



*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.  
John 1:5*

**Longest Night Worship Service**  
*Tuesday ~ December 17, 2024*



**BETHLEHEM**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ [www.blcfairport.org](http://www.blcfairport.org)  
The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

## GATHERING

### GATHERING MUSIC

In the Bleak Midwinter

Gustav Holst  
arr. David Hicken

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Tonight the earth tilts and tips, its axis pulling this half of the world  
away from the sun.

**This is the longest night.**

The shadows lengthen. The darkness lingers.  
Those we love don't always notice, but it's true:  
**this is the longest night.**

Tonight, we bring to God what weighs on us in the small hours.  
**This is the longest night.**

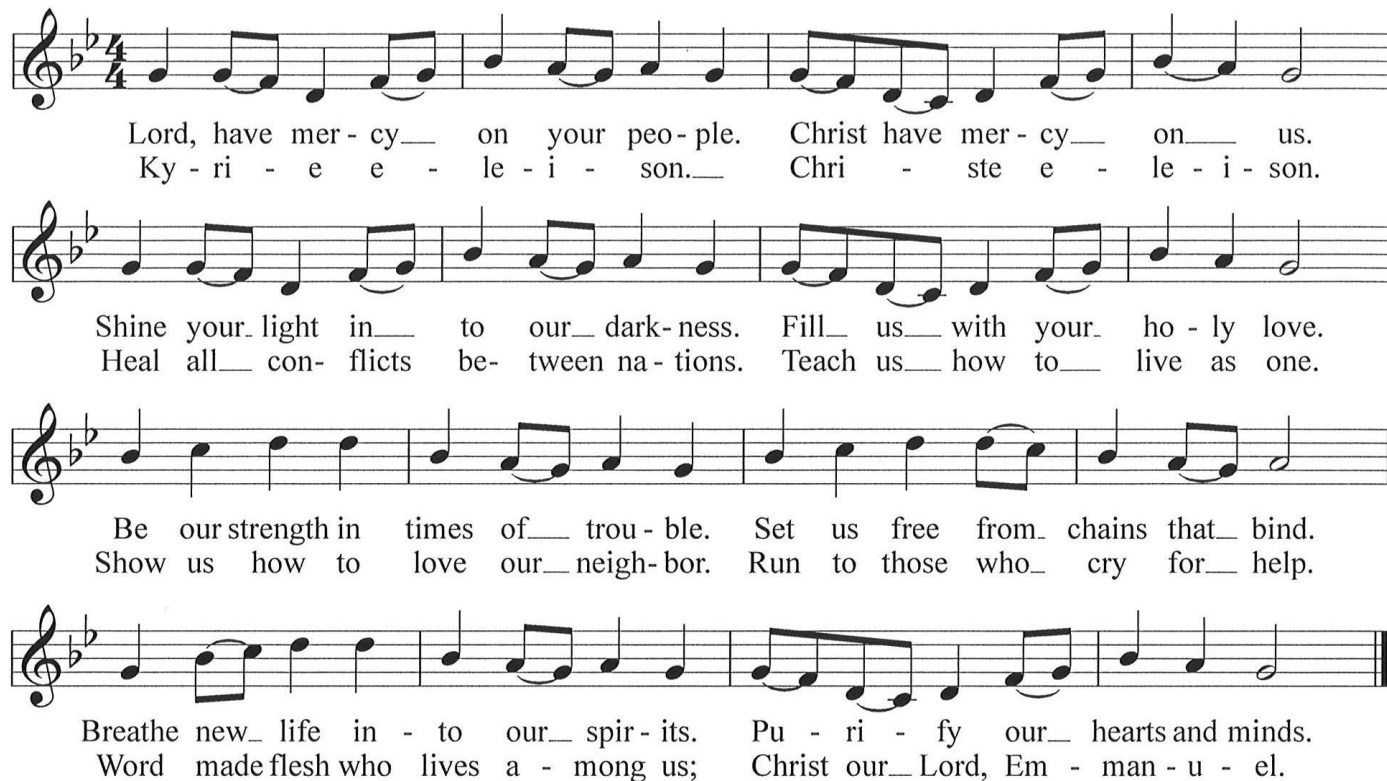
This gathering darkness is not a threat but a shelter, a time to name what is true:  
Sometimes joy doesn't come easily.  
**Yet God still meets us.**

Sometimes merriness is not within reach.  
**Yet God still meets us.**

Sometimes despair doesn't depart at dawn.  
**Yet God still meets us.**

Come, bring your whole selves to God.  
**God's arms are open wide.**

## KYRIE



Lord, have mer - cy\_\_ on your peo - ple. Christ have mer - cy\_\_ on\_\_ us.  
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.\_\_ Chri - ste e - le - i - son.

Shine your light in\_\_ to our dark - ness. Fill\_\_ us\_\_ with your ho - ly love.  
Heal all\_\_ con - flicts be - tween na - tions. Teach us\_\_ how to\_\_ live as one.

Be our strength in times of\_\_ trou - ble. Set us free from chains that\_\_ bind.  
Show us how to love our\_\_ neigh - bor. Run to those who\_\_ cry for\_\_ help.

