

Blue Christmas



Honor your loss
...embrace God's hope

A worship service of remembrance and hope

Wednesday, December 18 at noon

Trinity Lutheran Church

731 SW Buchanan

Blue Christmas: A Service of Light
December 18, 2024, 12:00 pm, Noon

WELCOME

P Welcome to this Blue Christmas, a time when we can, with others, acknowledge the “blue” feelings we have at Christmas time, the reasons for them, and offer them to God. This time has been called the “long dark night of the soul” and “the winter of our discontent” in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. We will invite you to reflect on the pain, the loneliness, and the sadness you may feel and offer it to God for healing and transformation. We have time set apart for remembrance and reflection, meditation, prayer and song. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone. Always remember that God knows your pain and loves you unconditionally.

GATHERING/CALL TO WORSHIP

P By God’s grace, we gather here together in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
We cry to the Lord who counts and collects our tears.

C Be with us now.

P In our grief and pain, our bodies and spirits cry out.

C Hear us, O Lord.

P Into all darkness, doubt, and despair,

C Come, Christ Jesus, be our light.

P Into all sorrow, sickness, and grief,

C Come, Christ Jesus, be our comfort.

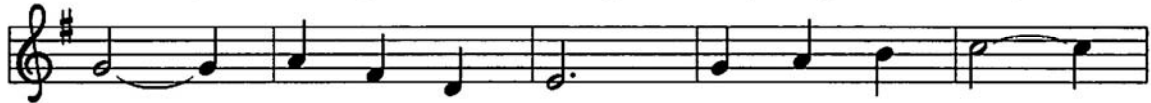
P To a wounded world and here in this place,

C Come, Christ be our hope.

P We gather today in reflection, trusting that Christ alone, through faith, is light enough in every darkness.



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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A Let us pray.

C The days are short. The nights are long. Lord, your universe mirrors the reality of our hearts, revealing your gracious spirit that mourns with us in grief, cries with us in sorrow, sits with us in despair. You are not a distant God, removed from human pain, but a faithful companion closer to us than our tears. Help us to feel your presence now as we remember and reflect, seeking your healing touch and the hope that was promised and delivered in Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

Please be seated.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

P We light these candles in thanksgiving for loved ones lost, for past health and joy that now seems distant.

We light these candles in prayer, that we will feel God's love in our present sorrow.

We light these candles in hope, for the promises of God yet to be revealed.

C Glory to God. Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 40:1, 25-31

P A reading from Isaiah, the 40th chapter.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

Look up to the heavens! Who made the stars, if not the One who brings out their host and numbers them, calling each one by its own name? So mighty is God's power and strength that not one fails to answer. Israel, why then do you complain that our God does not know your troubles or care if you suffer injustice? Our God, the everlasting God, the creator of the farthest parts of the ends of the earth, never grows tired or weary. No one can fathom the depths of God's understanding. God gives power to the faint and strength to the powerless.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

L The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM 22

All read the boldface verses together

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 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, you have been my God.

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and 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.

SECOND READING: ROMANS 8:35-39

P 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? 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.

L The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Refrain: Christ, Be Our Light

ELW 715

We sing the refrain as the assembly stands.

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.

P The Holy Gospel, according to John, the first chapter.

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL: JOHN 1:1-5, 10-14

P In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And 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.

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to you, O Christ.** *Please be seated.*

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

The first candle is lit.

P We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, those relationships, warm and loving, or complex and difficult. We remember each one. We name them in our hearts or out loud....

We give thanks for them and for their lives....

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.

C **We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.**

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 lit.

P We light this second candle to remember the pain of all of the losses we face that bring sadness and darkness to this time of year – 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, shalom.

C **We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.**

***O come thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily
To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

A period of silent reflection

The third candle is lit.

P 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.

C **We remember that though we have journeyed far, and while hope seemed forlorn, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.**

***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 lit.

P 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.

C **Let it speak to us of hope –**

–of being together in this place of healing and wholeness –

–of our companionship this night at the turning of the year –

**–of faith that we, and those we have loved and lost, are held eternally
in the hand of the One who brought light into being –**

–and who knows each one of us by name.

O come desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind

Bid then 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

LIGHTING OF INDIVIDUAL CANDLES

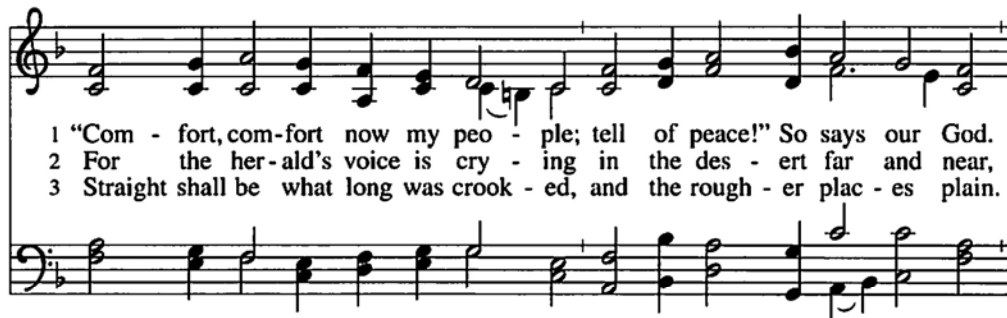
P Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. I invite each of you to offer your personal wound to the God who loves each of us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out: “Give me your pain, come to me... all who labor and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!”

