

Blue Christmas

December 18, 2011



"...light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

– **John 1:5** –

TRINITY UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH
658 Grand Avenue, Waukegan IL 60085

Blue Christmas Worship

Trinity United Lutheran Church

4:00 p.m.

Christmas can be a painful time for some. It may be the first Christmas without a loved family member who has recently died; it may be a time that has always been difficult. The constant refrains on radio and television, in shopping malls and churches, about the happiness of the season, about getting together with family and friends, reminds many people of what they have lost. The anguish of the death of a loved one can make us feel alone in the midst of the celebrating and joy. We need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness; we need to know that we are not alone. We need encouragement to live the days ahead of us.

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Pastor: Something deep, mysterious, and healing happens when we choose to worship God in the midst of our feelings of loss, or pain, or despair. When we choose to open that door to God, He comes in. When we carve out a little space, He enters in. When we pause, when we let our feelings be what they are, when we have enough courage to face pain, God joins us in our grief. And He begins to heal. "O rest, beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing." Tonight is about making that choice, and making space for us to feel, to find God feeling with us, and then to know God's healing presence.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: In the midst of a world where grief and pain abound . . .

Response: come worship a God who took on flesh and joins us in our hurt.

Pastor: In the midst of a world where people hunger and thirst . . .

Response: come worship a God who feeds the hungry.

Pastor: In the midst of a world where people are abused and oppressed . . .

Response: come worship a God who calls for compassion and justice.

Pastor: In the midst of a world filled with wars and rumor of war . . .

Response: come worship a God who desires nothing less than peace for the world.

Pastor: In the midst of a world of spiritual emptiness . . .

Response: come worship a God who gives life meaning.

Pastor: Come worship a God whose grace and love know no end.

-adapted from Sacraments and Seasons: Peacemaking Through Worship from Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. Call 800-524-2612 to order.

OPENING HYMN – “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men
From heavens all gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow;
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
Oh rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing.

AN ALTERNATE ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING:

Pastor: The first candle we light is to recall the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the losses of aging, the loss of jobs, the loss of health, the loss of dreams, perhaps even the loss of hope. We reflect on our losses and offer them to you, O Lord, asking that you grant us your peace.

silent reflection

Pastor: You are the light of the world

Response: Be light in our darkness, O Lord.

Pastor: The second candle we light is to remember the pain of grief and those whom we have loved and lost. We recall their names, their faces, their voices and the life we shared. We bring our memories and our sadness to you, O Lord, asking that you comfort those who grieve.

silent reflection

Pastor: You are the light of the world

Response: Be light in our darkness, O Lord.

Pastor: The third candle we light is to express the heaviness of our burdens, our hurts, our fears, our memories, our disbelief, our struggles that we carry in our day to day lives. We come to you with our burdens, O Lord, asking that you give us rest.

silent reflection

Pastor: You are the light of the world

Response: Be light in our darkness, O Lord.

Pastor: The fourth candle we light is to remember the pain of lives touched by darkness - those who live in poverty, those who are homeless, those who struggle with addiction, those who are imprisoned, those who live with fear, violence and war. We bring this darkness to you, O Lord, asking for wisdom and courage to act, and strength and hope for those who suffer.

silent reflection

Pastor: You are the light of the world.

Response: Be light in our darkness, O Lord.

Pastor: The fifth candle we light is the Christ candle. We light this candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope that is the essence of Christmas. We remember that God came to be with us, that we are promised the Holy Spirit, a faithful presence even in the deepest darkness. We bring you thanks, O Lord for the glimmers of your hope and your love that have shone in our lives through those who care and walk with us, reminding us of your presence.

silent reflection

Pastor: You are the light of the world

Response: Be light in our darkness, O Lord.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Lord, you are a present help in trouble. Come revive. Redeem. Restore. In our darkness, come as light. In our sadness, come as joy. In our troubles, come as peace. In our weakness, come as strength. Come, Lord, to our aid. Revive. Redeem. Restore us. O Lord, Open our eyes to your presence. Open our minds to your grace. Open our lips to your praises. Open our hearts to your love. Open our lives to your healing And be found among us.

--David Adam, "Help in Trouble" in *Tides and Seasons*

PRAYER OF LAMENT

Pastor: There are times when life is good and beautiful, and celebration is appropriate. But there are also times of distress and loss. During those times we sing sad songs of lament, protest and complaint about the chaos and harshness that life can sometimes be for us. We often feel afraid, angry, ashamed. Putting words to this season can often be difficult. But we do this together in our address to God, and we hear a model for these complaints in the Psalms.

PSALM 13, 74 and 79 (NIV)

Pastor: Do not hold against us the sins of past generations; may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need. Help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake. Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"

Response: Sometimes our world seems dark and we feel alone.

