

# *The Longest Night*

*December 22, 2024, 7pm*



*a Blue Christmas Service ...*

## 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 beloved 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

Words by  
Christina Georgina Rossetti

Music by  
Gustav Theodore Holst

## VERSE

♩ = 100

D Bm G D/F#

1. In the bleak mid - win - ter, frost - y wind made  
 2. Our God heav'n can - not hold Him, nor earth sus -  
 3. An - gels and arch - an - gels may have gath - ered  
 4. What can I give Him, poor as I

4 Em7 A D Bm G A D

moan; Earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone.  
 tain; Heav'n and earth shall flee a - way when He comes to reign.  
 there; Cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim throng'd the air.  
 am? If I were a shep - herd, I would bring a lamb.

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

Snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow; In the bleak mid -  
 In the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed, the Lord God Al -  
 But His moth - er on - ly, in her maid - en bliss, wor - shipped the Be -  
 If I were a wise man, I would do my part; Yet what can I

14 Bm G A D

win - ter, long a - go.  
 might - y, Je - - - sus Christ.  
 lov - ed with a kiss.  
 give Him? Give my heart.

## 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*

*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**

**“God Among Us”**

Rev. Karen Wright

**Hymn**

**“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”**

by Richard Storrs Willis



# It Came Upon The Midnight Clear

Words by  
Edmund Hamilton Sears

Music by  
Richard Storrs Willis

## VERSE

♩ = 120

F B♭/F F C7/E F B♭ G7

1. It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of  
 2. Still thro' the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un -  
 3. And ye, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing  
 4. For lo, the days are hast'n - ing on, by proph - et bards fore -  
 5. Yet with the woes of sin and strife, the world has suf - fered

4 C C7 F B♭/F F C7/E F B♭ C7 F

old. From an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold: "Peace  
 furl'd, and still their heav - en - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world; A -  
 low. Who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow. Look  
 told, when with the ev - er cir - cling years comes round the age of gold; When  
 long; Be - neath the an - gel strain have rolled two thou - sand years of wrong; And

9 A Dm/F A Dm C/G G7 C C7

on the earth, good - will to men, from heaven's all - gra - cious King": The  
 bove its sad and low - ly plains, they bend on hov - er - ing wing: And  
 now! For glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing: O  
 peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling, and  
 man, at war with man hears not the love song which they bring; O

13 F B♭/F F C7/E F B♭ C7 F

world in sol - emn still - ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing. \_\_\_\_\_  
 ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing. \_\_\_\_\_  
 rest be - side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing. \_\_\_\_\_  
 the whole world give back the song which now the an - gels sing. \_\_\_\_\_  
 hush the noise, ye men of strife and hear the an - gels sing. \_\_\_\_\_

## 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"

by Lauren Daigle

Praise Team/All

*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–1<sup>st</sup> 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.



**GRACE COVENANT**  
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