**Service of the Longest Night (Blue Christmas)**

**Gathering Music**

**Words of Welcome & Opening Prayer**

We come to know you, Holy One, as Wisdom Incarnate, as Flickering Flame, as Spirit of Life, as Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. You come to us as the Stranger, and the Strange. Often we do not recognize you. Yet you come to us in Wilderness, in the Impossible Made Possible, in Silence and Singing and Sighs Too Deep for Words. You abhor dominance, mastery, fear, and control. You are made known to us in Vulnerability and Courage. We come to you in need, with longing, in pain, captive to fear, desiring a more just world, a more livable life for all of us. We long for you. We long for healing. We long for liberation. We long for different systems and patterns of relating. And so, this Advent, we pause. We breathe. We pray. We dig deep. We reach out. We rise up. We remember. We vision. We sit with the pain. We wait, expectant. We light candles. We labor. We open to You, and to one another, and to the Sacred Mystery that is Emmanuel, God-With-Us, Love Incarnate, Divinity Enfleshed.

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**Song** (UMH #196: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus)

**Words of Comfort** (Psalm 23)

**Words of Hope** (Isaiah 40:1, 28-31 or Matthew 11:28-30)

**Meditation/Homily**

**Litany of Longing**

We recognize the winter solstice sun is low, crouched over the horizon.
All day long shadows pivot and turn pointing to a longer night, the longest night.
**Lord, we are longing for hope!**

Let us find comfort in our community as we experience the heaviness of life together.
Be with those who are lonely, sick, and burdened in this season.
**Lord, we are longing for love!**

We give thanks for every act of kindness, no matter how small.
With appreciation of all who come alongside us at just the right time to lend a helping hand.
**Lord, we are longing for joy!**

On this particular day where the earth swings its way back towards the sun,
we give thanks for Jesus Christ, who came to be present with us and guide us on our way.
**Lord we are longing for peace!
In every way and every day. Amen.**

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**Sung Response** (UMH #204: Emmanuel, Emmanuel)
*1st duet, 2nd instrumental, 3rd congregation, 4th instrumental*

 **Stations**

*Lighting candles, decorating ornaments of hope and remembrance, receive anointing of comfort and peace*

**Poem: *Blessing for the Longest Night***

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 [veil] 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.

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**Closing Song** (UMH #218: It Came Upon A Midnight Clear)

**Sending Forth**