

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.

PRELUDE *See Amid the Winter's Snow* *Douglas E. Wagner*
(© 2013 Lorenz Publishing co.)

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 HYMN *Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory* *ELW 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.**

STAFF

Rev. Mathew Berger, Pastor mathew.berger@stjohnsparkville.org 913-634-7131	Rev. Amy Berger, Pastor amy.berger@stjohnsparkville.org 443-286-5511
Martha Requard, Director of Music	Carol Erpenstein, Office Administrator

Scott Becker, Sexton

For emergencies call 443-844-9314

*****The Pastors are off on Fridays****



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Celebration of the Birth of Christ – December 24th

10 am Traditional Christmas Eve Worship*
4 pm Family Christmas Eve Worship with
Children Participation*
8:30 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship*

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 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.

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;

