

**THE LONGEST NIGHT**  
**A SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE,**  
**CONSOLATION, AND ASSURANCE**



**The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light.  
Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness,  
on them has the light shined.**

**Isaiah 9:2**

Here at First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino, we seek to be a community where the needs of real people meet the real love of God.

That is our hope for this night. Tonight we remember that Christmas arrives near the winter solstice, the longest night of the year (in our hemisphere). We recognize that for many the holidays can be long. While there is much celebrating, it is also true that losses in our lives or our knowledge of suffering in the world can take some of the joy from the season.

Tonight we intend to recognize the real darkness that exists in our lives and the world. The mass shootings of recent weeks and the fear that follows, are only one example of that. At the same time, we know that glimpses of Light will shine through, just as stars pierce the darkness on a winter night. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate. Light is stronger than darkness, love is stronger than death."

We welcome God's presence with us here tonight and always. May the candlelight, the music, the prayers, the Word of God, the silence, the communion of saints, and the community gathered here comfort and inspire you.

***We have included in your bulletin a paper on which you may write your prayer requests so that the church staff may pray along with you and for you throughout this season. You may leave it in the basket near the candles.***

**May the peace of Christ be with you tonight and always.**

# The Longest Night Service

Thursday, December 1, 2022 + 6:00 p.m.

## ✠ THE GATHERING

### LIGHTING CANDLES FOR OTHERS, OURSELVES, AND OUR WORLD

Light a light for those you want to remember.

Light a light for hope.

Light a light for prayer beyond words.

Light a candle for those you need, in whatever way, to let go.

Take your time. We have time enough tonight.

But first, let us pray:

### CALL TO WORSHIP

God of all life, and of what comes beyond the life we know:

✠ **We come tonight in our need, we come in our brokenness.**

We come to you with our gratitude.

✠ **We come with loose ends we haven't been able to tie up.**

We may not know why it is that we have come,  
or why you have led us here,

✠ **But we know you have promised never to turn us away.**

*[We rest in the presence of God with 10 minutes of music for healing. During this time, you are invited to come forward and light a votive candle as a visible sign of your prayer of remembrance and hope. When you leave tonight, you will be invited to take it with you so that a light of hope and remembrance may continue to shine in your home.]*

### \*HYMN

### *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

HYFRYDOL

✠ **Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us;  
let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.**

**Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a king,  
born to reign in us forever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

**UNISON PRAYER**

✠ **God of all time, we say that time is a healer,  
And yet healing does not happen without our permission.  
If we come tonight with bitterness,  
Persuade us with your sweetness.  
If we come tonight with anger or rage,  
Pacify us with your patience and peace.  
If we come tonight in pain, soothe us with your tenderness.  
If we come numb with shock,  
Calm us with your hand placed on our shoulders.  
If we come in despair, give us hope. Amen.**

⌘ **THE PROCLAMATION**

**READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE**

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

**John 1:1-5**

*[We keep silence, reflecting on what we have heard]*

**A MUSICAL OFFERING FROM THE THRESHOLD CHOIR**

⌘ **THE RESPONSE**

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS, OURSELVES, OUR WORLD**

Holy God of Advent, you became weak so we would find strength in moments of heartbreak; you left the safety of heaven to wander the wilderness of the world, holding our hands when we feel hopeless; you set aside your glory to hold our pain so we might be healed, even when there seems to be no hope; you became one of us, so we would never be alone in any moment, in any circumstance.

So come now, Child of Bethlehem, to strengthen us in these days. May we feel your presence in a way we have never known, not just as one born in a stable long ago and far away but as the One born in

our hearts. Your will for us and for all your people is health and salvation. Hear us as we pray for healing and wholeness.

*[After a name or situation is named aloud, we will respond with:]*  
God, in your mercy:

✘ **You hear our prayer.**

*[After a time we will use this closing:]*

✘ **Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### **LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING WITH OIL**

Gracious God, source of all healing,  
in Jesus Christ you heal the sick and mend the broken.  
We bless you for this oil pressed from the fruits of the earth,  
given to us as a sign of healing and forgiveness  
and of the fullness of life you give.

By your Spirit, come upon all who are anointed with this oil  
and receive the laying on of hands, that they may receive your  
healing touch and be made whole, to the glory of Jesus Christ our  
Redeemer. ✘ **Amen.**

*[You may request prayers for yourself, another, or a situation in our world.  
Those who wish may be anointed with oil, an ancient sign of healing, of joy,  
and of God's blessing.]*

**SINGING** *[The congregation will sing during the anointing.]*

***O Lord, Hear My Prayer***<sup>1</sup>

*Jacques Berthier*

✘ **O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer.  
When I call, answer me.  
O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer.  
Come and listen to me. Repeat.**

***Come and Fill Our Hearts***<sup>2</sup>

*Jacques Berthier*

✘ **Come and fill our hearts with your peace.  
You alone, O Lord, are holy.  
Come and fill our hearts with your peace,  
Alleluia.**

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**Wait for the Lord** <sup>3</sup>

*Jacques Berthier*

- ✘ **Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.**  
**Wait for the Lord, be strong, take heart.** *Repeat.*

**Be Still and Know**<sup>4</sup>

*John Bell*

- ✘ **Be still and know, that I am God**  
**Be still and know that I am God.** *Repeat.*

## ✦ THE SENDING

*[You are invited to pick up your candle if you wish, and hold it during our closing words]*

### CLOSING WORDS

*(Burgess, 2005)*

Carrying a candle from one place of shelter to another  
is an act of love.

To move through the huge and hungry darkness, step by step,  
Against the wind that blows forever around the world,  
Carrying a candle is an act of foolhardy hope.

Surely it will be blown out: the wind is contemptuous  
How much light can this tiny flame shed  
On all the great issues of the day?  
It is as helpless as a newborn child.

Look how the human hand that cradles it  
Has become translucent: fragile and beautiful; foolish and loving.  
The wind is stronger than this hand, and the darkness is great  
Around this tiny here-and-now flame  
That wavers, but keeps burning;  
Carried with such care through an uncaring world  
From one place of shelter to another  
An act of love.

The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never overcome it.

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**\*SUNG RESPONSE**

*It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

CAROL

It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old  
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold  
Peace on the earth! Goodwill to all,  
from Heav'ns all-gracious King  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
To hear the angels sing.

And ye beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low  
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow  
Look now! For glad and golden hours  
Come swiftly on the wing!  
O rest beside the weary road  
and hear the angels sing.

**BENEDICTION**

“...it came home to me that the most profound blessings we  
will ever know are those that meet us in our places of deepest  
loss and inspire us to choose to live again.”

*-Jan Richardson, Circle of Grace p. xiii*

We are indebted to several resources for elements of this service:  
*Reformed Worship Magazine* No. 81, *Book of Common Worship*, *Iona  
Worshipbook*, and *Candles & Conifers* by Ruth Burgess.

We are grateful for our **musicians** and our **worship leaders**, and to the members of the Worship Committee, who care for all aspects of our worship life.