

**Notes for the Blue Sunday Liturgy
Church of the Ascension, Hilton
Sunday 7 December 2008
Led by Revds Nic and Julia Denny-Dimitriou
And Lay Ministers
At 7.00 and 9.00 am services**

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**BLUE SUNDAY: 7 DECEMBER 2008**

**WELCOME & INTRO: Julia**

Welcome to this Blue Sunday service, a chance to acknowledge the "blue" feelings we may have at Christmas time, the reasons for them, and to offer them to God. For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult. For others, Christmas Eve, or New Year's Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year. In this service, we recognize that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We invite you to reflect on the pain, the loneliness, the sadness you may feel and offer it to God. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

**CALL TO WORSHIP Lay minister**

(Congregation read bold print)

God first loved us, and drew us to himself that we might know love and come alive

**And so we come again to find the heart of God**

We gather to praise God for the gift of life

**and do not know what to say, and so we sing**

We gather remembering the loss of our loved ones

**and do not know what to say, and so we sing**

We gather in joy for the gift of love,

**and do not know what to say, and so we sing**

God of the loving heart is always ready to mend our hearts and fill them again, so let us open them again to the wonders of life. Let us worship God.

**FIRST HYMN: HON 53 – Be still and know... Lay minister announce**

**CONFESSION: Lay minister to lead – page 106 only; Nic = Absolution**

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES**

**[2 candles lit on this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent]: Julia and Nic**

This is the time of endings and beginnings when the small signs of dawn pierce through the night and something new is born.

**As the darkness clears away with each candle set aflame --**

**hope, peace, love, and joy --**

(light each of the two candles as these are said)

**these are God's gifts, even in our waiting for dawn**

Let us prepare ourselves for the God-child to be born anew

in our time, in our life, in our present moment -

**even while we sing of the God-child coming once upon a time to**

**Mary. In our end is our beginning, in our time, infinity;**

**in our death a resurrection unrevealed until its season.**

**Godly signs gleam in our darkness**

**READINGS: Readers of OT 1 and OT 2 readings, & Julia reads Gospel**

Isaiah 40: 1 - 18

Isaiah 40: 19 – 31

Matthew 11: 28 - 29

**SERMON: Julia****PRAYERS: Lay Minister**(From Ted Yoder, *Guerrillas of Grace*)

O 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 long days and short nights, of looking forward while looking back,

**Teach us the lessons of endings;  
children growing, friends leaving,  
loved ones dying, grieving over,  
grudges over, blaming over, excuses over.**

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

(Time for silent prayer)

In this season of long days and short nights, of looking forward while looking back,

**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.**

**O God, grant us the sense of your timing.**

(Silent Prayers)

Prayers for Others, for Ourselves – **Lay minister choose**

**CANDLE LIGHTING – LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE**

We light candles to remember those persons who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season, which anticipates Christmas. [Each person who wishes to, comes up and lights one candle for all people remembered]

**MUSIC PLAYING:** REM, *Everybody hurts*

At conclusion of Candle Lighting period, the Lay minister reads...

**POEM: Blue X-mas by Sami Martasian (words at end of this liturgy)**

**PEACE**

**OFFERTORY HYMN: HON 222 – I am the resurrection**

**EUCCHARIST****NOTICES****BLESSING** (Irish Blessing used – congregation to join)**TRADITIONAL IRISH BLESSING**

May the road rise to meet you,  
 May the wind be always at your back  
 May the sun shine warm on your face  
 And the rain fall soft on your fields  
 And until we meet again  
 May the Lord hold you, dear friend  
 In the palm of his hand

[Followed by the Priestly blessing...]

**DISMISSAL****CLOSING HYMN: HON 366 – O God our help in ages past***Sources: Anglican Diocese of Ottawa; Trinity Presbyterian Church, Denton, Texas*  
 ~~~~~**Blue X-mas [By Sami Martasian]**

This year will be nothing like those that came before.

There won't be carols a banquet or gifts, just vacant space

Where we once talked, where we once laughed

I call my relatives in pursuit of a kind word

They aren't familiar with the distance in my voice

Although they lost him too they still can find cheer

Why can't I smile like them?

Does my mourning make me broken like the antique angel with the cracking face

Atop the Christmas tree?

You watch my every tear melting away the snow

You wept with me at the wake among the funeral flowers

And though my house is empty I never was truly alone

For not even the ice that slickens the porch stairs

Could freeze your heart, my lord

You call to me in the silence

"Do not be afraid, I am with you."