



# the Longest Night

A reflective service for all who grieve,  
all who know sorrow, all who yearn for Peace on Earth

6:00 PM Wednesday, December 17, 2025



## **Church of the Good Shepherd**

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Sunday Services at 8 & 10 AM • Wed. Service at 6 PM

# THE LONGEST NIGHT

**VOLUNTARY**

Creator of the Stars of Night  
(see H-60 in *The Hymnal 1982*)

David Cherwien

## WORDS OF WELCOME AND EXPLANATION

**HYMN H-74**

Blest Be the King Whose Coming

VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN

*(stanzas 1, 4)*

**Blest be the King whose coming is in the name of God!  
For him let doors be opened, no hearts against him barred!  
Not robed in royal splendor, in pow'r and pomp, comes he;  
but clad as are the poorest, such his humility!**

**Blest be the King whose coming is in the name of God!  
He offers to the burdened the rest and grace they need.  
Gentle is he and humble! And light his yoke shall be,  
for he would have us bear it so he can make us free.**

## **OPENING LITANY**    *Please stand*

*Celebrant*    Because you made the world, and intended it to be a good place, and called its people your children; because, when things seemed at their worst, you came in Christ to bring out the best in us; so gracious God, we can say:

*People*    **God's love is stronger than our hate. God's welcome is wider than our rejection. God's life is mightier than our death.**

*Celebrant*    Because confusion can reign inside us, despite our faith; because anger, tension, bitterness and envy distort our vision, because sometimes our minds take small things out of all proportion; because we err, we seek the good news that:

*People*    **God's truth is more eternal than our lies. God's light is more intense than our darkness. God's hope is greater than our despair.**

*Celebrant*    Let us trust God with our pain.

*People*    **God, we come to you on this Christmas season with pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, darkness has wrapped itself around our hearts. Inside this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words.**

*Celebrant*    God, we come to you as those who have been hurt physically and emotionally – some of us by strangers, some by loved ones, and some by life itself. Our ability to trust is shattered. Fear lurks behind every glance, sadness prowls behind every smile, and despair follows behind every hope.

*People*      **God, we are the outsiders. We are the ones who seem to stand on the edges of the group. We find ourselves on the outside looking in, and when we try to move inside and get close to others, too often we feel we are elbowed out of the way, and once again we feel abandoned and alone.**

*Celebrant*      God, some of us are grieving over what might have been. Once this season was a happy and magical time for us, too. But death and loss and heartache have changed it. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost in a terrifying new world. This season reminds us of all that used to be, and cannot be anymore.

*People*      **The memories of what was, and anxiety for what may be, suffocate us. All around us we hear the songs of glad tidings, the urging to buy gifts for others. But some of us have nothing we can give, and some of us have no one to give anything to. This is our longest night, Lord. Please be near us tonight.**

*Celebrant*      We ask this in the name of Jesus, who came into this world homeless and left this world betrayed, bereft and forsaken. We ask this in the name of the One who knows the pain in our souls.

*People*      **Amen.**

## PROMISES OF CONSOLATION

**READING**                      *Please be seated*                      Lamentations 3:17–26

*Lector*      I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, “My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD.” I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD’S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.” The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

*Lector*      The Word of the Lord.

*People*      **Thanks be to God.**

## INVITATION TO LIGHT A CANDLE

**HYMN H-66**                      Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus                      STUTTGART  
*Please remain seated*                      (stanzas 1, 2)

**Come, thou long-expected Jesus born to set thy people free;  
 from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.**

**Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art:  
 dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.**

## READING

Luke 2:1–7

*Lector* In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

*Lector* The Word of the Lord.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

## INVITATION TO LIGHT A CANDLE

### HYMN H-79

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ST. LOUIS

*(stanzas 1, 4)*

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

**Where children pure and happy pray to the blessed Child,  
where misery cries out to thee, Son of the mother mild;  
where charity stand watching and faith holds wide the door,  
the dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.**

## READING

Matthew 2:13-18

*Lector* An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

*“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”*

*Lector* The Word of the Lord.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

## INVITATION TO LIGHT A CANDLE

## HYMN H-101

Away in a Manger

CRADLE SONG

(stanza 1)

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

## READING

Matthew 11:28–29

*Lector* [Jesus said,] “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

*Lector* The Word of the Lord.

*People* Thanks be to God.

## INVITATION TO LIGHT A CANDLE

## HYMN H-115

What Child Is This

GREENSLEEVES

(stanza 1)

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

## READING

Revelation 21:1–5

*Lector* Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with humans, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

*Lector* The Word of the Lord.

*People* Thanks be to God.

## REFLECTION

## INVITATION TO LIGHT A CANDLE

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
 from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold;  
 “Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav’n’s all gracious King.”  
 The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

### PRAYERS OF HOPE AND PROMISE

*Please stand as able*

*Celebrant* Among the poor, among the bereft, among the privileged,  
*People* **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

*Celebrant* In the private house, in the public place, in the wedding feast, in the judgment  
 hall,  
*People* **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

*Celebrant* With a gentle touch, with a penetrating word, with a pure heart, with burning  
 love,  
*People* **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

*Celebrant* That the Reign of God might be at hand, so that the world might believe that  
 the powerful might kneel, and the hidden might be seen,  
*People* **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

*Celebrant* Within us, without us, behind us, before us, in this place, in every place, for this  
 time, for all time,  
*People* **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

### OFFERTORY SENTENCE

*The offering requested tonight is one from your memories, your grief, your yearnings, and your hopes.*

**OFFERTORY** It Came upon the Midnight Clear David Cherwien

## THE HOLY COMMUNION

### EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER A

**BCP 361**

### SANCTUS S-129

Robert Powell

### COMMUNION

What Child Is This/Creator of the Stars

David Cherwien

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Please stand or kneel, as you choose.*

*Celebrant*

Let us pray...

*All*

**Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

## BENEDICTION

*Please stand as able.*

*Celebrant*

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

*People*

**The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth, and we have seen his glory.**

*Celebrant*

In him was life, and that life was the light of all.

*People*

**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to extinguish it.**

*Celebrant*

The light and life of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, bless you and keep you close in the days and nights unfolding before us.

*People*

**Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN H-111

Silent Night

STILLE NACHT

*(stanzas 1, 3)*

**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, 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.**

## DISMISSAL

*Celebrant*

Alleluia! Unto us a Savior is born. Let all who come in weary and heavy-laden leave here restored and refreshed.

*People*

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

## VOLUNTARY

Comfort, Comfort These My People

Michael Burkhardt

## **SERVING US THIS EVENING**

Celebrant	The Rev. Whitney Burton
Organist/Choirmaster	Tom Huffman
Crucifer	Nancy Vallely
Torch/Chalicer	Cheryl Sharpe
Lector	Tony Bowman
Prayers of the People	Linda Corliss
Usher	Linda Corliss



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