



The Longest Night

Sunday, December 17, 2023, 7pm

a Blue Christmas service ...

The Longest Night (*Blue Christmas*) Service

December 17, 2023 7pm

Gathering for the Longest Night

Gathering Music

“Make Room”

as recorded by Casting Crowns

Praise Team

*A family hiding from the storm found no place at the keeper's door.
It was for this a child was born ~ to save a world so cold and hollow.*

*A sleeping town, they did not know that lying in a manger low
A Savior King who had no home has come to heal our sorrow.*

*Is there room in your heart ~ is there room in your heart ~
is there room in your heart for God to write his story.*

*Shepherds counting sheep at night do not fear the glory light.
You are precious in his sight ~ God has come to raise the lowly.*

*Is there room in your heart ~ is there room in your heart ~
is there room in your heart for God to write his story.
You can come as you are, it may set you apart,
When you make room in your heart and trade your dreams for his*

Call to Worship – Rev. Karen Wright

One: Merciful God, In this season of rejoicing,

All: we come to you weary and grieving.

One: In this season of feasting,

All: we hunger for healing and relief.

One: In this season of light,

All: our hearts are veiled in sorrow and shadow.

One: Will this season ever end?

All: “Yes.” We hear your, “Yes.” Those who are weary will find rest.

Those who mourn will be comforted. Those who hunger will be filled.

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.

Hymn 88

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

Words and Music
John Mason Neale
Arranged by
Thomas Helmore

Translated by
Veni Emmanuel

VERSE

♩ = 76 (Optional chords in parentheses)

Em Bm/D G/B G / C Am G/B D G D Bm G/B C G/B / Am Em/B Bm

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive Is - ra -
 2. O come, Thou Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by Thine ad - vent
 3. O come, Thou Wis - dom from on high, and or - der all things, far and
 4. O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind all peo - ples in one heart and

Em C Am Em/G D/F# Em Bm C D Em D Bm G G/B C Am G/B D G

6 el; That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here, un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re -
 here; Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
 nigh; To us the path of knowl - edge show, and cause us in her ways to go.
 mind; Bid en - vy, strife, and quar - rels cease; Fill the whole world with heav - en's peace.

CHORUS

D Em Bm G C Am G/B D Em D/F# G G/B C G/B Am Em/B Bm Em

joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

Responsive Prayers

One: Gracious God, in this season of Advent, we give thanks
that you came to be among us:

All: Emmanuel, God with us.

One: You came into the darkness of that time:

All: a time of change and stress, uncertainty and doubt.

One: You did not enter this world surrounded by grand things.

All: You were born in a stable, to parents far from home.

One: O God, we pray for your presence here and now,
in the difficulties of our time.

All: We lay before you our offerings of honesty and need, of worry and hope.

One: For all who are grieving, we pray:

All: O Lord, you know what it means to lose someone you dearly love.

One: For all who are lonely, we pray:

All: O Lord, you know how it feels to look around you and feel that there is no one left.

One: For all who are anxious, we pray:

All: O Lord, you know what it is like to be weary and heavy-laden.

One: For all who are vulnerable, we pray:

All: O Lord, you know what it means to be unhoused and unsafe.

One: For all who are beset by challenges, physical or emotional, we pray:

All: O Lord, you know how it feels to be in pain.

One: For all who are longing for light, and for hope, we pray:

All: O Lord, you know what it is like to wait in the darkness.

One: ... Here we offer our personal petitions in silence.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you came to be among us,

All: full of grace and truth.

One: In you we find our welcome.

All: You are our comfort and our company along the journey of our life.

One: In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

Scripture

Isaiah 11:1–10 (The Message)

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,
from his roots a budding Branch.
The life-giving Spirit of God will hover over him,
the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength,
the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-God.
Fear-of-God
will be all his joy and delight.
He won't judge by appearances,
won't decide on the basis of hearsay.
He'll judge the needy by what is right,
render decisions on earth's poor with justice.
His words will bring everyone to awed attention.
A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked.
Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots,
and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

A Living Knowledge of God

The wolf will romp with the lamb,
the leopard sleep with the kid.
Calf and lion will eat from the same trough,
and a little child will tend them.
Cow and bear will graze the same pasture,
their calves and cubs grow up together,
and the lion eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens,
the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent.
Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill
on my holy mountain.
The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive,
a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide.

On that day, Jesse's Root will be raised high, posted as a rallying banner for the peoples.
The nations will all come to him. His headquarters will be glorious.

