

The Longest Night
A Holiday Service of Loss, Longing, and Hope
“Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:4

Prelude

“A Rossetti Christmas”

Rossetti, arr. Hayes

Gathering

Words of Welcome and Intent

Call to Worship

P Creator God, envelop this space,

C **For grief is like an ocean, pulling us back in, and we need you in the midst of the waves.**

P Creator God, hold us now,

C **For our hands are already full, carrying memories and heartache, and we need you to carry us.**

P Creator God, in times of sorrow, we turn to you.

C **Thank you for staying through the longest nights.**

Reflection One: Acknowledging our Grief

Blessing for Falling into a New Layer of Grief

Jan Richardson

Response - Stones of Grief

As a way to acknowledge our grief, you are invited to take the stone you received at the beginning of the service. Feeling the weight of it in your hand, bring to mind a reminder of your grief. It may be the name of loved one, a loss, a change in your life, or a circumstance that causes you to grieve. Let the stone carry the weight of that grief with you. In your silent prayer, let God’s kindness find you in this longest night.

Piano Meditation

“The Father’s Rose”

arr. Hayes

Reflection Two: Remembrance

Prayer

Psalm 69:1-3, 13-18

Confessing our Need for Healing

One: God of connection and love, I confess—

All: **There are people singing tonight, but my heart is too heavy for singing.**

One: God of my heart and my mind, I confess—

All: **I know that I need you, but it’s hard to let you in. Grief builds walls where love had once been.**

One: God of the here and now, I confess—

All: **There is guilt that I carry, and memories to bury, but forgiving myself seems unnecessary.**

One: God of my prayers and my dreams, I confess—

All: This path of grief is miserably hard, bringing out difficult emotions in me. Forgive me when I get it wrong. Love me back to grace and peace. Amen.

Releasing Stones

During the piano meditation, you are invited to come forward and place your stone in the basket at the table. After letting go of the stone, take a pinch of salt and sprinkle it in the bowl of water as a symbol of the tears of release you shed. Through these acts, we offer our grief to God, for grief is too great to carry alone.

Piano Meditation

“Still, Still, Still”

arr. Hayes

Reflection Three: God’s Understanding

Scripture

Prayer

Candle Lighting

You are welcome to come forward, lighting a candle as a silent prayer to God. You are welcome to kneel at the altar if you wish. As you kneel at the rail or sit in your seat, the pastor will come around to everyone, laying a prayer shawl on your shoulders, so you know our prayers are with you and that you are not alone.

Piano Meditation

“Gesù Bambino (The Infant Jesus)”

arr. Hayes

Blessing for the Longest Night

Jan Richardson

Sending Hymn

“Silent Night, Holy Night!”

281, Vs.1

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Verse 1

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Benediction and Sending

People of the St. John Prayer Shawl Ministry made these prayers shawls with you on their minds and in their prayers. They are knit and crocheted with love. You are encouraged to take another prayer shawl with you as you leave in order to share it with someone else who grieves something or someone this holiday season.

Worship Leaders

Pastor Robin Caldwell
Piano Susan Yokubonis