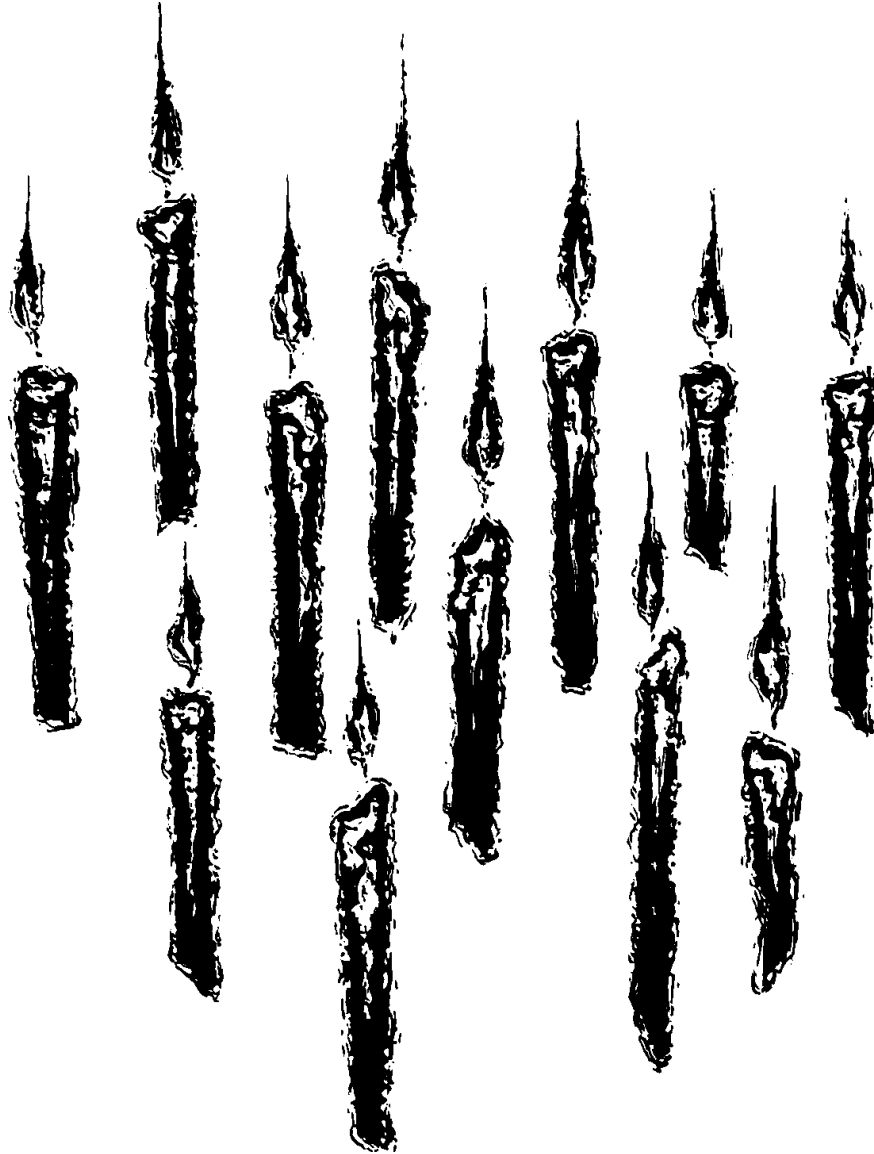


# Longest Night

December 21st 6:30 PM



## OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

809 S Commercial St. Neenah, WI 54956

[our-saviors.org](http://our-saviors.org)

(920) 725-3956



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

We are glad you are joining us for worship at  
**OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**You are Welcome here!**

## **Winter Solstice**

The winter solstice, December 21st, marks the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere. On this day the North Pole reaches its maximum tilt away from the sun, which causes the Sun to travel the shortest path through the sky. For this reason, this day has the least daylight and the longest night.

## **Importance of creating a time and space of solace**

The holiday season offers many opportunities for celebration, generosity, feasting, hope, joy, love and peace. There are songs, parties, traditions, gifts and memories shared that hold space for these wonderful things. While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Those who have experienced loss—of a job, a home, a relationship, their health—will be adjusting to new realities. Those grieving the death of a loved one (whether their passing happened recently or years ago) will feel the pain of empty seats at holiday parties. Those who are struggling with addiction at parties with fully stocked bars, miss a loved one deployed overseas or those struggling with illness might feel out of place during a time with so much celebration. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time.

