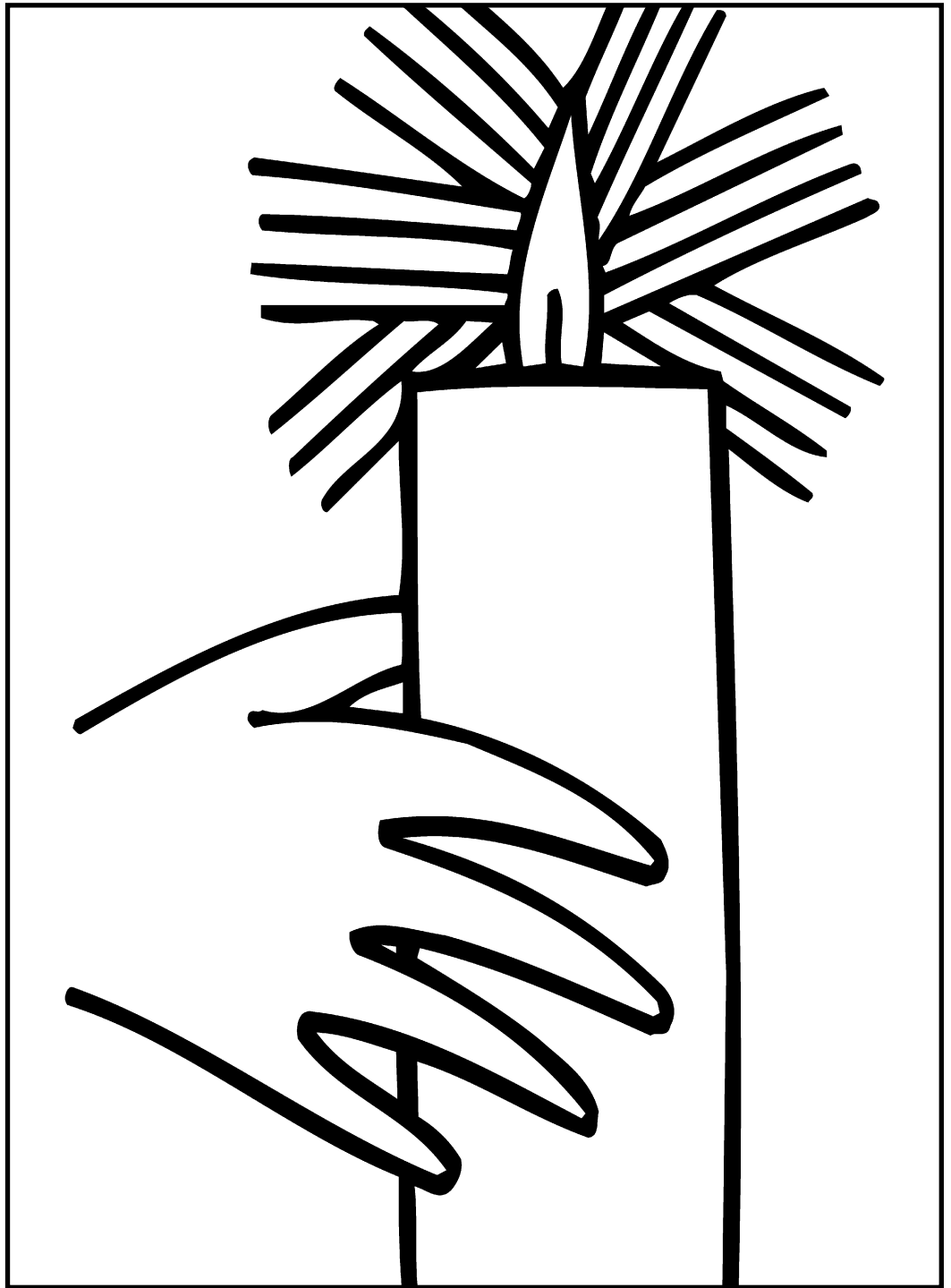


Longest Night Service

Naming our losses, disappointments, and hope



**December 21, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.
Badlands Worship
at St. John Lutheran in Dickinson**

