

Longest Night Service

A Night of Healing, Hope, and Remembrance



**First Presbyterian Church of Monroe
108 Washington Street
Monroe, MI 48161
(734) 242-1545**

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE
December 21, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.

WELCOME

Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 9)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those who live in a land of deep shadows a light has shone.

For the yoke that was weighing so heavily, and the burden upon their shoulders,
you have broken in pieces O God, our Renewer.

Hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of
wondering love

O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.

No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ
enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us this day
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

The First Reading: from Isaiah 40 (*selected verses*)

Psalm 22 (responsive)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words
of my groaning?

**O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by
night, but I find no rest.**

In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you
delivered them.

**It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept
me safe on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me,
you have been my God.**

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted. God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God.

QUIET MEDITATION

The Gospel Reading: from Matthew 1 & 2

CANDLE LIGHTING AND LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

The First Candle

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost.

We remember them with love.

We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies.

We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

May God's eternal love surround them.

(sing)

***O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God
appear***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A period of silent reflection

The Second Candle

We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to you, asking that you will place the gift of peace and shalom into our wounded hearts and open hands.

**We remember that through you, all things are possible.
Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

(sing)

***O come thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things
mightily;***

***To us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A period of silent reflection

The Third Candle

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us, years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God of mercy, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We have journeyed far, and though we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.

We accept and lay before you the ways we believe we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone in darkness; and in the knowledge of our own mortality.

Though winter is upon us and the night is dark, dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

(sing)

***O come thou Day-spring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;***

***Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A period of silent reflection

The Fourth Candle

We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the story of Christmas, which began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of foreign occupation and oppression, in a poor stable. The loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

(sing)

***O come Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and
mind***

Bid envy, strife and discord cease;

Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A period of silent reflection

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord, hear our prayer,

and in your merciful love, answer.

***Hymn**

“Away in a Manger”

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little lord Jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care
And take me to heaven to live with thee there.

Third Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Offering of Light

Let us pray together.

Loving God, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for healing, renewal, recovery, and a new day to come. Lighten our darkness, O God; give us light in this dark season; and by your great mercy keep us safe from the dangers of the night. Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, and let it go with us into the darkness tonight and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn. Amen.

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” Ann Lux, Soloist
You are welcome to come forward to light a candle in memory of someone or for an event you would like to recall or give to God.

Reading from Scripture: John 1:1-5

Hymn “Silent Night, Holy Night”

Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy Infant, so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Concluding Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives. Let the light of your Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for us and for all who despair, or feel lost or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts, that when we leave this place it may shine on for us and for those we meet along the way.

Another day will come, O God. I don't know what it will bring, but make me ready for whatever will come. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of your Peace. Amen.

Blessing and Dismissal

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Go in peace.

Rev. Michelle James, Officiant

Sue Downing, Pianist

Ann Lux, Soloist

There will be refreshments available following this evening's service. We hope you will stay for fellowship.

You are welcome to remain in the chapel as long as you wish for prayer and meditation at the conclusion of the service. As you leave the chapel, you may greet one another with a sign of peace, but please be respectful of those who prefer to remain quietly.