Breathe new\_ life in - to our\_\_ spir - its. Pu - ri - fy our\_\_ hearts and minds.  
Word made flesh who lives a - mong us; Christ our\_\_ Lord, Em - man - u - el.

## GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

## LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

*We begin worship this evening in darkness as we approach the longest night of the year. But just as the days will soon begin to lengthen, light slowly seeps into our worship time and space, flowing in around song and Scripture, prayer and lament, reminding us that light – Jesus Christ, the Light of the world – is coming.*

Even in our endings,  
**fill us with hope for new beginnings.**

Even as our minds race with anxiety,  
**fill us with peace that surpasses understanding.**

Even in our deepest grief,  
**fill us with joy and laughter.**

Even in a world of hate and fear,  
**fill us with your love, O God.**

*Please stand*

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Let us pray. God of love and understanding, we gather here this evening with feelings of grief and pain, seeking consolation in the midst of the world's celebration. Help us know that you are present with us in all of our moods and feelings and seasons. In this season of preparing for the coming of the true light, dear God, be with us in our darkness. Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy, and love that you promise to all of your people through the gift of your son Jesus.  
**Amen.**

### **HEARING GOD'S WORD**

*Please be seated*

### **READING: ISAIAH 43:16-21**

<sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
<sup>17</sup>who brings out chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
<sup>18</sup>Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
<sup>19</sup>I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup>The wild animals will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup>the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**READING: Romans 8:31-35, 37-39**

<sup>31</sup>What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Please stand*

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**GOSPEL: John 1:1-5, 10-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**HYMN**

Holy Child within the Manger

WOV 638

*(Music is printed in the back of this bulletin for your convenience)*

## **SHARING GOD'S MEAL**

*Our Lord invites us to His table to receive the meal of everlasting life. At this table, we join our loved ones of every time and place. We are fed by the God who swallows up death forever and mends our brokenness.*

### **THE PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor.*

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Holy God of Advent:

You became weak so we could find strength in moments of heartbreak;

You left the safety of heaven to wander the wilderness of our world,  
holding our hands when we feel so hopeless;

You set aside your glory to hold our pain so we might be healed,  
even when there seems to be no hope;

You became one of us, so we could never be alone, in any moment, in any  
circumstance.

### **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

So come now, Child of Bethlehem, to strengthen us in these days. May we feel your presence in a way we have never known, not just as One born in a stable long ago and far away, but as One born in our hearts, in our hopes, in our spirits, in our weakness.

You have promised to go before us: into our brokenness, into hospital rooms, into empty houses, into graveyards, into our future held by our God, and you are here, even now, waiting for each of us: to serve us, to hold us, to comfort us, to live in us. For these blessings we give you thanks, Holy Father, through your Son, Jesus Christ and in the unity of the Holy Spirit: one God, forever and ever. Amen.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

We prepare for you, praying as you taught us,

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who**

**sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,**

**and the glory are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Come. This good news is for you. All are welcome here.

**Thanks be to God!**

### **DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

*Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant.*

### **COMMUNION HYMN**

Deep Peace

(A Gaelic Blessing)

John Rutter

### **TABLE BLESSING**

May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and keep you in his grace.

**Amen.**

## THE CANDLE LIGHTING

*The congregation is invited to form a circle around the baptismal font.*

We come together on tonight to gather around the font, to remember all that brings us pain and sorrow and to offer the deepest prayers and desires of our hearts for hope and healing. In the darkness of this evening, we give thanks for the glimpses of light we see. May God be with us.

*Each person may light a candle and name a circumstance, silently or aloud,  
that longs for Christ's light to shine.*

*Please be sure to only tip the unlit candle. When all candles are lighted:*

For the light of Christ that burns in our midst and lights our life, we give thanks. May this holy season be warmed by our memories and God's promise. We hear in the gospel of John that Christ is the true light and "*the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*" Tonight we know that Christ is the light in our darkness. And we give thanks to God that He is the light that no darkness can ever overcome.

<b>HYMN</b>	Drawn to the Light	ELW 593
<i>(Music is printed in the back of this bulletin for your convenience)</i>		

## CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray together.

**O Lord our God, you see, know, and feel the pain of the world. Look upon us when we feel alone, and enfold us with your love, that in the midst of pain we may know your presence; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**



## **SENDING**

### **BENEDICTION**

As you leave this place,  
may you have the wisdom to lean on one another.  
May you have the courage to hold onto hope,  
the compassion to do the good that is yours to do,  
and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing.  
For in a world full of dead ends,  
Advent invites us to begin again.  
So start here. Start now.  
Start with love and begin again.

In the name of ✠ Christ, our new beginning, go in peace.

**Amen.**

*All are welcome to sit and meditate in the sanctuary following the service.*

## **BLC Pastors**

The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

## **BLC Musicians**

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

**Communicate with us:** Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

### ***Celebrate Christmas at Bethlehem***

#### **December 24 – Christmas Eve**

Message • Carols • Candles

5:30 pm – Worship with communion (in-person only)

6:45-7:00 pm – Outdoors – Corner of Church + Perrin Streets

7:30 pm – Worship with communion (in-person and livestream)

**What's happening at BLC this week?** Visit the Calendar of Events at [www.blcfairport.org](http://www.blcfairport.org). Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at [office@blcfairport.org](mailto:office@blcfairport.org) or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

**Church office hours:** Our co-Pastors are available Sunday – Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585) 223-0634 or emailing [pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org) or [pastor.amy@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.amy@blcfairport.org).

