**A Blue Christmas**

**‘The real meaning of Christmas is not presents, it’s more
like being met with hope and light in your darkness
and that’s a message that a lot of us don’t hear.’**

**Rev Wendy Boden-Nelson**

**Welcome and Call to Worship**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. **And also with you.**

All around us, lights are lit and carols play. The season heaps joy upon us. Yet, we who come here, we carry more than joy; we carry loss, worry, grief and pain.

We come weary, seeking rest from expectations. We also seek a holy presence to be with us. We come to this place, by the resilient grace of God: Whose love that never lets go. We come knowing that we will meet with God here.

**God of mercy and love, we gather here today as hurting people, bringing our pain, our sorrow and our confusion to this safe space. Would you meet us in our darkness, and give us freedom to struggle together as we seek your presence. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. Amen.**

**The Lighting of the Advent Candle**

As our nights grow longer and our days grow short, we remember God’s promise to our world: Christ, our Light and our Hope, will come.

**Collect and Readings**

**Reading Isaiah 61.1-3**

**This is the word of the Lord Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Reading**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 1: 1-5

Glory to you, O Lord.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

**Reflection and Response** In the midst of a season that often feels frantic, loud, and anything but peaceful, may the next few moments offer you space to reconnect with your soul, reflect, or simply be.

**Liturgy of Remembering**

The first candle we light is to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice,
the memory that binds them to us in this season.

**May God’s eternal love surround them.** (Pause while the 1st candle is lit)

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith. As we gather up the pain of the past we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

**Refresh, restore, renew us O God, and lead us into your future.** (2nd candle is lit)

The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives. God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to have a sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay. You ask us to be full of faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost, that you are our wisdom and our guide, and to trust in your presence. Your words to us are clear: ‘Do not fear, I go before you.’

**Let us recall that dawn defeats darkness, hope overcomes fear.** (3rd candle is lit)

The fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which 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. **Let us remember the One Who shows the way, who brings the truth and Who bears the light.**

**O God, be our hope and our light that we may find your way.** (4th candle is lit)

**We pray for your Holy Spirit to be at work within us, all of us who are gathered here tonight, may your Holy Spirit comfort us, may it sustain us, may it remind us of your constant love for us. Amen.**

**Prayers of the People** God, hear our prayer. **And in your mercy, answer**

For greater understanding of the lessons of love and acceptance as taught by Jesus Christ. God, hear our prayer. **And in your mercy, answer. God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

**The Peace** Holy One, you are with us in times of trouble and peace; in times of sorrow and times of joy. **When we are unsure of how to continue living and loving, your Spirit intervenes with sighs too deep for words. You speak for us now, Loving God. You comfort us with your abiding peace.**

**Prayer over the bread and wine** Pour upon the poverty of our love, and the weakness of our praise, the transforming fire of your presence. **Amen.**

**Great Thanksgiving** From the Discipleship Ministries Website

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. From the silence before creation your Word spoke all that is into being. You saw the darkness and called forth light, dividing the day from the night, and giving each its name and your blessing. We abused your blessing, **choosing to control rather than tend, to consume rather than nourish, to turn away from your light, and turn your darkness into a hiding place, a place of fear and shame.**

Still you chose to bless us and redeem us, calling us to restored fellowship through prophets, leaders, and faithful people. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. From the darkness of a stable, you brought forth the light of the world. He carried your light into every darkened corner, calling those kept in darkness to rejoice in your love, and exposing those who hid from your Truth to the light of your righteous judgment. By the baptism of his suffering, death and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. On the night in which he gave himself up for us he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: ‘Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: ‘Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith. **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them to be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ in his sufferings, one with each other in mutual love, and one in ministry to all the world with healing grace, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honour and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer and then the Breaking of the Bread**

Alleluia! In the midst of our longest night, Christ our Saviour dwells among us! **Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia!**

**Invitation to Communion**

For anyone who says yes to Jesus. For anyone who believes what Jesus says. For anyone who will just reach out to accept it. Then God will give them this wonderful gift.
The gift of love without condition. The gift of peace beyond understanding. The gift of life everlasting. The gift of life itself.

**Thanksgiving A Prayer of Hope**

**Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you
as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives. Let the light of your Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.**

**Blessing and Dismissal**

Comforting God, as we leave this time of rest would you continue to wrap us in your presence. Be with us in our struggles, and when we get lost in the darkness, shine your light and help us find our way back to you. May God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us, this day, this night and always. **Amen**.

You have seen the Saviour! Go now into this season of Christmas knowing the love of Christ and of his people, a love without end. **Thanks be to God.**