Song to Reflect

"Rose of Bethlehem"

as recorded by Selah

Carrie DeVries

*There's a Rose in Bethlehem with a beauty quite divine
Perfect in this world of sin on this silent, holy night*

*There's a fragrance much like hope that it sends upon the wind
Reaching out to every soul from a lowly manger's crib*

*Oh, Rose of Bethlehem~how lovely, pure and sweet
Born to glorify the Father~Born to wear the thorns for me*

*There's a Rose in Bethlehem colored red like mercy's blood
It's the flower of our faith ~ It's the blossom of God's love
Though its bloom is fresh with youth, surely what will be he knows
For a tear of morning dew is rolling down the Rose*

*Oh, Rose of Bethlehem~how lovely, pure and sweet
Born to glorify the Father~Born to wear the thorns for me
There's a Rose in Bethlehem with a beauty quite divine
Perfect in this world of sin on this silent, holy night*

*Oh, Rose of Bethlehem~how lovely, pure and sweet
Born to glorify the Father~Born to wear the thorns for me*

Reflection

“New Life Will Sprout”

Rev. Karen Wright

Hymn

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

Words by
Christina Georgina Rossetti

Music by
Gustav Theodore Holst

VERSE

♩ = 100

D Bm G D/F# Em7 A D

1. In the bleak mid-win-ter, frost-y wind made moan; Earth stood hard as
2. Our God heav'n can-not hold Him, nor earth sus-tain; Heav'n and earth shall
3. An-gels and arch-an-gels may have gath-ered there; Cher-u-bim and
4. What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a

6 Bm G A D G/B D7/A G Bm D/F# G A

i-ron, wa-ter like a stone. Snow had fall-en, snow on snow, snow on snow;
flee a-way when He comes to reign. In the bleak mid-win-ter a sta-ble place suf-ficed, the
ser-a-phim thron'g'd the air. But His moth-er on-ly, in her maid-en bliss,
shep-herd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part;

13 D Bm G A D

In the bleak mid-win-ter, long a-go.
Lord God Al-might-y, Je-sus Christ.
wor-shipped the Be-lov-ed with a kiss.
Yet what can I give Him? Give my heart.

Invitation to Christ's Presence

At this time, all are encouraged to silently name a particular need that you wish to acknowledge to the Lord. Then, please come forward to light a candle. As you do, invite the light of Christ into your heart, trusting that Christ came into the world to be with us, wherever we are.

Song to Reflect

"Somewhere in Your Silent Night"

Praise Team

as recorded by Casting Crowns

*All is calm and all is bright everywhere but in your heart tonight.
They're singing carols of joy and peace; but you feel too far gone and too far out of reach*

*Somewhere in your silent night, heaven hears the song your broken heart has cried
Hope is here, just lift your head for love has come to find you
Somewhere in your silent night*

*From heaven's height to manger low ~ there is no distance the Prince of Peace won't go
From manger low to Calvary's hill. When your pain runs deep his love runs deeper still
He has always loved you, child, and he always will*

*Somewhere in your silent night, heaven hears the song your broken heart has cried
Hope is here, just lift your head for love has come to find you
Somewhere in your silent night*

*Lift your head ~ Lift your heart ~ Emmanuel will meet you where you are
He knows your hurt ~ He knows your name ~ And you're the very reason that he came*

*Somewhere in your silent night, heaven hears the song your broken heart has cried
Hope is here, just lift your head for love has come to find you
Somewhere in your silent night*

Love will find you

Unison Prayer

Jesus, you are full of compassion, you understand our pain. Our suffering changes our experience of you and the celebration of your birth. We are caught between remembering happier times and grieving what might have been.

Root us in your steadfast love. Anchor us in your faithful promises. Hold us, and all who weep this holy season throughout the world. Shelter and sustain us all with your healing and hope, your peace and light. We love

you, we need you, we trust you. We ask this in your name Jesus, praying as you taught us...

The 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Song to Send

"God With Us"

Jason Ingram and Leslie Jordan

Praise Team

Oh, you've come to bring peace, to be love, to be nearer to us.

You've come to bring life to the light, to shine brighter in us.

Oh Emmanuel ~ God with us.

Our deliverer, you are savior. In your presence we find our strength.

Over ev'rything our redemption God with us. You are God with us.

Oh you've come to be hope to this world, for your honor and name

And you've come to take sin, to bear shame, and to conquer the grave

Oh Emmanuel ~ God with us.

Our deliverer, you are savior. In your presence we find our strength.

Over ev'rything our redemption God with us. You are God with us.

You are here ~ you are holy ~ we are standing in your glory.

You are here ~ you are holy ~ we are standing in your glory, Lord.

Our deliverer, you are savior. In your presence we find our strength.

Over ev'rything our redemption God with us. You are God with us.

Benediction

GOD'S PEACE TO YOU

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Announcements

WE INVITE YOU TO CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE AT GRACE COVENANT:

- **5pm — Family Service** — Service music will be shared by Joy! Singers; Celebration! Choir; a Christmas Eve Handbell Ensemble with ringers Andrew Alka, Elizabeth Bures, Lindsay Callender, and Kat Mason; and Christopher Callender, guitar, will lead “Silent Night.”
- **8pm — Traditional Service** — Service music will be shared by Chancel & Exaltation! Singers and instrumentalists. **7:45pm Prelude Music** — Including music by Andrea Dover, violin ~ Bob Dover, clarinet ~ Darryl Prater, trumpet ~ and Linda Dover, organ



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