

**The Presbyterian Church of Okemos**  
**December 19, 2021**  
**Longest Night Service**



**COVID-19 Safety Recommendations**

- *Wear a mask at all times while in the sanctuary, fellowship hall, or classrooms.*
- *Seat yourself while being aware to keep 6 feet of distance from the neighbors in your pew.*
- *While seating is now allowed in every row, please stagger your seats so that you are not sitting directly behind or directly in front of anyone in the pews around you.*
- *Remember that young children are not vaccinated.*

**Prelude** *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* Brahms  
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organ

**Gathering Words** Pastor Lisa Schrott

One: Gather us in...  
The lost and the lonely, the broken and breaking,  
The tired and the aching who long for the nourishment found at your feet.

**All: Gather us in.**

**Opening Poem**

As we gather our hearts in this space, I invite you to close your eyes and take a deep breath. Inhale what is good. Exhale what is hurting. As we settle into this service of prayer and reflection together, we begin with a poem written by Rev. Sarah Are Speed. Listen now to this honest reflection, and allow this honesty to mark this space as one set apart.

**Hymn #129** *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*, vs. 1-3

**Responsive Scripture**

One: In the midst of devastation and loss, we wait for God.  
**All: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end.**  
One: In the midst of change and uncertainty, we wait for God.  
**All: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end.**  
One: God's mercies never come to an end: they are new every morning.  
**All: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end.**

## **Prayer of Illumination**

God, tonight we come to your Word hoping that this ancient truth found in scripture will feel like a hand in the dark. Guide our feet. Move us through this wilderness season. Tilt our heads upward to see the stars, and let your Word be a blanket in the cold, a light on the horizon, and a friend to walk alongside. Move among us and move through us. Gratefully we pray, amen.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40: 1-11

**Meditation:** *Uneven Ground and Rough Places*

**Musical Response:** *Of the Father's Love Begotten*  
Maria Schoon, vocalist

## **Prayers of the People**

One: God who always welcomes us home—  
tonight is a long night.  
We gather together heavy with prayer concerns.  
They tumble out of our mouths,  
they saturate every word we sing,  
they lay over us like a quilt, weighing on our spirits.  
We are a million combinations of weary and sad, lonely and grieving, angry and hurt.  
It is obvious that we need you, so together we pray

**All: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.**

One: God, we need you in the messy middles,  
in the unclear paths forward, the transition seasons, and the splinterings of what once  
was.  
God, we need you in the grieving places,  
in the dining rooms with empty chairs, in the empty wombs, and in the dark of the tomb.  
God, we need you in our failed dreams,  
in shame that rises quickly, in the unknown next steps, in the discernment that is always  
easier said than done. And so we pray

**All: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.**

One: O come, Emmanuel.  
Flood our grieving hearts. Pour out your Spirit on this world.  
Where there is suffering, loneliness, poverty, abuse, addiction, depression—be there.  
Be all there.  
Wrap your arms around those hurting places, and carry us to your promised day.  
Until then, we will continue to pray

**All: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.**

One: Now using the words your son taught us to pray, we say together,  
The Lord's Prayer – Our Father...

### **Spoken Prayer and Silent Reflection**

Let us keep silence before God, and through our minds and hearts offer prayers which words might not contain.

There is a time for every purpose under heaven.

A time for what we have to lay down . . . *(Silence)*

A time for what we have to pick up . . . *(Silence)*

A time for confronting what we are avoiding . . . *(Silence)*

A time for recognizing what we hope for . . . *(Silence)*

A time for gratitude . . . *(Silence)*

In our time and in your time, God fulfill our prayers and  
let your kingdom come.

**All: Amen**

**Hymn #144**

*In the Bleak Midwinter, vs. 1-4*

### **Communal Sending**

One: We are here.

**All: We are here.**

One: I see you and your pain.

**All: I see you and your pain.**

One: I see you and your hope.

**All: I see you and your hope.**

One: We are not in this alone.

**All: We are not in this alone.**

One: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

**All: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us. Amen.**

### **Benediction**

As you leave this service, your service begins:

Comfort the homesick.

Open your doors to others.

Seek sanctuary.

Be brave enough to go home by another way.

And remember that here in God's house, all are welcomed—so come back soon.

In the name of our Foundation—God, Spirit, and Son—go in peace.

Dawn is coming.

Portions of the liturgy were written by the Rev. Sarah Are Speed. They are adapted from A Sanctified Art's 2021 Longest Night Liturgy. [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)

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