



**A Service of Reflection
for**

**All Saints', St Augustine of Canterbury, &
St James' (Roseland) Anglican Churches, Windsor
and
Christ Church (Anglican), Colchester
St Andrews' Anglican Church, Harrow**

on

**The Longest Night of the Year
Monday, December 21st, 2020**

Opening Responsory and Welcome

One In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be. What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

All **The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

Hymn **O Little Town of Bethlehem**

First Reading **Ecclesiastes 3. 1-11**

Psalm 22

One My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

All **O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.**

One In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

All **It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept me safe on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.**

One Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

All **God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted. God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 23

All **The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.**

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The Second Reading **Isaiah 40**

Litany of Remembrance

One 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.

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

Sing: 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

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

All We remember that though You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

Sing 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

One 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 tht we have suffered.

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

All 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 and daw will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

Sing 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

One 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 began in insecurity, and humbleness, in a poor stable.

We remember that the loving God who came to share this life with us promise us comfort and peace.

All 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.

Sing O come desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of mankind
Bid then our sad divisions cease,
and be thyself our King of Peace
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee o Israel.

Silent reflection

The Prayers of the People

Please respond to each petition ending "Lord, hear our prayer" with "... and in your merciful love, answer."

Hymn

Away in A Manger

Third Reading

Luke 2. 1-7

Offering of Light

One The story we celebrate this season tells us how in a little hill town a homeless couple off to pay their taxes took shelter in a stable among the animals and gave birth to a light that would change the world.

Let us pray.

All Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery and a new day coming.

Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, and let it go forth with us into the darkness, this night and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn.

One Lighten our darkness, we beseech you, O God; give us light in the night season; and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night.

All Amen

Hymn

Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

Psalm 121

All I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth. He will no suffer thy foot to moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber; behold, the God that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The lord is thy keeper; the Lord is they shade up on thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon at night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil and shall sustain thy soul. He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time for the and ever more.

Prayer

One Let us pray.

All Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers.

Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives.

Let the light of your holy spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.

Hymn

Silent Night

Concluding Prayers

One Let us pray.

All Another day will come, O God. I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, help me to do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy peace. Amen.

One O God, support us all the day long in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the even comes, and they buy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

Blessing and Dismissal

One The Lord bless and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and forever more.

All Amen.

One The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All And also with you.

Hymns

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O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. Oh little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth,
the everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary,
and gathered all above
While mortals sleep the angels keep
their watch of wondering love
Oh morning stars together,
proclaim thy holy birth.
And praises sing to God the king,
and peace to men on earth.
3. Oh little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth,
the everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

Away in A Manger

1. Away in a manger
No crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus
Lay down His sweet head
The stars in the sky
Look down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay
2. The cattle are lowing
The poor Baby wakes
But little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes
I love Thee, Lord Jesus
Look down from the sky
And stay by my side
'Til morning is nigh
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus
I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever
And love me, I pray
Bless all the dear children
In Thy tender care
And take us to Heaven
To live with Thee there

Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

1. Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy pow'rful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.
2. Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield;
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

Silent Night

1. Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
2. Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!
Christ the Savior is born!
3. Silent night, holy night
Son of God, oh, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.

First Reading **Ecclesiastes 3. 1-11**

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

The Second Reading **Isaiah 40**

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. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

Who has directed the spirit of the LORD, or as his counsellor has instructed him? Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice? Who taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales; see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.

Lebanon would not provide fuel enough, nor are its animals enough for a burnt-offering. All the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol? —A workman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts for it silver chains. As a gift one chooses mulberry wood —wood that will not rot—then seeks out a skilled artisan to set up an image that will not topple.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God'? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Third Reading **Luke 2. 1-7**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.