



# THE LONGEST NIGHT

The Order of Worship

December 20, 2020  
7:00 P.M.

MUSIC FOR GATHERING Air  
(From *Holberg Suite*)

Edvard Grieg

## CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-on them light has shined.

**People: For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders you have broken, O God.**

Leader: All around us, lights are shimmering and the sounds of laughter and delight fill the air. But inside, all is not merry and bright.

**People: In these long, cold nights, many are tired or sad; many are overwhelmed.**

Leader: We walk in darkness, in a land of deep shadow

**People: And wonder if there is a place for us this Advent season.**

Leader: We walk in good company, with the people of God in every generation who have waited for the light.

**People: We gather tonight to wait for the light.**

Leader: O come Emmanuel, God-with us. Come and shed your light into the deep shadows.

## WORDS OF WELCOME

WELCOME

Mary Boyd

## YESTERDAY'S PAIN

In the godforsaken, obscene quicksand of life,  
there is a deafening alleluia  
rising from the souls of those who weep,  
and of those who weep with those who weep.  
If you watch, you will see  
the hand of God  
putting the stars back in their skies  
one by one.

Some of us walk in Advent  
tethered to our unresolved yesterdays  
the pain still stabbing  
the hurt still throbbing.  
It's not that we don't know better;  
it's just that we can't stand up anymore by ourselves.  
On the way of Bethlehem, will you give us a hand?

Ann Weems

**HYMN NO. 121** O Little Town of Bethlehem (Glory to God hymnal) *St. Louis*  
(Sing stanzas 1 and 4)

## UNISON PRAYER

**All: God of love and understanding, we gather here this evening to confront our unease in the midst of the world's celebration. Help us know that you are present with us in all of our moods and feelings and seasons. Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy, and love that you promise to all of your people through the gift of your son Jesus. AMEN.**

## CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY

### FIRST CANDLE

Leader: The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost.

### WE REMEMBER THEM

Jewish prayer

At the rising of the sun and at its going down; We remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter; We remember them.

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring; We remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer; We remember them.

At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of the autumn; We remember them.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends; We remember them.

As long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as We remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength; We remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart; We remember them.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make; We remember them.

When we have joy we crave to share; We remember them.

When we have achievements that are based on theirs; We remember them.

For as long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as, We remember them.

### SILENT MEDITATION

**All: Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us. O God of sorrowing, draw near. Amen.**

**HYMN NO. 88** O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

*Veni Emmanuel*

(Sing stanza 1)

### SECOND CANDLE

Leader: The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss, the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in our lives or in our family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 11:28-30 (NRSV)

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

### SILENT MEDITATION

**All: God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and ever keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection. We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious. We forget so easily that you will be with us in all that we experience. Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives and open to discoveries of grace. Amen.**

**HYMN NO. 88** O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

*Veni Emmanuel*

(Sing stanza 6)

### THIRD CANDLE

Leader: The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of purpose and direction in their lives.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 40:1-5 (NRSV)

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 people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

**SCRIPTURE READING** Isaiah 41:13 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Do not fear, I will help you."

### SILENT MEDITATION

**All: God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide. Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction and grant that we may have the reassurance of knowing that we are on the right path. Take our lives and use them according to your will. Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you. Amen.**

**HYMN NO. 88** O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

*Veni Emmanuel*

(Sing stanza 7)

### FOURTH CANDLE

Leader: The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope.

### I WILL LIGHT CANDLES THIS CHRISTMAS

I will light candles this Christmas: Candles of joy despite all sadness, Candles of hope where despair keeps watch, Candles of courage for fears ever present, Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days, Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens, Candles of love to inspire all my living, Candles that will burn all the year long.

Howard Thurman

## SILENT MEDITATION

**All: God, Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow, because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the objects of our fears. Where there is love in life, guide us to find it; help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love. So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others. We ask it, in the name of Jesus Christ whose life is our light. Amen.**

## MEDITATION

Mary Boyd

## LIGHTING OF INDIVIDUAL CANDLES\*

Leader: Comforting God, wrap us in your presence in this time of remembrance. With these candles, help us find your light, a light that will guide us day by day, step by step, as we try to live life fully and wholly. We cherish the special ways you have sustained us. We thank you for the gifts of the saints which remain with us. Comfort us, encourage us, empower us. AMEN.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Lamentations 3:21- 26

But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,  
"therefore I will hope in him."  
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul that seeks him.  
It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord.

## SILENT MEDITATION

### CLOSING PRAYER

A prayer from Guerrillas of Grace by Ted Loder

O God of all seasons and senses,  
grant us the sense of your timing  
to submit gracefully and rejoice quietly  
in the turn of the seasons .  
In this season of short days and long nights, of grey and white and cold,  
teach us the lessons of endings:  
children growing,  
friends leaving, jobs concluding,  
loved ones dying, stages finishing,  
grieving over, grudges over,  
blaming over, excuses over .  
O God, grant us a sense of your timing.  
In this season of short days and long nights,  
of grey and white and cold,  
teach us the lessons of beginnings,  
that such waitings and endings  
may be the starting place,  
a planting of seeds  
which bring to birth what is ready to be born- something right and just and  
different,  
a new song, a deeper relationship, a fuller love- in the fullness of your time .  
O God, grant us the sense of your timing. Amen .

## BENEDICTION

Life is short and there is precious little time to gladden the hearts of those

who travel with us. So make haste to be kind; be quick to love, for the God  
who gave us form, reforms us and transforms us again and again, now and  
forever. Amen

## POSTLUDE Nimrod

*(Enigma Variations)*

Edward Elgar

## \*MUSIC FOR CANDLE LIGHTING

Selections from  
Hymn from Jupiter (from *The Planets*) Gustav Holst, arr. by Lucas Richman  
Andante (Brandenburg Concerto #2 in F major, BWV 1047) J.S. Bach  
Arioso (Cantata, BWV.156) J.S. Bach  
Air (Orchestral Suite #3, BWV 1068) J.S. Bach

### Worship Leaders

Mary Boyd and Daniel Lewis

### Musicians

Edward Pulgar, Violin 1  
Helen Bryenton, Violin 2  
Katy Gawne, Viola  
Andy Bryenton, Cello

*Special thanks to Barbara Adamcik, Allie Brewington,  
Melissa Everett, Ibbie Muntz*

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