



## LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

### Blue Christmas

During Advent, many churches hold a worship service for those who find Christmas a sad, complicated, and difficult time. December in Canada is a dark month with short days and long nights and many people are negatively affected by that darkness.

The *Blue Christmas* or *Longest Night* services focus on Christ, who is the Light of the world overcoming the darkness of loss, suffering, and loneliness.

These special services provide hope and healing for those who find Advent and Christmas difficult. They provide people with opportunity for remembering, letting go, and sharing hope. The general tone is one of mediation and reflection, but not dour. Often the sanctuary is dimly lit and participants are encouraged to light a candle of remembrance to celebrate the life and memory of a loved one.

### Called to Worship

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

**People:** **The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth.**

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

**People:** **The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to extinguish it.**

**Leader:** Then your light will break forth like the dawn,

**People:** **And your healing will spring up quickly;**

**Leader:** The Lord will always be with you to save you,

**People:** **God's presence will protect us on every side.**

**Leader:** When you call the Lord will answer;

**People:** **When we call for help, God will say, "I am here."**

### Hymn

## Prayer of Approach

## Scripture

## Sermon/Meditation

## Hymn

## Candle of Remembrance *or* Advent Wreath

*Light the candles of the Advent Wreath using these or similar resources:*

Leader: We light the candle of Hope as we await the coming of Jesus, who is the source of hope.

**People: We give thanks for the gift of hope in a time of despair.**

Leader: We light the candle of Joy, knowing that our comfort and help come from God.

**People: We give thanks for the gift of joy in a time of sadness.**

Leader: We light the candle of Love, knowing that God is Love revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

**People: We give thanks for the gift of love in a time of loneliness.**

Leader: We light the candle of Peace, knowing that Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

**People: We give thanks for the gift of peace in times of uncertainty.**

Leader: We light the Christ Candle knowing that Jesus is the Light of the world

**People: The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it.**

*Other candles could be made available for people to take and light from the Advent Wreath in thanksgiving or memory of people who are sick or have died or for situation of concern. People may be invited to name the person or concern they are lighting the candle for, saying:*

*“We light this candle in gratitude for ...”*

*Or*

*“We light this candle to remember...”*

## **Prayers of the People**

*This prayer may be prayed in unison with a moment of silence after each intercession*

Gracious God, we thank you for those we love and who loved us. We are grateful that they were part of our lives. We pray that nothing good in their lives will be lost, but will be of benefit to the world; that all that was important to them will be honoured by those who follow.

We thank you for the friendship they gave and for the strength and peace they brought. We thank you for the love they offered and received in life.

We thank you that in Christ we are forgiven for those times when we failed those we love, in word and by our actions. We ask for healing of those deep wounds, for the times when our trust was betrayed, or when we felt abandoned, or we were angry.

We ask that through our family and friends, through our hearts and our minds, in our courage and our consciousness, that which needs to be set aside, forgiven, and forgotten can be released and redeemed by your grace.

We pray for ourselves, who are tested by sorrow and the changes that have happened in our lives, that we do not try to minimize our loss, or seek refuge from it in words alone, nor brood over it so that it overwhelms us and isolates us from each other.

God, grant us courage and confidence in the new life that you have promised. We ask these prayers in the name of the Risen Christ.

**Our Father who art in heaven... Amen.**

## **Benediction**

The light has splintered the darkness,  
hope is ours once more.

The light calls us forward;  
we remember the past and walk  
confidently into the future.

Go from this place filled with peace and love;  
God's gift to us all. Amen.

**Scripture Suggestions:**

Psalm 121

Isaiah 40:1–8

Selected verses

Matthew 1 – 2

Luke 1 – 2

John 1

**Hymn Suggestions – 1997 Book of Praise**

#122 – Oh come, Oh come Emanuel

#110 – Come, thou long-expected Jesus

#119 – Hope is a star

#115 – Hail to the Lord's Anointed

#118 – Hark the glad sound

#691 – My shepherd is the King of love

#154 – Silent night

#314 – God is love: come heaven, adoring