

Blue Christmas

Blue Christmas/Longest Night Service *Service begins in silent meditation*

Opening

L: From the one who was, who is and who is to come: Grace and peace be with you all.

C: *And also with you.*

L: In the center of our worship, we light the Christ candle, remembering that Jesus Christ is always in the center 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.

C: Amen.

Light the Christ Candle

Greeting

L: The love of our Lord Jesus Christ, the warmth of God and the hope of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

ELW #294 - In the Bleak Midwinter

Thanksgiving of light

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

L: We give you thanks, O God for in the beginning you called light into being, and you set lights in the sky to govern night and day. In a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night you led your people into freedom. Enlighten our darkness by the light of your Christ; may your Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are merciful, and you love your whole creation and with all your creatures we give you glory, through your Son Jesus Christ, in unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

C: *Amen*

Psalm 27

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

²When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh— my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall.

³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.

⁴One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.

⁶Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!

⁸“Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!” Your face, LORD, do I seek.

⁹Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

¹⁰If my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up.

¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

¹²**Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing out violence.**

¹³I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

¹⁴**Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!**

Prayer

L: Creator of the stars of night, bless the long hours of this night with the warmth of your presence. Come to all who suffer in any way. Grant rest to the weary, freedom to those who are burdened, and bring hope to those who despair. Strengthen us as we await your coming once again, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

The Word

First Reading - Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ⁶A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

The word of the Lord Thanks be to God.

Hymn #256 Comfort, Comfort Now My People - Verses 1 & 2

Second Reading – Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

The word of the Lord Thanks be to God.

Hymn #253 – He Came Down

Third Reading - John 1:1-5,14

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. ¹⁴And 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.

The word of the Lord Thanks be to God.

Prayers and Candle lighting

L: We light four candles tonight in remembrance of our loved ones, for our pain and sorrow, for our regrets and for the challenges we face in life. We light these candles for our needs. We light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories and one for our love.

Candle 1: This candle represents our Grief. We own the pain of losing loved ones, of dreams that go unfulfilled, of hopes that evaporate in despair.

After candle is lit, a brief silence follows

Candle 2: This candle represents our courage. It symbolizes the courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to share our feelings honestly and openly with each other, and to dare to hope in the midst of pain.

After candle is lit, a brief silence follows

Candle 3: This candle represents our memories. For the times we laughed together, cried together, were angry at each other or overjoyed with each other. We light this candle for the memories of caring and joy we shared together.

After candle is lit, a brief silence follows

Candle 4: This candle represents our love. The love we have given, and the love we have received. The love that has gone unacknowledged and unfelt, and the love that has been shared in times of joy and sorrow.

After candle is lit, a brief silence follows

L: Let us pray. Comforting God, wrap us in your presence in this time. With these candles, help us find your light, a light that will guide us as we try to live life serving you, fully and wholly. We thank you for the gift our lives and all lives that touch us each everyday. Now comfort us. Encourage us. Empower us.

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

L: May God bless you and keep you.

May God' holy darkness enfold you and grant your rest.

May God nourish a seed of hope in you.

In the name of the Father, + the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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C: Amen.

Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus ELW #254