



You are Invited!

Christmas Eve Worship

A Service of Lessons & Carols, 5:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.

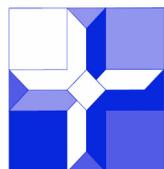
Candlelight Communion Service, 11:00 p.m.

Our Christmas Eve offering will be used to provide housing for Afghani refugee families. Please give generously!

**The Longest Night:
A Service of Comfort and Hope**
December 21, 2021



The Longest Night
John Stuart



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
Ann Arbor | Michigan

Making God's Love Visible

GATHERING

GATHERING MUSIC

Joseph Went a'Walkin

Es Ist Ein Ros

Still, Still, Still

Come Down, O Love Divine

arr. Ralph L. Lehman

arr. John Purifoy

arr. Chip Davis

Ralph Vaughan Williams

WELCOME

Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jeanette Kibler

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.

What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

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

ADVENT AND PANDEMIC WREATH LIGHTING: A LAMENT AND BLESSING

A Candle for Physical, Financial, and Professional Losses

Nancy Fox

A Candle for Emotional Losses

Cyndy Colton

A Candle for Spiritual Losses

Pat Gilbreath

A Candle for Interpersonal and Relational Losses

Gale Redding

The Christ Candle of Blessing

Debbie Ternes

UNISON RESPONSE

God of grace, the suffering we have experienced is real. Losses that we have suffered amplify past losses. Our feelings, at times, are almost too much to bear. We are weary; so help us to grieve, to grow, to let go, and to recover. Help us to remember these losses so that we might begin anew with a deeper sense of awe, appreciation, wisdom and perspective. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

* HYMN 144

In the Bleak Midwinter

CRANHAM

of the clutch
around your heart;
a thinning
of the darkness
that had drawn itself
around you.

This blessing
does not mean
to take the night away
but it knows
its hidden roads,
knows the resting spots
along the path,
knows what it means
to travel
in the company
of a friend.

So when
this blessing comes,
take its hand.
Get up.
Set out on the road
you cannot see.

This is the night
when you can trust
that any direction
you go,
you will be walking
toward the dawn.

—Jan Richardson
from

The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief

Image: *Remembering Is What We Do Together* © Jan Richardson (janrichardson.com)

Blessing for the Longest Night

All throughout these months
as the shadows
have lengthened,
this blessing has been
gathering itself,
making ready,
preparing for
this night.

It has practiced
walking in the dark,
traveling with
its eyes closed,
feeling its way
by memory
by touch
by the pull of the moon
even as it wanes.

So believe me
when I tell you
this blessing will
reach you
even if you
have not light enough
to read it;
it will find you
even though you cannot
see it coming.

You will know
the moment of its
arriving
by your release
of the breath
you have held
so long;
a loosening
of the clenching
in your hands,

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

* PASSING OF THE PEACE

RESPONSE

And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
Look now for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing:
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.

This is Stanza 3 of Hymn 123, *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* (CAROL).

OLD TESTAMENT READING Isaiah 9:2, 6–7

Karen Al-Saadi

PSALM READING Psalm 22 (selected verses)

Kathy Wirstrom

One: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

All: The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

One: God will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;

**All: The Lord will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
The Lord will set me high on a rock.**

One: Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!

All: "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek.

One: I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

**All: Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!**

NEW TESTAMENT READING John 1:1–14

Michele Derr

MEDITATION

Rev. Rogers

REMEMBERING OUR LOVED ONES

During this time of contemplative music, we pray for healing and we remember our loved ones. You are invited to come forward and take the flame from the candle of love—which cannot be extinguished by death—and light a votive for the person or persons you mourn, or for anything else which causes you pain.

Hymn 204	<i>Stay with Me</i>	STAY WITH ME
Hymn 466	<i>Come and Fill Our Hearts</i>	CONFITEMINI DOMINO
Hymn 227	<i>Jesus, Remember Me</i>	REMEMBER ME

UNISON PRAYER

Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery and a new day coming. Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, and let it go forth with us into the darkness, this night and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn.

GIVING OUR GIFTS

The offering for Stephen Ministry supports our grief book ministry.

Prayer of Dedication

Offering Music	<i>O Holy Night</i>	Adolphe Charles Adam
----------------	---------------------	----------------------

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

After the minister prays, please join in this unison 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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

* HYMN 252	<i>Day of Arising</i>	RAABE
------------	-----------------------	-------

* CLOSING RESPONSES

Heidi Hess-Willis

In the spirit of those we have remembered today,
We carry the light out into the world.
In remembering God's promises kept in baby Jesus,
We carry the light out into the world.
In the strength of a Christ who robbed death of its power,
We carry the light out into the world.
In the presence of the life-giving Spirit,
We carry the light out into the world.
Reassured that the darkness will end,
We carry the light out into the world.

* BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Silent Night* arr. Ernie and Becky Brock

Prayer is available with a minister at the communion table after the service.

Please stay and join us in the Welcome Center for a time of fellowship following the postlude. The Stephen Ministers invite you to take hot cider and pre-packaged cookies home with you.

Please join in reading or singing those parts of the service printed in **bold**.

Music leadership is provided by Deborah Gabrion, harp; Debra Rebecca Ash, flute; David Hufford, piano; and Dave VanderMeer, Minister of Music and Fine Arts.

Music copyright: All music is reprinted under OneLicense.net A-720542. All rights reserved.

Cover art: © John Stuart 2015