

SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH



*Offering comfort, hope and healing
for all who are challenged by this holiday season*

LITURGY OF THE LONGEST NIGHT
Blue Christmas

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2020
SEVEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

THE ENTRANCE RITE

VOLUNTARY

In the bleak midwinter

Cranham, Gustav Holst (1874-1934);
arr. Mark Hayes (b. 1953)

HYMN

Harmony

My Lord, what a morn-ing, My Lord, what a morn-ing, O

Fine

my Lord, what a morn-ing, When the stars be-gin to fall.

Unison

1. You'll hear the trum - pet sound,
2. You'll hear the sin - ner mourn, To wake the
3. You'll hear the Chris - tian shout,

na - tions un - der - ground, Look - ing to my God's right

D.C.

hand, When the stars be-gin to fall.

text: Traditional
music: Spiritual

WELCOME

CANDLE LIGHTING AND LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

OPENING ACCLAMATION

Presider By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us.
People **To give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Presider The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Presider Let us pray.

OHOLY ONE, WHOSE COMING WE AWAIT, you invite us into the light of your presence on this longest night of the year: Illumine the dark and doubting places of our weary and wounded hearts, community and world. We are thirsty for your healing comfort, compassion, and peace. Draw near to us and fill us, that we may pour out your goodness to all who hunger and thirst for your mercy. **Amen.**

—————THE LITURGY OF THE WORD—————

THE FIRST READING

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED IN DARKNESS have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Presider Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
People **Thanks be to God.**

THE GRADUAL: PSALM 13 *Usquequo, Domine?*

trans. and adapt. Stephen Mitchell, from A Book of Psalms

The Psalm is read in unison.

HOW LONG WILL THIS PAIN go on, Lord,
this grief I can hardly bear?
How long will anguish grip me
and agony wring my mind?
Light up my eyes with your presence;
let me feel your love in my bones.
Keep me from losing myself
in ignorance and despair.
Teach me to be patient, Lord;
teach me to be endlessly patient.
Let me trust that your love enfolds me
when my heart feels desolate and dry.
I will sing to the Lord at all times,
even from the depths of pain.

HYMN

1. Heal - ing riv - er of the Spir - it, Bathe the
 2. Well-spring of the heal - ing Spir - it, Stream that
 3. Liv - ing stream that heals the na - tions, Make us

wounds that liv - ing brings. Plunge our pain, our sin, our
 flows to bring re - lease, As we gain our selves, our
 chan - nels of your pow'r. All the world is torn by

sad - ness Deep be - neath your sa - cred springs.
 sens - es, May our lives re - flect your peace.
 con - flict; Wars are rag - ing at this hour.

Wea - ry from the rest - less search - ing That has
 Grate - ful for the flood that heals us, May your
 Sav - ing Spir - it, move a - mong us, Guide our

lured us from your side, We dis - cov - er in your
 Church en - act your grace. As we meet both friend and
 wind - ing hu - man course, Till we find our way to -

pres - ence Peace the world can - not pro - vide.
 stran - ger, May we see our Sav - ior's face.
 geth - er, Flow - ing home - ward to our Source.

text: Ruth C. Duck (b. 1947)

music: *Beach Spring*, Benjamin F. White (1800-1879)

THE SECOND READING

For Absence by John O'Donohue (1956-2008),
 from *To Bless the Space Between Us*, 2008

MAY YOU KNOW THAT ABSENCE is alive with hidden presence,
 that nothing is ever lost or forgotten.
 May the absences in your life grow full of eternal echo.
 May you sense around you the secret Elsewhere,
 where the presences that have left you dwell.
 May you be generous in your embrace of loss.
 May the sore well of grief turn into a seamless flow of presence.
 May your compassion reach out to the ones we never hear from.
 May you have the courage to speak for the excluded ones.
 May you become the gracious and passionate subject of your own life.
 May you not disrespect your mystery through brittle words or false belonging.
 May you be embraced by God in whom dawn and twilight are one.
 May your longing inhabit its dreams within the Great Belonging.

