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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **BLUE CHRISTMAS December 21, 2020** (Service adapted and inspired by Thom Shuman and Candles and Conifers by Ruth Burgess)   **THE INVITATION**   **CALL TO WORSHIP** Leader: Whoever we are, we come this night: **People: We are the lonely, we are those who mourn, we are the fearful, we are those who are empty.** Leader: Whoever we are, we come this night: **People: We are filled with questions, we struggle with doubts, we wear our hearts on our sleeves, we sit in the back of sanctuaries.** Leader: Whoever we are, we come this night: **People: We long to hear angels in the night, we wish to feel joy in our hearts, we search for a place at the table, we hope to find grace under the tree.** Leader: Whoever we are, we come this night: **People: For God has promised to meet us here and to welcome us for who we are.**   **SONG** Comfort, Comfort My People   **PRAYER** (Unison) **Holy God of Advent, you became weak so we would find strength in moments of heartbreak; you left the safety of heaven to wander the wilderness of the world, holding our hands when we feel hopeless; you set aside your glory to hold our pain so we might be healed, even when there seems to be no hope; you became one of us, so we would never be alone in any moment, in any circumstance. So come now, Child of Bethlehem, to strengthen us in these days. May we feel your presence in a way we have never known, not just as one born in a stable long ago and far away but as the One born in our hearts. You have promised to go before us: into our brokenness, into hospital rooms, into empty houses, into graveyards, into our future held by God, and you are here, even now, waiting for each of us: to serve us, to hold us, to comfort us, to heal us, to live in us, now and forever. Amen.** **PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS** Leader: There is so much joy in the air this season, O God, yet all we breathe is melancholy sighs. Our grief is a constant companion, who never gives us a moment to ourselves. Our fears crawl into bed to snuggle next to us. **People: We have lost so much: the lover of decades, or just a few months; the self-confidence to face the future, or even the future itself.** Leader: There are carols which speak of glad tidings, and songs about silver bells, winter wonderlands, and parties filled with family and friends, Holy one. Yet, we know all too well the laments of lost jobs, the sad songs of dreams turned to ashes, and the silence of empty homes and hollow hearts. **People: we have lost so much: the job we had held for years, or the one promised to us; the friend who was our compass through life, the family member who was our childhood playmate.** Leader: The nights have grown longer, slowly swaddling us in the shadows of emptiness. While others drive around looking for lights, we draw the curtains shut. We leave the porch light off, hoping the carolers will not stop. **People: We have lost so much: our health which was so vital; our pets who loved us unconditionally.** Leader: We have lost so much, God we hope is truly coming to us, and in the silence we offer all to you...   **A TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION**   **CAROL** In the Bleak Midwinter (verses 1-2)            GTG #144   **HEARING AND RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD Psalm 107:4-9** 4Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; 5hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. 6Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress; 7he led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town. 8Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. 9For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.  **A TIME TO REMEMBER Revelation 21:1-7** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2**And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” 5And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” **6**Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. **7**Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.   **A SPACE TO RESPOND Matthew 8:18-20** 18Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. 19A scribe then approached and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” 20And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”   **A PLACE TO SHARE**   **SONG** Abide with Me (v. 1, 2, 3)   **BLESSING** Leader: In our silence, **People: May the Word dwell in our hearts.** Leader: In our brokenness, **People: May the healing of God make us whole.** Leader: In our pain, **People: May the love of God restore our souls.** | |  | | |