

Blue Christmas Service
November 28, 2021 – 3 PM
Service of Word and Sacrament

PREWORSHIP MUSIC

*I Can Only Imagine*¹
*Don't Cry for Me*²
*On Eagles Wings*³

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE

*Blue Christmas*⁴

Dr. Troy Winemiller, Soloist

CALL TO PRAYER (Revelation 21:1-5)

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

Pastor: A promise from God's Holy Word: Then, I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more And, I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, like a beautiful bride prepared for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying:

Congregation: "Look! The home of God is now among mortals! God will live with them, and they will be God's people. God, himself, will be with them.

All: God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more. For the old world and its evils are gone forever."

Pastor: And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."

OPENING PRAYER

Pastor: God of Mercy, we come to you tonight, as we near the longest night of the year to acknowledge the feelings we are having in this season of waiting and wanting. Lord, you know that for some, every night appears endless, and the prospect of a new day seems dim. So, come to us Lord Jesus, for you are the Son of Righteousness, risen with healing in your wings. Come, Lord Jesus, for some of us are weak, afraid, lonely, or sad and cannot sing of Christmas joy. Come, Lord Jesus, and gather us under your wings as a mother hen shelters her chicks. Come, Lord Jesus, and weep with us as you wept with Mary and Martha. Come, Lord Jesus, for you know the cold and hunger of a stable; share our loneliness. Come, Lord Jesus, for you know the power of our enemy – death; now comfort and sustain us. Come, Lord Jesus, and make your home with us and share our every load. Come, Lord Jesus, and give us life and light through the long night and bring us to your joy in the morning. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

HYMN

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Bulletin, Last Page

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 9:2-6

Luke 2:1-20

MESSAGE

Rev. Laura C. Bair - Baker

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CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

Pastor: This is the time of endings and beginnings when the darkness overtakes the light, and we yearn for small signs of Light to pierce our night. We long for something new to be born. Let us light the advent wreath and remember the promise that the darkness will fade, and Light will emerge. We light the first Advent candle to remember those persons who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season, which anticipates Christmas.

Congregation: May God's eternal love surround them.

*All sing: 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.*

Pastor: We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our now empty hands, you place the gift of peace.

Congregation: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

*All sing: Silent night, holy night. Grief abounds, ever in sight.
Christ now comes in manger bare, holds our loss in his loving care
Peace, at last, to be ours. Peace, at last, to be ours.*

Pastor: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us, years of blue times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

Congregation: Let us remember the dawn that defeats darkness.

*All sing: 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!*

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

Congregation: Let us remember the One who shows the way and who goes with us into tomorrow.

*All sing: 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.*

Pastor: In the spirit of this season, let us now ask our God for what we need for ourselves as we participate in the Christmas season - as people coping with loss, pain, suffering, loneliness, grief, and sadness. In response to the words, "Loving God, hear our prayer," you're invited to respond with "And in your merciful love, answer." Let us pray. God, we come to you as Christmas dawns with the pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words. Loving God, hear our prayer.

Congregation: And in your merciful love, answer.

Pastor: Compassionate God, there are some among us who are grieving over what might have been. A death or a loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day for us too, but someone has died or moved away, or we have lost a job, a dream, a goal, or a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost. Loving God, hear our prayer.

Congregation: And in your merciful love, answer.

Pastor: God of the little ones, you sent your Son to be born as a baby, the Holy Child of Bethlehem. For some among us, Christmas is a reminder of what will never be, what used to be, or cannot be anymore. We hear the cries of your children everywhere - the homeless, the orphans, the sick, the hungry, and those in constant danger. While some of us may feel like Rachael, weeping and grieving with mothers in all places who have ever known the death of a child, others know the sorrow of barrenness and a fruitless womb. Please be near us this night. Loving God, hear our prayer.

Congregation: And in your merciful love, answer.

All: Amen.

Pastor: At this time, you are invited to walk to the Christmas tree and place as many blue ribbons of remembrance upon it as you feel called. You are also invited to light a candle, to represent the hope you have in Christ Jesus, the Light of the World who promises to give peace – a peace that passes all human understanding. (*Ribbons are placed; candles are lit*)

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

Pastor: Jesus said, “Come unto me, all who 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 weary souls.” Let us pray: Creator God, you made a world with darkness and light, and gave us the sun to warm us by day and the stars to guide us by night. You are forever bringing light into our darkness. Even when we shun the light, you send messengers who weave your words into our dreams and you stir up angelic choruses, which cause us to rejoice. Therefore, with all the people and creatures of the earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

All sing:

Seraphic Hymn

Hymnal, #522

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full, are full, of the majesty of Thy glory.
Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!

Pastor: On the night that was to be a long and dark one, Jesus gathered his friends around a table. He took bread, lifted it in blessing, broke it, gave it to his friends, saying,

Congregation: “This is my body, which is broken for you.”

Pastor: He later took the cup, lifted it in blessing, and gave it to his followers, saying:

Congregation: “This is my life poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Pastor: Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and fruit of the vine, that through Christ’s presence we may become a beacon of holy light and a source of hope for a weary world. These are the gifts of God, for the people of God. The Lord’s Table of Sacrifice and Life is ready.

RECEIVING THE ELEMENTS

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

All: *Lord Jesus, we give you thanks for coming to us, in bread and wine, the stillness of prayer, through the reading and hearing of scripture, hymns sung, candles lit, and ribbons hung. Lord, we go in thanksgiving for the light of Jesus, who laid his glory aside, became obedient to death, and rose with healing in his wings. Give us courage and guide our journeys that we may bear Jesus’ gifts of love and life and hope to a weary world. Amen.*

CLOSING HYMN

In the Bulb There is a Flower

Bulletin, Last Page

BENEDICTION

Pastor: May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord’s face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
May the Lord look upon you with kindness and give you peace.

All: Amen.

POSTLUDE

In Remembrance (Marshall)⁵

⁵ 1967 (Marshall) Lincoln Music Publishing, Inc. Use with permission, CCLI license # 2010291

In the Bulb There Is a Flower

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Unison

1. In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;
 2. There's a song in ev - ery si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy;
 3. In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;

in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise; but - ter - flies will soon be free!
 there's a dawn in ev - ery dark - ness, bring - ing hope to you and me.
 in our doubt there is be - liev - ing; in our life, e - ter - ni - ty.

In the cold and snow of win - ter there's a spring that waits to be,
 From the past will come the fu - ture; what it holds, a mys - ter - y,
 In our death, a res - ur - rec - tion; at the last, a vic - to - ry,

un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

From Latin, 12th century

Stanzas 1 and 2 Tr. JOHN MASON NEALE, 1851

Stanza 3 Tr. HENRY S. COFFIN, 1916

8. 8. 8. 8. 8. Ancient plain song, 13th century (Mode I)

Unison, with spirit

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive
 2. O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer Our spir - its by Thine
 3. O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind All peo - ples in one

Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 ad - vent here; Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
 heart and mind; Bid en - vy, strife and dis - cord cease;

HARMONY

Un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
 And death's dark shad - ows put to flight. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
 Fill the whole world with heav - en's peace. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -

UNISON

break

man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!
 man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!
 man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el! A-MEN.