

HARVEY BROWNE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

December 21, 2020

Service of the Longest Night
via Facebook Live & YouTube Live

GATHERING MUSIC

WORDS OF WELCOME

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

GATHERING WORDS

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

OPENING PRAYER

God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

HYMN 144

In the Bleak Midwinter
(vs. 1 & 4)

CRANHAM

*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.*

*What shall 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.
But what I can I give him, give my heart.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God, in the stillness of this night, open our hearts and minds to hear your word. May we trust in these ancient words of holy scripture, that we might believe the good news they bring us. Amen.

WORDS OF SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40: 28-31

Matthew 11: 28-30

Psalm 121 (Read responsively)

I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come?

My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth

God will not let your foot be moved; God who watches over you will not fall asleep.

Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night

The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.

The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth for ever more.

Glory to the Creator, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

POEM

“When the Time Had Come”

Kenneth Morse

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

First Candle

For Loved Ones

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost.

We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

Take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts.

Lord, we thank you for the gift each of these people has been I our lives. 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.

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

Second Candle

For the Pain of Loss

The second candle we light is 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 and peace in our lives from the stresses that surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when we lose relationship with those once close.

Please take a moment to remember the losses. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts.

God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. 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.

We remember that through You all things are possible.

Third Candle

For Memories

The third candle we light 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.

Please take a moment to acknowledge the pain of your own memories.

God of grace, 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.

We remember that even when we have journeyed far and felt lost, Your light has not failed.

Fourth Candle

For the Gift of Hope

The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers us, a story which also began in the darkness of abandonment, doubt, humility, war and a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who keeps the light shining and who came to share this life with us...promises us comfort and peace.

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.

Lighting Candles for the Longest Night

And now, dear ones, I invite you to light one or two candles of your own to represent those who you remember this night, memories which you carry, loves which you have lost, hope that may feel fleeting. As you light your candles, may you pray God's peace and light in the midst of this season.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

In the center of this table, we light the Christ candle, remembering that Jesus Christ is always with us. He hears our cries, he knows our hearts and, in the midst of all our fears and emotions, he offers us accompaniment, hope and healing. Let us pray.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for all the good things we need: For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas as special people coping with our many different losses. God, hear our prayer. **And in your mercy, answer.**

For our families and friends, that they may continue to help and support us. God, hear our prayer. **And in your mercy, answer.**

For all the losses we know in our lives, and for the losses we know in the lives of our friends and neighbors. May all sense your supportive presence alongside them. God, hear our prayer. **And in your mercy, answer.**

For our family and friends, that you may bless them with love, peace, and joy. God, hear our prayer. **And in your mercy, answer.**

For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas Angels on that faraway hillside. God, hear our prayer. **And in your mercy, answer.**

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, on this longest night, a reminder of the light you shine, which can never be put out. All this we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

HYMN 115

Away in a Manger
(vs. 1 & 3)

*Away in a manger no crib for a bed
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*Be near me Lord Jesus I ask thee to stay
close by me forever and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.*

CLOSING WORDS

When the world was dark and the city was quiet, you came.
You crept in beside us.

And no one knew. Only the few who dared to believe that God might do something different.

Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of tonight's world?

Will you come into the quietness of this night? Will you come into our lives, if we open them to you? Will you do something different?

When the world was dark and the city was quiet, you came.

You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord. Do the same this Christmas.