

# ***Light in the Darkness***

## **Blue Christmas Service**

### **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

*The service starts with sitting still, listening to music followed by a brief welcome.*

In the lonely places  
The wilderness  
Where we stand forlorn  
Windswept and alone  
Your voice calls out

**All Prepare a way for the Lord**

In the dark places  
The shadows  
Where we hide our fears  
Embrace our tears  
Your voice calls out

**All Prepare a way for the Lord**

We have gathered, near the longest night of the year as people for whom Christmas might be difficult – those for whom Elvis Presley sung it's going to be a blue Christmas.

For many of us loved ones who have died have been such a large part of Christmases in the past that we need to acknowledge the gap that they have left in our lives at this special time.

For others the pain of broken relationships may be why we are here tonight. For some of us life is already stressed, without the additional expectations and busyness and expense of Christmas and need some "time out".

Some of us have health concerns, for ourselves or someone we are close to. All of us need the hope and peace that the Christ-child can bring, and to know that we are not alone.

Our prayer is that as you experience this service tonight, and as you think about the Christmas message, you'll find comfort and hope. That you discover the light in the darkness.

Come, God-with-us:  
**All** who braves our rejection and hurt,  
who holds us in acceptance and love.

Come God-for-us:  
**All** who whispers in our ears  
that each of us are beloved children.

Come God-under-us:  
**All** who cradles us in arms that never grow weary;  
whose lap has room for all.

Come, God-over-us:  
**All** who watches in the long silence of the night,  
that we might rest in peace.

Come, God-beside-us:  
**All** who steadies us when we falter,  
who lifts us up when we fall.

Come, God-behind-us:  
**All** who picks up all the faded dreams we drop along the way,  
and patchworks them into hope.

Come, God-with-us, Emmanuel,  
**All** let your light shine in our darkness.

*The central candle on our Advent wreath is lit.*

**Musical meditation: O Come, O Come Emmanuel**

**Bible reading: Isaiah 40:1, 25-31**

Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.  
“To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.  
Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?  
He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

Why do you complain, Jacob?  
Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?  
Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.  
He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.  
Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

**Carol: *Silent Night***

**All** 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

Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight!  
Glories stream from heaven afar;  
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!  
Christ the Saviour is born!  
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night, holy night  
Son of God, oh, 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

## The Empty Chair

This empty chair represents those who won't be home for Christmas. Perhaps a relationship has ended, perhaps the people we love will be far away, perhaps sickness or death has changed how things used to be...

*Silence is kept*

### Lighting the first Advent Candle: Love

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours. Please take a moment to remember those who have died and those whom we see no longer...

Thank you Lord, for the gift each of these people has been in our lives. We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again, when we are all in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come. Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us. Comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness. God of sorrowing, draw near!

**All**    **A candle is burning, a candle of Love;  
A candle to point us to heaven above.  
Our loved ones are safe there, in God's tender care;  
One day he will call us to live with them there.**

*(sung to the tune Away in a Manger)*

### Song – The Empty Chair

*(Performed by Sara Raybould, Ann and Mike Lovatt)*

At this time of year we're waiting  
To celebrate the new born child  
He was born the King of Kings  
So, innocent and meek and mild  
Dear God you blessed your people  
Sent us your Son to save mankind.

*Hallelujah, Christ our saviour  
Fill our hearts and light our way  
Strengthen our faith and bring us closer  
Show us the joy in every day.*

At this time we all remember  
Those who rest in God's good care  
Give us strength in times of sorrow  
Gazing upon an empty chair  
Just like Jesus they are with us  
Loving and guiding, always there.

*Hallelujah, Christ our saviour  
Fill our hearts and light our way  
Strengthen our faith and bring us closer  
Show us the joy in every day.* (Repeat)

Heavenly Father hear our prayer  
Bless all those now in your care.

*Hallelujah, Christ our saviour  
Fill our hearts and light our way  
Strengthen our faith and bring us closer  
Show us the joy in every day.* (Repeat)

### **Lighting the second outer candle: Peace**

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith. As we gather up the pain of the past we offer it to you, God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace. Please take a moment to remember the losses in our lives...

God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and ever keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection. We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious. We forget so easily that you will be with us in all that we experience. Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives and to be open to the changes which we are now going through.

**All A candle is burning, a candle of Peace;  
A candle to signal that our tears will cease.  
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;  
A message of Peace humbly laid in the hay.**

*(sung to the tune Away in a Manger)*

## Lighting the third outer candle: Joy

Joy is deep contentment of knowing we're in the right place, on the right path. The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives. For nations lacking wise leadership, and the resulting conflicts.

God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide...

Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction and grant that we may have the reassurance of knowing that we are on the right path. Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you.

**All**    **A candle is burning, a candle of Joy;  
A candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy.  
For Jesus declared he's the life, truth and way,  
Who walks our road with us in hope every day.**

*(sung to the tune Away in a Manger)*

## Reflection Music – O Holy Night

### Lighting the fourth outer candle: Hope

The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God shares our life, as the word made flesh and knows what it is to be human.

