



December 19, 2021

## Blue Christmas

I attended a Blue Christmas service after my husband died. I experienced loss before, but that year was more difficult. He was with me during those other losses. It was the first time I had to prepare Christmas for my daughter without him.

I remember decorating the house, looking up to heaven saying, "Why did you leave me to do all this by myself." Then I sat down and did one of those laughing-crying moments because he never really helped with that part of the holiday anyway. But it was still different. Just not the same. My guess is many of you know what I'm talking about.

It is almost three years now since my sister died. I am still moving through losing her. Grief doesn't come with a manual. There is no one correct way to do this. It is a process that comes and goes. We need to give ourselves permission to be in all of that...even during a holiday.

Give yourself permission. Give yourself permission to skip a party or attend a party. If decorating gives you joy and you cry while doing it...go ahead. If you decide to skip some of what you used to do...it's fine. Give yourself permission to do what you need to do. This season is about welcoming Christ into the world and remembering God breaking into our suffering, sad and difficult world. It is about receiving the Holy One into our lives...into our hearts and even into our pain.

If you find this season particularly painful, reach out to someone who can give you the kind of support you need. Protect yourself from people who try to fix your feelings and wrap them up nice and neat so THEY will feel better.

Sometimes being at church can tap into the grief even more. Just know that your tears are free to flow. It's biblical! The ache that comes in that spot? Well...that's real and to be honored.

If you are finding this season difficult, know that I light a candle for you every day. If you are a friend of someone who is grieving, let them know you love them and just be present. Allow them to be where they need to be. That acceptance is the greatest gift you can give.

In all of this remember you are loved and the Holy One is with you always.

- Rev. Dr. Susan Minasian

PSEC Interim Associate Conference Minister for Search & Call

## New ONA Church!

Congratulations to the United Church of Christ's newest Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation: Zwingli United Church of Christ in Souderton. Congratulations to Zwingli UCC, the 1733rd church to become ONA since 1985. Their Open and Affirming Covenant reads:

*At Zwingli United Church of Christ, we promise to engage and nurture Christ's light in all of God's people, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity, race or ethnic background, social status, soul injury, religious beliefs, age, and physical, mental, or addiction challenges. We aspire to be a counterweight to exclusion and discrimination. We choose to purposefully welcome and include all people in every aspect of our church family including worship, fellowship, and leadership, lay and ordained, and will meet you where you are on life's journey to share God's love with you. It is our commitment that all members should feel and be safe, as we express God's universal and unconditional love in our church, community and daily lives.*

## PSEC 2021 Giving Cut-Off Date

Books of the PSEC will close Jan. 17. All OCWM contributions for 2021 must be in our office by that date or they will be counted towards 2022 contributions. **Please mail your contributions as soon as possible due to possible mail delays.**