



# Blue Christmas

Grace Presbyterian Church  
El Paso, Texas

December 18, 2024  
7:00PM

## WELCOME

### \*LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH:

Tonight, we come looking for the Christ-child.

**We come, bringing our hurts, our anxieties, our fears.**

We come seeking relief from worry and stress, pain and grief.

With the psalmist of old we say,

**"O Lord, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.**

**Give heed to my cry for I am brought low."**

### \*PRAYER FOR THE EVENING

**God of abundant mercy, you have given us grace to pray with one heart and one voice, even though our hearts are broken and our voices tremble with grief and sorrow. Comfort, comfort, your people, O God. Comfort those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death. Speak to us of the peace that awaits us, of the balm of healing for our weary and wounded souls. Amen.**

### \*OPENING HYMN

*O Little Town of Bethlehem* | No. 121

### CALL TO CONFESSION

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Dear Lord, we come this night to express our failures and confusion in our relationship with you: You know that we come with heavy hearts that we find hard to unburden. It is particularly in this time of year when the long nights collide with the brilliance of Christmas lights, when we find it hard to express our losses. We may be confused, sad, lonely, and feeling our losses and anxiety without remembering that you are always there to support us. We even tend toward anger, Lord, because we feel in some way it might be your will that we are unhappy. Sometimes we feel cut off from you because we allow our many hurts to engulf us. Sometimes, we lack trust in you.**

**Open us to the understanding that you are the source of all love and we need not feel so alone in our stress and our grief. Grant us wisdom to know that you - most of all - can be trusted, and that you are with us, especially when we are at our absolute worst. Amen. (*A time for silent confession*)**

### POURING OF THE WATER & ASSURANCE OF PARDON

*Because of the grace we receive in baptism, we have nothing to fear.*

### FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 43:1-3a

### \*HYMN

*Coventry Carol* | (see insert)

### SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 1:67-79

### MEDITATION

*"Christmas Bells"* | Rev. Janie McElwee-Smith

## THE LIGHTING OF CANDLES & INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS FOR WHOLENESS

*You are invited to come forward to light a small candle in front of Advent Wreath to represent a specific prayer you have this night. You may also go to the Deacons in the four corners of the Sanctuary to ask that they pray with you any request that you have. We hope that these ancient practices will give you strength for the journey that you may find wholeness for yourself and become a source of wholeness for others.*

### CANDLE PRAYERS

One: God who is with us, in this season of looking forward, of anticipating your Son's birth and return in glory, we often find ourselves uncomfortable, uneasy, anxious, and sad. The lights and the cheer, the music, the bright joy around us, often make us more unquiet, more out of step, feeling even more disconnected and different.

Some of these feelings come from false expectations. Others come from real situations and issues that face us or those we love. Some are from events we may influence and some are beyond our control. Trusting your grace and provision, we lift up these situations and face the pain and dislocation they cause within us. We claim your promise to walk with us in bearing them. We claim your steadfast love for us, knowing you will help us find peace for our troubled spirits. We claim your wise and merciful power, that you will meet each of us where we are.

***O come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel who mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

One: God of light and life, we light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues of physical or mental health. We especially remember those struggling with cancer, depression, or thoughts of suicide. May this light remind all of us of power of your saving love.

***O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily: to us the path of knowledge show; and teach us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

One: We light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues involving financial concerns, job loss, seemingly insurmountable debt. May this light remind us all that you are the Great Provider and that you will give us our daily bread. Help us to serve one another and to walk with our neighbors through these unprecedented times, that we may all bear witness to your saving love.

***O come, O come, though Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times didst give the law in cloud and majesty and awe. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

One: We light this candle for all those who grieve. You know our deepest need, you understand our deepest pain – lost dreams, lost opportunities, the separation of death. May this light remind us that we are not orphaned. We are not alone. Grant us grace that in pain we may find comfort. In sorrow, hope. In death, resurrection.

***O come, thou Root of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny; from depths of hell thy people save and give them victory over the grave. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

One: We light this candle for all those who are victims of violence in any form. May this light lead us to peace, safety, and truth. Pour forth encouragement to claim your help in healing physically, emotionally, and spiritually, to trust in your justice, to find assistance, to resist blaming ourselves, and to be confident in the future you have planned for us – a future full of hope.

***O come, thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home, make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

One: We light this candle for all those who are experiencing the pain of broken relationships with family and friends. May this light remind us of the pure communion you desire for all your creation. Our desire for this same communion makes estrangement so painful. Lead us to relinquish the hold broken relationships have on us, to forgive ourselves for our contribution to the breach, to forgive those who have hurt us, and to take steps to mend relationships, when possible.

***O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night; and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

One: We light this candle for all those who are suffering the consequences of war, famine, unbridled disease, and nature's destructive power. May this light remind us that you are always present in places of hardship, bringing light even in the deepest shadows, and new life even when death seems to be prevailing. We pray that your healing presence will be seen, felt, and embraced. Reveal to us how we may join in your work to alleviate suffering, to support those on the front lines of natural and manmade disasters, to pray unceasingly for your peace to prevail in your world.

***O come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind. Bid envy, strife, and discourse cease. Fill the whole world with heaven's peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel***

THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Glory to God* | pg. 35

\*CLOSING HYMN

*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* | No. 123

\*CHARGE & BENEDICTION



## TODAY'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Pastor — Rev. Janie McElwee-Smith

Music Director — Brittney Williams

Accompanist/Pianist — Patricia Provencio