

The Longest Night

December 21, 2021



St. John's Lutheran Church of Parkville

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Longest Night: Blue Christmas Evening Prayer

While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time. We come together seeking healing and room to share grief, sadness, loneliness, or confusion when these emotions often feel out of place during the holidays.

In the Northern Hemisphere, December 21 is the longest night, the winter solstice. It marks the shortest day of the year, the official start of winter. Tradition says that nature and all her creatures stop and hold their breath to see if the sun will turn back from its wanderings, if the days will lengthen and the earth will once again feel the sun's warmth. On this darkest day of the year, we come with our honest yearnings seeking the return of light and hope.

Gathering Music *A Rosetti Christmas* Mark Hayes, arr. Douglas E. Wagner
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Welcome

Call to Worship

P: Creator of the stars of night, bless the long hours of this night with the warmth of your presence.
Come to all who suffer in any way.

C: Come to us.

P: Grant rest to the weary, freedom to those who are burdened, and bright hope to those who despair.

C: Come to us.

P: Strengthen us as we await your coming once again, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Greeting

The light of our Lord Jesus Christ, the warmth of God, and the hope of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ELW 25

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

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
embracing all things far and nigh:
in strength and beauty come and stay;
teach us your will and guide our way.
Refrain

3 O come, O come, O Lord of might,
as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe. *Refrain*

- 4 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain*
(Text: *Psalteriolum Cantionum Catholicarum, Koln, 1710; tr. composite; Music: French*
processional, 15th cent.)

Prayer

Lord God, our light and our salvation, grant that your servants who seek your face in times of trouble may see your goodness in the land of the living, and that we may be set safely on the rock of our faith, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Scripture **Isaiah 40:1-11**
 Matthew 11:28
 Revelation 21:1-7

Hymn ***It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*** ***ELW 282***

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|---|---|
| 1 It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heav'n's all-gracious king."
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing. | 2 Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heav'nly music floats
o'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hov'ring wing,
and ever o'er its babel sounds
the blessed angels sing. |
| 3 And you, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow:
look now, for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing;
oh, rest beside the weary road
and hear the angels sing! | 4 For lo! The days are hast'ning on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and all the world give back the song
which now the angels sing. |

(Text: *Edmund H. Sears, 1810-'876; Music: Richard S. Willis, 1819-190*)

Candle Lighting and Prayer Stations

During this time, worshipers may light a candle and place it in the baptism font; write a prayer concern on a slip of paper and place it in a designated area; or kneel, sit, or stand for individual prayer. Prayer with laying on of hands is offered by prayer ministers to worshipers who desire this form of healing prayer

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn

Silent Night, Holy Night!

ELW 281

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|---|--|
| <p>1 Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is
bright round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.</p> <p>3 Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's
pure light radiant beams from your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.</p> | <p>2 Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the
sight; glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!</p> |
|---|--|

(Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885; Music: Franz Gruber, 1787-1863)

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace.
Amen.

If you wish to stay for additional prayer, a Healing Prayer minister will be in the back of the worship space.

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Join us for Worship this Christmas Season

December 24 Christmas Eve Services

- 11 am Worship with Holy Communion
- 4 pm Outdoor Family service
- 7:30 pm Candlelight service with Holy Communion

December 26

- 10 am Service of Lessons and Carols

Worship Leader
Organist

Claire Miller, OSSD
Martha Requard