

Calvin Sinclair & Christ Presbyterian Congregations



Meeting during December at 2000 1st Ave. NW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 319-364-3612
December 15, 2019

Blue Christmas Service

5:00 P.M.

MUSICAL PRELUDE

Words of Welcome

Welcome to this Blue Christmas, a time when we can, with others, acknowledge the “blue” feelings we have at Christmas time, the reason for them, and offer them to God. This time has been called the “long dark night of the soul” and “the winter of discontent” in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult. For others, Christmas Eve, or New Year’s Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year. In this service, we’ll have some singing appropriate to the Christmas Season, recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We will invite you to reflect the pain, the loneliness and the sadness you may feel and offer it to God for healing and transformation. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone. Always remember that God know your pain and love you unconditionally.

One: For you, O God our souls in silence wait.

ALL: TRULY OUR HOPE IS IN YOU

Opening Prayer

One: God of abundant mercy, you have given us grace to pray with one heart and one voice, even though our hearts are broken and our voices tremble with grief and sorrow. Comfort, comfort, Lord you Holy people. Comfort those of us who sit in darkness, mourning beneath our sorrows load. Speak to us of the peace that awaits us, of the balm of healing for our weary and wounded souls. We ask all this, trusting in the promise you have made to hear the prayers of two or three who have gathered in the Name of your Holy Child, Jesus.

ALL: AMEN

Hymn #53 “What Child is This?”

A Prayer of Lament as taken from the Christmas story

“This is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby, wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”

Eternal God, we bow before the mystery of your incarnation. As we consider our losses and our griefs, we find our God knows what it is to suffer loss. From your throne of glory you came to be born in poverty and laid in a manger. You have chosen weakness to confound the strong and poverty to amaze those who are comfortable in their material possessions.

We remember that you gave up everything in order to bring healing to our sorrow and comfort for our losses. [Silence]

“Blessed be the Lord our God,
for he has visited and redeemed his people.”
The angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said,
“Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him.
So get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.”
Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and left during the night.

Merciful God, we call upon you for all who have fled their homes in the darkness of night. You know the anxious nights of worry, times when sleep seems to flee and when all looks bleak. You know what it is to be displaced and homeless. In our restlessness, may we know your peace that passes all understanding. In your displacements, you know ours. [Silence]

“He has stretched out his mighty arm
and scattered the proud with all their plans.”
Herod gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem
and its neighborhood who were two years old and younger.
In this way what the prophet Jeremiah had said came true:

**“A sound is heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping.
Rachel is crying for her children; she refuses to be comforted, for they are dead.”**

Loving God, our hearts are heavy with the sufferings of this world. At times what happens seems so unfair. Innocents are killed, disease and syndromes stalk us. We long for the time when sin and death will be no more; when violence and sickness will no longer stalk us. O God, be our comfort in life’s unfairness. Help us to see your love and grace when sight fails and the world around us is black with despair. [Silence]

Hymn Insert “Little One, Born to Bring”

“He has brought down mighty rulers from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.”
And Mary said: “I am the Lord’s servant; may it happen to me as you have said.”

Gracious God, you placed yourself in the care of Mary to show to the world your will to save.

Give us grace to follow her example: to become instruments of your grace, servants of your will, and channels of your love. May it happen to us as you have willed. [Silence]

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.”

O God of peace, you fill our hearts with hope at every Christmastide, for we remember again that this is the world you have loved. Help us to remember in the darkness of despair that you have suffered so we can see the light of your love and grace. Give us the sense of your love so that hope, peace, and joy fill our hearts this night. Amen.

—based on Matthew 2:13-14, 16-18; Luke 1:38, 46-47, 51-52, 68; 2:12

Assurance

Now when Jesus learned of this, he went away from there. Great crowds followed him, and he healed them all.

This fulfilled what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I take great delight. I will put my Spirit on him, and he

will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. He will not break a bruised reed or extinguish a smoldering wick, until he brings justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope.” -- Matthew 12:15, 17-21

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow toward us, so also our comfort through Christ overflows to you. -- II Corinthians 1:3-5

Carol #38 “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

Spending Christmas with Jesus

Read by Tami Kruger

A Liturgy of Remembering

(Using the Advent Wreath Candles)

The first candle we light is to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, the memory that binds them to us in this season.

(Pause while the first candle is lit)

All: May God’s eternal love surround them.

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss, the loss of someone who was very important to us, part of our lives, part of our own selves. 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.

