

# Blue Christmas 2020

## A Service Of Remembrance And Hope

\*\*\* The live service is also available as a video: <https://youtu.be/O2Kh1YSGQFM>

### Reflective Music: He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd – Geoffrey Willis (organ)

*Composer: George Frideric (or Frederick) Handel 1685–1759; "Messiah", from the Novello Edition; Public Domain*

## Welcome

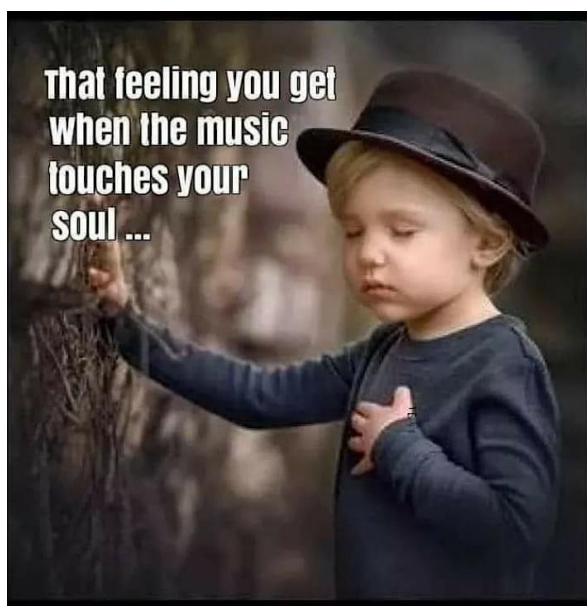
This service is for all those who have lost someone or something important in their life. It is for all those who know pain or are experiencing health problems or are finding things difficult at the moment.

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place.  
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.

## Call To Worship

Today we gather daring to wonder about God who has come in Jesus  
**Today we gather together as a family made one by our brokenness,  
coming with our hearts full of hope**

Today we gather just as we are, knowing God has promised to meet us here  
and to welcome us for who we are



*Contemplative Monk*

### Hymn: Comfort, Comfort, All My People – Geoffrey Willis (Organ)

*Composer: Robin Mann; © R. Mann;*

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### Hymn: Comfort, Comfort, All My People

– Helen Jackson [2:42]

<https://youtu.be/P1x7V9N583Q>

*Music & Lyrics: Robin Mann; © R. Mann; Lyrics Reproduced (below) and Permission to stream the music obtained from ONE LICENSE #A-620587 [MUC] Video: © 2020 the Multimedia team. All Rights Reserved. Posted to YouTube by Mountview Uniting Church.*

## **Comfort, Comfort All My People**

### *Refrain*

Comfort, comfort all my people  
with the comfort of my Word.  
Speak it tender to my people:  
all your sins are taken away.

Though your tears be rivers running,  
though your tears be an ocean full,  
though you cry with the hurt of living:  
comfort, comfort.

Every valley shall be lifted,  
every mountain shall be low,  
every rough place will be smoother:  
comfort, comfort.

### *Refrain*

Though your eyes see only darkness,  
though your eyes can see no light,  
though your eyes see pain  
and sorrow:  
comfort, comfort.

Every night will have its morning,  
every pain will have an end,  
every burden will be lightened:  
comfort, comfort.

### *Refrain*

## **Prayer**

God of love and understanding

We gather here today to sit with our pain in the midst of the world's celebrations  
Help us explore the mystery of your presence with us in all our ups and downs of this season  
Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy and love you promised to all of us at the birth of Jesus

## **Scripture Readings**

*NRSV. © National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide  
Sometimes an alternate text source (a paraphrase) is used to aid with study and reflection.*



Our readings are not traditional Christmas readings. They are meant to be reassuring and offer comfort and hope. The storms of life do not defeat us for Jesus stills storms and comforts our hearts. He brings deep spiritual healing and peace to our soul. We can give him our pain and sorrows. He has suffered and God suffered with him. God raised him up like God will raise us up.



*God holding Jesus when he suffered*

### **Matthew 8: 14-17**

#### **Jesus Heals Mary at Peter's House**

<sup>14</sup> When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever;

<sup>15</sup> he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him.

<sup>16</sup> That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. <sup>17</sup> This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."



*Eugene Delacroix – the Good Samaritan*

The next reading is about 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, sometimes directly, sometimes through others.

### Matthew 11: 28-29

<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls.



