

# Blue Christmas Service: Planning and running the service.

*These notes are to help you to plan and run a Blue Christmas service.*

## 1. Set a date and time and advertise the event

- The service is usually held in December often on, or around the 21<sup>st</sup> December, the longest night.
- Consider a notice for your pew sheet or individual invitations to people you know for whom Christmas is a difficult season. Mothers' Union members might like to invite a person and accompany them to the service.

Suggested words for the invitation:

Christmas can be a painful time for some people. Recognising that this is not a season of joy for everyone, this *church/ Mothers' Union* is offering a special Blue Christmas service on *date/time/venue*. Come and join us sharing prayers and scripture in the presence of God and reflect on the pain, the loneliness, and the sorrow we may feel.

All are welcome and after the service there will be a time of fellowship and reflection.

## 2. Setting up the worship space

- If it is safe and possible to do so consider subdued lighting as this helps people to feel less conspicuous.
- You will need an advent wreath which can be small but prominent. Perhaps place on a table covered with a blue cloth. The candles may be the traditional advent wreath candles or 4 blue candles and a white central Christ candle. Also on the table, or nearby, tea lights for people to light from the central candle. Make sure you have matches and a taper available.
- You will also need an empty cradle in front of the wreath. This may be as simple as a shoe box covered in brown paper.
- Provide strips of blue paper/ribbons about 1.5cm or half-an-inch wide and pens for people to write the names or the painful situations they wish to place in the empty cradle. Some people may want more than one. Distribute these around the seats before the start of the service.
- Play some quiet music as people arrive and at the end of the service. This does not need to be 'religious' but there should be no words.
- Make sure there are people to meet and greet and offer support during and after the service as required.
- Provide tissues.
- The provision of baubles to take home is optional.

## 3. Running the Service

- Allow people time and space to remember, reflect and pray.
- The service booklet can be adapted as required. Hymns have been suggested but you may wish to choose others such as:
  - Come thou long expected Jesus
  - In the bleak midwinter.
- Readings have been suggested but others that you might consider are.
  - Psalm 121
  - Psalm 23
  - Luke 2:1-7 (no room in the inn and Jesus being no stranger to being a stranger of refugee)
  - Matthew 22: 1-10 (there is a place for everyone)
  - Matthew 5: 3-10 (the Beatitudes (Jesus is well aware of people's sorrows, yearnings, and suffering and offers his blessing))

## 4. After the service

Consider providing refreshments such as mince pies and warm mulled wine/spiced apple juice.

## 5. Printing the service sheet

If you are going to customise the service, you will need to edit the file. It's been carefully set up in Word to use 'styles' - each line is set in a style (turn on 'styles' and you'll see what they are). Using styles will prevent any odd spacings and typefaces. Rather than having a handful of sheets stapled together, consider printing the service as an A5 booklet (the file has been set up for that).