



## Kensington Presbyterian Church

### *Longest Night*

*December 21, 2022*

**WELCOME** to worship. We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship in person, as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF.<sup>1</sup> If this is how you are worshipping, know that you are not alone... and if you like, you can invite those who live with you to join you, or connect with others through the phone or outside.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca)



<sup>1</sup> note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.

### *Announcements*

*Clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site*

**Advent Devotions:** This year we have a lovely Advent devotional from Sanctified Arts. While it is daily, it also contains a variety of activities to invite you closer to God. Rev. Peter can print you a copy, or give you access to an online version.

Family explorations of Christmas around the world and Advent Calendars are also available.

[presbyterian.ca/2022/11/01/ecumenical-advent](http://presbyterian.ca/2022/11/01/ecumenical-advent)

**Caroling in the Community:** Thursday, Dec. 22 at 7:00 p.m.

**Christmas Eve:** Saturday, Dec. 24 at 7:00 p.m.

**Christmas Morning:** Sunday, Dec. 25 at 10:30 a.m.

A fun worship for Jesus' birthday.

**NDG Christmas Dinner:** Dec 25 from 1 pm to 7 pm

The NDG Community Council is hosting a Christmas Dinner for everyone, free of charge. It will be held at St. Ignatius Church

**Jesus & Java:** Join us as we share the joys and questions of faith.

Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton

Thursday, 7 pm ...Caroling from the church

We won't meet (officially) on Dec 29.

### *Contacts*

Church Office: 514-486-4559 .....info@Kensingtonchurch.ca

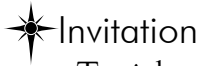
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## Creating Space<sup>2</sup>



### Invitation

Tonight we gather together in God's presence, to allow space for grief.

We know that Advent & Christmas can be a season with laughter, joy, and getting together with loved ones. We feel drawn to candles & fireplaces, light and hope.

However, we who are gathered here also know that Advent & Christmas can be a season of pain. It can be a month-long walk down memory lane that leaves us aching; a series of traditions that just don't fit anymore.

Tonight we gather together to create sacred space - space for grief, space for memories to run free, and space to remember loved ones lost. Tonight we gather together to testify to the darkness of the tomb and the darkness of the womb, believing that God is with us, not only in the light, but also through the longest nights.

We invite you to enter this space, bringing all that you are: your angers, your doubts, your sorrows, your hopes, your prayers, and your memories. Bring them all and simply let them be, for we are in the presence of God.

Let us worship.



### Call to Worship

Creator God, hover over this space—

**For Grief is like an ocean, pulling us back in,  
and we need you in the midst of the waves.**

<sup>2</sup> This worship service is adapted from one written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed for A Sanctified Art LLC, [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).

Creator God, hold us in your arms—

**For our hands are already full, carrying memories and  
heartache, and we need you to carry us.**

Creator God, in times of joy and in times of sorrow,  
we turn to you.

**Thank you for staying through the longest nights.  
We worship you. Let it be so.**

♪ Hymn: In the bleak mid winter.....pg 6 (145#1-3)



## Grief



Poem & video: Let there be

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul3cESihK4U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul3cESihK4U)



Lisle Gwynn Garrity



## Naming Our Grief

Grief is a heavy burden to bear. As we have just heard, “*When you know love, nothing goes untouched.*” While not the only source of pain, the loss of love can be so painful. As a way to acknowledge our grief, I invite you to take the stone you received at the beginning of the service and write a reminder of your grief on it. You may wish to write the name of a loved one, or you may name a loss or circumstance that causes you to grieve. You can find permanent markers in your pews {or under your seats}. You may hold your stone quietly in prayer when you finish.


## musical meditation



## Remembrance

## Prayer for Illumination

God, we come to you with honest words and cries of lament. We trust that in this space our grief is safe with you. Speak to us through your scripture so that we might be able to draw even closer to your holy presence, witnessing your faithfulness through the ages. Gratefully we pray, amen.

 Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible,<sup>3</sup> or click on the name to be taken to an online version.

[Psalm 69](#): 1-3, 13-18

## Prayer of Confession

Family of God, there are moments in worship when we are brutally honest with God, and the prayer of confession is one of these moments. Whether or not these words fit you today, we

voice them together, knowing that at some point or another we all could benefit from saying them. Please join me in praying the prayer of confession.

God of connection and love, I confess —

**there are people singing tonight,**

**but my heart is too heavy for singing.**

God of my heart and my mind, I confess —

**I know that I need you, but it's hard to let you in.**

**Grief builds walls where love had once been.**

God of the here and now, I confess —

**There is guilt that I carry, and memories to bury,**

**but forgiving myself seems unnecessary... but is.**

God of my prayers and my dreams, I confess —

**This path of grief is hard, bringing out the worst in me.**

**Forgive me when I get it wrong.**

**Love me back to grace and peace.**

**Amen.**



W. Kurelek

<sup>3</sup> If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963  
or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV

## The Story

Christmas is a story of great joy. One of the reasons is because there is hard times in this story as well.

Mary becomes pregnant. This is normally nice, but her husband isn't the father. This could have led to divorce, being cut off from the family, or even being killed.

