

The Longest Night



December 21, 2021 + 7 PM

Welcome to The United Methodist Church of Berea!

As followers of Jesus Christ, who reveals a God whose love knows no boundaries, we are committed to welcoming and affirming every person as a beloved child of God. Every person—of every sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, age, economic status, health, ability, or any other identifying label—is welcome to participate fully in our ministries and life together as church. We hope The United Methodist Church of Berea will become a home for you, your family, and your friends as together, in our relationship with God, with each other, and with all creation, **we make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

Centering Music

Wait for the Lord

*Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord: keep watch, take heart!*

Jacques Berthier (Ps 27:14) / © 1984, 1998 Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent /
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Words of Welcome

+ Call to Worship

We cry out to the Lord, who counts and collects all our tears.

Lord God, be with us now.

In our grief, in our loneliness, in our uncertainty, and in our pain,
our bodies and spirits cry out to God.

Hear us, O Lord, and come quickly, we pray. Amen.

+ Hymn

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

***Come thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our sins and fears release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.***

***Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.***

Tune: Rowland H. Pritchard, 1830; harm. From The English Hymnal, 1906 /
Words: Charles Wesley, 1744 / Public Domain

Prayer

The days are short. The nights are long.

***Lord, the world you have created mirrors the reality of our hearts,
revealing your gracious spirit that mourns with us in grief,
cries with us in sorrow, sits with us in despair.***

***You are not a distant God, removed from human pain,
but a faithful companion, closer to us than our tears.***

***Help us to feel your presence now as we remember and reflect,
seeking your healing touch and the hope promised and delivered
in Jesus Christ, your Holy Child. Amen.***

I will light candles this Christmas,
 candles of joy despite all the sadness,
 candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
 candles of courage for fears ever present,
 candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
 candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
 candles of love to inspire all my living,
 candles that will burn all year long.

Lighting of Candles

After the four Advent candles are lit, you are invited to light a candle on the altar table, giving expression to whatever burden, grief, sorrow, loneliness, or other experience that brings you to this time of worship. You are welcome to speak aloud the name of a person or experience as you light a candle, as you pray, and as we receive these moments together to reflect, be still, and know the presence of God who is with us, even in the darkest and longest of nights.

Hymn

Faith Is Patience in the Night

***Faith is patience in the night,
 waiting for the morning light,
 never giving up the fight.
 Spirit God give us faith.***

***Faith is laughter in our pain,
 joy in pleasures that remain,
 trust in one we can't explain.
 Spirit God give us faith.***

***Faith is steadfast will to live,
 standing firm and positive,
 being ready still to give,
 Spirit God give us faith.***

***Faith is courage under stress,
 confidence in hopelessness,
 greatest gift we can possess.
 Spirit God give us faith***

Music: John D. Horman / Text: Mary Nelson Keithahn / © 2000, Abingdon Press /
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Canticle of Light and Darkness (from UMH 205)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
***We look for light but find darkness, for brightness, but walk in gloom.
 We grope like those who cannot perceive; we stumble at noon as in the twilight.***
 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
***If I say, "Let only darkness cover me, and the light about me be night,"
 even the darkness is not dark to you, the night is bright as day,
 for darkness is as light with you.***
 You are the light of the world; be light in our darkness, O Christ.
***Blessed be your name, O God, forever.
 You reveal deep and mysterious things;
 you are light and in you is no darkness.
 Our darkness is passing away and already the true light is shining.***
 You are the light of the world; be light in our darkness, O Christ.

Psalms 61 and 62 (NRSV)

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I call to you, when my heart is faint.
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I;
 for you are my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.
Let me abide in your tent forever, find refuge under the shelter of your wings.
For God alone my soul waits in silence; from the Lord comes my salvation.
God alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

Silent Reflection

Psalm 139 (NRSV)

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
 the night is bright as day, for darkness is as light to you.

Silent Reflection

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;
 he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
 for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
 you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
 and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Meditation

Anthem

It Is Well

*Grander earth has quaked before, moved by the sound of His voice.
Seas that are shaken and stirred can be calmed and broken for my regard.*

Through it all, through it all my eyes are on You.

Through it all, through it all it is well.

*Through it all, through it all my eyes are on You,
and it is well with me.*

*Far be it from me to not believe, even when my eyes can't see.
And this mountain that's in front of me will be thrown into the midst of the sea.*

So, let go my soul and trust in Him. The waves and wind still know His name.

