

# The Longest Night (Blue Christmas) Service December 22,2024 7pm Gathering for the Longest Night

# **Gathering Music**

# **Wexford Carol**

Traditional

Praise Team

Good people all, this Christmas time, Consider well and bear in mind What our good God for us has done, in sending His belovèd Son. With Mary holy we should pray to God with love this Christmas Day; In Bethlehem upon the morn there was a blest Messiah born.

The night before that happy tide, the noble virgin and her guide Were long time seeking up and down to find a lodging in the town.

But mark how all things came to pass: from every door repelled, alas!

As long foretold, their refuge all was but a humble oxen stall.

# **Call to Worship**

ONE: Holy and Comforting God, we come before you feeling vulnerable and spent.

ALL: Our souls weep, and we wonder how we will get through a time when bells ring and gifts are exchanged and the word "Merry" surrounds us.

ONE: We long for the time before this sorrow came to dwell.

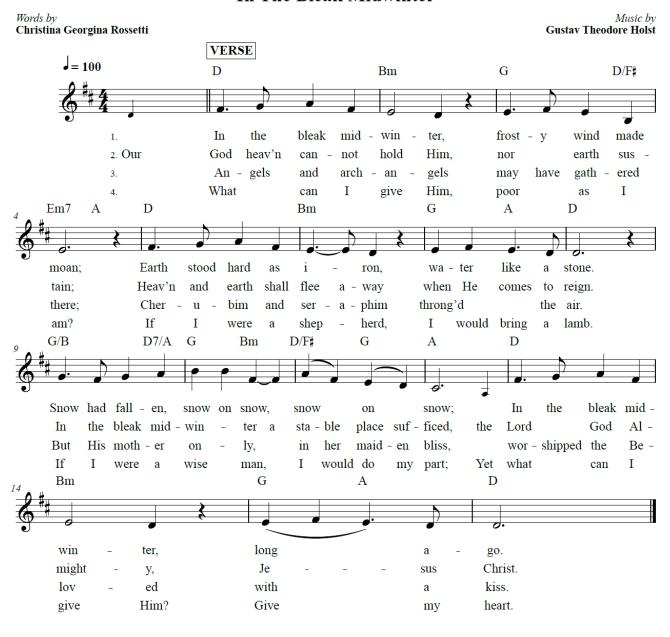
ALL: Help us to trust in your love. Help us to expect that as certain as the waves of grief are the moments when you will offer us peace.

ONE: Remind us all our feelings have value.

ALL: Be with us. Come to us. Live in us, Emmanuel, be God with Us.

**Hymn** "In the Bleak Midwinter" by Gustav Holst

# In The Bleak Midwinter



#### **Invitation to Christ's Presence**

# A Litany for Losses

Psalm 36:9 says, "Within You is the spring of life; in your light, we see light."

When we feel as if our light is dimmed, we can rely on the Holy Light to continue to shine until we ourselves shine bright once more.

We are not alone.

Please join me in a Litany of Losses. Your lines will be prompted.

#### **Loss of Life**

We mourn this night the loss of life.

Some of us have lost loved ones, friends, or coworkers. And we know that there has been loss of life all over this globe.

I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn the loss of life.

We mourn the loss of life.

We honor and remember these beloveds.

We honor and remember these beloveds.

We pray for comfort and peace.

We pray for comfort and peace.

Amen. Amen.

#### **Loss of Livelihood**

We mourn this night the loss of livelihoods.

Some of us have lost jobs, or dreams and passions for the work we do have died this year.

Many more whose names we do not know are not sure how they will sustain their families, themselves.

I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn the loss of livelihood.

We mourn the loss of livelihood.

We honor and remember the dreams now deferred.

We honor and remember the dreams now deferred.

We pray for sustenance and resilience.

We pray for sustenance and resilience.

Amen. Amen.

#### Loss of Love

We mourn this night the loss of love.

Some of us are encountering a loss of relationship in this moment.

We mourn the loss of imagined futures together.

We also mourn that it has become more and more difficult to love others who are different from us.

I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn a loss of love. We mourn a loss of love.

We honor and remember the good moments and seek healing for the pain.

We honor and remember the good moments and seek healing for the pain.

We pray for compassion and change in our divided communities.

We pray for compassion and change in our divided communities.

Amen. Amen.

#### **Loss of Liveliness**

We mourn this night the loss of liveliness.

For so many, the last few years have sapped us of our energy, our enthusiasm, and our sense of well-being.

