

A Blue Christmas Service

Order of Worship for the Evening with Holy Eucharist

December 7, 2021



A Blue Christmas service is one which creates the space for people to safely acknowledge their “blue” feelings during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

For many the holidays are painful as we remember the deaths of loved ones, grapple with life transitions, or experience loneliness. It can be difficult to experience these feelings when everyone around us seems full of joy and togetherness. Sometimes it can feel as though we are bringing down our friends or community by not joining in with the happy feelings. This can further increase feelings of loneliness and grief.

Blue Christmas services are often held on December 21, the longest night of the year. They can take many forms, including Eucharists, healing services, acts of remembrance, and prayer services. Many include hymns and readings appropriate for Advent.

The hope of a Blue Christmas service is to be a time in which the feelings of loss, sorrow, grief, and loneliness are able to be named and allowed in community, while creating the space for God to enter in and offer comfort and healing.

Thank you for joining us. We hope that you find comfort and rest here tonight.

Many thanks to the Rev. Radha Kaminski and the Rev. Terry Pierce for sharing this liturgy, first held in December 2018 at Christ Chapel, Seminary of the Southwest.

OPENING ACCLAMATION

Celebrant: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

***People:* Thanks be to God**

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Almighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us, as daylight fades, with the brightness of the vesper light; and we implore you of your great mercy that, as you enfold us with the radiance of this light, so you would shine into our hearts the brightness of your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Silence is kept during the lighting of the candles.

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

***People:* And also with you.**

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING | A Reading from Isaiah 9:2-6

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

***People:* Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 121 (in unison)

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

THE HOLY GOSPEL | Matthew 11:28-30

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

“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.”

Celebrant: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

HOMILY

The Rev. Lucy Strandlund

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Intercessor: In thankfulness at the nearness of Christ, let us offer our prayers to God, responding "And in your mercy, answer."

Intercessor: May the power of God's holy presence clear a path through the rubble of broken lives and hearts to make our world and all of us a new creation. God, hear our prayer.

People: **And in your mercy, answer.**

Intercessor: May our gracious God be always for us a shepherd to console and comfort us, to nourish all our deep hungers, and to make us live in peace forever. God, hear our prayer.

People: **And in your mercy, answer.**

Intercessor: May we come to find in the desert of our lives the gift of forgiveness and the waters of a new Jordan that bring cleansing and refreshment. God, hear our prayer.

People: **And in your mercy, answer.**

Intercessor: May the God who is our comfort hear the cries of all in need. God, hear our prayer.

People: **And in your mercy, answer.**

Intercessor: May all who have gone before us be ever at peace and may we remain faithful to the end and live forever in the light of your eternal glory. God, hear our prayer.

People: **And in your mercy, answer.**

Intercessor: May the God who is our future in the gift of Jesus Christ hold us always in the embrace of faithful love and bring us to new heavens and a new earth. God, hear our prayer.

People: **And in your mercy, answer.**

Celebrant: For the deepest hopes of our hearts, we pray now. Remembering especially...

At this time we invite you to reflect on names, sorrows, fears, hopes, and prayers you carry with you tonight and offer those up to God.

Celebrant: God of great compassion and love, hear the cries of these your people for ourselves and for the world. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of the one who came, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

CONFESSION OF SIN

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins to God.

***People:* God of all mercy, we confess that we have sinned against you, opposing your will in our lives. We have denied your goodness in each other, in ourselves, and in the world you have created. We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf. Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ, that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.**

The priest says,

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

Celebrant: The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

***People:* And also with you.**

THE OFFERTORY

Celebrant: All things come of thee, O Lord.

***People:* And of thine own have we given thee.**

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER 2

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Celebrant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

***People:* And also with you.**

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

***People:* We lift them up to the Lord.**

Celebrant: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Blessed are you, Father of compassion and God of all comfort. Out of the depths we call to you, still offering our praise with a voice of thanksgiving: because you sent your beloved Son to become truly human, experiencing the pain and sorrow of our lives, and to redeem us from sin and death, making us heirs in him of everlasting life; that we may enter into that kingdom wherein you will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and mourning and crying and pain will be no more. And so we join the saints and angels in proclaiming your glory, as we say,

**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.

We thank you, Father of mercies, for your continual care of the people you created and call into new life with you. You comforted our ancestors in their sorrow, and when we had strayed far from you, you sent Jesus, your Son, to humble himself and walk among us, offering healing for the sick, tears for the grieving, and new life for the dead. He became obedient to death, so that by the grace of God he could taste death for everyone.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Recalling now his suffering and death, and celebrating his resurrection and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Accept, O Lord, our sacrifice of praise, this memorial of our redemption.

Send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts. Let them be for us the Body and Blood of your Son.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us also, that we may see your hand in the world around us and in our own lives. Help us to come to this table for solace and strength, for pardon and renewal, and for unity and freedom, that we may be healed for service in your name.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Celebrant: Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

***People:* Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God.

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION *(for those participating via live-stream)*

Faithful God, in the wonder of your wisdom and love you fed your people in the wilderness with the bread of angels, and you sent Jesus to be the bread of life. Though I cannot consume these gifts of bread and wine, I thank you that I have received the sacrament of Christ's presence, the forgiveness of sins, and all other benefits of Christ's passion. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may I be renewed to love and to serve; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Celebrant: Let us pray.

***People:* Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

BLESSING

May the God who goes before you through desert places by night and by day be your companion and guide; may your journey be with the saints; may the Holy Spirit be your strength, and Christ your clothing of light, in whose name we pray. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you this day and remain with you always. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Celebrant: Let us bless the Lord.

***People:* Thanks be to God**

Please depart in silence. You are welcome to remain in prayer or come forward to receive unction.

The Prayers of the People are adapted from *Intercessions for the Christian People*, "Second Sunday of Advent B", The Liturgical Press.

The Confession and Absolution are taken from *Enriching Our Worship 1*, Church Publishing.

The Eucharistic Prayer is written by the Rev. Radha Kaminski following the Form II of an Order of Worship for Communion in the Book of Common Prayer.