

# Blue Christmas Service

## Greeting and Welcome

### Call to Worship

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: *And also with you.*

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. Let us pray:

People: *God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.*

## Hymn                      O Little Town of Bethlehem

### A Reading from the book of Isaiah (40:1, 25-31)

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,  
calling them all by name; because he is great in strength,  
mighty in power, not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel,

'My way is hidden from the Lord,  
and my right is disregarded by my God'?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: *Thanks be to God.*

## A LITURGY OF REMEMBRANCE

### First Candle:

Leader: The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, the memory that binds them to us in this season. Please take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

All: *Lord, we want our loved ones to be free at home with you. We ask that you save a place for us beside them. We ask that you fill us with motivation and energy in the days ahead when we feel like giving up. Help us to find joy in the people, events and the beauty of nature which surrounds us.*

Leader: Thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives. We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again, when we are all in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come.

### Second Candle:

Leader: The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith. Please take a moment to remember the losses. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

All: *God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and ever keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection. We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious. We forget so easily that you will be with us in all that we experience. Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives and to be open to the changes which we are now going through.*

### Third Candle:

Leader: The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives. God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to have a sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay. Your words to us are clear: "Do not fear, I go before you."

All: *God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide. Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction and grant that we may have the reassurance of knowing that we are on the right path. Take our lives and use them according to your will. Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you.*

### Fourth Candle:

Leader: The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

All: *O God whose spirit is known by those whose hearts are thankful, and who makes cheerfulness a companion of strength, lift up our hearts, we pray, to a joyous confidence in your care. Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow, because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears. Where there is love in life, teach us to find it; help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love. So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others. We ask it, in the name of Jesus Christ whose life is our light. Amen.*

## **Prayers of the People**

Leader: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for all the good things we need: For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas as special people coping with our many different losses.

**People: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For our families and friends, that they may continue to help and support us.

**People: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For any person we have loved who has died, for all the losses we know in our lives, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise.

**People: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For our family and friends, that you may bless them with love, peace, and joy.

**People: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas Angels on that faraway hillside.

**People:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray

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**People:** Our Father, who art 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

## Meditation

### Lighting of Individual Candles (music plays while candles are lit)

**Leader:** Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. I want to invite each of you to offer your personal wound to the God who loves each of us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out: "Give me your pain, come to me... all who labor and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!"

I invite each of you to come forward and light a candle. As you light the candle, remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close until we are able to shine.

*If you wish, you may kneel at the altar rail for the laying on of hands and a blessing, or you may return to your seat*

**Leader:** These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

## **CLOSING**

As we gather this evening, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather to be illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May the Christ Child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast and margined, bring light, comfort, peace, and joy this holiday season.

**Leader:** May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us through this darkness.

**People:** *That together we may shine again. Amen.*