

**In the mystery of the Word made Flesh,
the Maker of the stars was born.**

**We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
For to share our grief, to touch our pain,
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!**

*Song: *"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"* LUYH 61:1,5,6

*Choral Anthem: *"Peace, Peace/Silent Night"* Powell/Bock
Please join in singing st.1 of *"Silent Night"* when directed: LUYH 85:1

*Song: *"Silent Night! Holy Night"* LUYH 85:3,4

*Benediction

Blue Christmas Service

December 22, 2024



Bless you who feel grumpy,
you who are blah.
May you be met right where you are.
Bless you who are weary,
you who are flailing.
May you find rest.
Bless you who are burdened by grief,
you whose heart is so heavy.
May you not be rushed from your feelings,
but may memories make you smile, too,
and may laughter surprise you.
Bless you who can't quite muster
any pre-Christmas cheer.
May you plant seeds of goodness
for seasons to come.
Bless you who bristle at mandatory merriment.
May you sense the solidarity
and the hospitality of the ancient story,
which made room for fear, confusion,
and bewilderment.
Bless you who sit in the darkness.
May you find friendship there.

-Jeff Chu

Worship Participants

Pastor: Dr. Joel Kok ♦ Organ/Piano: Donna Brue ♦ Guitar: Laremy DeVries
Vocalist: Corrie DeVries ♦ Choir Director: Ryan Smit ♦ Readers: Jeff & Sara Ploegstra
Sound: Dennis DeJong ♦ Video: Marty Vander Plaats ♦ CCLI #493458 ♦ OneLicense #A-721171

Psalm 88:1-2

Lord, you are the God who saves me;
day and night I cry out to you.
May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024

Words of Welcome

Call to Worship

Based on Isaiah 40:1-11

LEADER God, who speaks comfort to us, invites us here.
God, who tends to us with gentleness, invites us here.
God, who gathers and carries us, calls us here.

PEOPLE **We long to see the glory of God,
and hear God's voice in our midst.
We wait in hope for the coming Messiah.**

Song: *"My Soul in Stillness Waits"*

LUYH 63:1,2,4

Opening Prayer

LEADER Our Merciful God, in this season of rejoicing, we come to you weary and grieving. In this season of feasting, we hunger for healing and relief. In this season of light, our hearts are veiled in sorrow and shadow.

PEOPLE **But in you we place our hope—**

LEADER hope that those who are weary will find rest, those who mourn will be comforted, those who hunger will be filled.

PEOPLE **The Light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness will not overcome it.**

LEADER Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening

Lighting the Christmas Candle

LEADER We welcome you O Christ, Light of the World. In the midst of our suffering, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.

*God's Greeting

Invitation to Light Candles

As the music begins, all who wish are invited to prayerfully light a candle in memory, in honor, or in gratitude... for healing, for hope, for peace... or simply in defiance of the darkness. You can light your candle from one of the four larger candles and then light a smaller candle. You are welcome to keep your candle lit as you return to your seat.

"I Wait"

"Wait for the Lord"

"Christ, Be Our Light"

LUYH 480

LUYH 908:1,2

Collect

PEOPLE **Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.**

Choral Anthem: *"The First Song of Isaiah"*

J. Noble White

*Affirmation of Faith

adapted from poem "First Coming" by M. L'engle

LEADER Christians, what do you believe?

PEOPLE **God did not wait till the world was ready,
till nations were at peace.
God came when the Heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.
God did not wait for the perfect time.
God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.**

**God did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy, God came to a tarnished world
of sin and doubt.**

**To a world like ours, of anguished shame,
God came and God's Light would not go out.
God came to a world which did not mesh;
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.**

Silence

For the gift of hope in our times of emptiness...

PEOPLE **we thank you, Lord.**

LEADER We come lonely and brokenhearted. We light the candle of Love, knowing that God's love was revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Silence

For the gift of love in our times of loneliness...

PEOPLE **we thank you, Lord.**

LEADER We come weary and beaten down. We light the candle of Joy, knowing that the comfort and help we need come only from God.

Silence

For the gift of joy in our times of sadness...

PEOPLE **we thank you, Lord.**

LEADER We come as people who are anxious. We light the candle of Peace, knowing that Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

Silence

For the gift of peace in our times of uncertainty...

PEOPLE **we thank you, Lord.**

LEADER In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

PEOPLE **The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth.**

LEADER In him was life, and that life was the light of all.

PEOPLE **We praise you, O Christ, our light, for you are our hope, our peace, our joy, and the source of love.**

Song: "Canticle of Simeon"

Words: Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29-35), James Quinn, Frank Quinn; Music: Elkanah K. Dare
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This is the Savior of the world, the Gentiles' promised light,
God's glory dwelling in our midst, the joy of Israel.

Almighty Father, hear our cry through Christ the only Son,
whom in the Spirit we adore for ages without end.

*Song: "Savior of the Nations Come"

LUYH 74:1,6,7

A Prayer of Longing and Waiting

LEADER Holy One, we have waited through many a long night for your coming: like those of old, our eyes have been red from weeping, our minds numb from anxiety, and our hands held out in longing.

And this Advent season sees us waiting again, alongside our own struggles, and alongside a world torn apart by greed and need, poverty and affluence, hunger and obesity.

When will You come to us? When will we see a star we can trust? When will wise ones rise up in our midst? When will humble workers see angels? How long, O God, must we wait for the promises to be fulfilled? How long will You keep us waiting?

So as once more we play the waiting game, unable to bring about the changes we seek, unable to put an end to society's pain, unable to appease all the hunger, help us to be tenacious, unyielding in our expectation that Christ has come, and Christ will come again. Amen.

Choral Anthem: "Sweetest Music, Softly Stealing" E. Hagenberg

The Psalm Reading

Psalm 88

LEADER This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE **Thanks be to God.**

Meditation: Dark Night of the Soul

*Song of Response: "Imagine"

LUYH 72

Advent Candle Lighting for the Long Night

LEADER We come as people who have lost hope. We light this candle as we await the coming Emmanuel, who is our source of hope.