

**11 Nov 22 – Advent 3 – Online – Ruth  
Bonni-Belle Pickard**

Heaven Shall Not Wait – StF 701

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHMt3YJHbZE&list=PLfJKMN-CtuWCeWWWKYxMLY\\_81soj1dufJ&index=30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHMt3YJHbZE&list=PLfJKMN-CtuWCeWWWKYxMLY_81soj1dufJ&index=30)

Longing for light (Christ be our light)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ITDS5B218g&list=PLfJKMN-CtuWCeWWWKYxMLY\\_81soj1dufJ&index=33](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ITDS5B218g&list=PLfJKMN-CtuWCeWWWKYxMLY_81soj1dufJ&index=33)

Into the darkness – StF 173

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXKOxub5obc&t=45s>

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Call to worship

Hymn – Come, thou long expected Jesus – StF 169

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuTGA5ke-iY>

Intro to Monologue –

Ruth Monologue –

Reflection and Candle lighting as an act of Remembrance and intercession

Prayer –

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – StF 180 v1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRDjVh2uCMw> **0:20-1:00**

Prayer --

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – StF 180 v2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRDjVh2uCMw> **1:00-1:41**

Prayer --

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – StF 180 v3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRDjVh2uCMw> **1:41-2:24**

Prayer –

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – StF 180 v4&5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRDjVh2uCMw> **2:24-end**

Prayer with Lord's Prayer –

Hymn -- For all the saints who showed your love – StF 746

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfSC0Alv6s0&t=40s>

Benediction

Abide with Me

Ruth, by Bonni-Belle Pickard, Advent 1999

Naomi gone?  
How could that be?  
I guess I just need to say it over and over  
Until I get used to it.

Naomi is dead.  
People I loved have died before;  
That's no secret.  
People die all the time!  
But we never get used to it...  
Grief: it's such a strange thing  
Such a hard thing...

They said I should have grieved more when Mahlon died.  
Well, I did grieve in my own way,  
But I didn't know much about grieving,  
And we had only been together such a short time,  
And Naomi is – was—such an expert griever  
That the rest of us pretty much left it to her  
To do the grieving for us then.

But if Naomi is gone!  
Who will do my grieving if I don't do it myself?

Some people grieve silently  
That wasn't Naomi's way.  
What she would do is talk.  
Remember.  
That's it: Re-member.  
Re-member the past  
To bring it back into focus,  
So the present makes more sense.

Naomi, I'll re-member today

They all warned me  
Before I married  
What a mother-in-law would be like;  
How she would be jealous of me  
For taking her sons,  
And how she would treat me harshly  
As her mother-in-law had done to her  
And as I would someday to do to my daughter-in-law.

And since I was a Moabite  
And she was a Hebrew –  
They told me it would be even worse  
Since Hebrews hated Moabites

And the only reason to marry one  
Was to ensure the male line continued....  
But somehow it wasn't like that with us.

Naomi never meant anyone any harm.  
Indeed, she was more of a mother to me  
Than my own mother.  
And I became her daughter.

More than that  
We became friends.  
I needed her wisdom  
She needed my vigor.  
She talked;  
I listened.  
She planned;  
I did.  
She plotted for safety and security;  
I chose risk.  
She decided with her head;  
I decided with my heart.

It didn't really hit me how much we needed each other  
Until she was ready to leave Moab.  
I guess we were all in a fog then,  
Still reeling from the deaths  
Of Elimelech and Mahlon and Chilion,  
Terrified to think what would become of us  
Three widowed women with no men  
To support or protect us.

But at the moment it came into her head  
To go back to Bethlehem,  
I knew I would go too.  
It didn't make any sense, they said.  
What hope was there for me,  
A widowed, childless, Moabite woman  
in Bethlehem?

Actually, Orpah and I both followed her  
As far as the Jordan,  
And then Naomi, the practical one,  
Told us to go back.  
She told us she wouldn't last long.  
Go back to the fertile land of Moab  
Where we had a future!