### A Story of Hope...

**Christmas Concert Narration And Music (Hymn: It Is Well With My Soul) –  
Hugh Bonneville (Narrator), The Tabernacle Choir And Orchestra [16:40]**

<https://youtu.be/ReApJymYSiw>

*Narration written by David Warner; Music by Philip Bliss & Mack Wilberg;  
Posted to YouTube by The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square*

The third reading is from the Book of Revelation. Our world with its hurts, pain and brokenness 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. The time will come when there will no longer be a need for tears.

### Revelation 7: 15-17

<sup>15</sup> For this reason they are before the throne of God,  
and worship him day and night within his temple,  
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

<sup>16</sup> They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;  
the sun will not strike them,  
nor any scorching heat;

<sup>17</sup> for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The final reading is from Luke. After the birth of John, the Baptist his father Zechariah prophesied what the birth of his son would mean for the world. It was the beginning of hope for the world.





*John leaping in his mother's womb when Mary came to visit and was pregnant with Jesus*

### **Luke 1: 76-79**

<sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
 for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
<sup>77</sup> to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
 by the forgiveness of their sins.  
<sup>78</sup> By the tender mercy of our God,  
 the dawn from on high will break upon<sup>[a]</sup> us,  
<sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
 to guide our feet into the way of peace."

### **Reflective Music: Meditation – Geoffrey Willis (organ)**

*Composer: Walter O'Donnell; further details unknown*

### **Spiegel Im Spiegel – Alexander Malter, Dietmar Schwalke [9:03]**

<https://youtu.be/hbtCYq-z0gc>

*Composed by Arvo Pärt 1935– ; © A. Pärt; Posted to YouTube by nadaniente115a*

## **Reflection**

I knew a man who had lost family, friends, country, business and voice.

He was diagnosed with cancer and came to Australia for treatment for throat cancer. He left all behind. Operation after operation failed. His wife was with him, offering love and support. I met him when another operation had failed, and the cancer had spread. He was told he had little time left. I spoke with him and offered him a stone I once held when I grieved. I told him to return it when he had finished grieving. He went home and then, a month later, his cousin a priest returned it to me saying, he had made his peace with God and embraced his faith before he died. He grieved all he had lost. His family grieved losing him.

Until they turned to God.

It is so important to offer support to people with cancer. It can be a lonely journey for some. When people are dying of cancer, they want to talk about dying. Dying can be scary for some. They need loved ones to give permission to go and be present to them. No words are needed. Just a loving presence.

There are stages of grief. A small book called *Good Grief*, by Granger Westberg, outlines these stages and its helpful, for some. People can experience grief when a loved one passes away, or someone gets divorced, or is made redundant, or diagnosed with cancer or a serious illness, or lives with long term pain that limits life, or is going blind or deaf. Grief comes in many forms. We may seek comfort in simplicity, such as staying in bed, listening to music, not answering the phone, sitting in our favourite chair, praying or having a cuppa.

Grief can come in waves, often when we are reminded of who or what we have lost. Depression and panic can be part of the grief process and if it gets too much its ok to reach out for help. To not go it alone.

A friend was a triathlete and one Christmas he had pain in the heart and a doctor put stints into his heart. His career as a sportsman came to an end. He grieved this loss and become depressed and sought counselling.

There may be times of anger. This too is part of the journey. What is needed is someone willing to be a quiet presence, who will listen and not talk. Sometimes there are no words.

Sometimes people can feel worn down by long term illness and pain. It's so exhausting, limiting and frustrating to be unable to do all the things that used to be part of life. It is a great loss. A carer who brings a lady to art classes said 'You do not have to suffer alone. Reach out for help and receive love.'

I once worked at the Austin in the spinal ward. Young people would be admitted after diving into shallow water or professionals or business-people after car accidents. There were many ages and reasons. For the paraplegics, they left in a wheelchair. There was a notice board covered in business cards, thank you cards, or photos. There was grief. They were brave courageous souls who picked up their lives after intensive medical treatment, physio and counselling and with the support of loved ones.

A man used to come to a day care centre at the Repat and used to joke about the police giving him lectures when he wandered off and got lost. He had early stages dementia. Months later he stood up amongst the group of people who came and thanked them for their kindness. He said it was his last chance to say goodbye. A few months later his dementia had advanced, and he was no longer the same man and he became violent towards his wife and was admitted to a secure unit. She grieved deeply, for the loss of her husband, who she had cared for over many years.

Another friend's husband died seven years ago, and she hadn't changed his room – his study. She joined two of my friends on the Camino in Spain and grieved as we walked it.

