

Community Blue Christmas Longest Night Service

A worship service of Hope, Strength
and Remembrance.



St. Paul United Church of Christ

119 North Franklin Street

New Bremen, Ohio 45869

December 21, 2022

Blue Christmas/Longest Night Worship Service

WELCOME (*Blue Christmas* by Meta Herrick Carlson from speaking it plain: words for worship and life together)

PRELUDE

*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.

*OPENING CAROL

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

No. 221

*LITANY OF CONFESSION AND INTERCESSION

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

People: 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.

Leader: God, we are grieving over what might have been. A death or a loss has changed Christmas for us. Once it was a special day for us, too. But someone has died. Someone has left us. Someone has moved away. We have lost a job. We have lost a dream, a goal, a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost in a terrifying new world. This season reminds us of all that used to be, and cannot be anymore.

People: Memories of what was, the fears of what may be, stifle us. All around us we hear the sound of celebration, the jingle of cash registers, the rustle of wrapping paper. But some of us have nothing we can give and some of us have no one to give anything to. This is our longest night, O Lord. Please be near us tonight. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION AND PRAYER**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: Hear these words of hope: God comes to us in the midst of our sorrow, in the midst of our loneliness. God makes room for us even when there is no room at the inn. When we are in turmoil, God brings peace. When we are lost, God offers us his Way. When we are bitter, God gives us courage to love again. Christ has come to us bringing us all these gifts of God. We are loved and beloved forever and ever. Thanks be to God!

***RESPONSE** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (refrain)*
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

HEARING OF THE WORD, SILENT REFLECTION, & LIGHTING OF CANDLES

READING ONE: Luke 6:17-23 (NIV)

This familiar passage reveals that Jesus was well aware of people's sorrows, yearnings, and sufferings—and offered a promise of something different.

SILENT REFLECTION

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

READING TWO: 1 Kings 19:1-3a, 8-15a (NIV)

Sometimes it is only in isolation that we can hear the still small voice through which God speaks to us.

SILENT REFLECTION

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

READING THREE: Psalm 22:1-11 (NIV)

Even Jesus knew the feeling of being abandoned by God, the God whom he had believed in, and of being left alone in his darkness.

SILENT REFLECTION

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

READING FOUR: Revelation 21:1-7 (NRSV)

Our present world is not how God wants things to be. Those who weep now will not weep later. In this new heaven and new earth, there will be no more need for tears.

SILENT REFLECTION

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

PASTORAL PRAYER

*CAROL OF SENDING *Comfort, Comfort Now My People* No. 155

*BENEDICTION

PASSING THE PEACE OF JESUS

(* indicates all who are able may stand)

Thank you to Gilberg-Hartwig Funeral Home for providing candles and ornaments for tonight's service.

WORSHIP LEADERS

Rev. Becky Erb Strang

Rev. Ed Rinehart

Keith May

Ginger Holtkamp

Arianne Henry

Pastor-St Paul

Pastor-Immanuel Church

Gilberg-Hartwig Funeral Home

Speaker

Organist