

Longest Night Service

December 21, 2020

Introduction and Welcome:

Opening Prayer

P: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

Hymn #137 Born in the night

1. Born in the night, Mary's child,
a long way from your home;
coming in need, Mary's child,
born in a borrowed room.

2. Clear shining light, Mary's child,
your face lights up our way;
Light of the world, Mary's child,
dawn on our darkened day.

A reading from Psalm 121

L: I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come?

P: My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth

L: He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.

P: Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

L: The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

P: So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night

L: The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.

P: The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth for ever more.

A Reading from the Gospel of St Matthew

‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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.’
(Matthew 11:28-30)

First Candle:

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face and the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to share their name in the chat window or in the silence of your hearts....

Prayer:

L: Lord, each of us takes our loved one by the hand and leads them to you, the God of love. Here we present them to you. Accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving care. We want our loved ones to be free at home with you. We ask that you save a place for us beside them.

P: We ask that you fill us with motivation and energy in the days ahead when we feel like giving up; remind us often of our true homeland when we are caught up in the desolation of the journey.

L: Help us to find joy in the people, events and the beauty of nature which surrounds us.

P: Thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives.

L: We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again, when we are all in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come.

P: Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us. Comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness. God of sorrowing, draw near! Amen.

Second Candle:

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith.

As we gather up the pain of the past we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

Please take a moment to remember the losses. I invite you to name them, in the chat or in the silence of your hearts....

Prayer:

L: God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you.

P: We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and ever keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection.

L: We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious.

P: We forget so easily that you will be with us in all that we experience.

L: Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives and to be open to the changes which we are now going through.
Amen.

Hymn #145 In the bleak mid-winter

1. In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan;
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak mid-winter, long ago.

2. Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall welcome him
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak mid-winter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God incarnate,
Jesus Christ.

3. Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air;
but his mother only,
in her maiden bliss,
worshipped the beloved
with a kiss

Third Candle:

The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives.

God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer.

We want so much to have a sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay.

You ask us to be full of faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost, that you are our wisdom and our guide, and to trust in your presence.

I invite you to name those lost in any way, in the chat or in the silence of your hearts....

Prayer:

L: God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide.

P: Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction and grant that we may have the reassurance of knowing that we are on the right path.

L: Take our lives and use them according to your will.

P: Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you. Amen.

Fourth Candle:

The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers to us.

We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

I invite you to name those in need of hope, in the chat or in the silence of your hearts....

Prayer

L: O God whose spirit is known by those whose hearts are thankful, and who makes cheerfulness a companion of strength, lift up our hearts, we pray, to a joyous confidence in your care.

P: Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow, because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears.

L: Where there is love in life, teach us to find it;

P: help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love.

L: So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others.

P: We ask it, in the name of Jesus Christ whose life is our light. Amen.

Communion

Introduction: A Poem with Musical accompaniment by Zoé McAndless

Celebration of Communion

Prayers of the People

Solo: Valse Triste (Franz von Vescey) – Played by Zoé McAndless

Benediction