Rabbi Joshua Liebman in his book, *Peace of Mind*, has a chapter on grief's slow wisdom, about the temptation not to return to usual activities again.

He says, 'The melody that the loved once played upon the piano of your life will never be played quite that way again, but we must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust.

We must seek out other artists of the Spirit, new friends who gradually will help us to find the road to life again, who will walk that road with us.'

We may be grieving for many reasons and some people never stop grieving, especially the loss of a child.

Life is different after a loss and often it takes a decision of the will to continue on and find new life and purpose. It may be slow, but the will to find resurrection and new life, with God's help and our loved one's support, can give us hope for the future.

These are the last verses of a poem called 'Stepping Stones', from *All Shall Be Well* by Joan Wilson, written in memory of a loved one who had passed away:

A stepping stone, careworn smooth  
 Inviting tentative feet  
 To take the first step  
 And there is need  
 There is always need  
 Of first steps and stepping stones.

Rev Tina

**BE STILL  
 AND  
 KNOW  
 THAT  
 I AM  
 GOD.**  
 PS 46:10

## Time Of Silent Reflection

## Christ In Quiet

In the place of stillness: the room of prayer  
 In the sanctuary of adoration  
 In the stilling of the storm  
 In the stilling of our minds, our souls and bodies  
 In the peace he gives  
 In the peace he asks us to share

*From David Adam, 'The Edge of Glory'*



### Reflective Music: To A Wild Rose – Geoffrey Willis (organ)

*Composer: Edward Alexander MacDowell 1860–1908; Public Domain*

## A Candle Liturgy

### The Candle Of Grief

I light the candle of grief  
 We own the pain of losing loved ones, of dreams unfulfilled, of hopes that evaporate in despair,  
 of living with pain, with limitations or illness.  
 We light the candle of peace in the midst of our grief

*Silence*

### The Candle Of Courage

We light the candle of courage  
 It symbolises the courage to confront our sorrow  
 to comfort each other  
 to share our feelings, honesty and openly with each other  
 May we remember with joy our shared times together  
 We light the candle of courage

*Silence*

### We Light The Candle Of Memories

For the times we have laughed together  
 cried together or were angry with one another  
 May we remember with joy our shared times together

*Silence*

## **We Light The Candle Of Love**

The love we have given  
and the love we have received  
The love that has been shared in times of joy and sorrow  
May our experiences of struggle lead us to a deeper experience of love

*Silence*

## **We Light The Christ Candle**

In the darkness we call for light  
The light that has been brought forth from the beginning  
of creation to shine in the shadows of our souls  
We yearn for this gracious light to warm us, to nourish us,  
and to give us strength  
Look for the light  
the light of Christ  
Know he is there always shining in the darkness  
the light of the world  
We light the Christ candle

*Silence*



**Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – Geoffrey Willis (organ)**

*Music: Plainsong melody (15th cent.); Public Domain*

**Ein deutsches Requiem – Katherine Fuge, Matthew Brook, Monteverdi Choir and  
Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique [5:11]**

**<https://youtu.be/waH9HpyWSVc>**

*Composer: Johannes Brahms; Op. 45: IV. Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen;  
Posted to YouTube by Sir John Eliot Gardiner - Topic*



## Candle Prayers



### Sending Out

Go in peace

If you are tired, may you find rest  
 If you are anxious, may you find peace  
 If you are lonely, may you find comfort

Know that nothing can separate you from the love of God  
 In Christ Jesus, he who invites us into his rest and offers us his peace and comfort  
 May the blessing of God – Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, remain with you always

**Reflective Music: The Hour of Peace – Geoffrey Willis (organ)**

*Composer: Reverend Alfred Wheeler 1865–1949; from Allan's Melodious Voluntaries, no. 12; Public Domain*

**Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, Op. 102: II. Andante –  
 Valery Gergiev, Mariinsky Orchestra, Denis Matsuev [5:31]**

<https://youtu.be/Aic9ozmg5WM>

*by Shostakovich (Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 2); Posted to YouTube by Denis Matsuev – Topic*

**Accreditation:** Liturgy adapted from *A Blue Christmas Service, A Service of Remembrance And Hope*,  
 Uniting Wesley Neurological Support Services

**Rev Tina, for Mountview Uniting Church**

*The following link is direct to the 'Worship' page on our website, from where other worship resources may be accessed:*

<https://www.mountviewuca.org/worship.html>

*Final collation by Mountview Multimedia team.*

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