St. Brendan the Navigator, St. Francis by the Sea and Trinity Episcopal Churches



BLUE CHRISTMAS

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

7:00PM

PRELUDE: **The Great "O" Antiphons** (with improvisatory interludes) Carlton Russell, cantor; Lorna Russell, viola da gamba

O Sapientia - O Adonai - O Radix Jesse - O Clavis David
O Oriens - O Rex Gentium - O Emmanuel

These Gregorian chant antiphons (no later than the 8th century), sung with the *Magnificat* from December 17 through 23, set the Latin texts on which the verses of the hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel" are based.

HYMN: O come, O come, Emmanuel,*
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.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
who orderest all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

GATHERING

Leader: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: *And also with you.*

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

Let us pray:

God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

A Reading from the book of Isaiah (40:1, 25-31)

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.
Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
'My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my God'?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.
People: *Thanks be to God.*

PSALM 121
Verse: I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come?
Response: *My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth*

Verse: He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.
Response: *Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

Verse: The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
Response: *So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night*

Verse: The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.
Response: *The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth for ever more.*

Verse: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Response: *As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (11:28-30)

'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.'

Leader: The Word of the Lord.
People: *Thanks be to God.*

HOMILY **The Rev. Elaine Hewes**

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,*
O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell thy people save,
and give them victory over the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A LITURGY OF REMEMBRANCE

First Candle:

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts….

Let us pray. Dearest God, thank you for the gift each person we have shared our lives with. We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again, when we are all in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come. Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us, comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness. God of sorrowing, draw near! Amen.

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,*
O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Second Candle:

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss.

We suffer loss in a multitude of ways: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith. The losses that have stacked up in the time of COVID-19 are overwhelming. 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.

Please take a moment to remember the losses. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts….

Let us pray. God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and ever keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection. We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious. We forget so easily that you will be with us in all that we experience. Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives and to be open to the changes which we are now going through. Amen.

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,*
O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Third Candle:

The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives.

We are tossed on the seas of existence, and are reminded again and again how little control we have over the big things in life: when we are born, to whom, the blessings and sorrows we receive, when and how we die. We long for a guide, for help in having a sense of inner direction. We seek the strength and grace to give our lives over to the will of God, and the wisdom and patience to persevere, even in the darkest nights.

Take a moment to remember where God has led you in the past. I invite you to name that, aloud or in the silence of your hearts….

Let us pray. God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to have a sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay. You ask us to be full of faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost, that you are our wisdom and our guide, and to trust in your presence. Your words to us are clear: "Do not fear, I go before you." Amen.

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,*
O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height

in ancient times once gave the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Fourth Candle:

The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope.

We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering. This is the hope of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

Take a moment to recall glimpses of hope you have had in your life. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts….

Let us pray. O God whose spirit is known by those whose hearts are thankful, and who makes cheerfulness a companion of strength, lift up our hearts, we pray, to a joyous confidence in your care. Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow, because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears. Where there is love in life, teach us to find it; help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love. So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others. We ask it, in the name of Jesus Christ whose life is our light. Amen.

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,*
O come, thou Root of Jesse's tree,
an ensign of thy people be;
before thee rulers silent fall;
all peoples on thy mercy call.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Leader: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for all the good things we need: For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas as special people coping with our many different losses. God, hear our prayer.

People: *And in your mercy, answer.*

Leader: For our families and friends, that they may continue to help and support us. God, hear our prayer.

People: *And in your mercy, answer.*

Leader: For any person we have loved who has died, for all the losses we know in our lives, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise. God, hear our prayer.

People: *And in your mercy, answer.*

Leader: For our family and friends, that you may bless them with love, peace, and joy. God, hear our prayer.

People: *And in your mercy, answer.*

Leader: For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas Angels on that faraway hillside. God, hear our prayer

People: *And in your mercy, answer*

Leader: For greater understanding of the lessons of love and acceptance as taught by Jesus your Christ. God, hear our prayer.

People: *And in your mercy, answer.*

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray

THE LORD'S PRAYER
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen

LIGHTING OF INDIVIDUAL CANDLES

Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. I want to invite each of you to offer your personal wound to the God who loves each of us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out: "Give me your pain, come to me… all who labor and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!"

I invite each of you to light a candle there in your home. As you light the candle, remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close until we are able to shine.

These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

CLOSING
As we gather this evening, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather to be

illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May the Christ Child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast, bring light, comfort, peace, and joy this holiday season.

BLESSING

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,*
O come, Desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind;
bid thou our sad divisions cease,
and be thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

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

DISMISSAL

Leader: May the hope of Christ sustain us through the darkness;

People: *That together we may shine again. Amen.*

POSTLUDE

The service was led by the clergy of the Episcopal Churches of the Blue Hill Peninsula:

The Reverend Donna Downs, Priest in Charge, Trinity Episcopal Church, Castine

The Reverend Elaine Hewes, Priest in Charge, St. Brendan the Navigator, Deer Isle

The Reverend Dr. Brent Was, Rector, St,. Francis by the Sea, Blue Hill

The Reverend Carlton Russell, Music Director and Vocalist, St. Francis by the Sea

Lorna Russel, Organist, St. Francis by the Sea

* Note: The hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel" is a song of people in darkness longing for God's light. It is not calling us to rejoice in the worldly form of the word, but calling our spirits and souls to reflect the true hope and joy that only God can give.

Zoom Link:

https://zoom.us/j/5439760613?pwd=MERyMDlaQ1lhOW11aWlXaStGb0NUUT09
Meeting ID: 543 976 0613
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Also Livestreamed on YouTube
Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMeJGIkivki6w5gcWTzkMxQ