Blue Christmas

DECEMBER 19, 2019
7:00 P.M.

www.fumcaustin.org
**GATHERING AS THE CHURCH**

Asterisks (*) indicate an invitation to stand as you are able.

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**WORDS OF WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge, for we are lost, we are lonely, we are afraid.

Tonight, we gather daring to wonder if God has indeed come in Jesus, discerning the rejection we have known, intimate with our failed relationships, holding our heartache in hands of tenderness.

Tonight, we gather with neighbors and strangers, a family made one by our brokenness, coming with our hearts full of hope, and our pockets filled with doubts.

Tonight, we gather just as we are, for God has promised to meet us here and to welcome us for who we are.

Thom Shuman

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**HYMN 211**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show
and cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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**OPENING PRAYER**

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 broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

Let us pray.
God of mercy,
    hear our prayer in this Advent season
for ourselves and for our families
who live with painful thoughts and memories.
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.
Amen.

HEARING GOD’S WORD

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:1, 25-31  Old Testament, page 633

PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
    though the earth should change,
    though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
    though its waters roar and foam,
    though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
    the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city;
it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar,
    the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice,
    the earth melts.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.
Come, behold the works of the Lord;
    see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
    he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
    he burns the shields with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
    I am exalted in the earth.”
The Lord of hosts is with us;
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.
O come, thou Root of Jesse’s tree,
an ensign of thy people be;
before thee rulers silent fall;
all peoples on thy mercy call.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A LITURGY OF REMEMBRANCE

THE FIRST CANDLE

Leader

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost.
We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face,
   the memory that binds them to us in this season.
We hold them before God,
   giving thanks for their lives in ours.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died.
I invite you to name them,
   aloud or in the silence of your hearts….

Lord,
   each of us takes our loved one by the hand and leads them to you, the God of love.
Here we present them to you.
Accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving care.
We want our loved ones to be free at home with you.
We ask that you save a place for us beside them.
We ask that you fill us with motivation and energy in the days ahead
   when we feel like giving up;
remind us often of our true homeland
when we are caught up in the desolation of the journey.
Help us to find joy in the people,
   events and the beauty of nature which surrounds us.
O God,
    thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives.
We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again,
    when we are all in your presence forever.
May this truth sustain us in the days to come.
Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us.
Comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness.
God of sorrowing, draw near!
Amen.

Hymn 211 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel Stanza 6

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
    our spirits by thy justice here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
    and death’s dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

THE SECOND CANDLE

Leader
The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss;
    the loss of relationships,
    the loss of jobs with the security they bring,
    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,
    the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith.
As we gather up the pain of the past 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.
I invite you to name them,
    aloud or in the silence of your hearts….

Together we pray,
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.
O come, thou Key of David, come,
  and open wide our heavenly home.
The captives from their prison free,
  and conquer death’s deep misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

THE THIRD CANDLE

Leader
The third candle we light for those who experience a loss 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 have a sense of direction,
  to know where we are and where we ought to be headed.
But the darkness and the questions stay.
You ask us to be full of faith,
  to believe deep within that you are our signpost,
  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.”

God of our depths,
  we cry out to you to be our guide.
Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction
  and grant that we may have the reassurance
  of knowing that we are on the right path.
Take our lives and use them according to your will.
Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you.
Amen.

Hymn 211

O come, O come, great Lord of might,
  who to thy tribes on Sinai’s height
in ancient times once gave the law
  in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
THE 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,
who shares our life,
promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

O God whose spirit is known by those whose hearts are thankful,
and who makes cheerfulness a companion of strength,
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.

God of Comfort,
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.
Amén.

Hymn 211 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, Desire of nations bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.
From dust thou brought us forth to life;
deliver us from earthly strife.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

MEDITATION

FEASTING AT THE TABLE OF GRACE

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.
It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.
From the silence before creation
your Word spoke all that is into being.
You saw the darkness and called forth light,
dividing the day from the night,
and giving each its name and your blessing.

We abused your blessing,
choosing to control rather than tend,
to consume rather than nourish,
to turn away from your light,
and turn your darkness into a hiding place,
a place of fear and shame.
Still you chose to bless us and redeem us,
calling us to restored fellowship
through prophets, leaders, and faithful people.

And so, with your people on earth
and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**
**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**
**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.**
**Hosanna in the highest.**

*The congregation may be seated.*

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
From the darkness of a stable,
you brought forth the light of the world,
he carried your light into every darkened corner,
calling those kept in darkness
to rejoice in your love,
and exposing those who hid from your Truth
to the light of your righteous judgment.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.
On the night in which he gave himself up for us
he took bread,
gave thanks to you,
broke the bread,
gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup,
gave thanks to you,
gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.”

And so,
in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ’s offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died;**

**Christ is risen;**

**Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them to be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit,
make us one with Christ in his sufferings,
one with each other in mutual love,
and one in ministry to all the world with healing grace,
until Christ comes in final victory,
and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit in your holy church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty God,
now and forever.

Amen.

And now as Jesus has taught us,
we are bold to pray:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory, forever.

Amen.

The pastor breaks the bread and says:
Alleluia!
In the midst of our longest night,
Christ our Savior dwells among us!

Therefore let us keep the feast.
Alleluia!

RECEIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

After you have received Holy Communion, all are invited to take the flame from the candle of love—which cannot be extinguished by death—and light a votive for the persons you mourn or the pain you endure. Votives may be placed on the Altar Table as an offering to God.
Anthem  
**I Wonder As I Wander**  
Appalachian Carol / Arr. John Rutter

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,  
how Jesus, the Savior, did come for to die.  
For poor ornery people like you and like I;  
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.  
When Mary birthed Jesus, ‘twas in a cows’ stall,  
with wisemen, and farmers and shepherds and all.  
But high from God’s heaven a star’s light did fall,  
and the promise of ages it then did recall.  
If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing:  
a star in the sky, or a bird on the wing;  
or all of God’s angels in heaven to sing,  
he surely could have had it,  
‘cause he was the King!

John Jacob Niles, *Songs of the Hill Folk*

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Hymn  
**Healer of Our Every Ill**

Words and Music: Marty Haugen
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PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING

On this long dark night
we await the coming of Christ.
We long for the light of his presence,
with us and in us.
When our souls are deeply troubled,
and our hearts break with the weight of sorrow,
may our grief be seasoned with love,
and our sorrow be buoyed by hope.
In our times of God-forsakenness and estrangement,
may we gaze on the innocent One,
made perfect through suffering
and see in him our vulnerable God,
who saves in weakness and pain.
May our suffering empty us of pride,
and lead us to true joy, our only security,
in Christ the infinite depths of God’s grace.
Amen.

GOING OUT TO SERVE

* BENEDICTION

* HYMN 221 In the Bleak Midwinter

CLOSING MUSIC

WORSHIP LEADERS

Preacher
Reverend Taylor Fuerst
Piano
Susannah Willms
Cantor
Victoria Tijerina