I invite each of you to come forward and share your prayer silently with God as you light a candle or pray silently at your seat as music is played. You may also join in singing the hymns. This is a time of prayer, hope, and healing in the presence of “the light of all people,” the light darkness cannot overcome (John 1:4-5).

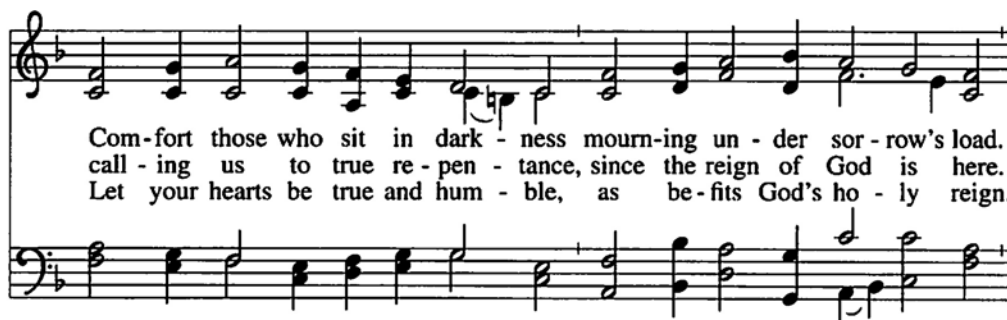
If you wish, you may kneel at the altar rail for the laying on of hands and a blessing, or you may return to your seat.

COMFORT, COMFORT NOW MY PEOPLE

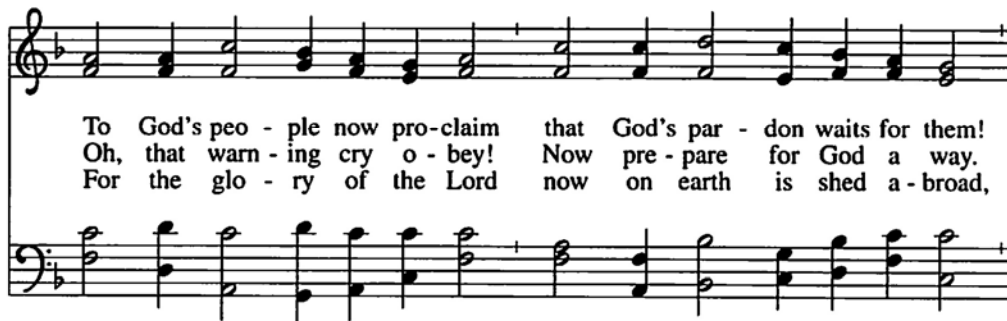
ELW 256



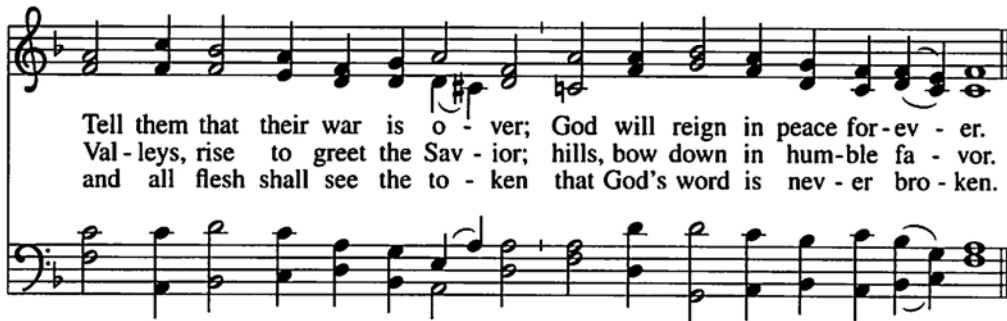
1 "Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.
 2 For the her-ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
 3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



Com-fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn-ing un - der sor - row's load.
 call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.
 Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be - fits God's ho - ly reign.



To God's peo - ple now pro-claim that God's par - don waits for them!
 Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.
 For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for-ev - er.
 Val - leys, rise to greet the Sav - ior; hills, bow down in hum-ble fa - vor.
 and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.



