



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
Ann Arbor | Michigan



The Longest Night © 2015 John Stuart

The Longest Night: A Service of Comfort and Hope

*December 20, 2017
7:00 p.m.*

GATHERING MUSIC

Tàladh Chrìosda (Christ Child's Lullaby)

Alleluia, Sing to Jesus

Come Down, O Love Divine

People, Look East

Traditional Gaelic carol

Rowland H. Prichard

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Traditional French Carol

WELCOME

Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers

CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Dorothy Parks-Piatt

One: Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge - the lost, the lonely, the uncertain. We gather with our common humanity in search of the uncommon grace of the Divine.

People: The world is dark. Rejection occurs, relationships fail, our hearts are heavy with grief. We hold these heartaches in our hands of tenderness.

Leader: Tonight, we gather with neighbors and strangers, admitting that our brokenness shows. We come ready to empty our pockets of doubt and fill them with the hope others have embraced.

People: We gather just as we are. In Jesus, God has promised to meet us here.

OPENING PRAYER

* HYMN 144

In the Bleak Midwinter

CRANHAM

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The candles will be lighted by Fernando and Lois Colón and the Arrington family.

One: We light our first candle, a single light that the deepest darkness cannot conquer – small and insignificant, yet a sign of hope.

All: Let it speak to us of the tiny flame of hope buried within us, the stubborn little light that refuses to be extinguished by all that life has thrown at it.

One: We light our second candle, a companion to the first – equally small, equally insignificant, but witnessing to a hope that another light brings.

All: Let it speak to us of the light from companionship of our families, our friends and of strangers, of kindnesses found in unexpected places that restore our hope in human nature.

One: We light our third candle, recalling nights of watching and waiting, anxious nights without sleep, when dawn seemed to ebb further from the horizon and hope seemed forlorn.

All: Let it speak to us of the sureness of morning, of the passing of darkness and of suffering, and the promise of an eternal sunrise dawning for those we have loved and lost. Let it speak of the light dawning also for us – though we may yet be in that darkest hour before the dawn.

One: We light our fourth candle, marking the closing of the Advent season and the immediacy of Christmas. It is a time of peace and joy we may not ourselves feel able to welcome – as our spirits dwell in sadness.

All: Let it speak to us of comfort, of being together in this place of healing and wholeness, of our companionship this night at the turning of the year. Let it speak of faith that we and those we have loved and lost are held eternally in the hand of the One who brought light into being, and who knows each one of us by name.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Blair Buckley

Holy and Gracious God, you know how difficult it is to be whole-hearted in our celebration of your birth. Our losses and our sorrow are what we know well. Where we are holding on to our pain, unwilling or unready to let it go, and where we have turned away from the grace you have offered, speak to us. Where our sadness goes on, where grief still has a claim on us, let us hear your assurance that you are traveling beside us, helping us to carry our burdens, and helping us to let in the light of Jesus Christ.

SILENT CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

* PASSING OF THE PEACE

* RESPONSE

O Little Town of Bethlehem (stanza 3)

How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv'n;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.

HYMN

Stay with Us (verse 1)



1. Stay with us, till night has come: Our praise to
 2. Walk with us, our spir - its sigh: Hear when our
 3. Walk with us, the road will bend: Make all our
 4. Talk with us, till we be - hold a joy - ful
 5. Stay with us, till day is done: No tears nor



you this day be sung. Bless our bread, o - pen our
 wea - ry spir - its cry, feel a - gain our loss, our
 weep - ing, wail - ing end. Wipe our tears, for - give our
 life you will un - fold: Heal our eyes to see the
 dark shall dim the sun. Cheer the heart, your grace im -



eyes: Je - sus, be our great sur - prise.
 pain: Je - sus, take us to your side.
 fears: Je - sus, lift the heav - y cross.
 prize: Je - sus, take us to the light.
 part: Je - sus, bring e - ter - nal life.

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SCRIPTURE READING

Job 11:13-19

Michele Derr

HYMN

Stay with Us (verse 2)

SCRIPTURE READING

John 16:20-23

Mary McKeever

HYMN

Stay with Us (verses 3-5)

MEDITATION

MUSIC OF REMEMBRANCE

Still, Still, Still

Traditional Austrian Carol

*You are invited to light candles of remembrance for those whose loss you grieve this night.
 May the light of their lives remain in us as we journey on.*

TIME FOR REFLECTION

Music *The Wexford Carol (Good People All, This Christmas Eve)*

Traditional Irish Carol

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Rev. Eric Koenig-Reinke

The Lord's Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Words of Institution

Communion of the People

Communion will be served by intinction. Worshipers are invited to come forward by the center aisle, receive bread and dip it in the chalice, partake, and return to their seats by a side aisle. Gluten-free wafers are on the Communion Table. Those unable to come forward will be served where they are seated.

