



*Blue Christmas Service*  
*December 21, 2022*

**GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE**

**Welcome**

**Prelude**

*In the Bleak Midwinter*

**Call to Worship**

Pastor Debra

O God, we are facing a long dark night. We come with feelings of grief, depression, and loneliness tugging at our hearts.

**We come seeking a place to acknowledge this is a difficult time of year for us; a place where our words will be heard and our feelings honored.**

Oh God, we need a safe place where we can drop our masks of good cheer so our tears can flow freely and our faces can wear the cares of all that we are carrying.

**Be among us this night, O God.**

Let your compassion heal us in this moment.

**Comfort us. Strengthen us. Care for us. Be Christ to us. Amen.**

**\*Opening Prayer**

Pastor Debra

Come, Holy Spirit, and comfort us in our afflictions. Reach into our hearts, heal, and restore us. Where we are hurting, comfort us. And where we are experiencing sorrow, show us compassion. Bless us in the night that we may see your light dawning upon us. Amen.

**\*Hymn**

*Silent Night, Holy Night*

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**COMFORT OF THE WORD**

**Gospel of Matthew 11:28-30 (NRSV Translation)**

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.

## **Romans 8:35-39 (New Living Translation)**

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### ***Moments of Silent Reflection***

#### **Lighting the Candles of Advent**

*After the lighting of each candle, together we will sing a verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," (verses 1, 2, 6 & 7).*

#### **First Candle**

We light the first candle to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, and the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them up to God with our love, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

**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.**

#### **Second Candle**

We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, and 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.

**O come, Thou Wisdom from on high  
And 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.**

### **Third Candle**

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 mental health challenges, and the pain of feeling marginalized or misunderstood.

**O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by thy justice here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

### **Fourth Candle**

This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope that God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God considers each of us precious, held in a divine love that can never be extinguished.

**O come, Desire of nations bind  
All peoples in one heart and mind.  
From dust though brought us forth to life;  
Deliver us from earthly strife.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

### **Special Music**

Meghan Walker

### **Blue Christmas Prayer**

Pastor Debra

Around us, O God, the singing can be heard: 'Joy to the world...let heaven and nature sing.' This season is to be one of hope eases our minds, when peace soothes our hearts, when love warms our souls, and when joy comes each morning.

But there are many who do not feel this joy. Some might try, others have given up trying. 'Where is this joy for us?' they ask. The world has found joy but some feel as if it has passed them by. Our minds are not at ease...we feel too much doubt. Our hearts are not at peace...there is too much to do. Our souls are not warmed...the chill of death is too troubling. Where, O God, can joy be found? We ask this as we come before you in prayer, opening ourselves to the possibility that hope, peace, joy, and love might still come to us.

We pray for the lonely, that they might find comfort in another's touch.

We pray for the downtrodden, that they might find relief from their burdens.

We pray for those wrestling with depression, that a light of calm might bring them peace.

We pray for those dealing with stress, that they might find the courage to let go.

We pray for the grief-stricken, that they might experience the newness of life that you bring.

May joy come to the world, O God, and may we grasp some of that. We do not pray for joy that is temporary or fleeting, but a joy that runs deep and sustains us even in moments of despair. We seek this joy in a season that can be less than joyful. O God, hear our prayer.

We wait for Emanuel, God With Us, to come into our hearts once again. May we experience your love in new ways as we in turn love each other. We pray this in the name of the One who is to come. Amen.

### **Candles of Remembrance, Prayer Ornaments, and Anointing**

Each of us comes bearing our own challenges, feeling sorrow for loved ones gone or far away, and struggling to mend our broken places. This is a time for each of us to offer up these challenges, sorrows, and struggles to the God who loves and offers hope when all hope seems lost.

Feel free to pray silently at your seat or come forward and share your prayer silently with God as you light a candle. You can then go to the Christmas tree, write down the name of loved ones or yourself you wish prayed on a paper ornament, and then hang that ornament on the tree. Pastor Amy and others will pray over these names through Christmas.

To be anointed, come forward to the altar. Briefly, state your prayer request. This prayer will be held up to God and oil placed on your forehead or hand as you request.

### **The Prayer of Jesus**

Pastor Debra

Merciful God, we pray that we be comforted in our suffering and made whole. When we feel afraid, give us courage; when we feel afflicted, afford us patience; when we are lost, offer us hope; when we are alone, move us to stand beside one another. And together, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray.

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 forever. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

### Hymn

*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

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### Benediction

Pastor Debra

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

*Love Came Down at Christmas*

## **Silent Night, Holy Night**

*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.*

*Silent night, holy night,  
shepherds quake at the sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born,  
Christ the Savior is born!*

*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.*

*4. Silent night, holy night,  
wondrous star, lend thy light;  
with the angels let us sing,  
Alleluia to our King;  
Christ the Savior is born,  
Christ the Savior is born!*

## **It Came Upon a Midnight Clear**

*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 men,  
from heaven'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 heavenly music floats  
o'er all the weary world;  
above its sad and lowly plains,  
they bend on hovering wing,  
and ever o'er its Babel sounds  
the blessed angels sing.*

*3. And ye, 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.  
O rest beside the weary road,  
and hear the angels sing!*

*4. For lo! the days are hastening on,  
by prophet 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 the whole world send back the song  
which now the angels sing.*