

The Longest Night

*A Service of Worship
December 21, 2022*

Please gather in silence...

Words for Silent Meditation

*Come to my aid, Gentle Healer,
for my prayer is to you.*

*In your perfect timing, beloved God,
in the abundance of your love,
answer my cry.*

*With your strength, O Rock, lift me up,
let me not sink in the mire;*

*let me be delivered from my fears
as from deep waters.*

*Let not the flood sweep over me,
or the deep darkness swallow me up.*

Adapted from Psalms for Praying, Nan Merrill, Psalm 69



Welcome

Pastor Tonya Ramer Wenger

Call to Worship *

During Advent, we are called to settle into
the exquisite darkness,
to hibernate, rest and restore.

This cycle was given to us at the time of Creation.

Pastor Jim Unruh

We are invited to face the darkness in our own lives and in the world around us.

The prophets assure us that the darkness will not overcome us.
They call us to watch for the light, notice the Light,
and be warmed by its rays.

We are called to wait, to hope, to trust in promises made.

As we near the end of this year's Advent journey,
we claim we come alive and find solace in both the light and the darkness.

Prayer

HYMN *Wait for the Lord* VT 228

We receive God's stories of light (after each reading, all respond with words in bold print)

The light of creation: Genesis 1:1-5

One: Jesus, you said, "I am the light of the world."

Many: **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.**

HYMN *It Came upon a Midnight Clear* (verse 1) VT 248

The light of the prophets: Isaiah 9:2-6

One: Jesus, you said, "I am the light of the world."

Many: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

HYMN *It Came upon a Midnight Clear* (verses 2-3) VT 248

The light of hope: Luke 1:46-55

One: Jesus, you said, "I am the light of the world."

Many: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

HYMN *It Came upon a Midnight Clear* (verses 4-5) VT 248

We seek healing and strength for the journey* *

During this time of quiet prayer, you are invited to come and light a candle in memory of loved ones or to recognize other losses you are experiencing. May the combined light of these candles also be a symbol of our hope in the Christ Child, the Light of God, Emmanuel—God with us.

HYMN *Away in a Manger* VT 257

Sending Blessing

One: Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

**Many: The light of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the healing love of God,
and the tender guidance of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.**

Postlude

You are invited to linger and pray as long as you would like. Blessings as you leave here, held by the healing love of God, walking in the light of Jesus, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When you are ready, you are welcome to make your way to the basement fellowship hall for the soup supper beginning at 6:30pm.



**Copyright 2013 Local Church Ministries, Faith Formation Ministry Team, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education.*

***Piano pieces played this evening are arranged by Tiffany Hobson, used with permission.*