

THE LONGEST NIGHT

Saturday, December 21st | 5:00 PM

For those who have experienced loss, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways. As a result, churches around the world have adopted the practice of having a “Blue Christmas” or a “Longest Night” service during the Advent season. This service is often observed on December 21st, the Winter Solstice, which is the longest night of the year.

This service is designed to create sacred space for the grief, longing, and heartache that feels close to home—especially during the holiday season.

Friends, this service is for you. Allow yourself a quiet space to reflect and draw near to God. We hope that these words and this worship can be a gift to you, providing a space of calm, quiet, and healing. May you find peace and encouragement in your journey.

This service has been adapted from a Liturgy by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

GATHERING

Gathering Music

Unaccompanied Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007

--J.S. Bach

Welcome

Rev. Hannah DiPasquale

Invocation

Blessed be the God of our salvation.

Who bears our burdens and forgives all our sins.

Opening Poem

We are raw nerves, exposed and tender.
We are weary bones, hunched and fragile.
We are silent prayers, lips saying your name.
We are wedding rings we can't take off, even though time has passed.
We are the same pew, but it feels different now.
We are a brave face when we have to be strong.
We are tears in the shower when grief roars its head.
We are setting the table, but there are empty seats.
We are stuck in the swell, caught in the storm.
We are moving on, caught in our guilt.
We are okay some days, but some days we're not.
We are familiar with the night, we know it by name.
We are night-walkers, dream-makers, star-chasers.
We are close to home, but home has changed.

We are close to the surface, but the waters are rising.
We are all of this, plus everything else, and we are here.
We are here.
Grief is here.
God is here.
The night is here.
And all of this is true,
and we are not alone.
Take my hand.
Take these words.
Let them be your life raft.
Let this be the longest night,
and let it be
whatever you need it to be.
We are here.
Grief is here.
God is here.
Take what you need.
Amen.

Advent Candle Lighting

Friends, in the Advent season, we light the candle of hope.

Tonight, we light it for all who feel hopeless. Tonight, this light shines bright for prisoners, for patients with chronic illness, for individuals fighting to get out of debt, for refugees waiting for a safe place to rest, and for relationships that have no clear way forward. Tonight, we light this candle for the hopeless.

May God's hope find them now.

In this season, we light the candle of peace.

Tonight, we light the candle of peace again for all who need peace. This light shines bright for the anxious and unsettled—for those in seasons of transition and discernment, for all who struggle with mental health, and for people navigating rocky, new beginnings.

May God's peace find them now.

In this season, we light the candle of joy.

Tonight, we light the candle of joy for all who need it. May this light shine for those who are overburdened, overstretched, worn out, and worn down. May this candle shine for those who need a good laugh, even in seasons of grief.

May God's joy find them now.

In this season, we light the candle of love.

Tonight, we light the candle of love again for all who need it. May this light shine for loved ones lost, for love that has been betrayed, for love that has been neglected or forgotten, and for all who long for love and find themselves lonely.

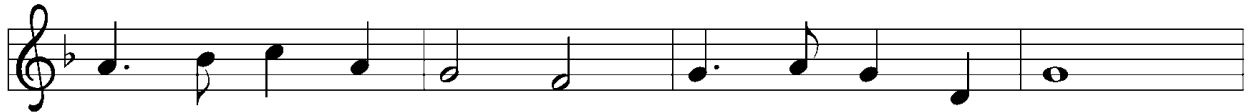
May God's love find them now.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn

In the Bleak Midwinter

ELW 294



1 In the bleak mid - win - ter, frost - y wind made moan,
2 Heav - en can - not hold him, nor . . . earth sus - tain;
3 What . . . can I give him, poor . . . as I am?



earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone;
heav'n and earth shall flee a - way when he comes to reign;
If I were a shep - herd I would bring a lamb;



snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed
if I were a wise . . . man I would do my part;



in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.
the Lord . . . God al - might - y, Je - sus Christ.
yet what I can I give him— give my heart.

