

# LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2020 | 7:00 P.M.



## **Words of Welcome**

### **Prelude**

"Be Still My Soul"  
*Judy Kabodian, piano*

arr. Jay Rouse

### **Psalm 13**

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long must I bear pain in my soul,  
And have sorrow in my heart all day long?*

### **Opening Prayer**

O God, we come to you in prayer this night: for all who have a song they cannot sing, for all who have a burden they cannot bear, for all who live in chains they cannot break, for those who are sick of heart, and for those who tend them, for those who wait for loved ones, and wait in vain, for those who are misunderstood, for those whose words of love are locked within their hearts and for those who yearn to hear those words. show us the way, O God, for we your people walk in darkness. Amen.

### **Music**

"Lonely Midnight"

James Stevens

### **Reading**

"Funeral Blues"

W.H. Auden

*Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone, Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.*

*Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead Scribbling on the sky the message "He is Dead". Put crepe  
bows round the white necks of the public doves, Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.*

*He was my North, my South, my East and West, My working week and my Sunday rest, My noon,  
my midnight, my talk, my song; I thought that love would last forever; I was wrong.*

*The stars are not wanted now; put out every one, Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,  
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood; For nothing now can ever come to any good.*

## **Psalm 139**

God, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand.

***I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.***

You know when I leave and when I get back; I'm never out of your sight.

***You know everything I'm going to say before I start the first sentence.***

I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too – your reassuring presence, coming and going.

***This is too much, too wonderful – I can't take it all in.***

Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit? To be out of your sight?

***If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there!***

If I flew on morning's wings to the far western horizon,

***You'd find me in a minute – you're already there waiting!***

Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the dark! At night I'm immersed in the light!"

***It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you; night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you.***

### **Reading**

"Shifting the Sun"

Diana Der-Hovanesian

*When your father dies, say the Irish, You lose your umbrella against bad weather.*

*May his sun be your light, say the Armenians.*

*When your father dies, say the Welsh, You sink a foot deeper into the earth.*

*May you inherit his light, say the Armenians.*

*When your father dies, say the Canadians, You run out of excuses.*

*May you inherit his sun, say the Armenians.*

*When your father dies, say the Indians, He comes back as the thunder.*

*May you inherit his light, say the Armenians.*

*When your father dies, say the Russians, He takes your childhood with him.*

*May you inherit his light say the Armenians.*

*When your father dies, say the British, You join his club you vowed you wouldn't.*

*May you inherit his sun, say the Armenians.*

*When your father dies, say the Armenians, Your sun shifts forever, And you walk in his light.*

### **Music**

"Awake the Sleeping Sun"

Richard Hundley

*Michaela Larsen, soprano*

### **Isaiah 43** (selected verses)

*But now thus says the Lord, 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 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.*

**Reading**

"Love Deeply"

Henri Nouwen

Do not hesitate to love and to love deeply. You might be afraid of the pain that deep love can cause. When those you love deeply reject you, leave you, or die, your heart will be broken. But that should not hold you back from loving deeply. The pain that comes from deep love makes your love even more fruitful. It is like a plow that breaks the ground to allow the seed to take root and grow into a strong plant. Every time you experience the pain of rejection, absence, or death, you are faced with a choice. You can become bitter and decide not to love again, or you can stand straight in your pain and let the soil on which you stand become richer and more able to give life to new seeds.

**Reading**

"Rolling Away the Stone"

S.M. Campbell

In the tomb of the soul, we carry secret yearnings, pains, frustrations, loneliness, fears, regrets, worries.

***In the tomb of the soul, we take refuge from the world and its heaviness.***

In the tomb of the soul, we wrap ourselves in the security of darkness.

***Sometimes this is a comfort. Sometimes it is an escape.***

Sometimes it prepares us for experience. Sometimes it insulates us from life.

***Sometimes this tomb-life gives us time to feel the pain of the world and reach out to heal others. Sometimes it numbs us and locks us up with our own concerns.***

In this season dominated by the dark, we seek balance for ourselves.

***Grateful for the darkness that has nourished us, we push away the stone and invite the light to awaken us to the possibilities within us and among us – possibilities for new life in ourselves and in our world.***

***Meditation and Lighting the Candle of Remembrance******Moment of Silence*****Music**

"I Will Lead You Home"

Amy Grant and Chris Eaton

***Closing Prayer***

Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery. Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, And stay with us in the darkness, This night and in the nights to come, Until we see the dawn. For we know, O God, that another day will come. We do not know what it may bring, so we pray to be made ready for whatever presents itself. If we are to stand up, help us stand bravely. If we are to sit still, help us sit quietly. If we are to lie low, help us do it patiently. And if we are to do nothing, we do it gallantly. Make this prayer more than words. Grant us, gentle God of love, the spirit of your peace. Amen.

***Blessing for the Longest Night*** © Jan Richardson (janrichardson.com)

All throughout these months as the shadows have lengthened, this blessing has been gathering itself making ready, preparing for this night.

It has practiced walking in the dark, traveling with its eyes closed, feeling its way by memory by touch, by the pull of the moon, even as it wanes.

So believe me when I tell you this blessing will reach you even if you have not light enough to read it; it will find you even though you cannot see it coming.

You will know the moment of its arriving by your release of the breath you have held so long; a loosening of the clenching in your hands, of the clutch around your heart; a thinning of the darkness that had drawn itself around you.

This blessing does not mean to take the night away but it knows its hidden roads, knows the resting spots along the path, knows what it means to ravel in the company of a friend.

So when the blessing comes, take its hand. Get up. Set out on the road you cannot see.

This is the night when you can trust that any direction you go, you will be walking toward the dawn.

***Response***

“Evensong”

Liza Lehmann



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