

December 21, 2022  
Longest Night  
7:00 pm



First Lutheran Church  
BOTHELL

# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

## STATEMENT OF WELCOME

We, the community of First Lutheran Church of Bothell, proclaim the message that the grace of our Lord is infinitely inclusive and that everyone is welcome. We believe that Christ calls us to reconciliation and wholeness in a world of alienation and brokenness.

As a Reconciling in Christ congregation and as disciples of Christ seeking justice and reconciliation among all peoples, we at First Lutheran Church welcome all into the fullness of God's love. **We welcome everyone, without exception and regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical and mental ability, age, or station in life.** We recognize that each person is a unique creation of God, and through grace, a child of God.

All are welcome at First Lutheran.

All are welcome to worship, to hear the Good News, to receive the sacraments, and to share in fellowship and service. As members of First Lutheran Church, we pledge ourselves and our congregation to exercise our faith in Christ, treasuring one another's similarities while embracing our God-given differences. We pledge that we will strive to live as a reconciling people, in our life together and in our outreach to the world.

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## Longest Night

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#### INTRODUCTION

The winter solstice is the longest night and the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere.

In a few days many of us will gather to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, the arrival of Jesus Christ, God in human form. December 25 is celebrated as Christmas because it had been incorrectly identified as the winter solstice. What the early Christians intended for this feast was not a birthday party for baby Jesus but rather a feast of proclamation. God arrives by way of deep darkness. Christians wanted to tell the world that God, the maker of the cosmos, chose to lovingly draw near to our broken world by way of a human birth on the longest night of the year. God's love for us goes deep and does not fade or change with the seasons. It is richer and more plentiful than the darkness of night, blazing brighter than the noonday sun of late June.

For many, the lack of daylight intensifies other suffering. The weight of depression grows heavier when light is scarce. We get stressed out when our calendars fill with extra social obligations. We fear interactions with family members that have been difficult in the past. What an opportunity, then, to share that the message of Christmas is specifically sent for those in pain and suffering. It is not that "all is merry and bright." Rather, it is the abiding truth that God seeks to be with us, even when we are "blue."

While it is true that our preindustrial forebears had legitimate reasons to be afraid of the dark, it is also true that we repeat racist binaries that have led to the violent deaths of people of color when Christians associate darkness with pain and lightness with healing. A night like this and a feast like Christmas are fruitful encounters with healing darkness. God-with-us is here to guide us into paths of love and practices of justice.

#### PRELUDE: 'Twas the Moon Of Wintertime

#### WELCOME

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

## **DIALOGUE**

The Spirit and the church cry out:

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

All those who await his appearance pray:

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

The whole creation pleads:

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

## **HYMN OF THE NIGHT: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (ELW 257)***

### **THANKSGIVING FOR THIS NIGHT**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give you thanks, O God,

for in the beginning you called the dark into being,

and you said it was good.

Without the darkness a seed will not grow.

In the dark depths of the ocean lies incredible wonder that nourishes our world.

In the dark of the womb we came to be.

In the dark our dreams come and bless.

In the dark our savior was born.

In the dark the angels came and announced the Good News.

In the dark indeed comes blessing and love and birth.

**Amen.**

### **PSALMODY: *Just as I Am Without One Plea (Elliot/Bradbury)***

*Rachel Jackman, soloist*

### **READINGS**

#### **Genesis 1:1-5**

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

#### **Psalms 104:19-28**

You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens. People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening. O LORD, how

manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

### **Luke 1:46-55**

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, **but in these last days God has spoken to us by the Son.**

### **WE TAKE TIME TO PRAY**

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the health of the creation, for abundant harvests that all may share, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For public servants, the government, and those who protect us; for those who work to bring peace, justice, healing, and protection in this and every place, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those who travel, for those who are sick and suffering,  
and for those who are in captivity, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For deliverance in the time of affliction, wrath, danger, and need,  
let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all servants of the church, for this assembly,  
and for all people who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy,  
let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Giving thanks for all who have gone before us and are at rest, rejoicing in the  
communion of all the saints, we commend ourselves, one another, and our  
whole life to you, through Christ our Lord.

**To you, O Lord.**

O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works:  
give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our  
hearts may be set to obey your commandments; and also that we, being  
defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy  
Spirit, God forever.

**Amen.**

## **REFLECTION ON THE LONGEST NIGHT**

### **EVENING CANTICLE: In the Bleak Midwinter (Rosetti/Holst)**

Rachel Jackman, Soloist

### **BLESSING**

God bless you and keep you,  
Jesus grant you grace and truth,  
and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts,  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **POSTLUDE:**



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