

“The Longest Night”
Comfort, Healing, Remembrance
December 21, 2022

Gathering Music

Centering Words

*“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person.
Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those
who have lighted the flame within us.” (Albert Schweitzer)*

Chiming of the Hour

Candle Lighting – the Christ Candle

Welcome

Dan Koger

Solo (Cadence Burrill)

The Alter

Opening Prayer

Kim Miller

Call to Worship (John 1:1-5)

Dan Koger

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
All things were made by God;
without God nothing came to be.
What came to be through God was life,
and this life was the light of the world.
The Light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never overcome it.

Hymn, 346

O Come to Me, the Master Said

**O come to Me, the Master said, my Father knows your need;
and I shall be, the Mather said, your bread of life indeed.
By faith in him we live and grow and share the broken bread,
and all his love and goodness know, for so the Master said.**

**Abide in me, the Master aid, the true and living vine;
my life shall be, the Master said, poured out for you as wine.
His body to the cross he gave, his blood he freely shed,
who come in love to see and save, for so the Master said.**

**Believe in me, the Master said, for I have called you friends,
and yours shall ve, the Master said, the life that never ends.
An so, with sin and sorrow past, when death itself is dead,
the Lord shall raise us up at last for so the Master said.**

Psalm Reading (Psalm 6, from *Psalms for Praying*, by Nan Merrill)

Kim Miller

“O my Beloved, enfold me with your love. Be gracious to me, Heart of my heart, for I am sad and weary. Surround me with your healing Light, that my body, mind, and soul might heal. I open the door of my heart to You. Enter in and fill me with your steadfast Love. I am tired of so many fears; I cry myself to sleep at night; grief and feelings of guilt cloud my eyes with tears. All my doubts, my fears, are creating walls so that I know not love. Love has heard my prayer, and hastens to answer my call. My fears shall be transformed by Love. All that was in darkness shall come into the Light.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Time for Silent Reflection

Call to Prayer, 178

Emmanuel, Emmanuel

**Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.
God in us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel.**

Responsive Prayers

Dan Koger and Kim Miller

Gracious God, in this season of Advent, we give thanks that you came to be among us:

Emmanuel, God with us.

You came into the darkness of that time:

a time of change and stress, uncertainty and doubt.

You did not enter this world surrounded by grand things.

You were born in a stable, to parents far from home.

O God, we pray for your presence here and now, in the difficulties of our time.

We lay before you our offerings of honesty and need, of worry and hope.

For all who are grieving, we pray:

O Lord, you know what it means to lose someone you dearly love.

For all who are lonely, we pray:

O Lord, you know how it feels to look around you and feel that there is no one left.

For all who are anxious, we pray:

O Lord, you know what it is like to be weary and heavy-laden.

For all who are vulnerable, we pray:

O Lord, you know what it means to be unhoused and unsafe.

For all who are beset by challenges, physical or emotional, we pray:

O Lord, you know how it feels to be in pain.

For all who are longing for light, and for hope, we pray:

O Lord, you know what it is like to wait in the darkness.

(Here we offer our personal petitions in silence)

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you came to be among us,

full of grace and truth.

In you we find our welcome.

You are our comfort and our company along the journey of our life.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.

Response to Prayer, 178

Emmanuel, Emmanuel

**Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.
God in us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel.**

Old Testament Reading (Isaiah 43)

Kim Miller

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Time for Silent Reflection

Hymn, 631

There is a Balm in Gilead

Refrain:

**There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.**

**Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.**

(refrain)

**If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul,
you can tell the love of Jesus, and say, "He died for all."**

(refrain)

**Don't ever feel discouraged, for Jesus is your friend;
and if you lack for knowledge he'll ne'er refuse to lend.**

(refrain)

Candle Lighting

Dan Koger and Kim Miller

Gospel Reading (Matthew 11)

Dan Koger

'Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest! For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.'"

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Time for Silent Reflection

Solo (Kyle Cook)

Cry No More

arr. Dan Forest

Visual Reflection – "I Will Light Candles this Christmas" (by Howard Thurman)

Invitation to Christ's Presence - Candles of Remembrance

Dan Koger

Psalms Reading (Psalm 23)

Kim Miller

The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows, he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymn – "Silent Night"

**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 of our birth.**

Sending Forth

Dan Koger