

## Blue Christmas

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.  
What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.  
**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

### Welcome and explanation

#### Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?  
O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.  
In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.  
It was you who brought me from the womb,  
you who kept me safe on my mother's breast.  
Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.  
Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.  
God does not despise the suffering of the afflicted.  
God does not hide from me.  
When I cry to God, God hears me.  
Thanks be to God.

#### Prayers of the People

God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas season tired and in turmoil.  
As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts.  
We ask your healing blessing upon all that we carry -  
fear we feel may never end, wounds and sorrow we cannot even put into words.  
Lord, hear our prayer,  
**And, in your compassion and love, respond to our need.**

God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been.  
Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas.  
We remember that once it was a special joy-filled day for us, but someone or something precious has gone away from us.  
We have lost a loved one, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream.  
We find ourselves adrift and alone.  
We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn.  
We come to you seeking rest, peace and shelter from the storm.  
Lord, hear our prayer.  
**And, in your compassion and love, respond to our need.**

God of grace, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season.  
We ask that you shelter and sustain all who wander or want or weep, or are heavy laden,  
that we may be lifted up in courage, and journey on in your peace.  
Lord, hear our prayer.  
**And, in your compassion and love, respond to our need.**

God of love, in this Christmas season we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again.

With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts.

Hold us close in your embrace, be near to us in this dark time of trouble, until the light returns and morning comes.

Lord, hear our prayer.

**And, in your compassion and love, respond to our need. Amen.**

Music - Judy Garland – Have yourself a merry little Christmas

St John's blue Christmas tree in Hospice Christmas Tree Festival – full of names of loved ones – those who have died, those people who we cannot be with, those who we are concerned about.

You may be feeling sad this Christmas because you are not able to be those you love. You may be sad because you are suffering or in pain, or because you are lonely. You may be feeling lost and confused because you see no clear way ahead in your life. You may be frightened because of the ongoing risk of covid or another life-threatening illness.

There are many reasons why people are sad at Christmas.

And that's OK. It's better to acknowledge our feelings than to pretend everything is OK when it's not. But what do we do with these feelings, feelings that threaten to overwhelm us at time?

The Judy Garland song and the trees speak to us of sadness at things that are not as we wish they could be and a desire for things to turn out well. The number of names hanging on the trees show us that we are not alone in having such feelings. There are hundreds, thousands of us out there who are struggling right now. And even knowing that is a starter in comfort because we realise we are not odd, we are not out of step. And, most importantly, we realise we are not alone. There are others like us, kindred spirits, trying as best they can to find a way through trouble and fear and sadness.

It's good to know we are not alone. Actually, we are never alone. Never ever. Because wherever we are, we are with God.

It may not always feel like it. It may never feel like it. But nonetheless, it is true. God is there. There is nowhere, no trouble, no human suffering, where God is not present. No place or person or situation is God-forsaken.

God understands our situation, really understands, because he has experienced it all for himself in Jesus, who was born a human baby. He came to be a human, one of us, experiencing all that we experience, both the highs and the lows. In Jesus, God was even willing to experience the utter desolation of loneliness and fear at Gethsemane and even the pain and suffering of death, a terrible death on the cross. At Christmas, what we need to remember more than anything else is that God is with us, we are not alone.

The Christmas story says again and again, "Do not be afraid." Why? Because God is with us. He will not let us fall. He will hold us fast.

Emmanuel, God with us at Christmas and always. Thanks be to God for his great love for us in Jesus. Amen.

### Prayer List

#### Litany of Remembrance

*The first candle is lit.*

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost.

We pause to remember their faces, their voices, their bodies.

We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us.

**We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.**

*A period of silent reflection*

*The second candle is lit.*

We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss:

loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, loss of joy.

We acknowledge the pain of the past and the present, O God, and we offer it to you, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands you will place the gift of peace.

**We remember that through you all things are possible.**

**Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

*A period of silent reflection*

*The third candle is lit.*

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months and even years that have been heavy with burdens.

We lay before you, compassionate God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered.

We lay before you the times we feel we have walked alone in darkness and in knowledge of our own mortality.

**We remember that, though at times we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.**

**We remember that, though winter be upon us and the night be dark, the dawn will come, and the light of dawn banishes the darkness.**

*A period of silent reflection*

*The fourth candle is lit.*

We light this fourth candle to remember the gifts of faith, light and hope that God offer us in the good news of Jesus' birth at Christmas,

a life which began in abandonment, insecurity, and humility, in a time of war and in a poor stable.

We remember that the loving God who came to share this human life with us promises us comfort and peace.

**We remember the One who shares our burdens, who is the way and the light, and who journeys with us into our tomorrows.**

**Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith,  
for renewal and recovery and a new day coming.  
Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts,  
and let it go forth with us into the darkness,  
until we see the dawn.**

*The fifth candle is lit.*

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*Blessing and Dismissal*

May the Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and forever  
more. Amen.