Orpah did go.  
And we missed her cheerful spirit those first few days,  
And Naomi still tried to talk me out of following

But she soon gave up.  
Even then we knew each other well enough  
To each know I would follow her wherever.

And so we continued on our journey  
In the beginning we had shared memories  
And shared grief,  
But as we went along,  
We began to share the journey, too.  
How we survived, I'll never know.  
Over rivers and streams,  
Up mountains and down.  
Naomi's feeble legs weak:  
"One more step, Naomi-ma," I'd tell her;  
"Soon we'll be in the Promised Land!"

Ah! The Stories she'd tell me about the Promised land!  
I know she'd never have left her beloved Israel  
If it hadn't been for the famine –  
But Moab, with its reputation for fertility,  
What had it got her?  
A full belly, perhaps,  
But it emptied her womb,  
And her arms...  
And mine?  
The Moabite god, Chemosh,  
Had not been friendly to me.  
Why should I remain in his land?  
Naomi's word –  
About El-Shaddai's Promised land –  
Was all I need to believe.

So we trudged together through wilderness,  
And slept in haystacks,  
And ate whatever we could find.  
The sun was hot,  
And the night was cold,  
But we had each other,  
And we surprised ourselves  
To find that woman could be friend  
With woman.

The journey took its toll on her.  
I often woke early and would check first  
To see if she breathed still.  
I never imaged what I would do  
If she stopped breathing...  
Never till today...

She was tired then.

She ached,  
And she got depressed,  
And she complained,  
But Naomi, my friend, was always  
Still breathing in the morning.

And so we would start another day  
Together.  
She would give thanks to El-Shaddai  
And ask for protection for the day.  
I would mumble along  
Wondering what kind of god  
Could really be worshipped so...  
And at the end of the day  
She would give thanks again  
And we would lay down and sleep  
While her God watched over us.

When we finally got to Bethlehem,  
It didn't take her long to make a plan.  
She sent me out to the fields,  
And I was glad to have some work to do.  
She had warned me that the Hebrews  
Would think me a wanton woman,  
Being a Moabite,  
So I watched the others carefully  
Out of the corner of my eye  
And tried to remember all she had taught me  
About how the Hebrew did things.

Her plan worked!  
There was work to do and food to eat – armloads of barley!  
And very little time to think back to Moab.

The next thing I knew, I was even eating  
With the owner of the field!  
He was a handsome man,  
Ah, yes, you know Boaz –  
Such a good man!  
It was more than I could fathom  
That he would become our go'el,  
The kinsman/redeemer for both Naomi and me --  
And more than that, a husband for me!

I think Naomi must have had the whole thing  
Planned out from the beginning.  
She knew I was good at seizing the moment  
So she worked hard to make sure the moments  
Were there to be seized!

And so I seized a husband:  
A good man  
Who took care of both of us, Naomi and me,  
And through whom God blessed my womb  
With a son:  
A son to continue Elimelech's line  
A son to warm Naomi's arms  
A son to melt the knots in her heart  
As she had melted those in mine.

I re-member, Naomi!  
I re-member you!

Thank you for the memories.  
They help me grieve a little now.  
The wailers from town  
Have come and gone.  
Boaz paid them well,  
and they did a property job of it.  
But what do they know of the worth of a woman?  
A woman worth being friends with?  
What do they know?  
Of love that has no explanation?

The wailers wailed with such ferociousness  
As if El-Shaddai would only hear  
The thunder  
Instead of the gentle rain  
Of tears.

Good-bye, Naomi.  
Sleep peacefully, my friend.  
I promised long ago  
That your people would be my people,  
And your God would be my God,  
And your tomb would be my tomb.

Someday I'll join you there, Naomi,  
Until then,  
Sleep well, my love.

Reflection:

In the monologue reflection I've done on Ruth today,  
I've focussed on the love she had for Naomi –  
A love which didn't end with Naomi's death  
But which I felt she would have thought about deeply.

