

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

*a service of healing and hope
in troubled times*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2021 - 5:00PM

ST. PAUL'S ON THE GREEN | 60 EAST AVENUE | NORWALK, CONNECTICUT 06851

*We gather in the light of Christ, who comes into the darkness of our lives and of this world.
Tonight we especially make room for that light in those places of personal darkness and pain.
The pain of loss, regrets of the past, fears of the future – all these we bring into God's healing presence.*

PRELUDE

Will Doreza, Piano

OPENING ACCLAMATION AND PRAYER *standing*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.

—Isaiah 9:2

Let us pray.

God of Mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves, our families, and all we love who face distress or live with loss. We ask for peace for the past, strength for today, and hope for tomorrow. We ask these things through the one who shares our life in joy and sorrow, despair and promise, death and new birth: Jesus Christ, our brother and our savior. **Amen.**

LAMPLIGHTING HYMN *standing;*

Join in singing with the quartet, and light your candles as the light is passed to you. You may keep your candle lit as long as you wish during the service, or you may put it in the sand tray at any time.

1 O gra - cious Light, Lord Je - sus Christ, in
2 Now sun - set comes, but light shines forth, the
3 Wor - thy are you of end - less praise, O

you the Fa - ther's glo - ry shone. Im - mor - tal, ho - ly,
lamps are lit to pierce the night. Praise Fa - ther, Son, and
Son of God, Life - giv - ing Lord; where - fore you are through

blest is he, and blest are you, his ho - ly Son.
Spi - rit: God who dwells in the e - ter - nal light.
all the earth and in the high - est heaven a - dored.

Words: Greek, 3rd cent.; tr. F. Bland Tucker (1895-1984); para. of *O Gracious Light*
Music: *The Eight Tune*, Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God”? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the People.

Thanks be to God.

I will lift up my eyes to the hills,
from where is my help to come?

**My help comes from God,
the maker of heaven and earth.**

God will not let your foot be moved;
the One who keeps you will not slumber.

**Behold the One who keeps covenant
shall not slumber or sleep.**

The Holy One is your keeper,
and is the shade at your right hand.

**So that the sun shall not strike by day,
nor the moon by night.**

God shall preserve you from all evil,
and is the One who shall keep you safe.

**Our God shall watch over our going out and our coming in,
from this time forth and for evermore.**

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises
was oftentimes filled with your tears.
And how else can it be?
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being,
the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine
the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit,
the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart
and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow
that is giving you joy.
When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,
and you shall see that in truth you are weeping
for that which has been your delight.
Some of you say, “Joy is greater than sorrow,”
And others say, “Nay, sorrow is the greater.”
But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

MUSICAL REFLECTION *seated*

Within our darkest night
You kindle a fire that never dies away,
never dies away. *(repeat)*

Taizé chant

GOSPEL READING *seated* *Matthew 11:28-30*

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Come to me, all you who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the People.

Thanks be to God.

MEDITATION

The Officiant invites the people to a period of silent reflection.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

standing

In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need.

For ourselves, as we participate in seasonal celebrations in whatever ways we are able;
God, hear our prayer,
and in your mercy answer.

For the people we love whom we have lost. For all of our losses, and that all may be redeemed by
your ever-present promise of new life.
God, hear our prayer,
and in your mercy answer.

For our families and friends, that they may continue to help and support us.
God, hear our prayer,
and in your mercy answer.

For all who are troubled in heart, that they may know your love and peace.
God, hear our prayer,
and in your mercy answer.

That the peace we proclaim in this season may come more fully into the whole world.
God, hear our prayer,
and in your mercy answer.

The Officiant concludes

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially
to the lonely, bereaved, and troubled in this holy season, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus,
who taught us to pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

HEALING PRAYER

seated

*The Officiant invites all to a time of reflective and healing prayer. If you would like to receive prayers for
healing, come forward to one of the two stations in the side aisles.*

CLOSING SONG

seated, sung meditatively

If in your heart you make a man-ger for his birth, then
 God will once a - gain be - come a child on earth If earth.

Words: Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), tr. by Stephen Mitchell.
 Music: Ana Hernández, © 2007 by Ana Hernández. Used by permission.

CLOSING WORDS AND BLESSING

standing

May the Divine Presence be your light in the darkness;
 May Christ be your healing and your hope;
 May the Holy Spirit bring you to the dawn of eternal light.

And may the blessing and peace of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 be with you now and evermore. **Amen.**

POSTLUDE

Will Doreza, Piano

*After the service, online healing prayer teams will be available for prayer for those worshipping online.
 Visit www.stpaulsnorwalk.org/healingprayer to connect and pray with them.*

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

Simple Eucharist with hymns	3:00pm	<i>especially for Families with Children</i>
Holy Eucharist with Choristers	6:00pm	<i>preceded by 5:45 Choral Prelude</i>
Holy Eucharist with Choir	10:00pm	<i>preceded by 9:30 Choral Prelude</i>

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

Holy Eucharist with Organ	11:00am
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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26

Christmas Lessons and Carols, with Eucharist	11:00am
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31

Burning Bowl liturgy	6pm	<i>followed by a bonfire in the churchyard</i>
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THE WORSHIP IS OVER – THE SERVICE BEGINS

ST PAUL'S ON THE GREEN

Contact us at: 203-847-2806 info@stpaulsnorwalk.org

The Rev. Daniel Simons *Priest in Charge*

Will Doreza *Interim Director of Music*

Josh Ehlebracht *Interim Organist*

Marsha Dunn *Parish Administrator*