

# *A Blue Christmas Worship Service*

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Sierra Vista, AZ*

*(Lyrics for all songs at the end of the service order below)*



**December 16 5pm 2023**

**Welcome**

**Rev. Allison Cornell**

## Opening Song – Get me through December – Alison Krauss

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

Presider: God of Mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent Season, for ourselves and our families who live with the painful memories of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past.

**People: We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.**

Presider: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.

**People: For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, God has broken in pieces.**

Presider: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**People: And the Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth, and we have seen his glory.**

Presider: In him was life, and that life was the light of all.

**People: The light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has never, ever been able to put it out.**

### Candle lighting with Song *(Please come and light one or more candles for those you are remembering tonight)*

The Longest Night - Peter Mayer

Gather Hymnal #339 - Warm the time of Winter (Haas)

### 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 always, 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 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: Sirach 38: 16, 18-23**

My child, let your tears fall for the dead,  
and as one in great pain begin the lament...  
Let your weeping be bitter and your wailing fervent;  
make your mourning worthy of the departed,  
for one day or two, to avoid criticism;  
then be comforted for your grief.  
For grief may result in death,  
and a sorrowful heart saps one's strength.  
In calamity, grief continues,  
but the life of the poor is a curse to the heart.  
Do not give your heart to grief;  
drive it away and remember your own end.  
Do not forget, there is no coming back;  
you do the dead no good, and you injure yourself.  
Remember his fate, for yours is like it;  
yesterday it was his, and today it is yours.

When the dead are at rest, let their remembrance rest, too,  
and be comforted for them when their spirits have departed.”

**Psalm 55: 1-2,4-8**

- 1 Listen to my prayer, O God,  
And do not hide Yourself from my plea.**
- 2 Listen to me and answer me;  
I am restless and distraught in my complaint and distracted**
- 4 My heart is in anguish within me,  
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.**
- 5 Fear and trembling have come upon me;  
Horror has overwhelmed me.**
- 6 And I say, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove!  
I would fly away and be at rest.**
- 7 “I would wander far away,  
I would lodge in the peace of the wilderness. Selah.**
- 8 “I would hurry to my refuge - my tranquil shelter far away  
From the stormy wind and from the tempest.”**

**New Testament: John 14: 1-6:**

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life.”

**Meditation – The comfort of the stars of night...**

*Amos 5: 8:*

*He who made the cluster of stars called Pleiades and the constellation Orion,  
Who turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night,  
Who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth,  
The Lord is His name.*

## **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.**

## **Stars of Remembrance and Healing Ritual with Oil**

*(You are invited to add a name on a sticker to a star-shaped ornament for the Christmas tree in remembrance of your loved one(s). 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 the healing others. You may also remain in your seat, quietly listening to the music or singing along.)*

## **Music during tree ornament placement and anointing:**

The Sweetest Gift – The Piano Guys

A Different Kind of Christmas – Mark Schultz

Christmas in Heaven – Maribeth Johnson

## **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.**

**Song – My Christmas Prayer – Don Moen**

## **The Lord's Supper:**

Presider: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Presider: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them up to the Lord**

Presider: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Presider:

All glory and honor be yours always and everywhere, mighty creator, ever-living God. You give us your love, even when things go wrong. Jesus knew hurt and pain. Through him you wipe away our tears and fill us with your peace.

And so, we join the saints and angels in proclaiming your glory as we say:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one who comes  
in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, Jesus the Christ, who for love of our humanity humbled himself, was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh you have caused his light to shine in our hearts, to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. In him we see our God made visible and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.

As the time of his death was approaching, Jesus celebrated his last supper with his friends. He took bread, broke it, and said a prayer of thanksgiving. We echo his words, praying:

**Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation: through your goodness we have this bread to set before you, which earth has given, and human hands have made. May it become for us the bread of life. Blessed be God for ever.**

Then Jesus took the cup of wine, raised it up and said a prayer of blessing over the cup. We echo his words, praying:

**Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation: through your goodness we have this wine to set before you, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. May it become for us the cup of salvation. Blessed be God for ever.**

Therefore, Father, with this bread and this cup we celebrate his love, his death, and his risen life. As you feed us with these gifts, send your Holy Spirit (+), and change us more and more to be like Jesus our Savior.

