

The Longest Night of the Year Service

Thursday, December 10, 7pm

First Pres Berkeley



"I shall look at the world through tears. Perhaps I shall see things that dry-eyed I could not see."

—Nicholas Wolterstorff

"May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy."

—Psalm 126

Welcome to The Service of The Longest Night

As the hours of light decline and we move toward the longest night of the year, it is good to find holy space to be together. It has been a hard year for all of us, and for some, it has been even harder than for others. It is the holiday season, but it does not feel like it. This is a good reason to gather around the light as best we can in God's presence, praying to find a deeper place for hope awakening us to God's holy dream.

How to prepare

On Thursday night, December 10, at 7 pm you will join online with others using the Zoom link that is provided on the First Pres website. During the service there will be invitations to rend fabric—a symbolic way of expressing loss and lament prayerfully with ears, eyes, hands, and hearts. This is known in the Jewish religious tradition as 'Kriah,' a way of lament.

In this packet you have materials to participate in the service. They are:

- 4 pieces of colored fabric
- 1 birch branch wreath
- Instructions

During the service you will write on the fabric before it is torn. **You will need to have a marker, (a black sharpie might be the best) and something to place underneath the fabric so that the marker does not bleed through.** You will need to have ample space to write. You may want to have a candle to light as you join the service online.



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Special note

If another person is with you and wants to participate but does not have these materials, there are two options:

Option 1: Find fabric at home that you have, preferably linen, but cotton will do. Cut out four pieces that are 5" x 8." At the top of each wide strip, make a short cut of a quarter of an inch. This will help with the rending of the cloth during the service. During the service after you tear your cloth you can tie it to a wreath you have at home or if you picked up an Advent wreath kit at church last week, you can use that wreath.

Option 2: Instead of using fabric you may use paper to write on, and then tear during the service. Before the service find two blank pieces of 8.5" x 11" paper and cut them in half so you have four wide strips (5.5" x 8.5"). In addition, before the service, find a vase or jar, colored or clear does not matter. During the service when you tear the paper you will fold the paper that you have torn in two and place it in the jar.

Preparing your heart

- Early in the week begin to ponder the verse from Psalm 126, "May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy." Make this into your prayer of preparation choosing words that you feel most comfortable to use.
- Approximately 10 minutes before the service, gather your materials and find a space that provides ample room for your computer, a place to write, and for a candle to light.
- After you settle in to where you will be sitting, calm oneself from the activities of the day. Breathe deeply, and breathe deeply again, close your eyes and become aware of your surroundings and rhythm of your breathing.
- Ponder the following: Tonight,
 - We rend to symbolize loss and taking hold of God in the darkness
 - We remember by placing our laments somewhere in our home that is readily visible
 - We rest in God as our helper and healer during the long days of winter
 - We rejoice even in darkness for God is here and so are all of God's beloved
- Join the service by logging in to the Zoom meeting on December 10 at 7 pm.

