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Community leaves light on for Ayla

WATERVILLE -- The father of 21-month-old Ayla Reynolds sat in the front row of First Congregational Church and held a candle for his missing daughter.

BY [BEN MCCANNA](#)



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WATERVILLE — The father of 21-month-old Ayla Reynolds sat in the front row of First Congregational Church and held a candle for his missing daughter.

Justin DiPietro was joined by his brother, four friends, about 20 members of the community and a similar number of journalists for a candlelight vigil Tuesday. It was a second local vigil for Ayla, who was reported missing one month ago Tuesday, and it was the first local public appearance by DiPietro.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



VIGIL FOR AYLA: Tears stream down the face of Justin DiPietro, left, during a candlelight vigil for his missing daughter, Ayla Reynolds, at First Congregational Church in Waterville on Tuesday. *Staff photo by Michael G. Seamans*



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At the end of the hour-long ceremony, DiPietro and friends walked silently through an array of TV news cameras in the church lobby and stepped into the rain outside.

Silence was a theme of the community gathering.

Earlier in the hour-long vigil, congregation member Danielle Bartz spoke to the power of silence during a moment of prayer.

“As we sit in silence tonight, we know that (God’s) presence will be deep within us, and that our combined

prayer will be a beacon of light to bring Ayla home,” she said.

Dana Bushee Herndandez, founder of the community group Mainely Moms & Dads, passed a microphone to anyone who wanted to speak.

Bob Vear, a grandfather of a small child, said Ayla’s disappearance should remind people of what they have.

“If you have a small child, hold, hug and caress him, because one never knows. One never knows,” he said.

Vear, a friend of the DiPietros, organized the vigil with the help of the church and its members. He said Ayla’s entire family is struggling with the disappearance.

“Both sides (of the family) are very emotional and very heartbroken,” he said. “They want resolution as much as the community at large. There’s no ifs, ands or buts about that.”

Vear said the vigil was meant to accomplish two objectives.

“Number one is to bring awareness that Ayla is still out there missing at this point,” he said. “Secondly, it’s to raise funds for T-shirts, bracelets, ribbons, flyers — anything it takes to keep Ayla’s name out in the forefront.”

In the lobby, T-shirts featuring Ayla’s photo and information were available in exchange for an unspecified donation.

Ayla was reported missing from her Violette Avenue home on Dec. 17. She was last seen wearing green one-piece pajamas with the words “Daddy’s Princess” printed on them. A \$30,000 reward has been offered for information that leads investigators her whereabouts.

State police ask that any tips be directed to 207-624-7076.

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