

Longest Night 2020 - Compilation of Readings, Songs & Images

Opening Prayer: God we have come to this place with our grief. Here we are in your presence. Draw near to us. Amen.

Opening Song: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dmO8UPIWoo>)

Movement I: Naming the Darkness



© Jonathan Dyck, “Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization”

Readings:

- Psalm 13: 1-4

1 How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?
2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
3 Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
4 and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

- Advent, 1971 (Madeleine L'Engle)

When will he come
and how will he come
and will there be warnings
and will there be thunders
and rumbles of armies
coming before him
and banners and trumpets
When will he come
and how will he come
and will we be ready

O woe to you people
you sleep through the thunder
you heed not the warnings
the fires and the drownings
the earthquakes and stormings
and ignorant armies
and dark closing on you
the song birds are falling
the sea birds are dying
no fish now are leaping
the children are choking
in air not for breathing
the aged are gasping
with no one to tend them

a bright star has blazed forth
and no one has seen it
and no one has wakened

Song: How Long (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnKsvuftWgQ>)

A Prayer for the Sorrowing

Let us now hold our own sorrows and the sorrows of those around us.

Tender God, we come to you in this Christmas season, with the pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words. Loving God, hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, there are those among us who are grieving over what used to be and cannot be anymore. A death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. We come with those grieving loved ones. We come with those grieving the loss of work, belonging, identity, or a sense of meaning in life. We come with those who feel lonely, sad and isolated. We find ourselves adrift, alone and lost. Loving God, hear our prayer.

Faithful God, this Christmas season reminds us of all our unfulfilled hopes and dreams. We come with those grieving the vacancy of childhood, family, community, and culture. We come with those grieving broken relationships, broken bodies, and broken spirits. We come with those longing for romantic relationships and with those longing for children. We come with those whose grief is ambiguous and difficult to name. While around, some of us hear the sounds of celebration, we only experience a sense of emptiness. Loving God, hear our prayer.

Loving God, in this particular year, we have borne witness to such suffering. We come before you with heavy hearts not knowing how to reconcile your great Love with such loss and brokenness. We come with those who have experienced losses related to COVID-19. We come with those who are ill, with those who are dying, with those who have lost a loved one, with those who have lost a sense of stability and routine, and with those who have lost social interaction with friends and family. We come with families grieving loss due to the worsening opioid crisis. We come with those who are hungry, with those who have no home, and with those who are scared.

Loving God, hear our prayer.

Loving God, we have also witnessed a year of immense struggle for human dignity and life. We come with those fighting for racial equality and for environmental protection. We come with water protectors and land defenders, with those fighting for truth, reconciliation and Indigenous sovereignty. We come with those standing in the face of injustice for Black communities, and People of Colour. We come with those working for

justice and dignity for LGBTQ2S+ communities. Loving God, please be near to us this night. Hear our prayer, and in your merciful love answer.

Lament Instrumental: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itbyWSfd9Iw>

Silence

Movement 2: Welcoming the Light

Reading 2a:

- Shine in the Dark I (Lucy Shaw)

From a dark dust of stars
kindled one, a prick of light.
Burn! small candle star,
burn in the black night.
In the still hushed heart
(dark as black night)
shine! Savior newly born,
shine, till the heart's light!

- Shine in the Dark II (Lucy Shaw)

Into blackness breached with white
the star shivers like a bell.
God of birth and brightness
bless the cool carillon
singing into sight!
Plot its poised pointing flight!
Dark has its victories
tonight, in David's town.
But the star bell's tongue
trembles silver still
in your felicity.

Song: We Watch for the Light (instrumental) can be found on GCBC resource page here
<https://www.gcbchurch.ca/resources/songs>

Naming Our Sorrow: Let us pray. God, we invite you to walk with us in this land of deep darkness. Together, we bring our stories of grief, loss, longing and sorrow into the open that your light, oh God of tender compassion and steadfast love, may shine in our lives. Walk with us this

night O God. Loving God, we name to you the following (you may name your loss, longing or griefs now)

Lord, surround this person in your love. We ask that your tender heart would be near to each person here tonight, in the losses and longings that have been named aloud and those that have been named quietly. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, in order to guide our feet into the path of peace. Walk with us this night, O God. Surround us in your love.

Silence



Readings 2b:

- Shine in the Dark III (Lucy Shaw)

The stars look out on
roofs of snow.
They see the night,
a velvet glow
with amber lanterns

shining so.
God searches through
the sweep of night.
Is there a heart that burns
warm and bright
to warm God's own heart
at the sight?

Silence

Movement 3: Consolation

We will move now into our third and final movement. In this movement we are going to listen together to a piece of music. During this listening, we are invited into a time of consolation. We trust that God is our great comforter and is present here with us. You are invited to any body posture or activity that promotes an intention of comfort. You may want to draw, move, lay down, or just sit and be still. Find a comfortable position and take a moment to relax your body. Take a breath, notice where your body hits the chair or the floor, and feel the support of that surface. You are invited to take a scan of your body and notice the places that hold tension. With your next breath, you are invited to breath into those spaces as we come to this time. I invite you to look inward and reflect on the movements we have journeyed through this evening and let the music join you there.

Listening Song: Enigma Variation No. 9 (by Elgar)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFZ75vKe3YY>

Silence

The music has now ended. Take a moment to return to this space. God of Light, we acknowledge you as the Great Comforter. May you bring hope to us this night.

Let us close this time in prayer. Come Child of Light, heal this sorrow. For your light is deeper than our deepest darkness.

Benediction:

Final Reading:

- May you go Easy, To be Filled with Light, and to Shine (Mary Oliver)

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,

equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine."

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine."

Final Benediction: May God's warmth and light arise up within you in the darkest of your long nights. Go now in peace. Amen.

If you would like prayer following this service, please do not hesitate to email the prayer corner at prayercorner@gcbchurch.ca

If you would like to linger now, you can listen to the following songs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSeg69d3CQ8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5RZyYItsmc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqMF-Vc6e48>