



Blue Christmas Service

Adapted from the NZ Prayer Book – Night Prayer

December 22, 2024

7:00 p.m.

St Paul's Anglican Church, Lindsay ON

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Incumbent - The Rev. Bonnie Skerritt

Honorary Assistant - The Rev. Canon Greg Physick

Music Director Arlene Gray

Opening Hymn: # 126 Away in A Manager

Officiant: Light and Peace in Jesus Christ Our Lord

People: Thanks be to God

Collect

Officiant: Dear God, thank you for all that is good, for our creation and for our humanity, for the stewardship you have given us of this planet earth, for the gifts of life and of one another, for your love which is unbounded and eternal.

O thou, most holy and beloved, our Companion, our Guide upon the way, our bright evening star. We repent the wrongs we have done:

Silence

We have wounded your love.

O God, heal us.

We stumble in the darkness.

Light of the world transfigure us.

We forget that we are your home.

Spirit of God, dwell in us.

Eternal Spirit, living God, in whom we live and move and have our being, all that we are, have been, and shall be is known to you, to the very secret of our hearts and all that rises to trouble us.

Living flame burn into us, cleansing wind, blow through us, fountain of water, well up within us, that we may love and praise in deed and in truth.

Eternal Spirit, flow through our being and open our lips,

that our mouths may proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the God of love.

Alleluia, alleluia.

The Proclamation of the Word

1ST Reading – Isaiah 40:1-2, 6-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings;

lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,

lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!'

See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Reader: The word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 23

Dear God, you sustain me and feed me: like a shepherd you guide me.

You lead me to an oasis of green, to lie down by restful waters.

You refresh my soul for the journey, and guide me along trusted roads.

The God of justice is your name.

Though I must enter the darkness of death, I will fear no evil.

For you are with me, your rod and staff comfort me.

You prepare a table before my very eyes, in the presence of those who trouble me.

You anoint my head with oil, and you fill my cup to the brim.

Your loving kindness and mercy will meet me every day of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of my God for ever.

2nd Reading – Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.'

Reader: The word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God.

The Gospel – Luke 2:4-12

Officiant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you

Officiant: The Gospel of our Lord according to Luke

All: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Officiant: The Gospel of Christ

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Meditation – The Rev. Bonnie Skerritt

Candle Lighting – An Act of Remembrance

A time of silent prayer follows the lighting of each candle

Officiant: We light four candles tonight in honor of our loved ones.

We light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories, and one for our love.

This candle represents our grief. We own the pain of losing loved ones, of dreams that go unfulfilled, of hopes that evaporate in despair. *(A candle is lit and a brief silence follows.)*

This candle represents our courage. It symbolizes the courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to share our feelings honestly and openly with each other, and to dare to hope in the midst of pain. *(A candle is lit and a brief silence follows.)*

This candle represents our memories. For the times we laughed together, cried together, were angry with each other or overjoyed with each other. We light this candle for the memories of caring and joy we shared together. *(A candle is lit and a brief silence follows.)*

This candle represents our love. The love we have given, and the love we have received. The love that has gone unacknowledged and unfelt, and the love that has been shared in times of joy and sorrow. *(A candle is lit and a brief silence follows.)*

I invite you to light your own candle to represent your burdens, griefs, sorrows, all those things that make Christmas a "blue" time for you.

You may want to light a tea-light in memory of those you love but see no longer. *You are invited to speak the name of your loved one out loud as you do so. When you have lit your candle you are invited to pray silently.*

We light the Christ candle, remembering that Jesus Christ is always in the center of our lives. He hears our cries, he knows our hearts and, in the midst of all our thoughts and emotions, he offers us hope and healing. (Christ Candle is lit.)

All: Comforting God, wrap us in your presence in this time of remembrance. As these candles symbolize your light, help us find that light, a light that will guide us day by day, step by step, as we try to live life fully and wholly. We cherish the special ways in which our hearts and our lives have been touched by our loved ones. We thank you for the gift their lives have been to us. Now comfort us, encourage us, empower us through the working of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Anthem: Like a Candle Flame

Hear, O Israel – The Shema

**Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.
Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first and the great commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.**

OFFERTORY HYMN - #122 In The Bleak Midwinter

Prayer over the Gifts

Officiant: Gracious God, by the power of the Spirit who sanctified the mother of your Son, make holy all we offer you this day. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS & THANKSGIVING

Song of Simeon *Nunc Dimittis*

Praise be to God, I have lived to see this day. God's promise is fulfilled, and my duty done. At last you have given me peace, for I have seen with my own eyes the salvation you have prepared for all nations – a light to the world in its darkness, and the glory of your people Israel. Glory be to God, sustaining, redeeming, sanctifying, as in the beginning, so now, and for ever. Amen.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

The Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever. Amen.

The minister and people pray responsively.

I will lie down in peace and take my rest,
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.

Let us bless the Earth-maker, the Pain-bearer, the Life-giver,
let us praise and exalt God above all for ever.

May God's name be praised beyond the furthest star,
glorified and exalted above all for ever. Amen

Leader: Into your hands, O God, I commend my spirit,
All: for you have redeemed me, O God of truth and love.

Leader: Keep me, O God, as the apple of an eye;
All: hide me under the shadow of your wings.

Leader: Preserve us, O God, while waking, and guard us while sleeping, that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep may rest in your peace.

Leader: God our Creator, our centre, our friend, we thank you for our good life, for those who are dear to us, for our dead, and for all who have helped and influenced us. We thank you for the measure of freedom we have, and the extent to which we control our lives; and most of all we thank you for the faith that is in us, for our awareness of you and our hope in you. Keep us, we pray you, thankful and hopeful and useful until our lives shall end. **Amen.**

Cantor: *Before the ending of the day, Creator of the world we pray, that you, with love and lasting light, would guard us through the hours of night. From all ill dreams defend our eyes, from nightly fears and fantasies; redeem through us our evil foe, that we no lasting harm may know. O wisest Guide, grant all we ask, fulfil in us your holy task, surround us with your love and care, and lead us on, your life to share. All praise to God, sustaining us, redeeming and transforming us, thanksgiving in eternity, all praise, beloved Trinity.*

Officiant: Lord, it is night. The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God. It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be. The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you. The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace. The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities. In your name we pray. **Amen.**

Sentence

Blessing, light, and glory surround us and scatter the darkness of the long and lonely night.

Dismissal

Officiant: The divine Spirit dwells in us.

People: Thanks be to God.

Closing Hymn: # 119 Silent Night