

Longest Night Service
Shenkel UCC and Temple UMC
December 21, 2024, 7:00 pm

Welcome

Call to Worship:

L: O God, come to our assistance.

C: O Lord, hasten to help us.

L: Drop down the dew from above, O heavens,
and let the clouds rain justice.

**C: Let the earth's womb be opened,
and bring forth a Savior.**

Opening Prayer

Meditation Music – In the Bleak Midwinter (NCH 128)

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 transcends all heaven, earth, and its domain;

Heaven and earth shall flee away when Christ comes to reign;

In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed

The sovereign God almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,

Cherubim and seraphim thronged the midnight air;

But his mother only, in her maiden bliss,

Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I offer, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.

If I were a wise one, I would do my part;

But what I can I offer; all my heart.

Assurance of God's Grace

I John 1:5-7

Litany of Remembrance

(The first candle is lighted.)

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

All: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

O come, O come, Emmanuel, our hearts are full with more than we can tell. We mourn for those in exile here, and notice all the ways that God appears. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel. God's with us in the places where we dwell.

A period of silent reflection

The second candle is lighted.

L: 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 into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

All: We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

O come, O Wisdom from within, we're weary and it's so hard to begin. But here, collective knowledge shows, and teaches us the way to go. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel. God's with us in the places where we dwell.

A period of silent reflection

The third candle is lighted.

L: 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, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We accept and lay before you the ways we feel 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 knowledge of our own mortality.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.

We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

*O come, O Cosmic Unity, we find you in community,
In land, in creatures, galaxies, in children, and in our own beauty.
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel. God's with us in the places where we dwell.*

A period of silent reflection

The fourth candle is lighted.

L: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that 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.

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

*O come, O Shelter, Sanctuary, Home, stir us, that none will find themselves alone. Call us to sacred spaces of rest. Bring liberation to all those oppressed.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel. God's with us in the places where we dwell.*

A period of silent reflection

(Part of this service is based on an order developed and used at The Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu Hawaii. Alt. lyrics to O Come, O Come, Emmanuel courtesy Linda Noonan. Advent 2024)

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 9:2-7

John 1:1-5, 14, 16

Time for Reflection and Space to Light Individual Candles

Hymn – “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” (345 NCH)

**Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded for with blessing in the hand,
Christ our God to earth descending, our full homage to demand.**

**Monarch great, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth Christ stood,
Lord of all, in human vesture – in the body and the blood –
Christ will give to all the faithful bread of life for heavenly food.**

**Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descending from the realms of endless day,
That the powers of hell may vanish as the shadows clear away.**

Prayer

Sung by Sandy Rowe and congregation

“Watch, O Lord” A Prayer of St. Augustine adapted by Marty Haugen

Watch, O Lord, with all those a - wake this night,
Watch, O Lord, with all those who weep; Give your
an - gels and saints charge o - ver all who sleep.

Cantor in your love, Lord; _____ *All* in your love, Lord; _____
All in your love, O Lord of all.

Benediction