

Blue Christmas

A Service of Remembrance and Hope



Blue Christmas Worship Service

Welcome to Grace Episcopal Church, Muskogee

I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Indeed, I will heal you.

2 Kings 20:5

Litany

Leader: Hear the cries of your people, O God.

People: **Let our cry come before you, O Lord. Deliver us according to your promise of mercy.**

A brief silence is kept

Leader: O Lord, we wait for you.

People: **More than sentries wait for the morning, our souls wait for you alone.**

Leader: Oh Lord, hear my prayer.
Oh Lord, hear my prayer.
When I call answer me.
Oh Lord, hear my prayer.
Oh Lord, hear my prayer.
Come and listen to me.

Leader: Let us pray together.

People: **Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: Let the cry of those in misery and need come to you, that we may find your mercy present with us in all our afflictions; give us strength for the sake of him who suffered for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Silent Prayer

Lessons

Jeremiah 8:18, 21-9:1

Reader: My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick. For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored? O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people!

Psalms 6: 2-4, 6-8

Reader: Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;

People: **O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.**

Reader: My soul also is struck with terror,

People: **while you, O Lord—how long?**

Reader: Turn, O Lord, save my life;

People: **deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.**

Reader: I am weary with my moaning;

People: **every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping.**

Reader: My eyes waste away because of grief;

People: **they grow weak because of all my foes.**

Reader: Depart from me, all you workers of evil,

People: **for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.**

Silent Reflection

Responsory

Stay with me.
Remain here with me.
Watch and pray.
Watch and pray.

**Stay with me.
Remain here with me.
Watch and pray.
Watch and pray.**

Litany of Remembering

Leader: 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.

People: **May God's eternal love surround them.**

A brief silence is kept

Leader: 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.

People: **Refresh us, restore us, and renew us, O God. Lead us into your future.**

A brief silence is kept

Leader: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmastime. 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.

People: **Let us remember that even after night has fallen, the dawn of a new day will follow.**

A brief silence is kept

Leader: 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 a time of no more pain and suffering.

People: **Let us remember the One who shows us the way, who brings truth, and who bares the light for us all. Amen**

A brief silence is kept

Blessing the Light

Leader: In this darkness we call for Light.
This Light brought forth from the beginning of creation
to shine in the shadows of our souls.
We yearn for this gracious Light to warm us,
to nourish us, and to give us strength.
We call on this brilliant Light to show us our pain,
so that in seeing it more clearly we might
have the courage to bring it to you.
And we ask you, O Holy One, to be with us here
in our healing walk on this darkened earth.

You are invited to light a candle in remembrance of your sorrow or pain.

Leader: Gracious God, you are the giver of every good gift including the precious gift of life itself. Help those of us who have lost loved ones give thanks for the time we shared with them. Help us to remember your gift of time where we could live and love

and enjoy life. Help us to remember the times we shared with those we love. Be with us as we grieve because those we lost are no longer with us. Be present in our sadness as we adjust to life that goes on. Be present with those who have gone before us because we know that you have prepared a place for every person. Help us to bear witness to our loved ones by sharing the best memories of them with others. Help us to rejoice that the love you give us has been shared and will be shared forever. **Amen**

HYMN: *Somewhere in your silent night*

Lessons

Isaiah 43:1-3, 5

Reader: But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Do not fear, for I am with you.

Psalm 71: 1-5, 9, 12

Reader: In you, O Lord, I take refuge;
People: **let me never be put to shame.**

Reader: In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
People: **incline your ear to me and save me.**

Reader: Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me,
People: **for you are my rock and my fortress.**

Reader: Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
People: **from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.**

Reader: For you, O Lord, are my hope,
People: **my trust, O Lord, from my youth.**

Reader: Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
People: **do not forsake me when my strength is spent.**

Reader: O God, do not be far from me;
People: **O my God, make haste to help me!**

Responsory

Reader: Our Darkness is never darkness in your sight:
People: **Our Darkness is never darkness in your sight:**

Reader: The deepest night is clear as the daylight.
People: **The deepest night is clear as the daylight.**

Psalm 23

Reader: The Lord is my shepherd, *
People: **I shall not be in want.**

Reader: He makes me lie down in green pastures,*
People: **and leads me beside still waters;**

Reader: he revives my soul.*
People: **and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.**

Reader: Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil,*
People: **for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.**

Reader: You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;*

People: **you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.**

Reader: Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *

People: **and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**

Blessing: Go in peace and faith.

If you are tired, may you find rest,

if you are anxious, may you find peace,

if you are lonely, may you find comfort.

Know that nothing can separate you from
the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And the blessing of God Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,

Be with you now and remain with you always. **AMEN.**

WORDS OF COMFORT AND STRENGTH

Luke 14:15-24

In this scripture, Jesus shares the parable of the feast to which many are invited but choose not to come, and others who have felt alienated are invited to the feast. In God's divine order, all are invited; no one is excluded.

Matthew 11:28-29

When burdens get piled on top of other burdens, the load can crush us. In his promise, Jesus offers us help to carry our burdens and responsibilities. We do not have to bear them alone, he will always help us.

Revelation 21:1-7

Our world, with its hurts and hatred, is not the way God would have us live. God's kingdom promises something so startlingly new that it takes our breath away. Those who weep now will not weep later. There will be no need for tears.

In Personal Times of Trouble

Psalms 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Cor 3:4-5

And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves ... but our adequacy is from God.

Rom 8:26-28

The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ...He intercedes ... according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Prayer for Help & Strength (BCP adapted)

Most merciful God, whose wisdom is beyond our understanding: Deal graciously with me in my trouble. Surround me with your love, that I may not be overwhelmed by my present circumstances, but have confidence in your goodness, and strength to meet the days to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Personal Guidance

Psalm 25:5, 9

Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.... He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

Prayer for Guidance (BCP)

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For God's Protection

Prayers for Protection (BCP)

Almighty and merciful God, in your goodness keep us, we pray, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready both in mind and body, may accomplish with free hearts those things which belong to your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Personal (Adapted)

O God of heavenly powers, by the might of your command you drive away from our bodies all sickness and all infirmity: Be present to me (*or the name of a loved one*) in your goodness; that my (*his/her*) weakness may be banished and my (*his/her*) strength restored; and that, my (*his/her*) health being renewed, I may bless your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Church Office will close at noon on Christmas Eve.

It will be closed through New Year's Day

We will resume normal hours the first business day following New Years.



Christmas Services:

December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve
Holy Eucharist

December 25, 2021

Christmas Day Organ Concert
From National Cathedral
1:30 PM (Online)

December 26, 2021

Holy Eucharist
10:30 AM



218 N. 6th Street Muskogee, OK 74401

Phone/Fax: (918) 687-5416

Email: Office@GraceMuskogee.org;

Website: www.GraceMuskogee.org



Ministers: All the People of God (BCP p. 855)

Deacon Emeritus: The Rev. Thomas A. Harrington

Music Director: Kenneth Yadon