

# THE LONGEST NIGHT

A SERVICE OF HOPE AND HEALING



6:30 p.m. – Midweek Advent Service

## Order of Service

Saint Michael Lutheran Church

3595 Broadway, Fort Myers, Florida 33901

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Third Wednesday of Advent

December 18, 2024

### Prelude

*"Of the Father's Love Begotten"*

*setting by Wilbur Held*

### Welcome

### Opening Carol

*"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*  
*(verses 1, 4-5)*

**357**

### Opening Sentences

*Pastor:* In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*People:* **Amen.**

*Pastor:* While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels like celebrating or even hopeful. Feelings of loneliness, grief, depression and loss are often heightened and magnified as the days get shorter and the nights get longer. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas. This Blue Christmas service is meant to provide a time and a place of solace during the often rushed and overwhelming days of Christmastime. We hold fast to the promise in Isaiah: there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress (*Isaiah 9:1*). In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (*John 1:1-5*).

*People:* **The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth, and we have seen His glory.**

*Pastor:* In Him was life, and that life was the light of all (*John 1:1-5*).

*People:* **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

*Pastor:* Our hope is in the strong and eternal name of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

*People:* **Amen.**

### Carol

*"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*  
*(verse 6)*

**357**

### Prayer



## ***The Longest Night***

*A Service of Hope and Healing*  
by Joseph Martin



### Overture

*"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

*tune by Gustav Holst*  
*arranged by Joseph Martin*

## Prayer

*Pastor:* Heavenly Father, we gather here to worship You and reflect on the promises of our faith. As the world around us celebrates, we must acknowledge that many people are viewing the dazzling lights of Christmas through glistening eyes filled with tears. Many must listen to joyful carols through the quiet sighs of sorrow and sadness. As many people exchange gifts and spend treasured times with loved ones, some are left to contend with the pangs of loss and daily struggles with health, finances and loneliness.

**People:** Lord, we know in our hearts that You have plans to prosper us and give us an abundant and joyful life, yet we also remember that You wept during Your earthly life. We know You are well-acquainted with grief and that You are not a stranger to deep sorrow. Thank You for coming into our world and becoming one of us, for being one with our struggles and for sharing our burdens. We ask that You begin a divine healing in us, a restoration of hope and a renewal of joy. Amen.

*Pastor:* The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silent before Him (*Habakkuk 2:20*). This is the Word of our Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## Anthem

*“Be Still and Know”*

*traditional Austrian melody  
arranged by Joseph Martin*

## Meditation

## Anthem

*“The Winter Weeps in Snowfall”*

*traditional French melody  
arranged by Joseph Martin*

## Meditation

## Responsive Litany

*attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi*

*Pastor:* Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

**People:** Where there is injury—pardon;

*Pastor:* Where there is doubt—faith;

**People:** Where there is despair—hope;

*Pastor:* Where there is darkness—light;

**People:** Where there is sadness—joy;

*Pastor:* O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,

**People:** To be understood as to understand,

*Pastor:* To be loved as to love;

**People:** For it is in giving that we receive;

*Pastor:* It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

**People:** Amen.

## Anthem

*“He Shall Feed His Flock”*

*music by Joseph Martin  
text based on Isaiah 40:11 and 53:6*

## Meditation

## Prayer

*Pastor:* Let us pray.

**People:** Heavenly Father, we pray for a miracle of grace in the lives of those we love. We surrender to Your will knowing that You are in every situation working good for our lives. Anoint us, Lord, with Your oil of assurance and heal our diseases and restore our injured bodies. Create in us new hearts and renew a right Spirit within us. Give us patience and courage to wait upon Your perfect will for our lives and embrace Your purposes in every situation. Amen.

*Pastor:* Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for You are the one I praise (*Jeremiah 17:14*).

**People:** Amen.

## Anthem

*“The Healing Place”*

*music by Joseph Martin  
text by J. Martin and C. B. McAfee*

## Meditation

## Anthem

*“I Thank My God”*

*music by Joseph Martin  
text based on Philippians 1:3*

## Scripture

*Psalm 30:1-5*

*Pastor:* I will exalt you, Lord, for You lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

**People:** Lord, my God, I called to You for help, and You healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; You spared me from going down to the pit.

*Pastor:* Sing the praises of the Lord, You His faithful people; praise His holy name. For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime;

**People:** Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

*Pastor:* This is the Word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## Anthem

*“In the Bleak Midwinter”*

*tune by Gustav Holst  
text by Christina Rossetti  
arranged by Joseph Martin*

## Offering

## Luther’s Evening Prayer

*Psalm 30:1-5*

## The Lord’s Prayer

## Blessing

## Closing Carol

*“The Night Will Soon Be Ending”*

**337**

## Postlude

*“In Sweet Rejoicing”*

*by J.S. Bach*