Longest Night Service (livestreamed)

Naming our losses, disappointments, and hopes

December 21, 2020 7:00 pm

***Presiding: Pastor Dawn Busch, Pastor Lisa Lewton, Pastor Mike Pretzer,
Pastor Dorothy Stein, and Pastor Mary Wiggins***

Welcome

The name “Longest Night” comes from the season, when we experience the shortest day and longest night of the year. The name also applies to the losses and disappointments that shaped 2020. Tonight is the “long dark night of the soul,” “the winter of our discontent.” Together, we admit the emotional roller coaster of life in a pandemic can be overwhelming. If we are to be overwhelmed by all that unfolded in 2020, let us not be overwhelmed alone.

During this worship service, we do some singing appropriate to the season amid a litany of losses, recognizing this is not necessarily a season of joy for all. We hear the hopeful Word of God. And we invite you to light a candle as we turn to the light.

Author Ann Lamott once quoted Wendell Berry who said, “It gets darker and darker and then Jesus is born.” This service offers you hope, knowing Christ came into our world to shine light, even into the darkness of 2020.

Call to Worship

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

O Lord our God, we stumble in the darkness of this longest night. **Will not the day come soon?**

We live burdened by our own sorrows, and cares of this world. **Will you help us soon?**

We hear the promise of your Word made flesh: **Christ is coming soon!**

We long for the light of your salvation. **Come and save us soon!**

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence



- ① Let all mor - tal flesh keep si - lence, and with fear and trem - bling stand;
2 King of kings, yet born of Mar - y, as of old on earth he stood,
③ Rank on rank the host of heav - en spreads its van-guard on the way;
4 At his feet the six - winged ser - aph, cher - u - bim with sleep - less eye,



pon - der noth - ing earth - ly - mind - ed, for with bless - ing in his hand
Lord of lords in hu - man ves - ture, in the bod - y and the blood,
as the Light of light, de - scend - ing from the realms of end - less day,
veil their fac - es to the pres - ence, as with cease - less voice they cry:



Christ our God to earth de - scend - ing comes full hom - age to de - mand.
he will give to all the faith - ful his own self for heav'n - ly food.
comes, the pow'rs of hell to van - quish, as the dark - ness clears a - way.
"Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, Lord Most High!"

Text: Liturgy of St. James; tr. Gerard Moultrie, 1829–1885, alt.

Music: PICARDY, French folk tune, 17th cent.



Litany of Losses

First Candle.....*Loss of Life*

We mourn this night the loss of life.

[light the first candle]

For so many, the pandemic has taken loved ones.

We mourn the loss of those close to us
and those whose names we do not know.

We mourn those who perished while working to save other lives.

We mourn those who died, not of pandemic, but of other causes.

And we mourn the loss, in many cases, of our ability to be with them as
they passed, our loss of gathering together for comfort in the ways we
needed so much.

I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn this loss of life.

We mourn this loss of life.

We honor and remember these beloved.

We honor and remember these beloved.

We pray for comfort and peace.

We pray for comfort and peace.

Amen. **Amen.**

Silent Reflection

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



1 Come, thou long-ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo-ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

Music: JEFFERSON, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835



Second Candle.....*Loss of Livelihood*

We mourn this night the loss of livelihood.

[light the second candle]

For so many, the pandemic has taken the security
of food, shelter, care for families, and medical care.

We mourn the loss of businesses
that could not withstand the circumstances.

These were not just businesses,
but dreams born of passion and hard work.

We mourn those who find themselves needing to rely on others for help
when what they really want to do is to be able to help others.

I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn this loss of livelihood.

We mourn this loss of livelihood.

We honor and remember the dreams now deferred.

We honor and remember the dreams now deferred.

We pray for sustenance and resilience.

We pray for sustenance and resilience.

Amen. **Amen.**

Silent Reflection

It Came upon the Midnight Clear



- ① It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
② Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
and still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world.
who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
when with the ev - er - cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,



"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king."
A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov - 'ring wing,
look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810–1876

Music: CAROL, Richard S. Willis, 1819–1900



Third Candle.....*Loss of Love*

We mourn this night the loss of love.

