

**Weekly Devotion based on Psalms: Blue Christmas**

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020**

[UCA congregations: AML, Drysdale, Lara, Portarlinton & St. Leonards]

*SILENCE...*

*Welcome*

Whoever you are, wherever you come from, we warmly welcome you to our weekly devotion based on selected Psalms and Isaiah.

*Today, we welcome you especially to this Blue Christmas devotion, a time when we can, with others, acknowledge the "blue" feelings we have at Christmas time, the reasons for them, and offer them to God. This time has been called the "long dark night of the soul" and "the winter of our discontent" in which memories of past and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming.*

*For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult. For others, it may be Christmas Eve, or New Year's Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year. In this service, we will have some singing appropriate to the season, recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We will invite you to reflect on the pain, the loneliness, and the sadness you may feel and offer it to God for healing and transformation. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone. Always remember that God knows your pain and loves you unconditionally.*

*Opening Words*

For you, O God, our souls in silence wait.

***Truly our hope is in you.***

*Opening Prayer*

God of abundant mercy, you have given us grace to pray with one heart and one voice, even though our hearts are broken and our voices tremble with grief and sorrow. Comfort, comfort, Lord, your Holy people. Comfort those of us who sit in darkness, mourning, wounded and feeling alone. Speak to us of the peace that awaits us, of the balm of healing for our weary and wounded souls. We ask all this, trusting in the promise you have made to hear the prayers of two or three who have gathered in the Name of your Holy Child, Jesus.

***Amen.***

*Psalms 23*

The Lord is my shepherd.

***I shall not want***

He makes me lie down in green pastures

***and leads me beside still waters.***

He revives my soul

***and guides me along right pathways for his name's sake.***

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;

***for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.***

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;  
***you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.***  
Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
***and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.***

*Hymn:* TiS 312 Once in royal David's city - vs 1

## *THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD*

**Isaiah 40** (*selected verses*)

"Comfort, comfort my people" says your God. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that the time of service is ended ... Look up to the heavens! Who made the stars, if not the One who drills them like an army, calling each one by its own name? So mighty is God's power and strength that not one fails to answer. Israel, why then do you complain that our 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 one can fathom the depths of God's understanding. God gives power to the faint and strength to the powerless. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

*Hymn:* TiS 312 Once in royal David's city - vs 2

*Psalm 22*

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

***O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but I find no rest.***

In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

***It was you who took me from the womb, you who kept me safe upon my mother's breast; since my mother bore me, you have been my God.***

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

***God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted; God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God!***

*Psalm 98*

I will sing about the wonders of Your love forever, O God!

I will proclaim Your faithfulness to everyone I meet – young and old.

For Your merciful love lasts forever, as constant as the heavens above.

Blessed are those who trust in You, who walk in the light of Your presence.

*Hymn:* TiS 312 Once in royal David's city - vs 4

*Silent reflection*

## *CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE*

Emmanuel - God with us, in this Advent season of waiting and anticipating the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah; we often find ourselves uncomfortable, uneasy, worried, and sad. The lights and festivities, the music, the joy around us, often make us more unquiet, more out of step, feeling even more disconnected and different.

***Come, holy Child of God***

Some of these feelings come from false expectations. Others come from real situations and issues that the communities here and beyond have experienced during the COVID19 pandemic. Trusting in your grace and mercy, we name these situations and face the pain and dislocation they caused. May your steadfast love and wisdom O God offer peace and wholeness at this time.

*Silence*

**Sung response:** O Lord hear my Prayer - Taize

*O Lord hear my prayer*

*O Lord hear my prayer*

*When I call answer me*

God of Light and Life, we light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues involving physical or mental health. We especially remember those struggling with cancer, depression, or thoughts of suicide. May its light remind us all of the healing available to us in Christ Jesus.

Hear our prayers for the vulnerable in our communities and beyond.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer*

*O Lord hear my prayer*

*Come and listen to me*

We light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues involving financial concerns, job loss, seemingly insurmountable debt. May its light remind us all that you are the Great Provider, you will give us our daily bread. Empowering God, help and guide those in position of power to share resources and care for those in need.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer*

*O Lord hear my prayer*

*When I call answer me*

We light this candle for all those who grieve. You know our deepest need, O God, you understand our pain - lost dreams, lost opportunities and the separation of death. May its light remind us that we are not orphaned, we are not alone. Grant us grace that in pain we may find comfort and healing in sorrow hope.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer  
O Lord hear my prayer  
Come and listen to me*

We light this candle for all those who wrestle with the chains of addiction. Help us to name that which enslaves us and face it: [food, alcohol, drugs, shopping, escapism, self-medication, and self-abuse in all its forms]. May this candle bring your light to those secret, and not so secret activities of imprisonment. Hear our prayers for deliverance and freedom; help us and those we love to break the hold of these addition.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer  
O Lord hear my prayer  
When I call answer me*

We light this candle for all those who are victims of violence. May its light lead us to peace, safety, and truth. God of justice hear the desperate cries of the survivors of such injustice and may they find a future full of hope.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer  
O Lord hear my prayer  
Come and listen to me*

We light this candle for all those who are experiencing the pain of broken relationships with family, children, spouses, and friends. May its light remind us of the pure communion you desire for all your creation. Our desire for this same communion makes estrangement so painful. Forgiving God, help us find a pathway for healing: forgiving others and forgiving ourselves.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer  
O Lord hear my prayer  
When I call answer me*

We light this candle for all those who are suffering the consequences of war, famine, and terrorism. May its light remind us of your holy calling to everyone who believes you are the light of the world. Change the hearts of all who resort to violence, who seek revenge. Protect those who find themselves far from home serving their nations or the needy. We know you are in the midst of those in anguish and pray that your healing presence will be seen, felt, and embraced.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer  
O Lord hear my prayer  
Come and listen to me*

We light this candle for all those who are estranged from you, who are besieged with doubts, who are overwhelmed by the world and do not claim your presence in their lives. We pray for them, and therefore ourselves, for we confess that each of us knows this condition. Lord may the light of your love lead us all home to you.

*Silence*

**Sung response:**

*O Lord hear my prayer  
O Lord hear my prayer  
When I call answer me*

*O Lord hear my prayer  
O Lord hear my prayer  
Come and listen to me*

We ask all these things in the strong name of Jesus.

**Amen.**

*Lord's Prayer*

*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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

**THE BLESSING**

The Psalmist writes: "You have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight. Surely everyone stands as a mere breath." May we go, breathing deeply from the grace of God, that each day with which we are blessed to live be one that does good in the world, that reflects the love of God, and brings praise to God.

**Acknowledgment**

*Blue Christmas service adapted from [aaeccasper@aol.com](mailto:aaeccasper@aol.com) and [Spill the Beans](#) online resources for Advent & Christmas 2020*

*Psalm 23 – Uniting in Worship*

*Coryule Sings Christmas Coryule Chorus CD – O little town of Bethlehem*

*Taize music – O Lord hear my prayer*

*Prepared by Rev Temukisa Amituana 'i-Vaeluaga & Rev Sani Vaeluaga*