



**FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

NURTURE. LOVE. SERVE. ALL.



Service for the Longest Night

December 21, 2021

6:00 pm

The Uses of Sorrow

(In my sleep I dreamed this poem)
Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.
It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.
from "Thirst," by Mary Oliver

Prelude

Anne Armstrong, piano

Call to Worship 70

In Deepest Night
Rachel Green, mezzo

Rose Mary

In deepest night, in darkest days,
When harps are hung, no song we raise,
When silence must suffice as praise,
Yet sounding in us quietly
There is the song of God.

When friend was lost, when love deceived,
Dear Jesus wept, God was bereaved;
So with us in our grief God grieves,
And round about us mournfully
There are the tears of God.

When through the waters winds our path,
Around us pain, around us death:
Deep calls to deep, a saving breath
And found beside us faithfully
There is the love of God.

Welcome and Invocation

Kelsey Stillwell

Carol of Advent 79

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.**

Refrain:

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. [Refrain]**

**O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in Her ways to go. [Refrain]**

**O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
Fill all the world with heaven's peace. [Refrain]**

Scripture Lesson

1 Samuel 1:4-10, 12-18

JD Granade

On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. Her rival [Peninnah] used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?”

After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly.

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.” But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.” Then Eli answered, “Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.” And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your sight.” Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

Meditation

JD Granade

Musical Response

Jerry Bunch, guitar

Collects of Healing and Wholeness

Kelsey Stillwell

After each prayer, our response will be,

“Lord, hear our prayer.”

Sharing Our Light

The Congregation

During this time of music and silent reflection, you are invited to light a candle at the altar to lift up the memory of a loved one or other loss, a need for healing, or simply to acknowledge the presence of God in your life. You are invited to take your candle with you at the end of the service.

Musical Meditation

Jerry Bunch, guitar

Silence is Kept

Litany of Light

Scott Dickison

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.

John 1:1-5

Carol of Comfort 89

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

HYFRYDOL

**Comfort, comfort ye my people,
speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness,
mourning 'neath their sorrows' load.**

**Speak ye to Jerusalem
of the peace that waits for them;
tell her that her sins I cover,
and her warfare now is over.**

**Hark, the voice of one that crieth
in the desert far and near,
bidding all to true repentance
since the kingdom now is here.
O that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way;
let the valleys rise to meet Him,
and the hills bow down to greet Him.**

**Make ye straight what long was crooked,
make the rougher places plain;
let your hearts be true and humble,
as befits His holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord
now o'er earth is shed abroad;
and all flesh shall see the token
that His word is never broken.**

Closing Blessing

“Blessing for the Longest Night”

JD Granade

by Jan Richardson

All throughout these months, as the shadows have lengthened,
this blessing has been gathering itself, making ready, preparing for this night.

It has practiced walking in the dark, traveling with its eyes closed,
feeling its way by memory, by touch, by the pull of the moon even as it wanes.

So believe me when I tell you this blessing will reach you, even if you have not
light enough to read it; it will find you, even though you cannot see it coming.

You will know this moment of its arriving by your release of the breath you have held so long;
a loosening of the clenching in your hands, of the clutch around your heart;
a thinning of the darkness that had drawn itself around you.

This blessing does not mean to take the night away,
but it knows its hidden roads, knows the resting spots along the path,
knows what it means to travel in the company of a friend.

So when this blessing comes, take its hand.
Get up. Set out on the road you cannot see.

This is the night when you can trust that any direction you go,
you will be walking toward the dawn.

Postlude

Anne Armstrong, piano

*You are welcome to remain in the sanctuary for silent reflection and prayer. Please leave in
silence to maintain a prayerful environment for those who stay.*

RESOURCES FOR GRIEF

Please contact one of the ministers for assistance in finding local resources for grief and loss, or if you'd just like to talk.

Scott: scott@fbcxmacon.org Kelsey: kelsey@fbcxmacon.org JD: jd@fbcxmacon.org

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN:

- Talking with Kids about Tragedy, <http://practicingfamilies.com/2013/03/20/when-tragedy-strikes/>
- Sesame Street Video: When Families Grieve, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NFbHMFFL-E>
- List of Recommended Books <http://www.buildfaith.org/2012/12/18/books-for-help-and-healing/>

BOOKS FOR ADULTS:

- *Everything Happens for a Reason, and Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler
- *Mending the Heart*, by John Claypool
- *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*, by Jan Richardson



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