

# Longest Night

Evening Prayer

Tuesday, December 21st  
at 7pm on Zoom

*Hosted by Grace Lutheran Church (Chesapeake, VA)*

"Hear my voice, O Lord, when I call;  
have mercy on me and answer me."

*Psalm 29:7*

## Grace Lutheran Church

521 Providence Road  
Chesapeake, VA 23325  
757-420-4704

[www.GraceLutheranChesapeake.org](http://www.GraceLutheranChesapeake.org)



<https://linktr.ee/gracelutheran>

Pastor—The Rev. Leslie D. Weber (she/her/hers)  
Minister of Music—Morgan Hatfield (they/them/theirs)

### **Our Mission Statement:**

We are a community of believers in Christ called to be servants to all people.

*The assembly gathers in silence.*

## **Introduction**

The winter solstice is the longest night and the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere.

In a few days many of us will gather to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, the arrival of Jesus Christ, God in human form. December 25 is celebrated as Christmas because it had been incorrectly identified as the winter solstice. What the early Christians intended for this feast was not a birthday party for baby Jesus but rather a feast of proclamation. God arrives by way of deep darkness. Christians wanted to tell the world that God, the maker of the cosmos, chose to lovingly draw near to our broken world by way of a human birth on the longest night of the year. God's love for us goes deep and does not fade or change with the seasons. It is richer and more plentiful than the darkness of night, blazing brighter than the noonday sun of late June.

For many, the lack of daylight intensifies other suffering. The weight of depression grows heavier when light is scarce. We get stressed out when our calendars fill with extra social obligations. We fear interactions with family members that have been difficult in the past. What an opportunity, then, to share that the message of Christmas is specifically sent for those in pain and suffering. It is not that "all is merry and bright." Rather, it is the abiding truth that God seeks to be with us, even when we are "blue."

While it is true that our preindustrial forebears had legitimate reasons to be afraid of the dark, it is also true that we repeat racist binaries that have led to the violent deaths of people of color when Christians associate darkness with pain and lightness with healing. A night like this and a feast like Christmas are fruitful encounters with healing darkness. God-with-us is here to guide us into paths of love and practices of justice.

## **Greeting**

The light of our Lord Jesus Christ, the warmth of God, and the hope of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Gathering Song—ACS #995

Come, Be among Us, O Jesus  
*Te invitamos, oh Cristo*



*Te in - vi - ta - mos, oh Cris - to, te in - vi -*  
Come, be a - mong us, O Je - sus. Come now and



*ta - mos hoy mis - mo: qué - da - te con no - so - tros,*  
vis - it your peo - ple. Come, and be near your chil - dren.



*qué - da - te de\_u - na vez. La no - che ya se\_a - pro -*  
Stay with us, Lord, a - bide. Shad - ows are deep - 'ning a -



*xi - ma, vie - ne la lo - bre - guez.*  
round us; fast falls the e - ven - tide.



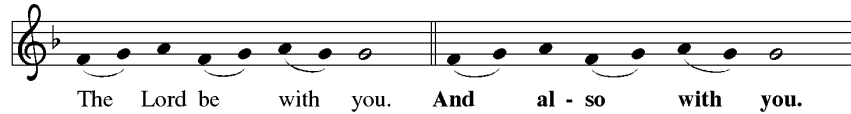
*Qué - da - te con no - so - tros, qué - da - te de\_u - na vez.*  
Come and be near your chil - dren. Stay with us, Lord, a - bide.



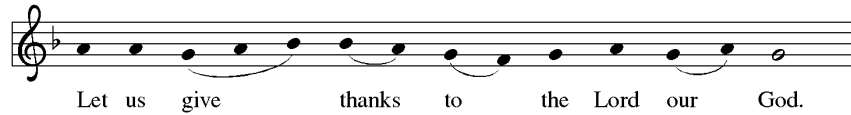
*Qué - da - te con no - so - tros, qué - da - te de\_u - na vez.*  
Come and be near your chil - dren. Stay with us, Lord, a - bide.

Text: Anonymous; tr. Greg Scheer, b. 1966  
Music: TE INVITAMOS, Anonymous  
Tr. © 2019 Greg Scheer, admin. Augsburg Fortress

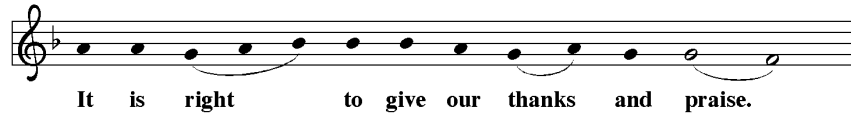
**Thanksgiving for Light**—ELW p. 310-311



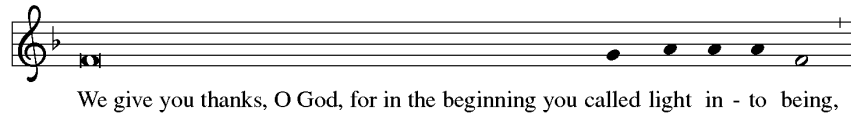
The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.



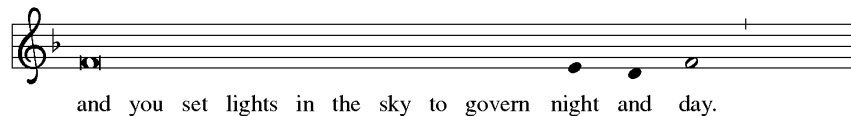
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



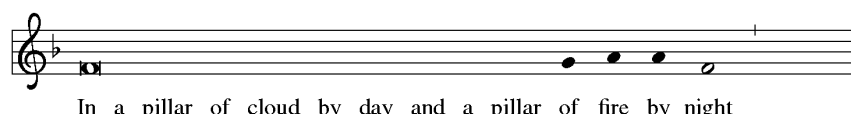
It is right to give our thanks and praise.



We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning you called light in - to being,



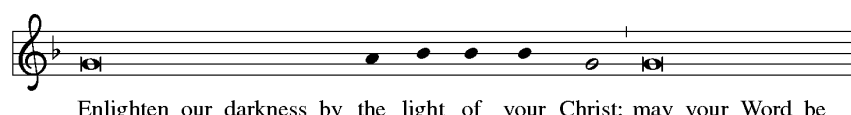
and you set lights in the sky to govern night and day.



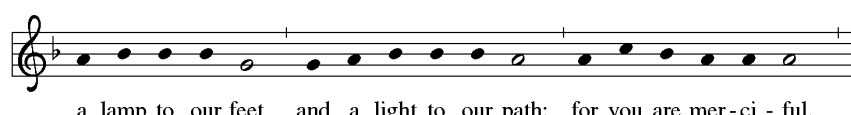
In a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night



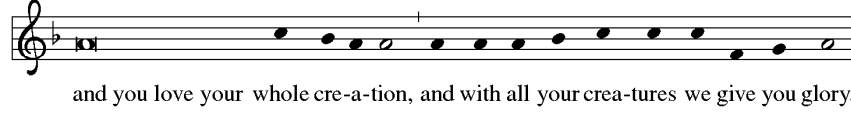
you led your peo - ple in - to freedom.



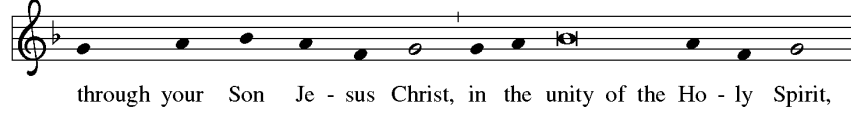
Enlighten our darkness by the light of your Christ; may your Word be



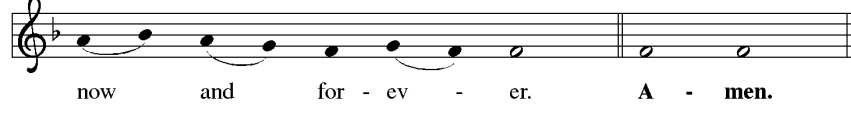
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are mer-ci - ful,



and you love your whole cre-a-tion, and with all your crea-tures we give you glory,



through your Son Je - sus Christ, in the unity of the Ho - ly Spirit,



now and for - ev - er. A - men.

## Psalm 27

Let us recite together Psalm 27, as translated in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymnal.

- <sup>1</sup>The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- <sup>2</sup>When evildoers close in against me to devour my flesh,  
they, my foes and my enemies, will stumble and fall.
- <sup>3</sup>Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear.  
Though war rise up against me, my trust will not be shaken.
- <sup>4</sup>One thing I ask of the LORD; one thing I seek;  
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life;  
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek God in the temple.
- <sup>5</sup>For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter,  
hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high  
upon a rock.
- <sup>6</sup>Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me.  
Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of  
rejoicing; I will sing and make music to the LORD.
- <sup>7</sup>Hear my voice, O LORD, when I call;  
have mercy on me and answer me.
- <sup>8</sup>My heart speaks your message—"Seek my face."  
Your face, O LORD, I will seek.
- <sup>9</sup>Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your servant in  
anger.  
Cast me not away—you have been my helper; forsake me not,  
O God of my salvation.
- <sup>10</sup>Though my father and my mother forsake me,  
the LORD will take me in.
- <sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, O LORD;  
lead me on a level path, because of my oppressors.
- <sup>12</sup>Subject me not to the will of my foes,  
for they rise up against me, false witnesses breathing violence.
- <sup>13</sup>This I believe—that I will see the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living!
- <sup>14</sup>Wait for the LORD and be strong.  
Take heart and wait for the LORD!

## Prayer

Creator of the stars of night, bless the long hours of this night with the warmth of your presence. Come to all who suffer in any way. Grant rest to the weary, freedom to those who are burdened, and bright hope to those who despair. Strengthen us as we await your coming once again, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## Reading—Isaiah 40:1-11

A reading from Isaiah.

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. <sup>3</sup>A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." <sup>6</sup>A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. <sup>9</sup>Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" <sup>10</sup>See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. <sup>11</sup>He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Song—ACS #1075

# O God, We Call

O God, we call, O God, we call, from

The first system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melody of quarter and eighth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are printed below the notes.

deep in - side we yearn, from deep in - side we yearn, from

The second system of music continues the melody and bass line from the first system. The lyrics are printed below the notes.

deep in - side we yearn for you.

The third system of music concludes the piece. It features a final cadence with a whole note chord in the upper staff and a whole note bass line in the lower staff. The lyrics are printed below the notes.

Text: Linnea Good, b. 1962  
Music: O GOD, WE CALL, Linnea Good  
Text and music © 1994 Borealis Music, linneagood.com

**Reading**—Revelation 22:1-5

A reading from Revelation.

<sup>1</sup>Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb  
<sup>2</sup>through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; <sup>4</sup>they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Song**—ELW 701

## Once We Sang and Danced



1 Once we sang and danced with glad-ness, once de-light filled ev-'ry breath;  
2 All the wil-lows bow in weep-ing, all the riv-ers rage and moan,  
3 God, who came to dwell a-mong us, God, who suf-fered our dis-grace,  
4 Come, O Christ, a-mong the ash-es, come to wipe our tears a-way,



now we sit a-mong the ash-es, all our dreams de-stroyed by death.  
as cre-a-tion joins our plead-ing: "God, do not leave us a-lone."  
from your own heart, grieved and wound-ed, come the rich-es of your grace.  
death de-stroy and sor-row ban-ish; now and al-ways, come and stay.

Text: Susan R. Briehl, b. 1952, based on Psalm 137

Music: KAS DZIEDĀJA, Latvian folk tune

Text © 2003 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.

All rights reserved. Used by permission.



**Reading**—John 1:1-5

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>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.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**


**Reflection**

**Gospel Canticle**—ELW p. 324

Leader

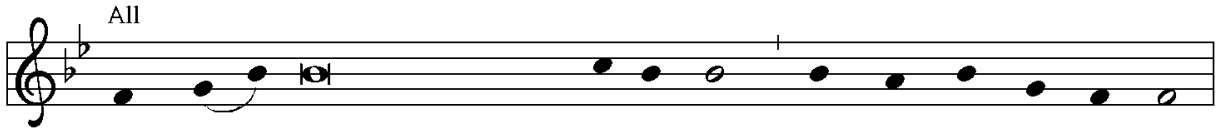


Guide us wak - ing, O Lord, and guard us sleep - ing;



that a-wake we may watch with Christ and a-sleep we may rest in peace.

All



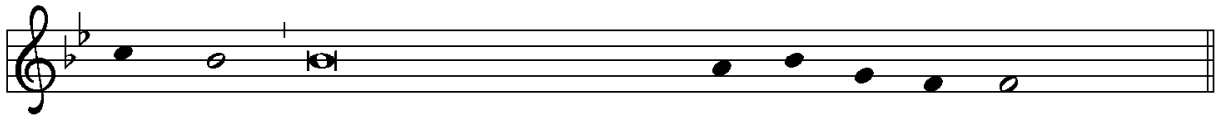
Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: your word has been fulfilled.



My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have prepared



in the sight of ev - 'ry peo - ple: a light to reveal you to the



na - tions and the glory of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.



Guide us wak - ing, O Lord, and guard us sleep - ing;

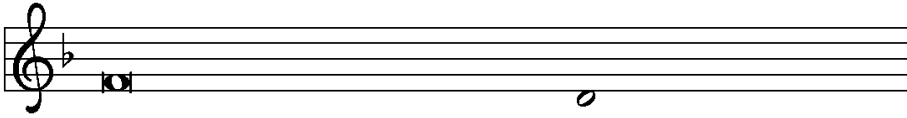


that a-wake we may watch with Christ and a-sleep we may rest in peace.

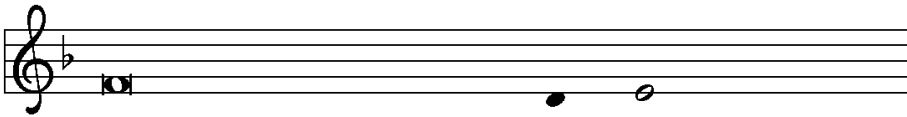
## Prayer



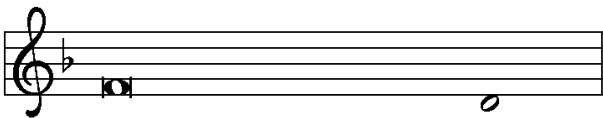
Hear my prayer, O Lord; **listen to my cry.**



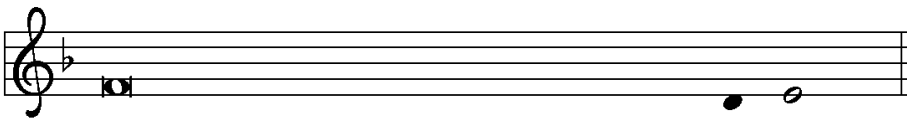
Keep me as the apple of your eye;



**hide me in the shadow of your wings.**



In righteousness I shall see you;



**when I awake, your presence will give me joy.**

Eternal God, the hours both of day and night are yours, and to you the darkness is no threat. Keep watch with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, comfort the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. **Amen.**

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Silence

## Blessing

May God bless you and keep you.

May God's holy darkness enfold you and grant you rest.

May God nourish a seed of hope among us.

**Amen.**

## Song—ACS #1035

### Though the Earth Shall Change



Though the earth shall change, though the moun-tains trem-ble,



though the wa - ters rage, you, God, are here.



Though the na - tions war, though the peo - ples bat - tle,



though the em - pire fal - ters, we will not fear.

Text: Rolf Vegdahl, b. 1955, and Tom Witt, b. 1957, based on Psalm 46  
Music: WE WILL NOT FEAR, Tom Witt  
Text and music © 2009 Augsburg Fortress

## Dismissal

The peace of Christ be with you all. **And also with you.**

*Greetings of peace may be shared as the assembly departs.*

Reprinted, podcasted, and streamed with permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS012006, One License # A-726145, CCLI License #1881789, and CCLI Streaming License #20660555. All rights reserved.