

A Service for  
The Longest Night



December 20, 2020



Christ Church Parish - Kent Island, 830 Romancoke Rd., Stevensville, MD 21666

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## A SERVICE FOR THE LONGEST NIGHT

Greeting

**An Opening Song**

***“Bless the Lord my soul”***

***Taize***

Bless the Lord, my soul / and bless God’s Holy Name.

Bless the Lord, my soul / who leads me into life.

**Welcome and Prayer**

Let us pray:

O God of mystery, you are beyond our knowing, and yet you know our hearts. We turn to you this evening seeking peace, fretful of our lives, and anxious for your promised guidance and protection. We want to place our trust in you but our hearts begin fearful and unresolved. Draw near this night with a mother’s tenderness and calm. Teach us to be patient with ourselves, receptive to your care and open to your love. **Amen.**

### **Readings from Holy Scripture**

**The First Lesson**

Jeremiah 31:1-6

At that time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus says the Lord: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the Lord appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merry-makers. Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit. For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: ‘Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.’

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

**Thanks be to God.**

## The Psalm

*Please read responsively*

Psalm 131 *The Message*

1 God, I'm not trying to rule the roost,

I don't want to be king of the mountain.

**I haven't meddled where I have no business**

**or fantasized grandiose plans.**

2 I've kept my feet on the ground,

I've cultivated a quiet heart.

**Like a baby content in its mother's arms,**

**my soul is a baby content.**

3 Wait, Israel, for God. Wait with hope.

**Hope now; hope always!**

## A Reading from Gospel of Luke

Luke 2:8-12

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

**Thanks be to God.**

## A Song

***"My soul is at rest"***

***Taize***

My soul is at rest in God alone;

My salvation comes from God.

## Prayers of Remembrance and Light

First Reader: God sent Jesus into the world to be the light of the world. In this place, now, we light candles of remembrance and hope. *<Pause>*

We light this first candle to drive away darkness and despair. Each of us is God's own child: beloved, protected and free. We remember how You, O God, have come to humanity again and again seeking our restoration and renewal.

The Light shines in the Darkness

All: **And the darkness cannot overcome it.**

(Pause for silence.)

Second Reader: We light this second candle as we recall the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health, the loss of dreams. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to You, O God, asking that you will place the gift of peace into our open hands.

Refresh, restore, and renew us, O God,

All: **Lead us into your bright future.**

(Pause for silence.)

Third Reader: We light this third candle to remember those whom we love but see no longer. Their faces were so familiar; their voices provided us counsel and calm. We ask You, O God, to help us to release them into the arms of their loving Savior.

Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord.

All: **And let light perpetual shine upon them.**

(Pause for silence.)

Fourth Reader: We light this fourth candle for ourselves: shining God's abundant light into the depths of our souls. God loved us so much that he sent the Son into the world. We ask, loving Jesus, for the gifts of faith and hope and love.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.

All: **Let us abide in Christ's love.**

(Pause for silence.)

## The 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.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen**

Leader: Now, all are invited to come forward to light a candle where you are. As you do so, offer your burdens, grief, sorrow, and losses: all that weighs down your heart at this time of year. You may speak aloud the name or the event if you wish to do so. Once you have lit your candle, pray silently and listen for the loving touch of the Spirit.

*When all the people have had the opportunity to light candles, the leader continues . . .*

Leader: Let us pray. Loving Jesus, your mother Mary once swaddled you in scraps of cloth; enfold us in your presence in this time of remembrance. With these candles, help us find your light, a light that will guide us day by day, step by step, as we try to live life fully and wholly. The saints of old and our loved ones now gone from our sight are with us this night. We thank you for the gift their lives have been to us. Give us your Holy Spirit to comfort us, encourage us, and empower us this night and forever. **Amen.**

## Closing Song

***“All will be well”***

***Mary Peters, 1847***

(1) Through the love of God, our Savior, / All will be well;  
free and changeless is his favor, / All, all is well;  
precious is the blood that healed us,  
perfect is the grace that sealed us,  
strong the hand stretched out to shield us, / All must be well.

- (2) Though we pass through tribulation, / All will be well;  
 ours is such a full salvation, / All, all is well.  
 happy when in God confiding,  
 fruitful if in Christ abiding,  
 holy through the Spirit's guiding, / All must be well.
- (3) We expect a bright tomorrow; / All will be well;  
 faith can sing through days of sorrow, / All, all is well;  
 on our Father's love relying,  
 Jesus every need supplying  
 in our living, in our dying, / All must be well.

**The Blessing**

Leader: Remember whom you love  
 Remember what is sacred  
 Remember what is true  
 Remember that you will die and that this day is a gift  
 Remember how you wish to live  
                   and the blessing of the God of Love:  
 Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier be with you always. *Amen.*

**Dismissal**

Deacon: Go in peace, for Christ goes with you.  
 All: **Thanks be to God.**

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*Participants*

*The Reverend Mark Delcuze, Rector*

*The Reverend Melody Sutherland, Deacon*

*Gary Van Essen, Minister of Music*



Reach for the stars  
that shine in the night.  
Do not be blinded;  
walk into the light.  
Listen for the message  
the star makes bold.  
Good tidings. Great joy. Good news. Bright Star.  
A son is born. A child is ours.  
Peace is within our reach.  
Lift your eyes to the skies.  
Risk stardust on your face.