



The Longest Night

A Service of Healing and Hope

December 21, 2025

Gathering

Greeting

All: The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

Special Music Just Because It's Christmas

Litany of Remembrance *Based on Psalm 22, and O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

**All: O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest.**

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here,
until the son of God appear.**

As we light the second candle, we cry out to God:

‘In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.’

**All: It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept me safe
on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me,
you have been my God.**

**O come thou Wisdom from on high,
who orderest all things mightily
To us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in her ways to go**

As the third candle is lit, we take to heart the words of the psalmist:

‘Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.’

**All: God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted.
God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me.
Thanks be to God.**

**O come thou day-spring, come and cheer
our spirits by thy advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight**

We light the fourth candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

All: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

**O come desire of nations,
bind in one the hearts of all mankind
Bid then our sad, divisions cease,
and be thyself our King of Peace**

We light the fifth candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

All: We remember that through You all things are possible.

Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

**O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death's abode.**

We light the sixth candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

**All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost,
we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.**

**We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark,
with the turning of the wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the
darkness.**

**O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light.**

We light the seventh and last candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable.

We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

**All: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way
to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.**

**O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

Special Music Emmanuel

Readings from the Psalms

(As the psalms are read, you are invited to meditate on these sacred prayers)

A Reading from the New Testament James 5:13-16

**Loving God who came to dwell among us,
fill our hearts with your loving presence,
draw us together in your love.
Help us cling to the truth that in our grief,
our pain, our distress, and our worry, we are not alone.**

God is with us, and the Spirit binds us together in the Body of Christ, that we may be agents of love, comfort, and hope to one another and all the world. **Amen.**

Blessing of the Oil for Anointing

(As we sing Silent Night you are invited to come forward to place your votive candle on the table, hang the heart ornament on the Blue Christmas tree, and to be anointed with oil. Prayer Shawls are available to take with you, if you like.)

**Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy Infant, so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

Words of Hope

God the Father enfold you, God the Son, Jesus the Christ, embrace you,
God the Holy Spirit surround you. Receive the sign of Christ's healing.
Prepare to go in peace.

**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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Watch now, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch or weep tonight,
and give you angels charge over those who sleep.

**May the love of God the Father surround you as you go in peace,
May the grace of Christ the Son surround you as you go in peace.
May the unity of the Holy Spirit surround you as you go in peace. Amen.**

You have seen the Savior! Go now into this longest night
knowing the love of Christ and of his people, a love without end.

Thanks be to God.

We leave in silence, but not without hope.