



Longest Night Resources 2025

FCC Oakland

This Sunday Dec 21, 2025 is the winter solstice. That makes it the day with the least sunlight and therefore the longest night. Even though there is usually joy and cheer at Christmas, we can admit that for some of us, this season is also dark and lonely. This is because Holidays can remind us of the people we dearly miss and the things that we deeply lament. If this is true for you, you are not alone and we wanted to share this with you.

We have curated 3 resources here to provide a guide for you if you would like to use them to pray and reflect at any time this week or in this season. Feel free to use one of them or all of them or just a fragment of one if it's helpful.

May you know that you are not alone and that the same Jesus who was born into a cold dark situation on earth, is the One who is still doing a new thing and is present in your life today. May his light continue to shine in the darkness that you are enduring. God loves you.. You are held and you are not alone!

If you want to talk to one of our pastors or staff members for further care and resources, please email us frontoffice@oaklandfcc.org

Love, your FCC Pastors and Staff

1. LITANY OF PRAYER, SCRIPTURE, AND REFLECTION

Introduction:

The holidays have a way of pressing on our tender places, don't they? When the world sparkles with twinkle lights and fa-la-la energy, some of us are just trying to make it through the day without breaking down in the grocery store. There's the empty chair. The diagnosis. The relationship that is fraying at the edges. The future that feels suddenly very fragile. Here's the truth we don't always say out loud: it is painfully normal to feel the ache more sharply precisely when the world says we should feel only joy. And that is why we must make room for lament. As Mark Vroegop writes in *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, "Think of lament as the transition between pain and promise."

Isaiah 55:1-3:

*"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.
Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David."*

Prayer:

God, help me name what is at the core of my sadness and loss today. Speak in the stillness as I wait. Comfort me as the truth surfaces.

Use this breath prayer, breathing in slowly with the first phrase, and breathing out slowly with the next.

Inhale: "God, show me what is hurting."

Exhale: "Help me release it to you."

(Repeat as needed)

Continue breathing in and out, slowly, repeating these phrases in your own time. When you are ready, consider writing or drawing something on a slip of paper that names your loss.

Lord God, you are here with me—
Around me, above me, and beneath me,
Near as the air I breathe.
I pray to you as Jesus taught us to pray:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.
Amen.

Isaiah 9:6-7:

*“For unto us a child is born,
To us a son is given,
And the government will be on his shoulders,
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,
Of the greatness of his government and peace
There will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne
And over his kingdom
Establishing and upholding it
With justice and righteousness
From that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
Will accomplish this.”*

Reflection:

The words of the prophet Isaiah announce the arrival of one who will establish peace, justice,

wisdom, right thinking, and right behavior as the governing principle for life. A principle that will

rule over the earth and endure forever. This is good news indeed. No wonder the angels

announcing Jesus' birth belted out their joy in song. God is bringing forth a time where suffering and sorrow and pain will be no more. When God will "wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

All this is to be accomplished through Jesus who comes to reveal these good purposes of God in himself through his life and death and resurrection. Through Jesus, death has been swallowed up. Yet these days we live in are not marked by these future promises. Instead, we know sorrow and confusion and loss. And there are times that we feel overpowered and overwhelmed as we fumble our way through the darkness.

And yet, and yet, the light of God finds us still. Through the friend that checks in on us. The hand that reaches out. The moment of beauty that speaks peace and life. The sense of belonging we get every once in a while. And we see again the wisdom, as Leonard Cohen writes, "There is a crack, a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."

We do not know why things work this way. We just know that even on the longest night of the year, God's light can find us. Even in our fear and loneliness and overwhelm, God's light can find us. Even when we are deep in grief, God's light can find us. Even when we ache for all that will never be, God's light will find us.

For *"In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it"* (John 1:4-5). Amen.

(katebowler.com)

2. LONGEST NIGHT PRAYER LITURGY

Psalm 139:10-11:

If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night," darkness is not dark to you, O Lord; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike.

Prayer:

O Lord God Almighty, as you have taught us to call the evening, the morning, and the noonday one day; and have made the sun to know its going down: Dispel the darkness of our hearts, that by your brightness we may know you to be the true God

and eternal light, living and reigning for ever and ever. Amen

Loving God, you hold this space with us tonight, where many have come before us seeking your healing, strength and love. You know us, O God: you understand who we are, you know what troubles and puzzles us, what makes us smile and what makes us sad. You listen to our questions and our prayers. You know the people we love, and the people we struggle with. Sometimes we hurt others; sometimes we hurt ourselves. So, we bring our own hurt, asking for your healing; and we bring the hurt we have caused others asking for forgiveness.

Listen to these words of Jesus, words that we can trust:

“Don’t be afraid.”

“I love you.”

“Your sins are forgiven.”

“I will be with you always.”

Write these words in our hearts, loving God, let them take root in our living, that we may know your peace. Amen.

*Consider writing one or more of these phrases down and carrying it with you.

Psalm 126:

When God restored the fortunes of Zion,

then were we like those who dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,

and our tongue with shouts of joy.

Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

(brief pause and silence)

Then they said among the nations,

“God has done great things for them.”

God has done great things for us,

and we are glad indeed.

Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

(brief pause and silence)

*Restore our fortunes, O God,
like the watercourses of the Negev.*

*Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.*

Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

(brief pause and silence)

Intercessory Prayer:

From deep within our being we call upon you, O God, for through you all can be made whole. Hear us as we voice our concerns for the people of earth.

Pray for those who cry out in physical pain or who suffer silently and long for healing. We pray for those with mental anguish, or who are anxious or fear the future, who at night cry, "I wish to God it were morning," and in the morning cry, "I wish to God it were night."

(A brief silence is kept for to offer names, silently or aloud)

Pray for communities in which people deal with disaster, hunger or poverty, or who are victimized because of race, history, gender or sexuality,

(A brief silence is kept for to offer names, silently or aloud)

Pray for those who mourn, who grieve the loss of love or a loved one, or who grieve the loss of their own resilience, freedom or hope,

(A brief silence is kept for to offer names, silently or aloud)

Pray for those who are near death or who fear death, and for those who have made the last journey from life to greater life,

(A brief silence is kept for to offer names, silently or aloud)

Remembering others in our hearts, whose deepest needs may be known to you alone, we commend them and ourselves to your affirming and restoring grace.

(A brief silence is kept for to offer names, silently or aloud)

May the God who goes before you
through desert places by night and by day

be your companion and guide;
may your journey be with the saints;
may the Holy Spirit be your strength,
and Christ your clothing of light, in whose name we pray.
Amen.

(Saint Mark's Episcopal, Seattle, WA)

3. CANDLE CEREMONY

Introduction:

"Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright." Many of us stand in our sanctuaries singing this hymn by candlelight, basking in the glow of Christmas joy and wonder. We look forward to exuberantly proclaiming "Joy to the world! the Lord is come" while trumpets blare, repeating the sounding joy. But for so many, it is neither calm nor bright, and there seems to be very little joy in the world. Christmas can be a dark time in which grief is more profound, loss seems keenly more painful, and an overwhelming sadness that seems out of place in the tinsel and lights threatens to swallow us up. During the season of Advent, we do acknowledge a longing for what is yet to come. We recognize the wait and the pain involved in the "not yet." But we always do so in the context of Christmas promise and with an eye on the birth of Christ as fulfillment and joy.

Advent Candles:

*Re-light your Advent candles using these prayer/prompts, or use tea candles.

On Sundays during Advent, we arrive for worship, and we begin by lighting candles representing, peace, hope, joy, love, and light. As we light a new candle each week, we use the added glow of candlelight to show our rising anticipation for the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, a time of joy, fulfillment, and wonder. This evening we will light the same candles, but we do so to honor the fact that for many people Christmas joy is masked with darkness and pain. While others around us are caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season and are busy making plans, many of us are frozen in our grief and sorrow. So tonight we

light our Advent candles to acknowledge that Jesus Christ came into a broken and sinful world and became the incarnate Lord who keenly knows all our thoughts and feelings and meets us where we are.

We light this candle of peace . . . praying that in a world where there seems to be no peace, in all the unsettled places in our own lives, in our anxieties and fears, you would be our Prince of Peace.

We light this candle of hope . . . acknowledging our hopelessness. We often despair about broken relationships, about our inability to rectify a bad situation, about our addictions, about our own never-ending sadness. We pray that you would be hope to the hopeless.

We light this candle of joy . . . though joy may be difficult to find because of our physical surroundings or our emotional and mental state. We pray that your joy would be our strength.

We light this candle of love . . . acknowledging that our love for others can be the source of so much pain. We miss those whom we love but are no longer here this Christmas. We grieve with those whom we love who are suffering. We struggle with feelings of being unloved. "Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down." Show us your love.

The Christ candle representing light remains unlit. For it is in darkness that we meet tonight and in darkness that we gather together to pray, to find comfort, and to be reminded of Jesus Christ, the light of the world who meets us in this place.

Psalm 142:

*1 I cry aloud to the Lord;
I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.
2 I pour out before him my complaint;
before him I tell my trouble.
3 When my spirit grows faint within me,
it is you who watch over my way.
In the path where I walk
people have hidden a snare for me.*

*4 Look and see, there is no one at my right hand;
no one is concerned for me.*

*I have no refuge;
no one cares for my life.*

*5 I cry to you, Lord;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."*

*6 Listen to my cry,
for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me,
for they are too strong for me.*

*7 Set me free from my prison,
that I may praise your name.
Then the righteous will gather about me
because of your goodness to me.*

Light an additional candle in remembrance of a loved one, in solidarity with someone who is hurting, or as a representation of your own need and prayer.
(pause for silence and reflection)

Poem:

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait

till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Madeleine L'Engle, from "The Ordering of Love: The New and Collected Poems of
Madeleine L'Engle" © 2005, Shaw Books.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, it is night.

The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no
peace.

The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new
possibilities.

In your name we pray. Amen.

Rev. John Williamson, from Night Prayer of A New Zealand Prayer Book He
Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa.

Kate Bowler:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ucLN9sBKRs5nSfnw7Bjv7GKzGby6hCgR/view?usp=sharing>

St. Mark's Seattle:

<https://saintmarks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024.12.22-Longest-Night.pdf>

Church Support Hub:

<https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/longest-night-liturgy/>

Kasey Hitt:

<https://www.khspiritualdirection.com/longest-night-service.html>

Reformed Worship:

<https://reformedworship.org/resource/longest-night-0>