

Blue Christmas @ FCRC

Welcome & Lighting of Christ Candle

Opening Song



*Holy darkness, blessed night, heaven's answer hidden from our sight.
As we await you, O God of silence, we embrace your holy night. from Holy Darkness by Dan Schutte*

Opening Prayer

God of abundant mercy, this evening we come to pray with one heart and one voice, even though our hearts may be sorrowing and our voices tremble with grief, exhaustion, loneliness. Comfort, comfort, your people. Comfort those of us who sit in darkness, mourning beneath our sorrow's load. Be our sheltering place. Amen.

Song: *Our Song in the Night*

In the darkness, can you hear us? When the night comes, are we alone?
Have you forgotten all of your children? When we remember You, we groan.
But our hearts cannot be silent:

*Oh God, be our song in the night when the light is gone
God, be our joy, be our strength Be our sheltering place
Our song in the night*

We are broken-- are we forsaken? Has Your love gone down with the sun?
And your mercy through all history, is it abandoned and undone?
Oh our hearts cannot be silent:

*Oh God, be our song in the night when the light is gone
God, be our joy, be our strength Be our sheltering place
Our song in the night*

Your road, it led me down to the Red Sea. The waters trembled, and You made a way
You raised Your arm and led them to dry land Lord, will You hear us when we say
that our hearts cannot be silent? *Bifrost Music*

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Song: Be Still

Be still and know that I'm with you
Be still and know that I am here
Be still and know that I'm with you
Be still, be still, and know

When darkness comes upon you
And colors you with fear and shame
Be still and know that I'm with you
And I will say your name

If terror falls upon your bed
And sleep no longer comes
Remember all the words I said
Be still, be still, and know

And when you go through the valley
And the shadow comes down from the hill
If morning never comes to be
Be still be still be still

If you forget the way to go
And lose where you came from
If no one is standing beside you
Be still and know I am

Be still and know that I'm with you
Be still and know I am *(The Fray)*

Litany for the Longest Night

Compassionate God, hear our sorrow and let our cry come to you.
Stand near in the darkness, O God

We are heavy with sadness, broken by our loss and afraid of our future, overwhelmed by all we can not understand.
Stand near in the darkness, O God

We are confused and sometimes even enraged by what feels unjust.
Stand near in the darkness O God.

Help us to grieve honestly and bravely, allowing our tears to fall.
Stand near in the darkness, O God.

Release us from blame towards others or ourselves.
Stand near in the darkness O God.

Save us from regret, help us let go of lost dreams, and entrust ourselves to your purpose.
Give us grace to endure.
Stand near in the darkness O God.

A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 40

Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, look up to the heavens! So great is God's power and strength that not one of the stars fails to answer God's call. Why, then, do you fear that God does not know your troubles or care if you suffer injustice? Our God, the everlasting God, the creator of the farthest parts of the earth, never grows tired or weary. No human can fathom this completely. But truly, those who wait on this Lord shall find their strength renewed....

Walking in the Dark: A Litany of Remembrance

Holy God, trusting in your grace and provision, we come to name those things which trouble us in this season. Hand in hand with you, we will walk into the dark, claiming your promise to companion us, your steadfast love to bring peace to our troubled hearts, your merciful power to meet each need.

God of Flourishing, we light this candle to pray for all those suffering physical and mental ill health. May this light remind us to trust in the dark for the healing of Jesus and to pray for all who bring health and emotional care to others.

God of Abundance, we light this candle for all those experiencing financial strains, job loss, overwhelming debt. May this light remind us that you have created an abundant world and empower us to live generous lives for truly we bring nothing into this world and we take nothing out of it.

God of Comfort, we light this candle for all who grieve the death of someone they love or perhaps someone they wish they'd loved better. Whether the loss is very recent or from a long time ago, may this light remind us that you are also acquainted with grief and understand the mystery of separation at the door of death. Especially we pray for doctors and nurses and care aids carrying heavy burdens of being in the precious place of a deathbed when family can't be there.

God of Life, we light this candle for all who want to move away from habits that enslave them. May this light bring your light to those secret harmful habits and bring freedom. Especially we pray for all involved in various 12 step programs that those communities of mentoring and accountability would remain strong despite our need to be physically apart.

God of Water, Earth and Sky, we light this candle for the communities in Canada who do not have clean water, in particular the Neskantaga nation spending Christmas in a hotel. May this light remind those of us who freely drink clean water to move actively towards ways to heal this persistent injustice.

God who Calms Storms, we light this candle for the places where it comes most close to home, for all who live with broken relationships with children, partners, friends. May this light remind us of the pure communion you desire between all humans all your creation. Lead us to reflect, receive and extend forgiveness in word and deed.

God with Us, we light this candle for all those who feel estranged from you, besieged with doubt, overwhelmed by the many difficulties of life. May this light remind us of your love come so clearly close in Jesus to lead us all home to you.

Intercessory Prayer for Healing

From our walk in the dark, bring to mind someone in particular who needs healing in some way. Picture that person encircled with the light of Christ. and pray this prayer for healing: Holy Spirit, present with us now, reach out to ___ and be his/her very present help in this time of trouble. Amen

Closing Prayers & Blessings for a Blue Christmas

All throughout these months as the shadows have lengthened,
this blessing has been gathering itself, making ready, preparing for this night.
It has practiced walking in the dark, traveling with its eyes closed,
feeling its way by memory, by touch, by the pull of the moon even as it wanes.

So believe me when I tell you: this blessing will reach you even if you have not enough light to read it.

You will know the moment of its arriving by the release of the breath you've held so long,
A loosening of the clenching in your hands, of the clutch around your heart,
A thinning of the darkness that has drawn itself around you.

This blessing does not mean to take the night away,
but it knows its hidden roads and its resting spots,
knows what it means to travel in the company of friends.

So when this blessing comes, take its hand.
Get up. Set out on the road you can not see.
This is the night when you can trust that any direction you go
will be walking toward the dawn. from *The Cure for Sorrow* by Jan Richardson

Come now, O God, when our love is forsaken.
Come, when our bedrock of faith has been shaken.
Come, when our deepest of hopes are mistaken
Come, Emmanuel. Come, Emmanuel.

Come, when we squander the freedom you gave us.
Come, break the systems of sin that enslave us.
Come, though we wonder if you can still save us.
Come, Emmanuel. Come, Emmanuel.

Come, lead us out of our self-serving madness.
Come, while the world is enshrouded in sadness.
Come, turn the tears of our mourning to gladness.
Come, Emmanuel. Come, Emmanuel.



Prayer for a Blue Christmas

Magnify your goodness, O Holy One, through us,
As through Mary, simple peasant woman your goodness was made known.

Lift all that is downtrodden within us and all around the world to a glorious hope.
Shake the dust of broken dreams and dead-end futures from the cloth of our lives,
And crown us with peace that we might be your peaceful people.

Bless us, nurture the holy seed growing with us,
that we might come this Christmas especially to believe
the unlikely story the angels told Mary: the life of God is about to be born in us.

Our souls magnify you, our songs glorify you,
our prayer is a holy longing for our lives to say “yes” to your
invitation to trust in the storm of life. Amen.

Closing Song

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
Peace on the earth, goodwill to men, From heaven's all-gracious King.
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, And hear the angels sing! *Edmund Sears (1849)*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of Christ's Spirit be with us all!