

A Blue Christmas Worship Service

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Sierra Vista, AZ

Opening Song – Peace, Be Still – Rush of Fools

Come to Me,
you who are weak
Let My strength
be yours
tonight
Come and rest,
let My love be your bed
Let My heart be yours tonight

[Chorus:]
Peace be still, Peace be still
Please be still
and know that I am God
and know that I am God

Come empty cup,
let Me fill you up
I'll descend on you
like a dove
tonight
Lift your head,
let your eyes fall into Mine
Let your fear subside tonight
[Chorus]

Hallelujah, Hallelujah [*repeat*]
[Chorus] *2 more times*



Call to Worship *(Please stand, as you are able)*

Presider: Today we come looking for the peace that Christ Child promises.

People: We come, bringing our hurts, our worries, our fears.

Presider: We come seeking relief, comfort, and assurance. With the psalmist of old we say,

People: “O Lord, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low.”

Presider: Let us pray:

All: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent and Christmas season for ourselves, and for our families and friends who live with the struggles of illness or the pain of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

(Please be seated)

Song – My Soul in Stillness Waits – Marty Haugen

Refrain: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits,
truly my hope is in you.

O Lord of Light, our only hope of glory,
your radiance shines in all who look to you,
come, light the hearts of all in dark and shadow.

Refrain x2

O Root of Life, implant your seed within us,
and in your advent, draw us all to you,
our hope reborn in dying and in rising.

Refrain

Call to Confession *(Please stand, as you are able)*

- Presider:** Dear Lord, we come to you this evening to express our distance and confusion regarding our relationship with you:
- People:** **You know that we come to you with heavy hearts that we find hard to unburden. It is particularly in this time of year when the darkness of long solstice nights collides with the brilliance of Christmas lights, that we find it hard to express our losses.**
- Presider:** We may be confused, sad, lonely, and feeling our losses without remembering that you are always there to support us. We tend even toward anger at you, Lord, because we feel in some way it is your will that we are unhappy. Sometimes we feel cut off from you because we allow our many hurts to engulf us. We lack trust in you.
- People:** **Open us to the understanding that you are the source of all love and we need not feel so alone in our grief. Grant us wisdom to know that you — most of all—can be trusted, and that you are with us, especially when we are at our absolute worst.**

Assurance of Pardon

- Presider:** Let us open our lives to God's healing presence and receive our Lord's acceptance of us!
- People:** **We know, God of Love, that you are always with us, even in our very darkest of times. We know that you forgive our many transgressions and that by leaning into your infinite patience and strength, we receive your mercy, your care, and your grace today. Amen.** *(please be seated)*

Hearing the Word:

Old Testament Isaiah 40: 1-5; 28-31

“Comfort my people,” says our God.

“Comfort them!

2 Encourage the people of Jerusalem.
Tell them they have suffered long
enough

and their sins are now forgiven.

I have punished them in full for all their
sins.”

3 A voice cries out,

“Prepare in the wilderness a road for the
Lord!

Clear the way in the desert for our
God!

4 Fill every valley;

level every mountain.

The hills will become a plain,

and the rough country will be made
smooth.

5 Then the glory of the Lord will be
revealed,

and all people will see it.

The Lord himself has promised this.”

28 Don't you know? Haven't you
heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God;
he created all the world.

He never grows tired or weary.

No one understands his thoughts.

29 He strengthens those who are weak
and tired.

30 Even those who are young grow
weak;

young people can fall exhausted.

31 But those who trust in the Lord for
help

will find their strength renewed.

They will rise on wings like eagles;

they will run and not get weary;

they will walk and not grow weak.”

Psalm 31: 9-12:

“O Lord, have mercy on me in my anguish. My eyes are red from weeping;
my health is broken from sorrow.

I am pining away with grief;

my years are shortened, drained away because of sadness.

My sins have sapped my strength;

I stoop with sorrow and with shame.

I am scorned by all my enemies and even more by my neighbors and friends.

They dread meeting me and look the other way when I go by.

I am forgotten like a dead man, like a broken and discarded pot.”

New Testament John 14: 16-20, 27:

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you.

“When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you. In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you also will live. When that day comes, you will know that I am in my Father and that you are in me, just as I am in you.

“Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.”

Meditation – “Grief Triggers” John Pavlovitz blog

Intercession for Healing (all)

Presider The God of strength moves within us;

People the God of courage hears our distress.

Presider The God of hope reveals wholeness to us;

People the God of healing touches us when we are broken.

Presider When the pain overwhelms us, when the burden is too heavy,

People we turn to our God, who is sustaining and redeeming.

Presider When there is loneliness, when there is isolation,

People we turn to our God, who is loving and present.

Presider For God created us, redeemed us and sustains us, and we are not alone.

People Lead us in your ways, O God, and bring us your healing touch.

The Lighting of the Candles and Healing Ritual with Oil

(You are invited to come forward to light a candle for yourself or a loved one. If you chose, you may then also be anointed with oil. This anointing on your forehead is a very old tradition used to give strength on the journey of being healed and for healing others. You may also remain in your seat, quietly listening to the music or singing along.)

