



Longest Night

Wednesday, December 21, 7:00 PM



Prelude

Winter Songs

Ola Gjeilo

Words of Welcome and Intent

Call to Worship

Leader: Creator God, hover over this space—

People: For Grief is like an ocean, pulling us back in, and we need you in the midst of the waves.

Leader: Creator God, hold us in your arms—

People: For our hands are already full, carrying memories and heartache, and we need you to carry us.

Leader: Creator God, in times of joy and in times of sorrow, we turn to you.

People: Thank you for staying through the longest nights. We worship you. Let it be so.

Hymn

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight,
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Naming Our Grief

We invite you to take the stone you received at the beginning of the service and write a reminder of your grief on it. You may hold your stone quietly in prayer when you finish.

Prayer for Illumination

God, we come to you with honest words and cries of lament. We trust that in this space our grief is safe with you. Speak to us through your scripture so that we might be able to draw even closer to your holy presence, witnessing your faithfulness through the ages. Gratefully we pray, amen.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 69:1-3, 13-18

Reader 1: Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.
I am weary with my crying;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my God.

Reader 2: But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.
At an acceptable time, O God,
in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.
With your faithful help
rescue me
from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.
Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or the Pit close its mouth over me.

Reader 1: Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
Do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in distress—make haste to
answer me.
Draw near to me, redeem me,
set me free because of my enemies.

Reader 2: These are the words of our sacred texts. The Spirit speaks truth, for God has
been faithful throughout the ages. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Leader: God of connection and love, we confess

People: there are people singing tonight, but my heart is too heavy for singing.

Leader: God of my heart and my mind, I confess

People: I know that I need you, but it's hard to let you in. Grief builds walls where love had once been.

Leader: God of the here and now, I confess

People: There is guilt that I carry, and memories to bury, but forgiving myself seems unnecessary.

Leader: God of my prayers and my dreams, I confess

People: This path of grief is miserably hard, bringing out the worst in me. Forgive me when I get it wrong. Love me back to grace and peace. Amen.

Releasing Stones

We invite you to come forward and place your stone in one of the glass vases in the front. Through this act, we symbolically release our grief, placing our grief before God as a way to ask for help in this journey.

Scripture Reading

Reader 1: "God will wipe every tear from your eye. There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain." *Revelation, Chapter 21, verse 4*

Reader 2: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." *Psalms 147, verse 3*

Reader 3: "The LORD is close to the Brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." *Psalms 34, verse 18*

Prayer

God of creation, You gave us love. Thus tonight, as our hearts hurt due to love lost, we ask that you give us comfort. Flood our minds with memories of love and with gratitude for all of those moments. And as we wade through this Christmas season, help us to catch glimpses of you in the midst of our heartache. God of light and hope, Give us peace instead of resentment. Give us You instead of the mere thought of You. And if you can, give it to us sooner rather than later. Gratefully we pray, Amen.

Candle Lighting

Please depart in silence.

