

Mid-Week Advent Service
December 21, 2022
Blue Christmas Service

Please join us in prayerful meditation before the service.

Stand

The Gathering of the People

P Welcome to this Blue Christmas service, a time when we can, in company with each other, acknowledge the sadness we feel at Christmas time. This is the time of the shortest day and longest night of the year, when memories of past experiences and the pain of present reality can become overwhelming. Recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone, in this service we will be invited to reflect on the pain, the loneliness, and the sorrow we may feel and offer it all to our great sign of hope, the Holy Child of Bethlehem. We pray that all of us will find hope and comfort in knowing that we are not alone.

Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

P If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night," darkness is not dark to you, O Lord; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike. *Psalm 139:10-11*

Let us pray.

Collect for Advent

P Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

C **Amen.**

Sit

The Proclamation of the Word

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

P The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

The psalm is read in unison

Psalm 121

C **I lift up my eyes to the hills;
From where is my help to come?
My help comes from the LORD,
The maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved
And he who watches over you will not fall asleep.
Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep;
The LORD himself watches over you;
The LORD is your shade at your right hand,
So that the sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;
It is he who shall keep you safe.
The LORD shall watch over your going out and your coming in,
From this time forth for evermore.**

Reading

Luke 2:8-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon:

"Hope in the Midst of Grief"

John 20:24-29

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting and Litany of Remembrance

Stand

P We light this Advent candle to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season which anticipates Christmas.

C **May God's eternal love surround them.**

Hymn:

Silent Night, Holy night – *with adapted verses*

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.

P We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

C Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

Hymn:

Silent night, holy night
Griefs abound, ever in sight,
Christ now comes in manger bare,
Holds our loved ones in his holy care.
Joy, at last, to be ours.
Joy, at last, to be ours.

P We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us, years of difficult times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

C Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

Hymn:

Silent night, holy night
Shepherd quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia,
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!

P This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God, who shares our life, also promises us a place and time where pain and suffering will be no more.

C **Let us remember the one who shows the way and who goes with us into our tomorrows.**

Hymn: Silent night, holy night
 Son of God, love's pure light
 Radiant beams from thy holy face,
 With the dawn of redeeming grace,
 Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.
 Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Intercessions

P In the spirit of this season, let us now ask our God for what we need for ourselves as we participate in the Christmas season as people coping with loss, pain, suffering, loneliness, grief, sadness. In response to the words, "Loving God, hear our prayer," you are invited to respond with "And in your merciful love, answer."

God, we come to you as Christmas dawns with pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words.

(pause)

Loving God, hear our prayer,

C **And in your merciful love, answer.**

P Compassionate God, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. A death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day for us too, but someone has died or moved away. Or we have lost a job, or a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost. Lord, help us find our way.

(pause)

Loving God, hear our prayer,

C **And in your merciful love, answer.**

P The Christmas season reminds us of all that used to be and cannot be anymore. The memories of what was, the fears of what may be, overwhelm us. All around us we hear the sounds of celebration, but all we experience is a sense of feeling blue. Please be near us this night.

(pause)

Loving God, hear our prayer,

C **And in your merciful love, answer.**

P I invite you to offer your own intercessions and thanksgivings either silently or aloud.

(pause)

Loving God, hear our prayers this night. Grant to all, and especially to those in sorrow this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ, who taught us to pray together saying,

C **Our Father, who are in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn:

What Child Is This

LSB 370



1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mar - y's lap is
2 Why lies He in such mean es-tate Where ox and ass are
3 So bring Him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; Come, peas - ant, king, to



sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet While
feed - ing? Good Chris - tian, fear; for sin - ners here The
own Him. The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; Let



shep - herds watch are keep - ing? This, this is
si - lent Word is plead - ing. Nails, spear shall
lov - ing hearts en - throne Him. Raise, raise the

Christ the king, Whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;
 pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you;
 song on high, The vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;

Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The babe, the son of Mar - y!
 Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The babe, the son of Mar - y!
 Joy, joy, for Christ is born, The babe, the son of Mar - y!

Text and tune: Public domain

Prayer for the Night

P Let us pray.
 Lord, it is night.

The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done;
 what has not been done has not been done;
 let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives
 rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
 all dear to us,
 and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.

Let us look expectantly to a new day,
 new joys,
 new possibilities.

In your name we pray.

C **Amen.**

Stand

(A New Zealand Prayer Book, 184)

Hymn:

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

LSB 338



1 Come, Thou long - ex - pect-ed Je-sus, Born to set Thy peo-ple free;
2 Born Thy peo - ple to de - liv - er; Born a child and yet a king!



From our fears and sins re-lease us; Let us find our rest in Thee.
Born to reign in us for-ev - er, Now Thy gra - cious king - dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con-so - la-tion, Hope of all the earth Thou art,
By Thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it Rule in all our hearts a - lone;



Dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na-tion, Joy of ev - 'ry long - ing heart.
By Thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it Raise us to Thy glo - rious throne.

Text and tune: Public domain

The Blessing

P May Christ, who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you this night, and remain with you always.

C Amen.

Dismissal

P Go forth in the name of the promised Christ.

C Thanks be to God.

LEADING AND ASSISTING IN WORSHIP TODAY

Pastor.....Pastor Christopher Hazzard
Organist..... Carol Ceaglske
Elder Carlos Orellana

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