

A Service of Worship for the Longest Night

December 21, 2025

4:00 p.m.

Entering the Longest Night

Prelude Baxter Jennings

Welcome & Explanation Rev. Dr. Mike Hatfield

Call to Worship Rev. Mychal Gallop

Leader: Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge,

People: for we are lost, we are lonely, we are afraid.

Leader: Tonight, we gather daring to wonder if God has indeed come in Jesus,

People: discerning the rejection we have known, intimate with our failed relationships, holding our heartache in hands of tenderness.

Leader: Tonight, we gather with neighbors and strangers, a family made one by our brokenness,

People: coming with our hearts full of hope, and our pockets filled with doubts.

Leader: Tonight, we gather just as we are,

People: for God has promised to meet us here and to welcome us for who we are.

Invocation

Experiencing the Longest Night

*Carol 163 *Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming*
ES IST EIN' ROS' ENTSPRUNGEN
(Stanzas 1 & 3)

A Word from the Prophets Isaiah 55:1-3 Rev. Angela Zimmerman

A Word from the Gospels John 1:1-5

Carol *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* WALTHAM
(See Insert)

Meditation Dr. Hatfield

*Stand as you are able

Finding Our Light in Darkness

Litany of Remembrance Rev. Susan Spangenburg

Leader: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost.

We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies.

We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

People: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

Sung Response

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel That mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, o Israel.
(silent reflection)

Rev. Zimmerman

Leader: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss:

loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy.

We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

People: We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, o God, and lead us into Your future.

Sung Response

O come thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, o Israel.
(silent reflection)

Rev. Gallop

Leader: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens.

We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming

ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered.

We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

People: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

Sung Response

O come thou day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by thy advent here Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
(silent reflection)

Dr. Hatfield

Leader: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the story of Christmas, which also began in insecurity, and humbleness, and in a poor stable.

We remember that the loving God who kept the light of a star shining over the Christ child, and who came to share this life with us, promises us comfort and peace.

People: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows

Sung Response

O come desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind; Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease, fill all the world with heaven's peace. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
(silent reflection)

Prayers of the People

Rev. Spangenburg

Remembering Together

A Time of Remembrance

Rev. Zimmerman

You are invited to come and light a candle in remembrance of loss, whether through death, loss of a relationship, loss of job, or loss of health; in remembrance of other significant events; to represent Light, even as the darkness of depression or loss of joy surrounds you; or to represent hope for the coming year.

Quiet time at the Altar or in the Pew

*The Lord's Prayer

Rev. Gallop

**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.
Amen.**

*Blessing and Dismissal

Dr. Hatfield

Exit in Silence

Worship Leaders

Rev. Dr. Mike Hatfield, Senior Pastor, FBC & CHBC
Rev. John Fulcher, Interim Pastor of Music & Worship, FBC
Rev. Susan Spangenberg, Senior Pastor, Pocahontas Bassett
Rev. Angela Zimmerman, Senior Pastor, Starling Avenue Baptist
Rev. Mychal Gallop, St. Cleophas Ministry

Musicians

Baxter Jennings

Thank you for sharing these important moments in worship with us. Our prayers this season attend your memories of loved ones who remain dear to you and missed; and your spirit as you experience feelings of anxiety, loneliness, depression, or loss of joy.

As you exit, please note a few resources are available to you as you leave. In addition, know that you are invited to call one of the ministers during the next few days if a pastoral visit would be of value to you.



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