

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The First Sunday of Advent – “Hope”

November 27, 2022, 10:15 am

THE ENTIRE SERVICE IS PRINTED BELOW;
YOU'LL NEED NO BOOKS OR OTHER MATERIALS TO FOLLOW ALONG.

The Priest or Leader will say the items in regular type.
You are invited to say aloud the items printed in boldface.

A Blue Christmas Service

A Service for Those Who Find This Season Difficult

Welcome to this “Blue Christmas” service. For some, memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences and situations can become overwhelming. Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or New Year’s Eve can be very difficult and a reminder of the challenges in our lives. In this service, we invite you to listen. We invite you to pray. We invite you to sing. We invite you to meditate upon the pain and anguish you may bring –and we invite you to offer your pain to the Christ child. And we trust that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

Voluntary

Savior of the Nations, Come – J.S. Bach

Greeting and Invitation

Lighting of the Advent Wreath Candles

Leader(s): Today we light the first candle of Advent. Each candle has a meaning. This first candle is “Hope”.

Leader(s): All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen

Words of Invitation (2 Cor. 1:4b-5, NRSV)

Presider: God consoles us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

Opening Prayer

Presider: O God, our God, we shrink before the great mystery of your presence and power. You are the source and redeemer of life; we are the mortal ones who work so very hard to trust in you and the eternity you provide. Only you fully know and understand the places that we find ourselves: between faith and doubt, light and darkness, hope and despair, love and fatigue of spirit, joy and harsh reality, peace and unrest. Only you can deliver us from what seems too real unto the truth of your consolation. We seek not to be comfortable, for that would be selfish and contrary to your call to joyful obedience as servant-disciples. We do seek, to be comforted, for we know that You are our Comforter. So help us in this night, to see beyond the darkness unto your glorious light, to move in heart and mind beyond our grief unto your ever-present care; and in it all to find in this season of celebration your permission to be and to feel as is fully human. For we long to know Christmas despite our pain and sadness, even though it might be celebrated by us in a minor key; in the One who was born to set us free and give us the gift of life. **Amen.**

Silence

The Lightening of the First Candle

Presider: We light this candle to remember all those we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us during this season of holy waiting.

People: May God's eternal love surround them.

All stand and join in singing,

Opening Hymn

Savior of the Nations Come #54



1 Sa - vior of the na - tions, come! Vir - gin's
2 Won - drous birth! Oh, won - drous child of the
3 Thus on earth the Word ap - pears, grac - ing
4 Come, O Fa - ther's sav - ing Son, who o'er

Son, make here your home. Mar - vel now, both
Vir - gin un - de - filed! Might - y God and
his cre - a - ted spheres; hence to death and
sin the vic - tory won. Bound - less shall your

heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.
Ma - ry's son, ea - ger now his race to run!
hell de - scends, then the heav - ly throne a - scends.
king - dom be; grant that we its glo - ries see.

A Reading from the Continuing Revelation of God to People of Faith

Presider: I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you which shall be the darkness of God.... I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope for hope would be hope for the wrong thing; there is yet faith but the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting. Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought; so the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

God, I want "green pastures" in my life. I'm always in search of something better.

People: A place to rest.

Presider: You have the perfect places in mind for me, quiet meadows beside crystal clear water to drink.

People: You know what will refresh my soul.

Presider: Show me those places, I am trying to trust in you.

People: And teach me to follow you every day as if there is no other. Amen.

The Lightening of the Second Candle

Presider: We light this second candle to redeem our wounds. We remember before us the pain and loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, and the loss of health. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, Holy One. We pray that into our broken hearts and open hands, you place the gift of peace.

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

Prayers of Compassion (a time after silent prayer)

Presider: Holy one, you know us inside and out. In your compassion forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

Assurance of Acceptance (based on Isaiah 49:14-16)

Presider: There are times when all we see is the darkness; we may cry out, “God has forsaken me; God has forgotten me.” But God says to us, “ I shall never forget you! I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands!”

By the grace of Christ we are accepted and loved by God. **Amen.**

Prayer of Illumination

Presider: Gracious God, nourish us tonight with your Word, that we may be strengthened and encouraged through Jesus the Christ, the bread of heaven. **Amen.**

Descant

2 Wak - ened by the sol - emn warn - ing, from earth's bond - age let us rise;
 5 Hon - or, glo - ry, might, and bless - ing to the Fa - ther and the Son,

1 Hark! a thrill - ing voice is sound - ing: "Christ is nigh," it seems to say;
 2 Wak - ened by the sol - emn warn - ing, from earth's bond - age let us rise;
 3 Lo! the Lamb, so long ex - pect - ed, comes with par - don down from heaven;
 4 so when next he comes with glo - ry, and the world is wrapped in fear,
 5 Hon - or, glo - ry, might, and bless - ing to the Fa - ther and the Son,

2 Christ, our sun, all sloth dis - pel - ling, shines up - on the morn - ing skies.
 5 with the ev - er - last - ing Spi - rit while un - end - ing a - ges run.

1 "Cast a - way the works of dark - ness, O ye child - ren of the day."
 2 Christ, our sun, all sloth dis - pel - ling, shines up - on the morn - ing skies.
 3 let us haste, with tears of sor - row, one and all to be for - given;
 4 may he with his mer - cy shield us, and with words of love draw near.
 5 with the ev - er - last - ing Spi - rit while un - end - ing a - ges run.

Reflection

Presider: During the period of silence following the reflection you are encouraged to write down grief, fears, losses that are weighing on you this season. You have been given an envelope for your prayers. Please seal the envelope. They will not be opened by anyone and will be shredded unopened after the service.

You are encouraged as you feel so moved to light a candle of hope for the future. After doing so, you may place your envelope on the tree.

