

Service of Compassion and Hope

A very warm welcome to anyone visiting with us today. You are most welcome to participate fully in this service, in whatever way is meaningful to you, of course, observing Covid protocols.

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

People: The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Leader: In him was life and that life was the light of all people.

People: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it.

Processional Hymn: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus CP 88

Words of welcome

Lighting of the candles on the Advent Wreath

Reader: We light our first candle: a single light that the deepest darkness cannot conquer – small – insignificant - but a sign of hope.

People: Let it speak to us of the tiny flame of hope buried within us – the stubborn little light that refuses to be extinguished by all that life has thrown at it.

Reader: We light our second candle: a companion to the first – equally small – equally insignificant – but witnessing to hope that another light brings.

People: Let it speak to us of the lights of companionship – of our families and our friends – of strangers and kindnesses found in unexpected places, that restored our hope in human nature.

People: Refresh, restore, renew, O God, and give us hope for the future and trust in your abiding love.

(I invite you to come forward to light candles for all the losses and griefs in your lives. A reminder to maintain distance from everyone. Please come up the side aisles and go back down the centre aisle. Only 2 per table at a time).

Leader: We light the Christ Candle, which speaks of Christ's presence in our lives, Christ's light in our darkness.

People: God our Father, we give thanks that you have sent your Son Jesus into this world to share our sorrows with us. We give thanks that he promised to be with us in our lives, to be the hope in our despair, the comfort in our sorrows, to be the light in our darkness. Please let us feel his presence with us now. Amen.

Confession and Absolution: BAS p. 191

Offertory Hymn: In The Bleak Midwinter CP 122

Celebration of the Eucharist

Eucharistic Prayer #2 BAS p. 196

The Lord's Prayer BAS p. 211

The Breaking of the Bread, Advent BAS p. 212

Communion Hymns:

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear CP 140

Choir Anthem: Bless the Lord (Ten Thousand Reasons)

Prayer after Communion BAS, p. 214

The Blessing

Recessional Hymn: All Poor Folk and Humble CP 151

Reader: We light our third candle recalling nights of watching and waiting – sleepless – anxious when dawn seemed to ebb further from the horizon and hope seemed forlorn.

People: Let it speak to us of the sureness of morning – of the passing of the darkness of suffering – and the promise of an eternal sunrise, dawning for those we have loved and lost and dawning too for us – though we may yet be in that darkest hour before the dawn.

Reader: We light our fourth candle: marking the closing of the Advent season and the immediacy of Christmas – a time of peace and joy we may not ourselves feel able to welcome – as our spirits dwell in dark and wintriness.

People: Let it speak to us of hope – of being together in this space of healing and wholeness – of our companionship this night at the turning of the year – of faith that we and those we have loved and lost are held eternally in the hand of the One who brought light into being – and who knows each one of us by name.

Prayer: Loving and gracious God, in the quiet of the evening we come to you, trusting that you hear our prayer. We gather in many places, yet together with friends and strangers, seeking your peace and comfort. We come with feelings of deep hurt, sadness, anger, loneliness and hope. We know that your love is deep enough and profound enough to accept our feelings, our fears and our longings that go beyond words. Just as candles break through the darkness of a room, let your light break through the darkness of our souls. Give us courage to open our hearts to your healing love. We pray in the name of Jesus, your Son, Amen.

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11

Luke 2:1-7

Reflection

Choir Anthem: You are Mine

Candle Lighting:

(This year, we will come forward only once to light candles for all our losses, because of Covid restrictions. When the time comes, I will invite you forward. If you are watching at home, you can light candles as you wish, if it is safe to do so.)

Leader: The first candles we light are to remember those whom we have loved and lost, and, in some cases, the loss of opportunity to honour and say good-bye with funerals and gatherings. We pause to remember our loved ones' names, their face, their voice, the memories that bind them to us.

People: May God's eternal love surround them.

Leader: The second candles we light are for our friends and family members or ourselves, who are suffering from serious illness and the anxiety that goes with it. We pray especially for anyone with Covid, and for those who are so anxious about it, and for the medical staff who are working so hard to treat us. O God, surround the frightened with your tenderness, give relief to those in pain, hold the weak in your arms of love, give patience to those who must wait for tests and treatments, comfort those who are lonely, that they may feel your loving presence in their lives.

People: O God, let the healing power of your loving presence be felt in all our lives.

Leader: The third candles we light are for the pain of loss. The loss of relationships, loss of jobs, loss of homes, loss of independence and dignity, loss of innocence, loss of meaning in life, so many losses. And this year in particular, the loss of our ability to gather as we wish, for our loneliness and isolation, especially at Christmas, and for the loss of all that we considered normal and comfortable. We gather up the pain of past and present, and offer it to you, O Lord, asking that from your hands we may receive the gifts of compassion and hope, of patience and strength, of healing and love.

Service of Compassion and Hope

This service is a time of quiet reflection and prayer, a way we can acknowledge our hurts and sorrows at a time when celebrating is expected, but often so difficult for some of us to do. This could be for many reasons: a recent (or anticipated) death of a loved one, broken relationships, illness, the loss of work, loss of a family home, loss of independence, all the effects of the Covid virus, or this year in particular, the terrible things which have been happening in our world which contribute to our inner confusion and sadness.

Tonight we have an opportunity to acknowledge these things and, by prayers and lighting candles, to offer them to Jesus, along with our pain. Hearing the story of how Jesus was born among us and also suffered as we do, helps us remember that he is most willing to walk with us in our valley of sorrow. Seeing the lights reminds us that Jesus is the Light shining in the darkness of our lives with love and compassion. Knowing that we are not alone brings us hope and courage. May you find hope, compassion, courage and companions on the way this night.

Christmas Services:

Friday, December 24, 2:00 and 6:30 Christmas Eve Communion
4:00 pm Christmas Eve Children's Service

Christmas Day: No service

Sunday, December 26, 10:00 am, Lessons, Carols and Communion

Sunday, January 2, 8:00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

10:00 am Carols and Devotions