**Music during candle lighting and anointing:
"Christmas in Heaven" – Maribeth Johnson**

December hasn't changed
This town looks the same
They still light that tree in the city square
There's red, white, and green shining everywhere
And I wish you were here
And I wonder

Is the snow falling down on the streets of gold
Are the mansions all covered in white
Are you singing with angels "Silent Night"
I wonder what Christmas in heaven is like

There's a little manger scene
Down on Third and Main
I must have walked right by it a thousand times
But I see it now in a different light
'Cause I know you are there
And I wonder

Are you kneeling with shepherds before him now
Can you reach out and touch his face
Are you part of that glorious Holy night
I wonder what Christmas in Heaven is like

Is the snow falling down on the streets of gold?
Are the mansions all covered in white?
Are you singing with angels "Silent Night"
I wonder what Christmas in Heaven is like

Song - "The Prayer" – David Archuleta

I pray you'll be our eyes
And watch us where we go
And help us to be wise
In times when we don't know

Let this be our prayer
When we lose our way
Lead us to a place
Guide us with your grace
To a place where we'll be safe

La luce che tu dai
I pray we'll find your light
Nel cuore restera
And hold it in our hearts
A ricordarci che
When stars go out each night
L'eterna stella sei

Nella mia preghiera
Let this be our prayer
Quanta fede c'è
When shadows fill our day

Lead us to a place
Guide us with your grace
Give us faith so we'll be safe
Sognamo un mondo senza piu
violenza

Un mondo di giustizia e di speranza
Ognuno dia la mano al suo vicino
Simbolo di pace e di fraternita

La forza che ci da
We ask that life be kind
E il desiderio che
And watch us from above

Ognuno trovi amore
We hope each soul will find
Intorno e dentro a se
Another soul to love
Let this be our prayer
Let this be our prayer
Just like every child
Just like every child

Needs to find a place
Guide us with your grace
Give us faith so we'll be safe

E la fede che
Hai acceso in noi
Sento che ci salvera

"Somewhere In Your Silent Night"

– Casting Crowns

Somewhere in your silent night
All is calm and all is bright
Everywhere but in your heart tonight
They're singing carols of joy and
peace
But you feel too far gone
and too far out of reach

Somewhere in your silent night
Heaven hears the song
your broken heart has cried
Hope is here, just lift your head
For love has come to find you

From heaven's height to manger low
There is no distance
the Prince of Peace won't go
From manger low to Calvary's hill
When your pain runs deep
His love runs deeper still
He has always loved you, child
And He always will

Somewhere in your silent night
Heaven hears the song
your broken heart has cried
Hope is here, just lift your head
For love has come to find you
Somewhere in your silent night

Lift your head
Lift your heart
Emmanuel will meet you where you
are
He knows your hurt
He knows your name
And you're the very reason that He
came

Somewhere in your silent night
Heaven hears the song
your broken heart has cried
Hope is here, just lift your head
For love has come to find you
Somewhere in your silent night

Love will find you
Love will find you
Love will find you

Prayer of Supplication

Presider Let us pray.
Even in the waiting,

People: God is with me.

Presider: The true light, which enlightens everyone, has come into the world.

**All: Holy One of Blessing and Healing, come enlighten this night.
Open my heart to the brightness of your love. Release my fears
and revive my hope, that I may rest well and secure in your care.
Let me rise in the morning to a new day, a better day, tomorrow.
Amen.**

"My Christmas Prayer" – Don Moen

The lights of the city shine bright red and green
But sometimes the season is not what it seems
In heartache or joy let me rest in Your care
Be near me Lord Jesus
This is my Christmas prayer

The wise men brought treasures,
the shepherds bowed down
The angels were singing their glorious sound
I have no great riches, no gift to impart
What can I give You?
Lord, I will give my heart

Be near me Lord Jesus,
I ask You to stay
Close by me forever, I pray
Through the storm, through the night
Hold me close, be my light, show the way
Bless all of Your children, we need Your embrace
We hunger for mercy, and long for Your grace
Our grateful devotion is all we can bring
We praise You, we bless You
Jesus, our Savior and King

How great is the gift
just to know You are there
Be near me, Lord Jesus
Be near me, Lord Jesus
This is my Christmas prayer

Benediction

Presider: May the Spirit's power and mystery go before us, to show us the way, to shine above us to lighten our world, to lie beneath us to bear us up, to walk with us and give us companionship, and to glow and flow within us to bring us comfort and joy once more. **Amen.**

Closing Song – "My Little Prayer" – David Archuleta

Heavenly Father, I am grateful
For your eternal presence
I am learning to be patient
And that you are really there

Sometimes I am afraid
And I know that's lacking faith
But I'm beginning to understand
That for me you have a plan

Heavenly Father, I am grateful
For you sending your son
To die so that I live
And for never giving up

I'm learning everyday
That I won't always have my way
But I'm beginning to understand
That for me you have a plan

Heavenly Father, I am grateful
For you hearing my prayer
I am learning to be patient
And that you are really there

There are answers I'm receiving
No, they're not always immediate
Sometimes I have felt a feeling
That's when I kneel down in prayer

You show me you hear my prayer
I'm amazed by how you care

Cause you hear
My little prayer



Please join us in some refreshments and conversation after the service.





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