Spruce Run Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church

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Longest Night Service

December 21, 2022

PRELUDE (Bach/Handel selections & Faure's Sicilenne)

Janis Kaplan - cello

Margaret Walker - flute

WELCOME

On this longest night of the year, near the end of the season of Advent, a season of yearning and hope, anticipating Christmas—so many of us find ourselves confronting losses and griefs of all sorts:

- -the first, or perhaps the 5th, or 50th, Christmas without a spouse or child or sibling or friend.
- -Retired and no longer invited to office parties.
- -moved in but just not settled.

We find ourselves confronted by grief and metaphoric, as well as literal, long nights.

It can feel like our whole society is Christmas-mad, insisting we fit into a joyful pattern when that's not where we're at. I hope this Longest Night service is a time and place where all of us are given a spiritual space to grieve and to be as we are.

OPENING DIALOGUE

Almighty God grant us a quiet night and peace at the last.

Amen.

By day, O God, you grant your steadfast love, And at night your song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.



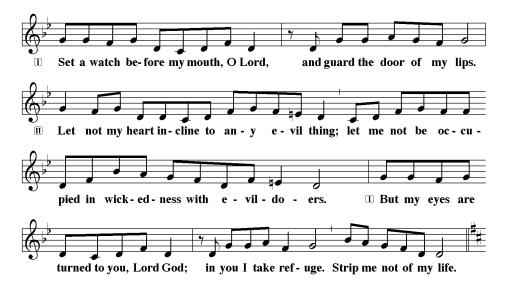
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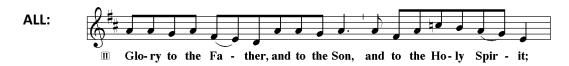


ALL:



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CANTOR:





PSALMODY

And now let us pray together the 23rd Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil;

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff—

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

my whole life long.

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

"When I am Laid in Earth"

Janis Kaplan - cello

Margaret Walker - flute

-Purcell

A LITANY OF REMEMBERING

We come this night to our Advent wreath, not forgetting hope, peace, joy, and love, but recognizing there are times when we can only anticipate them, only yearn for them. We light these four candles in honor of our loved ones and to name our losses.

<Pause>

We who despair light this first candle, may we be held by hope.

Light Candle

There are so many ways we try to hide our hurt and ignore that empty spaces in our life. A conspiracy of silence, denial, avoidance, overwork, substance abuse.

Help us, Dear Lord.

<Pause>

We who are in distress light this second candle, may we find peace.

Light Candle

It hurts so much! We are like a lonely city, it tastes like bitter gravel, all that is sacred it a desolate tomb.

Help us, Dear Lord.

<Pause>

We who are filled with sorrow light this third candle, may joy seep in.

Light Candle

We tumble and twist, hands outstretched like we're on a balance beam, the edge of a cliff, enduring an earthquake.

Help us, Dear Lord.

<Pause>

We who grapple with loss light this fourth candle, may we be uplifted by love.

Light Candle

We remember those we love, all those blessed moments with them, remember too those that were mundane and even painful. At this time, let us name aloud or in silence those people whom we loved, and all that we have lost.

Silence

All of it we bring before you.

Help us, Dear Lord.

"Song of the Birds"

Janis Kaplan - cello

Margaret Walker - flute

(Catalan carol)

WORD

Lamentations 1:1-4

How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal. She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has no one to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude: she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress. The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to the festivals; all her gates are desolate, her priests groan; her young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter.

Romans 8: 26

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

In many and various ways God spoke to his people of old by the prophets.

But now in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

GOSPEL CANTICLE

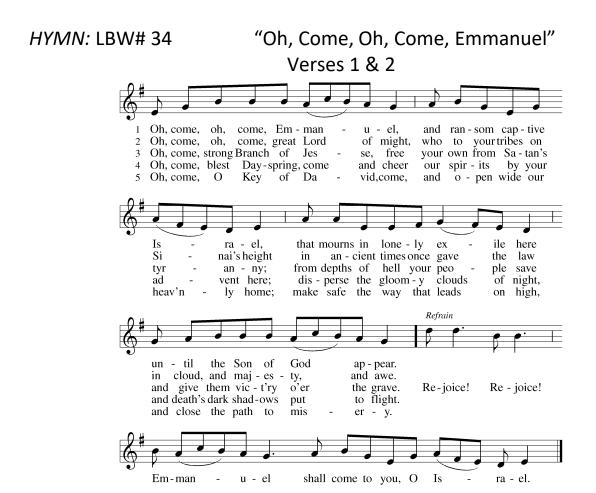
ELW#723 "Canticle of the Turning" My soul cries out with a joy ful shout Though $my\ .\ \underline{\cdot}\ .$ Ğod, 2 small, all, am my you . . . to the the halls of for tow'r, From pow'r tress not Though the na tions rage from . . age, we re -God of my heart great, and my spir - it work great. . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the stone will be Let the king be - ware for your left on stone. God's mem - ber who holds us fast: mer - cy must de won - drous things bring that you to the ones who wait. depths of the past to the end of the age be. jus - tice liv - er tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . . from his throne. from the con - quer - or's crush - ing us grasp. your sight plight, You fixed ser - vant's on your and my ver - y hun - gry Your name puts the proud to shame, and to shall . . The poor weep no more. for the sav the This ing word that our fore - bears heard is did so from east west shall my weak-ness you spurn, to not for you nev - er those who would for yearn, you will show your might, put the food they can earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be be blest. Could the world be a - bout turn? name to flight, world a - bout strong to for the is to turn. mouth fed, for the world is a - bout turn. God, turn - ing the world crushed by who is a round. My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus-tice burn.

Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a-bout to

John 11:32-35

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep.

HOMILY



PRAYERS

Let us pray together.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, comfort the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

Amen.

HYMN: LBW# 65 "Silent Night"



DISMISSAL

Go in peace, yearning for Peace.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE "Coventry Carol A La Nanita Nana" Janis Kaplan - cello Margaret Walker - flute