Where there is love in life, teach us to find it; help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love. So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others. We ask it, in the name of Jesus Christ whose life is our light.

**All**    **A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;  
A candle of hope in December's dark night.  
While angels sing blessings from heav'n's starry sky  
Our hearts we prepare now, for Jesus is nigh**

*(sung to the tune Away in a Manger)*

## **Focussing on the central candle**

Standing here in the centre of the candles that represent some of life's joy and pain, this central candle represents Jesus who has come to be Emmanuel, God with us, in the midst of it all.

Jesus who was born as a helpless baby – and who hears our cries, and understands how weak and helpless we can feel.

Jesus the good shepherd, who knows our hearts and offers us healing and hope in the midst of our suffering. Who came to help us understand just how much God loves us. And who lived and died to restore our relationship with our heavenly father.

Jesus who will reign as King over God's new creation, where there will be no more sickness or death or crying or pain for all eternity. And who has given us his Holy Spirit to help, comfort and guide us as we seek to follow him here on earth and wait for his glorious return.

## **Song – Grown-up Christmas List**

Do you remember me  
I sat upon your knee  
I wrote to you with childhood fantasies  
Well I'm all grown up now  
Can You still help somehow?  
I'm not a child but my heart still can dream.

So here's my lifelong wish  
My grown up Christmas list  
Not for myself but for a world in need.

No more lives torn apart  
That wars would never start  
And time would heal all hearts.  
Ev'ry man would have a friend,  
that right would always win  
And love would never end.  
This is my grown up Christmas list

What is this illusion called  
the innocence of youth  
Maybe only in our blind belief,  
can we ever find the truth.

There'd be no more lives torn apart  
That wars would never start  
And time would heal all hearts  
Every man would have a friend  
that right would always win,  
And love would never end.

This is my grown up Christmas list  
This is my only lifelong wish  
This is my grown up Christmas list

### **Lighting of candles and creating a heart wreath**

Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. I want to 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 labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you."

I invite each of you to come forward and light your candle. As you light the candle, remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close until we are able to shine.

You may also wish to write a word or a name of someone or something special to you on your heart card, and to come up and place it on our heart wreath. Remember that God hears our prayers and holds us all in his love.

*After candles have been lit and hearts placed on the wreath, silence is kept.*

These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

**All** **Come, Lord, come down, come in, come among us.**  
**Enter into our darkness with your light.**  
**Come fill our emptiness with your presence.**  
**Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory.**  
**Come refresh, renew, restore us.**  
**Come Lord, come down, come in, come among us.**  
**Amen.**

## Time of Prayer

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, come to your people;

**All In your mercy, set us free.**

Unlooked for, Christ comes.

Loving God, we pray for our community.

In the midst of our everyday lives,

surprise us with glimpses of your glorious, humble love  
at the heart of existence.

Lord, come to your people;

**All In your mercy, set us free.**

Longed for, Christ comes.

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

As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown  
and wrapped itself around our hearts.

In this season where the darkness seems unyielding,

we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts.

Lord, come to your people;

**All In your mercy, set us free.**

Loving God, we pray for those whose lives are hard and painful,  
or whose existence is sorrowful, bitter or empty.

In their need, may they know your healing touch

that reaches out to comfort, strengthen and restore.

Lord, come to your people;

**All In your mercy, set us free.**

Loving God, grant to all,

especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas,

the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus,

who taught us to pray,

**All 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,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

**Hymn: *Make me a channel of your peace***

**All** **Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;  
Where there is injury your pardon, Lord;  
And where there's doubt true faith in you.**

*Oh, Master grant that I may never seek  
So much to be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

**Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope;  
Where there is darkness, only light;  
And where there's sadness, ever joy.**

***Refrain***

**Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
In giving to all men that we receive;  
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.**

**Final blessing**

Lord,  
In the beginning  
when all was very dark,  
you said: Let there be light.  
And there was light  
and life throughout the universe.

And when the human race was exhausted,  
tired and weary,  
in the darkness of anxiety, confusion and sin,  
into that darkness you came  
as light in Jesus Christ.  
God became a human being among us all.

Come, once again, Light of Life,  
lighten the darkness in our lives with your mighty word of love.  
Lighten our hearts with the joy of your promised coming.  
Lighten our world with the hope that faith in you brings.

We travel towards Christmas Day in the peace of Jesus Christ.  
May his peace,  
that lightens the soul with faith,  
lifts the spirit with hope,  
and transforms the world with love,  
be yours tonight and always.

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and all whom you love,  
this Christmas time, in your darkest moments, now and always.

**All Amen.**

May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us through this darkness.

**All That together we may shine again. Amen.**

*Please feel free to stay for as long as you need.  
You may wish to write your own prayer on the gift tags and place them on  
the tree or use the heart wreath if you didn't do so earlier.*

*You are welcome to join us for wine and nibbles in the Church Room.*

*Rev Joe, the Churchwardens and members of Holy Trinity Church send  
you their prayers and blessings for the Christmas season.*