



Worship Service for December 17, 2023

Blue Christmas

Prelude Marshall Davies

Chiming of the Hour Aimee Broadhurst

Welcome Pastor Felix

Centering Moment Pastor Felix

Call to Worship Aimee Broadhurst

LEADER: God of love, many come to you this Christmas Season tired and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our precious hearts.

ALL: In this season of long nights, we ask your healing for all who fear that sorrow may never end and for the wounds they cannot even put into words.

LEADER: We are weary from the journey, and we have found restlessness instead of restfulness.

ALL: We come to you seeking rest, peace, and community. In Your tender love, we offer our prayers and place our trust in You.

Amen.

***Hymn**

Congregation

TNCH #23 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

vs. 1 & 2(a)

There's a wideness in God's mercy,

Like the wideness of the sea;

There's a kindness in God's justice,

Which is more than liberty.

There's no place where earthly sorrows

are more felt than in God's heaven;

There's no place for where earthly sorrows

have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader

than the measures of our minds;

and the heart of the Enteral

is most wonderfully kind.

There's no place where earthly sorrows
are more felt than in God's heaven;
There's no place for where earthly sorrows
have such kindly judgment given.

Gathering Prayer

Aimee Broadhurst

ALL: God of grace, grant us your Holy Spirit and strengthen us through these days. We ask that you shelter and sustain all, both here and throughout the world, who weep and are heavy laden. We are one community who turn to you and to each other with longing and imploring hearts. Be near to us this night, until the light returns. In Your love, hear our call to you.

Amen.

Lighting the Candles

Pastor Felix

PASTOR FELIX: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their faces, their voices, their bodies. We

embrace and give thanks for the memories that unite them to us in this season of expectation.

All: We remember them with love. May God's eternal presence surround them.

PASTOR FELIX: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss:

loss of relationships, of trust, of jobs, of health, of faith, and of joy.

We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, asking that into our wounded hearts, O God, You will place the gift of peace.

All: We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

PASTOR FELIX: We light this third candle to embrace ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us, years, that

have been heavy with burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sting of memories, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We lay before you the times we have spent blaming ourselves. We lay before you the time we have walked alone and in darkness, fearing our mortality.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far and may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed us.

PASTOR FELIX: We light this fourth candle to remember the gift of light and hope that God offers to us all year long. We remember that the Holy One does not allow for the darkness to extinguish the light. We remember to hold in our hearts promises of comfort and peace.

All: We remember all who share our burdens, who show us the way to the Light, and who journey with us into all our tomorrows.

Biblical Witness

Aimee Broadhurst

Luke 7:11-15

Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, rise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Contemporary Witness

Pastor Felix

Eckhart Tolle on the Dark Night of the Soul
(Adapted)

The "dark night of the soul" is a term that goes back a long time. Yes, I have also experienced it. It is a term used to describe what one could call a collapse of a perceived meaning. The inner state in some cases is very close to

what is conventionally called depression. Nothing makes sense anymore, there's no purpose to anything. Sometimes it's triggered by some external event, some disaster perhaps, on an external level. The death of someone close to you could trigger it. Or you had built up your life, and given it meaning, and the meaning that you had given your life for some reason collapses.

Then there is the possibility that you emerge out of that into a transformed state of consciousness. Life has meaning again. You awaken into something deeper - a deeper sense of purpose or connectedness with a greater life that is not dependent on explanations or anything conceptual any longer. It's a kind of re-birth - the birth of the true self. It is probably the case that some people who've gone through this transformation realized that they had to go through that, in order to bring about a spiritual awakening.

Reflection

Pastor Felix

“Our Connectedness”

Special Music

Plymouth Choir

“Drawing Nearer”

Even in the midst of all of this,
trouble on the news, no peace within,
still there is a light in the distance
drawing nearer,
drawing nearer

So open up our eyes to see your light
open up our hearts, they're clenched so tightly
steal in like a thief and steal our hearts
like a baby
like a baby
Even in the midst of all of this...

Sharing Our Concerns and Prayer Petitions

Pastor Felix

Response: “These are our concerns and petitions”

Pastoral Prayer

Pastor Felix

ALL: Holy One, we accept your invitation to walk with you and with each other. When we are feeble, hold us with your strong arms. When we are in trouble, grant us your grace. Increase our faith when our destination seems distant. Help us to call on our family of faith. Remind us that our doubts are evidence of honest spiritual struggle. We long to know your sacred presence more fully and share it with others so we can make a difference in their lives.

Amen.

The Ritual

Pastor Felix

PASTOR FELIX: Placing our hand over our hearts we silently speak these words three times:

(Silent stillness I breath in and pain and fear I breathe out. Here life still beats. Here love still lives. Here life and love abide.)

*** Hymn****Congregation****Sing! # 201 "Deep Peace"**

Peace, peace, deep peace,
My peace I give to you.
Peace, peace, deep peace,
My peace I give to you.

Not as the world gives,
I give to you,
Not as the world gives,
I give to you.
Peace, peace, deep peace,
My peace I give to you.

Love, love, strong love,
My love I give to you.
Love, love, strong love,
My love I give to you.

Not as the world gives,
I give to you,
Not as the world gives,
I give to you.
Love, love, strong love,
My love I give to you.

Benediction

Pastor Felix

Postlude

Marshall Davies

Today's Worship Participants

Worship Leader: Aimee Broadhurst

Sound: Tony Trosclair

Video: Mark Vines

Projector: Amie & Shelby-Mak Friday

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