Help us, Father, to love one another, as we look forward to that day when suffering is ended, sorrow is no more, every tear is wiped away, and all creation is gathered together in your loving arms.

And now with our friends and family who have died and who have joined the company of all your saints: we give you glory, through Jesus Christ, in the strength of the Spirit, today and forever. **AMEN.**

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Presider: And as Jesus taught us, we now pray: *(contemporary version)*

All:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours now and forever. Amen.**

### **The Breaking of the Bread:** *(Presider breaks the bread in silence)*

Presider: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is celebrated for us.

**People: Therefore, let us keep the feast. Alleluia!**

*(Everyone is welcome and invited to receive the bread and wine in this church. The bread is gluten free and the wine is real wine. To intinct/dip your bread into the wine, please visit the left altar rail. To sip wine from the cup, please visit the right altar rail. If you prefer a priest blessing instead of the bread and wine, please visit either rail and cross your arms over your chest)*

## **Post Communion Prayer:**

Presider: Let us pray:

**All: Almighty God, we thank you that in your great love you have fed us with the spiritual food and drink of Christ's last supper, and have given us a foretaste of your heavenly banquet. Grant that this holy communion may be to us a comfort in our distress, and a pledge of our inheritance in that kingdom where there is no death, neither sorrow nor crying, but fullness of joy with all your saints, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

## **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 Christmas Card – Steven Curtis Chapman**

*Please join us for some refreshments and conversation after the service in the Parish Hall.*

## **Songs and Lyrics for A Blue Christmas Worship Service 2023**

### **Get me through December - Alison Krauss**

How pale is the sky that brings forth the rain  
As the changing of seasons prepares me again  
For the long bitter nights and the wild winter's day  
My heart has grown cold, my love stored away  
My heart has grown cold, my love stored away

#### *Refrain:*

I've been to the mountain, left my tracks in the snow  
Where souls have been lost and the walking wounded go  
I've taken the pain, no girl should endure  
But faith can move mountains of that I am sure  
Faith can move mountains of that I am sure  
Just get me through December  
A promise I'll remember

Get me through December  
So I can start again  
No divine purpose brings freedom from sin  
And peace is a gift that must come from within  
And I've looked for the love that will bring me to rest  
Feeding this hunger beating strong in my chest  
Feeding this hunger beating strong in my chest  
Just get me through December  
Promise I'll remember  
Get me through December  
So I can start again

#### *Refrain*



## **The Longest Night – Peter Mayer**

Light a candle, sing a song  
Say that the shadows shall not cross  
Make an oblation out of all you've lost  
In the longest night

Gather friends and cast your hopes  
Into the fire as it snows  
And stare at God through the dark windows  
Of the longest night  
Of the year

A night that seems like a lifetime  
If you're waiting for the sun  
So why not sing to the nighttime  
And the burning stars up above?

Come with drums, bells and horns  
Or come in silence, come forlorn  
Come like a miner to the door

Of the longest night  
For deep in the stillness, deep in the cold  
Deep in the darkness, a miner knows  
That there is a diamond in the soul  
Of the longest night  
Of the year

A night that seems like a lifetime  
If you're waiting for the sun  
So why not sing to the nighttime  
And the burning stars up above?

Maybe peace hides in a storm  
Maybe winter's heart is warm  
And maybe light itself is born  
In the longest night  
In the longest night  
Of the year

## **“Warm the time of Winter” – by Ruth Duck and Lori True**

When the wind of winter blows, bringing times of solitude,  
fill the silent icy night; be our hearts' compassion.

*Refrain:*

Holy Light, warm our night; warm the time of winter.  
Holy Light, warm our night, warm the time of winter.

When we shiver in despair, when the chill of death comes near,  
Hold us Spirit, calm our fear, while the evening deepens.

*Refrain*

When in days of fallen snow, change confounds or love burns low,  
From the ashes may there rise phoenix of our growing.

*Refrain*

## **“The Sweetest Gift” – Craig Aven, The Piano Guys**

I'm not going to lie.  
Christmas really hurts this time  
Cause you're not here to celebrate with me.  
Tears fill my eyes.  
And memories flood my mind,  
As I place your ornament upon our tree.  
Although this year I have a broken heart,  
It gives me hope and joy as I remember where you  
are.

