



The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer  
A Service for the Longest Night  
December 21, 2022  
7 PM

Moyers, Mike. *The Lord is My Light*,  
from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

# A Service for the Longest Night

## Opening Music

## Welcome & Introduction

## Opening Acclamation

*Leader* Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world

*Response* **The light no darkness can overcome**

*Leader* Stay with us now for it is evening

*Response* **And the day is almost over**

*Leader* Let your light scatter the darkness

*Response* **And shine within your people here.**

## Music

## Prayer

*Leader* God be with you.

*Response* **And also with you.**

*Leader* Let us pray. O Holy One, whose coming we await, you invite us into the light of your presence on this longest night of the year: Illumine the dark and doubting places of our weary and wounded hearts, community and world. We are thirsty for your healing comfort, compassion, and peace. Draw near to us and fill us, that we may pour out your goodness to all who hunger and thirst for your mercy. Amen.

## Silence

**Gathering:** *Making the house ready for the Lord* by Mary Oliver

Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but  
still nothing is as shining as it should be  
for you. Under the sink, for example, is an  
uproar of mice — it is the season of their  
many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves  
and through the walls the squirrels  
have gnawed their ragged entrances — but it is the season  
when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And  
the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard  
while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow;  
what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling  
in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly  
up the path, to the door. And still I believe you will  
come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox,  
the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know  
that really I am speaking to you whenever I say,  
as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.

**Music**

**First Reading:** *When I Most Want To Rush* by Carrie Newcomer

When I most want to rush  
Perhaps,  
It is time to slow down.

What might happen,  
If I stopped trying to get to the epilogue,  
Before I read the middle chapters?

Maybe I would breathe into  
Right where I am  
And love what I find there.  
Know that wherever I am  
Is right where I need to be,  
And lose all interest  
In runaway trains.

I can keep drinking from a firehose  
That drenches me  
Without quenching my thirst.  
Or I can taste one drop of honey  
Let it rest on my tongue  
Until it is gone.

I'm not saying that I should give up.

Or stop.  
But just begin to live this,  
And then that.  
Breathing into one true thing,  
And then into the next.

And finally learn,  
When I most want to rush

It is time to slow down.

**Silence**

**Invitation**

*Said together*

We light these first candles to slow down, to quiet ourselves. To let go of our lists, our concerns, our busyness, at least for this night. Let us open to the quiet and peace of this precious moment. We pray to be fully present to ourselves, to each other, and to the Holy in our midst. Let us “Be still and know that I am God.” Amen.

**Candle Lighting with Music**

*At this time you are invited to come forward to light your candle*

**Second Reading:** *I'm Learning to Sit with Not Knowing* by Carrie Newcomer

I'm learning to sit with not knowing.  
Even when my restless mind begins jumping  
From a worried  
What next?  
To a frightened  
What if?  
To a hard edged and impatient,  
Why aren't you already there?

I'm learning to sit and listen  
To pat myself on the knee,  
Lay my hand on my heart,  
Take a deep breath,  
And laugh at myself.  
To befriend my mistakes,  
Especially the ones,  
That show me how  
I most need to change.

I'm learning to sit with whatever comes  
(Even though I'm a planner.)  
Because so much of this life  
Can't be measured or predicted.  
Because wonder and suffering visit  
When we least expect  
And rarely in equal measure.

I'm learning to sit with  
What I might never know  
Might never learn,  
Might never heal.

I'm learning to sit with  
What might waltz in and surprise me,  
Might crash into my days,  
With unspeakable sorrow  
Or uncontainable delight.

I'm learning to sit with not knowing.

Silence

Invitation

*Said together*

We light these second candles to surrender to not knowing. To lean into what is, and seek less to control the uncontrollable. To be less judging and more forgiving of ourselves and others. To trust in the presence of the Holy whatever comes. We pray to be fully present to ourselves, to each other, and to the Holy in our midst. Let us “Be still and know that I am God.” Amen.

Candle Lighting with Music

*At this time you are invited to come forward to light your candle*



**Third Reading:** *Blessing That Holds a Nest in Its Branches* by Jan Richardson

The emptiness  
that you have been holding  
for such a long season now;

that ache in your chest  
that goes with you  
night and day  
in your sleeping,  
your rising—

think of this  
not as a mere hollow,  
the void left from  
the life that has leached out  
of you.

Think of it like this:  
as the space being prepared  
for the seed.

Think of it  
as your earth that dreams  
of the branches  
the seed contains.

Think of it  
as your heart making ready  
to welcome the nest  
its branches will hold.

**Silence**

**Invitation**

*Said together*

We light these third candles to reverence the loss and emptiness we experience. To heed the ache we hold and carry. To bless the sacred space within us that is being prepared for new life. We pray to be fully present to ourselves, to each other, and to the Holy in our midst. Let us “Be still and know that I am God.” Amen.

**Candle Lighting with Music**

*At this time you are invited to come forward to light your candle*

**Fourth Reading** *Blessing of Hope* by Jan Richardson

So may we know  
the hope  
that is not just  
for someday  
but for this day—  
here, now  
in this moment  
that opens to us:

hope not made  
of wishes  
but of substance,

hope made of sinew  
and muscle  
and bone,

hope that has breath  
and a beating heart,

hope that will not  
keep quiet  
and be polite

hope that knows  
how to holler  
when it is called for,

hope that knows  
how to sing  
when there seems  
little cause

hope that raises us  
from the dead~

not someday  
but this day,  
everyday,  
again and  
again and  
again.

