

Blue Christmas by [Rev. Nancy C. Townely](#)

In some instances, this celebration is placed on or near December 21st, which is the longest night of the year. Following this date, daylight seems to be returning for more and more of each day. On this night, or anytime this service is presented, we remember those for whom the holidays are not joyful; they are lonely, in mourning, feeling alienated and cast apart from family celebrations; they are experiencing depression and sadness and yet are often compelled to "put on a happy face" for others, denying their true feelings.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

[The sanctuary or worship area may be used for this service, as well as a fellowship hall in which chairs may be placed in a circle. Near the top of the circle, a table is placed, covered in blue cloth, which covers the entire table, puddling onto the floor. At the back of the table are four blue pillar candles and a large white pillar candle. Votive candles may be placed on the table. It is best if they are placed randomly rather than in rows. A small taper or long wick, or several wicks are available for the people to take the light from the advent candles and place them on a votive candle during the service. This process will be described later in this service]

The setting: If this service is held in a fellowship hall, a large room, or a sanctuary in which there are chairs rather than pews, have the chairs placed in a circle, forming several rows if necessary. If the service is held in a sanctuary in which pews are the seating arrangement, invite the people to sit up closer to the front of the church. Be careful about this. For some, just being in this service is difficult enough; so if you sense that someone needs to sit where they want to sit, let them do it.

Centering Music: [note: this music should be quiet in intensity, but should not be morose or depressing] You may want to use recorded music: If you have some favorite songs which are pensive and quiet, fitting the opening mood of the service, play several of them. I have found the following to be useful for this service; however, these CD may not be available. You will have to check on them.]

1.] "Wherever You Go: Songs of Openness to New Life" by the Monks of Weston Priory, CD 1035, published by The Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, Inc., Weston, VT 05161

Songs: "Anything Happens"; "If Anyone Loves Me"; "O Lord, Be Not Far"; "A Light Has Shone"

2.] "Songs of Angels: Christmas Hymns & Carols" Robert Shaw and Robert Shaw Chamber Singers: CD-80377, 1994 TELARC,

Songs: "Coventry Carol"; "In the Bleak Midwinter"

3.] "You Are Mine", the best of David Haas, Volume 2, CD-341, GIA Publications

Song: "You Are Mine"

Call to Worship:

L: In the midst of festivities, shouts, and bright lights, we feel the darkness of our souls.

P: Come, God of power and Light, help us.

L: In the midst of gatherings, we feel alone and alienated.

P: Come, God of peace and Hope, hear our cries.

L: In the midst of celebration, our hearts cry out.

P: Lord, hear us and come to us. Bring us peace. AMEN.

THE BRINGING IN OF THE LIGHT: *You may have an acolyte or some other person bring in the light and light the four blue advent candles on the table.*

***Hymn #242 (UMH) "Love Came Down at Christmas"**

Opening Prayer:

God of love and understanding, we gather here this evening to confront our pain in the midst of the world's celebration. Help us to know that you are present with us in all of our moods and feelings and seasons. Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy and love that you promise to all of your people through the gift of your son Jesus. AMEN.

Scripture Readings: *[Note: You may ask three people to read, or have one person other than the worship leader read the "Readers" parts]*

Leader: 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.

Reader 1: Luke 14: 15-24

Leader: 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.

Reader 2: Matthew 11: 28-29

Leader: 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 of tears.

Reader 3: Revelation 21: 1-7

*Hymn (UMH 220) "Angels from the Realms of Glory"

OR

*Song (TFWS 2095) "Star-Child"

CANDLELIGHTING

Leader: We light four candles tonight in remembrance of our loved ones. We light these candles for our own needs. We light one for our **grief**, one for our **courage**, one for our **memories** and one for our **love**.

Reader 1: This candle represents our **Grief**. We own the pain of losing loved ones, of dreams that go unfulfilled, of hopes that evaporate in despair.

Reader lights a candle.....a brief silence follows

Reader 2: This candle represents our **courage**. It symbolizes the courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to share our feelings honestly and openly with each other, and to dare to hope in the midst of pain.

Reader lights a candle.....a brief silence follows

Reader 3: This candle represents our **memories**. For the times we laughed together, cried together, were angry at each other or overjoyed with each other. We light this candle for the memories of caring and joy we shared together.

Reader lights a candle.....a brief silence follows

Reader 4: This candle represents our **love**. The love we have given, and the love we have received. The love that has gone unacknowledged and unfelt, and the love that has been shared in times of joy and sorrow.

Reader lights a candle.....a brief silence follows

Leader: You are invited to come forward to light one of the votive candles which represents your burdens, griefs, sorrows, all those things which make Christmas a "blue" time for you. You may speak the name or the event if you wish to do so as you light the candle. Then you may return to your seat.

When all people have had the opportunity to light candles, the leader continues.....

Leader: In the center of this circle (or table) we light the Christ candle, remembering that Jesus Christ is always in the center of our lives. He hears our cries, he knows our hearts and, in the midst of all our thoughts and emotions, he offers us hope and healing.

Leader lights the Christ Candle

Leader: Let us pray....

Comforting God, wrap us in your presence in this time of remembrance. With these candles, help us find your light, a light that will guide us day-by-day, step-by-step, as we try to live life fully and wholly. We cherish the special ways in which our loved ones have touched us. We thank you for the gift their lives have been to us. Now comfort us. Encourage us. Empower us. AMEN.

*Hymn (UMH 239) "Silent Night, Holy Night"

Blessing:

Leader: Go in peace, knowing that the God, whose love created this world, sent Jesus into the same world to be our friend, companion, and Savior. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

People: Thanks be to God. AMEN.

Sending forth Music:

Recommended: TFWS 2051 "I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry"