



Waiting on God

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green** cloth or scarf because we are now in a time of **growth**. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Video: The Power of Your Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5DERncaM80>

Light Candle

We light this candle...

Light the candle

And we breathe...

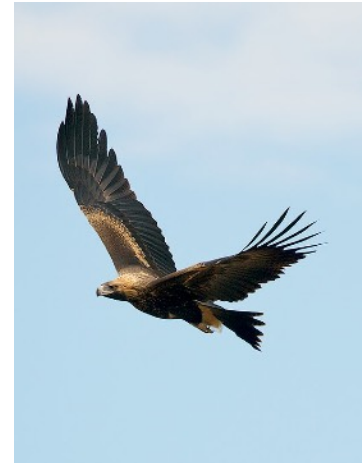
and we turn towards the one who is the Light of the World,
Jesus the Christ.

We seek the light.

We celebrate the light.

We allow ourselves to be drawn to the light.

We wonder at what the light reveals to us.



"Wedge-tailed Eagle (Aquila audax)" by patrickkavanagh is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, God our Creator, breathed life into this land and its peoples.

The land we gather on,

the land we live, work, play and worship on,

has been cared for since time immemorial by the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal Nation. It has never been ceded.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We commit ourselves to building relationships with those who carry the sacred stories today.

And we commit ourselves to pursuing justice for their communities, so that our reconciled life reflects the way of God here in this place.

Call to Worship

Come all of you who are weary.

Come to the one who will lift you up on eagle's wings,

***that we might run and not grow weary
walk and not faint.***

Come all of you who are worried.

Come to the one who will lift you up and renew your strength,

***that we might wait upon the living God
with patience and peace.***

Come all of you who are ailing.
Come to the one who will lift you up and empower your spirits,
***that we might know the energy and strength of God
present beyond all space and time.***

Come, celebrate the one who does not weary,
or succumb to despair,
but who is wholeness itself,
source of our healing and hope.

Written and modified by Anita Monro
for Year B 5th Sunday after Epiphany, 5 February 2012 & 4 February 2024.

So come, slow your breathing,
bring your focus into this time and place,
open yourself once more to the moving of God's Spirit amongst us.
Come, let us worship God.

Opening prayer

Creator God,
here we are,
creatures of your forming,
amidst the wonder of your beautiful creation.
As we gather to worship you,
may we see and hear and know of your presence amongst us once more.
Stir in us, the courage and the will to respond to your call -
today and in all our days. Amen.

Sing - Everyday Loving (Seasons 5-16)

This song reminds us that each one of us is welcome here - no strings attached, and we are called to offer love in the everyday ordinariness of life.

This welcome here is simply free.

It's for the world, for you and me.

We bring our smiles and cares,

our heart's own prayers

and the stories of our days,

to worship God in many ways.

And together we're...

Ev'ryday loving! Ev'ryday loving!

We're just ev'ryday loving!

The way that God loves us!

God's love is deep. God's love is wide.

It's all around, and here inside.

So when we lend a hand or take a
stand,

it's love we're sending round.

In ev'ry day, that's where it's found.

And together we're...

Ev'ryday loving!...

Then can we dare to use our eyes,

and tune our ears to others' cries?

To hear the silent words of those

unheard,

and sing with them their song.

We know that God will lead us on.

And together we're...

Ev'ryday loving!...

O God of Earth, you hear us call.

Shower your love upon us all.

And like a mustard seed, the faith we
need

will blossom as we grow.

Give us your faith, to live and show,
that what you're giving is...

Ev'ryday loving!...

Words and Music: Linnea Good

Prayer - reflecting on Isaiah 40:21-31

- 21 Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
- 22 It is [God] who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
- 23 who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.
- 24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when [God] blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

Creator of all that is,
here we are,
like grasshoppers on this amazing planet,
specks of dust in the vastness of the universe,
yet loved, held and cherished in your embrace.
When we consider the sweep of human history,
our lives are such short breaths in the life of the earth.
Yet you call to each one of us, inviting us to live each day in the fullness of Life.

- 25 To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
- 26 Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
The One who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because [God] is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

Holy One, we cast our eyes across the horizon
and drink in the blue green of the ocean
we wonder at the endless blue sky
and watch clouds making their way propelled by the wind.
You, our God, You created all this!
And we are often speechless in the presence of such beauty,
breathless when pondering the power of wind and waves.
And yet, not one of your creatures is missed,
not one of us is forgotten.

- 27 Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
'My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my God'?
- 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

[God] does not faint or grow weary;
[God's] understanding is unsearchable.
29 [God] gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
30 Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
31 but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

O God, we do get tired.
As we grow older, our bodies grow weaker.
When we see the pain and struggles of our friends, our families,
when we are honest about our own challenges,
our souls are sometimes weary.

And so we wait, O God, on you. *[pause]*
We long for the Spirit's breath to blow through our weariness
to re-ignite our passion and energy
that we may know the joy of flight,
of soaring through our days,
of renewed strength spurring us into your future. Amen.

Sing - In Full Flight (Seasons 6-22)

As we reflect on flying as if on the wings of an eagle, so we sing of the birds who inspire us to soar.

We can't quite see what tomorrow will offer.

Nothing's that clear, so little in place.
Yet, "All shall be well," the wise lady whispers;
all shall be well, a goodness to trace.

*Bird in full flight, bird on the wing.
Soaring above, beyond on the run.
Journeys of change, vistas of wonder.
Leading to life through the heart of the One.*

Wonders of birth, pained separations.
Myst'ries too deep, too hard to explain.
Beauty and hope in each new day
dawning,

the presence of joy at play once again.

Bird in full flight...

Ev'ry day moments alive to love's splendour.

Why turn aside for a heaven above?

God in the laugh, the cry and the gesture,
grace in the now, peace through the dove.

Bird in full flight...

We who are called to live out Love's passion.

Those who set out on the journey of faith;
need look to the skies only to fashion
the daring of birds, bold courses they take.

Bird in full flight...

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Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Mark 1:29-39

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him

about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' ³⁸He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Reflection

In the healing,
in the praying,
in the searching,
Holy God, may we find you.
And in our finding, may we learn to proclaim -
in words and in our lives - your reign, your way amongst us. Amen.

The prophet, Isaiah calls to the people of Israel:

Don't you know?

Haven't you heard?

In many ways, it is not a question, of course they know! Of course they have heard!

They have heard the stories of God over and over!

They must *know* that God is the creator of all that is.

Perhaps though, when we hear these words of the prophets to us, today, perhaps in the asking, there is also a gentler sense of "well, haven't you heard, don't you know?"

But the prophet continues, so even if you think you don't know or you haven't heard, he is going to tell us anyway!

God is the creation of all that is - stretching out the heavens, holding all the earth, and knowing each part of God's own creation intimately so that nothing is missed or missing.

And this same God give strength to the weary when we rest or wait or dwell in God.

Well for many who have been faithful followers of Jesus for a long time, that all makes sense. But if you are weary today, if you are exhausted, then how does this work, do we think?

In the reading from the gospel attributed to Mark, Jesus visits Simon and Andrew's house along with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law is ill - so not the best time for your son-in-law to bring his friends over(!)

But while mother-in-law is never given a name, she is obviously deeply loved because they tell Jesus about her, and about her illness. And so he goes to her and “lifts her up” (1:31) - the term is the same as the gospel writer uses to describe Jesus being “lifted up” on the cross. Jesus “lifts her up” and then “Then fever left her, and she began to serve them” (1:31). So much to say about one sentence!

The breaking of the fever is a mystery - we don't know how.

The description of this woman's service can raise our feminist hackles a little - why should she serve the boys when they have come home seemingly unexpected, particularly when she had been so ill.

But what the woman does, the word in Greek that we translate as “to serve” is *διακονει* (*diakonei*) which can also be translated as “to minister”. It is the same Greek word that is used to describe what the angels do for Jesus in the wilderness (Mark 1:13) It is where we get the word “deacon” from. Mother-in-law doesn't simply offer hospitality - she *ministers* to them, providing what is necessary to sustain life.

And we are reminded, that we need to attend to what is necessary to sustain life - for ourselves and for the people around us.

And here I am preaching to myself too - but if we are in the habit of skimping on taking time for rest, refreshment, proper meals - you know what I mean - if we get too busy to take care of the life-sustaining practices we all know we need, then we will be unable to be present for those to whom we may be called upon to minister.

That evening we find the house surrounded by people seeking healing - physical and what the gospel writer describes as “possessed with demons” (1:32). And the whole city was there! (1:33) Now, of course, that might have been an exaggeration but I think we can be confident that there was a large crowd. And Jesus attends to them (1:34).

And then early the next morning, he goes to a quiet place to pray (1:35).

For those of us that don't do mornings, this little story has always made me feel a bit guilty - but it doesn't have to be before day break...

Another necessity of life is taking time to be quiet, to pray, to give ourselves space to process our experiences and space for God to guide us. If we fill every waking moment with noise and movement, we will never find peace.

I know that silence can be uncomfortable for some people.

Some of us don't sit still very well.

But it is now scientifically well documented that we need silence and stillness to balance the busyness of our minds. Whether it is mindfulness practices, or here with our Meditation Group that starts back this week, whether it is sitting on a bench overlooking the ocean or in the rain forest - we need silence and stillness for our wellbeing.

And, in that silence, I believe, God will reveal Godself to us - maybe not today or tomorrow, maybe not in a flash of “ah ha”, maybe simply in a growing depth of peace, or a “knowing”.

We don't know how long Jesus was gone for, but he seems to have been missed because the gospel writer describes Simon and the others *hunting* for him (1:36). And when they find him, he suggests they move on to the neighbouring towns to proclaim and to “cast out demons” (1:38-39)

The gospel writer is clear that Jesus' first priority is the proclamation of God's reign on earth in this time and place - “the kingdom of God has come near” (1:15) and that this is good news, calling people to return to God's way. God hasn't abandoned them, God is in their midst, God's way is within their reach.

The writer of Mark's gospel is also aware of a cosmic dimension to Jesus' ministry. We hear a lot about demons and evil spirits in Mark's gospel. And I don't want to downplay

that cosmic dimension - I have no doubt there is more to this world than we can explain by scientific theories and proofs. And Mark's gospel certainly sets up a clash between Jesus and those powers.

But I also want to say that what are described as demons also could describe many things that hold people captive - addictions, trauma, patterns of behaviour, patterns of thinking - and there is something about an encounter with Jesus that offers freedom from those things. That's not to say it is a magic solution - science tells us that it is neurologically hard for us to change embedded patterns of thinking and behaviour - for better or worse - the choice to follow the path Jesus shows, the choice to participate in God's reign over the powers of the world, they are sometimes difficult and they occur day after day after day.

And we get tired...

We get tired of fighting against pressure to take a supposedly easier path...

We get tired when our work for good seems to make no measurable difference...

We get tired when other people seem to be better at it...

We get tired when we begin to think that maybe God has forgotten about us...

So we wait, we wait on God,

we wait in the stillness and the silence,

resting, dwelling, taking time to be refreshed and renewed in body, mind and spirit.

We wait on our own,

and we wait in the company of our siblings in Christ - don't ever be afraid to ask a brother or sister in Christ to pray with or for you -

we wait, and in our waiting, God's Spirit will renew and refresh and revive. Amen

Responding

Sing - We Cannot Measure How You Heal

This song holds our questions about healing, about holding grief and points us to the love of God found in the people who are gathered around us right now...

We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends
as hands which shaped and saved the
world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain
and make your broken people whole.

John L Bell and Graham Maule

Prayer for Others

Today as we pray for the world and the people around us, I want to begin by asking you to think about people and circumstances that need our prayer, and then to name them quietly in the space offered...

Who among us has need of support and encouragement?

We name those people aloud in the presence of loving community. *Name them now...*

Who are the strangers, orphans, and widows who have yet to be folded into our embrace?
Name them now...

Where are the cities or situations we cannot engage personally, we name them now, knowing God will bring us toward them when or if we can be of service.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Epiphany, 2021, p.174

Eternally loving God,
we thank you for all that we are,
and all that you have given us.
As we come before you in worship today,
we give thanks for your work in the world,
for all those who have dedicated their lives to caring for others,
for those who work tirelessly and thanklessly,
we ask for your blessing on them
and that we too may care for those around us, and all who cross our path.

We pray today for all your people,
in this building, at home, and all around the world,
that they will seek to follow you,
to love and to care for each other,
that they will know that they are loved for who they are,
just as you have made them.

We pray for those who are struggling with ill health in whatever form it takes,
who worry about themselves, their families, their finances, their jobs.
Hold them close to you, O God,
guide them through their difficult times,
bring healing and peace to your children who suffer.

We pray for your church,
here in Australia and across the world,
grant us the wisdom to see your vision
to know what is needed
and what is to be discarded,
that we might more fully serve you and each other. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 37, 2021, p.106

Offering

This part of our service is not about the money.

It is about considering how we will respond to what we have seen and heard and experienced this morning, or perhaps throughout the week - how is God prompting you, nudging you, inspiring you - and what will you do about it?

Generous God,
we gather in thanks and praise,
for all that we have and all that we are,
we come as we are
broken but beloved.
In your love you breathe life,
heal the sick, and feed the hungry.
Here we offer these tokens of money
and we offer ourselves, our time and gifts
as we commit ourselves to your church
your mission, and your call,
to care for and love all who we meet, in your name. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 37, 2021, p.105

Sending

Sing - May The God of Hope (Seasons 6-30 - 3 verses)

As we go, we ask God to go with us and we commit ourselves to a life of prayer and worship and work as Christ calls us...

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and
peace.

May the God of justice speed us on our
way,
bringing light and hope to every land and
race.

*Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all.
Working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.*

God will be our shepherd as we go our
way,
and will not forsake us when we go astray.
Even though the load of life is hard to bear,
we must not forget that God is always
there.

Praying, let us work for peace...

May the God of healing free the earth from
fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and
pursued.

May the God of love keep our commitment
clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed.

Praying, let us work for peace...

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Stanza 2: Ann Mitchell. Copyright © Choristers Guild.

Sending and Blessing

Go, knowing we are held by love,
sustained in hope,
and equipped for the ministry we are called to.
And the blessing of God,
divine mystery, divine Word, divine presence
be with you this day and always.
Amen

Rev Kath Merrifield
4 February 2024