The Longest Night Service

December 21, 2023



St. John's Lutheran Church of Parkville www.stjohnsparkville.org (410) 665-1234 office@stjohnsparkville.org Text SJPARKVILLE to 22828 to join our email list.

Welcome to St. John's—we are glad you're here! Whether you have worshiped with us many times, or this is your first time, there is a place for you here. Your presence among us is a gift.

BLUE CHRISTMAS: A SERVICE OF NIGHT PRAYER FOR THE WINTER SOLSTICE

(Please take a moment to silence all electronics. Thank you!) (Hymns are taken from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, the red book in the pew rack.)

INTRODUCTION

Advent and Christmas are seasons of joy and hope. And yet, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating at this time of year. Amid the cheerful music on the radio and advertisements with enormous red bows, our losses can be magnified—grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, or unemployment...become even harder to bear.

Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel stress at Christmas time. The shadow of depression grows when sunlight is scarce. We get stressed out when our calendars fill with extra social obligations. We fear interactions with family members that have been difficult in the past.

At first glance it may seem like there's no room for grief at Christmas, but Advent and Christmas are also the season of Emmanuel—God with us.

God is with us, in our joys *and* in our sorrows. This "Blue Christmas" Service is an opportunity to come together in worship, to seek healing, make room for grief, and find hope in Jesus Christ who knows our pain, and comes to bring love, joy and deep peace to an aching world.

Whatever you may be feeling this holiday season, know that God is with you.

PRELUDESee Amid the(© 2013 Lorenz Publishing co.)

See Amid the Winter's Snow

Douglas E. Wagner

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.

GATHERING HYMNJoyous Light of Heavenly GloryELW 561(Text: Greek hymn, 3rd cent., para. Mary Haugen, b. 1950; Music: Marty Haugen; Text and music ©1987 GIA Publications, Inc.)

PRAYER

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. Grant rest to the weary, freedom to those who are burdened, and bright hope to those who despair. Strengthen us as we await your coming once again, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

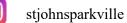
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St. John's Lutheran Church Parkville

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Celebration of the Birth of Christ – December 24th 10 am **Traditional Christmas Eve Worship*** Family Christmas Eve Worship with $4 \, \mathrm{pm}$ Children Participation* Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship* 8:30 pm **** December 25th Christmas Day Service at 10 am* **** December 31st 1st Sunday after Christmas Worship at 10 am Service of Lessons & Carols *Services include Holy Communion

READING

¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and crv 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. ³A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every 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. ⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ⁶A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. ⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him: his reward is with him. and his recompense before him. ¹¹He 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.

SUNG RESPONSE Comfort, Comfort Now My People ELW 256

(Text: Johann G. Olearius, 1635-1711; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.; Music: Trente quatre pseaumes de David, Geneva, 1551)

READING

Psalm 22:19-24

¹⁹But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! ²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! ²¹Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me. ²²I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: ²³You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me. but heard when I cried to him.

SUNG RESPONSE

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

ELW 272

John 1:1-5

(Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851-1934, sts. 1-2; Harriet R. Krauth, 1845-1925, st.; John C. Mattes, 1876-1948, st. 4; Music: Alte catholische geistliche Kirchengesange, Koln, 1599; arr. Michael Praetorius, 1571-1621

READING

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

REFLECTION

PRAYER

During this time of praver, you are invited to come forward and receive a sign of healing and wholeness in the name of Christ. You are also invited to take time for silent praver as music is played.

LORD 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,

BLESSING

The Lord now bless and keep you; God's love in you increase By God's own face, with shining grace, grant you eternal peace To Father, Son, and Spirit, eternal One-in-Three Be thanks and praise through all our days, into eternity. Amen.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear **SENDING HYMN**

ELW 282

(Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810-1876; Music: Richard S. Willis, 1819-1900)

DISMISSAL

The peace of Christ be with you all. And also with you.

Greetings of peace may be shared as the assembly departs.

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