

**SERVICE OF LONGEST NIGHT
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Carrying Out Christ's Love

DECEMBER 21, 2021

PASTOR ELAINA SALMON

Prelude *"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

Introduction

(Please stand in body or in spirit.)

Song *"Beyond the Moon and Stars"*
(congregation sings refrain)

*Beyond the moon and stars, as deep as night,
So great our hunger, Lord, to see your light.
The sparrow finds her home beneath your wing,
So may we come to rest where angels sing.*

Greeting

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

P God, we bring to you our grief-- our own and the grief of the world. Although we may know you are with us as much in the dark as in the light, we admit we often feel left in the dark--alone, angry and fearful. Remind us tonight as you have reminded all people through all ages that you are Emmanuel, God-with-us. Help us open our hearts to you, and in your mercy, receive our prayers and tears as the one offering we can give tonight. Come, Lord Jesus, be with us.

C **Amen.**

(Please be seated.)

Song *"Longest Night"*

Voices from Scripture

P Cried the Psalmist,
"My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"

(Psalm 42:3)

A Through his tears he said,
Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!

I will praise him again--
my Savior and my God!
Now I am deeply discouraged,
but I will remember you...

(Psalm 42:5-6a)

P Cried Jeremiah,
Peace has been stripped away,
and I have forgotten what prosperity is.
I cry out, "My splendor is gone!
Everything I had hoped for from the Lord is lost!"

(Lamentations 3:17-18)

A Jesus from the cross when darkness came over the land cried out
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(Mark 15: 33-35/Psalm 22:1)

P Through his tears Jeremiah said,
Yet I still dare to hope
when I remember this:
The faithful love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh each morning.
I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance;
therefore, I will hope in him!"

(Lamentations 3:21-24)

A To his friends soon to be frightened and full of tears, Jesus said,
"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart.
And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give.
So don't be troubled or afraid. Remember what I told you:
I am going away, but I will come back to you again."

(John 14:27-28a)

P "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.
in this world you will have trouble. But take heart!
I have overcome the world."

(John 16:33)

A And in the end says the book of Revelation,
"He will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.
All these things are gone forever.

(Revelation 21:4)

Song *"Peace I Leave With You"*

Guided Prayer

Instrumental Song *"You are Near"*

The Embrace of God

A time of silence. Then, when the music plays, you are welcome to come forward to light a candle and/or receive a blessing at the altar rail. Please allow for social distancing.

If you're joining us on Zoom, you can join us by lighting a candle at home. You may bless one another or yourself with these or similar words – "You are/I am loved. You are/I am held in God's hands. May God's grace heal us/me in body, mind, and spirit."

Song "God is With Us"

Prayers of the People of God

(Please stand.)

A God of power and might, we wait upon you to come and heal our weary world. Hear our prayers for all in need.

A We pray for your church in every land. We lament the times the church has caused people harm by words of exclusion and condemnation. Hold us together in your love and empower our witness to the gospel. Lord in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

A We pray for the whole of creation. We lament the losses of shorelines, glaciers, forests, and endangered species. We lament the destruction wrought by tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires. Give us hearts and a will to protect the gifts of the earth. Lord in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

A We pray for the world disrupted by the pandemic. We lament 800,000 covid deaths in our country and 5.3 million deaths worldwide. Comfort those who grieve. Give strength to doctors and nurses overwhelmed by another round of rising cases. We lament the divisions that have arisen during the pandemic, and pray that we might find productive ways to serve one another in love. Lord in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

A We pray for your reign of love. We lament all the ways we fall short of your beautiful dream for humanity. Help us acknowledge the truth of our brokenness, so that we might be healed and transformed. We pray for prophets and dreamers, for activists and leaders who envision peace born of justice. Lord in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

A We pray for the sick and dying, for the lonely and lost, for those who struggle with addiction and depression, for those who feel that hardship will overwhelm them. Gracious God, come near with your healing touch and tender mercy. Lord in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

A We pray for the grieving. We name those who have died and acknowledge the hole in our heart they have left behind (*names of the deceased may be spoken out loud*). Come near and comfort our broken hearts. Lord in your mercy,
C **hear our prayer.**

A Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
C **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P Remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray,
C **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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Sending Litany

P When I was weak and lost,
A you renewed my strength.
P When I cried out for help,
A you looked with favor upon your servant.
P When the world was weary,
A you were born among us.
C **Oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel. Amen.**

Sending Song "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

*It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all-gracious king."
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.*

*Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heav'nly music floats o'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hov'ring wing,
and ever o'er its babel sounds the blessed angels sing.*

*And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow:
look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing;
oh, rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing!*

*For lo! The days are hast'ning on, by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.*

Blessing

- P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.
- C **Amen.**

*Thank you to Don Garling, Sue Gray and Carol Rhoades
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Acknowledgements

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