[light the third candle]

Our society's dilemma, centuries in the making,
has created such hatred, suffering, oppression, and ill-will.

We mourn the loss of those whose lives
were lost to brutality and violence.

We mourn the loss of our ability to love one another
despite our differences,

as beings who deserve to be seen for their inherent beauty and worth.

We mourn that black and brown peoples have perished
and suffered at the greatest proportion in the pandemic of coronavirus.

We mourn the pandemic of racism
that still plagues the fabric of our communities.

I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn this loss of love.

We mourn this loss of love.

We honor and remember the work of prophets who proclaim justice.

**We honor and remember the work of prophets
who proclaim justice.**

We pray for compassion and change.

We pray for compassion and change.

Amen. **Amen.**

Silent Reflection

Hymn... "*Of the Father's Love Begotten*"

- 1 Of the Father's love begotten, ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall
see, evermore and evermore.
- 2 Oh, that birth forever blessed, when the virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior of our race,
and the babe, the world's redeemer, first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.

Fourth Candle.....*Loss of Liveliness*

We mourn this night the loss of liveliness.

[light the fourth candle]

For so many, this year has robbed us
of our energy, our enthusiasm, and our sense of well-being.
We mourn teachers and leaders and caregivers and workers
who are struggling to help those in their care,
themselves exhausted and needing the sustenance they give to others.
We mourn the loss of all who are suffering with anxiety and depression,
who are finding it difficult to live each day with fullness
or to find hope for tomorrow.

We mourn those we have lost to suicide.
We mourn those who find themselves addicted to substances
in order to ease the pain that feels unbearable.
We mourn those who are experiencing their place of shelter
as an abusive place from which they struggle to escape.

I invite you to repeat after me:

We mourn this loss of liveliness.

We mourn this loss of liveliness.

We honor and remember that each person is precious and whole.

We honor and remember that each person is precious and whole.

We pray for recovery and renewed vigor.

We pray for recovery and renewed vigor.

Amen. **Amen.**

Silent Reflection



It Came upon the Midnight Clear



- 1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
- 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
- 3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
- 4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
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who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
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"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king."
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oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810–1876
Music: CAROL, Richard S. Willis, 1819–1900

Fifth Candle.....*More Light*

And now we light a fifth candle.
Just as we will do later this week on Christmas Eve,
We light this as a sign of our belief...
We believe in the Light that has come and is coming.

[light the fifth candle in the center]

This light casts its glow on all the surrounding prayers we have prayed.
This light resides within us, perhaps dim for a time,
but always lit—an ember of the Holy inside us.
This light reminds us that we are not alone.

Prayers of the People

Let us pray. God of light, you shed your light in the darkness of this world. Grant that we may always live in the promise of your Word made flesh. O God for whom we long, **come and save us soon!**

God of light, we recall many disappointments in the year 2020. Birthdays, weddings, graduations, and reunions that were not what we had hoped. Lift our spirits with the peace of your presence. O God for whom we long, **come and save us soon!**

God of light, Christmas Eve will not look like any other Christmas Eve. We grieve our sanctuaries, missing the usual Christmas crowd. We will miss singing without worrying about safety, and greeting those we seldom see. Meet us in our disappointment. O God for whom we long, **come and save us soon!**

God of joy, fill our world with the light of your presence, that we may share the good news of Christ's coming. O God for whom we long, **come and save us soon! Amen.**

Trusting in God's promise of salvation through the life and light of Jesus Christ, let us pray the Lord's Prayer together.

**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, and the power, and the glory, forever
and ever. Amen.**

Sending

Blessing

Siblings in Christ, we are lost in the night no more, but live in the promise of Christ. May God, who sends light to overcome the darkness, grant you light and more light to accompany you always. **Amen.**

Silent Night, Holy Night!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!

Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,
 1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,
 ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.
 all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
 at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
 love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,
 Hol - der Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher
 Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
 heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
 with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your
 Ruh, schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.
 peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
 born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792–1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885
 Music: STILLE NACHT, Franz Gruber, 1787–1863

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is coming soon. **Thanks be to God!**

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