Silence

Invitation

*Said together*

We light these fourth candles to tenderly and gently open to hope. To be vulnerable to that fluttering of hope already present within us. Already here. Not of distant dreams, but in this moment. We pray to be fully present to ourselves and to each other, and to the Holy in our midst. Let us “Be still and know that I am God.”

Candle Lighting with Music

*At this time you are invited to come forward to light your candle*

## The Holy Communion

### Music

#### **Gospel Reading:** *John 1:1-5*

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.

#### **The Great Thanksgiving**

In the beginning, God of creation, your wind swept the darkness,  
stirring up life from the heights to the depths.

**Your spirit raised us from dust  
and formed us to be like your  
children with one common breath.**

We couldn't see where the wind had come from  
we couldn't tell where the wind would go.

**Divided, we hid behind walls  
turning away from the breath of life.  
But you spoke through the prophets  
you gave visions to those enslaved  
you spoke in the whirlwind and promised salvation.**

You breathed on Mary, your listening servant,  
making your Word alive in her flesh.

**You gave us Jesus, who shared our same breath  
receiving your Spirit in the river Jordan.  
He proclaimed freedom to captives, good news to the poor  
he gave hope to the suffering, and life to the dead.**

On the night before he died for us,  
Jesus was at supper with his friends.  
He took bread, gave thanks to you,  
broke it, and gave it to them saying:

“Take, eat, this is my body, broken for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.”

After supper, Jesus took the cup of wine,  
said the blessing, gave it to his friends and said:  
“Drink this, all of you:  
this cup is the new Covenant in my Blood,  
poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.”  
Therefore, God of endless mercy,  
of all the things that are yours  
we offer you these, which are yours especially.  
We offer them gladly, as he told us,  
giving thanks for his death and resurrection.  
Filled with your Spirit,  
and drawn together in his peace  
we praise you and we bless you

**We praise you, we bless you and we give thanks to you. We pray to you, our God**

Now pour out your Spirit once more  
to make this bread and wine  
the body and blood of Christ,  
that we might blow  
through the world with his love  
healing and forgiving,  
reconciling like Jesus  
until the heights and depths  
are filled with your children from every tribe and language  
and people and nation  
joined with the communion of saints, we are bold to say:

Our Father  
who art in heaven  
hallowed be thy name  
thy kingdom come  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in Heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our trespasses  
As we forgive those who trespass against us  
And lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil  
For thine is the kingdom  
And the power  
And the glory  
Forever and ever  
Amen.

*The Celebrant says the following Invitation*

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that  
Christ died for you, and feed on Christ in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

## The Post Communion Prayer

*Celebrant*      Let us pray.  
*All*              God of the night,  
                    now we turn toward the dark  
                    in which all things  
                    have their beginning  
                    and find their form.  
                    Bless the seeds  
                    and tend what grows  
                    in the dark of the womb  
                    in the dark of the earth  
                    in the dark of the soul.  
                    Be with us,  
                    dream in us,  
                    create us anew  
                    in the hours of this night. Amen

- Jan Richardson

**Sending:** *Remembering that it happened once* by Wendell Berry

Remembering that it happened once,  
We cannot turn away the thought,  
As we go out, cold, to our barns  
Toward the long night's end, that we  
Ourselves are living in the world  
It happened in when it first happened,  
That we ourselves, opening a stall  
(A latch thrown open countless times  
Before), might find them breathing there,  
Foreknown: the Child bedded in straw,  
The mother kneeling over Him,  
The husband standing in belief  
He scarcely can believe, in light  
That lights them from no source we see,  
An April morning's light, the air  
Around them joyful as a choir.  
We stand with one hand on the door,



Looking into another world  
That is this world, the pale daylight  
Coming just as before, our chores  
To do, the cattle all awake,  
Our own white frozen breath hanging  
In front of us; and we are here  
As we have never been before,  
Sighted as not before, our place  
Holy, although we knew it not.

### **The Blessing**

Now be rest for our eyes,  
God of the evening.  
In these dark hours,  
repair us, renew us,  
restore and redeem.

- Jan Richardson

### **The Dismissal**

*Deacon*            Go in Peace. The Christ is coming.

*People*            **Thanks be to God.**



**Participants**

*Celebrant* ..... The Rev. Joyce Keeshin  
*Deacon* ..... The Rev. Gary Lubin  
*First Reader* ..... Kelli Wisecup  
*Second Reader* ..... Julia Joyce  
*Third Reader* ..... The Rev. Gary Lubin  
*Fourth Reader*..... Andrea Rogers  
*Sending Reading*..... The Rev. Melanie Slane  
*Musician* ..... Jerika Hayes

*Minister for Liturgy* ..... Anny Stevens-Gleason  
*Assisting Minister for Pastoral Care* ..... Becca Morehous

## Maps

At the edges of our borders  
you wait,  
and at our territorial lines  
you linger,  
because the place where  
we touch  
beyond our boundaries  
is where you take  
your delight.

And when we learn to read  
the landscape of our fears,  
and when we come to know  
the terrain of every sorrow,  
then will we turn  
our fences into bridges  
and our borders  
into paths of peace.

-Jan Richardson