

Good Soil Lutheran Ministries
Growing Together in Christ to Love and Serve



The Longest Night
December 21st, 2023
6:30 pm



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Welcome

We welcome all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us. Our unity is in Christ.

For Parents with Children

Good Soil loves kids and the "holy noise" they bring! Your children are warmly welcome in worship. Sing, pray, and respond; your children will learn by worshiping with you. There's also a "prayground" area in the back of the sanctuary and a nursery/cry room behind that on the back left side. We pray that worshiping together as a family is a meaningful experience!

For Those Needing Hearing Assistance

Please ask an usher about our hearing assistance devices to enhance your worship experience.

Holy Communion

Christ is truly present with us in worship and through this meal. All are welcome to participate in Holy Communion here at Good Soil. Children may commune with elements or receive a blessing depending on parent/guardian preference. Gluten-free wafers and grape juice are available upon request.

Bulletin Key

Bold Font – Spoken by the Congregation

Regular Font – Spoken by the Pastor or Worship Assistant

† – Please stand as you are able, in body or spirit.

The Longest Night

While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time.

The Longest Night service provides a time and place of solace where we can come together seeking healing and room to share grief, sadness, loneliness, or confusion when these emotions often feel out of place during the holidays.

In the Northern Hemisphere, Dec 21 is the longest night, the winter solstice. It marks the shortest day of the year, the official start of winter. Tradition says that nature and all her creatures stop and hold their breath to see if the sun will turn back from its wanderings, if the days will lengthen and the earth will once again feel the sun's warmth. On this darkest day of the year, we come with our honest yearnings seeking the return of light and hope.

Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Prelude

Welcome

† Call to Worship and Prayer of the Day

P: From the one who was, who is, and who is to come:

Grace and peace be with you all.

C: And also with you.

P: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who live in a land of deep shadow, on them light has shined.

**C: The Light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness shall not overcome it.**

Let us pray.

O God our redeemer, you created light so we can live, and you illumine our world with your beloved Son. By your Holy Spirit, comfort us. Give us strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. **Amen.**

† **Gathering Hymn: Each Winter as the Year Grows Older - ELW 252**

Verses 1-2 will be sung by leaders. The congregation is invited to sing verses 3-5.

- 1 Each winter as the year grows older,
we each grow older, too.
The chill sets in a little colder;
the verities we knew
seem shaken and untrue.
- 2 When race and class cry out for treason,
when sirens call for war,
they overshout the voice of reason
and scream till we ignore
all we held dear before.
- 3 Yet I believe beyond believing
that life can spring from death,
that growth can flower from our grieving,
that we can catch our breath
and turn transfixed by faith.
- 4 So even as the sun is turning
to journey to the north,
the living flame, in secret burning,
can kindle on the earth
and bring God's love to birth.
- 5 O Child of ecstasy and sorrows,
O Prince of peace and pain,
brighten today's world by tomorrow's,
renew our lives again;
Lord Jesus, come and reign!

Text: William Gay, b. 1920, alt. Text © 1971 United Church Press.

The Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1, 25-31

1Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

²⁵To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. ²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. ²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"?

²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; ³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Silence for reflection.

Let us pray,

O Lord our God, you speak to us of comfort and peace. When the things of this world wither and fade, renew our strength and help us to hold onto your Word.
Amen.

Psalm 121 (read responsively)

I lift up my eyes to the hills;

from where is my help to come?

My help comes from the LORD,

the maker of heaven and earth.

The LORD will not let your foot be moved

nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

Behold, the keeper of Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep;

the LORD watches over you;

the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

the sun will not strike you by day,

nor the moon by night.

The LORD will preserve you from all evil

and will keep your life.

The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in,

from this time forth forevermore.

Silence for reflection.

Let us pray,

O Lord our God, you promise to help all those in need of your tender care. Watch over us, preserve us from evil, and keep us safe this day and forevermore.

Amen.

† **Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁸Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Silence for reflection.

Let us pray,

O Lord our God, you know the burdens on our shoulders and have promised to carry those burdens with us. Help us to sense your presence and find rest in you. **Amen.**

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection – Pastor Marissa Harrison

Silence for reflection.

† **Hymn of the Day: Healer of Our Every Ill ELW 612 vs 1 & 2**

Refrain: Healer of our ev'ry ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.

1 You who know our fears and sadness,
grace us with your peace and gladness;
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *Refrain*

2 In the pain and joy beholding

how your grace is still unfolding,
give us all your vision, God of love. *Refrain*

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950 Text © 1987 GIA Publications, Inc.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

First Candle: Promise and Redemption

Faithful God, you are the source of all mercy and consolation. With this candle, we remember the hope that you kindle among us through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. We remember your promise of redemption. Sustain us by your assurance that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.

The first candle is lit. Silence for reflection.

God of promise and redemption,
you are our light and our salvation, our refuge and our stronghold.
Amen.