Healing stations have set up at the altar rail. Anyone who would like to receive the sacrament of healing by laying of on the hands and anointing may proceed to these areas. Our minister will be available for confidential and personal prayer with you.

Choir Anthem

In the Bleak Midwinter – Harold Darke

Voluntary

In Dulci Jubilo – Marcel Dupre

Presider: Quiet meditative music will be played during this time. You are invited to maintain silence. This time will conclude with a chant. You are invited back into this space of song and prayer as you are moved.

Chant

Creator of the Stars of Night (Verses 1 & 4)



1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night,
 2 In sor - row that the an - cient curse
 3 When this old world drew on toward night,
 4 At your great Name, O Je - sus, now
 5 Come in your ho - ly might, we pray,
 * 6 To God the Fa - ther, God the Son,



1 your peo - ple's ev - er - last - ing light,
 2 should doom to death a - u - ni - verse,
 3 you came; but not in splen - dor bright,
 4 all knees must bend, all hearts must bow:
 5 re - deem us for e - ter - nal day;
 6 and God the Spi - rit, Three in One,



1 O Christ, Re - deem - er of us all,
 2 you came, O Sa - vior, to set free
 3 not as a mon - arch, but the child
 4 all things on earth with one ac - cord,
 5 de - fend us while we dwell be - low
 6 praise, hon - or, might, and glo - ry be



1 we pray you hear us when we call.
 2 your own in glo - rious li - ber - ty.
 3 of Ma - ry, blame - less mo - ther mild.
 4 like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.
 5 from all as - saults of our dread foe.
 6 from age to age e - ter - nal - ly.

A Reading from the Continuing Revelation to God’s People “Advent,” by
 Jessica Powers

Advent

I live my Advent in the womb of Mary,
 And on one night when a great star swings free
 From its high mooring and walks down the sky
 To be the dot above the Christus i,
 I shall be born of her by blessed grace.
 I wait in Mary-darkness, faith’s walled place,
 With hope’s expectance of nativity.
 I know for long she carried me and fed me,
 Guarded and loved me, though I could not see.
 But only now, with inward jubilee,
 I come upon earth’s most amazing knowledge:
 Someone is hidden in this darkness with me.

The Lightening of the Third Candle

Presider: We light this candle to remember ourselves in this holy time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months and for some of us, years of down times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, and the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

People: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

A Reading from the Christian Gospel (Mathew 11:28-30)

Presider: When burdens get piled on top of other burdens, the load can crush us or at least seem like it is crushing, Jesus offers to help carry our burdens and responsibilities. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The Lighting of the Fourth Candle

Presider: 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 goes with us into tomorrow.

A Reading from the Hebrew Tradition “An Unending Love” by Rabbi Rami Shapiro

“We are loved by an unending love.

We are embraced by arms that find us
Even when we are hidden from ourselves.
We are touched by fingers that soothe us
Even when we are too proud for soothing.
We are counseled by voices that guide us
Even when we are too embittered to hear.
We are loved by an unending love.

We are supported by hands that uplift us
Even in the midst of a fall.

We are urged on by eyes that meet us
Even when we are too weak for meeting.

We are loved by an unending love.

Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled,
Ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices;
Ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles;
We are loved by the unending love.”

Closing Prayer

from Ted Loder, *Guerillas of Grace*

Presider: O God of all seasons and senses, grant us the sense of your timing to submit gracefully and rejoice quietly in the turn of the seasons.

In this season of short days and long nights,
Of grey and white and cold,
Teach us the lessons of endings;
Children growing, friends leaving, loved ones dying,
Grieving over,
Grudges over,
Blaming over,
Excuses over.

O God, grant us a sense of your time.
In this season of short days and long nights,
Of grey and white and cold,
Teach us the lessons of beginnings.
That such waitings and endings may be the starting place,
A planting of seeds which bring to birth what is ready to be born—
Something right and just and different,
A new song, a deeper relationship, a fuller love---
In the fullness of your time.

O God, grant us the sense of your timing.

Blessing and Dismissal

Presider: May the God of Grace heal you, body and soul.

May your pain cease. May your strength increase. May your fears and worries be released.

And may blessings, love and joy surround you ---now and always. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn

Christ is the world's true light #542



1 Christ is the world's true Light, its Cap-tain of sal - va - tion,
2 In Christ all rac - es meet, their an-cient feuds for - get - ting,
3 One Lord, in one great Name u - nite us all who own thee;



the Day - star clear and bright of ev - ery race and na - tion;
the whole round world com - plete, from sun-rise to its set - ting;
cast out our pride and shame that hin-der to en - throne thee;

new life, new hope a - wakes, for all who own his sway:
 when Christ is throned as Lord all shall for - sake their fear,
 the world has wait - ed long, has tra - vailed long in pain;

free - dom her bond - age breaks, and night is turned to day.
 to plough-share beat the sword, to prun - ing - hook the spear.
 to heal its an - cient wrong, come, Prince of Peace, and reign.

The Dismissal

Presider: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Voluntary

Savior of the Nations, Come – J.S. Bach

Join us following this service for coffee hour in Fellowship Hall.

All are Welcome!

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH LEADERSHIP

THE R.T. REV. PRINCE G. SINGH, BISHOP PROVISIONAL | THE REVEREND JERRY LASLEY, RECTOR
THE REVEREND DR. MICHAEL CARR, PRIEST IN RESIDENCE
THE REVEREND ELIZABETH MORRIS DOWNIE, ASSISTANT EMERITUS
NADA RADAKOVICH, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC | ANGELA ZINSLI, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
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BILL THEWALT, CLERK | BOBBIE WALTON, TREASURER
KEN DUCK (2023) | KAY VAN NATTA (2023)
FLO GJERSTAD (2024) | ELLEN SAFLEY (2025)
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