

The Longest Night



December 17, 2025

First Presbyterian Church Covington, GA

✠ *You are invited to stand in body OR in spirit* ❖

The Longest Night

Prelude

*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
Once in Royal David's City
As with Gladness Men of Old
"For Unto Us a Child Is Born" from Messiah
Becky Ramsy & Alice Walker*

French Melody, PICARDY
Harry Gauntlett, IRBY
Conrad Kocher, DIX
G.F. Handel

Welcome

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Hannah Freeman

Even in our endings,

Fill us with hope for new beginnings.

Even as our minds race with worry and anxiety,

Fill us with peace that surpasses understanding.

Even in our deepest grief,

Fill us with joy and laughter.

Even in a world of hate and fear,

Fill us with your love, O God.

Come, let us worship Emmanuel, God with us.

✠ **Hymn of Praise 144**

In the Bleak Midwinter

CRANHAM

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 55:1-3

Curtis Watson
Pew Bible page 685

Personal Silent Reflection

Refrain 88

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Refrain 88

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Light in the Darkness

A reading from Psalm 42:8:

"By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life."

Your stories have brought you here. Now let us bring them into the light of God.

This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.

In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of truth.

There is no need to hide or deny. God welcomes us as we are.

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. *(Psalm 86)*

This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.

In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of lament.

We recognize our wounds and cry out to God.

We accept God's invitation to express every feeling and question.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;

and by night, but find no rest. *(Psalm 22:1-2)*

(Pause for one minute of stillness)

This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.

In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of courage.

Courage to be honest, to seek help, to comfort one another.

Courage to dare to love and dream again.

The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts;

so I am helped, and my heart exults,

and with my song I give thanks to him. *(Psalm 28:7)*

(Pause for one minute of stillness)

This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.
In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of hope.
God is good. God is strong. God is near,
leading us to a day without tears and pain, without sin and death.
Healing and deliverance are coming; if not now, then on that day.

**By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.**

(Psalm 65:5)

Naming Our Sorrows and Bringing Our Pain to God

During this time you are invited to write your burdens and sorrows on the piece of paper provided for you.

After writing and reflecting, you are invited to bring your paper forward and place them in the bowls. Come cast your burden on the Lord. You will watch as the paper dissolves.

Following that, you are invited to come receive anointing with oil, a symbol of God's intimate presence. These prayerful activities are optional. Feel free to stay in your seat if you prefer.

Special Music

Still, Still, Still

Arr. by Philip Ledger

Mark Fiddie

Breath Prayer

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

Exhale: "Help me release it to you."

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 9:6-7

Curtis Watson

Pew Bible page 638

Personal Silent Reflection

Refrain 88

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Meditation on the Longest Night

Blessing the Night

Blessed are we,

Gathered by candlelight in these dark times.

In the confusion and pain that envelops us.

We receive your comfort.

It reaches to the core of our tired bodies,

our worried minds,

and our heavy hearts.

Your light has come to us in the songs sung,

the words spoken,

and in the faces all around, our companions along the way.

Blessed are we,

Who have poured out our hearts,

and look for your light.

Bless us this Christmas

as we come softly to your cradle, just as we are.

Closing

You are invited to sit and be. We ask that while in the sanctuary you remain silent.

Need to take some more time? Provided on the table by the Christmas tree

you will find reflection resources. Pick a card, a picture, a children's book and

give yourself space to feel.



Notes

Accessibility—A limited supply of large print worship guides and hymns are available in the narthex. Please return the large print binder to an usher at the end of worship so it may be updated for the next service. If you'd like to learn about connecting your Bluetooth hearing aids to our Sanctuary sound system we invite you to talk to our Tech Team.

