

## Blue Christmas

*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 love one can make us feel alone in the midst of 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.*

*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.*

### MEDITATION

*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, thou hast broken in pieces O God.*

-Isaiah 9:2, 4

### PRELUDE

Linda Hill, Harpist

### GREETING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And so we invite each other to this time of peaceful worship.  
Tonight we come looking for the Christ child.

**People: We come, bringing our hurts, our worries and our fears.**

Leader: We come seeking relief from pain, anxiety, loneliness and despair. With the psalmist of the Scriptures we say,

**People: "O Lord, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living,  
Give heed to my cry, for I am low."**

**All: We come tonight to rest in God.**

### OPENING PRAYER

**God of Mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent Season for ourselves and our families who hold painful memories of loss, grief, separation or crippling stress. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of the Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promises. Amen.**

### LITANY OF REMEMBERING

Leader: This first candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memory that binds them to us in this season.

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

[A moment of silence.]

Leader: This second candle we light to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.

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

[A moment of silence.]

Leader: 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. We give thanks for all the support we have known.

**People: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.**

[A moment of silence.]

Leader: This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God who shares our life promises has for us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

**People: Let us remember the one who shows the way, who brings the truth and who bears the life.**

[A moment of silence.]

SCRIPTURE READING

BRENT'S SCRIPTURE

MEDITATION

Rev. Brent Ross

SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 88

MEDITATION

REV. SUSAN GREGG-SCHROEDER

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Leader: The God of strength moves within us;

**People: the God of courage hears our distress.**

Leader : The God of hope reveals wholeness to us;

**People: the God of healing touches us when we are broken.**

Leader : When the pain overwhelms us, when the burden is too heavy,

**People: we turn to our God, who is sustaining and redeeming.**

Leader :When there is loneliness, when there is isolation,

**People: we turn to our God, who is loving and present.**

Leader :For God created us, redeemed us and sustains us, and we are not alone.

**All: Lead us in your ways, O God, and bring us your healing touch. Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Linda Hill, Harpist

## THANKSGIVING OVER THE OIL

*THOSE WHO WISH TO BE ANOINTED WITH OIL ARE INVITED TO COME FORWARD. YOU MAY BRIEFLY STATE YOUR PRAYER REQUEST. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS WILL THEN BE MADE ON YOUR FOREHEAD WITH OIL. THE WORDS SPOKEN WILL BE, "I ANOINT YOU WITH THE OIL IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT." YOUR RESPONSE IS "AMEN." AFTER ANOINTING YOU ARE INVITED TO KNEEL AT THE ALTAR FOR PERSONAL PRAYER. LIGHT A BLUE CANDLE AND RETURN TO YOUR SEAT FOR A TIME OF SILENT PRAYER.*

LET US PRAY.

**O GOD, THE GIVER OF HEALTH AND SALVATION, WE GIVE THANKS TO YOU FOR THE GIFT OF OIL. AS YOUR HOLY APOSTLES ANOINTED MANY WHO WERE SICK OF BODY AND SPIRIT, SO POUR OUT YOUR HOLY SPIRIT ON US AND ON THIS GIFT, THAT THOSE WHO IN FAITH AND REPENTANCE RECEIVE THIS ANOINTMENT MAY BE MADE WHOLE; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.**

PRAYER AFTER ANOINTING

**ALMIGHTY GOD, WE PRAY THAT OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS MAY BE COMFORTED IN THEIR SUFFERING AND MADE WHOLE. WHEN THEY FEEL AFRAID, GIVE THEM COURAGE; WHEN THEY FEEL AFFLICTED, AFFORD THEM PATIENCE; WHEN THEY ARE LOST, OFFER THEM HOPE; WHEN THEY ARE ALONE, MOVE US TO THEIR SIDE. IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST WE PRAY, AMEN.**

**HYMN OF GOING FORTH : SILENT NIGHT**

No. 239

*UNITED METHODIST HYMNAL*

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**

Linda Hill, Harpist

*You are invited to remain in the sanctuary as long as you want following the service. If you wish to speak privately to someone as you leave, there will be persons available in the chapel and the bride's room.*