HYMN



1. Peace be - fore us, peace be - hind us,
 2. Love be - fore us, love be - hind us,
 3. Light be - fore us, light be - hind us,
 4. Christ be - fore us, Christ be - hind us,



peace un - der our feet. _____ Peace with - in us,
 love un - der our feet. _____ Love with - in us,
 light un - der our feet. _____ Light with - in us,
 Christ un - der our feet. _____ Christ with - in us,



peace o - ver us, let all a - round us be peace. _____
 love o - ver us, let all a - round us be love. _____
 light o - ver us, let all a - round us be light. _____
 Christ o - ver us, let all a - round us be Christ. _____

text: David Haas (b. 1957), based on a Navaho prayer
music: David Haas

THE HOLY GOSPEL

John 1:1-5

Presider The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Presider The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

HOMILY

The Reverend Gwynn Crichton

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider Standing at the threshold of the longest night as we await the light of Christmas, we offer the prayers of our hearts, praying for ourselves, community, church and world to Emmanuel, God with us.

Intercessor Stand near in the darkness, gracious God. We are broken by our loss and afraid of our future, overwhelmed by all we cannot understand.

People **Stand near in the darkness, gracious God; comfort us in our pain.**

Intercessor We are heavy with sadness and grief, sick with despair, aching with emptiness;

People **Stand near in the darkness, gracious God; comfort us in our pain.**

Intercessor We are confused and enraged at the injustices in our communities and world. We are frightened to find ourselves doubting your love.

People **Stand near in the darkness, gracious God; comfort us in our pain.**

Intercessor Our bodies cannot rise or rest, our hearts are like stones.

People **Stand near in the darkness, gracious God; comfort us in our pain.**

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.**

Intercessor Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love. Only you can heal us. Send your life-giving Spirit to renew our broken hearts.

People **Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love.**

Intercessor Increase in us patience toward ourselves and one another.

People **Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love.**

Intercessor Give us grace to let go of lost dreams, entrusting ourselves to your purpose and will.

People **Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love.**

Intercessor Use our sorrows to enlarge our compassion toward others and ourselves.

People **Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love.**

Intercessor Release us from fear, renew us in love, and rekindle our hope.

People **Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love.**

Intercessor Fill us with gratitude for the good things we enjoy, help us to notice our blessings.

People **Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love.**

Intercessor Help us remember, always, those who suffer in illness, war, poverty, or despair, and turn our hearts towards their relief.

People **Save and restore us, Good Lord, by your love.**

You may name, silently or aloud, those for whom you are concerned.

Intercessor Renew us this night, that we might live as your children in the strength of your love.

People **O come, O Dayspring from on high, and cheer us by your drawing nigh; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!**

Presider Holy and Gracious God, as a father has compassion on his children, so do you have mercy on us. As a mother carries and feeds her children, so do you carry us in our afflictions, and feed us with healing and joy. We thank you for strengthening and renewing us in your love. We pray for grace to help you push back the darkness in our world, to help unfold your light, and to live with courage, kindness, and hope. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People **And also with you.**

THE HOLY COMMUNION

SOLO AT THE OFFERTORY

music: Spiritual
text: Spiritual

THERE IS A BALM IN GILEAD,
to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead,
to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged,
and think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit
revives my soul again.

If you cannot preach like Peter,
if you cannot pray like Paul,
you can tell the love of Jesus,
and say, "He died for all."

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Presider Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Presider All thanks and praise are yours at all times and in all places, our true and loving God; through Jesus Christ, your eternal Word, the Wisdom from on high by whom you created all things. You laid the foundations of the world and enclosed the sea when it burst out from the womb; You brought forth all creatures of the earth and gave breath to humankind. Wondrous are you, Holy One of Blessing, all you create is a sign of hope for our journey; And so as the morning stars sing your praises we join the heavenly beings and all creation as we shout with joy:

SANCTUS AND BENEDICTUS

Ho - ly, ho - ly Ho - ly Lord, God of power and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho san - na in the high-est.
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho
san - na in the high - est, ho san - na in the high-est.

text: Mass Ordinary, Fifth century
music: *Land of Rest*, American folk tune

The Presider continues.

