

# Service of the Longest Night December 12, 2021 5:00 p.m. In-Person and Facebook Live Service

Following Jesus, our mission is to serve God by building an inclusive community where uplifting worship and relevant messages deepen spirituality and inspire acts of justice, service, and compassion.

# **Our Church's Mission Statement**

Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage, Pastor Larry Patterson, Office Administrator Ben Sackett, Custodian Rev Demphna Krikorian, Christian Educator Rev. John Baumgartner, Pastor Emeritus Darlene Banks, Bell Choir Director Chuck Byam, Organist Brandon Frost, Choir Director Nicole Finney, Child Care

210 W. Saginaw Hwy • Grand Ledge, MI 48837 • grandledgeucc.org

# SERVICE OF THE LONGEST NIGHT

(Adapted with permission from Rev. Nicolette Siragusa)

#### WELCOME

Welcome to this evening's Longest Night service, as we worship God and acknowledge that our feelings around the holidays are often complex. Together, we will light candles for ourselves, and for those we know who need more light in their lives.

# \*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Blessed are the poor in spirit,

People: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Leader: Blessed are those who mourn, **People:** For they will be comforted.

Leader: Blessed are the meek,

People: For they will inherit the earth.

Leader: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

**People:** For they will be filled.

Leader: Blessed are the merciful.

**People:** For they will receive mercy. Leader: Blessed are the pure in heart,

People: For they will see God.

# LITANY OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT

Voice 1: We wait in the darkness, expectantly, longingly, thoughtfully.

Voice 2: In the darkness of the womb, the Christ-child was nurtured and made ready for the journey into light.

All: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

Voice 1: It is only in the darkness that we can see the splendor of the universe – blankets of stars, the glowing of distant planets.

Voice 2: The darkness of the night sky allowed the Magi to follow a star to the Christchild.

All: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

Voice 1: In the darkness of night, desert peoples find relief from the cruel, relentless heat of the sun.

Voice 2: In the blessed desert darkness, Mary and Joseph escaped with the infant Jesus to safety in Egypt.

All: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

Voice 1: In the darkness of sleep, we are restored and renewed. We allow our fears and concerns, our hopes and visions rise to the surface, and listen in the quiet for a still, small voice.

Voice 2: God spoke to Jacob and Joseph through dreams in the darkness of sleep. God is speaking still.

All: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light. For darkness is not dark to you, and night is as bright as day.

# **Connecting With Scripture**

After each passage is read, if you are worshipping with us in person, you are invited to come forward to light candles for yourself, or for someone you care about. If you are worshipping with us on-line, you are invited to type into the comments the number of candles you would like me to light. If you wish, you may list names of people you are praying for (by first name only). You are also invited to light a prayer candle at home. Once I have finished lighting the candles, we will pray aloud together.

FIRST STORY "Loss" Job1:13-21

Prayer: Great Provider, sustain your people who mourn the loss of health and youth, of strength and independence, of dreams and opportunities, of family and friends, of material blessings and financial security. Amen.

SECOND STORY "Death of a Child" Matthew 2:16-18

Prayer: Holy Mother, as you grieved for your beloved child on the cross, comfort those who grieve for children lost during pregnancy, in childhood, and in adulthood. Amen.

THIRD STORY "Depression" Psalm 13:1-3

Prayer: Good Shepherd, walk with all those in shadowed valleys, restoring their souls and granting them a light in the darkness. Amen.

FOURTH STORY "Family Strife" Genesis 37:23-34 (adapted)

Prayer: Father of the fatherless, Mother of the motherless, Brother, Sister, Spouse: Bring your healing to broken homes and wounded families through the gifts of confession, repentance, and forgiveness. Bless those who find no comfort in families of blood with chosen families and with families of faith. Amen.

FIFTH STORY "Sickness" Psalm 6:2-7

Prayer: Holy Spirit, Breath of Life, we ask that you grant life, hope, and healing to the sick and convalescent. Breathe peace and acceptance into those with chronic and progressive conditions, and ease their pain, that they may find contentment in this life. Amen.

Prayer: Prince of Peace, fill the anxious with serenity. Remind us all that, regardless of what the future or the present holds, like lilies of the field, we all are always clothed in the love and comfort of your presence.

Amen.

SEVENTH STORY

"Injustice"

Job 24: 2-8 and 9:22-24

Prayer:

God of justice, move among the hearts and minds of all the people of this world, guiding us toward actions that will heal these broken systems and bring a just peace to all. Help us to see the progress that has been made that we may find hope and encouragement in doing this life-long work. Amen.

EIGHTH STORY

"Loneliness & Abandonment"

Psalm 22:1-7

Praver:

Holy Spirit, open the eyes of those who feel alone to your abiding presence, and bring them into loving community. Let them believe in their hearts that they are your beloved children. Amen.

NINTH STORY

"Addiction"

Proverbs 23:29-35

Praver:

Light of the World, rescue all who dwell in the midst of addiction, freeing them from the false promises that this escapism provides, as well as all that binds them. Amen.

TENTH STORY

"Fury and Outrage"

Psalm 109: 8-20

Prayer:

Lamb of God, free your people from the burden of furious anger, softening our hearts, and teach us how to turn our swords into plowshares. Let us be filled with the same grace that you grant to us, so that we may act with love and forgiveness, even towards our enemies. Amen.

COMFORT FROM THE STORY

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**BENEDICTION**