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# **LONGEST NIGHT**

## **ORDER OF WORSHIP**

*The congregation gathers with a time for quiet reflection and meditation*

### **Prelude**

### **Words of Welcome**

L Tonight, on the longest night of the year, we acknowledge that, for many people, Christmas is a time of loneliness, sorrow, alienation, and sadness. This service offers a way for people to claim those feelings and still feel surrounded by the compassionate love of God. For all those who are carrying heavy loads this time of year, we hope this service will offer solace for the soul.

### **Greeting**

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

**C And also with you.**

### **Prayer**

L Creator of the stars of night,  
bless the long hours of this night with the warmth of your presence.

**C Come to all who suffer in any way.**

L Grant rest to the weary,  
freedom to those who are burdened,  
and bright hope to those who despair.

**C Strengthen us as we await your coming once again,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

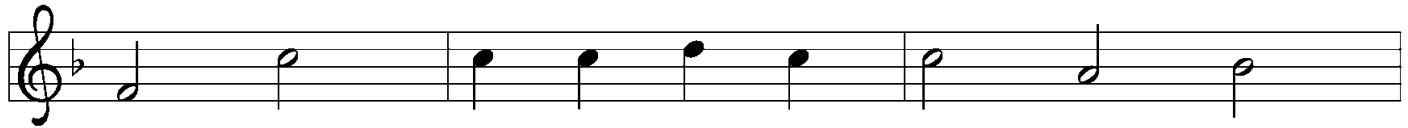
**Solo:** “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” arr. by Mark Hayes

**Song:** “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

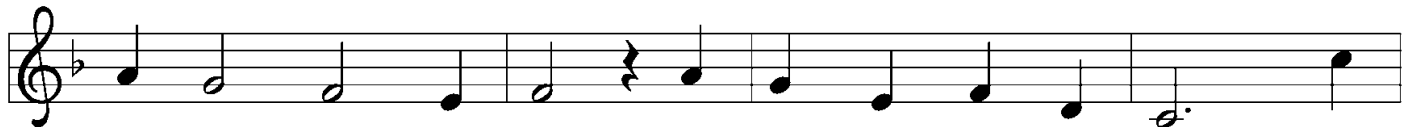
ELW #272



1 Lo, how a rose e’er bloom - ing from ten - der stem hath  
2 I - sai - ah had fore - told it, the rose I have in  
3 This flow’r, whose fra - grance ten - der with sweet-ness fills the  
4 O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, who felt our hu - man



sprung! Of Jes - se’s lin - eage com - ing as  
mind; with Mar - y we be - hold it, the  
air, dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor the  
woe; O Sav - ior, king of glo - ry, who



seers of old have sung, it came, a flow’r so bright, a -  
vir - gin moth - er kind. To show God’s love a - right, she  
dark-ness ev - ’ry - where. True man, yet ver - y God, from  
dost our weak - ness know: bring us at length, we pray, to



mid the cold of win - ter, when half - spent was the night.  
bore to us a Sav - ior, when half - spent was the night.  
sin and death he saves us and light - ens ev - ’ry load.  
the bright courts of heav - en and in - to end - less day.

Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851–1934, sts. 1–2; Harriet R. Krauth, 1845–1925, st. 3; John C. Mattes, 1876–1948, st. 4  
Music: ES IST EIN ROS, *Alte catholische geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1599

## **Prayer**

L God of love and understanding,

**C We gather here this evening to confront our pain  
in the midst of the world's celebration.**

L Help us know that you are present with us  
in all of our moods and feelings and seasons.

**C Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy, and love  
that you promise to all of your people  
through the gift of your son Jesus.**

**Amen.**

## **Candle Lighting Litany**

L: We light four candles tonight in honor of our loved ones.  
We light one for our grief, one for our courage,  
one for our memories, and one for our love.

P: This candle represents our grief.  
We own the pain of losing loved ones,  
of dreams that go unfulfilled,  
of hopes that evaporate in despair.

*Leader lights a candle; brief silence follows.*

L: This candle represents our courage.  
It symbolizes the courage to confront our sorrow,  
to comfort each other,  
to share our feelings honestly and openly with each other,  
and to dare to hope in the midst of pain.