It is well with my soul. It is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.

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Invitation to the Table

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. *And also with you.*

Lift up your hearts. *We lift them up to the Lord.*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere

to give thanks to you, almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

From the silence before creation, your Word spoke all that is into being.

*You saw the darkness and called forth light, dividing day from night,
giving each its name and your blessing.*

We rejected your blessing, choosing to control rather than care,

to consume rather than cultivate,

to turn away from your light and turn your darkness into a hiding place.

*Still, you choose to bless and redeem us, calling us into renewed fellowship
through prophets, leaders, servants, and saints.*

And so, with them—with all your people on earth and all of creation—

we praise your name and join your unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Word in Jesus Christ.

From the darkness of a barn, you brought forth light into the world.

Christ carried your light into every darkened corner,

calling those kept in darkness to rejoice in your enduring love.

By the baptism of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection,

*you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.*

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you,

broke the bread, gave it to the disciples, and said:

"Receive, eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me."

When the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, again gave thanks to you,

gave it to the disciples, and said:

"Receive, drink; this is the new covenant, given for you and for all.

Do this to remember me."

And so, in remembrance of these and all your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,

we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice,

in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,

that we may be Christ's light for the world.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final glory, and we feast together at your table.
***Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of your Holy Spirit,
all honor and glory are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer

***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 for ever. Amen.***

Sharing the Bread and Cup

Anthem

The Story I'll Tell

*The hour is dark and it's hard to see
what you are doin' here in the ruins and where this will lead.
Oh, but I know that down through the years I'll look on this moment
and see your hand on it and know you were here.*

*And I'll testify of the battles you've won, how you were my portion when there wasn't enough.
And I'll testify of the seas that we've crossed, the waters you parted, the waves that I've walked.*

*Singing: Oh, oh, oh. My God did not fail. Oh, oh, oh. it's the story I'll tell.
Singing: Oh, oh, oh. I know it is well. Oh, oh, oh. it's the story I'll tell.*

Believing gets hard when options are few.

*When I can't see what you're doin', I know that you're provin', You're the God who comes through.
Oh, but I know that over the years I'll look back on this moment
and see your hand on it and know You were here.*

All that is left is highest praises. So sing hallelujah to the Rock of Ages.

*And I'll testify of the battles you've won, how you were my portion when there wasn't enough.
And I'll sing the song of the seas that we've crossed,
the waters you parted, the waves that I've walked.*

Alton Eugene, Benji Cowart, Naomi Raine /

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Prayer following Communion

*Lord, you have now set your servants free to go in peace as you have promised.
For these eyes of ours have seen the Savior whom you have prepared
for all the world to perceive: a light to enlighten the nations
and the glory of all your people. Amen.*

+ Hymn

Abide With Me

*Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

*I need thy presence every passing hour.
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.*

*I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;
ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.*

*Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*

Tune: W.H. Monk, 1861 / Text: Henry F. Lyte, 1847 (Lk. 24:29) / Public Domain

+ Benediction

May Jesus, the life—the life that is the light for all people—shine in your heart.
No matter how small, how dim, may that light stubbornly shine.
The darkness shall not overcome it.
With courage to face the coming days, with hope, with God by your side,
may the peace of Christ be with you.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Choral Response

Wait for the Lord

*Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord: keep watch, take heart!*

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Postlude

Join us in worship, this week and every week:

Sunday at 9AM in-person in the Sanctuary and online (www.facebook.com/umcberea/videos)

Sunday at 11AM in-person in Wesley Hall

Monday—Friday at 9AM (Morning Prayer) via Zoom
(1-888-788-0099, meeting id: 518 014 483; passcode: 170)

In accordance with CDC guidelines and our county's current "high" transmission risk, we require that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, wear face masks throughout their time in our building.



CHRISTMAS
a celebration of God's presence

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24

4 PM, 7 PM, and 11 PM in the Sanctuary
7 PM Online (www.facebook.com/umcberea/live)
8:30 PM Outdoors on the Seminary St. lawn

Please worship with us—and invite others, too—in whatever setting is most comfortable to you as we celebrate God's gift of his presence with us in Jesus Christ. Each service will include beautiful music, a message of hope, & the traditional sharing of candlelight.