



# ALL SAINTS'

## Episcopal Church

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## Blue Christmas Service

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

*Please join us in prayerful meditation before the service.  
We ask that you turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices.*

### **The Gathering of the People**

*The congregation stands.*

*President:* Light and peace, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*People:* **Thanks be to God.**

*President:* If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night," darkness is not dark to you, O Lord; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike. Psalm 139:10-11

Let us pray.

### **Collect For Advent**

*President:* Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### **The Proclamation of the Word**

*The congregation is seated for the reading of God's word.*

*Isaiah 9:2-7*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,

the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders;

and he is named Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David

and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

*The psalm is read in unison*

*Psalm 121*

**I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,  
From whence cometh my help.  
My help cometh from the Lord,  
Which made heaven and earth.  
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:  
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.  
Behold, he that keepeth Israel  
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.  
The Lord is thy keeper:  
The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.  
The sun shall not smite thee by day,  
Nor the moon by night.  
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:  
He shall preserve thy soul.  
The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in  
From this time forth, and even for evermore.**

*All stand for the reading of the gospel.*

*Luke 2:8-20*

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

*President:* The Gospel of the Lord.

*People:* **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

**Reflection**

the Rev’d Elizabeth Shows Caffey

*You are invited into a time of quiet reflection in response to the gospel.*

**Reflection Music:** *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Soloist: Laurie Burlington

*Congregation stands for the Litany.*

**Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Litany of Remembrance**

*President:* We light this Advent candle to remember those persons who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season which anticipates Christmas.

*People:* **May God’s eternal love surround them.**

**Hymn 111:** *Silent night, Holy night* – with adapted verses

Soloist: Laurie Burlington

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.

*President:* We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. 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.

*People:* **Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

**Hymn:**

Silent night, holy night  
griefs abound, ever in sight,  
Christ now comes in manger bare,  
Holds our loved ones in his holy care.  
Joy, at last, to be ours.  
Joy, at last, to be ours.

*President:* 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 of difficult times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

*People:* **Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.**

**Hymn:**

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!

*President:* This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

*People:* **Let us remember the one who shows the way and who goes with us into our tomorrows.**

**Hymn:**

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.

## **Intercessions**

*President:* In the spirit of this season, let us now ask our God for what we need for ourselves as we participate in the Christmas season as people coping with loss, pain, suffering, loneliness, grief, sadness. In response to the words, “Loving God, hear our prayer”, you are invited to respond with “And in your merciful love, answer.”

God, we come to you as Christmas dawns with pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words.

Loving God, hear our prayer,

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

*President:* Compassionate God, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. A death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day for us too, but someone has died or moved away. Or we have lost a job, or a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost. Lord help us find our way. Loving God, hear our prayer,

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

*President:* The Christmas season reminds us of all that used to be and cannot be anymore. The memories of what was, the fears of what may be, stifle us. All around us we hear the sounds of celebration. But all we experience is a sense of feeling blue. Please be near us this night. Loving God, hear our prayer,

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

*President:* I invite you to offer your own intercessions and thanksgivings either silently or aloud.

*President offers a concluding collect.*

*Congregation is seated for the hymn.*

**Hymn 115:** *What Child is This?*

Soloist: Laurie Burlington

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste  
to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding:  
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here, the silent Word is pleading.  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste  
to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him:  
The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste  
to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

## **Prayer for the Night**

*Congregation remains seated.*

*President:* Let us pray.

Lord,  
it is night.

The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done;  
what has not been done has not been done;  
let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives  
rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,  
all dear to us,  
and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.

Let us look expectantly to a new day,  
new joys,  
new possibilities.

In your name we pray.

**Amen.**

(A New Zealand Prayer Book, 184)

*The congregation stands and sings together.*

**Hymn 66:** *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus* verses 1, 3, & 4

**Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.**

**Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art:  
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.**

**By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.**

## **The Blessing**

*President:* May Christ, who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace; and the blessings of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

*President:* Go forth in the name of the promised Christ.

*People:* **Thanks be to God.**

## **Worship Participants**

President: the Rev'd Elizabeth Shows Caffey  
Soloist: Laurie Burlington

## **Worship Notes**

We offer many thanks to:

St. James Episcopal Church, Bozeman, MT

<http://www.stjamesbozeman.org/downloads/bluechristmas.pdf>

&

The Rev. June Maffin of North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

<http://www.ottawa.anglican.ca/blue.shtml#service>

&

Grace Church, Charleston, South Carolina, USA

<http://www.gracechurchcharleston.org/>

for posting their Anglican 'Blue Christmas' services online and granting other churches permission to use their liturgies.

We have combined parts of their Blue Christmas services and added our own special touches.