

On this long night, when darkness comes early and brightness seems distant, we gather to be reminded that the Christ whose birth we celebrate offers hope in times of emptiness, peace in times of uncertainty, joy even in sadness, and love in times of loneliness. He is the light of the world that dispels darkness. The light of Christ shines brightest in the darkest, longest night.

SERVICE OF THE LONGEST NIGHT

December 20, 2017
7:00 p.m.

A reflective worship service for those who find this season particularly painful due to hard circumstances, loss, or loneliness.



5500 River Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20816-3399

301-320-3600 | 4thpres.org

Fourth Presbyterian Church is a member congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

PRELUDE Fred Markey, organ

CALL TO WORSHIP Matthew 11:28–30

Pastor: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden

People: **And I will give you rest.**

Pastor: Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,

People: **For I am gentle and lowly in heart,**

Pastor: And you will find rest for your souls.

People: **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

HYMN NO. 41 “Come, Ye Disconsolate” Consolator

PRAYER OF CONFESSION Psalm 51:1–2, 5–6, 10–12

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

PRAYER OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON Matthew 1:18–23

HYMN NO. 124 “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” Hyfrydol

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 40:1–5, 10–11 Kevin Schick

PRAYER FOR THE GRIEVING AND SICK Rev. Thomas Myrick

ANTHEM “He Will Hold Me Fast” Matt Merker

Renee Gamache, soprano; Fred Markey, organ

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast.
When the tempter would prevail, he will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold through life’s fearful path,
For my love is often cold—he must hold me fast.

*He will hold me fast, he will hold me fast.
For my Savior loves me so—he will hold me fast.*

Those he saves are his delight, Christ will hold me fast.

Precious in his holy sight, he will hold me fast.

He’ll not let my soul be lost, his promises shall last.

Bought by him at such a cost, he will hold me fast.

For my life he bled and died, Christ will hold me fast.

Justice has been satisfied, he will hold me fast.

Raised with him to endless life, he will hold me fast.

Till our faith is turned to sight when he comes at last.

SCRIPTURE READING John 1:1–5, 10–14 Susan Scola

PRAYER FOR THE DISCOURAGED AND DEPRESSED Jessica Schick

ANTHEM “Holy Child, Who Chose the Hearts of Men” Getty
Jack and Cathie Stanton

Holy Child who chose the hearts of men to be his favoured home,
Leaving heaven’s gates for Bethlehem God came to call his own.

Now to us the highest King is born—behold the Royal Son.

Glory kneels to mend all that is torn; the promised Child has come.

Joy and pain as man he knew on earth, no place to lay his head.

As a servant he embraced this world and on a cross he bled.

Having borne the deepest grief of man, he rose to heaven’s throne.

Now I’m sheltered in the Father’s hand; I stand by grace alone.

May the gift of God amaze us still, the triumph of all time.

As his child I kneel to heaven’s will to make his purpose mine.

Though this road be scarred with trial and pain, it’s paved with lavish grace.

Knowing him will be my greatest gain, my hope the Saviour’s face.

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 2:22–38

MEDITATION “Waiting for Consolation” Dr. Todd M. Smedley

HYMN NO. 123 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” Veni Emmanuel

BENEDICTION Revelation 21:1–5

POSTLUDE