We grasp for help, often seeking solutions that end up hurting us even more. Hear our cry, O God of mercy.

Pastor: How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

**Response: Sometimes things fall apart; we are hurt and confused.
We look for guidance and turn to those who lead us astray.
See our dilemma, O Lord of hope!**

Pastor: Have regard for your covenant, because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land. Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name. Rise up, O God, and defend your cause; remember how fools mock you all day long. Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries, the uproar of your enemies, which rises continually.

**Response: We are tempted to trust only ourselves; we are angry and fearful.
We call on you, even demand that you hear our prayers.
For you are the one who created us.**

PSALM 13:3–6 (NIV)

Pastor: Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

**Response: We come to you O Lord, seeking answers to our questions.
We come to you O God, because you are the Creator.**

Pastor: But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.

**Response: We come looking for a song to sing;
We wait for your voice to call us from beyond our fear.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE – Psalm 46:1–5

Pastor: God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.^[c]

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.

God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

WORDS OF JESUS – Luke 2:1-7

In 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.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“There’s Still My Joy”

MEDITATION

Pastor Richard Grudt

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Pastor: God of star and song:
You created a world with darkness and light,
and gave us the sun to warm us by day and the stars to guide us at night.
You are forever bringing light into our darkness.
Even when we shun the light,
You send midnight messengers who weave your words into our dreams
and you stir up angelic choruses which cause us to rejoice.
Therefore, with all the prophets who called us back to the light,
and with all the people and creatures of earth and all the company of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.
Holy are You and blessed is your son Jesus Christ.
He came that we might see our way even in the darkness of life,
and hear his call through the stories of our lives.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

All are invited to join hands while praying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION FOR COMMUNION, CANDLE LIGHTING & PRAYER:

If you so desire, please come forward via the center aisle in order to receive communion, light a candle, and/or to have a time of private prayer with Pastor Rich.

Instructions:

For communion: Pause at the communion station. Break off a piece of bread, dip the edge in the cup, and partake. Proceed to light candles and/or move to one of the prayer stations. Return to your pew via the side aisles.

For candle lighting: Receive communion or proceed directly to the candle lighting tables. Use a taper to light a candle to remember a loved one, a loss, or a hope. Proceed to one of the prayer stations or simply return to your pew via the side aisles.

For private prayer: Proceed to one of the four prayer stations, located at the front altar and at the front corners of the sanctuary (transepts). You may kneel, stand or sit as you wait for a pastor who will pray with you. Return to your pew via the side aisles.

During Communion and prayer: **“The Hills Are Bare at Bethlehem”,
arr. by David Johnson – Joshua Langhoff**

PRAYER FOR OTHERS, FOR OURSELVES

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT (“First Coming” by Madeleine L’Engle)

Pastor: God did not wait till the world was ready, till...nations were at peace.

People: **God came when the Heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release.**

Pastor: God did not wait for our perfect time.

People: **God came when the need was deep and great. God dined with sinners in all their grime, turned water into wine.**

Pastor: God did not wait till hearts were pure.

People: **In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt. To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came and God's Light would not go out.**

Pastor: God came to a world which did not mesh; to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

People: **In the mystery of the Word made Flesh, the maker of the stars was born.**

Pastor: We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice, or to share our grief, to touch our pain,

People: **God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!**

BENEDICTION **The Irish Blessing** (in unison)

**May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and the rains fall soft upon your fields;
and until we meet again,
May you be held in the warmth of God's hand. Amen.**

HYMN **"O Little Town of Bethlehem"**

**O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.**

**O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
oh, come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!**

POSTLUDE

**"Comfort, Comfort, Now My People" arr. Paul Manz
Joshua Langhoff**

Any offering may be left in the plate in the front of the church.

Blue Christmas

This year will be nothing like
those that came before.
There won't be carols
a banquet or gifts
just vacant space
where we once talked
where we once laughed.

I call my relatives
in pursuit of a kind word
They aren't familiar with
the distance in my voice

Although they lost him too
they still can find cheer
Why can't I smile like them?
Does my mourning make me broken
like the antique angel with the cracking face
atop the Christmas tree?

You watch my every tear
melting away the snow
you wept with me at the wake
among the funeral flowers

And though my house is empty
I never was truly alone
for not even the ice
that slickens the porch stairs
could freeze your heart, my lord.
You call to me
in the silence
"Do not be afraid, I am with you."

This poem was written by Sami Martasian, a high school freshman in North Kingstown, RI

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Presiding Minister
Organist/Keyboard

Reverend Richard Grudt
Joshua Langhoff

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship:

Saturday, December 24 at 4:30 p.m.

Family Worship with Holy Communion and Special Children's Message

Christmas Day Worship:

Sunday, December 25 at 9:30 a.m.

New Year's Day Worship:

Sunday, January 1, 2012 at 9:30 a.m.

Worship & Communion



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