We mourn the loss of all who are suffering with anxiety and depression, who are finding it difficult to live each day with fullness or to find hope for tomorrow.

#### I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn this loss of liveliness.

We mourn this loss of liveliness.

We honor and remember that each person is precious and whole.

We honor and remember that each person is precious and whole.

We pray for recovery and renewed vigor.

We pray for recovery and renewed vigor.

Amen. Amen.

# **More Light**

And now we light a fifth candle.

Just as we will do on Christmas Eve,

We light this as a sign of our belief
that the light does always come and is coming even now.

This light casts its glow on all the surrounding prayers we have prayed.

This light resides within us, perhaps dim for a time,
but always lit—an ember of the Holy inside us.

This light reminds us that we are not alone.

#### **Ritual of Hope**

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

Scripture Revelation 21:1–6

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them and be their God;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Song to Reflect

"Rose of Bethlehem"

as recorded by Selah

Praise Team

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

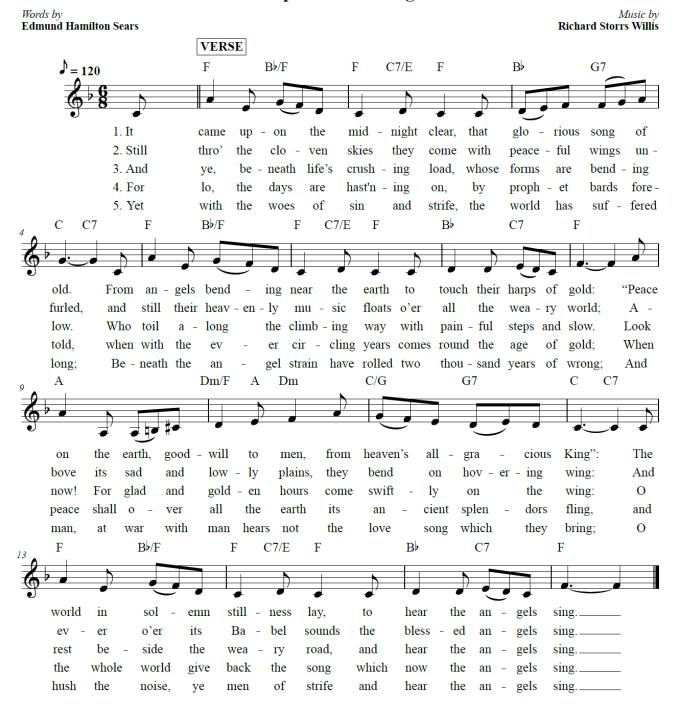
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**Reflection** "God Among Us" Rev. Karen Wright

**Hymn** "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" by Richard Storrs Willis

# It Came Upon The Midnight Clear



## **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

"Light of the World"
Praise Team/All

by Lauren Daigle

The world waits for a miracle~The heart longs for a little bit of hope
Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel
A child prays for peace on Earth~And she's calling out from a sea of hurt
Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel

And can you hear the angels singing

Glory to the light of the world (Repeat)

is here

The drought breaks with the tears of a mother~A baby's cry is the sound of love

Come down, come down, Emmanuel

He is the song for the suffering~He is Messiah, the Prince of Peace has come

He has come, Emmanuel

Glory to the light of the world (Repeat)
For all who wait~For all who hunger

# For all who've prayed~For all who wonder Behold your King~Behold Messiah Emmanuel, Emmanuel Glory to the light of the world (3X)

The world waits for the miracle~The heart longs for a little bit of hope Oh come, oh come Emmanuel

#### **Benediction**

### **GOD'S PEACE TO YOU**

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#### **Announcements**

#### WE INVITE YOU TO CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE AT GRACE COVENANT:

- **5pm Family Service** This family friendly service will feature our children and youth as they take us to the manger with Joseph and Mary and their newborn son. The youngest worshippers will join in lighting their own glo stick candle with the congregation to sing "Silent Night." Music will be shared by Joy! Singers (4s–1st graders) and Celebration! Choir.
- 8pm Traditional Service Experience the beauty of a traditional service of lessons and carols, celebrating the joy and tenderness of Christ's birth. The evening concludes with the lighting of candles and singing "Silent Night," accompanied by Christopher Callender on guitar. Prelude Music Begins at 7:45pm Enjoy a special musical prelude by Linda Dover on organ, along with additional musicians. Choral music during the service will be presented by the Chancel and Exaltation! Singers, and instrumentalists.



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