



The Longest Night – A Blue Christmas Service
December 21, 2022
6 p.m.

Welcome to this service of meditation and prayer.
The congregation is invited to say or sing the words in bold.

Welcome

Cindy Maddox

Call to Worship

One: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the hope of Christ's coming, we come together to share our grief.

All: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the peace that Christ brings, we come together to acknowledge our pain.

One: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the joy of Christ's coming, we come together to name our fears.

All: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the love that Christ brings, we come together to be upheld in our struggles.

One: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.

All: We call upon Emmanuel, God with us.

Hymn

While We Are Waiting, Come

Don Cason



Verse 1 – While we are waiting, come.

Verse 2 – While we are grieving, come.

Verse 3 – While we are struggling, come.

Unison Prayer

Lauren Baske Davis

God of love and comfort, who promises us an end to all mourning, crying, and pain, be present with us now as we bring our struggles before you. We remember that you became flesh, experiencing all the grief and joy of being human, living and dying among us in this troubled world. Send now your Holy Spirit, our Comforter, to hold us in your love as we acknowledge all the complex emotions that this season brings. With the lighting of these candles, may the light of your presence shine among us and warm the bleak midwinter of our hearts. O come, Emmanuel, and fill the whole world with heaven's peace. Amen.

Special Music

Slowly, Slowly the Evening Falls

Norwegian-American,
arr. Bret Hesla

Slowly, slowly the evening falls 'til the stars appear.
Slowly, slowly my thoughts unwind. Clouds within me clear.
Slowly, slowly the silence grows like a snowfall piling deep.
Slowly, slowly the darkness calls me to sleep.

Refrain:

Praise the God of the evening, Mother of the fertile dark.
Praise the God of the silence in the void between the stars.
Send your holy shadows. Cover us, oh God of might.
Make us whole and keep us in the womb of the night.

Sweetly, sweetly sings the moon from the eastern sky.
Sweetly, sweetly sleep comes and I close my eyes.
Sweetly, sweetly I walk in dreams going where no feet have trod.
Sweetly, sweetly I rest my soul in the arms of God. *Refrain.*

Intro to Advent Candle Lighting

Cindy Maddox

THE FIRST CANDLE: Grief

Reading

Lauren Baske Davis

Silent Meditation

Hymn:

Comfort, Comfort O My People

(Tune: Psalm 42)

"Comfort, comfort O my people, tell of peace," thus says our God;
Comfort those whose hearts are shrouded, mourning under sorrow's load.
Speak to all who suffer pain of the peace that waits for them;
Tell them that I see their sorrow, and I hear their cry for mercy.

THE SECOND CANDLE: Pain

Reading

Gina Washburn

Silent Meditation

Hymn*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

(Veni Emmanuel)

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and with thy captive people dwell
that mourn in lonely exile here, until the Child of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us, in peace to dwell.

THE THIRD CANDLE: Fear**Reading**

Barbara Crouter

Silent Meditation**Hymn:**

Out of the Depths, O God, We Call
(Verse 2)

#554 (Fennville)

Out of the depths of fear, O God, we speak.
Breaking the silences, the searing truth we seek.
Safe among friends, our grief and rage we share.
Here in this community, hold us in your care.

THE FOURTH CANDLE: Struggle**Reading**

Cindy Maddox

Silent Meditation**Candles of Remembrance**

If you have a candle nearby, you are invited to light it at this time. You also will be invited (but not required) to share in the chat what you are struggling with this year.

THE CHRIST CANDLE**Reading**

Lauren Baske Davis

Special Music*Healing River*

Christopher Grundy

Refrain: Healing river, flow through me. Wash away this pain and show me what can be!

Lay my body down beneath this tree, and let me rest here in the shade so quietly!
The whispering water will clear my head, with falling leaves are many colors for my bed.

Life like crystal will fill my eyes to help me see, and soon these salty tears will dry.
I will bend down to cool my skin, and find at last that I am whole and clean again.

Put that sweet fruit here in my hand. Then give me time and I will find the strength to stand.
When that strength returns, thanks I'll pray, then gather up these leaves and we'll be on our way.

Shall we gather at the river where bright angel feet have trod?
Lay me down there by the river, flowing from the throne of God!

Blessing for the Longest Night

Jan Richardson

Hymn:

Out of the Depths, O God, We Call
(Verse 3)

#554 (Fennville)

God of the loving heart, we praise your name.
Dance through our lives and loves, anoint with Spirit flame.
Your light illumines each familiar face.
Here in this community, meet us with your grace.

Benediction

Thank you for joining us this evening. Peace be with you.

Christmas Eve Worship Services December 24:

4:00 p.m. Carols, Choirs, and Candle Lighting, with livestream to Zoom and YouTube

8:00 p.m. Carols, Communion, and Candle Lighting

Christmas Day Worship: 10:30 a.m. with livestream to Zoom and YouTube

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