



A SERVICE OF PRAYER
AND MUSICAL MEDITATION
FOR THE LONGEST NIGHT
December 17, 2025 • 6:00 pm

In the name of Jesus Christ, welcome.

*This service recognizes that this season,
full for many with holiday celebrations and rejoicing,
can be hard for those who mourn,
for those going through painful life transitions,
and for those who struggle.*

*This service recognizes that not everyone feels joyful.
We acknowledge our sadness while seeking peace, hope, and comfort for our souls.*

Please stand

THE OPENING SENTENCES

Officiant Blessed are you, holy and living One.
People **You come to your people and set them free.**

Officiant In the middle of the night, when stark night was darkest, then you chose to come. God's resplendent first-born sent to make us one. The voices of doom protest: "All these words about justice, love and peace — all these naïve words will buckle beneath the weight of a reality which is brutal and bitter, ever more bitter." It is true, Lord, it is midnight upon the earth, moonless night and starved of stars. But can we forget that you, the son of God, chose to be born precisely at midnight?

HYMN 112 "In the bleak midwinter"

Cranham

THE COLLECT

Officiant Let us pray.
God of Mercy and Light, hear our prayer in this Season for ourselves and our families who live with painful experiences of loss and struggle. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ who entered the world to share our life in sorrow and joy, death and new birth, despair and promise.
People **Amen.**

THE LIGHTING OF CANDLES

Officiant We light this candle to remember those persons who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. (*Silence*)

People We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season.
May God's eternal love surround them.

Officiant We light this second candle to redeem the pain and loss – the loss of relationships, the loss of health, the loss of jobs, and the loss of financial security. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our welcome hearts and open hands, you place the gift of peace.

People **Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.**

Officiant 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 of down times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, and the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

People **Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.**

Officiant We light this fourth candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope that God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

People **Let us remember the one who shows the way and who goes with us into our tomorrows.**

Please be seated

VOLUNTARY *Coventry Carol*

trad. English melody, arr. Marty Parks

PSALM 139:1-11 *Read responsively by half verse*

Domine, probaste

- 1 LORD, you have searched me out and known me; *
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 2 You trace my journeys and my resting-places *
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 3 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
but you, O LORD, know it altogether.
- 4 You press upon me behind and before *
and lay your hand upon me.
- 5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; *
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.
- 6 Where can I go then from your Spirit? *
where can I flee from your presence?
- 7 If I climb up to heaven, you are there; *
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
- 8 If I take the wings of the morning *
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
- 9 Even there your hand will lead me *
and your right hand hold me fast.
- 10 If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, *
and the light around me turn to night,"
- 11 Darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day; *
darkness and light to you are both alike.

THE FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Reader A Reading from the Book of Isaiah.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

A SONG OF CHRIST'S GOODNESS *Read responsively*

Anselm of Canterbury

Jesus, as a mother you gather your people to you; *
 you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
Often you weep over our sins and our pride, *
 tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgment.
You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, *
 in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.
Jesus, by your dying, we are born to new life; *
 by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; *
 through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.
Your warmth gives life to the dead, *
 your touch makes sinners righteous.
Lord Jesus, in your mercy, heal us; *
 in your love and tenderness, remake us.
In your compassion, bring grace and forgiveness, *
 for the beauty of heaven, may your love prepare us.

THE SECOND LESSON

John 1:1-5

Reader A Reading from the Gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN “Precious Lord, take my hand” (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II - 106*)

Precious Lord

1 Pre-cious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me
 2 When my way grows drear, pre-cious Lord, lin-ger
 3 When the dark-ness ap-pears and the night draws
 stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
 near, when my life is al-most gone;
 near, and the day is past and gone;
 through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the
 hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand, lest I
 at the riv-er I stand, guide my feet, hold my
 light, take my hand, pre-cious Lord, lead me on.
 fall, take my hand, pre-cious Lord, lead me on.
 hand, take my hand, pre-cious Lord, lead me on.

Please be seated

MEDITATION

The Reverend Joshua D. Armstrong-Walters, *Rector*

VOLUNTARY *O Holy Night*

Adolphe Adam, arr. Karen Almquist and Jennifer Grady

*You are invited to come forward and light a votive candle
 as you offer to God your prayers of remembrance, intention, or thanksgiving this night.*

Please stand or kneel

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Leader In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for what we need. We pray for ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can in this season of Christ's return.

All are invited to offer their prayers silently or aloud.

Leader God, hear our prayer,
People **And in your mercy answer.**

Leader For our families and friends that they may know love, peace and happiness in you; that they may continue to help and support us.

All are invited to offer their prayers for families and friends, silently or aloud.

Leader God, hear our prayer,
People **And in your mercy answer.**

Leader For those we have loved who have died. For all the losses that we know; that all may be redeemed by your promise of hope and peace.

All are invited to offer their prayers for those who have died, silently or aloud.

Leader God, hear our prayer,
People **And in your mercy answer.**

Leader For the peace of God proclaimed by the Christmas angels to come throughout the whole world.

All are invited to offer their prayers for our region and world, silently or aloud.

Leader God, hear our prayer,
People **And in your mercy answer.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Officiant God of great compassion and love, hear the prayers of your people. Grant to all, especially all who are bereaved and saddened this Season, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ, who taught us to pray, saying:

People **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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

A PRAYER FOR THE SEASON

Officiant Gracious and most Merciful God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

People **Amen.**

A PRAYER FOR THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Officiant Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope. Grant this for the sake of your love.

People Amen.

A PRAYER FOR GOD'S CARE

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

People Amen.

HYMN 111 "Silent night, holy night"

Stille Nacht

THE BLESSING

Officiant May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of our Loving, Merciful, Hopeful, and Strengthening God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us, and those whom we love and those whom we find it hardest to love, now and forever.

People Amen.

VOLUNTARY *That Night in Bethlehem*

trad. Irish melody

*If you wish to receive prayers for healing,
a member of the clergy will be available at the altar rail following the service.*

LEADERS IN THE LITURGY

Officiant The Reverend Andrew Y. Moore, *Senior Associate Rector*

Organist Karl J. Robson, *Director of Music*

Flautist Elizabeth Keller-Tripp

Harpist Gréta Ásgeirsson

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WINTER GRIEF

Let the rest
in this rested place
rest for you.
Let the birds sing quietly
and the geese call
from far off
and let the sky race
from west to east
when you cannot
lift a wing to fly.
Let evening trace
your loss in the branches
against a fading sky.
So that you can give up
and give in
and be given back to,
so that you can let
winter come and live
fully inside you,
so that you can
retrace the loving path
of heartbreak
that brought you here.

So you can cry alone
and be alone
so you can let yourself alone
to be lost,
so you can let the one
you have lost alone,
so that you can let
the one you have lost
have their own life
and even
their own death
without you.
So that the world
and everyone who has ever lived
and ever died can come and go
as they please.
So you can let yourself not know,
what not knowing means.
So that you can be
even more generous in your letting go
than they were in their leaving.
So that you can let winter
be winter.
So that you can let the world alone
to think of spring.

-David Whyte



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