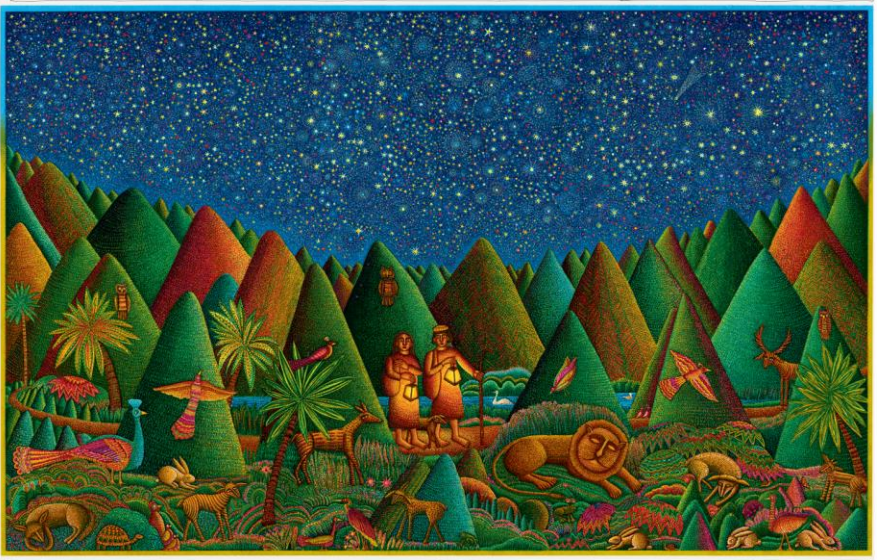


THE LONGEST NIGHT



**FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH
DECEMBER 20, 2023 + 7:00 PM**

Please join in prayerful meditation before the service.
Congregational responses are printed in bold.

THE GATHERING

PRELUDE

"Creator of the Stars of Night" - David N. Johnson
Organ composition
"Will You Come and Follow Me" - Mark Hayes
"O Holy Night" - A. E. Adams
Music for Recorder and Piano

We begin in the name of the Father, Son+, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

If I say, 'Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night,' darkness is not dark to you, O Lord; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike.
Psalm 139:10-11

HYMN

"Creator of the Stars of Night" Red Book #245

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Creator of the stars of night, you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

You are still as the North Star and steadfast as the dawn. Reveal yourself where we least expect you:

in the longest night, in the most difficult times, in the sheer silence when words fail us.

Faithful One, abide with us every moment.

Amen.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

READING

LUKE 23:44-56

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with Jesus. ³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left...⁴⁴It was now about noon (on that Friday), and darkness came over the whole land until three in the

afternoon, ⁴⁵while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." ⁴⁸And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

⁵⁰Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, ⁵¹had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. ⁵²This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. ⁵⁴It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 4

The cantor will chant the refrain and then the congregation will repeat one time at the beginning of the psalm and then at marked throughout. The verses of the psalm will be chanted responsively.



¹Answer me when I call, O God, defender | of my cause;
you set me free when I was in distress; have mercy on me and
I hear my prayer.

**²“You mortals, how long will you dishon- | or my glory;
how long will you love illusions and seek | after lies?”**

³Know that the LORD does wonders | for the faithful;
the LORD will hear me | when I call.

**⁴Tremble, then, and | do not sin;
speak to your heart in silence up- | on your bed. Refrain**

⁵Offer the appointed | sacrifices,
and put your trust | in the LORD.

**⁶Many are saying, “Who will show us | any good?”
Let the light of your face shine upon | us, O LORD.**

⁷You have put gladness | in my heart,
more than when grain and | wine abound.

**⁸In peace, I will lie | down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me | rest secure. Refrain**

READING LUKE 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HOMILY

HYMN

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

Red Book #294

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

Come and Fill Our Hearts

Confitemini Domino

Con - fi - te - mi - ni Do - mi - no quo - ni - am bo - nus.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace. You a-lone, O Lord, are ho - ly.

