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# Blue Christmas Service



## **Words of Welcome**

### **Hymn: O Little Town of Bethlehem (verses 1 & 2)**

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars  
go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting  
light. The hopes and fears of all the years, are met in  
thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep, their watch of  
wondering love. O morning stars together, proclaim the  
holy birth. And praises sing to God the King, and peace  
to men on earth.

## **Liturgy of the Word**

**Scripture Reading:** Selected verses from Isaiah 40

### **Hymn – O Little Town of Bethlehem (verses 3 & 4)**

How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is given;  
So God imparts to human hearts, the blessings of his  
heaven. No ear may hear his coming, but in this world  
of sin. Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear  
Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray  
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us this day  
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings  
tell. O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

### **Responsive Scripture Reading: Psalm 22**

**Leader:** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the  
words of my groaning?

**People:** O my God, I cry by day, but you do not  
answer; and by night, but I find no rest.

Leader: In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

**People: It was you who took me from the womb, you who kept me safe upon my mother's breast; since my mother bore me, you have been my God.**

Leader: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

**People: God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted; God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God!**

**A Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:28-29**

**Responsive Scripture Reading: Psalm 121**

Leader: I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come?

**People: My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.**

Leader: He will not let you foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.

**People: Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.**

Leader: The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

**People: So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

Leader: The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.

**People: The Lord shall watch over your going out and your going in, from this time forth for ever more.**

Leader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**People: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

## **Litany of Remembrance and Candle Lighting**

### **Readings of Hope**

We light this **first candle** to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

**All: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.**

### **Hymn: "O Come, O Come Emanuel"**

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.

We light this **second candle** to remember the pain of loss:

loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You,

asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

**All: We remember that through You all things are possible.**

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

**Hymn: “O Come, O Come, Emanuel”**

O come thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily. To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

We light this **third candle** to remember ourselves this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

**All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.**

**We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.**

**Hymn: “O Come, O Come Emanuel”**

O come thou day-spring, come and cheer, our spirits by thy advent 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 **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.

**All: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.**

**Hymn: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**

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.

### **Lighting of Individual Candles**

#### **Words of Hope**

**Hymn: Away in a Manger**

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little lord Jesus laid down his sweet head  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
the little lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay  
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care  
And take me to heaven to live with thee there.

#### **Words of Benediction**

**Hymn: Silent Night**

Silent night, holy night,  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild.  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds quake at the sight;  
Glories stream from heaven afar,

Heav'nly hosts sing alleluia;  
Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.