

CHRISTMAS SOLACE SERVICE

December 21, 2020

Organ Prelude: O Little One Sweet

Chorale prelude by Bruce Nasmith

Words of Welcome

Hymn: In the bleak midwinter

No. 145

1. In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan;
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

3. Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air;
but his mother only,
in her maiden bliss,
worshipped the Beloved with a kiss.

2. Our God, heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall welcome him
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ.

4. What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a Wise Man,
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

Prayer of Approach & The Lord's Prayer
The Peace of Christ be with you all;
And also with you

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40: 1-8

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'
6 A voice says, 'Cry out!'
And I said, 'What shall I cry?'
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
7 The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
8 The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Listen to the Word in the words.
We are listening, O Holy One.

Meditation

Lighting of the First Candle

We light the first candle to represent grief: the pain and sorrow we experience with loss.

We pray for those in our church family and others known to us, who have suffered loss, especially in this past year. We remember them before God.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O God

And let light perpetual shine upon them.

Prayer: Loving God, bless all who have lost loved ones. May we who have suffered loss learn to live without our loved one's presence in the flesh. May we feel the spirits of our loved ones with us - that all the things that were dear and wonderful about them might continue to be alive in us.

Bless those who have lost loved ones with whom reconciliation was not achieved. Help us to find peace of mind in leaving grievances behind and in trusting in your power of forgiveness.

Bless all who have lost some of the comforting, familiar things in their lives, a job, a home, a marriage, friends or family support. Help us to find some loving support around us in new circumstances, grant us the patience to accept change, and the grace to walk through it with courage and gentleness.

Bless those who have suffered a loss of health and those for whom daily life is becoming more difficult or painful. Help us to find renewal of spirit in you, and to move through pain to the other side of grief.

(silence)

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lighting of the Second Candle

As we light the second candle, we are warmed by the comfort and strength we receive from each other and from God, the source of all compassion.

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for the comfort and strength of community, family, friends and our church family. We thank you for your promise, to never leave us or forsake us.

Your will for us is wholeness, and so we pray for healing in our lives. We pray for all who are in need of courage and strength to face the celebration of Christmas.

It seems so easy for some to enjoy good cheer, and we can give in to envy and discouragement.

Help us to find peace in your presence even amid holiday festivities. Help us as we try to live with our sorrow rather than bury it.

Help us to live in the present rather than regretting the past or fearing the future.

May we have wisdom to turn from the old habits that may harm us, and the compassion to see and offer comfort where others are sorrowing.

(silence)

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Hymn: Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming

No. 151

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming,
as prophets long have sung.

It came, a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.

2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the Rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.

To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Saviour,
when half-spent was the night.

3. This flower, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fills the air,
dispels with glorious splendour
our darkness everywhere.
True flesh, yet very God,
from sin and death he saves us
and shares our every load.

4. O Saviour, child of Mary,
who felt our human woe,
O Saviour, King of glory,
who dost our weakness know,

bring us at length, we pray,
to the bright courts of heaven
and to the endless day.

Lighting of the Third Candle

We light the third candle to represent memory, a unique human capacity.

Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for the memories we have of happy times from which we receive comfort. We cherish the fond memories of the joy and laughter of special day celebrations.

We also remember the tears and conflicts. We ask for your help in overcoming difficult memories that haunt and prevent change in us. Show us how to live peacefully with the imperfections of human relationships.

We thank you for families, friends and the church community that continue to nurture us.

We ask your forgiveness for the times that we have been hurtful rather than loving with others. We also pray that we may be forgiving to those in our lives that have hurt us.

(silence)

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lighting of the Fourth Candle

We light the fourth candle to signify the light of love, God's love and the love we feel for one another that comes from God.

Prayer: God of light, we thank you for the love we share with one another. We pray for those we love, those we see every day and those far away, and for all who love us.

God of light, we pray for those who show love to others in their lives, who minister to the sick and dying, the hungry and homeless. We pray for those who act for peace in situations of conflict, those who offer hope in contexts of despair.

We pray for strength for ourselves to build bonds of love, peace and hope in our families and communities and in the larger world.

God of light, we thank you for your greatest gift of love, revealed in your beloved Jesus. Yours is a love that knows no limit.

It is a love that walks alongside your people when they pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Yours is a love that can draw forth healing and light no matter how dark the darkness appears in our lives and in the world.

We call on your light to touch us and guide us forward in your love.

(silence)

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.
Amen.

Duet: O Little One Sweet

J. S. Bach

Soloists: Bruce Nasmith & Erin Stone

Scripture Reading: John 1: 1-5, 10-13

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

This is the gospel of Jesus Christ
Thank you, O Word made flesh.

Meditation

Hymn: It came upon the midnight clear

No. 148

1. It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"To all the earth goodwill and peace,
from heaven's all gracious King!";
the world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

2. Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

3. But with the woes of sin and strife,
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong,
but we, through din of war, hear not
the love song which they bring.
Oh hush the noise, Oh still the strife
and hear the angels sing.

4. And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
Oh rest beside the weary road
and hear the angels sing.

5. For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,

when peace shall over all the earth
God's promised splendours fling,
and all the world take up the song,
which now the angels sing.

Benediction

Organ postlude: Joy to the world

arranged by Bruce Nasmith

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