



Blue Christmas
a service for remembrance and hope

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11

6:00 PM

CHRIST CHURCH AMONG THE OAKS

A SECOND SITE WORSHIP CENTER FOR CHRIST CHURCH, PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLORIDA

WORSHIP: SUNDAYS 9:00 A.M. VICAR: THE REV. SANDY TULL

NSIA COMMUNITY CENTER, 120 MEADOW AVENUE IN VILANO BEACH

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Welcome to Christ Church Among the Oaks

Please turn off all electronic paging devices and cellular telephones before the Service begins. This is a non-smoking area. No open flames are allowed. Thank you.

Welcome to this Blue Christmas Service, a time when we can, with others, acknowledge the “blue” feelings we have at Christmas time, the reasons for them, and offer them to God. We are experiencing the shortest day and the longest night of the year. Certain memorable phrases come to mind at this time: “long dark night of the soul”, “the winter of our discontent” in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult. For others, Christmas Eve, or New Years Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year. In this service, we’ll share in some singing appropriate to the Christmas season, recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We will invite you to reflect on the pain, the loneliness, and the sadness you may feel and offer it all to our great sign of hope, the Christ Child. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Hymn Love Came Down on Christmas

*Love came down at Christmas,
love all lovely, love divine;
love was born at Christmas:
star and angels gave the sign.*

*Worship we the Godhead,
love incarnate, love divine;
worship we our Jesus,
but wherewith for sacred sign?*

*Love shall be our token;
love be yours and love be mine,
love to God and neighbor,
love for plea and gift and sign.*

Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

It is not ourselves that we proclaim; we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, for Jesus' sake. For the same God who said, "Out of darkness let light shine," has caused his light to shine within us, to give the light of revelation—the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. *2 Corinthians 4:5-6*

Let us pray.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

(Please be seated)

A Reading from Isaiah (61:1-4)

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion -- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Psalm 139 *(read together)*

*1 Lord, you have searched me out and known me; *
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.*

*2 You trace my journeys and my resting-places *
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

*3 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.*

*4 You press upon me behind and before *
and lay your hand upon me.*

*5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; *
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.*

*6 Where can I go then from your Spirit? *
where can I flee from your presence?*

*7 If I climb up to heaven, you are there; *
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.*

*8 If I take the wings of the morning *
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*9 Even there your hand will lead me *
and your right hand hold me fast.*

*10 If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, *
and the light around me turn to night,"*

*11 Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day; *
darkness and light to you are both alike.*

Gospel Song *O Come, Let Us Adore Him*

♩ = 100

Traditional

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It features a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 100. The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains the first line of the melody and bass line, with lyrics: 'O come, let us a - give Him all the He a - lone is'. The second system contains the second line of the melody and bass line, with lyrics: 'dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a - glo - ry, We'll give Him all the glo - ry, We'll give Him all the wor - thy, for He a - lone is wor - thy, for He a - lone is'. The third system contains the third line of the melody and bass line, with lyrics: 'dore Him, Christ the Lord. We'll glo - ry, Christ the Lord. For wor - thy, Christ the Lord. Lord.' The third system also includes a first ending bracket labeled '1.2.' and a second ending bracket labeled '3.'.

O come, let us a -
give Him all the
He a - lone is

dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a -
glo - ry, We'll give Him all the glo - ry, We'll give Him all the
wor - thy, for He a - lone is wor - thy, for He a - lone is

10 dore Him, Christ the Lord. We'll
glo - ry, Christ the Lord. For
wor - thy, Christ the Lord. Lord.

1.2. 3.

Gospel of Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

People The word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God.

CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY OF REMEMBRANCE

Reader We light this candle to remember those persons who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us in this season.

Please take a moment to remember those we have lost, I bid you to lift them aloud or in silence of your heart.

(SILENCE)

All *May God's eternal love surround them.*
Lord, each of us takes our loved one by the hand and places it in yours, the God we love. Here we present them to you. Accept our prayers of thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving care. Remind us often of our true homeland and as we continue to journey- heal us and help us find joy.

Hymn *Silent night, holy night,*
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Reader We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health, the loss of joy, the loss of peace and loss in all the stresses which surround us. As we gather up the our pain of the past, we offer it to You, O God. Asking that into our open hands and hearts; you will place the gift of peace.

I invite you to take time to remember these losses, I invite you to name them in the silence of your heart.

(SILENCE)

All God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. Teach us to be patient with transformation, and to be open to the changes we are going through. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and Lead us into your future.

*Hymn Silent night, holy night
 griefs abound, ever in sight,
 Christ now comes in manger bare,
 Holds our loved ones in his holy care.
 Joy, at last, to be ours.
 Joy, at last, to be ours.*

Reader We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas 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, the pain of reflecting on our own mortality. God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the desert to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to have a sense of where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the questions and doubt still stay. You ask us to be full of faith and to remember you are our wisdom and our guide and to trust you. Your words are clear, “Do not fear, I go before you”.

I invite you take this silent time, to reflect and hold up those fears and doubts and give them to God.

(SILENCE)

All Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness. God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide. Give to us that strong sense of inner direction and grant that we may have peace knowing that we are on the right path. Take our lives and mold them to your will. Take all that is lost in us and redeem it into joy.

*Hymn Silent night, holy night,
 shepherds quake at the sight,
 glories stream from heaven afar,
 heavenly hosts sing alleluia,
 Christ, the Savior, is born!
 Christ, the Savior, is born!*

Reader 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.