(Pause while the second candle is lit)

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

The 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.

(Pause while the third candle is lit)

Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness, life overcomes death.

The 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 us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

(Pause while the fourth candle is lit)

**Let us remember the One Who shows the way,
Who brings the truth and Who bears the light.**

As the Christ candle is in the middle of the Advent Wreath, so too is Christ in the midst of our lives. Regardless of whether we are in sorrow or joy, Jesus is always there. He was there for Mary and Martha when their brother died. He cried at Lazarus’ grave even though Jesus knew that he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. He is the one who has come, who is present and will come again to rule forever.

Thanks be to God for his loving presence. Amen.

Hymn Insert “I Wonder as I Wander”

Communion:

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

When there was only chaos, you spoke, O God, and light shattered the shadows, water raced down the valleys, creatures beyond imagination grazed in the abundant fields. You created all which is beautiful for those shaped in your image, but loneliness became our companion, grief wrapped its arms around us, fear sang its carols to us, and our dreams turned to nightmares.

So that we would know you are with us in these moments, these days, these lives, you became one of us, Jesus walking among us, reminding us of your promises to us, not only in the songs of the angels, but in the steady words of hope spoken in the face of death.

**You are not only holy, O God giver of hope,
you know the pain we have felt,
you have mingled your tears with ours,
you have wept at the graveside of a loved One.**

The angelic chorus told of your glory and wonder, yet Jesus came to let us know of your compassion. He could have remained safe in the cradle of grace, but became as poor as we often feel. He could have clothed himself in holiness, but knew the humility of wondering where his next meal might come from, whether or not he had a place to sleep at night.

He trampled death and sin into the dust, taking on himself our griefs and sorrows, so that we might find the path to life that is whole and complete, where promises are fulfilled, where a sure hope is the bed where we can rest our wearied souls.

**We believe we will find acceptance, because Jesus was rejected in our place;
we trust we know new life, because Jesus experienced our death; we look to that day when all weeping is done, when pain and loss is behind us and we are welcomed into that kingdom called eternity.**

As your Spirit moved upon the waters of creation, filling them with life beyond imagination, may it move upon the gifts of this Table. We hunger for hope in the midst of despair, for life when grief seems to never leave our side, for wonder where there are only shadows feed us with that Life which will never depart from us, but be with us and you on this night and in all the moments to come.

Our souls are parched from the deserts of our lives, we thirst for joy in a world burgeoning with sorrow, the deep pools of love have gone dry, and you hand us that cup of grace which will never run empty but will continue to fill us the waters of life forever.

On this night, remind us that your morning of hope will come;
in our sorrow, wrap us in the swaddling clothes of healing;
in our loneliness, help us to find you as the Friend who never leaves us;
in our loss, whisper to us your promise that we will be fulfilled
in the future you hold before us in the longest nights.

God in Community, Holy in One, be with us now and forever. Amen.

Words of Institution

The serving of communion

Prayer

**O God who loves us with a steadfast love,
O Christ who knows our grief and sorrows,
O Spirit who encompasses us with peace,**

This day we ask for your comfort, that in our sorrow, we will remember your willingness to take on our sadness. In our grief help us to see that day when we will rejoice with you when all sorrow and sadness will be no more. Even so come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Day is Done, but Love Unfailing *(to the tune of All Through the Night)*

**Day is done, but love unfailing,
Dwells ever here;
Shadows fall, fall but hope prevailing,
Calms every fear.
Loving Father, note forsaking,
Take our hearts of Love's own making,
Watching our sleeping, guard our waking,
Be always near.**

**Dark descends, but light unending
Shines through our night;
You are with us, ever leading,
New strength to sight;
One in love, your truth confessing,
One in hope of heaven's blessing,
May we see, in love's possessing,
Love's endless light.**

**Eyes will close, but you unsleeping,
Watch by our side;
Death may come, in love's safekeeping
Still we abide
God of love, all evil quelling,
Sin forgiving, fear dispelling,
Stay with us, our hearts indwelling,
This eventide.**

Blessing

In your silence, may the Word dwell in your heart.
In your brokenness, may the Bread of Life heal you.
In your pain, may the One who can heal you touch your soul.
In the time of bleakness and numbness,
May God's peace which passes all knowledge be your portion.
Amen.

In the sure knowledge of God's steadfast love, Christ's grace and comfort and the Spirit's enabling and peace, let us go forth sustained in our difficult times by the Triune God. Amen.