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Lighting of Advent Wreath and Benediction from "A Liturgy for Endings and Beginnings" by Anna Strickland | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).

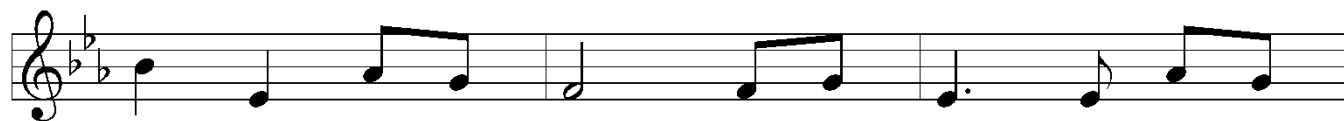
Eucharistic Prayer is adapted from *Playing Hopscotch in Heaven: Lectionary Liturgies for RCL Year A* by Thom M. Shuman  
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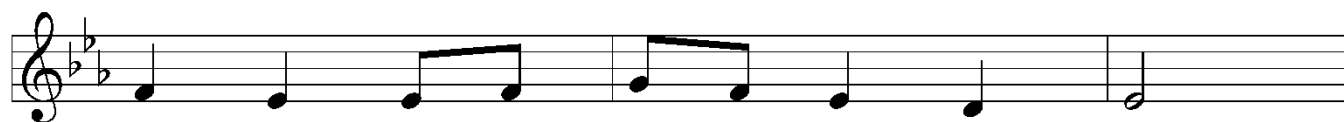
"In the Bleak Midwinter" Tune: Gustav Holst; Arranger: David Hicken © 2013 Enchanting Music  
"Deep Peace" – A Gaelic Blessing Music: John Rutter © 2020 Oxford University Press



1 Ho - ly Child with - in the man - ger, long a -  
 2 Once a - gain we tell the sto - ry— how your  
 3 Ho - ly Child with - in the man - ger, lead us



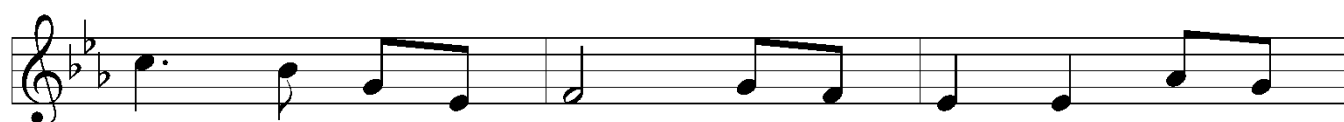
go yet ev - er near; come as friend to ev - 'ry  
 love for us was shown, when the im - age of your  
 ev - er in your way, so we see in ev - 'ry



stran - ger, come as hope for ev - 'ry fear.  
 glo - ry wore an im - age like our own.  
 stran - ger how you come to us to - day.



As you lived to heal the bro - ken, greet the  
 Come, en - light - en with your wis - dom, come and  
 In our lives and in our liv - ing give us



out - cast, free the bound, as you taught us love un -  
 fill us with your grace. May the fire of your com -  
 strength to live as you, that our hearts might be for -



spo - ken, teach us now where you are found.  
 pas - sion kin - dle ev - 'ry land and race.  
 giv - ing and our spir - its strong and true.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: JOYOUS LIGHT, Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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# Drawn to the Light



1 Peo - ple who walk in dark - ness have sought a light in the  
2 How can we tell a heav - en from hell if ev - 'ry - one  
3 Where is the sun? Oh, there will be none! The Lamb is the



heart of the dark - est night. Just when we thought all would be  
dwells in the dark of night? Morn - ing dis - pels, gent - ly com -  
one who is shin - ing bright, bids us to come! Life has be -



lost, we were drawn to the light of God.  
pels, and we're drawn to the light of God.  
gun when we're drawn to the light of God.

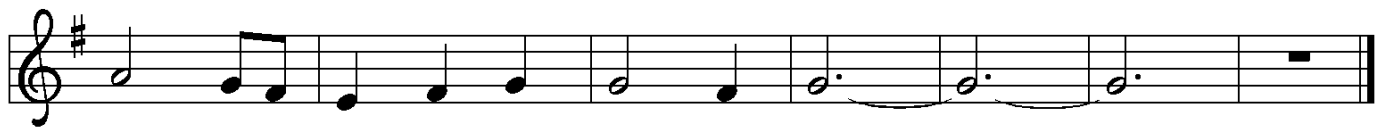
## Refrain



Dawn is in sight! Gone is the night, drawn to the



light and the morn - ing. Glo - rious and bright, oh, what a



sight to be drawn to the light of God.

Text: John C. Ylvisaker, b. 1937

Music: LA CROSSE, John C. Ylvisaker

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