



Moyers, Mike. *You Are Light*

The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer

A Service for the Longest Night

December 18, 2024

7 PM

together

can i sit with you?

- and then what?

that's it.

- just sit?

yes.

- will we say anything?

not unless it's really necessary.

- so we'll sit in silence?

yes.

- won't that feel lonely?

not at all.

- why?

because we'll be alone, together.

ullie-kaye

A Service for the Longest Night

OPENING MUSIC

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

All text in bold is to be said together.

Please stand as you are able

OPENING ACCLAMATION

Leader Do not be afraid.

Response **God is with us always.**

Leader Let your light scatter the darkness

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

Leader Stay with us now for it is evening

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

A CALL TO WORSHIP *A Blessing for Traveling in the Dark*

Jan Richardson

Go slow

if you can.

Slower.

More slowly still.

Friendly dark

or fearsome,

this is no place

to break your neck

by rushing,

by running,

by crashing into

what you cannot see.

Then again,

it is true:

different darks

have different tasks,

and if you

have arrived here unawares,

if you have come

in peril

or in pain,
this might be no place
you should dawdle.

I do not know
what these shadows
ask of you,
what they might hold
that means you good
or ill.

It is not for me
to reckon
whether you should linger
or you should leave.

But this is what
I can ask for you:

That in the darkness
there be a blessing.

That in the shadows
there be a welcome.

That in the night
you be encompassed
by the Love that knows
your name.

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.**

Please be seated.

SILENCE

MUSIC

May You Find a Light

The Brilliance

FIRST READING

Note To Self When Walking

Carrie Newcomer

When walking in the woods,
Or on a path,
Or down the street,
In a store,
Or just upstairs,
When you are intent on going,
Wherever it is you are going,
Stop.
Stand still.

Notice how the mind can chatter,
Like purple finches in the trees,
Endlessly clicking and warbling,
Rising and falling and rising again.
Notice all your plans and longings,
All the things you got, but didn't want,
All you wanted, and didn't get,
All the circular conversations aimed at changing,
What was already said or unsaid.
Notice all the losses you are carrying,
With as much grace as you can muster.

Notice the sky, the feel of the air on your skin,
The sounds or what hangs in the silence,
The hard knot in your throat.
Notice all these things and more,
Because there is always more.
Then let your heart open,
Even just a crack,
A dribble or a dam break,
It doesn't matter.
Because it is in that opening,
You'll find a clear space

The one you keep finding
And losing
And finding again.

Remember to love it all,
All of it.
Hold hands and high five
With what's easy and dear,
Ephemeral and brilliantly ordinary.
Wrap compassion like a blanket
The kind we place tenderly,
Around other people's shoulders,
When the disaster is done and the worst is over.
Love it all,
Without looking for any way out,
Not condoning, just allowing,
For it all to just live,
Where it lives.

Love everything that broke your heart open
That changed you forever,
That made you softer,
And helped you understand,
What you could not have understood otherwise.
Love what you've endured,
Love what you are still enduring.
Love the purple finches and the sidewalk,
The view from the upstairs window,
The brambles and wild asters,
And the click of the keyboard.

Love all of this
Small and fragile,
Big and beautiful,
Life.

Then take the next step.

SILENCE

BLESSING

That you may take time to pause, to simply be.

That you may embrace all that has brought you to this place.

That you may feel the presence of the Holy in every step you take.

PRAYER

Holy One, Lead us to wholeness

And make us shine with your light of healing love.

INVITATION

We light these first candles to pause, to quiet ourselves. To let go of lists, distractions, concerns, at least for this night. To lean into what simply is and trust in the presence of the Holy whatever comes. We pray to be fully present to ourselves, to our lives, 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

SECOND READING

Send Love. It Matters.

Carrie Newcomer

Somewhere someone needs help.

Send love.

It matters.

If you can't get there yourself,

Then take a deep breath.

Breathe in the weight of their troubles,

Breathe out and send all those burdens

into the Light

Where sorrows can be held

With the most tender and infinite grace.

Breathe in what you can do.

Breathe out what you can't change.

Spool out a thread of connection.

Send courage and calm.