WORD

Prayer for Illumination

God, we do not have night vision.
The sun has set on the world as we know it
and we do not have night vision.
So today we come to your Word
Hoping that this ancient truth found in scripture
Will feel like a hand in the dark

Guide our feet
Move us through this wilderness season
Tilt our heads upward to see the stars,

and let your Word be a blanket in the cold,
a light on the horizon,
and a friend to walk alongside.

We do not have night vision,
but we know we have you.
Move among us
and move through us.
Gratefully we pray, Amen

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 40: 1-11, 28-31

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our
God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass;
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers; the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;

lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms
and carry them in his bosom
and gently lead the mother sheep.

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted,
but those who wait for the LORD shall renew
their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.

John 14:27-28

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to
you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I
am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.

Psalms 121

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
2 My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

4 He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
6 The sun shall not strike you by day
nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

8 The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

RESPONSE

Prayer of the People

"In Silence We Wait"
sung between each petition

ACS 998

Sing: *In Silence We Wait*

The musical notation consists of two staves in G major (one sharp). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics: "In si - lence we wait, in dark - ness you". The second staff contains the melody for the second line of lyrics: "come to us; bring us your light." The lyrics are written below the notes.

In si - lence we wait, in dark - ness you
come to us; bring us your light.

Now using the words your son taught us to pray, we say together,

**Our Father in Heaven
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive
those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

**Padre nuestro que estás en el Cielo,
santificado sea tu nombre,
venga a nosotros tu Reino,
hágase tu voluntad
en la Tierra como en el Cielo.
Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día.
Perdona nuestras ofensas,
como también
perdonamos a los que nos ofenden.
No nos dejes caer en tentación,
y líbranos del mal.
Porque tuyo es el Reino, tuyo el Poder,
y tuya la Gloria,
ahora y siempre. Amén.**

Prayer Time

Spiegel im Spiegel '*Mirror in the Mirror*'

--Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

Journaling Prayers

See the back of this bulletin for journaling prompts to write in your seat.

Anointing

Visit the station to be anointed and receive a blessing with frankincense oil.

Pray with Pastor

Visit the station to pray with Pastor Hannah.

Candle Lighting

Come forward to light a candle in memory of someone or any other prayer you have at this moment.

Prayer of Gratitude

God of our joy
and God of our weariness,
we have brought our worn-down hearts to you this night—
hearts full of grief,
hearts carrying fear,
hearts, tender to the touch.
We have brought our weariness to you this night
because we know that you are present with us in the valleys.
We know that you were born into a quiet night like this one,
so surely our tears from the night are not unfamiliar to you.
Therefore, as we prepare to leave the safe protection of this sanctuary,
as we prepare to return to the fullness of our lives,
we ask that you would continue to walk with us.
Stay by our side through the valley.
Stay by our side as we climb our way out.
Just stay close.
For we cannot move from weariness to joy without you.
With honesty and gratitude, we give you these prayers of our hearts—
those named and left unnamed. We give them all to you.
Amen.

Sending

One: We belong to one another.

All: We belong to one another.

One: We are not in this alone.

All: We are not in this alone.

One: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

All: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us. Amen.



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things
 3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on
 4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law
 tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 teach us your will and guide our way. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!
 in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
 and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

5 O come, O Key of David, come,
 and open wide our heav'nly home;
 make safe the way that leads on high,
 and close the path to misery. *Refrain*

7 O come, O King of nations, come,
 O Cornerstone that binds in one:
 refresh the hearts that long for you;
 restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*

6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
 O Sun of justice, now draw near.
 Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
 and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*

8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here
 until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

SENDING

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sending Music

Madison

--Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Hyerim Mapp, cello

Jieun Newland, piano

(and time for silent prayer before departing)

Journaling Prayers. Use the notecard or space below to write individual prayers to be kept between you and God. Prayer prompts to guide your writing:

- Write five words that describe how you're feeling in this moment.
- Write down the names of people you carry in your heart today.
- Write down one area of your own life where you could use God's help, comfort, or guidance.
- Write down a prayer for your faith journey.
- Write down a prayer concern you have for our world.
- Take a minute to write any lingering prayers you have at this moment.