

Advent Midweek Worship Series

Pairing Scripture
with poems by Tanner Olson

TONIGHT:
**Isaiah 40:1-8 &
“Compassion”**

*Also marking the
Longest Night
Wednesday
December 21
2022*

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH & PRESCHOOL

5110 Grand Avenue, Gurnee, Illinois 60031 – (847) 244-9647

Pastor Ben Squires

Cell phone: 224-419-5519 or email: pastor@bethelgurnee.org

Cindy Daluga, Disciple Care Coordinator
Cindy.daluga@bethelgurnee.org

Ben Sanders, Mission Facilitator
office@bethelgurnee.org

Website: www.BethelGurnee.org

VESPERS

Adapted from the Lutheran Service Book, “*vespers*” is a Latin word meaning “evening.” Originally one of eight daily offices prayed during the Middle Ages, Vespers was retained at the time of the Reformation as one of two chief daily services, the other being Matins (Morning Prayer). “Sunset marks the end of the day and also the beginning of the next day so that the days roll on without interruption. The hours of darkness are experienced as a time of waiting and watching... the unknown, isolation, fear, death, night... but also stillness, rest, peace, and promise. In Christ, the grave is transformed into the morning of new and unending life” (quotes from Journey into the Heart of God).



The Longest Night: An Invitation Into God’s Compassion

P: This is the longest night of the year. For those for whom night-time means heightened loneliness or fear, this is the night most dreaded, the night when hope is most needed. We are surrounded in this season by the sounds and sights of joy – family gatherings, parties, and laughter. Some of it is real, some is forced, and some is a cover-up for various kinds of pain and disappointment. Many of us are reminded, by the very nature of the Christmas season, of those who are absent from our family circles. Others are burdened by illness or disappointment or anxiety. Some are acutely aware of the chaos of our world. And so we have come together this evening seeking the compassion, comfort and strength from the Lord Jesus who is in our midst through His Word and through the people of His Church.



God knows the emptiness we sometimes feel. God knows the feelings of abandonment, anger, loneliness, and relief we sometimes feel, too. God knows us from the depths of our hearts, and God sits with each one of us as we learn to be whole people once more. Be assured of God’s love and compassion. Amid the flickering lights, the promised joy and peace of this season can elude us, but we are here tonight, to gather in prayer, prayer sometimes with sighs too deep for words. May God’s Refrain, “Be not afraid!” resound within our souls, moved in us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

God of light and life, in the midst of a busy season when so many around us are making plans for the birthday of Jesus, we come listening for your voice and hoping for your comforting grace. Draw near us as we draw near to you. In the Name of Jesus, we pray,

C: Amen.

Opening Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 357 sts. 1,3,5-6



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som
3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy
5 O come, Thou Key of Da - vid, come, And o - pen
6 O come, Thou Day - spring from on high, And cheer us

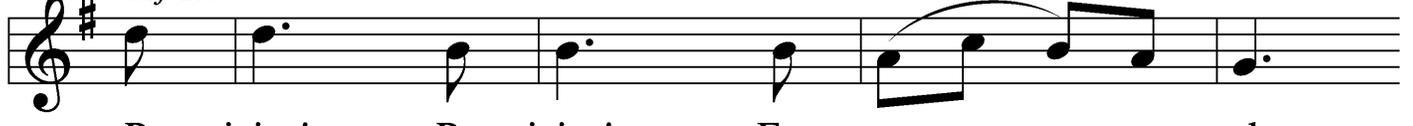


cap - tive Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly
tribes on Si - nai's height In an - cient times didst
wide our heav'n - ly home; Make safe the way that
by Thy draw - ing nigh; Dis - perse the gloom - y

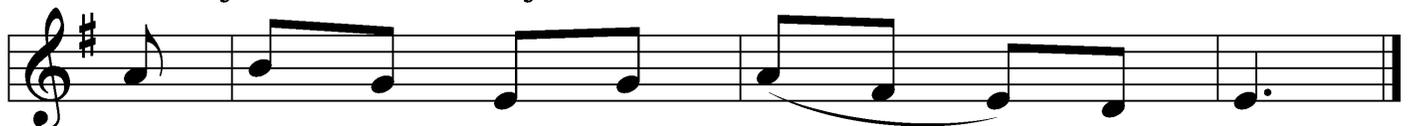


ex - ile here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
give the Law In cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.
leads on high, And close the path to mis - er - y.
clouds of night, And death's dark shad - ows put to flight.

Refrain



Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el



Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Text: Latin, c. 12th cent.; Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum, 1710, Köln; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-66, alt.
Tune: French, 15th cent.

