

A Community Service of the *Longest Night*

December 21, 2025 – 7 PM



Haddonfield
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A Service for the Longest Night

Prelude		Matt Smith
Greeting		Rev. Dr. Chris Heckert
Opening Prayer		Rev. Yeeun Kim
Carol	<i>In the Bleak Midwinter</i>	UMH 221
The Advent Wreath Candle Lighting		Linda Pollock, Jeff Pollock, Rev. George Morris, Rev. Kathy Morris

Leader:

On this longest night, we come without pretense.

Some of us are weary. Some are grieving.

Some are simply tired of being strong.

The psalmist prays,

“When my heart is faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” Tonight, we light four candles, not to rush toward light, but to trust that God is already our refuge in the dark.

Reader 1: Candle of Lament

This candle is for our lament.

For cries we have held back, for prayers that came out as silence,
for grief that has no clear shape.

We light this candle and bring our honest hearts to God, who hears our cry.

(Light candle... brief silence)

Reader 2: Candle of Rest

This candle is for rest.

“For God alone my soul waits in silence.”

We release the need to fix, explain, or endure alone.

We light this candle, trusting God to be our shelter when our strength runs thin.

(Light candle... brief silence)

Reader 3: Candle of Shelter

This candle is for shelter.

“You are my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”

We remember moments when love sustained us, when presence mattered more than words. We light this candle, remembering that God has been with us through every season.

(Light candle... brief silence)

Reader 4: Candle of Trust

This candle is for trust.

"Trust in God at all times; pour out your heart before God."

Not because everything is resolved, but because we are not alone. We light this candle, holding onto the quiet promise that even the longest night will not have the final word.

(Light candle... brief silence)

Carol

What Child Is This

UMH 219

A Litany for the Longest Night: Finding Hope in the Shadows

Rev. Yeeun Kim

Leader: In the beginning, God, you moved over the darkness and called it good. Tonight, we gather in the longest of nights, bringing the heavy burdens of our hearts. To those who feel displaced in their own lives, and to those whose homes feel empty this year:

People: Lord, meet us in the shadows.

Leader: We acknowledge the seats left vacant at our tables. We remember the voices we can no longer hear and the hands we can no longer hold. For the homes transformed by loss or distance:

People: Comfort us with a peace that passes understanding.

Leader: We pray for those for whom "home" is a place of memory rather than a present reality. For those who are wandering, those who are lonely in a crowd, and those who find the lights of Christmas too bright for their weary eyes:

People: Be our shelter and our steady ground.

Leader: Gentle God, you chose to make your home among us in a cold stable, as a refugee and a stranger. Remind us tonight that we do not have to "get over" our grief to be close to you.

People: Remind us that your love dwells in the dark as much as the light.

Leader: Even as we wait for the return of the sun on this longest of nights, we ask for the grace to rest in the stillness. May we find a home in your presence, where every tear is seen and every heart is known.

People: Into your hands, we commit our sorrow and our hope.

Leader: In the name of the One who is our True Home, Jesus Christ,

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 61:1–4; 62:1–2; 5-8

Megan Atkinson

Message

Rev. Tayler Necochea

Invitation to Light Candles and Receive Anointing

Rev. Dr. Chris Heckert

You are invited to come forward to light one of the votive candles, which represents your burdens, griefs, sorrows, all the things which make this a dark time for you. You may speak the name or the event, if you wish to do so, as you light your candle, then return to your seat.

Lighting of Candles

arr. by Gordon Schuster

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Solo *He Shall Feed His Flock* Part I No. 20

Aria from *Messiah*, HWV 56, by George Frideric Handel

Patty Fisher, soloist; Matt Smith, organist

Prayer Rev. Dr. Chris Heckert

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

A Closing Benediction: The Promise of the Coming Light Rev. Tayler Necochea

Pastor: Eternal God, we thank you for meeting us here in the quiet.

As we prepare to leave this place, we lift our eyes toward the horizon of Advent.

We recognize that while the night is at its longest, the turning of the year is at hand, and your Light is even now breaking through.

Lord, remind us that the story of Christmas began in a shadow—

under a star-lit sky, among the displaced, and in the hearts of the weary.

We cling to the promise that you are the God who comes to us; the God who builds a home in the midst of our ruins and plants seeds of joy in the soil of our sorrow.

As we go out into the night, fill us with the stubborn hope of the prophets.

Let the warmth of the coming Christ Child thaw the places in us that have grown cold with grief. Comfort us with the truth that the Word made Flesh is the True Home where we are always welcomed, always known, and always restored.

May you leave this space not just with your burdens, but with the steady, flickering flame of Christmas expectation. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not, and will not, overcome it.

Go now in the grace, the peace, and the radiant hope of the One who is to come.

All: Amen.

Postlude

Participants in Tonight's Service:

Rev. Dr. Chris Heckert, Rev. Tayler Necochea, Rev. Yeeun Kim

Matt Smith, Organist & Pianist

Patricia Fisher, Soloist; Amy Boyd, Clarinetist

Advent Wreath Readers:

Linda and Jeff Pollock, Revs. Kathy and George Morris