

### **Closing**

**Sandi Stevens**

As we gather this evening, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather to be illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season.

**L:** May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us through this darkness.

**R:** That together we may shine again. Amen.

**You are invited to exit to the back of the Sanctuary to receive an ornament from the Blue Christmas tree in the Gathering Area as a remembrance of your loved ones and the message of our special Blue Christmas service. Then please join us for refreshments. Steven Ministers will be available for conversation and support.**

**Closing Hymn: "Hope Was Born this Night"**

**Congregation**

**Stephen Ministers serving at First St. Pauls:**

Ann Auten	Sandi Stevens	Val Erickson
Lynn Hohlen	Nikki Doremus	Carolyn Willicott
Kathy Adelson	Dean Papenhagen	Allison Power
Vickie Frerichs	John Boltz	Janet Drudik
Becky Mohling	Susan Luedders	Jan Franzen
Micki Buscher	Jean Janssen	Sue Brown

**Belva Junker - GriefShare Coordinator - (402) 469-1236**

Upcoming GriefShare Events:

Loss of a Spouse: January 13<sup>th</sup> and January 15<sup>th</sup> - 6:30 p.m.

13 week GriefShare begins Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup> - 1:30 p.m.

**Ann Auten - Stephen Ministry Coordinator - (402) 469-2191**

Contact Ann if you would like a Stephen Ministry caretaker to visit you during your grief process, or would like to know more about this ministry.

**Christmas Eve Services at First St. Paul's - Wednesday, December 24th**

4:00 p.m. Traditional Worship

4:30 p.m. Contemporary Worship

7:00 p.m. Traditional Worship with Communion

11:00 p.m. Traditional Worship with Communion

# *Blue Christmas*

*A Service of Healing and Hope  
Sunday, December 14th  
3:00 p.m.*



First St. Paul's Lutheran Church, LCMC  
501 N. Burlington Ave. • Hastings, NE 68901  
402-463-1329  
[www.firststpauls.org](http://www.firststpauls.org)



*Prelude for Quiet Meditation*

*"A Christmas Alleluia"*

*Welcome and Call to Worship*

*Pastor Joel*

We meet in the name of a loving God.  
Who knows our needs, hears our cries.  
And heals our wounds. **Amen.**

*Gathering of Community*

L: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**R: And also with you.**

L: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

Let us pray:

**God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen**

*Hymn: "In The Bleak Mid-Winter"*

*Congregation*

*Skit: "Jingle Blues"*

*"Winter Prayer: God's Timing"*

*Pastor Chad*

God of all seasons and senses, grant us the sense of your timing to submit gracefully and rejoice quietly in the turn of the seasons.

In this season of short days and long nights, of gray and white and cold, teach us the lessons of endings; children growing, friends leaving, loved ones dying, grieving over, grudges over, blaming over, excuses over.

**Response: "O God, grant us a sense of your timing."**

L: God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

**Our Father who art in heaven**

**Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,**

**Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread**

**And forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory**

**Forever and ever. Amen.**

*Lighting of Individual Candles*

*Pastor Joel*

L: Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. We invite each of you to offer your personal wound to the God who loves each of us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out: "Give me your pain, come to me... all who labor and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!"

We invite each of you to come forward and light a candle. As you light the candle, remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close until we are able to shine.

*Meditative Song: "Let the Healing Flow"*

*(Prayerful Meditation)*

L: These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever. (Extinguish Candles)



Jesus the good shepherd, who knows our hearts and offers us healing and hope in the midst of our suffering. Who came to help us understand just how much God loves us. And who lived and died to restore our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Jesus who will reign as King over God's new creation, where there will be no more sickness or death or crying or pain, for all eternity. And who has given us His Holy Spirit to help, comfort and guide us as we seek to follow Him here on earth and wait for His glorious return.

**Praise Song: "Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace)"**      **Congregation**

*Homily* *Pastor Joel*

*Prayers of the People* *Micki Buscher*

L: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for all the good things we need: For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas as special people coping with our many different losses. God, hear our prayer.

**R: And in your mercy, answer.**

**L:** For our families and friends, that they may continue to help and support us. God, hear our prayer.

**R: And in your mercy, answer.**

**L:** For any person we have loved who has died, for all the losses we know in our lives, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise. God, hear our prayer.

**R: And in your mercy, answer.**

**L:** For our family and friends, that you may bless them with love, peace, and joy. God, hear our prayer.

**R: And in your mercy, answer.**

**L:** For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas Angels on that faraway hillside. God, hear our prayer.

**R: And in your mercy, answer.**

In this season of short days and long nights , of gray and white and cold, teach us the lessons of beginnings; that such waitings and endings may be the starting place, a planting of seeds which bring to birth what is ready to be born - something right and just and different, a new song, a deeper relationship, a fuller love - in the fullness of your time.

**Response: “O God, grant us a sense of your timing.”**

*Liturgy of the Word*  
*Reading from Isaiah 40: 1, 25-31*

*Pastor Chad*

L: The Word of the Lord.

**R: Thanks be to God.**

## Psalm 121

## Belva Junker

**L:** I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come?

**R: My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.**

**L:** He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.

**R: Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.**

**L:** The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

**R: So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

**L: The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.**

**R: The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth for ever more.**

**L: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.**

**R: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-5*

*Belva Junker*

*The Empty Chair (Lighting of the Advent Wreath)*      *Kathy Adelson*

This empty chair represents those who will not be home for Christmas. Perhaps a relationship has ended, perhaps the people we love are far away, perhaps sickness or death has changed how things used to be....

*Hymn: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" (vs. 1)*

*First Candle – Remember the Loss*

L: We light this first candle to remember those we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, and the memories of them that we hold in our hearts.

(Pause)

We thank God for them and ask for His comfort, and when we are feeling overcome with sadness, we ask for the peace that is greater than we can ever understand.

**R: Lord, hear our prayer.**

*The Empty Chair (Part 2)*      *Val Erickson*

The empty chair also represents the pain and sadness that can come from other events that enter our lives, uninvited and unwanted- leaving us reeling in pain and shock, unable to shake the feeling that it was not supposed to be like that.

*Hymn: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" (vs. 2)*

*Second Candle – Redeem the Pain of Loss*

L: We light this candle to represent other losses that we find ourselves faced with: The loss of health, of independence, of freedom, the loss of confidence or security, plans that did not work out, or hopes that ended in despair.

We pause now for you to tell the God who longs to bind up those who are broken-hearted about some of the losses that you are feeling at this time.

(Pause)

**R: Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Hymn: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" (vs. 3)*

*Third Candle – Loss of Direction*

*Nikki Doremus*

L: This candle represents our courage: the courage to face our sadness, to share our feelings with others, our doubts and fears, our anger, frustration, or depression, and to dare to hope despite the depth of our pain.

We pause now for you to tell God about some areas where you need help finding courage. He longs to take you by the hand and say to you: "Do not fear, I will help you."

(Pause)

**R: Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Hymn: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" (vs. 4)*

*Fourth Candle – Sign of Hope*

*Sandi Stevens*

L: We light this fourth candle to remember those who have supported us in our pain.

We pause to remember the prayers, words of comfort and support, the acts of kindness from family and friends and those who stood with us in our time of need.

(Pause)

**R: We thank you God for sending others to remind us that we are never alone. And we thank you for sending your son, Jesus. Amen.**

*Light the Central Candle*

*Pastor Joel Remmers*

Standing here in the center of the candles that represent some of life's joys and pain, this central candle represents Jesus who has come to be Immanuel, God with us, in the midst of it all.

Jesus, who was born as a helpless baby, hears our cries and understands how weak and helpless we can sometimes feel.