



# Blue Christmas Service

December 18th, 2022

7pm

## Words of Welcome

### Gathering Hymn

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” ELW# 257

1. 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 you O Israel.
2. O come, O Wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh: in strength and beauty come and stay; teach us your will and guide our way.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

*Guitar instrumental*

3. O come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home; make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

**The Gathering of the People**

P: 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.

Psalms 139:10-11

P: 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. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God our Redeemer.

P: Let us pray.

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

The Proclamation of the Word:

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'?

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.

## **Psalm 121**

### The Message

Leader: I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains?

**C: No, my strength comes from God, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.**

Leader: God won't let you stumble, your Guardian God won't fall asleep.

**C: Not on your life! Israel's Guardian will never doze or sleep.**

Leader: God's your Guardian, right at your side to protect you—

**C: Shielding you from sunstroke, sheltering you from  
Moon stroke.**

Leader: God guards you from every evil, God guards your very life.

**All: He guards you when you leave and when you return,  
he guards you now, he guards you always.**

## **Hymn**

“It Came Upon A Midnight Clear”

ELW #282

1. It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold: “Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav’n’s all gracious king.” The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.
2. Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled, and still their heav’n-ly music floats o’er all the weary world. Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hov-‘ring wing. And ever o’er its ba-bel sounds the bless-ed angels sing.

### *Guitar instrumental*

3. And you, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow; look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing; oh, rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing!
4. For lo! The days are hastning on, by prophets seen of old, when with the ever circling years shall come the time foretold, when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling. And all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.

**A reading from Luke 2:8-20**  
**The Message (MSG)**

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

Reflection (message)

Hymn

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

ELW# 279

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by; yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love. O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

*Guitar instrumental*

3. How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n. No ear may hear his coming; but, in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.
4. O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel.

## A Liturgy of Remembering

*P:* “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matt.11:28

*P:* This first candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours. (*Pause while the first candle is lit.*)

**ALL: God, may your eternal love surround them. Amen**

*P:* This second candle we light is to redeem, the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. (*Pause while the second candle is lit.*) We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God’s hands we receive the gift of peace.

**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 changes which we are now going through, Amen.**

*P:* This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and months; the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stood with us. (*Pause while the third candle is lit.*) We give thanks for all the support we have known.

**C: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.**

*P:* This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us. (*Pause while the fourth candle is lit.*) We remember that God who shares our life promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

**C: Let us remember the one who shows the way, who brings the truth and who bares the light.**

*P:* Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. I want to invite each of you to offer your personal word 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.

*(time of silence, prayer and reflection)*

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.

*Time for people to light individual candles.*

## Prayers of the People

*P:* In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need; For ourselves as we participate, in whatever way we can this Christmas, as special people coping with our many different losses.

God, hear our prayer...

**C: And in your mercy answer.**

*P:* For our families and friends that they may continue to help and support us.

God, hear our prayer...

**C: And in your mercy answer.**

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

God, hear our prayer...

**C: And in your mercy answer.**

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

God hear our prayer...

**C: And in your mercy answer.**

*P:* For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas Angels on that faraway hillside,

God, hear our prayer...

**C: And in your mercy answer.**

*P:* For greater understanding of the lessons of love and acceptance as taught by Jesus your Christ.

God, hear our prayer.

**C: And in your mercy answer.**

*P:* 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 Christ our Savior and Lord.

**All: Amen**

**Communion liturgy:**

*P:* God is with us.

**C: God is within and around us.**

*P:* Even in our darkness,

**C: God's light shines in our hearts.**

*P:* Even in our grief,

**C:** we believe peace can be known.

*P:* We believe peace can be known because we are lovingly created in image of God, our Divine Healer, the Eternal One. God is the source of life for all creation. When we cry out in our sorrow, and suffering, God is present in the depths of our sadness, and we honor God for the gifts of these cleansing tears, this strengthening light, and our renewing breath.

In Jesus, God's eternal and incarnate child, God gave us a comforter and a friend; one to walk with us and to be our Light when we cannot carry one for ourselves. Jesus suffered grief and anxiety, fear and pain. And he was put to a death of shame upon a cross, only to rise again in the glory of God's Love.

And on the night he was betrayed, our Savior Jesus Christ took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said: "Take, eat: This is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, given for you, and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Lord, as you taught your disciples, so we pray,

**C: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is 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, and deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever, Amen.**

*All are welcome to commune at this table. If you would like to have laying on of hands, anointing with oil and prayer at the altar, you may do so after you have received communion.*

*Distribution: Special guitar music*

**Post communion Blessing & prayer:**

*P:* And now, may the body and blood of our Lord and Savior, strengthen you and keep you in His grace, amen.

*P:* Let us pray,

**All: Loving God, we give you thanks for restoring us in your image and nourishing us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Now send us forth a people, forgiven, healed, renewed; that we may proclaim your love to the world and continue in the risen life of Christ our Savior. AMEN.**

**Hymn:**

**“O Come O Come Emanuel”**

**ELW# 257**

5. O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer; O Sun of justice, now draw near. Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight. Rejoice, rejoice, Emanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

6. O come, O King of nations, come, O Cornerstone that binds in one: refresh the hearts that long for you; restore the broken, make us new. Rejoice, rejoice, Emanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

*Guitar instrumental*

7. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice, rejoice, Emanuel, shall come to thee O Israel.

**Benediction**

*P:* Go in peace and faith. If you are tired, may you find rest, if you are anxious, may you find peace, if you are lonely, may you find comfort. Know that nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And the blessing of God Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, remain with you always. AMEN.