

THE RATTLE BAG

A little book of prayers and practices
to sustain you during shutdown

Sanctuary, 2020

Welcome to the rattle bag!

This little book is a ‘rattle bag’: a motley assortment of the prayers which float around my head and the practices which stud my life. These are words and habits which I have found to be useful, sustaining and kind. It was put together in response to the stated needs of several households, who asked for some patterns and prayers they could draw on during shutdown. I hope it helps meet those needs, and gives you some pleasure and encouragement.

I’ve included a couple of my own prayers, not because they are brilliant but as a reminder that all prayer arises from ordinary people in ordinary places, and as an encouragement to you to write your own prayers and, where appropriate, share them to help others put words around their faith.

When I proposed this project to the leadership, we decided the priority was to get something in your hands as soon as possible; and so it has been thrown together very quickly with little consultation. However, I suspect this booklet could prove useful well beyond shutdown. So if you find yourself turning to it, and if you think of prayers which are begging to be included, please let me know. Perhaps in future we will put together a longer, more considered edition, sharing more of the prayers which tell the stories of our lives. A big thanks to those in the congregation who did manage to contribute prayers at such short notice. Any unattributed prayers are written by me.

With love,

Alison, [Sanctuary](#)

April 2020

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus said to his disciples, Pray like this ... (Matthew 6:9-13)

Many Christians pray this daily. Lest it become tired through overfamiliarity, play with the words. What difference does it make to say 'hallowed', 'holy' or 'blessed'? 'Kingdom' or 'culture'? 'Sins', 'debts' or 'trespasses'? 'Evil' or 'the evil one'? Can you say 'Mother'? Look up Luke 11:2-4. How do the prayers differ? What comes before and after each version? What difference does it make?

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

SONG OF PRAISE

Give thanks to God; call on God's name. Make known to all peoples what God has done! Sing to God, sing praise to God, tell of all God's wonderful acts!

(Psalm 105:1-2)

You can speak or sing this song of praise, or doxology. You'll find the score at <http://rosslangmead.soweb.com/rl/songs.html>.

Creator of this great land, we adore you.
Renewer of your people, hear our praise.
Transformer of all life, you often take us by surprise.
Continue to be present in life-giving ways. Great God.

Ross Langmead

A SIMPLE PRAYER

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances: for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Fill in the blanks.

Hello, God.

It's me ...

Thank you for ...

I'm sorry that I ...

Please help me ...

Amen.

ALL SHALL BE WELL

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18)

In 'Revelations of Divine Love,' Julian of Norwich records these words, which were spoken to her by Jesus. Living as she did at a time of great suffering, including the Black Death, she wrote thirteen chapters arguing with the words and asking how things could possibly be made well. For the most part, God did not address her concerns. Instead, God invited Julian simply to trust in that future of wellness ... which she finally accepted.

Sin is inevitable,
but all shall be well,
and all shall be well and
all manner of things shall be well.

Spoken through Julian of Norwich

FIVE BODY PRAYERS

All the people shouted ‘Amen! Amen!’ while lifting up their hands, then they bowed low and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

(Nehemiah 8:6)

People pray not just with words but with their bodies. In a formal service, we might bow to honour people, who are bearers of God’s image; kneel to show humility, particularly during prayers of confession; stand to show respect; sit to show receptivity; shake hands to express unity and peace with one another; raise our hands, palms outwards, in a gesture of blessing and praise; and so on. Here are some ways to pray with our bodies at home.

Stand comfortable and relaxed, just as you are:

Hello, God.

I like being here with you,

like a child being with an adult who loves them.

Feeling sulky? Open your hands, palms up to the sky:

Dear God,

come in, come in to my house.

Curl your body into a heap:

Dear God,

I’m sitting in a heap.

Look at me,

you can see that I’m sorry.

When you are rocking your body:

Dear God,

please hold me close.

Raise your arms up and wide!

Dear God,

I lift my hands to you

in joyful thanks and praise!

Marie-Agnes Gaudrat, adapted

ENEMIES

Jesus said 'Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you ...'

