

# ***Blue Christmas***



*If you have come through a painful experience that hurt you in body, mind, or spirit, come and light your candle of hope and place it on the cross of Jesus Christ.*

*Let Christmas be a time of joy a celebration of the birth of our Saviour. He is the light of our lives, and he is always in the centre of his people.*

## *Words of Welcome*

### *Call to Worship:*

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God.

[Isaiah 9:2,4]

### *Opening Prayer:*

One: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and our families who live with the painful memory of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise.

All: **Amen.**

## *Special Music or Hymn*

### *Scripture Reading – Isaiah 40:1-2a, 25-31:*

*Our first scripture reading comes from the Book of Isaiah. It was written in a time when many of the people of Judah had been taken as captives into exile in Babylon and were feeling crushed and without hope.*

“Comfort, comfort my people,” says our God. “Encourage the people of Jerusalem and tell them that their time of suffering has ended. With whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?” asks the Holy One. “Look up to the heavens! Who made the stars, if not the One who leads them out like an army, 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 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. Even youths become exhausted and young ones give up. But they that wait upon the Lord all renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

### ***Responsive Psalm 121***

- One: I will lift up mine eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?  
 All: **My help comes from God who made heaven and earth.**  
 One: God will not suffer your foot to be moved. The one who keeps you will not slumber.  
 All: **Behold the one who keeps Israel shall not slumber nor sleep.**  
 One: The Holy One is your keeper. The Holy One is your shade on your right hand.  
 All: **The sun shall not hurt you by day nor the moon by night.**  
 One: Our God shall preserve you from all evil and shall preserve your soul.  
 All: **Our God shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.**

### ***Carol or Hymn***

#### ***Gospel Reading – John 1***

*Matthew and Luke describe Jesus' birth in Bethlehem with stories of visits from shepherds and Magi. But John's gospel speaks of Jesus as God's word for all humanity, as God's word spoken through this one born into a hurting world. He also describes Jesus' birth as light in our darkness.*

“Before the world was created, the Word already existed; the Word was with God and was the same as God. From the beginning the Word was with God. Through the Word, God made all things. Not one thing in all creation was made without the Word. The Word contained life and this life brought light to all people. The light shines on in the darkness and the darkness has never overpowered it. The true light that enlightens all people was coming into the world.

And the Word was made flesh and lived among us; and we saw his glory, full of grace and truth.”

### ***Message***

#### ***Responding to God's Word – A Liturgy of Remembering***

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

All: **May God's eternal love surround them.**

One: 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 will receive the gift of peace.

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

One: This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and months; the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stood 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.**

One: 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.**

### **Lighting a Candle of Hope**

One: In the centre, we light the Christ candle, remembering that Jesus Christ is always in the centre of our lives. He hears our cries; He knows our hearts, and in the midst of all our thoughts and emotions, He offers us hope and healing.

*(The Christmas candle is lit).*

All: **Comforting God, wrap us in your presence in this time of remembrance. With these candles, help us find your light; a light that will guide us day by day, step by step, as we try to live life fully and wholly. Now comfort us, encourage us, empower us. Amen.**

*(People come forward on the left to light a candle and place it on the cross, circle around and return on the right side).*



*Prayer*

One: Gentle God, thank you for your constant love. Help us to remember that you long to comfort and hold us. Help us to listen for your voice in the words of friends, family, and strangers. Help us learn to redefine ourselves as we seek to respond in positive ways to changes. Thank you for the life you have given us and the assurance that we are your people. May the candles we have lit tonight be symbolic of the light of your constant love. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

All: **May we be gentle with ourselves, remembering that we are created in the image of God. May we go into the world with honesty and thanksgiving, embracing tears, laughter, and all that is good. Amen.**

*Benediction and Dismissal:*

One: May the protection of God comfort us; may the courage of Jesus sustain us; and may the tenderness of the Spirit embrace us.

All: **Amen.**

One: Let us go in peace.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

*Closing Hymn*