



**December 17th, 2022
2:00 pm**

Blue Christmas

**A service of music, prayer and light
to light the darkness**

If you are joining us for the first time, welcome!

We hope you feel at home.

The wearing of a mask is recommended

Welcome

Opening Hymn: "In the Bleak Midwinter"

Blue 122

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live 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 lifted from them, O God, our Redeemer.

Let us pray.

All: God of mercy, as Christmas draws near, we acknowledge before you that this can be a difficult time. We gather this day with feelings of grief, loss, anxiety, and sadness upon our hearts. Be with us we pray. We ask for comfort 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. Amen.

Reader: A Reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"?

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:1, 25-31)

Hymn: "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People" vs. 1&3 Blue 100

Reader: A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. "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."

(Matthew 11:25-30)

Reflection

A sacred time of Remembrance – Lighting of 4 Candles

First Candle:

Leader: The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their voices, their faces, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for all that they have meant to us.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died, naming them aloud or in the silence of your hearts.

All: Lord, accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust our loved ones to your care. Thank you for the gift they have been in our lives. May we have faith to trust that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again, when we are in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come. Take our aching hearts, and comfort us. God of sorrowing, draw near! Amen.

“Lord, I Need You” (verse 1)

**Lord I come I confess
Bowing here I find my rest
And without You I fall apart
You're the one that guides my heart.**

**Lord I need You oh I need You
Ev'ry hour I need You
My one defense my righteousness
Oh God how I need You.**

Second Candle:

Leader: The second candle we light is to uphold before God the pain of loss; the loss of a relationship, the loss of a job with the security it brings, 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. As we gather up the pain of the past and the present, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

Please take a moment to remember the losses, naming them aloud or in the silence of your hearts.

All: 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. Amen.

"Lord, I Need You" (verse 2)

**Where sin runs deep Your grace is more
Where grace is found is where You are
And where You are Lord I am free
Holiness is Christ in me.**

**Lord I need You, oh I need You
Ev'ry hour I need You
My one defense my righteousness
Oh God how I need You.**

Third Candle:

Leader: The third candle we light for those who feel discouraged, anxious, or who have lost a sense of direction in their lives. God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay. You ask us to have faith, to believe that you are our wisdom and our guide, and to trust in your presence. Your words to us are clear: "Do not fear, I go before you."

All: God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide. Grant that we may have the reassurance of knowing that you are with us on our every journey. Take our lives and use them according to your will. Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you. Amen.

"Lord, I need You" (verse 3)

**Lord I cry, hear my fears
Bowing here I bring my tears
Lead me out into the light
You're the one whose way is right.**

**Lord I need You, oh I need You
Ev'ry hour I need You
My one defense my righteousness
Oh God how I need You.**

Fourth Candle:

Leader: The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God has come to us in Jesus Christ, and because of this, we are never alone. We also hope in our eternal promises, that there will be no more crying or pain, but life everlasting.

All: O God, lift up our hearts, we pray, to a joyous confidence in your care. Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow, because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears. 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. Amen.

"Lord, I need You" (verse 4)

**Lord I cry, hear my fears
Bowing here I bring my tears
Lead me out into the light
You're the one whose way is right.**

**Lord I need You, oh I need You
Ev'ry hour I need You
My one defense my righteousness
Oh God how I need You.**

Lighting of Individual Candles

Leader: Each of us comes bearing our own griefs, hurts, and sorrows. I now invite each of you to light your candle, holding both your sorrows and your hope before God. Take a moment of silence in the light of your candle, to be still in the presence of your God who promises to be with you and who shines light within all the places of your darkness.

2 minutes of silent reflection

The Blessing

Closing hymn: "Of Eternal Love Begotten"

Blue 132



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