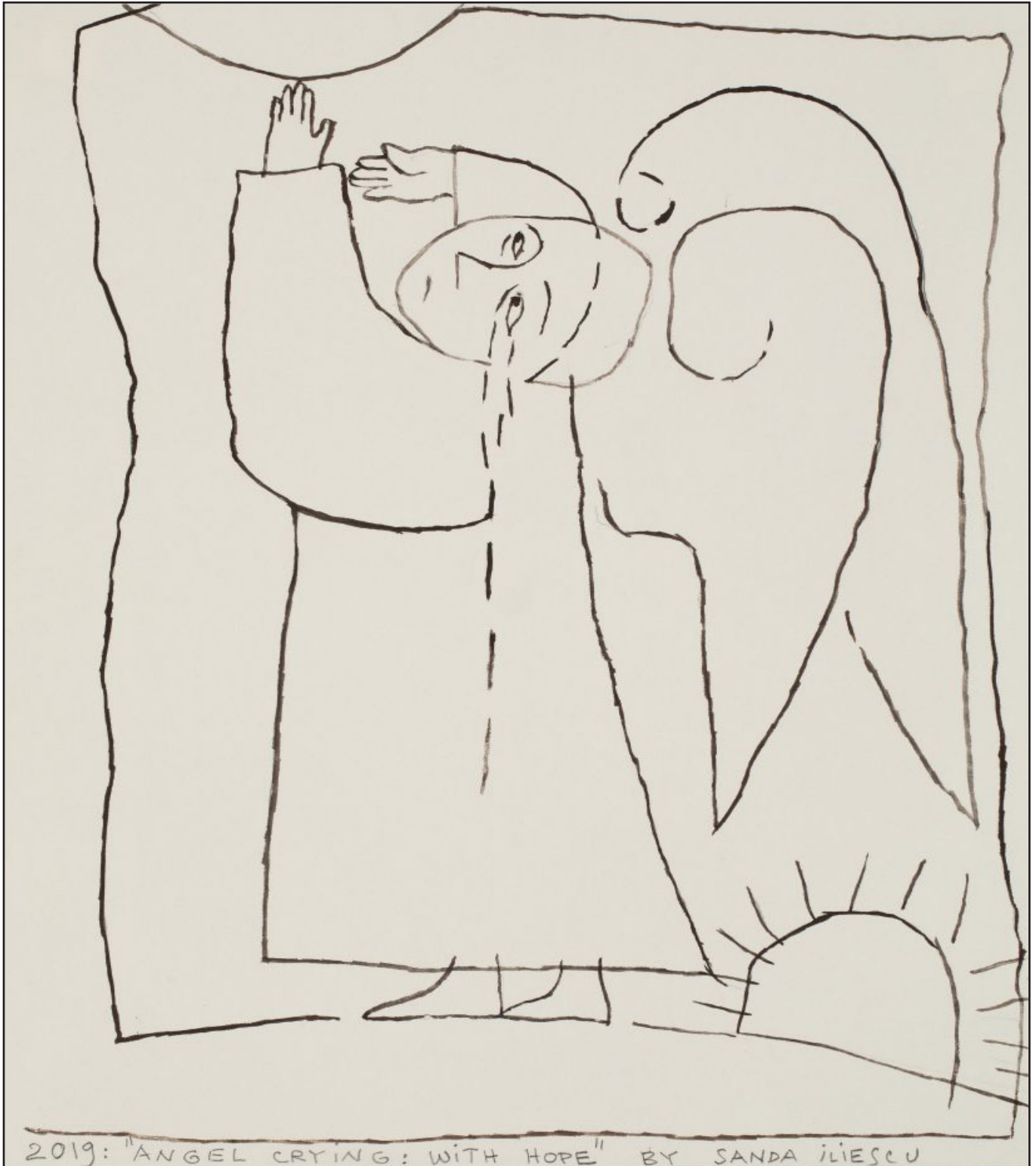


Shandon Presbyterian Church

607 Woodrow Street • Columbia, South Carolina • 29205

Service of the Longest Night • December 21, 2022 • 6 pm



A Service of the Longest Night

Prelude

Matthew McCall

The Huron Carol

ARR. DAN FORREST

Call to Worship

Rev. Jenny McDevitt

Lighting of the Advent Candles

* Hymn 676

Day Is Done

AR HYD Y NOS

An Evening Prayer

Rev. John Cook

Gentle God,

**Your Christmas angels are singing,
but we struggle to hear their song.**

We long to hear from all of them:

**the ones who sing of your glory in the highest heaven;
the ones who whisper, 'Do not be afraid;'
the ones who cradle us and enfold us in their wings;
the ones who understand if our hearts are too heavy
for melodies that soar and dance.**

**This is our truth tonight, but we trust that your truth is stronger.
So if we are here tonight with anger,
calm us with your patience.**

**If we are here tonight with fear,
companion us with your light.**

**If we are here tonight in pain,
soothe us with your gentleness.**

**If we are here tonight in shock,
steady us with your hand.**

For all of us who are here tonight, O God, hold us and give us hope.

(Silent prayer)

Assurance of God's Grace

Response

Jennifer Mitchell

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ST. LOUIS

**O 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.**

**How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

Scripture Lesson

Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.

This is the Word of God, for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Meditation

Rev. Jenny McDevitt

Making a Place

Time for Silence and Reflection

Ritual of Candle Lighting and Prayer

Anthem

Before the Marvel of This Night

CARL F. SCHALK

Pastoral Prayer

* Hymn 123

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

CAROL

* Benediction

*Please depart the Sanctuary in silence.
The pastors will greet outside the Woodrow Street doors.*

A counselor from Live Oak Counseling Center, a supported ministry of Shandon Presbyterian Church, will be available in the Parlor following the service to meet with anyone needing extra support this evening

*Join us Sundays at 10:30 am.
Christmas Eve services are at 4, 8, and 11 pm.*

Blessing for the Longest Night

All throughout these months
as the shadows have lengthened,
this blessing has been gathering itself,
making ready,
preparing for this night.

It has practiced walking in the dark,
traveling with its eyes closed,
feeling its way
by memory
by touch
by the pull of the moon
even as it wanes.

So believe me when I tell you
this blessing will reach you
even if you have not light enough
to read it;
it will find you
even though you cannot see it coming.

You will know the moment of its arriving
by your release of the breath
you have held so long;
a loosening
of the clenching in your hands,
of the clutch around your heart;
a thinning
of the darkness that had drawn itself around you.

This blessing does not mean to take the night away
but it knows its hidden roads,
knows the resting spots along the path,
knows what it means
to travel in the company of a friend.

So when this blessing comes, take its hand.
Get up.
Set out on the road you cannot see.

This is the night when you can trust
that any direction you go,
you will be walking toward the dawn.

—Jan Richardson