Use—One License #A-728728 authorizes the use of music printed in our worship guide and streamed online. Liturgy by Kate Bowler, katebowler.com | Cover art by Stushie Art, stushieart.com



Serving Today

Usher Chair | Charles Ardis

Tech Team | Jonny Atkins

Liturgists | Amy Fraser, Hannah Freeman, Curtis Watson

Guest Musician | Becky Ramsey

First Presbyterian Church Staff

Neeley Rentz Lane	Senior Pastor	Nursery Staff
Alisa Castilla	Interim Dir. of Children & Youth	Hattie Bellinger
Mark Fiddie	Dir. of Music & Worship Arts	Catrina Crowe
Denise Gabriel	Dir. of Community Preschool	Akeelah Fletcher
Peni Kehoe	Finance Administrator	Jahniyah Greene
Catherine Laseter	Dir. of Communications & Operations	Jordyn Williams
Alice Walker	Organist CAGO, AAGO	Sylvia Woods

Emergency Response Team

In the event of an emergency including tornado, fire, intruder, and medical emergencies, the Emergency Response Team will lead the church's response and may be identified by wearing yellow visibility vests. If these people are not present for an emergency secondary responders will wear ERT vests. Please follow any directions given by the following people in the event of an emergency:

Primary Point Person—Neeley Rentz Lane
Facility/Security Response—Kenny Compton, Stan Hall, John McCarthy
Medical Response—Nichole Howell, Pam Stillerman

Officers

Reaching Out	
Sara Chini	Witness (2026)
Stephanie Scarborough	Witness (2027)
Engaging	
Charles Ardis	Faith Formation (2025)
Krista Firkus	Faith Formation (2027)
Nichole Howell	Worship (2025)
Hardy Fortson Sideris	Worship (2027)
Belonging	
Gary Boteler	Finance (2027)
Pam Stillerman	Welcome (2026)
Connecting (Deacons)	
Cathy Dobbs	Pastoral Care (2027)
Denny Dobbs	Pastoral Care (2027)
Dana Hall	Faith & Fellowship (2025)
Darcel Tabb	Faith & Fellowship (2027)
More	
Jodi Atkins	Preschool (2026)
Kenny Compton	Facilities (2026)
Jo Anna Fish	Personnel (2027)
John McCarthy	Clerk of Session
Danny Vining	Personnel (2025)

Advent Poinsettias

The poinsettias that are decorating the Sanctuary this Advent season were provided through donations in memory and in honor of the following people. Donations over the cost of flowers are divided and given to both CarePortal and FaithWorks.

In honor of:

- ◇ The Elders & Deacons of FPC
Bart & Ruth Frankena
- ◇ Memama *Neeley Rentz Lane*
- ◇ Debbie & Deborah -our sisters
Stan & Dana Hall
- ◇ Mom, dad, sister, and brother
Yvonne Hill-Davenport
- ◇ Our Children & Grandchildren
Curtis & Carolyn Watson
- ◇ Carol McGiboney *The Weesners*
- ◇ Eleanor Scarborough,
Sherri Bolton,
Betty Bailey *Miriam Wheeler*
- ◇ Miriam G. Wheeler
Miriam Witherspoon-Wheeler

Given by:

In memory of:

Given by:

- ◇ Our parents:
Clayton & Bernice Bailey
Clay Bailey & Betty Bailey
- ◇ Brenda Buckelew
Jennifer & Reid Buckelew
- ◇ JoAnn Crews *Tom Crews*
- ◇ Michael Dobbs *Cathy & Denny Dobbs*
- ◇ Ursula Kaminski *Leonard Kaminski
& children*
- ◇ Our parents *Larry & Day Kennon*
- ◇ Frank Colladay *Neeley Rentz Lane*
- ◇ Brenda Buckelew, Memaw
*Kim, Homer, Riley
& Chloe McSwain*
- ◇ Jim Stillerman *Pam Stillerman*
- ◇ Russell & Myrtle Vining,
William & Laura Miller,
Doug Bolton *Danny & Beth Vining*
- ◇ Our Parents *Curtis & Carolyn Watson*
- ◇ Guy McGiboney,
Grady Daugherty,
Barbara & Jack Weesner *The Weesners*
- ◇ Marvin Wells *The Wells Family*
- ◇ Penny Blakeney,
Doug Bolton,
Jack Wheeler *Miriam Wheeler*
- ◇ Jack Wheeler,
James & Miriam Gardner
Miriam Witherspoon-Wheeler
- ◇ Nana G *Braden Woodham*



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
COVINGTON, GA





1169 Clark Street SW Covington, GA 30014
fpccov.org 770.786.7321