(Matthew 5:44)

Is someone really bugging you? Regularly pray the Lord's Prayer on their behalf, until there is a shift in your own heart.

X's Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come in X,
Your will be done by X,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give X today their daily bread.
Forgive X their sins,
as they forgive those who sin against them.
Lead X not into temptation,
but deliver X from evil. Amen.

Suggested by Morton T. Kelsey

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Of course, it can also be good to have a sense of humour about our enemies!

May those who love us, love us.
And those who don't love us,
May God turn their hearts;
And if God doesn't turn their hearts,
May God turn their ankles,
So we will know them by their limping.

Irish traditional

FRIENDS

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I no longer call you servants, but friends.' (John 15:15)

Jesus,
we pray for our friends,
that they may lead happy and useful lives.
We pray for friends with whom we have quarrelled,
that we may have the chance to be reconciled.
We pray for those living in a new place,
and who lack friends.
We pray for those who have lost their friends
by the way they live.
We pray for those who befriend the friendless.
Jesus, our friend,
help us to be true and loyal friends.
Grant that all our friendships lead us closer to you.
Because you reach out the hand of friendship
to everyone. Amen.

Carol Micklem & Roger Tomes, edited

RECONCILIATION

Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew in me a right spirit. (Psalm 51:10)

‘wunthanbayarra’: When I forgive you, I am free. Making peace with you cools my head and calms my spirit.

*From the Yanyuwa language
As told by Ros Moriarty*

From the mud
a pure white flower.
From the storm
a clear blue sky.
As we pardon
one another
God forgives us
from on high.

Dear God,
Give us the courage to overcome
anger with love. Amen.

Sophie Piper

RECONCILIATION RITUALS

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:13-14)

Here are a few simple ideas for rituals around reconciliation.

WASH IT AWAY

For small things: Use handwashing, a shower or a bath to wash away minor hurts and frustrations. Name them, let them swirl down the plughole, and emerge refreshed.

COOLING HAT

Read the poem on the previous page. Encourage children to find a special hat which 'cools heads', a white flower, or something the colour of the sky, to help them move from anger and hurt towards reconciliation.

BLESSING CUP

Ask your children to set the table beautifully. Choose a special glass, fill it with a drink everyone can share (one household uses cranberry juice), and put it in the centre. Before the meal is served, sit down together. Remember how much you love one another. Take turns naming what you appreciate about each other (e.g. what do each of us appreciate about mum this week? dad? kid? etc.). Think about how you have hurt each other, failed to recognise each other as a gift, or failed to forgive. Things may be spoken aloud, or mulled over in silence. Let someone pray for the household, seeking God's forgiveness for everyone and peace for the household. Then pass the blessing cup around, and, one at a time, drink deeply.

ANXIOUS

Don't worry about anything! Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need. Thank God for what God's done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything you can understand. It's wonderful what happens when Christ replaces worry at the centre of your life. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Pray about everything:

Hello, God. It's me ...

This is the situation ...

Tell God what you need:

I feel ...

I need ...

Thank God for what God's done:

Thank you that ...

Pray in Jesus' name:

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.

GENEROSITY

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a small boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' (John 6:8-9)

Sometimes we need God's help to be generous.

God of the barley loaf,
God of the boy,
God of the fish,
and God of the humble brother:
When we do not have enough,
may we use what we have
to do what we can.
Because a small boy did this,
and generosity listened. Amen.

Pádraig Ó Tuama

SHOPPING

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers.

(Deuteronomy 24:15)

Whether food, drink, electronics or t-shirts, everything we buy involves somebody else's labour.

God of the just weight
and the fair measure,
let me remember the hands
that harvested my food, my drink,
not only in my prayers
but in the marketplace.
Let me not seek a bargain
that leaves another hungry. Amen.

Janet Morley

WHAT WE NEED IS HERE

So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that crawls, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:22)

... Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clean,
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye
clear. What we need is here.

Wendell Berry, excerpt

TRUST

Jesus said, 'Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.' (Matthew 6:25-26a)

When I rise up,
let me rise up joyful
like a bird.

When I fall
let me fall without regret
like a leaf.

Wendell Berry

PATTERNS

God said, 'As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.' (Genesis 8:22)

O God,
You set the patterns of the world —
summer and winter,
seedtime and harvest —
so that all living things may flourish.

But we have been greedy
for warmth in wintertime
cool air in summertime
harvest crops at seedtime
spring flowers as the year grows old.

Teach us to live peaceably with the world.
Let the patterns be restored
and bless us. Amen.

Sophie Piper

LITANY

Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. (Psalm 82:3-4)

A prayer for other people's suffering.

Gather up
In the arms of your pity
The sick, the depraved,
The desperate, the tired,
All the scum
Of our weary city
Gather up
In the arms of your pity.
Gather up
In the arms of your love—
Those who expect
No love from above.

Langston Hughes

STRENGTH

My arm shall strengthen them ... (Psalm 89:21b)

God give us strength.
Strength to hold on
and strength to let go.
Amen.

Michael Leunig

HANDWASHING 1

Pilate took a basin of water and washed his hands in full sight of the crowd, saying, 'I'm washing my hands of responsibility for this man's death. From now on, it's in your hands. You're judge and jury.' (Matthew 27:24)

Forgiving Jesus:

You watched Pilate wash his hands
of responsibility for your death,
and you forgave him.

Each time we wash our hands,
help us remember our baptism.

Help us remember that we are forgiven;
help us to forgive.

Because you watched, and you forgave,
not only Pilate, but every one of us. Amen.

HANDWASHING 2

Who may ascend to the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in her holy place?
Those who have clean hands and a pure heart. (Psalm 24:3-4)

O Holy One:

You welcome those
who are clean of hand and pure of heart.

As I wash my hands,
wash away my guilt also.

Cleanse me of all violence, greed, envy, hate;
any tendency to manipulate;
make my heart white as snow.

For you did create us to worship you:
this we know: through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

HEART AND HOUSE

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. (Luke 24:28-29)

Jesus said to the disciples: 'Dwell in me, and I will dwell in you.' (John 15:4)

This is a prayer for hearts and houses. You can pray it literally, or you can pray it understanding that, in many spiritual traditions including Christianity, the home is a metaphor for the self.

On my heart and on my house
the blessing of God.
In my coming and in my going
the peace of God.
In my life and in my seeking
the love of God.
At my end and new beginning
the arms of God to welcome me
and to bring me home.

J. Philip Newell

WALKING

The earth people heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the evening. (Genesis 3:8)

A simple chant for your daily stroll. As you walk, imagine your feet pressing into the earth and blessing it, step by step. You can also sing this to a tune by Ruth Cunningham; find it at Music that Makes Community (online).

God bless every step that I am taking,
and bless the earth beneath my feet.

Celtic chant

EARTH BLESSINGS

Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' (John 20:21-22)

PEACE

Jesus' peace is communicated, in part, through the creation brought into being by the Breath of Life (Genesis) and the Word of Life (John). The blessing is sung here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYsTzXby4vU>.

The peace of the earth be with you,
the peace of the heavens, too;
the peace of the rivers be with you,
the peace of the oceans too.
Deep peace falling over you;
God's peace growing in you.

Traditional Celtic

LIGHT

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' (John 6:12)

One family blesses their daughters as they head to school each day, using these beautiful words from North American First Nations. The first blessing suits one daughter; the second, the other. Our children may not be leaving the house right now, but the time will come soon enough.

Go gently.
Be brave, be pure,
be as humble as the earth
and as radiant as the sun.

May the long time sun shine upon you
May all love surround you
May the true light within you
guide your way home.

NOAH IN THE ARK

And the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. On that very day Noah entered the ark, along with his sons ... (Genesis 7:12-13)

This prayer is especially for parents during shutdown.

Lord,
what a menagerie!
Between your downpour and these animal cries
one cannot hear oneself think!
The days are long,
Lord.
All this water makes my heart sink.
When will the ground cease to rock under my feet?
The days are long.
Master Raven has not come back.
Here is Your dove.
Will she find us a twig of hope?
The days are long,
Lord.
Guide Your Ark to safety,
some zenith of rest,
where we can escape at last
from this brute slavery.
The days are long,
Lord.
Lead me until I reach the shore of your covenant.
Amen.

*Carmen Bernos de Gasztold,
translated by Rumer Goden*

SHORT PRAYERS FOR RISING

The steadfast love of God never ceases: God's mercies never come to an end.
They are new every morning! Great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

O God, our Creator,
your kindness has brought us the gift of a new day.
Help us to leave yesterday behind,
and not to worry about tomorrow,
but to accept and live into the gift of today. Amen.

Iona Community

God of resurrection,
bright morning star,
lord of the dance,
leap of faith,
stillness of joy,
bless us this day
and all who journey with us. Amen.

Jim Cotter

Bless to us, O God,
the earth beneath our feet,
the paths on which we go,
the people whom we meet.
Bless to us, O God,
each thing our eyes see,
each sound our ears hear,
each scent that goes to our nostrils,
each taste that goes to our lips,
each task to which we put our hands. Amen.

Philip Newell, adapted

MORNING PRAYER

The steadfast love of God never ceases: God's mercies never come to an end.
They are new every morning! Great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

A simple structure for morning prayer, folding together prayers from South Yarra Community Baptist and the GraceTree Community in Coburg.

Let the darkness recede,
the day open before us,
the world rise to new life.

But before the day unfolds,
let us pause, awake and ready,
that we might behold the beauty
of your Living Presence in this moment.

Silence

We are created in Your image.
In you alone
we live and move and have our being.
Glory be to God,
now and forever.

We give you thanks, O Lord,
for the beauty and promise of this day.
Here and now,
we embrace solitude, stillness,
and life with others. Amen.

MIDDAY PRAYER

Be still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)

Here is a simple structure for midday prayer, adapted from that used by the GraceTree Community in Coburg. You will find prayers for the movement into silence overleaf.

Gracious God,
we pause now in the middle of the day
to recall your Living Presence.
Let us listen for the Word of God:

Read the Bible

Movement into silence

Silence

The day's activities beckon once more.
From busyness, distraction,
and the anxious pursuit of others' approval:
Lord, deliver us.

Holy Spirit, our Advocate,
keep us alert to our shadows
in this time of noonday brightness,
and protect us from the fiery arrows of the Accuser.
Give us the grace to serve you and others
in self-giving love, whatever the cost. Amen.

FIVE MOVEMENTS INTO SILENCE

Be still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)

You can use each prayer as a standalone introduction to a time of silence, or fold it into the longer structure on the previous page, in which you also read and reflect on a Biblical text. Alternatively, use the Centering Prayer app for framing silence.

MONDAY

In quietness we lay before you our fear and faith.
From fear of staying still,
 O God, deliver me.
From fear of surrender,
 O God, deliver me.
From fear of decision,
 O God, deliver me.
But from the fear that marks your presence:
 I beseech you, O God, do not deliver me.

TUESDAY

Here we rest under the shadow of your mercy.
May your presence
of inner silence and stillness
flow like Living Water through our souls,
refreshing and renewing us.

Monday: Janet Morley

Tuesday: GraceTree Community

Wednesday: Janet Morley, adapted by Nathan Nettleton

Thursday: Garry Deverell & Nathan Nettleton

Friday: Giles David, adapted

WEDNESDAY

Spirit of comfort and conviction,
unclothe me of my pride,
unweave my thoughts,
uncomplicate my heart,
and give me surrender,
that I may welcome the deep silence
which stands at the centre of my being
like the rock at the heart of our land.

THURSDAY

Let us lay ourselves open to the spirit
who comforts and disturbs,
who purges our delusions with fire
and whispers grace with a lover's breath.
Gather us under your wings, Tender Spirit,
and brood over us in the stillness.
Shelter us from the storms of our fear,
inscribe your teachings on our hearts,
and bring forth in us the fruit of love.

