

Prayer Circle – The Longest Night December 21, 2020 7:30-8:15

Tonight we have come to pray together and to light candles of love and remembrance - to have light and community on this shortest day and longest night and to remember that we are one in the love of Jesus and that we can join together whenever we are in need so that our losses and our aloneness and our mourning are held in a circle of love and light.

The pandemic has brought a global and communal loss and grief and also many personal experiences of loss and insecurity and fear and sorrow. People have had personal losses during this time and not had their beloved community as close and available as they might need. We all have lost the routines and rhythms of life and the richness of our lives and gatherings with friends and families. We know about the problems in our country and of the many losses to violence and hatred and the on-going struggles for justice in the face of these losses.

Tonight we sit together and recognize a need for prayer and reflection on our losses and to share in the sorrows the recognition that in this time of Advent the church has proclaimed hope, love, joy and peace in the midst of difficulty. This is the church's gift to the world- that the faith story is grounded in the presence of God that came and dwelt among us in the midst of hardship.

Tonight we light 4 candles of remembrance and love and ask you all to light your candles and pray with us:

The first Candle (Carletta)

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies.

We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation when all Creation waits for the Light.

All: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

The Second Candle is lighted. (Bev)

We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

All: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future. We remember that through You all things are possible.

The third Candle is lighted. (Maria)

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

All:

We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

The fourth Candle is lighted. (Mary)

We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

All:

We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

The Prayers of the People

Carletta

God of love, in this Christmas Season

We embrace and offer up to you
all that used to be which is now lost to us,
and cannot be again.

With celebration all around us, memories of what was,
and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts.

Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night,
until the light returns and morning comes.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer, **

Bev

God of mercy and compassion,

there are those among us who are grieving over what might
have been.

Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of
Christmas.

We remember that once it was a special day for us, too,
but someone or something precious has gone away from us in
this life.

We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream.

We find ourselves adrift and alone.

We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at
the inn.

We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the
storm.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Mary

God of grace, in the spirit of the season,

grant us all that we need to comfort us

as we journey through this Christmas season.

We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us,

both here and throughout the world,

who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden, that we may
be lifted up in courage and journey on in thy peace.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Psalm 122 Maria G.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh from the Lord,
who hath made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved;

he that keepeth thee will not slumber;

behold, the God that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor
sleep.

The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right
hand.

The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon at night.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil and shall sustain thy
soul.

He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in,
from this time forth and even forevermore.

Closing Prayer Mary C

Almighty God, we thank you for your constant
love and for the blessings of this day. We know
that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you
are there.

Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice
in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Let the
light of your holy Spirit shine like these candles in the
darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing,
lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell
so deeply in our hearts that it may shine on, for us and
for those we meet along the way. Amen.

All:

Another day will come, O God.

**I know not what it may bring forth, but make me
ready,**

God, for whatever it may be.

If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.

If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.

If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.

And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly.

Make these words more than words,

and give me the Spirit of thy Peace.

Amen.

May the peace of God, be always with you.

All: And also with you.