



Sunday, December 19, 2021

**THE LONGEST NIGHT WORSHIP SERVICE**

All Are Welcome

For those who have experienced loss, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways. We know that many approach this season with mixed emotions. Tonight's service is designed to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the holiday hustle and bustle.

In this pandemic season of life, we imagine that grief and loss will be magnified and nearly universal, and a service like this may be needed now more than ever. We hope that this service offers a space of calm, quiet, and healing.

**WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2021**

**GATHERING**

*\*Please stand as you are comfortable. **Bold** indicates congregational response.*

**Prelude**

**Poetic Meditation**

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn

We are raw nerves, exposed and tender.  
We are weary bones, hunched and fragile.  
We are silent prayers, lips saying your name.  
We are wedding rings we can't take off, even though  
time has passed.  
We are the same pew, but it feels different now.  
We are a brave face when we have to be strong.  
We are tears in the shower when grief roars its head.  
We are setting the table, but there are empty seats.  
We are stuck in the swell, caught in the storm.  
We are moving on, caught in our guilt.  
We are okay some days, but some days we're not.  
We are familiar with the night, we know it by name.  
We are night-walkers, dream-makers, star-chasers.  
We are close to home, but home has changed.  
We are close to the surface, but the waters are rising.  
We are all of this, plus everything else, and we are here.  
We are here.  
Grief is here.  
God is here.  
The night is here.  
And all of this is true,  
and we are not alone.  
Take my hand.  
Take these words.  
Let them be your life raft.  
Let this be the longest night,  
and let it be whatever you need it to be.  
We are here.  
Grief is here.  
God is here.  
Take what you need.  
Amen.

**\*Hymn**

*In the Bleak Midwinter*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 221, vs. 1, 4

# READING THE WORD

## Prayer for Illumination

Pastor Lane

God, we do not have night vision.  
The sun has set on the world as we know it  
and we do not have night vision.  
So today we come to your Word  
hoping that this ancient truth found in scripture  
will feel like a hand in the dark.  
Guide our feet.  
Move us through this wilderness season.  
Tilt our heads upward to see the stars,  
and let your Word be a blanket in the cold,  
a light on the horizon,  
and a friend to walk alongside.  
We do not have night vision,  
but we know we have you.  
Move through us.  
Move among us  
and move through us.  
Gratefully we pray, amen.

## Scripture Reading

Marilyn Damberg, Johnny McWilliams

*Each reading will be followed by contemplative music and time for personal prayer and reflection.*

Isaiah 40:1-2, 28-31

Lamentations 3:21-24

John 14:1-4, 25-27

Psalms 121

# RESPONDING

## Prayers of the People & The Lord's Prayer

*Verses from "When We Are Called to Sing Your Praise" will be woven into our prayer. We invite you to sing along or listen as you remain prayerful.*

*When We Are Called to Sing Your Praise*  
The Faith We Sing Songbook 2216

**When we are called to sing your praise  
with hearts so filled with pain  
that we would rather sit and weep  
or stand up to complain,  
remind us, God, you understand  
the burdens that we bear;  
you, too, have walked the shadowed way  
and known our deep despair.**

When we are called to sing your praise  
and cannot find our voice,  
because our losses leave us now  
no reason to rejoice,  
remind us, God, that you accept  
our sad laments in prayer;  
you, too, have walked the shadowed way  
and known our deep despair.

When we are called to sing your praise  
and life ahead looks grim,  
still give us faith and hope enough  
to break forth in a hymn,  
a thankful hymn, great God of Love,  
that you are everywhere;  
you walk the shadowed way with us  
and keep us in your care.

### **Individual Prayer and Reflection**

*Having prayed together as a community, we now shift our attention to the individual prayers that weigh on our hearts. As contemplative music plays, we invite you into a guided written prayer practice with the following prompts:*

**Write five words that describe how you're feeling in this moment.**

**Write down the names of people you carry in your heart today.**

**Write down one area of your own life where you could use God's help, comfort, or guidance.**

**Write down a prayer for your faith journey.**

**Write down a prayer concern you have for our world.**

**Take a minute to write any lingering prayers you have at this moment.**

### **Visual Meditation**

Music Video

#### *The Hurting Times*

*“The Hurting Times” was written by the band Barnaby Bright after hearing their pastor tell a story of the way his grandmother used to say, “I wish I could give you my heart for the hurting times.” Inspired by these words, they wrote a song which became “The Hurting Times.” It is a powerful story of a love that would do anything for another. In many ways, it can remind us of how God grieves alongside us and feels all that we feel.*

### **Candle Lighting**

*Having prayed together as a community individually and communally, take a few moments to ritualize the weight and significance of these prayers. Think of a person, incident, experience, or need in their life that you wish to lift up to God. When you are ready, move forward to light a candle or two in honor of that prayer. Watch the room grow brighter as the light spreads.*

# SENDING

## \*Hymn

*What Wondrous Love Is This*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 292, vs. 1, 2, 4

## \*Communal Sending

We are here.

**We are here.**

I see you and your pain.

**I see you and your pain.**

I see you and your hope.

**I see you and your hope.**

You are my neighbor.

**You are my neighbor.**

We belong to one another.

**We belong to one another.**

We are not in this alone.

**We are not in this alone.**

Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

**Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.**

**Amen.**

## \*Benediction

## \*Postlude

*Thank you for worshipping with us.  
Go in peace.*

# WORSHIP NOTES

## Prayers and Liturgy

Most of our prayers and liturgy were written by Sarah Are Speed | A Sanctified Art, LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).

## Livestream of Worship

To join a livestream of worship, share today's service or watch previous worship services, visit <http://facebook.com/stjohnsbr/live>.

## Music Livestream

Permission to stream music covered by OneLicense A-732159 and CCLI 20233858.





# Christmas Eve at St. John's

Friday December 24  
at 5 pm

You are invited home to St. John's for Christmas Eve worship. In keeping with our Advent theme of "Close to Home," we will join Mary and Joseph on their journey home, as the only place they can find shelter for giving birth is a stable. Jesus, born without a home, invites us to come home - a place of welcoming and appreciation. This special evening of worship will include beautiful music, featuring several ensembles, a children's message, a meditation by Pastor Lane, Christmas carols, Holy Communion and will conclude with a special candle lighting.



## Carols, Communion, and Cookies

Sunday, December 26 at 10AM



We invite you to come comfortable on **Sunday, December 26 for Carols, Communion, and Cookies at 10 a.m.** We will sing tons of Christmas carols, share in Holy Communion, and enjoy loads of cookies following the service – plus coffee and hot cocoa. Children are invited to bring one toy they received for Christmas for a Blessing of the Toys during worship – in person and virtually. You won't want to miss this uplifting morning of worship and fellowship! Feel free to bring some cookies to share.



**ST. JOHN'S**  
United Methodist Church

*Glorifying God. Feeding People. Making Disciples.*