The first system of music consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. It contains a vocal line with lyrics. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing a bass line with chords.

Con - fi - te - mi - ni Do - mi - no. Al - le - lu - ia!
Come and fill our hearts with your peace. Al - le - lu - ia!

The second system of music also consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. It contains a vocal line with lyrics. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing a bass line with chords.

We light the first candle to remember people we have loved and lost. We remember their names, their faces, and their voices. Tonight we remember... *name those you have lost aloud or in the quiet of your heart.* We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season which anticipates Christmas.

May God's eternal love surround them. Refrain

We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will give the gift of peace.

Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

Refrain

We light the third candle to remember ourselves this season. We remember the past weeks, months and even years of difficulty and struggle. We remember the grief, sadness, and pain caused by reflecting on our own mortality.

Let us remember that even the coldest night ends with the rising sun. Refrain

We light the fourth candle by faith; the gift of hope which God offers to us in the Christmas story. We look together toward the manger where God lays, Jesus Christ, who grows to share our life and promises a future without suffering, where every tear will be wiped away and death will be no more.

We remember our God who shows the way and goes with us into tomorrow. Refrain

INTERCESSIONS

God, we come to you as Christmas dawns with pain inside us. On this longest night, so has darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season, we offer you the pain of our hearts and traumas that some of us cannot put into words.

Loving God, hear our prayer, **And in your merciful love, answer.**

Steadfast God, in your body gathered here and throughout the world, many know pain and confusion. May your presence protect and heal all who suffer discrimination, violence, and hunger.

Loving God, hear our prayer, **And in your merciful love, answer.**

Compassionate God, we grieve what might have been. Death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day, yet our joy has been interrupted by loss and change. We find ourselves adrift, alone, and lost. Lord help us find our way.

Loving God, hear our prayer, **And in your merciful love, answer.**

This season reminds us of all that used to be and cannot be anymore. Memories of what was and fears of what may be often stifle us. All around us we hear sights and sounds of celebration, yet, we feel blue. Please be near us during this longest night.

Loving God, hear our prayer, **And in your merciful love, answer.**

I invite you to offer your own intercessions and thanksgivings, either silently or aloud... *please offer your prayer petitions aloud or in the quiet of your heart.*

Loving God, hear our prayer, **And in your merciful love, answer.**

SERVICE OF HEALING

After the music begins, please come forward individually as desired to be anointed with healing oil and a special blessing. Please join in song or pray in silence as you wish.

Wait for the Lord

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Wait for the Lord'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 8/8. The lyrics are: 'Wait for the Lord, whose day is near. Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!' The first system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second system also ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Text: Taizé Community
Music: WAIT FOR THE LORD, Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994
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SENDING: PRAYER FOR THE NIGHT

A Collect for Protection

O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night. Bring us in safety to the morning hours; through him who died and rose again for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

A Collect for the Presence of Christ

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion on the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and in the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love.

Amen.

Lord, it is night.

In stillness may we know Your presence.

It is night after a long day.
In the darkness of night
help us to place our fear of the world
and of our own lives into your rest.
The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
when we have no peace.
The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
with new joys,
and new possibilities.
In your name we pray.

Amen.

THE BLESSING

May Christ, who, by his incarnation, gathered into one things earthly and things heavenly, fill you with his unexpected joy and peace; and the blessing of God, Father, Son +, and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always.

SENDING HYMN

"Of the Father's Love Begotten"

Red Book #295

THE DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and to be loved.
Go in hope, trusting that you go with God.
Go in faith that God's holy light will break on all darkness now and forever.

Thanks be to God's light that shines in our darkness.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

POSTLUDE

"Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott"

- J. S. Bach

Organ composition

SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY

The Rev. Kimberly van Driel, Presiding Minister
Sharon Heist Miller, Assisting Minister
Holly Schubert, Reader
Kevin Mathias, Organ; Recorder
Signe Mitchell, Piano
Marlin Boltz, AV Assisting Minister

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