

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church  
Blue Christmas  
A Service of Remembrance  
December 15, 2022, 3 pm



In memory of those who have touched our lives and remain forever in our hearts; to honor grief and find light in the darkness of the holiday season.



**WELCOME** to a service honoring grief, loss, and the fullness of life in this sacred time of year. We gather together to remember the presence of the Sacred in all of our emotions and experiences. We offer this service to all who long for a space in which wounds are named and sadness is welcomed, regardless of religious tradition or experience. We pray that this offering may be a blessing upon you.

Call to Worship (John 1:1-5)

Roz Losey

In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
All things were made by God;  
without God nothing came to be.  
What came to be through God was life,  
and this life was the light of the world.  
The Light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never overcome it.

Service parts in bold: Everyone speaks in unison.

Parts with an asterisk: \* Please stand in body or in spirit.

\* Hymn #88

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (Verses 1, 2, 4, 6, 7)*

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.

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.

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

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine 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.

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind; bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.

Responsive Prayer

Roz

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

**P: Emmanuel, God with us.**

L: You came into the darkness of that time:

**P: a time of change and stress, uncertainty and doubt.**

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

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

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

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

L: For all who are grieving, we pray:

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

L: For all who are lonely, we pray:

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

L: For all who are anxious, we pray:

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

L: For all who are vulnerable, we pray:

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

L: For all who are beset by challenges, physical or emotional, we pray:

**P: O Lord, you know how it feels to be in pain.**

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

**P: O Lord, you know what it is like to wait in the darkness. ("L" or "P" – can't tell from Teddie's working copy)**

*... Here we offer our personal petitions in silence.*

L: Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you came to be among us,

**P: full of grace and truth.**

L: In you we find our welcome.

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

L: In Jesus' name, we pray.

**P: Amen.**

Everything is beautiful and I am so sad.  
This is how the heart makes a duet of  
wonder and grief. The light spraying  
through the lace of the fern is as delicate  
as the fibers of memory forming their web  
around the knot in my throat. The breeze  
makes the birds move from branch to branch  
as this ache makes me look for those I've lost  
in the next room, in the next song, in the laugh  
of the next stranger. In the very center, under  
it all, what we have that no one can take  
away and all that we've lost face each other.  
It is there that I'm adrift, feeling punctured  
by a holiness that exists inside everything.  
I am so sad and everything is beautiful.

## First Scripture

*Psalm 139:1-12*

Roz

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. <sup>3</sup> You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways <sup>4</sup> Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. <sup>5</sup> You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. <sup>11</sup> If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night', <sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

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

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup> Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup> 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup> 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup> 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Reflection

*God's Presence with Us Always*

Pastor Teddie

Invitation to Christ's Presence – Candles

*At this time, all are encouraged to silently name a particular need that you wish to acknowledge to the Lord. Then, please come forward to light a candle. Or, light a candle in your home if you are joining participating remotely.*

*As you do, invite the light of Christ into your heart, trusting that Christ came into the world to be with us, wherever we are.*

Unison Prayer

To Come

**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. Amen. Not sure if this is where this should go – BEFORE Benediction?**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. We normally DON'T include text – keep?**

\* Hymn #840 *When Peace Like a River (It is Well with My Soul)*

When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

(Refrain): It is well with my soul; it is well; it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control, that Christ hath regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed his own blood for my soul. (Refrain).

He lives: O the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! (Refrain).

Lord, hasten the day when our faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll, the trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend; even so it is well with my soul. (Refrain).

Benediction

*A Poem: For Suffering (by John O'Donohue)*

Pastor Teddie

May you be blessed in the holy names of those  
Who, without knowing it,  
help to carry and lighten your pain.

May you know serenity  
When you are called  
To enter the house of suffering.

May a window of light always surprise you.

May you be granted the wisdom  
To avoid false resistance;  
When suffering knocks on the door of your life,  
May you glimpse its eventual gifts.

May you be able to receive the fruits of suffering.

May memory bless and protect you  
With the hard-earned light of past travail;  
To remind you that you have survived before  
And though the darkness is now deep,  
You will soon see approaching light.

May the grace of time heal your wounds.

May you know that though the storm may rage,  
Not a hair of your head will be harmed.

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Some of the Liturgy written by Christine Chakoian, pastor at Westwood Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, California and provided for free distribution.