*Pastor lights a candle; a brief silence follows.*

P: This candle represents our memories.  
For the times we laughed together, cried together,  
were angry with each other or overjoyed with each other.  
We light this candle for the memories  
of caring and joy we shared together.

*Leader lights a candle; a brief silence follows*

L: This candle represents our love.  
The love we have given, and the love we have received.  
The love that has gone unacknowledged and unfelt,  
and the love that has been shared in times of joy and sorrow.

*Pastor lights a candle; a brief silence follows.*

P: You are invited to come forward to light one of the candles  
to remember a loved one who can't be with you this Christmas.  
You can also light a candle to express a loss:  
of a job, a home, a relationship, your health.

**Solo:** “The Longest Night of the Year” by Mary Chapin Carpenter

*When all the people have had the opportunity to light candles  
the leader continues*

L: We light the Christ candle,  
remembering that Jesus Christ is always in the center of our lives.  
He hears our cries, he knows our hearts and,  
in the midst of all our thoughts and emotions,  
he offers us hope and healing.

*Pastor lights the Christ candle.*

## **Prayer**

P Let us pray.

**C Comforting God,  
wrap us in your presence  
in this time of remembrance.**

P With these candles, help us find your light,  
a light that will guide us day by day, step by step,  
as we try to live life fully and wholly.

**C We cherish the special ways  
in which we have been touched by our loved ones.  
We thank you for the gift their lives have been to us.  
Now comfort us, encourage us, empower us. Amen.**

## **Reading: Isaiah 61: 1-3**

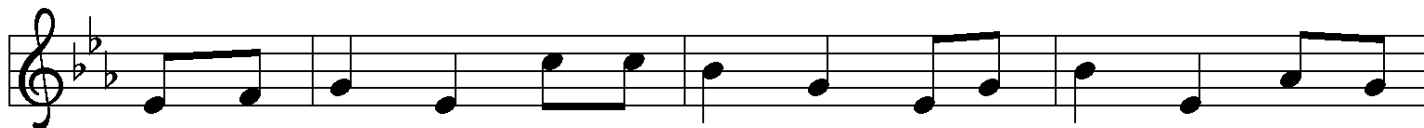
<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

## **Reading: Psalm 146:8**

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

# Song: "Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory"

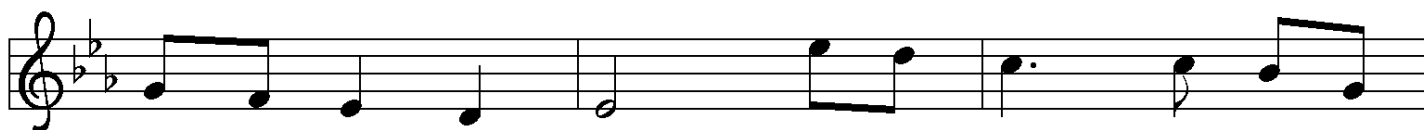
ELW #561



1 Joy - ous light of heav'n-ly glo - ry, lov-ing glow of God's own  
2 In the stars that grace the dark - ness, in the blaz - ing sun of  
3 You who made the heav-en's splen - dor, ev-'ry danc - ing star of



face, you who sing cre - a - tion's sto - ry, shine on  
dawn, in the light of peace and wis - dom, we can  
night, make us shine with gen - tle jus - tice, let us



ev - 'ry land and race. Now as eve - ning falls a -  
hear your qui - et song. Love that fills the night with  
each re - flect your light. Might - y God of all cre -



round us, we shall raise our songs to you. God of day - break,  
won - der, love that warms the wea - ry soul, love that bursts all  
a - tion, gen - tle Christ who lights our way, lov - ing Spir - it



God of shad - ows, come and light our hearts a - new.  
chains a - sun - der, set us free and make us whole.  
of sal - va - tion, lead us on to end - less day.

Text: Greek hymn, 3rd cent., para. Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: JOYOUS LIGHT, Marty Haugen

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## Reading: Luke 24: 13-21, 28-35

<sup>13</sup>Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup>And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" <sup>19</sup>He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## Sermon

**Song:** “We Come to You for Healing, Lord”

ELW #617



1 We come to you for heal - ing, Lord, of  
2 As once you walked through an - cient streets and  
3 You touch us through phy - si - cians' skills, through  
4 When nights are long with wake - ful - ness, through  
5 We come to you, O lov - ing Lord, in



bod - y, mind, and soul, and pray that by your  
reached toward those in pain, come, ris - en Christ, a -  
nurs - es' gifts of care, and through the love of  
days when strength runs low, grant us your gift of  
our dis - tress and pain, in trust that through our



Spir - it's touch we may a - gain be whole.  
mong us still with pow'r to heal a - gain.  
faith - ful friends who lift our lives in prayer.  
pa - tience, Lord, your calm - ing peace to know.  
nights and days your grace will heal, sus - tain.

