

“But I trust in Your faithfulness, my heart will exult in Your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord, who has been good to me. *Deliver me, O God.*”

Blue Christmas

This is a service for those who feel at odds with or estranged from the general feeling of joy and happiness typically associated with this time of year. These may be people who have suffered a personal loss: death of a loved one, divorce, illness, or job loss. The service seeks to comfort them by reminding them they are not alone and that their feelings are honored.

Worshippers should have an opportunity to take part in at least one healing ritual, such as lighting a candle or praying with someone. The music should keep with the contemplative nature of the service.

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Our Longest Night: A Service of Hope at Christmas Time

Opening Words

The Uses of Sorrow

(In my sleep I dreamed this poem)

Someone I loved once gave me
a box full of darkness.

It took me years to understand
that this, too, was a gift.

- *Mary Oliver*

Unison Gathering Prayer

Your compassion for us overflows, O God. We are facing our longest night. We come burdened with sorrow, loneliness, and sadness. We come seeking a place to set them

down; a place where our words will be heard and our feelings honored. We need a place where we can drop our masks of good cheer so our tears can flow freely and our faces can wear the cares of all that we are carrying. Be among us this night, O God. Let your compassion heal us in this moment. Comfort us. Strengthen us. Care for us. Be Christ to us. Amen.

Hymn: _____ (see list below)

Readings

Lamentations 3:1-3, 19-26

Matthew 5:3-12a

Words of Comfort

Silent Prayer and Reflection

A Time for Comfort

Use this time to light candles, receive anointing, or receive a prayer.

Litany (based upon Psalm 13)

How long, O Lord; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand? *Deliver me, O God.*

Look at me, answer me, O Lord, my God! Restore the luster to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest my enemy say, "I have overcome them," my foes exult when I totter. *Deliver me, O God.*

But I trust in Your faithfulness, my heart will exult in Your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord, who has been good to me. *Deliver me, O God.*

Hymn: _____ (see list below)

Unison Collect

Generous and gracious God, we look to you for compassion and thank you for your presence this night. Overwhelmed by our burdens we easily forget that you never leave us alone and that your steadfast love for us never falters. By coming together we find assurance and comfort that we do not suffer this longest night alone. You have given us strength to live through this night. Turn us to reach out to those whose night is also long. Grant that we may be your healing presence in their lives by bringing them your compassion and comfort that

will assure them that they do not suffer alone. Amen.

Closing Words

To be alive - is Power -
 Existence - in itself -
 Without a further function -
 Omnipotence - Enough -
 To be alive - and Will!
 'Tis able as God -
 The Maker - of Ourselves - be what -
 Such being Finitude!
 - *Emily Dickinson*

Notes on the Service

- *The Uses of Sorrow* by Mary Oliver from her collection *Thirst* (published by Beacon Press, 2006)
- *To Be Alive* (677) by Emily Dickinson from *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (published by Little, Brown and Company, 1961)

Suggested Hymns

From *NCH* or *Pilgrim Hymnal*

- Precious Lord
- Balm in Gilead
- Abide with Me
- If Thou but Suffer God to Guide Thee
- Nobody Knows the Trouble I See
- Sweet Hour of Prayer
- The Lord's My Shepherd

From *Sing! Prayer and Praise*

- There is Peace no. 90
- Where are You, God no. 17
- Star Child no. 174
- Where are You, God no. 175

- Star Child no. 174
- Open My Eyes/*Abre Mis Ojos* no. 161

The Rev. Quentin Chin is a member of Church on the Hill (UCC) in Lenox, MA, and Interim Minister of the United Methodist Church of Lenox, MA. This service was used as an ecumenical service in Lenox on December 13, 2009, and included Episcopal, Roman Catholic, United Methodist and UCC congregations. It is one of many resources found on the [United Church of Christ's](#) worship resources site.

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