

Blue Christmas Service
Kindling Lights of Hope
Leaders Guide



What you will need

- Advent Wreath – with a central light to represent the Christ-candle (unless you are happy to light the one on your Advent wreath before midnight Mass on Christmas Eve)
- Candles – ideally ones that last several days

Opening Responses

- Reader At the beginning of all things,
 God created light.
 to fill the wide darkness of space
 with centres of light and life.
- Reader 2 We light the first light on our Advent wreath
 to remember the gift of light that God gave to the universe.
- Reader God created the sun and the moon –
 and each day, just after the darkest hour before the dawn,
 the sun rises
 and brings light and warmth to the peoples of the earth.
- Reader 2 We light the second light on our Advent wreath
 to remember with thanks for the gift of light
 that breaks anew over the horizon of the morning.
- Reader God separated light from darkness –
 and human beings found fire
 to light and warm the dark and cold places.
 From generation to generation,
 people have kindled flames to ward off the darkness
 and the fears it brings.
- Reader 2 We light the third light on our Advent wreath
 as countless ancestors have done
 to bring light into the dark and cold places of their world.
- Reader In grief – and loss – and fear –
 our lives seem filled with darkness.
- Reader 2 We light our fourth candle
 as a sign of hope,
 and that the God who created the light and the darkness
 is in both of them with us –
 holding firm the light which may just now be hidden from us.

Scripture Readings

You might choose any of the First Readings for Advent but Isaiah 9: 1-6 is particularly suitable. You could also consider John 1: 1-5

Hymn – choose something that everyone will probably know – e.g. Silent Night, O Little Town of Bethlehem, In the Bleak Midwinter

Short reflection/homily (ideas)

Reflect on how much of what is around us promises Christmas joy and fun but for many people it can be a dark and difficult time of year – made harder because they are “supposed” to be happy and jolly. If we are in the dark places of bereavement or loneliness or fear – or any of the many things that bring darkness to our lives – this is even harder. We might be in situations where we feel we have to put on a front for those closest to us – so that we don’t upset them. And this adds to our pressure.

This service is a time to give yourself permission to acknowledge that, just for a while, you are not looking forward to Christmas – that, perhaps, you really do not want Christmas at all. And then, hopefully, find that you are able to look ahead and face it with renewed sense of hope.

For a moment, name for yourself the situation that is causing you pain – this is your darkness today / tonight. It may be loss – bereavement – a frightening diagnosis – unemployment – money worries – and so on.

In our readings, we heard about God’s promise to send a light into the world – a light that would illuminate those in darkness – and bring light to those in the shadow of death. These are the words of a God who understands how this feels. God does not offer platitudes or tell us to put our real feelings aside but acknowledges that there are times in our lives when we are overwhelmed by what is happening to us. He promised that he would send light into the world – and fulfilled that promise at Christmas.

Christmas is more than simply commemorating the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem – though that is, of course, a big part of our celebration. Even more significant is that God became human. God did not stay in the wonderful light of heaven, but left it to become human in the person of Jesus. God – in Christ – lived a human life with all its joys – but also much of its suffering and pain. God does not stand apart from us – but comes to share the darkness with us. He brings light with him – even though he knows we may not be able at this time to recognise it.

One name given to Jesus is “Emmanuel”. This means God-with-us... the Light of the World is with us. In a few moments, you will be invited to bring your tee light and light it from the Christ candle. As you do, try to imagine the Lord lighting a small and determined light within you. A light that will carry you through the next few days. You are welcome to take it away with you at the end – or leave it here for us to keep lit over Christmas. When you wake in the night – or have a moment when darkness threatens to overwhelm you – remember this light, lit from the Christ candle, still shining in the church and allow it to touch you and give you courage and strength.

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With gentle music in the background, invite people forward to light their candle. A suitable song might be “Kindle a Flame” from the Wild Goose Resource Group – but there are others that might help people to pray and be still during this time.

Reader We gathered as friends – as families – as strangers

**All We gathered in solidarity of sorrow
and prepare to part with the promise of compassionate remembering.
May we remember those who have shared this time with us
as they too journey through dark days,
trusting to your light and love.**

Reader And may the God of light and compassion be with us.
The Father and Creator who brought light into the universe;
The Son, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World;
The Holy Spirit, who kindles the light of hope in our hearts.

And may the blessing of the God of light and compassion,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with us all this night and all nights.

All Amen

