

Blue Christmas

a service of healing and hope



*The Evangelical Lutheran Church
Of the Good Shepherd
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**A congregation of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

*"We are a caring family of God nourished by the Word, guided by the Holy Spirit to
share the love of Jesus Christ."*

Blue Christmas Service
December 19, 2020 - 5:30 pm.

GATHERING MUSIC

<i>“Noel Nouvelet”</i>	<i>(Instrumental)</i>
<i>“What Child is This”</i>	<i>ELW 296</i>
<i>“Beautiful Savior”</i>	<i>ELW 838</i>

WELCOME by Pastor Frank Podolinski

Opening Prayer: God of mercy, hear our prayer this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. Death and new birth, despair and promise. We ask these things in the name of Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow. **Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Celebrant: Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge,

All: for we are lost, we are lonely, we are afraid.

Celebrant: Tonight, we gather daring to wonder if God has indeed come in Jesus,

All: discerning the rejection we have known, intimate with our failed relationships, holding our heartache in hands of tenderness.

Celebrant: Tonight, we gather with neighbors and strangers, a family made one by our brokenness,

All: coming with our hearts full of hope, and our pockets filled with doubts.

Celebrant: Tonight, we gather just as we are,

All: for God has promised to meet us here and to welcome us for who we are.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH - A Liturgy of Remembering

Celebrant: This first candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, the memory that binds them to us in this season. (Pause while the first candle is lit)

All: May God’s eternal love surround them.

Celebrant: This second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. (Pause while the second candle is lit.) 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.

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

Celebrant: This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and month: the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stood and stand with us. (Pause while the third candle is lit.) We give thanks for all the support we have known.

All: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

Celebrant: This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us. (Pause while the fourth candle is lit.) We remember that God who shares our life promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

All: Let us remember the one who shows the way, who brings the truth and who bears the light.

*HYMN

“O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL”

ELW 257

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things
3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on
4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
far and night: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;
Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
teach us your will and guide our way. Re - joice! Re - joice!
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (said by all)

Generous and gracious God, we look to you for compassion. Sin's shadows and death's darkness are around us. We know the pain of loss, the confusion of uncertainty, and the fear of the future. Overwhelmed by our burdens we easily forget that you never leave us alone and that your steadfast love for us never falters. By coming together we find assurance and comfort that we do not suffer this lon- gest night alone. Forgive us when we have neglected to reach out to those whose night is also long. Grant that we may be your healing presence in their lives by bringing them your compassion and comfort that will assure them that they do not grieve alone.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Like a hen who gathers her chicks, God embraces you in tender care. Like manna in the desert, God feeds you with surprising mercy. Like a loving parent, God runs to meet you again this day, forgiving your sins for the sake of + Christ, leading you from death into life. Amen

HYMN

"O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"

Vs. 1 & 3

O Little Town of Bethlehem

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
2 For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove
3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!
4 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - d'ring love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.

yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

READINGS

Isaiah 25:4-9

⁴For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,

⁵the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

⁶On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

⁷And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.

⁸Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Psalm 28: 1-3, 6-9

All – To you, O Lord, I call, do not remain silent. Send your word, the way against death. To you, O Lord, I call.

¹To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, hear me. If you do not heed I shall become like those in the grave.

²**Hear the voice of my pleading as I call for help, as I lift up my hands in prayer to your holy place.**

³Do not drag me away with the wicked, with the evildoers, who speak words of peace to their neighbors, but with evil in their hearts.

⁶**Praise to you, Lord, you have heard my cry, my appeal.**

⁷You, Lord, are my strength and my redeemer; in you my heart trusts. I was helped; my heart rejoices, and I praise you with my song.

⁸**LORD, you are the strength of your people, a fortress where your anointed finds refuge.**

⁹Save your people, bless Israel your heritage. Be their shepherd them and carry them forever.

ALL: To you, O Lord, I call, do not remain silent. Send your word, the way against death. To you, O Lord, I call.