Opening Words

P: O Lord, open my lips,

C: **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

P: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

C: **make haste to help me, O Lord.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Praise to You, O Christ,

C: **King who comes to save us.**

Psalm Reading (Responsive)

Psalm 23, with Psalm 27:1 (ESV, alt.)

P: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

C: **He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters;**

P: He restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

C: **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil; For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

P: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

C: **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Amen.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

C: **The LORD is our light and our salvation;**

P: Be not afraid.

C: **Amen.**

Reading Paired with Tonight's Poem

Isaiah 40:1-8 (ESV)

(See Handout)

Tonight's Poem by Tanner Olson

(See Handout)

Another Version of the Reading

Isaiah 40:1-8 (VOICE)

“Comfort, comfort My people,” says your God.

²“With gentle words, *tender and kind*,

Assure Jerusalem, *this chosen city from long ago*, that her battles are over.

The terror, the bloodshed, the horror of My punishing work is done.

This place has paid for its guilt; iniquity is pardoned;

its term of incarceration is complete.

It has endured double the punishment it was due.”

³A voice is wailing, “In the wilderness, get it ready!

Prepare the way; make it a straight shot. The Eternal would have it so.

Straighten the way in the *wandering* desert

to make the *crooked* road wide and straight for our God.

⁴Where there are steep valleys, treacherous descents,

raise the highway; lift it up; bring down the dizzying heights.

Fill in the potholes and gullies, the rough places.

Iron out the shoulders flat and wide.

⁵*The Lord will be, really be, among us.*

The *radiant* glory of the Lord will be revealed.

All flesh together will take it in. *Believe it.*

None other than God, the Eternal, has spoken.”

⁶A voice says, “Declare!”

[And I say,] “But what shall I declare?”

All life is like the grass.

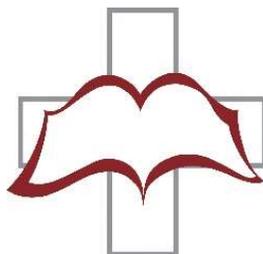
All of its grace and beauty fades like the *wild* flowers in a field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades

as the breath of the Eternal One blows away.

People are no different from grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;

nothing lasts except the word of our God. It will stand forever.



Greeting and Collect (Prayer of the Day)

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: O God, come to our assistance. We have gathered here this evening because we long for you to come to us, to save us, to comfort us, to bring us peace. As we approach the day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we grow in our awareness that we need you. We bring our grief, our pains, our disappointments, our fears and the chaos of our world, and we lay all that before you in this time of worship. As Jesus embodied your love for the world and became "God-with-us," so now this night we pray that you would again, come, oh come, Emmanuel.

C: **Amen.**

Responsory

P: O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting;

C: **O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting:**

P: Come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: O Emmanuel, our king and our Lord, the anointed for the nations and their Savior;

C: **O Emmanuel, our king and our Lord:**

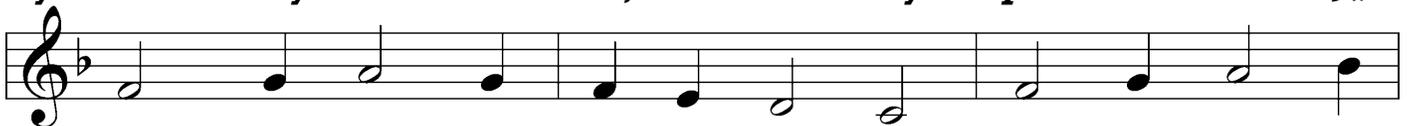
P: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

C: **Come and save us, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

Hymn of the Day

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

LSB 347



1 "Com - fort, com - fort ye My peo - ple, Speak ye peace," thus
2 Yea, her sins our God will par - don, Blot - ting out each
3 Hark, the her - ald's voice is cry - ing In the des - ert
4 Make ye straight what long was crook - ed; Make the rough - er



saith our God; "Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness, Mourn - ing
dark mis - deed; All that well de - served His an - ger He no
far and near, Call - ing sin - ners to re - pen - tance, Since the
plac - es plain. Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be -



'neath their sor - rows' load. Speak ye to Je - ru - sa - lem
 more will see or heed. She hath suf - fered man - y a day,
 King - dom now is here. O that warn - ing cry o - bey!
 fits His ho - ly reign. For the glo - ry of the Lord



Of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her
 Now her griefs have passed a - way; God will change her
 Now pre - pare for God a way; Let the val - leys
 Now o'er earth is shed a - broad, And all flesh shall



sins I cov - er And her war - fare now is o - ver."
 pin - ing sad - ness In - to ev - er - spring - ing glad - ness.
 rise to meet Him And the hills bow down to greet Him.
 see the to - ken That His Word is nev - er bro - ken.