1 Un - ex - pect - ed and mys - te - rious is the gen - tle
 2 In a mo - men - tar - y meet - ing of e - ter - ni -
 3 We are called to pon - der mys - t'ry and a - wait the



word of grace. Ev - er - lov - ing and sus - tain -
 ty and time, Mar - y learned that she would car -
 com - ing Christ, to em - bod - y God's com - pas -



ing is the peace of God's em - brace. If we fal - ter
 ry both the mor - tal and di - vine. Then she learned of
 sion for each frag - ile hu - man life. God is with us



in our cour - age and we doubt what we have known, God is
 God's com - pas - sion, of E - liz - a - beth's great joy, and she
 in our long - ing to bring heal - ing to the earth, while we



faith - ful to con - sole us as a moth - er tends her own.
 ran to greet the wom - an who would rec - og - nize her boy,
 watch with joy and won - der for the prom - ised Sav - ior's birth.

EACH WINTER AS THE YEAR GROWS COLDER

ELW 252



1 Each win - ter as the year grows old - er, we each grow old - er,
 2 When race and class cry out for trea - son, when si - rens call for
 3 Yet I be - lieve be - yond be - liev - ing that life can spring from
 4 So e - ven as the sun is turn - ing to jour - ney to the
 5 O Child of ec - sta - sy and sor - rows, O Prince of peace and



too. The chill sets in a lit - tle cold - er; the
 war, they o - ver - shout the voice of rea - son and
 death, that growth can flow - er from our griev - ing, that
 north, the liv - ing flame, in se - cret burn - ing, can
 pain, bright - en to - day's world by to - mor - row's, re -



ver - i - ties we knew seem shak - en and un - true.
 scream till we ig - nore all we held dear be - fore.
 we can catch our breath and turn trans - fixed by faith.
 kin - dle on the earth and bring God's love to birth.
 new our lives a - gain; Lord Je - sus, come and reign!

1 Lost in the night do the peo - ple yet lan - guish,
 2 Must we be vain - ly a - wait - ing the mor - row?
 3 Sor - row - ing wan - d'ers, in dark - ness yet dwell - ing,
 4 Light o'er the land of the need - y is beam - ing;

long - ing for morn - ing the dark - ness to van - quish,
 Shall those who have light no light let us bor - row,
 dawned has the day of a ra - diance ex - cel - ling,
 riv - ers of life through its des - erts are stream - ing,

plain - tive - ly sigh - ing with hearts full of an - guish.
 giv - ing no heed to our bur - den of sor - row?
 death's deep - est shad - ows for - ev - er dis - pel - ling.
 bring - ing all peo - ples a Sav - ior re - deem - ing.

Will not day come soon? Will not day come soon?
 Will you help us soon? Will you help us soon?
 Christ is com - ing soon! Christ is com - ing soon!
 Come and save us soon! Come and save us soon!

P Let us pray together.

C **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.

You have given us strength to live through this night.

Turn us 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 suffer alone. Amen.

NIGHT OF SILENCE/SILENT NIGHT

ELW 281

*Cold are the people, winter of life, we tremble in shadows this cold endless night,
frozen in the snow lie roses sleeping, flowers that will echo the sunrise,
fire of hope is our only warmth, weary, its flame will be dying soon....*

Stil - le Nacht, hei - 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.

CHARGE AND BLESSING

The assembly may stand.

P May Jesus – the life that is light for all people – shine in your heart. No matter how small, no matter how dim, that light will stubbornly shine. And the darkness will not overcome it. Go in peace, with courage to face the coming days with hope, with God by your side.

C **Amen.**

SCRIPTURES

Psalm 121

I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep. Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe. The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth for ever more.

Matthew 11:28-30

‘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.’

Lamentations 3:19-24

“I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”

PRAYERS

C **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.**

L Lighten our darkness, we beseech 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.

C **Amen.**

L O God, we are facing a long dark night. We come burdened with grief, mental health challenges like depression, and loneliness.

C **We come seeking a place to set them down; a place where our words will be heard and our feelings honored.**

L 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.

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

L Let your compassion heal us in this moment.

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



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Website: trinitylutherantopeka.org

OFFICE HOURS

10:00AM-3:30PM, Monday through Thursday

Together in Community

Living with Christ

Caring for Neighbors

Together in Community

We are a faith community brought together to worship God and to be of service to the needs of the world as the Great Commandment is our guide in our lives (*Matthew 22:36-39, Mark 12:29-31, and Luke 10:26-27*). We are a congregation that seeks to reach all those in our county with members spread throughout Topeka area, while being rooted in Historic Old Town. In our faith, we hope to be a symbol of Christ's love in the world (*John 15:12*), to be a community of support and care (*Galatians 6:2*), and to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ came to be a Savior for all people (*Colossians 1:13-14*).

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

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Vice-President Curt Lewis (Maintenance)

Secretary Shelley Andrews (Administration)

Parker Jackson (Administration)

Steve Luoma (Community Relations)

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