

Wait for the Lord

Taizé

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!

Sending

“Blessing for the Longest Night”

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.

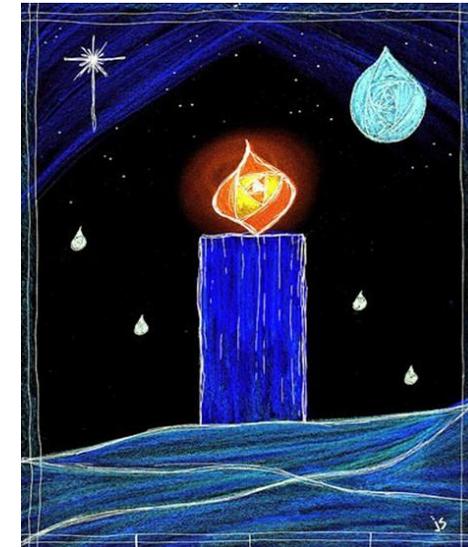
You will know the moment of its arriving by your release of the breath you have held so long; a loosening of the clenching in your hands, of the clutch around your heart; a thinning of the darkness that had drawn itself around you.

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.

You are welcome to remain in the sanctuary to pray or sit peacefully as long as you wish. When you are ready, please depart in silence.

Longest Night
A Service of Comfort and Hope
December 20, 7:00 p.m.



Prelude

Welcome

Coming Together

One: Tonight, as Christmas draws near, we dare to allow ourselves to wonder if God, Emmanuel, is indeed “with us”. Does God look beyond the holiday cheer and hear our prayers, see our suffering, and meet us in our grief?

All: We think of all the loss we have endured this year, the failed and strained relationships, the scars we bear, all the heartache we hold.

One: Tonight, we gather with different stories, different hurts, and different longings ~ yet we are made one by the brokenness of our humanity and our need for Christ’s light.

All: We come praying that this light will not be overcome by our many doubts.

One: Tonight, we gather just as we are and God welcomes us.

All: God has promised to meet us here. Let us set down all the heavy burdens we carry and lean into the loving embrace of God.

Bless the Lord, My Soul

Taizé

*Each Taizé chant will be sung through once by the choir,
and then all are invited to join in.*

Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's ho - ly name.

Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me in - to life.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

One: We light our first candle of hope, honoring the times we have felt hopeless, but remembering that light shines in the darkness, and that it cannot be overcome.

All: We light our second candle of love, honoring the times we have felt that love was far away, but placing our trust in the love that will never let us go.

One: We light our third candle of joy, recalling the many nights we have been anxious and worried, and yet knowing that joy will come again.

All: We light our fourth candle, honoring time of unrest and distress, and yet remembering the peace of Christ, the inner peace we seek, and the peace we desire throughout the world.

Scripture

Psalm 22:1-5, 9-11a

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from

my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. Do not be far from me...Do not be far from me.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

O Lord Hear My Prayer

Taizé

As we sing, you are invited to come forward to light a candle in memory of someone, something, or simply as a sign of hope and a prayer for light that overcomes darkness.

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. When I call an - swer me.

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and lis - ten to me.

Prayer

All: Holy God of Advent, hear our prayers of longing, of lament, of grief. See our flickers of hope, peace, and joy, small as they may be. Just as these candles create warmth and light, may we, too, feel and cling to the warmth and light of your love. Come now, Child of Bethlehem, to strengthen us in these days. May we feel your presence in a way we have never known, not just as one born in a stable long ago and far away, but as one born in our hearts, in our hopes, in our spirits, even in our weakness. Amen.