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., 1923–2007

Music: MARTYRDOM, Hugh Wilson, 1764–1824

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# HEALING

*The order for healing is an expression in worship of the church's ministry of healing. Here all who sense the need of God's healing in any aspect of their lives may join in prayer for others and themselves. Here each person may come to receive a word of blessing and prayer. Here each one may also receive a physical gesture of healing: the laying on of hands, which may be accompanied by anointing with oil. These signs, first given in baptism, tell us again that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked forever with the cross of Christ, who is health and salvation for the world.*



## Introduction

P In its ministry of healing, the church does not replace the gifts of God that come through the scientific community nor does it promise a cure. Rather, the church offers and celebrates gifts such as these:

God's presence with strength and comfort in time of suffering,

God's promise of wholeness and peace, and

God's love embodied in the community of faith.

A Our Lord Jesus healed many as a sign of the reign of God come near and sent the disciples to continue this work of healing—with prayer, the laying on of hands, and anointing. In the name of Christ, the great healer and reconciler of the world, we now entrust to God all who are in need of healing.

## **Prayers of the People**

A God of mercy.

**C Hear our prayer.**

A O God, we bring these intercessions before you, knowing that you will hear us as you have promised, and will answer according to the mercy shown in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C Amen.**

## **Laying On of Hands**

P Sisters and brothers, I invite you to come and receive a sign of healing and wholeness in the name of the triune God.

*Those who wish to receive laying on of hands and anointing  
may come forward down the center aisle to kneel or stand at the rail.*

*Please return to your pew using the side aisles.*

**Solo:** “Night of Silence” by Daniel Kantor

## **Healing Prayer**

**P** Let us pray:

**C** **Living God,**  
    **through the laying on of hands,**  
    **grant comfort in suffering to all who are in need of healing.**  
**When we are afraid,**  
    **give us courage;**  
**when afflicted,**  
    **give us patience;**  
**when dejected,**  
    **give us hope;**  
**and when alone,**  
    **assure us of the support of your holy people.**  
**We ask this through Christ our Lord.**  
**Amen.**

## **Healing Blessing**

**P** Almighty God,  
    who is a strong tower to all,  
    to whom all things in heaven and on earth bow and obey,  
be now and evermore your sure defense,  
and help you to know that the name given to us  
    for health and salvation  
is the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**C** **Amen**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**C Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever.  
Amen.**

## **Blessing**

**P 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.**

**C Amen.**

## Song: "Love Has Come"

ELW #292



1 Love has come— a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the  
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der. Love is God now a -  
3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us! Love is life ev - er -



Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav - en has come to pro - claim it;  
sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth - er;  
last - ing and free. Love is Je - sus with - in and a - mong us.



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to  
what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the  
Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the



you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.  
name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.  
gift of Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Text: Ken Bible, b. 1950

Music: UN FLAMBEAU, F. Seguin, *Recueil de noëls composés en langue provençale*, 1856

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## Dismissal

L The peace of Christ be with you all.

C And also with you.

*The congregation departs in silence.*

Please join us for these  
**Upcoming Worship Services**

Sunday, December 24th

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Services**

**1 PM, 3 PM, 5 PM & 9 PM**

Saturday, December 30th 5 PM & Sunday December 31st 9 AM

**Lessons & Carols Services**

*These will be Services of the Word (without Communion)  
and the congregation will get to sing many Christmas carols  
as we celebrate the season of Christmas.*

Please note that there will not be worship services on:

Saturday, December 23rd 5 PM & Sunday, December 24th 9 AM

Monday, December 25th

**Worship Leaders**

Pastor: Rev. Jon Strasman [jstrasman@our-saviors.org](mailto:jstrasman@our-saviors.org)

Worship Assistant: Sarah Swender

Music Director: Jim Miller [jmiller@our-saviors.org](mailto:jmiller@our-saviors.org)

Soloist: Izzy Rickets