

Liturgical Resources for Longest Night/Blue Christmas Service

Words of Welcome

Blessing:

*"Blessing for the Brokenhearted" by Jan Richardson
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There is no remedy for love but to love more. – Henry David Thoreau

Let us agree/for now/that we will not say/the breaking/makes us stronger
or that it is better/to have this pain/than to have done/without this love.

Let us promise/we will not/tell ourselves/time will heal/the wound,
when every day/our waking/opens it anew.

Perhaps for now/it can be enough/to simply marvel/at the mystery
of how a heart/so broken/can go on beating,/as if it were made/for precisely this—

as if it knows/the only cure for love/is more of it,

as if it sees/the heart's sole remedy/for breaking/is to love still,

as if it trusts/that its own/persistent pulse/is the rhythm/of a blessing
we cannot begin to fathom/but will save us/nonetheless.

Call to Worship

1: Creator God, lover of the universe, we come to You in this quiet place
seeking Your reassurance and Your hope.

2: We come in the midst of noise, listening for Your gentle heartbeat.

1: For those who are chilled by grief and pain,

2: bring the warmth of Your love.

1: For those who are overwhelmed by feelings that exhaust and stifle,

2: bring the cooling breeze of Your love.

1: For those who are caught in the glare of expectations,

2: bring the comforting darkness of Your love.

1: For those who find themselves in shadows of anxiety,

2: bring the morning dawn of your love.

1: Breathe courage into our day,

2: whisper strength into our dreams.

1: We ask these things in the name of Your child, Jesus, who was born into a chaotic world of birth, death and rebirth – just like today.

2: Amen.

[Hymn: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (1, 2)]

Opening Prayer: God of love and understanding, we gather here this evening to confront our pain in the midst of the world's celebration. Help us to know that You are present with us in all of our moods and feelings and seasons. Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy and love that You promise to all of Your people through the gift of Your son, Jesus. Amen.

Good News for Our Time and Place

Psalm 13

Isaiah 40:1-11

[Carol: "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" (1,3,4)]

Psalm 121

Luke 2:1-7

[Carol: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (1,4)]

A Time of Prayer:

Call to prayer: *Matthew 11:28-29*

A time for naming and quiet meditation (*invite folks to type names and/or situations into the chat, or unmute and speak them*)

A time of pastoral prayer: Merciful, loving God of all mystery, we bring before you this evening all of our losses: the loss of loved ones and friends, the loss of jobs or good health, the loss of broken relationships, as well as the sense of common loss we share with sisters and brothers around the world. We bring to you our grief, our anger, our guilt, our sorrow, our loneliness, our frustration, and we lay it before you. Bring us stillness, we pray, that we may cover all the feelings of our hearts with folded hands. Give us grace to wait on you silently and with patience. You are nearer to us than we know, closer than we imagine. If we cannot find you,

it is because we search in far places. Before we felt the pain, you suffered it; before the burden came upon us, your strength lifted it; before the sorrow darkened our hearts, you were grieved. As you walk in the valley of every shadow, be our good shepherd and sustain us while we walk with you, lest in weakness we falter. Though the pain may deepen, keep us in your way and guide us past every danger; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

The Lord's prayer (using "sins"): *(invite people to pray along)*

Our Maker, Our Mother, **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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Candle lighting – using Advent candles, if available (folks can be invited to light candles at home during this time)

Read: John 1: 1-5

A candle for remembrance: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memories that bind them to us in this season. (pause -- light candle) May God's eternal light surround them.

A candle for loss: We light this second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace. (Pause -- light candle) Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

A candle for ourselves and our support systems: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Advent and Christmas season. We pause and remember these past weeks and months: the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the joy and sorrow of memories, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends who care for us. We give thanks for all the support we have known. (Pause -- light candle) Let us remember that after every night comes the dawn of a new day.

A candle for faith and hope: We light this fourth candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering. (Pause -- light candle) Let us remember the One who shows us the way, who brings the truth and who bears the light.

The Christ candle: We light the Christ candle, remembering the One who came, in the fullness of time, to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. We remember Jesus, our Christ, who was and is and is to come. (Light candle)

Affirmation of Faith:

from Romans 8

We believe there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and we know that in everything God works for good with those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose. We are sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Passing the Peace

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-5

Blessing:

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All throughout these months,/as the shadows/have lengthened,
this blessing has been/gathering itself,/making ready,/preparing for
this night.

It has practiced/walking in the dark,/traveling with/its eyes closed
feeling its way/by memory,/by touch,/by the pull of the moon
even as it wanes.

So believe me/when I tell you/this blessing will/reach you,
even if you/have not light enough/to read it;
it will find you,/even though you cannot/see it coming.

You will know/ the moment of its/arriving
by your release/of the breath/you have held/so long;
a loosening/of the clenching/in your hands,
of the clutch/around your heart;/a thinning/of the darkness
that had drawn itself/around you.

This blessing/does not mean/to take the night away,
but it knows/its hidden roads,/knows the resting spots/along the path,
knows what it means/to travel/in the company/of a friend.

So when/this blessing comes,/take its hand./Get up.
Set out on the road/you cannot see.

This is the night/when you can trust/that any direction/you go,
you will be walking/toward the dawn.

Benediction:

May we be gentle with ourselves,
remembering that we are created
in the image of God.

May we go into the world
with honesty and thanksgiving,
embracing tears, laughter, and all that is good.

May the protection of God comfort us,
the courage of Jesus sustain us,
and the tenderness of the Spirit embrace us. Amen.

[Carol: "Silent Night"]