



**Pacific Beach**  
United Methodist Church



# Blue Christmas

**Saturday, December 21, 2024**

**The Longest Night**

[www.lajollaunitedmethodist.org](http://www.lajollaunitedmethodist.org)

## WE GATHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Gathering Music

*Still, Still, Still*

German Carol/Arr. Philip Ledger  
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Welcome & Blessing

Call to Worship

One: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be. What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

All: **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

† Opening Hymn

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

UMH 230

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;  
above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!
3. How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;  
so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.
4. O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

## WE HEAR OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Scripture

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 (NRSVue)

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die;  
a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill and a time to heal;  
a time to break down and a time to build up;  
a time to weep and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek and a time to lose;  
a time to keep and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silent and a time to speak;  
a time to love and a time to hate;  
a time for war and a time for peace.

What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

**Scripture** (Responsive)

Psalm 22

One: 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?

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

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

**All: It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept me safe on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.**

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

**All: 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.**

**Scripture** (Collective)

Psalm 23 (KJV)

**The LORD is my shepherd;**

**I shall not want.**

**He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;**

**he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

**He restoreth my soul;**

**he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.**

**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**

**I will fear no evil;**

**for thou art with me;**

**thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.**

**Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;  
thou annointest my head with oil;  
my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**

**Music Interlude**

*In the Bleak Midwinter*

UMH 221

**Scripture**

Isaiah 40 (NRSVue)

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All flesh is grass;  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers; the flower fades,  
[[when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers; the flower fades,]]  
but the word of our God will stand forever.  
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good news;

lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”  
See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him  
and his recompense before him.  
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms  
and carry them in his bosom  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

## WE RESPOND TO THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

### Candle Lighting

#### Music Reflection

*Love Came Down at Christmas*

UMH 242

1. Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign.
2. Worship we the Godhead, Love incarnate, Love divine;  
worship we our Jesus, but where with for sacred sign?
3. Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine;  
love to God and all men, love for plea and gift and sign

### Litany of Remembrance

One: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their physical features and physical presence. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all creation waits for the light.

**All: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.**

#### Carol

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v1)*

UMH 211

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.

*A period of silent reflection*

One: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

**All: We remember that through you all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

**Carol**

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v2)*

UMH 211

O come thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh  
To us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

*A period of silent reflection*

One: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

**All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.**

**Carol**

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v6)*

UMH 211

O come thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thy justice here  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight  
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

*A period of silent reflection*

One: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

**All: We remember the one who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.**

**Carol**

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v7)*

UMH 211

O come desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind  
Bid then our sad, divisions cease, and be thyself our King of Peace  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

*A period of silent reflection*

### **The Prayers of the People**

One: God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts – sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words. Lord, hear our prayer,

**All: And in your merciful love, answer.**

One: God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too, but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life. We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and alone. We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm. Lord, hear our prayer.

**All: And in your merciful love, answer.**

One: God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season. We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us, both here and throughout the world, who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden, that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in thy peace. Lord, hear our prayer.

**All: And in your merciful love, answer.**

One: God of love, in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts. Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes. Lord, hear our prayer,

**All: And in your merciful love, answer.**

One: Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake. Amen.

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little lord Jesus laid down his sweet head  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.  
I love thee, lord Jesus, look down from the sky And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.
3. Be near me lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

**Scripture**

Luke 2:1-7 (NRSVue)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

**One:** One legend we celebrate in this season tells how a few brave fighters, defending their temple, had only enough oil to light the sacred lamp for one day, but it burned eight days until relief arrived. Another legend tells how in a little hill town a homeless couple with tax problems took shelter in a stable among the animals and gave birth to a light that would change the world. Let us pray.

**All:** **Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery and a new day coming. Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, and let it go forth with us into the darkness, this night and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn.**

**One:** Lighten our darkness, we beseech you, O God; give us light in the night season; and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night. Amen.

## WE FOLLOW CHRIST INTO THE WORLD

**Collective Scripture**

Psalm 121 (NRSVue)

**I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?**



**My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The Lord is your keeper;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day  
nor the moon by night.  
The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
The Lord will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and forevermore.**

† **Closing Hymn**

*Silent Night*

UMH 239

1. Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Prayer: 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.

2. Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

Prayer: Another day will come, O God. I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy Peace. Amen.

3. Silent night, holy night, Son of god, love's pure light;  
radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

† **Benediction**

Liturgical elements from *Discipleship Ministries (UMC)* and *The Abingdon Worship Annual*.

**Pastors:** Rev. Lori Leopold and Rev. Bob Rhodes  
**Organist:** Bob Wuertz  
**Pianist:** Rebecca Cosford  
**Ushers:** Dan Martin, Peter McCreight  
**Tech Team:** Cam Rhodes

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**LJUMC Ministry Team**

Rev. Bob Rhodes, Lead Pastor; Bob Wuertz, Music Ministries Director;  
Theresa Erb, Office Manager; Emilio Valente, Information Technology Director;  
Erin Wyr, NS Executive Director