



Reverends Jeanne Hanson and Zina Jacque  
Sunday, December 20, 2020 - 6 pm

**The Longest Night  
Order of Service**

**PRELUDE**

*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence / Away in a Manger  
Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine / Of the Father's Love Begotten / O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

**WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One Voice: In the beginning darkness was over the face of the deep.  
Second Voice: *In the beginning deep darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness shrouded all the people.*  
One Voice: But there is a promise of light. Isaiah's promise, "Arise, shine for the light has come." John's promise, for "Jesus is the light of the world."  
Second Voice: *The light is promised, but there are days when it seems that darkness has won.*  
One Voice: Beloved, together, let us walk through the longest night, trusting the light will come.  
Both Voices: Even on the darkest night of the year, there is a promise the dawn will gently come. We look toward that moment, together. Amen.

**MUSICAL REFLECTION**

*In the Bleak Midwinter*

*Arr. by Mark Hayes*

**REFLECTIONS**

**Psalm 22 (Selected Verses Follow)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest. . . . In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. . . . Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. . . . But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen . . . For God has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one, he has not hidden his face from him, but has listened to his cry for help.

**Reflection on Psalm 23**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Even, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

**MUSICAL REFLECTION AND PEACE-FILLED STARS**

*The Whisper*

*Arr. by Craig Courtney*

While the music is playing, please write on your star something they hold in your heart for which you need peace.

## LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

### CANDLE ONE

*Voice One:* We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost for any reason. 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.

**Voice Two and All: We remember them. May God's eternal love surround them.** *A period of silent reflection*

### CANDLE TWO

*Voice One:* We light this second 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.

**Voice Two and All: We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, Oh God, and lead us into Your future.** *A period of silent reflection*

### CANDLE THREE

*Voice One:* We light this third 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.

**Voice Two and 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 time the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.**  
*A period of silent reflection*

### CANDLE FOUR

*Voice One:* We light this fourth 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.

**Voice Two and 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.** *A period of silent reflection*

## THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Voice One:* God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts -- sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words. Lord, hear our prayer,

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

*Voice Two:* God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too, but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life. We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and alone. We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm. Lord, hear our prayer.

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

*Voice One:* God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season. We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us, both here and throughout the world, who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden, that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in Thy peace. Lord, hear our prayer.

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

*Voice Two:* God of love, in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts. Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes. Lord, hear our prayer,

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

*Voice One:* Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake.

**All: Amen.**

## MUSICAL REFLECTION

### RESPONSE TO THE NIGHT: Psalm 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keeps thee will not slumber; behold, the God that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon at night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil and shall sustain thy soul. He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and even forevermore. **All: Amen.**

### PRAYER

*Voice One:*

Another day will come, O God, I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy Peace. Amen.

*Voice Two:*

O God, support us all the day long in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen. Finally, *the* Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and forever more. Amen.

### POSTLUDE

*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

*Arr. by Mark Hayes*



*As you go into this longest night, know this, for as long as these nights have come, they have been followed by the gentle rising of the next day's sun. Even this longest night cannot overcome the light that is sure to rise. May you find strength in the midst of this darkness and may it last you until the sun's first rays kiss your cheek and bless your soul. May you find strength to continue on through the dark and into the light. This is our prayer for one another and for our world. Amen.*