(SILENCE)

All Let us remember the one who shows the way and who goes with us into our tomorrow. Lift up our hearts with joyous confidence in your care. Guide us when we cannot see or know that a shadow is only a shadow. Where there is love in life, teach us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of your love. So guide us to give comfort and encouragement to others. We ask this in the name of the Christ child, Jesus whose life is our light.

Hymn *Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

Officiant You are each invited to come forward, light a candle, offer a silent prayer, and return to your seat.

Solo *It Is Well with My Soul* by Philip Bliss.

The Prayers

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People ***And also with you.***

Officiant Let us pray.

Officiant and People

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, forever and ever. Amen.

Intercessor In the spirit of this season, let us now ask our God for what we need for ourselves as we participate in the Christmas season as people coping with our loss, pain, suffering, loneliness, grief, sadness. In response to the words, "Loving God, hear our prayer", you're invited to respond with "And in your merciful love, answer."

Intercessor God, we come to you as Christmas dawns with the pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words. Loving God, hear our prayer,

All ***And in your merciful love, answer.***

Intercessor Compassionate God, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. A death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day for us too, but someone has died or moved away. Or we have lost a job, a dream, a goal, a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost. Loving God, hear our prayer,

All ***And in your merciful love, answer.***

Intercessor The Christmas season reminds us of all that used to be and cannot be anymore. The memories of what was, the fears of what may be, stifle us. All around us we hear the sounds of celebration. But all we experience is a sense of feeling blue. Please be near us this night. Loving God, hear our prayer,

All ***And in your merciful love, answer.***

Officiant Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers, creator of the changes of day and night, giving rest to the weary, renewing the strength of those who are spent, bestowing upon us occasions of song in the evening. As you have protected us in the day that is past, so be with us in the coming night; keep us from every sin, every evil, and every fear; for you are our light and salvation, and the strength of our life. To you be glory for endless ages.
Amen.

Hymn **Away in a Manger**

***Away in a manger no crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky look down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing the poor Baby wakes
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus look down from the sky
And stay by my side 'til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children In thy tender care
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there.***

Prayer for the Night

Lord, It is night.
The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.
It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done; let it be.
The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world
and of our own lives rest in you.
The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.
The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities.
In your name we pray. Amen.

The Blessing

May the Son of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness
from before your path; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the
Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always.
Amen.

Final Hymn

Precious Lord

*Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I'm tired, I'm weak, I'm lone
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.*

*When my way grows drear precious Lord linger near
When my light is almost gone
Hear my cry, hear my call
Hold my hand lest I fall
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.*

*When the darkness appears and the night draws near
And the day is past and gone
At the river I stand Guide my feet, hold my hand
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.*

*Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I'm tired, I'm weak, I'm lone
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home*

Dismissal

Go forth in the name of the promised Christ.

People

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

The following people served in tonight's service.

The Rev. Sandy Tull, *Officiant*

Jack Tull, *Reader*

Boril Ivanov, *Musician*

Claire Heusinger, *Vocalist*

Announcements

Christmas Eve Celebration

Tuesday, December 24 - Our Christmas Eve celebration will take place at 2:00 PM here at the Oaks. As always, lots of carols with beautiful music and guest musicians and a traditional worship service preparing us for Christmas Day and the hope we feel in remembering the birth of Christ. Be sure to invite your neighbors, friends and family to celebrate with us!

Christmas Season

Sunday, December 29 - The first Sunday of Christmas is a unique day in the life of the Oaks as again we will use our worship time to celebrate our church and our church family. We will "circle up" and discuss what is meaningful about our worship and what may need to be changed, how we can support and love each other even more, how we can introduce our church to more neighbors, and share communion with each other as disciples of Christ. The comments from this service last year were extremely positive so please plan to participate.

Offerings Online

Forgot to bring cash or write a check??? We now have a QR code in the bulletin for safe, quick, and easy online giving. You will be automatically directed to the Christ Church giving page where you can enter your information one time and it will be saved for future giving.



Our Outreach Liaisons

*So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.
James 2:17*

Learn to Read

Improving literacy for over 200 individuals each year at no cost to the student. Improved reading skills lead to better paying jobs, higher levels of education, healthier lifestyles, and a better overall community.

Elaine Reagan ereaganpvb@gmail.com

Mary Jane Dillon dillonmj43@gmail.com.

St. Gerard Campus

A non-profit maternity home and Christian high school for pregnant teenagers, promoting empowerment through education and strong Christian values.

Paula Allmen pallmen@icloud.com

Stan Sundermeyer srsundermeyer@msn.com

St. Francis Housing Crisis Center / Port in the Storm

Engaging those experiencing homelessness to achieve stability, self-sufficiency, and a viable plan for their future by providing a safe, stable environment, access to essential services, and supportive connections.

Cynthia King cyndiking@gmail.com

Jack Tull tulljs@msn.com

Council on Aging

Provides the opportunity for every person in St. Johns County to enjoy wellness, longevity and quality of life choices within a strong, healthy community.

Sharon Carlson xtraice0922@gmail.com

Pie in the Sky Community Alliance of St. John County

Pie in the Sky is a grassroots, volunteer-based organization providing hope by serving with dignity and respect to alleviate hunger and social isolation through the home delivery of healthy fresh produce to low-income senior citizens.

Dale Hatcher dalenhatcher@hotmail.com.

South Woods Elementary

Creating a secure community that will instill in all students a desire for academic excellence, fostering the development of caring, productive citizens.

Margo Cleary margcleary@aol.com