

**BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE
DECEMBER 24, 2022 2:00 pm.**



Greeting and Call to Worship

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

All around us, lights are lit and carols play.
The season heaps joy upon us.

Yet, we who come here, we carry more than joy;
we carry loss, worry, grief and pain.

We come weary, seeking rest from expectations.
We also seek a holy presence to be with us.

We come to this place, by the resilient grace of God:
A love that never lets go.

Carol: CP 117 Lo, How A Rose E're Blooming

1 Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung!
of Jesse's lineage coming
as seers of old have sung.
It came, a blossom bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half spent was the night.

3 O Flower, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fills the air,
dispel in glorious splendour
the darkness everywhere;
true man, yet very God,
from sin and death now save us,
and share our every load.

2 Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the Rose I have in mind,
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Saviour,
when half spent was the night.

Prayer of Approach

We gather to remember...those who have touched our lives, glad memories and happy stories, and love that we hold dear.

We name in the silence of our hearts, those who have been life itself to us.

We gather carrying burdens, and hurts, and worries, feeling worn down by the weight of it all.

We name in the silence of our hearts, those burdens that pray upon our minds and strength.

We gather in the name of Jesus, vulnerable as an infant, joyful and happy as a youth, wise and caring as an adult.

We gather in the presence of God, who brings life and light to all.

All life is precious in God's sight. No one is ever alone or forgotten.

Come, let us gather in the Spirit of hope and peace. We worship in the name of joy and love. Amen.

Losing One We Love

Isaiah 40:1, 6–8

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Prayer

Holy One, you are with us in times of trouble and in times of peace;
in times of sorrow and times of joy.

When we are unsure of how to continue living and loving,
your Spirit intervenes with sighs too deep for words.

Speak for us now, Loving God.

Comfort us with your abiding peace... (*silence*)

Healing and Memory

Psalms 139:7–12

⁷ Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," ¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Prayer

God of all, when we feel alone, you draw nearer;
when we lose our footing, you guide us toward a good path.
Through the ages, you have promised to be a comfort to your people,
and you call us to be a comfort to others.
In all our living, may we never lose the memory
of our most cherished relationships,
and may we feel the courage and strength you offer to us
through those who surround us... (*silence*)

Living with Hope and Love

John 14:1–4, 18–19

¹ Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

Prayer

God of hope and joy, you prepare our hearts for renewal.
You till the soil of our lives and nurture small shoots of possibility.
Even when we are unsure, you repeat your promise:
I will never leave you.
Open us, Holy One, to your promise.
Hold us in your care.
Strengthen us for your future.
Guide us in anticipation and faith... (*silence*)

Remembering in Hope

We light a candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memories that bind them to us in this season.

May God's eternal love surround them.

We light a candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. 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.

Refresh us, restore us, and renew us, O God. Lead us into your future.

We light a candle to remember ourselves this Christmastime. We pause and remember these past weeks and months: the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the joy and sorrow of

memories, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends who care for us. We give thanks for all the support we have known.

Let us remember that even after night has fallen, the dawn of a new day will follow.

We light a candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and a time of no more pain and suffering.

Let us remember the One who shows us the way, who brings truth, and who bares the light for us all. Amen.

We light a candle for those we do not know, O God, who, like us, have suffered loss, who live with grief, who long for peace and justice, who long for friendship and healing.

Let us remember your people, of every time and place.

For these and all your children, we give thanks for life, hope and courage. Amen.

In this darkness we call for Light. This Light brought forth from the beginning of creation to shine in the shadows of our souls. We yearn for this gracious Light to warm us, to nourish us, and to give us strength. We call on this brilliant Light to show us our pain, so that in seeing it more clearly we might have the courage to bring it to you. And we ask you, O Holy One, to be with us here in our healing walk on this darkened earth.

Carol: CP 119 Silent 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,
sleep in heavenly peace.

2 Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight:
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing alleluia,
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour 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.
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

Dismissal

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.

Thanks be to God.