In the previous weeks of these services  
featuring women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus,  
I've reflected on how their legacies might have influenced Jesus' life and ministry.  
Surely Jesus was 'acquainted with grief' – as was Ruth --  
We're told that 'Jesus wept' when his dear friend, Lazarus, died –  
That gives us permission, too, to grieve, to mourn  
To know that we do so in the presence of One who grieves with us.

While some might think this is a strange reflection to do at Christmas time,  
There is a growing awareness amongst church leaders  
That Christmas is a difficult time for many,  
Especially those who have had recent bereavements,  
And can't really face a holiday season full of merriment

Several churches today hold 'Blue Christmas' services this time of year –  
And I have adapted a liturgy written by a minister in Ohio, Rev Heather Hill,  
for such a service. This will serve as our prayers of intercession.  
Instead of singing 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel' straight through  
As we have done in previous weeks,  
We'll be singing a verse at a time after prayers for various types of loss and bereavement.

## A LITURGY OF REMEMBRANCE

By Rev Heather Hill, Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Parma, Ohio.

### *Lighting of Four Advent Candles*

#### ***First Candle:***

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost.  
We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face,  
the memory that binds them to us in this season.  
We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.  
Please take a moment to remember those who have died.

Lord, each of us takes our loved one by the hand and leads them to you, the God of love.  
Here we present them to you.  
Accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving care.  
We want our loved ones to be free at home with you.  
We ask that you save a place for us beside them.  
We ask that you fill us with motivation and energy in the days ahead  
when we feel like giving up;  
remind us often of our true homeland  
when we are caught up in the desolation of the journey.  
Help us to find joy in the people, events and the beauty of nature which surrounds us.  
Thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives.  
We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again,  
when we are all in your presence forever.  
May this truth sustain us in the days to come.  
Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us.  
Comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness.  
God of sorrowing, draw near! Amen.

#### ***Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,\****

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by thine advent here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

#### **Second Candle:**

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss;  
the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring,  
the loss of health in ourselves or in family members,  
the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us,  
the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith.  
As we gather up the pain of the past we offer it to you, O God,  
asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you.  
We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life  
and ever keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection.  
We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious.



We forget so easily that you will be with us in all that we experience.  
Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives  
and to be open to the changes which we are now going through. Amen.

**Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,\***

*O come, thou Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

**Third Candle:**

The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives.  
God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land.  
You lead Ruth and Naomi from Moab to Bethlehem.

Hear our prayer.

We want so much to have a sense of direction,  
to know where we are and where we ought to be headed.

But the darkness and the questions stay.

You ask us to be full of faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost,  
that you are our wisdom and our guide, and to trust in your presence.

Your words to us are clear: "Do not fear, I go before you."

God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide.

Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction

and grant that we may have the reassurance of knowing that we are on the right path.

Take our lives and use them according to your will.

Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you. Amen.

**Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,\***

*O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times once gave the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

**Fourth Candle:**

The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope,  
the hope that the Christmas story offers to us.

We remember that God, who shares our life,  
promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

O God whose spirit is known by those whose hearts are thankful,  
and who makes cheerfulness a companion of strength,

lift up our hearts, we pray, to a joyous confidence in your care.

Guide us when we cannot see the way.

Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow,

because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears.

Where there is love in life, teach us to find it;  
help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love.  
So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others.  
We ask it, in the name of Jesus Christ whose life is our light. Amen.

**Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel,\***

*O come, thou Root of Jesse's tree,  
an ensign of thy people be;  
before thee rulers silent fall;  
all peoples on thy mercy call.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

God of great compassion and love,  
We ask you to be with us and with those whom we have remembered today,  
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.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil,  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen

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.

[For all the saints]

Benediction:

May the God who led Ruth and Naomi beyond despair into hope,  
And blessed them when they scarcely dared to believe,  
Bless us in our living.  
May the God who led Naomi beyond this earthly life  
Even while she left a legacy of love and adventure behind,  
Be with our loved ones who have passed...  
May that same God remain with us filling our empty places  
With love and peace and even joy.  
Amen!