



# THE LONGEST NIGHT

December 21, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.  
First Presbyterian Church

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On this Winter Solstice night, welcome to the Longest Night Service. Some come because they are mourning the death of a loved one. Some suffer from illness, addiction, infertility, or estrangement. Some are lonely, struggling financially, or in conflict with another. Some hurt because of the great pain, need, and violence in our nation and world. Some are far from home or feel lost within themselves. The reasons for coming are many. We gather in the midst of suffering to remember God is good. God is strong. God is near. We are not alone, and we have every reason to hold on to hope.

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

\* When this symbol precedes an element of the service, please rise in body or spirit.

GATHERING MUSIC

*Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

arr. Phyllis Avidan Louke

*Est Ist Ein' Ros'*

arr. John Purifoy

*What Child Is This*

arr. Daniel Burton

WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

We welcome you, O Christ, Light of the World.

**In the midst of our suffering, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.**

\* HYMN 123

*It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

CAROL

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God, we bring you our grief — our own and the grief of others in the world. Although we may know you are with us as much in the dark as in the light, we often feel left in the dark — alone, angry and fearful. Forgive us when we forget that you are Emmanuel, God-with-us. Help us when we falter. Love us in and through our loneliness, anger and fear. Be with our friend and comforter and guide through the darkest times in our lives, and show us again your warmth, light, and grace. Amen.**

## ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

### \* PASSING OF THE PEACE

You are invited to share signs with one another of the peace we experience as God's people. Greet one another saying, "The peace of Christ be with you," and respond, "And also with you."

### \* CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

ST. LOUIS

**How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv'n;  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav'n.  
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.**

### CANDLE LIGHTING

This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of truth. There is no need to hide or deny. God welcomes us as we are.  
**Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.** (Psalm 86:1)

One: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of lament. We recognize our wounds and cry out to God. We accept God's invitation to express every feeling and question.

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.**

This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of courage. Courage to be honest, to seek help, to comfort one another. Courage to dare to love and dream again.

**The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.**

This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of hope. God is good. God is strong. God is near, leading us to a day without tears and pain, without sin and death. Healing and deliverance are coming; if not now, then on that day.

**By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.**

\* HYMN 466

*Come and Fill Our Hearts*

CONFITEMINI DOMINO

## VOICES FROM SCRIPTURE

Psalm 42:3

Psalm 42:5-6a

Lamentations 3:17-18

Lamentations 3:21-24

Mark 15:33-35

John 17:27-28

John 16:33

Revelation 21:4

## MEDITATION

### A TIME OF PERSONAL REFLECTION AND OFFERING

Offertory

*Joseph Went A'Walking*

Traditional English  
arr. Ralph L. Lehman

### A TIME OF PRAYER

You are encouraged to write your burdens and sorrows on the blue strips of paper. Come forward to light a candle in remembrance of a loved one or the pain that you are feeling, and place your prayer requests on the communion table. Please take an evergreen clipping with you as you return to your seat as a reminder of God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

*Mary Did You Know?*

Mark Lowry & Buddy Greene  
arr. Cindy Blevins

### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

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

God came when the Heavens were unsteady  
and prisoners cried out 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,  
turned water into wine.

God did not wait till hearts were pure.

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

To a world like ours, of anguished shame,

God came and God's Light would not go out.

God came to a world which did not mesh;  
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

In the mystery of the Word made Flesh,  
the Maker of the stars was born.  
We cannot wait till the world is sane  
to raise our songs with joyful voice,  
For to share our grief, to touch our pain,  
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Adapted from the poem "First Coming" by Madeleine L'Engle

\* HYMN 676

*Day is Done*

AR HYD Y NOS

\* CHARGE AND BLESSING

CLOSING VOLUNTARY

*Il Est Ne*

arr. Ernie and Becky Brock

## WORSHIP LEADERS

### *Liturgists*

Debbie Ternes  
Jeanette Kibler  
Marita Servais  
Nancy Fox  
Karen Al-Saadi  
Martha Kershaw  
Rev. Jay Sanderford  
Rev. Mark Mares  
Rev. Hannah Lundberg  
Rev. Megan Berry  
Rev. David Prentice-Hyers

### *Meditation*

Rev Melissa Anne Rogers

### *Musicians*

Deborah Rebeck Ash  
Deborah Gabrion  
David Hufford

### *Greeter*

Kathy Wirstrom

### *Ushers*

Cyndy Colton  
Linda Lampman

### *Cookie Bakers*

Linda Lampman  
Kathy Wirstrom

# HOPE IS BORN

JOIN US IN THE SEASON OF ADVENT

## CHRISTMAS EVE Saturday, December 24

Candlelight Lessons & Carols  
5:00 & 8:00 p.m. | Sanctuary

A joyful Christmas Eve service featuring the Chancel Choir and Brass.  
Come sing the carols and hear the traditional readings.  
The 5:00 p.m. service will be livestreamed on our YouTube channel.

Candlelight Communion  
11:00 p.m. | Sanctuary

A traditional Christmas Eve service with Communion.

## CHRISTMAS DAY Sunday, December 25

Casual Christmas Celebration  
10:00 a.m. | Sanctuary

Celebrate the hope and wonder of Christmas.  
Children are encouraged to bring their Christmas toys to the worship service.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
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