Second Candle: Acceptance and Mercy

Merciful God, your light shines even in our darkest hours, and your love neither fails nor forsakes us. With this candle, we acknowledge the fear and sadness that grips our lives. We remember our struggles with painful emotions, difficult thoughts, and unfulfilled desires. We bring to you our loneliness, despair, doubt, anxiety, anger, disappointment, and our yearnings. Grant us your peace that surpasses all human understanding.

The second candle is lit. Silence for reflection.

God of acceptance and mercy,
you are our light and our salvation, our refuge and our stronghold.
Amen.

Third Candle: Memory and Hope

Almighty God, you turn the shadow of death into daybreak. With this candle, we remember those whose absence still fills our hearts with sorrow and leaves holes in our lives. We cherish their memories and commend them into your unfailing light. Surround them with your eternal love, and grant us your peace.

The third candle is lit. Silence for reflection.

God of memory and hope,
you are our light and our salvation, our refuge and our stronghold.
Amen.

Fourth Candle: Comfort and Grace

Compassionate God, your steadfast love accompanies us, and your light shines on the broken places in our lives. With this candle, we acknowledge our unspoken pains and hidden griefs. Bind up our wounded hearts and soothe our troubled spirits. Give us strength and comfort through your promise to make us whole.

The fourth candle is lit. Silence for reflection.

God of comfort and grace,
you are our light and our salvation, our refuge and our stronghold.
Amen.

Responsive Chant: Wait for the Lord ELW 262

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!
(repeat 2x)

Text: Taizé Community Text © 1984 Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc.

† Invocation and Prayers

Let us pray.

Prince of Peace, whose righteousness is like the strong mountains and whose justice is as the great deep; let us know your presence now.

Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Mighty God, whose power girds creation, whose hands cradle the hills, yet whose mercy is boundless; let us know your presence now.

Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Wonderful Counselor, whose glory is beyond our understanding and whose love is beyond measure; let us know your presence now.

Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Emmanuel, whose character it is always to have mercy, and whose arm is always ready to save: we lift before you now those who we want to remember in our

prayers either aloud or silently in our hearts... *(pause to remember those in our prayers)*. God of mercy and salvation; let us know your presence now.

Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer**.

Hold all those we love in your unbounded love and make us your healing presence in the world. **Amen**.

Lighting of Individual Candles and Healing Rite

All are invited to light a candle and place it in the sand bowl. The candle can represent a special prayer or someone you are holding in prayer. It can also represent something that's been on your mind that you want to entrust to God's care.

Please light your candle as you feel moved to do so. Those who wish to receive a healing blessing may then proceed to the back of the sanctuary to be anointed with oil and prayed for individually.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray,

O Lord our God, you see and know and feel the suffering and pain of the world. Look upon us when we feel alone, and enfold us with your love, that in the midst of our pain, our loneliness, our worry and our concern we may know your presence. We ask this blessing in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

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.

The Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

† **Sending Hymn: Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory ELW 561**

1 Joyous light of heav'nly glory,
loving glow of God's own face,
you who sing creation's story,
shine on ev'ry land and race.

Now as evening falls around us,
we shall raise our songs to you.
God of daybreak, God of shadows,
come and light our hearts anew.

2 In the stars that grace the darkness,
in the blazing sun of dawn,
in the light of peace and wisdom,
we can hear your quiet song.
Love that fills the night with wonder,
love that warms the weary soul,
love that bursts all chains asunder,
set us free and make us whole.

3 You who made the heaven's splendor,
ev'ry dancing star of night,
make us shine with gentle justice,
let us each reflect your light.
Mighty God of all creation,
gentle Christ who lights our way,
loving Spirit of salvation,
lead us on to endless day.

Text: Greek hymn, 3rd cent., para. Marty Haugen, b. 1950 Text © 1987 GIA Publications, Inc.

† Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.
Amen.

† Dismissal

May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us through the darkness.
That together we may shine again.

Go in peace. Christ is coming soon.
Thanks be to God

Postlude

Join Good Soil for Christmas Eve worship on 12/24:

9:30am – Lessons & Carols service with communion

6:30pm – Candlelight Christmas Eve service with communion

(both services will be livestreamed)

Tonight’s Worship Servants:

Livestream: Trey Harrison	Online Usher: Trey Harrison
Ushers: Dave Blocksom & Amanda Inman	Reader: JoAnne Wancata

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Time
Sun, Dec 24	Lessons and Carols In-Person and Livestream Worship Candlelight Christmas Eve In-Person and Livestream Worship	9:30 am 6:30 pm
Sun, Dec 31	In-Person and Livestream Worship	9:30 am
Thurs, Jan 4	Confirmation Class @ Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran	5:45 pm
Sat, Jan 6	Ladies’ Breakfast @ Gene’s Place to Dine	9:00 am
Sun, Jan 7	In-Person and Livestream Worship: Baptism of Our Lord Sunday	9:30 am
Sun, Jan 14	In-Person and Livestream Worship MLK Jr. Commemoration Service @ Good Soil MLK Jr. Commemoration Service Fellowship	9:30 am 3:00 pm 4:30 pm