For the nights can be long

And filled with shadows

And sometimes terrible

Unexpected waters will rise.

Somewhere someone needs help.

Send love.

It matters.

SILENCE

BLESSING

May you be blessed with loving relationships, and respond with care for those in your midst. May any difficulties encountered between you be softened by the gratitude you have for each other. May you learn from each other and grow with each other. May you lovingly respect each other's free will and boundaries. May you be witness for each other in times of sorrow and joy, in times of beginnings and endings, in our shared hope of healing now and in days to come.

PRAYER

Holy One, healer of brokenness,

Make us bold to share your light with others

INVITATION

We light these second candles with love for those near to us or at a distance, for those suffering from illness or grieving, for those struggling or feeling lost or alone. To do what we are able to do, for each other, in love and compassion. To be more forgiving of ourselves and others. We pray to be fully present 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

THIRD READING

The Peace of Wild Things

Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

SILENCE

BLESSING

Henri Nouwen

We are not alone; beyond the differences that separate us, we share one common humanity and thus belong to each other. The mystery of life is that we discover this human togetherness not when we are powerful and strong, but when we are vulnerable and weak.

PRAYER

Holy One, Healer of the world,
Shine your light upon all humanity.

INVITATION

We light these third candles in hope of healing of all humanity. That violence, divisions and suffering among all peoples, tribes and nations may cease. We pray that with God's grace there may be paths of healing and peace. We pray to be fully present to the human family, 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

FOURTH READING

The Sycamore

Wendell Berry

In the place that is my own place, whose earth
I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old tree growing,
a great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of itself.
Fences have been tied to it, nails driven into it,
hacks and whittles cut in it, the lightning has burned it.
There is no year it has flourished in
that has not harmed it. There is a hollow in it
that is its death, though its living brims whitely
at the lip of the darkness and flows outward.
Over all its scars has come the seamless white
of the bark. It bears the gnarls of its history
healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection
in the warp and bending of its long growth.
It has gathered all accidents into its purpose.
It has become the intention and radiance of its dark fate.
It is a fact, sublime, mystical and unassailable.
In all the country there is no other like it.
I recognize in it a principle, an indwelling
the same as itself, and greater, that I would be ruled by.
I see that it stands in its place and feeds upon it,
and is fed upon, and is native, and maker.

SILENCE

BLESSING

May you speak
where the Spirit calls you to speak;
may you create
with courage and with grace.
Amid the threat of destruction
and in the presence of desolation,
may you bear witness to the God
who knows how to create anew
from fire,
from flood,
from all that lays waste
in this world.

PRAYER

Holy One, Healer of all creation
Keep safe this Earth our sacred home

INVITATION

We light these fourth candles in deep appreciation for all creation. To love and tenderly care for our extraordinary natural world. To honor the beauty, diversity, and resilience of nature, and to do our part to safeguard our sacred home. We pray to be fully present to the miracle of creation, 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.

THE POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Jan Richardson

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

SENDING

A Blessing for the Longest Night

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
the 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.

THE BLESSING

A Reflection on Finding your Way: What to Do in the Darkness

Go slowly
Consent to it
But don't wallow in it
Know it as a place of germination
And growth
Remember the light
Take an outstretched hand if you find one
Exercise unused senses
Find the path by walking it
Practice trust
Watch for dawn

THE DISMISSAL

Deacon Go in Peace. The Christ is coming.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Participants

In order of reading

The Rev. Joyce Keeshin

Anny Stevens-Gleason

Jerika Hayes, *musician*

Kelli Wisecup

Stephanie Polen

Nancy Hodges

Andrea Rogers

The Rev. Gary Lubin

Becca Morehous

RESOURCES

Night Visions © Jan Richardson

Sanctuary of Women © Jan Richardson

THANK YOU

If you find yourself half naked
and barefoot in the frosty grass, hearing
again, the earth's great, sonorous moan that says
you are the air of the now and gone, that says
all you love will turn to dust,
and will meet you there, do not
raise your fist. Do not raise
your small voice against it. And do not
take cover. Instead, curl your toes
into the grass, watch the cloud
ascending from your lips. Walk
through the garden's dormant splendor.
Say only, thank you.
Thank you.

Ross Gay