### *Chorus:*

You're with the Son of God.  
You're with the Prince of Peace.  
You're with the one we're celebrating  
And that thought amazes me.  
Sometimes I still break down,  
Grieving that we're apart,  
But the sweetest gift is knowing where you are.  
You're with the Son of God.

## **“A Different Kind of Christmas” – Mark Schultz**

Snow is falling Christmas Eve  
Lights are coming on up and down the street  
The sound of carols fills the air  
And people rushing home, families everywhere  
*[Chorus]*

Are putting candles in the windows  
Lights upon the tree  
But there's no laughter in this house  
Not like there used to be  
There's just a million little memories  
That remind me you're not here  
It's just a different kind of Christmas this year

### *[Verse 2]*

And in the evening, fires glow  
Dancing underneath the mistletoe

Got your picture in a frame  
And a stocking with your name.  
Oh God knows it's been hard letting go.  
And I can't bring you back,  
But I'll see you again.  
And oh, that thought is healing to my soul.  
I'll miss making angels with you in the snow.  
I guess instead you will be singing with them  
All around God's throne.

### *Chorus*

And I know the Christmas season  
Was your favorite time of year.  
You loved to help us decorate our tree.  
But now that you're with Jesus,  
I can't imagine how you feel  
Cause He's the one who bled and died  
Upon the tree for you and me.

### *Chorus*

A letter left from Santa Claus  
Won't be the same this year in this house because  
*[Chorus]*

There's one less place set at the table  
One less gift under the tree  
And a brand new ache  
To take their place inside of me  
I'm unwrapping all these memories  
Fighting back the tears  
It's just a different kind of Christmas this year  
You might also like

### *[Bridge]*

And there's voices in the driveway  
Family's right outside the door  
And we'll try to make this Christmas  
Like the ones we've had before

And as we gather round the table  
I see joy on every face  
And I realize what's still alive  
Is the legacy you made

*[Chorus]*

It's time to put the candles in the windows  
The lights upon the tree  
It's time to fill this house with laughter  
Like it used to be  
Just because you're up in heaven  
Doesn't mean you're not near  
It's just a different kind of Christmas  
It's just a different kind of Christmas this year

### **“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

*Refrain:*

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

### **"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

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  
*Refrain*

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

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,  
Through the storm, through the night  
Hold me close, be my light, show the way

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

## “My Christmas Card” – Stephen Curtis Chapman

I think I passed you on the busy sidewalk last night  
I think I caught the sadness in your eyes  
While everybody sings their happy Christmas songs  
tonight  
All you want to do is cry

Christmas lights and decorations everywhere you  
turn  
But all you feel inside is dark and gray  
There may be joy for all the world but is there any joy  
for you  
Hold on, Love is looking for a way  
Hold on, I believe it's why love came

So I'm sending you this Christmas card  
To let you know somebody loves you  
And I'm singing you this little song  
To let you know you're not alone  
And I'm thinking, as we celebrate, how Love came  
down  
So every lost and lonely broken heart would get  
found  
And wherever you are, I hope this Christmas card  
Finds you and reminds you  
You are loved

For every one who's been left standing on the out-  
side looking in  
Every one with dreams that never will come true  
When the story of your life gets re-written over night  
Well, this is all part of the Christmas story, too  
And I believe God knows and He's right there with  
you

So I'm sending you this Christmas card  
To let you know somebody loves you  
And I'm singing you this little song  
To let you know you're not alone  
And I'm thinking, as we celebrate, how Love came  
down  
So every lost and lonely broken heart can be found  
And wherever you are, I hope this Christmas card  
Finds you and reminds you  
You are not alone

You're never forgotten  
The God who made you came down to our world  
To let us know wherever we are  
He is with us  
Our God is with us  
And He really wants to let you know  
Just how much He loves you

And I'm singing you this Christmas song  
So you'll know you're not alone  
And I'm thankful, as we celebrate, how Love came  
down  
Now all the lost and lonely broken hearts can be  
found  
And wherever you are, I hope this Christmas card  
Finds you and reminds you  
You are loved



2750 Cardinal Dr. Sierra Vista, AZ 85635  
<https://ststephensaz.org>  
520-458-4432



### Welcome Visitor!!!

Please leave your name and  
contact info. If you'd like to  
speak with someone, please  
check here

You can use  
the QRC here  
to fill out your  
info online.

