

A SERVICE OF THE LONGEST NIGHT

A Different Service of Worship for Christmas



December 21, 2015

7:30 PM

Overbrook Presbyterian Church
6376 City Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19151
www.overbrookpresb.org

Dr. Andrew H. Mann, Jr.
Dennis Elwell

Interim Minister
Minister of Music

The Service of the Longest Night

Monday, December 21, 2011 at 7:30 PM

PRELUDE

Two Carol Preludes

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

H. Alexander Matthews

Silent Night

Samuel Barber

CALL TO WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER

❖ CAROL, No. 88

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

Stanzas 1, 3, 6, and 7

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: A Litany of Remembering

Leader: The Gospel of John uses the image of light to describe the power of Jesus Christ. He is the light that is so bright that there is no darkness dark enough to put it out. The Advent wreath is a symbol of the power of the light of Christ. We light the first candle tonight to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, and the memory that binds them to us this season. (Silence) Bless our memories, O God.

People: May your eternal love surround them, O God.

Leader: The second candle we light to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and to offer it to God, asking God to give us the gift of peace and patience with ourselves (Silence) Receive our pain, O God.

People: Refresh, restore, and renew us, O God, and help us to trust you to lead us into the future.

Leader: The third candle we light to remember ourselves this Christmas season. We pause and remember these past weeks and months: the disbelief, the anger, the tears, the down times, the reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes from family and friends. We give thanks for the support of those who stand with us and love us. (Silence) Bless us, O God.

People: **Remind us that your light shines in our time of darkness, O God.**

Leader: We light the fourth candle to remember the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers: The Word became flesh and lived among us, knows our pain, conquered pain and death, and continues to be present with us. (Silence)
Thank you, God.

People: **Emmanuel means “God with us.” May God rekindle our faith in his presence. Amen.**

❖ **CAROL, No. 123** *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

CAROL

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FROM THE PSALMS

Psalm 23

ONE: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.

MANY: **He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name’s sake.**

ONE: Even though I walk through the valley, of the
shadow of death,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff--
they comfort me.

MANY: **You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;**

ONE: You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

ALL: **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.**

FROM THE EPISTLES

Romans 8:26-27, 31-39

❖ **CAROL, No. 795** *Healer of Our Every Ill* HEALER OF OUR EVERY ILL

FROM THE GOSPELS

Matthew 1:18-25

MEDITATION

Dr. Mann

❖ **CAROL, No. 146**

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child!

SILENT PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

You may go forward and light a candle from the candles on the Advent wreath, offering your prayer to God either in silence or aloud, and then place your candle in the basin of sand.

❖ **CAROL, No. 122**

Silent Night

STILLE NACHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Camil Van Hulse

O Jesus Christ, Thy Manager Is My Paradise

At which my soul reclineth.

For there, O Lord, Doth lie the Word

Made flesh for us; herein Thy grace forth shineth.

A *Service of the Longest Night* is so named because of its proximity to the winter solstice - the longest night of the year. But the name is also fitting because, despite the trappings of gifts, special meals, and Christmas carols, the season can be darker than "normal" times of the year for those who struggle. The stresses and strains of trying to offer a time of celebration take their toll. Many people find they have trouble feeling "in the spirit" of things, whether because of the recent (or anticipated) death of a family member or friend, the end of a marriage, the loss of work, or other trying change. It is for those of us who struggle that the birth of Christ may be its most meaningful. For us a savior is born, to lift the burden from our shoulders, to wipe away the tears from our eyes. We are not alone, for Christ is with us.

No offering will be received during *A Service of the Longest Night*. If you wish to make a contribution to further the ministry of the church, simply drop us a note and include a check letting us know how it is to be used.