Feeling blue at Christmas



Remembering and Reflecting service

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**Welcome**

**Opening Prayer**

This afternoon we gather here in this place of sanctuary,

**For we are lost,**

**We are lonely,**

**we are afraid**

We gather, daring to wonder

if God has indeed come in Jesus-

discerning the rejection we have known,

intimate with our failed relationships,

holding our heartache in hands of tenderness.

We gather with friends and strangers,

a family made one by our brokenness;

**We come with our hearts full of hope,**

**and our heads filled with doubts.**

Yet we gather, just as we are

**In the hope that God will meet us here,**

**and welcome us, just as we are.**

# Hymn: In the bleak Mid-Winter

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.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him

nor earth sustain;

heaven and earth shall flee away

when he comes to reign:

in the bleak midwinter

a stable place sufficed

the Lord God incarnate,

Jesus Christ.

For everything there is a season

*Choose a picture that symbolises what you dislike about Christmas*

## The Absence by R S Thomas

It is this great absence

that is like a presence , that compels

me to address it without hope

of a reply. It is a room I enter

from which someone has just

gone, the vestibule for the arrival

of one who has not yet come.

I modernise the anachronism

of my language, but he is no more here

than before. Gene and molecules

have no more power to call

him up than the incense of the Hebrews

at their altars. My equations fail

as my words do. What resources have I

other than the emptiness without him of my whole

being, vacuum he may not abhor?

### Remembering the absent who are present still

*We are light candles and name those we wish to remember at this time*

## Music-The Desolation of Smaug: ‘I see Fire’ from The Hobbit by Ed Sheeran



# Hymn: Broken Town

O Broken town of Bethlehem

your people long for peace,

but curfews, raids and closure barricades

have brought them to their knees

yet still they strive for justice

yet still they make their stand

their hopes and fears still echo down the years

Come, heal this holy land.

O holy child of Bethlehem,

O royal refugee,

your place of birth is now a hell on earth

through our complicity.

The innocents still suffer,

their backs against the wall.

We see the curse, the violence and worse

and choose to ignore it all.

O holy streets of Bethlehem

deserted and destroyed

frightened faces fill the sacred places

pilgrims once enjoyed.

Yet in the midst of darkness

a hopeful beacon shines:

the future lies in humble sacrifice, and not in guns and mines.

O holy star of Bethlehem

Help us to watch and pray.

With love and light illuminate the night

reveal the Kingdom’s day.

Dare us to be angels

your awful truth to tell.

It must be heard:

Love is the final word, Our Lord, Emmanuel. *Garth Hewitt*

### An opportunity to stand in solidarity with those we do not know but whose pain and distress concern us

*Place a nugget in the bowl for a place or person overseas*

**Act of Remembrance**

In the rising of the sun and its setting

**We will remember them**

 In the blowing of the wind, and in the chill of winter

**We will remember them**

In the opening buds of and in the warmth of summer

**We will remember them**

In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn

**We will remember them**

In the beginning of the year and when it ends

**We will remember them**

When we are weary and in need of strength

**We will remember them**

When we are lost and sick at heart

**We will remember them**

When we have joys we long to share

**We will remember them**

So as long as we live, they too shall live

For they are still a part of us

**As we remember them**

### A time to heal

*An opportunity to write down wounds which we will bind together*

## Music-Cracked and Broken by Diana Jones



## The year’s Midnight by Gillian Clarke

The flown, the fallen,

the golden ones,

the deciduous dead, all gone

to ground, to dust, to sand,

borne on the shoulders of the wind.

Listen! They are whispering

now while the world talks,

and the ice melts,

and the seas rise.

Look at the trees!

Every leaf-scar is a bud

expecting a future.

The earth speaks in parables.

The burning bush. The rainbow.

Promises. Promises.

# Prayer

In our journeying we find you,

God of the unexpected places.

We find you there-in our doubts

as well as in our certainties,

in our fears as well as our courage,

in our questions as well as our wonder,

and in our turning to others to care.

Help us to journey on,

looking expectantly to find you. **Amen**

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Hymn: Song for love

Now we sing to praise love’s blessing

all through our lives,

laughter, joy, surprise, confessing,

all through our lives.

Love that dreamed a new creation,

love that dared an incarnation,

love that offers transformation

all through our lives.

How our wounds ache for love’s healing

all through our days

How our world needs love’s revealing,

in all its ways.

Fearful hearts suspect the stranger,

hardened nations arm for danger,

love lives on, the powerful changer,

all through our days.

Love’s the grace that makes us caring

all through our lives,

urges us to warmth and sharing

all through our lives,

speaks to us, oppression naming,

strives in us, injustice shaming,

lives in us, true peace proclaiming

all through our lives.

Love’s the clown that mocks at winning

all through the world,

midwife of each new beginning

all through the world.

In the struggles that confound us

in the chaos all around us

love’s wide arms with hope surround us

all through the world.

In God’s faithful love we flourish

all through our lives,

known and loved, each other nourish

all through our lives.

Though the world’s demands are pressing,

what life brings is left to guessing,

still we sing to praise love’s blessing

all through our lives.

Words: Anna Briggs Tune: Ar hyd yr Nos (Welsh Traditional)

# Blessing

God of earth and heaven,

in times of pain

and in times of plenty,

we seek your blessing.

Lay your hands on us in love

and give good gifts to your people.

In Jesus’ name and in the love of the Spirit, we pray. **Amen**

*Prayer resources used from ©Doi ng December Differently. Nicola Slee & Rosie Miles. Wild Goose Publications. The Iona Community, 2006.*

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 **Love and peace surround you this Christmas**