

Blue Christmas – A Service of Healing and Hope ...because Christmas isn't always merry



This year we are sharing a recorded Blue Christmas service. In this time together, we would like to offer you a few moments of reflection and meditation. Our lives are saddened by the grief and losses we have experienced and our grief during Christmas swells in our hearts as we are reminded that our joy is muted and incomplete. Please rest into the silences and participate in the singing and candle lighting from the comfort of your own home.

Music

Welcome and Call to Worship

Welcome. We come to this special time, each of us bringing our sorrow or our pain or our loneliness to a place where we can recognize that this holiday season may bring grief as well as joy, despair as well as hope. Although separate we know that we share our burdens, our sadness, our fears, and so we gather courage to journey on. In this season when the world seems overcome with joy, many are conflicted with other emotions. We are not alone. God is with us. It was into a world of pain, hurt, and confusion that Christ came, and Christ is with us still. We truly hope this time of reflection and prayer will be a blessing.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world – the light no darkness can overcome. Stay with us, Lord, for we are weary. Let your light scatter the darkness and illumine your people here.

➤ **SONG** **People in darkness** **124**

Scripture **Lilian**

Isaiah 40: 1-2

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. 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.

Matthew 11: 28-29

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.

Reflection

This is a special time of year – filled with expectations and traditions – reminiscences and dreams. Some of us, because of the death of a loved one or family member – because of a powerful memory of long ago, because of unemployment, because of abuse or neglect, because of depression and a sense of lost hope – some of us are having difficulty celebrating during this

Christmas season. It is as though an event, or memory, or circumstance has taken us from exhilarating joy to a place of sadness and despair.

Jesus just emerged from the waters of his baptism, and filled with joy, heard the words, *“This is my son, whom I love. With him, I am well pleased.”* Almost immediately, Jesus was thrust into the desert where he met all kinds of temptation.

Many of us can no doubt relate to being at a high point in our life when, almost without warning, a single event casts us into a desert – a desert of anger or regret – a desert of sadness or fear – a desert of silence – of lost hope – a desert of despair – of wandering.

Today, in the name of Jesus, the Christ, we call upon the angels of the Lord to come and attend each one of us in as we set down our burdens – if only for a short time – through faith in Jesus. We ask God to bring us new understanding – healing and fresh hope – the promise of new beginnings. By the power of the Holy Spirit may we be open and ready to receive God’s great love. **Amen**

➤ **SONG** ***Be still and know that I am God*** **64**

Lighting the Advent Candles

Kittie: *We light the candle of hope, awaiting the birth of Jesus, our source of hope. (Candle of hope is lit)*

Anne: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. *(Romans 15:13)*

Together: **Thank you, O God, for the gift of hope in our times of emptiness and despair.**

Kittie: *We light the candle of peace, knowing that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. (Candle of peace is lit)*

Anne: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. *(John 14:27, 16:33)*

Together: **Thank you, O God, for the gift of peace in our times of uncertainty and fear.**

Kittie: *We light the candle of joy, knowing our comfort and help come from God. (Candle of joy is lit)*

Anne: To the one who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before God’s glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. *(Jude 1: 24-25)*

Together: **Thank you, O God, for the gift of joy – for happy memories – for your presence in our times of sadness.**

Kittie: *We light the candle of love, knowing God is love revealed to us in Jesus. (Candle of love is lit)*

Anne: I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. *(Ephesians 3: 17-19)*

Together: **Thank you, O God, for the gift of love in our times of longing and loneliness.**

Kittie: *In him was life, and that life was the light of all. We light the Christ candle, knowing Jesus is our hope, our peace, our joy, and the source of abundant love. (The Christ candle is lit)*

Anne: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. *(John 1: 1 and 5)*

Together: **The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)**

➤ **SONG** *I wonder as I wander* **142**

Prayer

God of comfort, come gently among us today – hear our prayers – restore our souls. Piece together our loose ends – smooth over our rough edges – restore our souls. When lights and decorations fail to delight our senses and serve only to deepen our pain and grief – restore our souls. When we clench our fists in anger, open our hands to receive your grace. When we are worn out and beat down, surround us with your peace. When our doubts outweigh our hopes, increase our faith. When we have no energy left to love, love us all the more. When we cannot bring ourselves to pray, pray for us, as we remember how Jesus prayed... ***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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

Blessing

God of the watching ones – the waiting ones – the slow and suffering ones – the angels in heaven – the child in the womb – give us your blessing – your good word for our souls, that we might rest and rise in the kindness of your company. **Amen**

➤ **SONG** *Silent night* **154**

Silent Reflection