

Dear Friends,

Our 2019 Blue Christmas, a service of comfort and hope, was generously supported by our Pastors, office staff, and dedicated church members who volunteered their time and talents to make this year's Blue Christmas meaningful for all who attended. Tom formatted the bulletin in PowerPoint and prepared the slides for Miriam, a new member of our team, to project the hymns and prayers on the Sanctuary's walls. Our office staff posted the event in emails to the congregation, and on Facebook. In addition, they made last minute edits, printed, and folded the bulletins, and Corkie submitted press releases to online publications. Peter sat in for Marion at the piano this year when she realized it would be too difficult for her to play through the entire service. I asked Marion what she thought of the service, sitting on the other side of the piano, and she said with a sigh, "It was lovely." Preparing the altar for the service was a joint effort, and all I needed to say was "Who can help me?" and four creative ladies joined me in the Sanctuary. When it was finished we all stood back and commented on how pretty it looked. Several people offered to bring refreshments, prepare the table, and cheerfully invite people into the Asbury Room when the service ended. Prayers, scriptures, and 8 specific, meaningful readings were individually read, candles were lit, followed by hymns and silent reflections. Kevin Walker, also a new addition to the Blue Christmas team, joined Peter and together they played and sang the anthem 'Gold in Them Hills', by Ron Sexsmith. Pastor Jeff gave a meaningful message that certainly touched our guests sitting in the pews. Following the anthem participants placed their paper stars on the altar with a loss, sadness, concern, or hope written on the back to be offer up to God. We gathered in a circle and prayed the "Lord's Prayer" followed by "Silent Night" as we passed the light of a candle, to the person next to us, illuminating the Sanctuary. Jeff invited those who wished to come to the Chancel rail for anointing with oil and a special prayer.

The following are a few comments I heard following the service:

"On Saturday morning I was coming up with all kinds of excuses not to attend the Blue Christmas Service later that evening. I decided to ignore them this year and I'm so glad I did. The service really touched my heart, I'm so glad I was there."

Another person said,

"This service is not just for those who may have lost someone recently, but for anyone unsettled and concerned with world events and with what's happening in our neighborhoods."

And another shared,

"Because of last night's service I was able to know the comforting words to say to a friend of mine who is having a hard time this Christmas. I was able to say some of the words Jeff said about grief being a show of love, and I quoted from Psalm 121 that the shadow on her right hand was Jesus going through her grief with her."

I am very grateful for the unselfish support given by so many for our Blue Christmas Service.

Chris Fillimon