

THE LONGEST NIGHT

A DIFFERENT SERVICE OF WORSHIP FOR CHRISTMAS

Chapel of the Cross

December 22, 2007

7:00 p.m. o'clock

The holidays can be difficult for us all; the stresses and strains of trying to offer a time of celebration take their toll. Many people find they have trouble feeling “*in the spirit*” of things, whether because of the recent (or anticipated) death of a family member or friend, the end of a marriage, the loss of work, or other trying change. We are gathered together for A Service of The Longest Night. It is so named because of its proximity to the winter solstice – the longest night of the year. But the name is also fitting because – despite the trappings of gifts, special meals, and Christmas carols – the season can be darker than “normal” times of the year for those who struggle. We offer this service of comfort and peace to you.

WORDS OF WELCOME

In the middle of the night, when stark night was darkest,
Then you chose to come.

God’s resplendent firstborn sent to make us one.

The voices of doom protest:

“All these words about justice, love and peace –

All these naïve words will buckle beneath

the weight of a reality which is brutal and bitter, ever more bitter.”

It is true, Lord; it is midnight upon the earth,
moonless night and starved of stars.

But can we forget that You, the son of God,
chose to be born precisely at midnight?

THE PRELUDE

“*O Holy Night*”

Adolphe Adams

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Jesus said: “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” And so we invite each other to this time of peaceful worship. Flee for a while from your burdens and tasks.

All: **Hide yourself for a little space from the turmoil of your thoughts.**

Leader: Come, cast aside your burdensome cares and put aside your laborious pursuits.

All: **Give your time to God, and rest in God for a little while.**

*THE HYMN

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“*In the Bleak Midwinter*”

THE CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

Leader: Let us pray.

All: **Holy and Gracious God, you have searched us and you know us, and so you know how difficult it is for us to be whole-hearted in our celebrations of your Good News. There are parts of us which will not listen to the angel’s song – we believe their tidings of great joy are for some people but not for us. We grieve, God, and we hold tight to our sorrows. And so we confess, not our pain, but our embrace of it and our stubborn refusal of your grace and love. Forgive us, God. Continue to love us, we pray, and help us finally to hear your assurance that you travel beside us, and you will help carry our burdens. Amen.**

The Pastoral Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer

THE SOLO

“*O Savior, Hear Me!*”

Randy Manning
arr. Dudley Buck

THE READING OF SCRIPTURE

THE REFLECTION

Pastor Steve Beutler

THE SOLO

“*Nearer, My God, to Thee*”

Randy Manning
Lowell Mason

LIGHTING CANDLES OF REMEMBRANCE AND CONCERN

“Silent Night”

The Readings

Isaiah 40:28-31

Psalms 121

John 1:1-5, 10-14, 16-18

THE LITANY OF AFFIRMATION

Leader: God did not wait till the world was ready,
till... nations were at peace.

All: **God came when the Heavens were unsteady and
prisoners cried out for release.**

Leader: God did not wait for the perfect time.

All: **God came when the need was deep and great.**

Leader: God did not wait until our hearts were pure.

All: **In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and
doubt. To a world like ours, of anguished shame,
God came and God’s Light would not go out.**

Leader: God came to a world which did not mesh;
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

All: **In the mystery of the Word made Flesh, the maker
of the stars was born.**

Leader: We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs
with joyful voice, or to share our grief, to touch our
pain.

All: **God came with Love. Rejoice!**

*THE HYMN

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

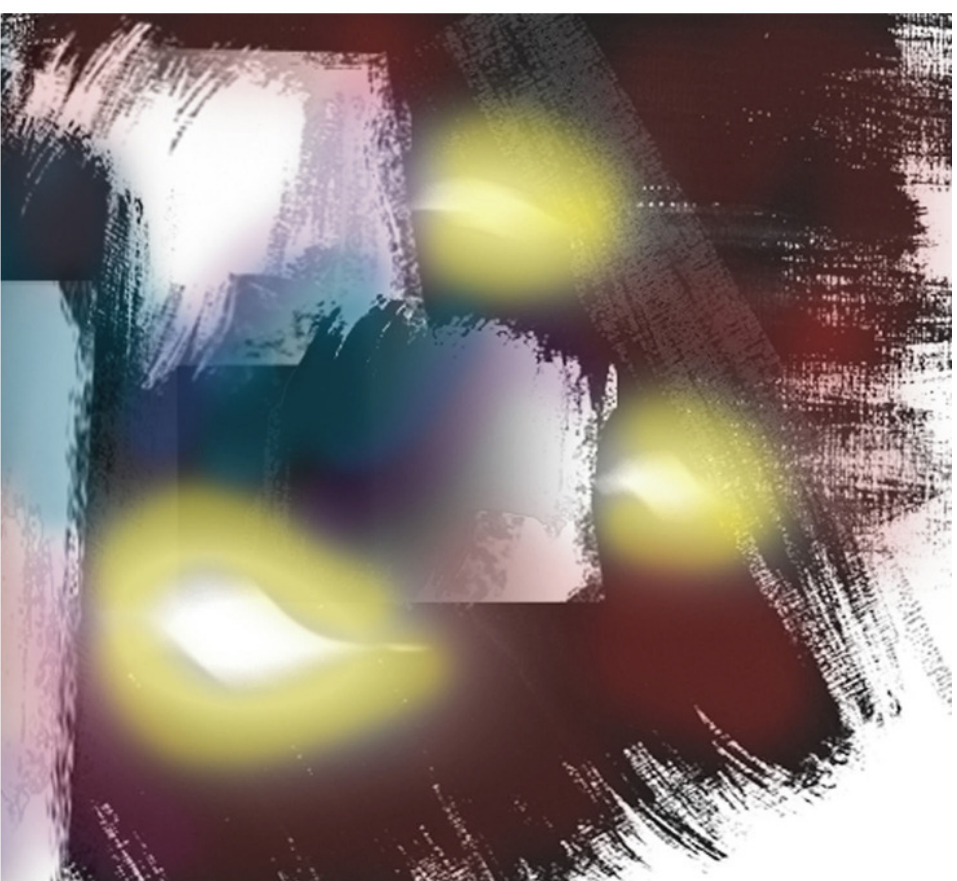
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*THE BENEDICTION

THE POSTLUDE

“There’s a Song in the Air”

Karl P. Harrington



The Longest Night