

# **A Service of Hope Through the Longest Night**

## **Script**

### **Invitation to Worship**

This year has been hard for us all in one way or another. Some have lost loved ones, either friends or family. Some have lost their jobs. Some connections for one reason or another. We have all suffered.

We all have, for one reason or another, have an empty chair in our lives, in our homes or in our hearts. We want to acknowledge this. The holidays can be tough for one reason or another. We acknowledge this. This time should be full of joy and gladness, maybe filled with despair or loneliness. We acknowledge this.

We have presented this to have a different outlook on that empty chair. We know that this time of year we look to the East, to envision the anticipation of the Christ Child's arrival. We look and see the empty chair as a place of sorrow. Yet, in the birth of Christ, we can also rest our hearts in the assurance that, with the coming of the Christ Child, the world will receive the future with salvation and hope.

It can be difficult to envision hope and salvation as we look upon that empty chair. Yet, we have the promise of God's everlasting love, that with Christ, we will have everlasting life in the presence of Christ. Although we feel that sorrow and pain, we can, with Christ, know that we will see our loved ones again and know that God will never forsake us, even in the hard times that we are experiencing.

May the light of the Christ Child envelop us with love and hope forevermore. God bless each and everyone of us. Amen.

### **A Word of Pain**

Psalm 13:1-3

Psalm 102:1-5

Job 30:20

### **Responsive Song**

O Come, O Come Emmanuel - Verse 1

*O come, O come, Immanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel  
that mourns in lonely exile here*

*until the Son of God appear.*

*Refrain:*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.*

### **Our Hearts Break - A Time to Lament**

Our hearts break with our personal losses as we see see the empty chairs and together:  
With Rachel, with mourning and great weeping, we lament the loss of our children:

Those lost to Covid 19

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Those lost to the pain of mental health

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

With persons with disabilities, we lament the loss of normal adaptations:

Those with hearing losses unable to read lips through masks

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Those with vision losses, unable to hold the arm of acquaintances to help them  
navigate new areas.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Those with learning disabilities, unable to understand with remote learning.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

With people who are lonely, we lament the necessity of staying apart.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Those feeling anxious and depressed, unable to reach out physically for help.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Our hearts break with our society as we see see the empty chairs and together:

With Job, we lament the feelings of unworthiness caused by loss of status and income as  
employment suddenly ends

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

With all the people of God's creation, we lament the loss of our elders and their wisdom  
as they no longer surround us.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

With our brothers and sisters of color, we lament with all who cry out "My life does  
matter."

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

With our friends and neighbors, we lament our differences in ideology that make it hard to  
see where we do agree.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

With our first responders and those who teach our children, we lament that they often feel unappreciated.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

With those who often are away from their own families to take care of us, we lament that the need is so great.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

And our hearts break with global losses as we see the empty chairs and together:  
With the creator of all the universe, we lament the damage to our physical world.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

The changes in climate that we exacerbate with our need for comfort.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

The fires ravaging lands worldwide leaving God's creatures without a home.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

The pollution of the world's oceans.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

The drought affecting our ability to grow food.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

The deforestation of the rainforest leading to unanticipated weather changes.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

### **Responsive Song**

O Come, O Come Emmanuel - Verse 7

*O come, O King of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of humankind.  
Bid all our sad divisions cease,  
And be yourself the King of Peace.*

*Refrain:*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.*

### **A Word of Hope**

**John 1:1-5**

*(light single blue candle while the scripture is being read)*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

### **Prayer of Hope**

God of light and love, we thank you for your presence in the darkness. Help us feel the warm embrace of your light in the darkness. Amen.

### **Responsive Song**

O Come, O Come Emmanuel - Verse 6

*O come, O Bright and Morning Star,  
And bring us comfort from afar!  
Dispel the shadows of the night  
And turn our darkness into light.*

*Refrain:*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.*