

## BLUE CHRISTMAS

*(As people enter the sanctuary, ushers give each person a paper star and a pen/pencil.)*

### PRELUDE

Chris Bullok

### CALL TO WORSHIP *(lighting community candle during reading)*

Rev. Chris Yost [pulpit]

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.

What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

People: **The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

### WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

Rev. Chris Yost

[pulpit]

### HYMN #196

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

- 1. Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.**
- 2. Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.**

### THE FIRST READING: PSALM 121 (NRSV)

Rev. Cecilia Granadosin

[pulpit]

- <sup>1</sup>I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?
- <sup>2</sup>My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.
- <sup>3</sup>He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.
- <sup>4</sup>He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- <sup>5</sup>The LORD is your keeper;  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
- <sup>6</sup>The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.
- <sup>7</sup>The LORD will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.
- <sup>8</sup>The LORD will keep

your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and forevermore.

## HANDBELL ANTHEM

*Christmas Night*

The Wesley Vibes

### THE SECOND READING: ISAIAH 40:1-5; 28-31 (NRSV)

Rev. Deana Lowe

[lectern]

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her

that she has served her term,

that her penalty is paid,

that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup>A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;

the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>8</sup>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.

<sup>29</sup>He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.

<sup>30</sup>Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;

<sup>31</sup>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.

### MEMORY STARS

[Chris, pulpit]

*(Following the second reading from Isaiah 40, you are invited to write on your star your concerns for others or your own concerns as the song is sung. When you are ready, please walk up and hang your star on the tree.)*

## LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

## LIGHTING THE FIRST CANDLE

Rev. Beth Ensor [pulpit]

Leader: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

**All: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.**

**Sing: O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel  
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear.  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*A period of silent reflection*

## LIGHTING THE SECOND CANDLE

Rev. Deana Lowe [lectern]

Leader: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

**All: We remember that through You all things are possible.  
Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.**

**Sing: O come thou Wisdom from on high, who order all things far and nigh;  
to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*A period of silent reflection*

## LIGHTING THE THIRD CANDLE

Rev. Chris Yost [pulpit]

Leader: 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, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

**All:** We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

**Sing:** O come thou day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by thy advent here  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

*A period of silent reflection*

#### **LIGHTING THE FOURTH CANDLE**

Rev. Cecilia Granadosin [pulpit]

Leader: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

**All:** We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

**Sing:** O come desire of nations, bind in one heart and mind.  
From dust You brought us forth to life; deliver us from earthly strife.  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

*A period of silent reflection*

#### **The Prayers of the People** *(readers alternate pulpit/lectern so the prayer flows smoothly)*

[Lectern] Rev. Dorothy Straks: God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts --sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words.

Lord, hear our prayer,

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

[Pulpit] Steve Shipp: God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too, but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life. We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and alone. We are weary

from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm.

Lord, hear our prayer,

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

**[Lectern]** Debbie George: God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season. We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us, both here and throughout the world, who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden, that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in Thy peace.

Lord, hear our prayer.

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

**[Pulpit]** Catherine Dierschke: God of love, in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts. Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes.

Lord, hear our prayer,

**All: And in Your merciful love, answer.**

**[Lectern]** Rev. Dorothy Straks: Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake. Amen.

## **HYMN #219**

### *What Child is This?*

**1. What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?**

**Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?**

**Refrain: This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;**

**Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.**

**2. Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?**

**Good Christians, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. *Refrain***

**3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him;**

**The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him. *Refrain***

### THIRD READING: JOHN 1:1-18 (NRSV)

Rev. Beth Ensor [pulpit]

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'" <sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

### PRAYER

Rev. Dorothy Straks [lectern]

Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives. Let the light of your holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.

### HYMN #239

*Silent Night, Holy Night*

- 1. 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.
- 2. Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;**  
glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing alleluia;  
Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 3. 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.

**CONCLUDING PRAYER** *(all eight leaders standing together behind the candles)*

Chris Yost: Let us pray together:

**Another day will come, O God.**

**I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be.**

**If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.**

**If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.**

**If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.**

**And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly.**

**Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy Peace. Amen.**

**BLESSING AND DISMISSAL**

Rev. Chris Yost

May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us through this darkness that together we may shine again.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;

the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and forever more.

Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

Chris Bullok

*The 'Blue Christmas' service used tonight is based on an order developed and used at The Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu Hawaii.*