

Blue Christmas/Longest Night

12/20/2018

Call to Worship:

Leader: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

People: **The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth, and we have seen his glory.**

Leader: *In him was life, and that life was the light of all.*

People: **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to extinguish it.**

Words of explanation:

Welcome to this "Blue Christmas/Longest Night" service. "The name comes from the season-during this season in December, we experience the shortest day and the longest night of the year. But the name also applies to the feeling that a number of us have about this season. For some, it is the "longest dark night of the soul," "the winter of our discontent," in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming.

For some people, the entire season is challenging. For others, 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 will have some singing appropriate to the season, recognizing that this is not necessarily a season of joy. We will invite you to meditate on the pain and anxiety you may bring, and to offer it up to Christ form Him to help you with. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone in your struggle.

***Carol:** *(You may remain seated)* **"O come, O come, Emmanuel, # 211 verse 1 and 2**

Prayer of Confession and Intercession

God, some of us come to you in this Advent and Christmas season, with the pain growing inside of us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts.

In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words.

God, some of us come to you as those who have been abused. We have been hurt, physically, emotionally, sexually. As Children, as teenagers, as adults, we have had the trust we gave others violated. We may have little confidence in ourselves, and cringe away from any threat, whether perceived or real.

God, some of us come to you as outsiders. We are the ones who seem to stand on the edges of any group. We find ourselves always looking in over someone else's shoulders, and when we try to move to the center, we feel as if we are getting pushed out of the way. We encounter prejudice and discrimination, even hatred in our lives.

God, some of us are grieving over what might have been. A death or a loss has changed this season for us when once it was a special time for us too. But someone has died. Someone has left us. Someone has moved away. We have lost a job. We have lost our health, or see loved ones struggling with their poor health, or even facing death. We have lost a dream. a goal, a cause. Some of us find ourselves feeling alone, adrift, or lost in a scary new situation. This reason reminds us of all that used to be, and cannot be any more. And You may feel far away to us.

God, some of us may come to you as victims. From this temporary period of peace, we will go back to situations where we are beaten, exploited, humiliated. We live in fear, as afraid of the future as of the present.

For some of us, the memories of what once was, and the fears of what may be, stifle us. All around us we hear the sounds of celebration, the jingle of cash registers, the rustle of wrapping paper. But some of us may feel we have little we can give, and few, if any one to give anything to. Please be with us in our grief and in our longing, and give us your peace and comfort, your strength and guidance, for we ask in the name of Jesus, Our Savior who promised to be with us always. Amen.

The Old Testament Lesson: 1 Kings 19: 1-16 with comments

Carol:*(you may remain seated) "In the Bleak Midwinter" # 211*

The Gospel Lesson: Matthew 5: 1-10 with comments

Lighting of the Candles- *Anyone who wants to may come forward to light a candle of remembrance for loved ones, or a candle representing a prayer offered up to God for a person or situation. If you would like the pastor to pray with you or for you, Pastor Heidi will be off to the side in front. If you would like a group of people to pray with you or for you, she will ask for others to come forward to join her in prayer for your healing, comfort, or for whatever you desire prayer.*

Pastoral Prayer leading into the Lord's Prayer (in unison) traditional version # 895

***Carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem" # 230**

New Testament Reading: The Revelation to John 7: 15-17 with comments

Sacrament of Holy Communion- *Pastor Heidi will lead an informal communion liturgy and then everyone is invited to come forward altogether to receive communion together in the front of the sanctuary. You do not have to be a member of this congregation or denomination to receive the Lord's Supper. If you are seeking to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are welcome to participate. We will pass the plate of bread and the cup of juice, from one to another and dip the bread into the juice and eat.*

Blessing: *The life our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived and suffered and died for the sake of all suffering and hurting humans, yesterday, today, and tomorrow; the peace of God, which passes all understanding; and the presence of God's Holy Spirit supporting and encouraging you, be with you through this season. Amen.*

***Carol:** *(please stand if you are willing and able) "Silent Night" # 239*

Please join us for our traditional candlelight Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m. on Monday, December 24th, and any Sunday for worship at 10 a.m. followed by a coffee hour.

The Christmas Open House at the parsonage is Friday, December 28th from 3-8 p.m. or so. Just bring yourself and your family for food and fellowship!

Note: *This service has been adapted from a Lutheran service by Jim Taylor that I found online, which means that I have adapted his prayers and taken some of his scripture suggestions, as well as the call to worship from John chapter one and the words of explanation.. Pastor Heidi*

P.S. If you would like to speak to me about any pressing issues or concerns, I am available during the holidays by calling 734-407-9515