

ST. MARY OF THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BLOWING ROCK, NORTH CAROLINA



A SERVICE OF HOPE, LIGHT, AND REMEMBRANCE
DECEMBER 20, 2021

WELCOME

In this Longest Night service of Hope, Light, and Remembrance, sometimes called a "Blue Christmas," we acknowledge, as the Body of Christ, that there are many for whom the holiday season is not a joyful time. Many of us are lonely, mourning, or feeling alienated from family or friends, especially this year. Some people experience depression and sadness this time of year and yet often feel compelled to "put on a happy face" for others, denying our true feelings.

In this service of worship we are all invited to be our true selves and to allow our true feelings to be expressed, trusting that this caring, Christian community is a safe place to feel our hurts and sorrows during this season. This service gives us space to share and time to live with all the feelings we have.

As we gather this evening, in person and online, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather in worship to be illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May the Christ Child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast and marginal, bring light, comfort, peace and joy this holiday season.

JOIN THE SERVICE ONLINE

Via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88587481328>

Via YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSIER6UDGf9FyTvPRGs8_1A

THE LONGEST NIGHT
A SERVICE OF HOPE, LIGHT, AND REMEMBRANCE
6:00 PM

A prayerful silence precedes the service.
The bells ring the hour.

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Eric Luke, Accompanist

A CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader In the midst of festivities and bright lights,
we feel the darkness of our souls.

People **Come, God of Light, help us.**

Leader In the midst of gatherings, we feel alone and alienated.

People **Come, God of Hope, hear our cries.**

Leader In the midst of celebration, our hearts cry out.

People **Come, God of Peace. Come to us and bring us peace this Christmas.**

HYMN 56 (*vs. 1, 2, 6, 7*)

O come, O come, Emmanuel

Veni, veni, Emmanuel

AN ALTERNATIVE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

A period of silence follows the lighting of each candle.

The Candle of Memory

Luke 6:20-23

The Candle of Peace

Matthew 11:28-29

The Candle of Acceptance

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

The Candle of Hope

Luke 2:1-7

SOLO
I Wonder as I Wander

Jim Crowell, Soloist

HOMILY

The Reverend Kathy Beach

A few moments of silence for reflection follows the homily.

A LIGHTING OF CANDLES

Following the invitation, everyone is invited to come forward and light a small candle, or more than one candle. As you do so, you may wish to speak a name or acknowledge an event that causes you grief, sorrow, or pain this Advent.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Leader: God of wisdom, we come to you this Season tired, in turmoil,
and in pain.
As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped
itself around our hearts.
In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all
that we carry in our hearts --
sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words.
Lord, hear our prayer,

People **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Leader: 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 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.
Lord, hear our prayer.

People **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Leader: God of grace, in the spirit of this season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey into this Christmas season.
We ask that you shelter and sustain all 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 your peace.
Lord, hear our prayer.

People **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Leader: God of love, as we approach the Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you all that once was which is now lost to us, all that cannot be again.
With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts.
Hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes.
Lord, hear our prayer,

People **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Leader Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*Contemporary*)

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,

**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.**

HYMN 101

Stille Nacht

Silent night! Holy night!

THE BLESSING

THE DISMISSAL

Leader Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

People **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

Eric Luke, Accompanist

Anyone who would like to meet with a member of the clergy for personal, confidential prayer is invited to move to the front of the Church following the service. A clergyperson will be there to welcome you, to hear your prayer requests, and to pray with you individually.

**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP
THIS CHRISTMAS**

FAITHBRIDGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Christmas Eve at 7:00PM (at Faithbridge)
or 8:30PM Carols (at the Blowing Rock Gazebo)

RUMPLE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Christmas Eve at 4:00PM or 6:00PM

ST. MARY OF THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Christmas Eve at 5:00PM or 10:00PM
Christmas Day at 11:00AM

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St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church

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