

## Blue Christmas

Trinity Christian Reformed Church, Dec 21, 2023

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### Program notes:

**Boldface** words: all read together.

\*Asterisk: please stand if able

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### \* Call to Worship

*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.**

### Opening Prayer

**\*Hymn** *O Little Town of Bethlehem- LUYH# 88 Vs. 1-4*

**The First Reading:** *Ecclesiastes 3:1-11*

### Psalm 22

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?*

**O my God, I cry out by day but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.**

*In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted, and You delivered them.*

**It was you who brought me from the womb,**

**You who kept me safe on my mother's breast.**

**Since my mother bore me, when trouble is near there is no one to help.**

**God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted.**

**God does not hide from me.**

**When I cry to God, God hears me.**

**Thanks be to God.**

### Psalm 23

**The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.**

**He makes me to lie down in green pastures;**

**He leads me beside the still waters.**

**He restores my soul;**

**He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.**

**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**

**I will fear no evil;**

**for you are with me;**

**Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;**

**You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,**

**and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

**The Second Reading:** *Isaiah 40: 28-31*

### Memory Stars

*(Following the second reading from Isaiah 40, you are invited to write on or meditate on each star: concerns for others or your own concerns)*

### Litany of Remembrance

*(The first candle is lighted.)*

*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.**

**Hymn:** *O Come O Come, Emmanuel*

**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*

*(The second candle is lighted.)*

*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.

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

*Hymn: O Come O Come, Emmanuel*

**O come thou Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily**

**To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in its ways to go  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*A period of silent reflection*

*(The third candle is lighted.)*

*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 is dark, with the turning of the earth the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.**

*Hymn: O Come O Come, Emmanuel*

**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*

*(The fourth candle is lighted.)*

*Leader:* We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us at Christmas, which began in humbleness, in a poor stable.

We remember that Jesus came to share this life with us and to promise us comfort and peace.

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

*Hymn: O Come O Come, Emmanuel*

**O come desire of nations bind , all peoples in one heart and mind**

**Bid all our sad, divisions cease, and be thyself our King of Peace**

**Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*A period of silent reflection*

## \*The Prayers of the People

*Leader:* God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain.

As the nights have grown longer, so has the 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,

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

*Leader:* 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 have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift.

We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you seeking rest, peace, and shelter from the storm. Lord, hear our prayer.

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

*Leader:* 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 of us, both here and throughout the world, who wander, want, weep or are heavy laden, that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in Your peace.

Lord, hear our prayer.

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

*Leader:* 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,

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

*Leader:* Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and send your angels to take care of 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 your love's sake. Amen.

**\*Hymn** (Away In A Manger- LUYH #86 Vs. 1, 2, 3 )

**Third Reading: Luke 2:1-7**

*(Please be seated.)*

**Offering of Light**

*Leader:* This season, we celebrate the birth of Christ: the light that changes the world. Let us pray.

**Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery and a new day coming.**

**Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, and let it go forth with us into the darkness, this night and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn.**

*Leader:* Lighten our darkness, we ask you, O God; give us light in the night season; and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night. Amen.

**Anthem:** (Guide Me O My Great Redeemer-LUYH # 43, verses 1-2)

*(From Exodus 13:21)*

*Taper candles found near the Advent Wreath may be lighted and placed in the tub with sand. Memory stars may be taken home.*

## Psalm 121

*(All read together.)*

**I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from?**

**My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

**The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.**

**The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.**

## \*Prayer

*Leader:* Let us pray.

**All: Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day.**

**We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there.**

**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** (*Silent Night-LUYH# 85, Verses 1-3*)

## \*Concluding Prayers

*Leader:* Let us pray.

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

**I don't know what it may bring, 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 your Peace. Amen.**

*Leader:* O God, support us all day long in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed,

and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.

Then Lord, in your mercy, grant us safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at last. Amen.

## \*Blessing and Dismissal

*Leader:* 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.

*Leader:* The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**People And also with you.**

*People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

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