GLORY AND HONOR ARE YOURS, Creator of all, your Word has never been silent; you called a people to yourself, as a light to the nations, you delivered them from bondage and led them to a land of promise. Of your grace, you gave Jesus to be human, to share our life, to proclaim the coming of your holy reign and give himself for us, a fragrant offering. Through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, you have freed us from sin, brought us into your life, reconciled us to you, and restored us to the glory you intend for us.

We thank you that on the night before he died for us Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, gave it to his friends and said: "Take, eat, this is my Body, broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." After supper Jesus took the cup of wine, said the blessing, gave it to his friends and said: "Drink this, all of you: this cup is the new Covenant in my Blood, poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And so, remembering all that was done for us: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection and ascension, longing for Christ's coming in glory, and presenting to you these gifts your earth has formed and human hands have made, we acclaim you, O Christ:

Presider and People

Dying, you destroyed our death.
Rising, you restored our life.
Christ Jesus, come in glory!

The Presider continues.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine that they may be to us the Body and Blood of your Christ. Grant that we, burning with your Spirit's power, may be a people of hope, justice and love. Giver of Life, draw us together in the Body of Christ, and in the fullness of time gather us with all your people into the joy of our true eternal home. Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, we worship you our God and Creator in voices of unending praise.

Presider and People

Blessed are you now and forever. AMEN.

The Presider continues.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The Presider breaks the bread followed by silence.

Presider This is the true bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

People **Whoever eats this bread will live for ever.**

THE COMMUNION

Presider Let us pray.

FAITHFUL GOD, in the wonder of your wisdom and love, you fed your people in the wilderness with the bread of angels and you sent Jesus to be the bread of life. Though we cannot consume these gifts of bread and wine together, we thank you that we have received Christ's presence, the forgiveness of sins, and all other benefits of Christ's passion and resurrection. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we embody your love, be renewed for your service, and be reflections of the awakened and risen Lord. Amen.

The Presider receives communion on behalf of the community.

THE POSTCOMMUNION PRAYER

The people say together

ETERNAL GOD, we thank you that in Christ you give yourself into our hands: with our hearts and with our lives, may we proclaim the coming feast when many will come from east and west, from north and south to greet the Lord of all: we ask this in his name. Amen.

HYMN

1 In the bleak mid - win - ter, frost - y wind made moan,
 2 Our God, heaven can - not hold him, nor — earth sus - tain;
 3 An - gels and arch - an - gels may have gath - ered there,
 4 What — can I give him, poor — as I am?

earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone;
 heaven and earth shall flee a - way when he comes to reign:
 cher - u - bim and se - ra - phim throng - ed the air;
 If I were a shep - herd, I would bring a lamb;

snow had fal - len, snow on snow, snow — on — snow,
 in the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble - place suf - ficed
 but his mo - ther on - ly, in her maid - en bliss,
 if I were a wise — man, I would do my part;

in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.
 the Lord — God in - car - nate, Je - sus Christ.
 wor - shiped the be - lov - ed with a kiss.
 yet what I can I give him— give my heart.

text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)
music: Cranham, Gustav Theodore Holst (1874-1934)

A BLESSING FOR HEALING

by *The Right Reverend Steven Charleston*

MAY THE HEALING HAND OF GOD touch you in every way. May you feel God's warmth move through your body like liquid sunshine, healing you, restoring you, strengthening you. May you breathe in the power of God to renew you and bring you back to the fullness of life. May the ancient Spirit that has sustained so many sustain you, answering your prayers for healing so you will not feel alone. May the power of all that is sacred enter your soul and remain there until your healing is made complete. Be whole and be well through the love of the One who made you. **Amen.**

THE DISMISSAL

The Presider gives the dismissal.

People **Thanks be to God!**

VOLUNTARY

Poco Allegretto

César Franck (1822-1890)

—PARTICIPANTS—

Presider

The Reverend Rainey G. Dankel, *Associate Rector for Parish Life*

Preacher

The Reverend Gwynn Crichton, *Associate Rector for Pastoral Care*

Musicians

Dr. Christopher Reynolds, *Director of Music and Organist*

Stephanie Hill Blackwood, *Cantor*

Lectors

Nancy Burns, Sandra Whitfield, Howard Wells

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