

Blessing For The Longest Night

by Jan Richardson

All throughout these months as the shadows have lengthened, this blessing has been gathering itself, making ready, preparing for this night.

It has practiced walking in the dark, traveling with its eyes closed, feeling its way by memory by touch by

the pull of the moon even as it wanes.

So believe me when I tell you this blessing will reach you even if you have not light enough to read it; it will find you even though you cannot see it coming. You will know the moment of its arriving by your release of the breath you have held so long; a loosening of the clenching in your hands, of the clutch around your heart; a thinning of the darkness that had drawn itself around you.

This blessing does not mean to take the night away but it knows its hidden roads, knows the resting spots along the path, knows what it means to travel in the company of a friend.

So when this blessing comes, take its hand. Get up. Set out on the road you cannot see. This is the night when you can trust that any direction you go, you will be walking toward the dawn.

Longest Night Worship



**December 21, 2023
6pm, Wilson Activity Center**

**Asbury United Methodist Church
1700 Napa Valley Drive
Little Rock, AR 72212**

a service of healing & hope

Revs. Susan Ledbetter, Heather Rose, and Patti Butler

Longest Night Service

December 21, 2023 6pm Wilson Activity Center

Words of Welcome

Call to Worship

Opening Hymn *In the Bleak Midwinter* 221

First Scripture Reading Ecclesiastes 3

Second Scripture Reading Matthew 11:28-30

Prayer

Song of Meditation *Somewhere in Your Silent Night*

Litany of Remembrance

Candles of Remembrance: Brokenness,
Uncertainty, Change, Hope, & The Christ Candle

Solo *O Holy Night* Caleb Conrad

Holy Communion

Closing Hymn 196

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Blessing and Invitation

All are welcome to remain as long as needed.

After her husband's death, author and artist Jan Richardson said, "If I have learned anything about grief in the past two years, it is that grief is a wild creature. Grief will resist every attempt to tame it, to control it, or to keep it tidy and well-behaved. Rather than managing it, grief asks instead that we tend to it, listen to it, question it. One of the surest ways to calm it is to give it some space in which to speak--or to holler, or weep."

Tonight in this sacred space, you are invited to sit, sing, cry or cry-out; you are invited to be still or to move. You are invited to lean into your feelings, even the ones you can't quite name.

The prayer stations and candle lighting table(s) are available throughout the evening. After we receive Holy Communion together, there will be a specific invitation to visit the prayer station you feel most drawn to for a time of prayer, meditation and an opportunity for anointing.

Again, there is no set way to experience the Longest Night worship service, just as each of walks our own journey of healing and hope. May you experience the light in the darkness, embrace the shadows of your soul, and experience the great I AM—Emmanuel, God with us, always.