Text: Johann Olearius, 1611-84; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-78, alt.
 Tune: Trente quatre Pseaumes de David, 1551, Geneva, ed. Louis Bourgeois

Sermon

"Compassion"

Isaiah 40:1-8



Offering

Offertory Prayer

P: Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

C: Amen.

Prayers of the Church

P: Let my prayer rise before You as incense,

C: *and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*

P: Merciful Father, whose guiding hand has brought us to the completion of this day, we humbly pray You to stay with us and shelter us in quiet hours of this night that we, who are wearied by the changes and chances of this passing world, may rest in Your changeless peace. Lord, in Your mercy,

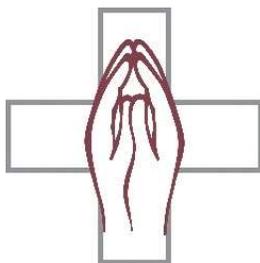
C: *hear our prayer.*

P: God of compassion, you have given us your own Son, Jesus Christ, to be for us the great physician, making the broken whole and overcoming even the darkness of death and despair with new life and hope. We thank you for the one who touched the untouchable, reached out to the dying, and brought healing and wholeness to those who had despaired of mending. Touch our wounds, relieve our hurts, and restore us to wholeness of life,

C: *hear our prayer.*

P: Set our troubled souls free, O Lord, from restlessness and anxiety. Uphold us by your strength. Anchor us upon the rock of your faithfulness. Give us your peace and power and so keep us that in all times of trouble and distress, we may know you hold us close. Indeed, you are faithful, O God. You not only give us your word that can be trusted but you also lend us your ear for our comfort. Lord, in Your mercy,

C: *hear our prayer.*



P: Grant us, O God, the fullness of your promises. Where we have been weak, grant us your strength; where we have been confused, grant us your guidance; where we have been distraught, grant us your comfort; and in all times and circumstances grant us your peace. God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Let us pray together.

C: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Silence for meditation)

The Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in Your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

All: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C: Amen.**

Acknowledgments

Adapted from "Vespers" in *Lutheran Service Book*.

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Longest Night portions adapted from:

Dan Nighswander, Jubilee Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB

lutheranmoxie.wordpress.com

www.stphilipchurch.org, Southport, NC

Closing Hymn

O God of Light

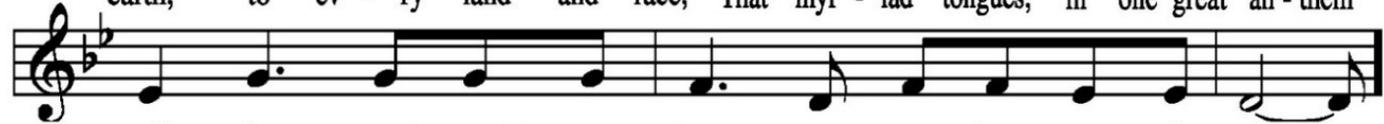
LSB 836; tune: 801



1 O God of light, Your Word, a lamp un - fail - ing, Shall pierce the
2 From days of old, through blind and will - ful a - ges, Though we re -
3 Un - dimmed by time, those words are still re - veal - ing To sin - ful
4 To all the world Your sum - mons You are send - ing, Through all the



dark - ness of our earth - bound way And show Your grace, Your plan for us un -
belled, You gent - ly sought a - gain And spoke through saints, a - pos - tles, proph - ets,
hearts Your jus - tice and Your grace; And quest - ing spir - its, long - ing for Your
earth, to ev - 'ry land and race, That myr - iad tongues, in one great an - them



veil - ing, And guide our foot - steps to the per - fect day.
sa - ges, Who wrote with ea - ger or re - luc - tant pen.
heal - ing, See Your com - pas - sion in the Sav - ior's face.
blend - ing, May praise and cel - e - brate Your gift of grace

Refrain



O God of light, make poss - i - ble my hope, And show Your



grace! And show Your grace! O God of light, make poss - i - ble my



hope, And show Your grace! And show Your grace!

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Announcements



UPCOMING WORSHIP SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN SANCTUARY) – 6:30PM

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN GYM) – 6:30PM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN GYM W/COMMUNION) – 10AM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN SANCTUARY) – 10AM

CONTACT THE OFFICE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCHEDULE. USHERS, READERS, AND VARIOUS OTHER VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP AND COMMUNION. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING FOR ONE OF THOSE ROLES, PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE AT OFFICE@BETHELGURNEE.ORG.

**PRAY
OVER**

2023

**BETHEL • COMMUNITY
WORLD • YOU**

SPECIAL SERVICE ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

10AM IN THE SANCTUARY

Worship with specific times of prayer for our new year,
our church, and the world around us near and far.

Plus, an opportunity to come forward
to be prayed over individually.