

Spruce Run Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church

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Rev. Chris Halverson, Pastor

Candice O. Peare, Director of Music

Longest Night Service

December 21, 2023

PRELUDE

"Drive the Cold Winter Away" by John Playford;
"Siciliano" by J.S. Bach;
"Adagio Affettuoso" by J. Haydn;
"Prelude" from the first Suite for Solo Cello by J.S. Bach
Janis Kaplan - cello

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.

ALL:



Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense;
the lift-ing up of my hands as the eve-ning sac - ri - fice.

CANTOR:



O Lord, I call to you; come to me quick-ly; hear my voice when I cry to you.

ALL:



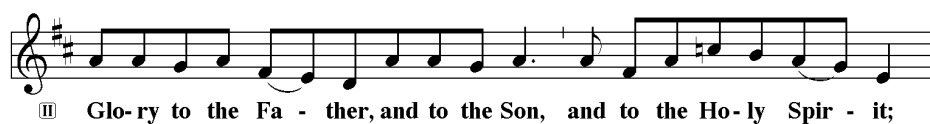
Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense;
the lift-ing up of my hands as the eve-ning sac - ri - fice.

CANTOR:



Set a watch be-fore my mouth, O Lord, and guard the door of my lips.
Let not my heart in-cline to an - y e - vil thing; let me not be oc - cu -
pied in wick-ed-ness with e - vil - do - ers. But my eyes are
turned to you, Lord God; in you I take ref- uge. Strip me not of my life.

ALL:



Glo-ry to the Fa - ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho-ly Spir - it;

CANTOR:



ALL:



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.

"Sarabande" from the fifth Suite for Solo Cello by J.S. Bach
Janis Kaplan - cello

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 is 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.

"Coventry Carol" (anonymous)
Janis Kaplan - cello

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"



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .
3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a
4 Though the na - tions rage from . . age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
work great . . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . from his throne.
liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
The hun - gry poor shall . . weep no more, for the
This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



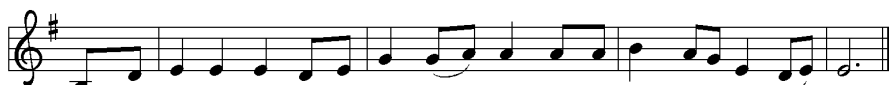
weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.



Refrain
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 turn.

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

HYMN: LBW# 34

"Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel"

Verses 1 & 2



1 Oh, come, oh, come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
2 Oh, come, oh, come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on
3 Oh, come, strong Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's
4 Oh, come, blest Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by your
5 Oh, come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
Si - nai's height in an - cient times once gave the law
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save
ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
and close the path to mis - er - y.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

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"



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,



Hold - er 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.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, yearning for Peace.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

"Greensleeves" (traditional)
"Spagnoletta" by Michael Praetorius
"It Came Up on a Midnight Clear"
Janis Kaplan - cello