



a service for the  
**LONGEST NIGHT**

Tuesday, December 21  
6:30 PM

*All are invited to sing during the congregational songs in worship!  
We ask that you please **wear a mask at all times while indoors**, out of an abundance of caution  
and out of respect for the health and safety of all people joining us for worship.*

**Gathering Music**

Tim Hendrix

**Opening Poem**

April Alston

We are raw nerves, exposed and tender.  
We are weary bones, hunched and fragile.  
We are silent prayers, lips saying your name.  
We are wedding rings we can't take off, even though time has passed.  
We are the same pew, but it feels different now.  
We are a brave face when we have to be strong.  
We are tears in the shower when grief roars its head.  
We are setting the table, but there are empty seats.  
We are stuck in the swell, caught in the storm.  
We are moving on, caught in our guilt.  
We are okay some days, but some days we're not.  
We are familiar with the night, we know it by name.  
We are night-walkers, dream-makers, star-chasers.  
We are close to home, but home has changed.  
We are close to the surface, but the waters are rising.  
We are all of this, plus everything else, and we are here.  
We are here.  
Grief is here.  
God is here.  
The night is here.  
And all of this is true,  
and we are not alone.

(cont'd on the next page)

Take my hand.  
Take these words.  
Let them be your life raft.  
Let this be the longest night,  
and let it be  
whatever you need it to be.  
We are here.  
Grief is here.  
God is here.  
Take what you need.  
Amen.

✠ **Opening Hymn**

“In The Bleak Midwinter”

CRANHAM;  
Words by Christina Rossetti,  
Music by Gustav Holst

**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.**

**Angels and archangels may have gathered there;  
cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;  
but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,  
worshiped the beloved with a kiss.**

**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.**

**Scripture Reading**

Lamentations 3:21-24

Anna Beth Cross

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Scripture Reading**

Psalm 121

Christian McIvor

**Prayer of the People** (with “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” refrain)

God who always welcomes us home—  
tonight is a long night.  
We gather together heavy with prayer concerns.  
They tumble out of our mouths,  
they saturate every word we sing,  
they lay over us like a quilt, weighing on our spirits.  
We are a million combinations of weary and sad, lonely and grieving, angry and hurt.  
It is obvious that we need you, so together we sing. . .

**Refrain: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel!**

(cont'd on the next page)

God, we need you in the messy middles,  
in the unclear paths forward, the transition seasons, and the splinterings of what once was.  
God, we need you in the grieving places,  
in the dining rooms with empty chairs, in the empty wombs, and in the dark of the tomb.  
God, we need you in our failed dreams,  
in shame that rises quickly, in the unknown next steps, in the discernment that is always  
easier said than done.

And so we sing. . . **(repeat refrain)**

O come, Emmanuel.  
Flood our grieving hearts.  
Pour out your Spirit on this world.  
Where there is suffering, loneliness, poverty, abuse, addiction, depression—be there.  
Be all there.  
Wrap your arms around those hurting places, and carry us to your promised day.  
Until then, we will continue to sing. . . **(repeat refrain)**

### Individual Prayer

April Alston

### Candle Lighting

Anna Beth Cross

### Communal Sending | “We See One Another”

Christian Mclvor

One: We are here.

**All: We are here.**

One: I see you and your pain.

**All: I see you and your pain.**

One: I see you and your hope.

**All: I see you and your hope.**

One: You are my neighbor.

**All: You are my neighbor.**

One: We belong to one another.

**All: We belong to one another.**

One: We are not in this alone.

**All: We are not in this alone.**

One: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

**All: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.**

One: Amen.

### Benediction

Isaiah 40:28-31

Chrissy Tatum Williamson

### Postlude

“Close to Home”  
Christian Mclvor

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*With Christ as the Cornerstone, we will build a church of living stones, where every member  
is a minister and is equipped to express God’s love by word and deed to all people.*

*Based on 1 Peter 2:5, 6*



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† Please rise in body or spirit.