

# Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church-E.L.C.A.



## Blue Christmas Service Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### **Welcome & Call to Worship**

Reader 1: Good evening, and welcome to Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church. Tonight is a night for us to be together in the dark. But, let's admit it, so often darkness scares us. Darkness is our nightmare. We've been taught to fear it, to avoid it, to keep the lights on, to think happy thoughts, to pretend everything's all right, and to not go into "that dark place."

Reader 2: Yet we are here tonight in the dark because God created light and dark, day and night... and said both were good. To fear darkness is to miss what we can see there that we can't see clearly anywhere else. So, here we are. We are in the dark. Will you say that with me? Here we are.

**All: We are in the dark.**

Reader 1: We are here to acknowledge we are in the dark about so many things: We have so many unanswered questions. We have so much fear and sorrow we can't make sense of—tucked away in secret places. And for some of us, we have fresh grief that's raw and feels unending. Here we are.

All: **We are in the dark.**

Reader 2: We can hear in this night an invitation to not run so quickly to the bright shiny objects, to easy answers, and loud, well-lit rooms. This sacred darkening makes room for all of who we are—for our laments and longings, our confessions and our cries. This darkness can help us see what we cannot see in the light. This dark and holy night can perhaps even be a night where dreams are dreamed, hope can be born. Here we are.

All: **We are in the dark.**

Reader 1&2: And God is with us...we are not alone.

Hymn

#257 O Come O Come Emmanuel vs 1&2

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O come, wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh: in strength and beauty come and stay; teach us your will and guide our way. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

### **We do not Lament Alone**

Reader 1: Tonight, we will be participating in the long-standing biblical tradition of lament, the practice of mourning for all that's wrong and crying out—to God and with God—to make things right. Yes, with God. One of the things we learn from scripture is that God also laments. The prophet Ezekiel tells us that God has a scroll filled with God's own handwritten words of grief and sorrow. So, we do not lament alone.

Reader 2: One of the ways people expressed their laments in the Bible was by rending...by tearing their clothes. David does it when he hears of his daughter Tamar's rape, and when Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle. Job did it when he lost pretty much everything he owned and everyone he loved. Clothing was an extremely valuable and limited resource in those days, and not something that was easily replaced. So, when they ripped their clothes to shreds, it spoke volumes. It was a way of physically expressing the pain they felt inside, a way of saying, "I am torn up. My heart is ripped to shreds."

And yes, sometimes the wait seems so long—too long—and we feel like the writer of Psalm 22 who cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Hymn

#257 O Come O Come Emmanuel vs 5&6

O Come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home; make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O Come, O Dayspring, come and cheer; O sun of justice, now draw near Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

## Grieving What We've Lost

Reader 2: One of the things we learn from reading the psalms and the prophets is that we don't have to protect God from our questions and cries. Our prayers don't have to be neat; they don't have to be nice, and we don't have to hold anything back.

Reader 2: O God, your dream was of a world that was safe and life-giving. So we cry out to you, for this has not been our reality, especially in the midst of this pandemic. We cry out for all the lives lost this year—those known to us and those unknown, from the people down the street, to those across the world. We cry out for the loss of \_\_\_\_\_

We grieve, as well, the loss of even being able to grieve in the ways we have before. We cry out because it's so easy to lose hope.

A time for silence and prayer

Sung Response

In Silence We Wait

In silence we wait, in darkness you come to us; bring us your light

## Psalm 13

Reader 2: Hear these words from Psalm 13: How long, O Lord? Will you utterly forget me? How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall I harbor sorrow in my soul, grief in my heart day after day?

Reader 1: God, you dream of a world where we can all be together in body and spirit to share meals and laughter and embraces. So, we cry out to you because that has not been our reality this year. We weep for the loss of relationships, for the loss of routine and normality and the ability to be physically together. We weep even for the loss of trust that the world is a safe, good place. We are in turmoil and peace seems like just a memory.

Time for silence and prayers.

Sung Response

In Silence We Wait

In silence we wait, in darkness you come to us; bring us your light

## Jeremiah 8

Reader 1: Hear these words from Jeremiah 8: No healing, only grief; my heart is broken. Listen to the weeping of my people all across the land.

Hymn

#257 O Come O Come Emmanuel vs 7&8

O come, O King of nations come, O cornerstone that binds in one: refresh the hearts that long for you; restore the broken, make us new. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Reader 2: O God, you dream of a world where there's mercy and kindness and justice and joy, and enough to go around. So we must weep tonight for all the lives lost and hurt because of the racism and injustice and the

fear of strangers and difference in this country. The list of names is long. And somehow still keeps getting longer.

Time for silence and prayers.

Sung Response

In Silence We Wait

In silence we wait, in darkness you come to us; bring us your light

### **Jeremiah 31**

Reader 2: Hear these words from Jeremiah 31: A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.<sup>20</sup>

Reader 1: O God, you dream of a world where wrongs are acknowledged and righted and restoration is possible. So tonight we must cry out to you and confess that we have too often ignored the wrongs in our country, our neighborhoods, our own hearts. But our eyes have been opened wider this year and what we see...hurts. It hurts and it's hard to confront what's broken within us and around us, and to find the courage to make amends and make things right. Hear our prayers and forgive us.

Time for silence and prayers.

Sung Response

In Silence We Wait

In silence we wait, in darkness you come to us; bring us your light

### **Psalm 102**

Reader 2: Hear these words from Psalm 102: God, listen! Listen to my prayer, listen to the pain in my cries. Don't turn your back on me just when I need you so desperately. Pay attention! This is a cry for help!

*Candle Lighting*

*Musical Selection*

As we read in Romans 8: "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>25</sup> So as we wait through all our dark nights, we can remember God's immense and unfailing love for each of us and for this whole aching world—a love born in Christ on Christmas. Let us pray: O God of big dreams, O God of big love, we look for you in this darkness of our despair, of our denial, of our disappointments. Even as we weep, we wait. And hope. And look toward Bethlehem. Help us, whether we can see you clearly or not, to follow you and to live your dreams—your fierce, brave, life-and joy-giving dreams—tonight and always. Amen.

### **Final Blessing**

Go trusting that in this darkness, even now, seeds are growing, hope is being born, and new dreams are being dreamed. Go in the embrace of the God of powerful love, the Christ of humanness and vulnerability, and the Spirit that is always, always with us and for us, Amen.

Sending Hymn

#283 O Come All Ye Faithful, vs 1&4

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem; come and behold him,  
born the king of angels: O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him, O come, Let us adore him, Christ  
the Lord!

Yes, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be glory given! Word of the Father, now in  
flesh appearing: O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him, O come, Let us adore him, Christ the  
Lord!

P: The Peace of the Lord always be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

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