Joseph sticks with her. Because of this, they have to leave home; travelling just before the baby is born. When they get to Bethlehem, there is nowhere to stay. They are homeless until somebody lets them stay in their garage/barn.

Later when King Herod hears the rumour that Jesus will become the king, he orders all the baby boys to be killed - and our family become refugees fleeing horrible violence.

There are lots of uncertainty and grief in the Christmas story.

♪ Hymn: Away in a Manger.....pg 6 (149#1, 3)



W. Kurelek

## Releasing the stones

No one has lived your life, but Jesus knows about how hard it can be. The Holy Spirit has journeyed with you, even when you never noticed. You can be completely honest with God.

I invite you to place your grief before God and to ask God for help in this journey, knowing that no matter what, God's grace goes before us.

When you are ready, I invite you to come forward and place your stone in one of the glass jars - symbolically releasing your grief to God. We're not pretending that your grief will ever fully disappear, particularly not in this instant. In doing this we acknowledge grief is stifling and too great to carry alone. We accept God's offer to help.



♪ musical meditation



## *Going Forth*

### Readings

[Revelation 21:4](#)

"God will wipe every tear from your eye.

There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain."

[Psalm 147:3](#)

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

[Psalm 34:18](#)

"The LORD is close to the Brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Scripture tells us that one day there will be no more suffering. As we all know, that day may not be today. Tonight we simply live in a space that acknowledges our loss, remembers God's presence, believes in the promise of the future, and, for now, allows that to be enough. Please join me as we pray to the God who shares in our grief and gives us our love.

## Prayer

God of Christmas,  
You gave us love.  
Tonight, as our hearts ache, we ask that you give us comfort.  
Flood our minds with memories of love  
and fill us with gratitude for all of those moments.  
And as we wade through this Christmas season,  
help us to catch glimpses of you in the midst of our heartache.

God of light and hope,  
Give us peace instead of resentment.  
Give us You instead of just a Christmas card image of You.  
And, if it is wise,  
give it to us sooner rather than later.

Gratefully we pray,  
Amen.

🎵 Hymn: Silent night.....pg 7(154)

## Candle Lighting & Benediction

Family of God, tonight we gathered together in God's presence to make space for grief.

We know that this can be a season of immense joy. However, we also know that Advent can be a season with pain.

Gathered together, we have acknowledged our grief, named it, and placed it before God. To close this evening, we carry light

from the Advent wreath—from these promises of hope, peace, love, and joy that Christ grants us - to rest that light amidst our sorrows.

We trust that God is present even in the darkest of times.

We trust that neither life or death, the present or what comes, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Go now in peace, trusting that you are loved, you are known, and you are not alone. Amen.



*Friedrich Peter RCA, God's Heart, 2007.*

F Peter - Gods hope crp



1. In the bleak mid - win - ter, fros - ty wind made moan;  
 2. Our God, heaven can-not hold him, nor earth sus - tain;  
 3. An - gels and arch - an - gels may have gath-ered there,  
 4. What can I give him, poor as I am?

earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone;  
 heaven and earth shall wel-come him when he comes to reign;  
 cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim throng - ed the air;  
 If I were a shep - herd, I would bring a lamb;

snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
 in the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed the  
 but his mo - ther on - ly, in her maid - en bliss,  
 if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; yet

in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.  
 Lord God in - car - nate, Je - sus Christ.  
 wor - shipped the Be - lov - ed with a kiss.  
 what I can I give him — give my heart.

Words: Christina G. Rossetti (1830–1894) Music: Gustav T. Holst (1874–1934)

CRADLE SONG 11 11 11 11

1. A - way in a man-ger, no crib for a bed, the lit-tle Lord  
 2. The cat-tle are low-ing, the ba-by a-wakes, but lit-tle Lord  
 3. Be near me, Lord Je - sus, I ask you to stay close by me for -

Je - sus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the bright sky looked  
 Je - sus no cry-ing he makes. I love you, Lord Je - sus! Look  
 ev - er, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil-dren in

down where he lay, the lit-tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
 down from the sky, and stay by my side un-til morn-ing is nigh.  
 your ten-der care, and fit us for hea-ven to live with you there.

Words: v.1, 2, Little Children's Book for School and Families c. 1885; v.3, Gabriel's Vineyard Songs 1892;  
 alt Music: William James Kirkpatrick (1838–1921); harmony, Eric H. Thiman (1900–1975)

Words: public domain Music: harmony, copyright © The United Reformed Church in the UK/Oxford University Press

# Silent Night

1. Si - lent night! ho - ly night! All is calm,  
 2. Si - lent night! ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake  
 3. Si - lent night! ho - ly night! Son of God,  
 1. Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,

ho - ly in - fant so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly  
 heaven - ly hosts sing "Hal - le - lu - jah, Christ, the Sav - iour is  
 with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy  
 Hol - der Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - lisch - er

all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child,  
 at the sight: glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,  
 love's pure light ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face,  
 ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.

peace; sleep in heav - en - ly peace.  
 born! Christ, the Sav - iour is born!"  
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.  
 Ruh', schlaf in himm - lisch - er Ruh'.

Words: German, Joseph Mohr (1792–1848), translation, John Freeman Young (1820–1885)  
 Music: Franz Gruber (1787–1863)