John 1:1-5, 9-14, 16-17

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,

¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION

***HYMN**

“STILL, STILL, STILL”

Still, still, still,
One can hear the falling snow.
For all is hushed,
The world is sleeping,
Holy Star its vigil keeping.
Still, still, still,
One can hear the falling snow.

Sleep, sleep, sleep,
'Tis the eve of our Saviour's birth.
The night is peaceful all around you,
Close your eyes,
Let sleep surround you.
Sleep, sleep, sleep,
'Tis the eve of our Saviour's birth.

Dream, dream, dream,
Of the joyous day to come.
While guardian angels without number,
Watch you as you sweetly slumber.
Dream, dream, dream,
Of the joyous day to come.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Celebrant: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need; For ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmas. God hear our Prayer....

All: And in your mercy answer.

Celebrant: For our families and friends that they may continue to help and support us. God, hear our prayer....

All: And in your mercy answer.

Celebrant: For the person we have loved that has died. For all the losses that we know, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise. God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

Celebrant: For all our family and friends that they may know love and peace and happiness in you. God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

Celebrant: For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout the whole world. God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

Celebrant: God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ

SHARING OF PEACE

MUSIC

LO, HOW A ROSE E'ER BLOOMING

REMEMBERING OUR LOVED ONES

All are invited to light a candle from home. This is a candle of love - which cannot be extinguished by death – this light represents the person/persons we mourn.

MUSIC OF REMEMBRANCE

“SILENT NIGHT”

ELW 281

Silent Night, Holy Night!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!

Stil - le Nacht, heil - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,
 1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son - of God,

ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.
 all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
 at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
 love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,

Hol - der Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher
 Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
 heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
 with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your

Ruh, schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.
 peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
 born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792–1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885
 Music: STILLE NACHT, Franz Gruber, 1787–1863

CLOSING PRAYER OF HOPE

On this long dark night we await the coming of Christ. We long for the light of his presence, with us and in us. When our souls are deeply troubled, and our hearts break with the weight of sorrow, may our grief be seasoned with love, and our sorrow be buoyed by hope. In our times of God-forsakenness and estrangement, may we gaze on the Innocent One, made perfect through suffering, and see in him our vulnerable God,

who saves in weakness and pain. May our suffering empty us of pride, and lead us to true joy, our only security, in Christ the infinite depths of God's grace. Amen

Prayer (all): Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; 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

“LONGING FOR LIGHT, WE WAIT IN DARKNESS”

ELW 715

Christ, Be Our Light



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for
2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for
3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for
4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for
5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



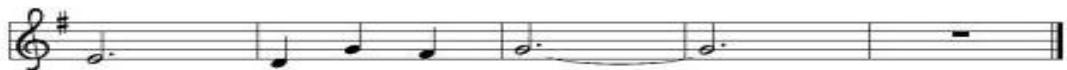
your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



Refrain
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957

Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, Bernadette Farrell

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***BENEDICTION**

You are a story who has to be told by God who so believes in you He moved right into you and keeps writing hope on all your impossible walls, who keeps raising the sun over you because He's intent on raising His dream for you, who keeps you, so you can keep on, and who will not let your story end till Glory has the last word. Period.

All – Thanks be to God.

***POSTLUDE**

“HE IS BORN”

FRENCH CAROL

This service is based on ones developed by the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor, MI and Virginia Theological Seminary. “The Call to Worship” was written by Thom Shuman and posted on Lectionary Liturgies (<http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca>). “The Confessional Prayer” was written by Quentin Chin, in *Our Longest Night: A Service of Hope at Christmas Time*, posted on the United Church of Christ website (<http://www.ucc.org>). The psalm text is from New Camaldoli Hermitage (Big Sur CA) and the final prayer is from The Book of Common Prayer used by the Episcopal Church.

Into This Silent Night

Into this silent night
As we make our weary way
We know not where;
Just when the night becomes its darkest
And we cannot see our path;
Just then is when the angels rush in,
Their hands full of stars.

– Ann Weems



