

# The Longest Night

December 9, 2020 ~ 7:00 pm  
St. Cross Episcopal Church



Celebrant: The Reverend Nathan Biornstad

Deacon: The Reverend Patti Angelo

Organist: Sean O'Neal

Cantor: Dan Wilson

Lector: Cameron Johnson

## PRELUDE

### OPENING SENTENCE AND COLLECT

*Please Stand.*

*Celebrant:* Come, O come Emmanuel,  
You are the way, the truth and the life;  
*People:* **You are the true vine and the bread of life.**

*Celebrant:* Come living Savior,  
*People:* **Come to your world which waits for you.**

*Celebrant:* Almighty God, give us grace to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; so that when he shall come again in his glorious majesty we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

*All:* **Amen.**

### A LITANY OF REMEMBERING

*Celebrant:* We wait in darkness, expectantly, longingly, anxiously, thoughtfully.

*Deacon:* The darkness is our friend.  
In the darkness of the womb, we have all been nurtured and protected.  
In the darkness of the womb, the Christ-child was made ready for the journey into light.

*People:* **You are with us, O God; in darkness and in light.**

*Celebrant:* It is only in the darkness that we can see the splendor of the universe – blankets of stars, the solitary glowings of distant planets.

*Deacon:* It was the darkness that allowed the magi to find the star that guided them to where the Christ-child lay.

*People:* **You are with us, O God; in darkness and in light.**

*Celebrant:* In the darkness of the night, desert people find relief from the cruel relentless heat of the sun.

*Deacon:* In the blessed darkness, Mary and Joseph were able to flee with the infant Jesus to safety in Egypt.

*People:* **You are with us, O God; in darkness and in light.**

*Celebrant:* In the darkness of sleep, we are soothed and restored, healed and renewed.

*Deacon:* In the darkness of sleep, dreams rise up. God spoke to Jacob and Joseph through dreams. God is speaking still.

*People:* **You are with us, O God; in darkness and in light.**

*Celebrant:* In the solitude of darkness, we sometimes remember those who need God's presence in a special way – the sick, the unemployed, the bereaved, the persecuted, the homeless; those who are demoralized and discouraged, those whose fear has turned to cynicism, those whose vulnerability has become bitterness.

*Deacon:* Sometimes in the darkness, we remember those who are near to our hearts – colleagues, partners, parents, children, neighbors, friends. We thank God for their presence and ask God to bless and protect them in all that they do – at home, at school, as they travel, as they work, as they play.

*People:* **You are with us, O God; in darkness and in light.**

*Celebrant:* Sometimes in solitude of darkness, our fears and concerns, our hopes and our visions rise to the surface. We come face to face with ourselves and with the road that lies ahead of us. And in that same darkness, we find companionship for the journey.

*Deacon:* In that same darkness, we sometimes allow ourselves to wonder and worry whether the human race is going to make it at all.

*People:* **We know you are with us, O God, yet we still await your coming. In the darkness that contains both our hopelessness and our expectancy, we watch for a sign of God's Hope. Amen.**

## OPENING HYMN

Hymn #56

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

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

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.

*Refrain*

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

*Refrain*

## READING

*Isaiah 40:1, 18, 22-31*

*This reading comes from the Book of Isaiah. It was written in a time when the people of Judah were captives in Babylon and so felt crushed and without hope.*

“Comfort, comfort my people,” says our God. “Encourage the people of Jerusalem and tell them that their time of suffering is ended. With whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?” asks the Holy One. “Look up to the heavens! Who made the stars, if not the One who leads them out like an army, calling each one by its own name? So mighty is God's power and strength that not one fails to answer. Israel, why then do you complain that our God does not know your troubles or care if you suffer injustice? Our God, the everlasting God, the creator of the farthest parts of the earth, never grows tired or weary. No one can fathom the depths of God's understanding. God gives power to the faint and strength to the powerless. Even youths become exhausted and young ones give up. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.”

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord

*People:* **Thanks be to God**

## HYMN

Hymn #67

*Please stand*

Comfort, comfort ye my people,  
    speak ye peace, thus saith our God;  
comfort those who sit in darkness  
    mourning 'neath their sorrows' load.  
Speak ye to Jerusalem  
of the peace that waits for them;  
tell her that her sins I cover,  
and her warfare now is over.

Hark, the voice of one that crieth  
    in the desert far and near,  
calling us to new repentance  
    since the kingdom now is here.  
Oh, that warning cry obey!  
Now prepare for God a way;  
let the valleys rise to meet him  
and the hills bow down to greet him.

Make ye straight what long was crooked,  
    make the rougher places plain;  
let your hearts be true and humble,  
    as befits his holy reign.  
For the glory of the Lord  
now o'er earth is shed abroad;  
and all flesh shall see the token  
that the word is never broken.

## GOSPEL

*Matthew 11:28-30*

*Please remain standing*

*Deacon:* The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew.

*People:* **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

*Deacon:* The Gospel of the Lord.

*People:* **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

## HOMILY

The Rev. Nathan Biornstad

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Deacon:* We bring to God a troubled situation.

*People:* **We come as we are.**

*Deacon:* We bring to God someone who is hurting.

*People:* **We come as we are.**

*Deacon:* We bring to God a painful part of our lives.

*People:* **We come as we are.**

*Deacon:* We bring to God someone we need to forgive.

*People:* **We come as we are.**

*Deacon:* We bring to God something we need.

*People:* **We come as we are.**

*Deacon:* We bring to God our praise and thanksgivings.

*People:* **We come as we are.**

A TAIZE HYMN *Sung three times*

O Lord hear my pray'r, O Lord hear my pray'r.  
When I call, an - swer me. O Lord hear my pray'r. O  
Lord hear my pray'r, Come and lis - ten to me. O

**THE PEACE**

*Celebrant:* The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People:* **And also with you.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

*Celebrant:* Merciful God, hear us as we pray the words Jesus taught us:

*All:* **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, for ever and ever. Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN

Hymn #112

*Please stand, as you are able*

In the bleak midwinter,  
frosty wind made moan,  
earth stood hard as iron,  
water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
snow on snow,  
in the bleak midwinter,  
long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him,  
nor earth sustain;  
heaven and earth shall flee away  
when he comes to reign:  
in the bleak midwinter  
a stable-place sufficed  
the Lord God incarnate,  
Jesus Christ.

What can I give him,  
poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd,  
I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a wise man,  
I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him—  
give my heart.

## THE BLESSING

May God bring you what Christ has prepared for you. May God give you the will to live each day in life eternal. And the blessings of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

## THE DISMISSAL

*Deacon:* Go in peace to bless the Lord.

*People:* **Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE