

TRINITY BUCKINGHAM CHURCH

*Sharing God's love and serving God's people
with Christ in our hearts and God's work through our hands*

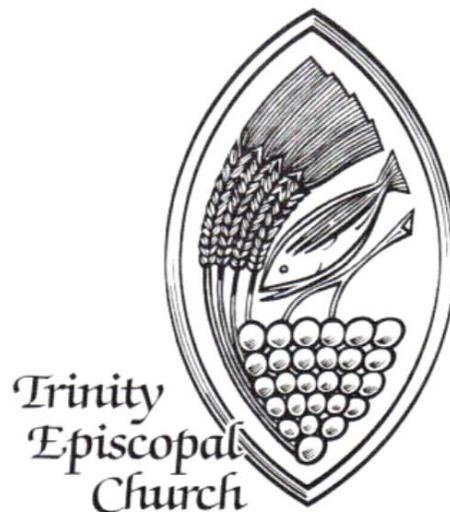
The Longest Night: Prayers for hope, comfort, and peace



Welcome to Trinity Church and to this service of prayers for hope, comfort and peace. Whatever brings you through these doors tonight, and whatever you carry with you, please know that you are welcome.

Our service this evening is a service of candle light, prayers, and silence on the longest night of the year. Together, we will keep vigil in the darkness, trusting that tomorrow the light will begin to return.

May you be found by the Light, and may you find what it is that you need.



Music: *Gabriel's Oboe* music by Ennio Marconi, performed by Maria Elliot and Paul Webber; *Fireside Praise* words and music by Ana Hernandez, performed by Ana Hernandez; *Sending You Light* by Melanie DeMore, performed by Ana Hernandez, *Open My Heart* words and music by Ana Hernandez and Ruth Cunningham, performed by HARC; *My Dancing Day*, traditional, performed by The Miserable Offenders

Worship Resources: *Cloth for the Cradle*, Wild Goose Worship; *The Iona Abbey Worship Book*; *Advent Liturgy*, The Whole People of God. *Liturgy for the Whole Church*, Sudan K. Bock; *The Book of Common Prayer*; *Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle*, Ted Loder; *Psalms for Praying*, Nan Merrill; *Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems, and Reflections for Every Season*, Joyce Rupp; *Circle of Grace*, Jan Richardson

Art: Jan Richardson

Prayers on the Longest Night of the Year

Music: Gabriel's Oboe Used with permission.

One: On this, the longest night of the year, we gather to light candles in the darkness, and to offer our prayers for peace, for healing and for comfort; We pray for the world, we pray for others, we pray for ourselves.

One: The God of heaven has made a home on earth,

Many: **God dwells among us and is one with us.**

One: The highest in all creation lives among the least.

Many: **God journeys with the rejected and welcomes the weary.**

One: Come now all who thirst

Many: **And long for the water of life**

One: Come now all who hunger

Many: **And long to be filled with good things.**

One: Come now all who seek hope and comfort

Many: **And long to be warmed by the light of love.**

Music: Fireside Praise

One: God be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

One: Let us pray.

Most loving God, as you have taught us to call the evening, the morning, and the noonday one day; and have made the sun to know its going down: Dispel the darkness of our hearts, that by your brightness we may know you to be the true God and eternal light, living and loving for ever and ever. **Amen.**

We are led into a few moments of silence with these words:

Be still and know that I am God...

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know...

Be still...

Be...

The First Advent Candle is Lighted

One: We light the candle of Hope as we await the coming of Jesus, who is the source of our hope.

Many: **Thank you, God, for the gift of hope in our times of emptiness.**

Reading:

Isaiah: 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

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.

A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

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.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

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.

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever.

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!'

See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

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.

We are led into a few moments of silence with these words:

Be still and know that I am God...

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know...

Be still...

Be...

The Second Advent Candle is Lighted

One: We light the candle of Peace, knowing that Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

Many: **Thank you, Lord, for the gift of peace in our times of uncertainty.**

Reading:

Psalm 139:1-6, 23-24

O my Beloved, You have searched me
and know me!

You know when I sit down and
when I rise up;

You discern my innermost thoughts.

You find me on the journey and
guide my steps;

You know my strengths and
my weaknesses.

Even before words rise up in prayer,

Lo, You have already heard
my heart call.

You encompass me with love where'er
I go,

and your strength is my shield.

Such sensitivity is too wonderful
for me;

it is high; boundless gratitude
is my soul's response.

Search me, O my Beloved, and know
my heart!

Try me and discern my thoughts!

Help me to face the darkness within me:

Enlighten me, that I might
radiate your love and light!

We are led into a few moments of silence with these words:

Be still and know that I am God...

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know...

Be still...

Be...

The Third Advent Candle is Lighted

One: We light the candle of Joy, knowing that our comfort and help come from God.

Many: **Thank you, Lord, for the gift of joy in our times of sadness.**

Reading

Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

‘See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.’

And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

We are led into a few moments of silence with these words:

Be still and know that I am God...

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know...

Be still...

Be...

The Fourth Advent Candle is Lighted

One: We light the candle of Love, knowing that God is love revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Many: **Thank you, Lord, for the gift of love in our times of loneliness.**

Reading:

A Meditation for Advent

When the world was dark
and the city was quiet, you came.

You crept in beside us.
And no-one knew.
Only the few who dared to believe
that God might do something different.

Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of tonight's world;
Not the friendly darkness
as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,
but the fearful darkness,
in which people have stopped believing
that war will end
or that food will come
or that government will change
or that the Church cares?

Will you come into that darkness and do something different to save your people
from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of this town;
not the friendly quietness as when lovers hold hands,
but the fearful silence
when the phone has not rung,
the letter has not come,
the friendly voice no longer speaks,
the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness
and do something different,
not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners
and the quiet places of our lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden or want to be,
but because the fullness we long for
depends on our being as open and vulnerable to you
as you were to us,
when you came,
wearing no more than diapers,
and trusting human hands
to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives
if we open them to you
and do something different?

When the world was dark
and the city was quiet
you came.

You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord.
Do the same this Christmas.
Amen.

We are led into a few moments of silence with these words:

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given.
We would be silent now, Lord, and expectant...that we may receive the gift we
need. That we may become the gift others need.

Music: Sending You Light Used with permission

Prayers of the People

Together we gather, grateful for these strong walls which give refuge from the cold and dark. We join our voices with the countless prayers of suffering and of joy which have been uttered in this place.

O Jesus you sat at table with the betrayed and rejected of Palestine. We pray for those today who do not feel welcomed in their daily lives.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you identified with the naked and with those who had no place to lay their heads. We pray for the thousands who are homeless this night.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you belonged to a refugee family. We pray for the millions of displaced people in our world. Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace. We pray for those caught up in wars around the world: for soldiers, refugees and those who hold fast to the reasons for fighting.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you are the Great Physician. In this time of pandemic, we pray for all who are ill, coping with pain, fearing the worst, and for those who worry for the future.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you are our Brother. We pray for those who struggle in relationships, especially at this “family time”, when the cracks lie just below the surface.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you proclaimed release to the captives. We pray for all who are imprisoned this night. And we pray for those who enslaved by addictions.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you wept at the tomb of your friend Lazarus. We pray for all who mourn, and who are missing loved ones and companions, especially during these memory- and emotion-charged times.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you cared for your companions and for the little ones who surrounded you. We pray for those for whom God has given us special care.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you prayed that we might be one as you and the Father are one. We pray that we may feel at home with one another and with you in our midst.

Christ, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

O Jesus, you are the Hope of the World. And for our deepest hopes we now pray....

Candles are lit as we offer our prayers here and at home.

Music: Open My Heart Used with permission.

O Jesus, you taught us to pray as brothers and sisters, pray with us now the words you taught us:

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.

O God of all seasons and senses, grant us hope and peace and joy and love. In this season of short days and long nights, of gray and white and cold, teach us the lessons of endings:

children growing, friends leaving,
jobs concluding, stages finishing,
grieving over, grudges over,
blaming over, excuses over.

O God, grant us hope and peace and joy and love. In this season of short days and long nights, of gray and white and cold, teach us the lessons of beginnings:

that such waitings and endings may be a starting place,
planting of seeds which bring to birth
what is ready to be born—
something right and just and different,
a new song, deeper relationship,
a fuller love—
in the fullness of your time.

O God, grant us hope. Grant us peace. Grant us joy. Grant us love. For the sake of the Light of the World.

Let us go forth in peace. **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Music: My Dancing Day Used with permission.

Accept the strength that comes from the grace of Christ Jesus. –2 Timothy 2:1

I am leaning on the heart of God.
I am resting there in silence.
All the turmoil that exhausts me
is brought to bear on this great love.

No resistance or complaint is heard
as I lean upon God's welcome.
There is gladness for my coming.
There is comfort for my pain.

I lean, and lean, and lean
upon this heart that hurts with me.
Strength lifts the weight of my distress.
Courage wraps around my troubles.

No miracle of instant recovery.
No taking away of life's burdens.
Yet, there is solace for my soul,
and refuge for my exiled tears.

It is enough for me to know
the heart of God is with me,
Full of mercy and compassion,
tending to the wounds I bear.

~Joyce Rupp

Blessing When the World is Ending

Look, the world
is always ending
somewhere.

Somewhere
the sun has come
crashing down.

Somewhere
it has gone
completely dark.

Somewhere
it has ended
with the gun,
the knife,
the fist.

Somewhere
it has ended
with the slammed door,
the shattered hope.

Somewhere
it has ended
with the utter quiet
that follows the news
from the phone,
the television,
the hospital room.

Somewhere
it has ended
with a tenderness
that will break
your heart.

But, listen,
this blessing means
to be anything
but morose.
It has not come
to cause despair.

It is simply here
because there is nothing
a blessing
is better suited for
than an ending,
nothing that cries out more
for a blessing
than when a world
is falling apart.

This blessing
will not fix you,
will not mend you,
will not give you
false comfort;
it will not talk to you
about one door opening
when another one closes.

It will simply
sit itself beside you
among the shards
and gently turn your face
toward the direction
from which the light
will come,
gathering itself
about you
as the world begins
again.

—Jan Richardson

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