

“When Things Seem Bleak”

Blue Christmas

Virtual Liturgy

December 21, 2020

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We offer a “Blue Christmas” worship service for those who find the holidays difficult. Especially after a year such as this one when so much pain and loss has been felt by many.

This year’s Christmas, many of our loved ones will not be with us at the dinner table or gathered around the tree opening presents. Maybe because we cannot gather this year as we are used to, or because they have lost the battle to covid19 or other illness. None-the-less, the enormous stress brought on by this pandemic has maybe made it that much harder during this holiday season. Many of us may not know the pain and hurt many are having to carry this year, but we can bring forth our comfort, our prayers and our video chats – because this year, this year we cannot bring our shoulders to lean on when that was what we usually did in times of grief.

This Christmas may be remembered by many as not the happiest of times. And not just this Christmas – when we lose a

loved one, we remember them more during the holidays. We can vividly see images of them during in past events over the holiday season. We want to hold on to Christmas' past – when we could see and be with them and hear their voices – and that is okay beloveds. It is okay to hear their voices even today. That is why we continue to offer this time of worship – to create a time for acknowledging our grief, acknowledging each other's grief – and remembering our loved ones. This year is no different.

Remembering the past reminds us of the many old traditions we carry with us that were handed down from our families. Maybe there are certain cultural foods we prepare, bring out the old decorations that might be on their last leg but that still have significant meaning to us. In a world that keeps changing, some of these traditions and decorations still bring us comfort. When we think about it, Christmas reminds us of a past event about a vulnerable child that made a worldly impact more than two-thousand years ago. People were suffering, experiencing great loss – loss of parents, loss of children, loss of infants – many died at the hands of their occupiers. This vulnerable child, born to a peasant woman, to a carpenter, brought hope to the hopeless – then and still does so today beloveds. This child reminded the community of

his them to keep up the faith and support one another – and still does so today beloveds.

One thing about the past beloved community, beloved Church is that we cannot live in it. We cannot physically live in the past with our loved ones, no more than we can live with that once, vulnerable child, born in a stable that brought hope to many. Christmas is about living in the present as well. Living in the moment – the promise of a bright future, even after a year such as this one that we have been experiencing. This year, I truly believe, the Christ child reminds us to open that gift of hope and thankfulness. Thankful to all our scientists, doctors, nurses, first responders, all the way to the hospital janitors. Thankful to all the organizations and churches who stepped up to feed the unemployed families, the houseless community and the most vulnerable of our time.

Let us close with this beloved Iao Church, beloved brothers and sisters who join us from the virtual world. When things seem bleak on this journey of life, Christmas reminds us to be hopeful for a coming vaccine against this virus. Christmas reminds us to invoke our inner vaccine against the viruses of hate, racism, misogyny, homophobia, sexism and all the ugly “isms” of our

world. And most importantly, Christmas reminds us that more than two-thousand years ago, God came to us as a vulnerable child. God came to us as a love incarnate. We are minded that Emmanuel – “God with us” is still with us during these hard times, during this great loss. Christmas reminds us, especially this Christmas, to call one another and that it is okay to have that Christmas dinner meal together, even if it is through zoom or other forms of social media but know that you can still be with your loved ones in some way. Above all things – know that we hold each of you in our prayers, and we send out our virtual hugs and offer up our virtual shoulder to lean on. In our hearts always!

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.