



Shandon Presbyterian Church

607 Woodrow Street • Columbia, South Carolina • 29205

Service of the Longest Night

December 21, 2023 • 7 pm



This is God's house. There is a place for you here. Welcome home.

A Service of the Longest Night

Prelude

Matthew McCall

The Huron Carol

ARR. DAN FORREST

Call to Worship

Rev. Jenny McDevitt

Lighting the Advent Candles

* Hymn 109

Blessed Be the God of Israel

MERLE'S TUNE

An Evening Prayer

April Martin

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 here tonight, O God, hold us and give us hope.

(Silent prayer)

Assurance of God's Grace

* Response

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 1:67-79

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Rev. Jenny McDevitt

Once In Royal David's City

Anthem

Once In Royal David's City

ARR. TONY ALONSO

A Time for Silence and Reflection

Ritual of Candle Lighting and Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. John Cook

* Hymn

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

CAROL

**It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old
from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold.
"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all gracious King,"
the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.**

**And you beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing:
O, rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.**

**For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.**

* Benediction

*You are welcome to stay in the Sanctuary as long as you like.
The candles will remain lit. When you depart, please do so quietly.*

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 11:30 pm.*

Blessing for the Longest Night

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