Communion Music

What Child Is This

Old English Air

Unison Prayer After Communion

On this long dark night we await the coming of Christ. We long for the light of his presence, with us and in us. When our souls are deeply troubled, and our hearts break with the weight of sorrow, may our grief be seasoned with love, and our sorrow be buoyed by hope. In our times of God-forsakenness and estrangement, may we gaze on the innocent One, made perfect through suffering and see in him our vulnerable God, who saves in weakness and pain, Christ, the infinite depths of God's grace. Amen.

* **HYMN 79**

Light Dawns on a Weary World

TEMPLE OF PEACE

* **BENEDICTION**

* **POSTLUDE**

Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella

Traditional French Carol



* Please stand in body or spirit.

Those parts of the service of worship in which the congregation participates in word or song are noted in bold type.

Prayer is available with a Stephen Minister at the communion table after the service.

Following the benediction, hot cider and Christmas cookies will be offered in the vestibule of Monteith Hall. Please stay and share fellowship with us.

Greeters are Stephen Ministers Susie Reynolds and Linda Lampman.

Communion Servers are Nancy Fox and Catherine Kendall.

Cookie bakers are Jim Clark, Nancy Fox, and Linda Koopmann.

Musical leadership is provided by Deborah Gabrion, harp; Deborah Rebeck Ash, flute; Angie Noble, oboe; and Tom Granum, Director of Music Ministries.

Into This Silent Night

Into this silent night
As we make our weary way
We know not where;
Just when the night becomes its darkest
And we cannot see our path;
Just then is when the angels rush in,
Their hands full of stars.

– Ann Weems

Grief

I had my own notion of grief.
I thought it was the sad time
That followed the death of someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I'm learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through.
But rather,
There is absorption. Adjustment. Acceptance.
And grief is not something you complete,
But rather, you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish
And move on,
But an element of yourself-
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing.
A new definition of self.

– Gwen Flowers

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday Worship, December 24:

Worship and Communion in Monteith Hall, 8:00 a.m.
Family Worship and Christmas Pageant, 9:30 a.m.
Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols, 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.
Candlelight Communion Service, 11:00 p.m.

Childcare will be provided at the 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve services by reservation only. If you need childcare for either of these services, please contact Debbie MacVey or the Church Office. If you are able to give the young families of this church the wonderful gift of providing childcare during one of these services, please contact Debbie MacVey.

It is tradition for children to bring a gift of new socks and underwear in any size to the Christmas Pageant (9:30 a.m. this year). These gifts are given to the House-by-the-Side-of-the-Road for distribution to families in need.

Christmas Eve Parking:

Please be considerate in parking choices as many visitors join us for worship on Christmas Eve. Overflow parking is available on Washtenaw Avenue, Hill Street, or in the Forest Street parking structure, a short walk down Forest Court. Parking is not available this year at nearby sorority houses.

The 2017 Christmas Eve offering will support SafeHouse Center, an Ann Arbor 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to provide safety, support, advocacy and resources for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence and their children, and to work relentlessly to change the systems and attitudes that allow this abuse to continue. Your gifts will be used to fund work with youth (Teen Voice), and to provide children's programming designed to break the cycle of domestic violence. If you wish to direct your offering toward your tithe or pledge, indicate "church" on your check or envelope.

The church building will be closed Monday, December 25, and Monday, January 1. The building will close at 4:00 p.m. on December 26 – 29.

Year-End Finance Information: Please support the ministries of First Presbyterian Church with your year-end gifts. The IRS requires that books for 2017 be closed on December 31. Make sure your donation is postmarked by December 31 for your contribution to be applied to your 2017 financial statement. When paying your financial commitment with a credit/debit card, the commitment is for one calendar year. A new authorization form, available on our website and in the Finance Office, must be filled out annually.

Save the date for our Women's Retreat. Our retreat will be March 9 – 10 at Maumee Bay State Park. Sign-ups will begin in January.