



Longest Night of the Year
Evening Prayer
December 22, 2020 9pm

Welcome

Bell x3

Gathering:

Let our prayer be set forth in your sight as incense.
The lifting up of our hands an evening sacrifice.

Call to Worship

Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge,
For we are lost, we are lonely, we are afraid.

Tonight, we gather daring to wonder
if God has indeed come in Jesus,

**Discerning the rejection we have known,
intimate with our failed relationships,
holding our heartache in hands of tenderness.**

Tonight, we gather with neighbors and strangers,
a family made one by our brokenness,

**Coming with our hearts full of hope,
and our pockets filled with doubts.**

Tonight, we gather just as we are,
**for God has promised to meet us here
and to welcome us for who we are.**

Opening Prayer

O God, your unfailing presence sustains
the world we live in and the life we live:
Watch over those, both night and day,
who work while others sleep,
and grant that we may never
forget that our common life
depends upon each other's toil.

Be with us this longest night, O God,
be in our deep grief and in our joy.
Walk with us every step of the way
and meet us in this time and place,
for we pray in Jesus name. **Amen.**

Song: Phos Hilaron

Hail Gladdening Light, sun so bright
Jesus Christ, end of night, Alleluia, Alleluia

Hail Gladdening Light, Eternal Bright
at evening time, 'round us shine, Alleluia, Alleluia

(Chorus) And we hymn the Father we hymn the Son,
we hymn the Spirit Holy divine
No one more worthy of songs to be sung
To the giver of life all glory is Thine

Hail Gladdening Light, such joyous Light
O Brilliant Star, forever shine, Alleluia, Alleluia (Chorus)

Tomlin, Crowder et al, CCLI

Psalms of Lament

Psalm 13: 1-4

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

Psalm 22: 1-2

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? 2 O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.
Silence*

Psalm 121 (read responsively)

I will lift up mine eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

My help comes from God who made heaven and earth.

God will not suffer your foot to be moved.

The one who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold the one who keeps Israel shall not slumber or sleep.

The holy one is your keeper.

The Holy one is your shade on your right hand.

The sun shall not hurt you by day nor the moon by night.

Our God shall preserve you from all evil and shall preserve your soul.

Our God shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and even for evermore.

Candle Lighting Litany of Remembrance

O God, you dream of a world that is safe and life-giving to all creatures. So we cry out to you, for this has not been our reality, especially in the midst of this pandemic. We cry out for all the lives lost this year—those known to us and those unknown, from the people down the street, to those across the world.

We cry out because it's so easy to lose hope.

We light the candle of Hope in silence, naming all those who have died and the griefs we continue to bear.

O God, you dream of a world where there is mercy and kindness and justice and peace for all Creation. So we cry out to you, for this has not been our reality. We weep tonight for all the lives lost and hurt because of the racism and injustice, violence and oppression. We weep for the fear of strangers and difference that divides us from one another.

We are in turmoil and peace seems like just a memory.

We light the candle of Peace in silence, praying for the peace of our world.

O God, you dream of a world where we can all be together in body and spirit to share meals and laughter and embraces. So, we cry out to you because that has not been our reality this year. We weep for the loss of relationships, for the loss of routine and normality and the ability to be physically together. We weep even for the loss of trust that the world is a safe, good place.

Refresh us with the gift of your joy, O God.

We light the candle of Joy in silence, asking God to come and fill us again.

O God, you dream of a world where wrongs are acknowledged and righted and restoration is possible. So tonight, we must cry out to you and confess that we have too often ignored the wrongs in our neighbourhoods, our relationship to the earth and in our cities and homes. We have gathered our torn hopes, our ragged laments, trusting that God will come and restore us in a love that never fails.

As we wait through this our longest night, we remember God's unfailing love for each of us and for this aching world—a love born in Christ on Christmas.

We light the candle of Love in silence, asking God to fill us again.

Let us pray:

O God of hope, peace, joy and love, we look for you in this season of grief. Even as we weep, we wait. And we look toward Bethlehem. Help us, whether we can see you clearly or not, to follow you and to live your dreams—your fierce, brave, life-giving dreams—tonight and always. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers before the God who listens, let us pray:

Abba, Amma, Beloved, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Litany of Affirmation

(Adapted from "First Coming" by Madeleine L'Engle)

God did not wait until the world was ready,
till the nations were at peace.

**God came when the heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried for release.**

God did not wait for the perfect time.

God came when the need was deep and great.

God dined with sinners in all their grime.

God did not wait until the hearts were pure.

In Joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.

To a world of anguish and shame.

God came in Joy, and God's light never goes out.

God came to a world which did not mesh;
to heal its ill, and make all things new.

**In the mystery of the Word made flesh,
the maker of the stars was born.**

We cannot wait until the world is whole,
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
to share our grief, to touch our pain.

God came in grace, with love.

Let us rejoice!

Sending:

Sleep, O sleep in the calm of each calm.

Sleep, O sleep in the guidance of all guidance.

Sleep, O sleep in the love of all loves.

Sleep, O beloved, in the Lord of life.

Sleep, O beloved, in the God of life.

The peace of all peace be mine this night

Almighty God grant us a quiet night and at the last, a peaceful end; and the blessing of God, Source of all Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Spirit be with us this night and ever-more. **Amen.**

Song: In the Bleak Mid-winter:

In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan,

Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;

Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,

In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;

Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.

In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,

Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;

But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,

Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

Benediction;

Go in the embrace of the God of powerful love, the Christ of humanness and vulnerability, and the Spirit that is always, always with us and for us,
Amen.



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