

Blue Christmas Liturgy

Setting

Fairly subdued lighting is helpful - there may be tears and people feel less conspicuous. Have tissues discreetly available.

- **An Advent wreath will be needed.**

This can be fairly small but should be prominent. If a small group is expected and you think you can sit in a circle or horseshoe, lay out greenery in a circle and add four purple candles (though plain white will do).

- **Place an empty "cradle" in front of the wreath** - or in the middle if you are using greenery.

This could be as simple as a shoe-box covered in brown paper - remember, the manger was simple.

Ensure you leave enough space for people to move between the candles towards and from it safely. You could even move the candles during the placing of the cloths.

Responses

You may like to use the "Reader 2" responses as responses for everyone. This works well - some people may find it difficult to speak during the service, though saying the words can itself be healing.

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

Reader 2 Let it speak to us of the tiny flame of hope
or **All** 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.

Reader 2 Let it speak to us of the lights of
or **All** companionship –
 of our families and our friends –
 of strangers
 and kindnesses found in unexpected places
 that restored our hope in human nature.

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.

Reader 2 Let it speak to us of the sureness of morning
or **All** – of the passing of 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.

Reader 2 Let it speak to us of hope –
or **All** of being together in this place 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.

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 9: 1-6

Luke 2: 1-7

John 1: 1-5

Hymns

In the Bleak Midwinter

Silent Night

Lead Kindly Light

Do Not Be Afraid

I Watch the Sunrise

Abide With Me

Symbol/ Ritual

Prepare strips of cloth - about 1/2 cm wide. Cotton or similar is best - ensure that it can be written on - preferably with ballpoint or similar pen that won't smudge.

- Invite people to write the names of their loved ones - or the situation causing them pain - on the strips. Some will want several strips - others may prefer to put them all on one.
- The cloths can then be placed in the "cradle" - people being invited to name their loved one if they wish. Gently encourage people to feel that they are praying for and

supporting each other... This can create a beautiful atmosphere which may provoke more tears but which enables people to feel strengthened by the solidarity of others in similar situations.

- Once the cloths are in place, it can be helpful to reflect very briefly on the names and that we are entrusting them to the Child who is the Light of the World and light a fifth candle representing Christ. A taper can be lit from this and people invited to light small candles distributed around the wreath.

Allow people time at the end to sit with the names and lights.

Mulled wine, punch or cups of tea and a few mince pies could be a kind gesture before people leave.

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