



CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
6300 Trinity Drive, Pine Bluff, Arkansas



Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God.

(Isaiah 40:1)

Blue Christmas service is a worship service that names and holds space for the sadness that accompanies the holidays. Heightened by the advertising of our consumerist culture, there is a definite Christmas ideal that includes neatly iced gingerbread houses, smiling children, and an excessive amount of neatly wrapped packages. These standards and the church's sometimes solitary focus on joy can make the holidays an isolating time for anyone who can't muster happiness or meet the criteria. A blue Christmas service is

*an invitation for anyone who wants to come and set their burden down,
for a community to hold pain collectively.*

CALL TO WORSHIP (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Pastor: In the beginning was the Word,

People: and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Pastor: All things were made by God;

People: without God, nothing came to be.

Pastor: What came to be through God was life,

People: and this life was the light of the world.

Pastor: The Light shines in the darkness,

People: and the darkness can never overcome it.

***OPENING HYMN # “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (Verses 1, 2, 3, 4)**

**1 O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.**

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**2 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. [Refrain]**

**3 O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai’s
height in ancient times didst give the law in cloud and majesty and
awe. [Refrain]**

**4 O come, thou Root of Jesse, free thine own from Satan’s tyranny;
from depths of hell thy people save and give them victory o’er the
grave. [Refrain]**

RESPONSIVE PRAYERS

Pastor: Gracious God, in this season of Advent, we give thanks that you came to be among us:

People: Emmanuel, God with us.

Pastor: You came into the darkness of that time:

People: a time of change and stress, uncertainty and doubt.

Pastor: You did not enter this world surrounded by grand things.

People: You were born in a stable, to parents far from home.

Pastor: O God, we pray for your presence here and now, in the difficulties of our time.

People: We lay before you our offerings of honesty and need, of worry and hope.

Pastor: For all who are grieving, we pray:

People: O Lord, you know what it means to lose someone you dearly love.

Pastor: For all who are lonely, we pray:

People: O Lord, you know how it feels to look around you and feel that there is no one left.

Pastor: For all who are anxious, we pray:

People: O Lord, you know what it is like to be weary and heavy-laden.

Pastor: For all who are vulnerable, we pray:

People: O Lord, you know what it means to be unhoused and unsafe.

Pastor: For all who are beset by challenges, physical or emotional, we pray: **People: O Lord, you know how it feels to be in pain.**

Pastor: For all who are longing for light, and for hope, we pray:

People: O Lord, you know what it is like to wait in the darkness.

(Here we offer our personal petitions in silence.)

Pastor: Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you came to be among us, full of grace and truth. In you, we find our welcome.

People: You are our comfort and our company along the journey of our life.

Pastor: In Jesus' name, we pray.

Together: Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 139:1-12 (NASB 95)

1 Lord, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I get up; You understand my thought from far away. 3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, Lord, You know it all. 5 You have encircled me behind and in front, And placed Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot comprehend it. 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. 9 If I take up the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will take hold of me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," 12 Even darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION

Rev. Jai Kwak

INVITATION TO CHRIST'S PRESENCE

UNISON PRAYER

Gracious God, as we go from this place, we trust in your company along our way. Wrap your everlasting arms around us; swaddle us in the security of your love; comfort us with the silence of your quiet breath; brighten our path with the light of your presence. Then, send us into the world.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN # 836 Abide with Me (Verses 1, 2, 3)

1 Abide with me: fast falls the eventide; the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day; earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away. Change and decay in all around I see. O thou who changest not, abide with me.

3 I need thy presence every passing hour. What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power? Who like thyself my guide and strength can be? Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Jai Kwak

I would not exchange the sorrows of my heart
For the joys of the multitude.
And I would not have the tears that sadness makes
To flow from my every part turn into laughter.
I would that my life remain a tear and a smile.

A tear to purify my heart and give me understanding
Of life's secrets and hidden things.
A smile to draw me nigh to the sons of my kind and
To be a symbol of my glorification of the gods.

A tear to unite me with those of broken heart;
A smile to be a sign of my joy in existence.

I would rather that I died in yearning and longing than that I live Weary and despairing.

I want the hunger for love and beauty to be in the
Depths of my spirit, for I have seen those who are Satisfied the most wretched of
people. I have heard the sigh of those in yearning and Longing, and it is sweeter than
the sweetest melody.

With evening's coming the flower folds her petals And sleeps, embracing her longing.
At morning's approach she opens her lips to meet The sun's kiss.

The life of a flower is longing and fulfillment.
A tear and a smile.

The waters of the sea become vapor and rise and come
Together and area cloud.

And the cloud floats above the hills and valleys Until it meets the gentle breeze, then
falls weeping To the fields and joins with brooks and rivers to Return to the sea, its
home.

The life of clouds is a parting and a meeting.
A tear and a smile.

And so does the spirit become separated from
The greater spirit to move in the world of matter
And pass as a cloud over the mountain of sorrow
And the plains of joy to meet the breeze of death
And return whence it came.

To the ocean of Love and Beauty----to God.