FRIDAY

When the world tells us that we are what we do with our
spending power, let us learn:
We are who we are in our silence.
When the world tells us that we are how we're seen in the
eyes of others, let us learn:
We are who we are in our silence.
When the world tells us to rush in where angels fear to
tread, let us learn what the angels already know:
Our truth is conceived in the silence of God.

SOME TABLE PRAYERS

They will celebrate your abundant goodness, and joyfully sing of your righteousness ... The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

(Psalm 145:7, 15)

An action grace:

God bless us	(hands on head)
God bless the food	(hands around plate)
Amen	(hands folded)

Found at graces.io:

For the stars and the sun
and the bountiful earth
For the clouds and the rain
and the changing seasons
For the soil and seeds
and the warmth of the spring
For the glory of life
in growing things
For fields and fruit trees
for cows and honey bees
For flowers and greens
and grasses and beans
For all the living things
that have become this meal
We give grateful thanks. Amen.

From the Huron Hunger Fund, Anglican Church of Canada:

For food in a world where many walk in hunger;
For faith in a world where many walk in fear;
For friends in a world where many walk alone;
We give you thanks, O Lord. Amen.

From the Cook Islands:

Oh dear Lord, we thank you for the magnificent feast you have provided and for the beautiful cooks who have put it here. For the sea, for the trees, for the gardens, we thank you. Please help us not to eat like pigs and to remember people who do not have this food and are hungry. Amen.

From the Carmina Gadelica:

Give us O God of the nourishing meal,
well-being to the body, the frame of the soul.
Give us O God of the honey-sweet milk,
the sap and the savour of the fragrant farms.

From Edward M Hays, Prayers for the Domestic Church:

The day is coming to a close,
and, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus,
we pause to break bread together.
May our eyes be opened,
and, in this act of common sharing,
may we see the Risen Lord in one another.
May we see the Lord of Life in our food,
our conversation and lives shared in common.
May the blessing of God,
God's peace and love, rest upon our table. Amen.

THE EXAMEN

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any evil in me, and guide me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

The Examen is a way to reflect on the day. The following is one version. Read more about the Examen on our website, and find other versions on the excellent free app, Reimagining the Examen.

Step 1: Ask God for light. Pray to see the day through God's eyes, not your own.

Step 2: Give thanks. Every day is a gift from God. Think back over the day, and thank God for all the good things.

Step 3: Review the day. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you reflect on God's activity in the day. Wonder: Where was I most aware of God's presence? Did I sense Christ in the community? Did I bring Christ to others? Was I aware of feeling loved, or of being mean, or of trusting God? What do my emotions tell me about my relationship with God today?

Step 4: Face your shortcomings. Without judgement, reflect on the day. When were you mean, jealous, vicious or selfish? What stopped you from acting with love? Tell God you are sorry, and ask for forgiveness. Feel God's love wash over you.

Step 5: Look to tomorrow. Think about tomorrow. What might be hard? Ask God to help you each moment.

Close: Pray "Our Father", or move into other night prayers.

NIGHT TIME PRAYER

I trust in God's Word; I trust in the Lord.

More than sentries for the dawn, I watch for the Lord. (Psalm 130:5-6)

A simple prayer before sleep. You can pray it as a standalone prayer, or follow on from the Examen (previous page).

It is night.

The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done.

What has not been done has not been done.

Let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world
and of our lives rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

Silence

The night heralds the dawn.

Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys, and new possibilities. Amen.

TableLife, Oxford (adapted)

MORE PRAYERS FOR THE NIGHT

Keep me, Lord, as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 17:8)

After praying freely, you might like to close with one or more of the following. Except where indicated, all are drawn or adapted from The Wee Worship Book.

Watch now, dear Lord, with those who wake or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous, and all for your love's sake. Amen.

Augustine

I lay my head to rest,
and in doing so, lay at your feet
the faces I have seen, the voices I have heard,
the words I have spoken, the hands I have shaken,
the service I have given, the joys I have shared,
the sorrows revealed, I lay them at your feet,
and in doing so lay my head to rest.

John Birch

Bless to us, O God,
the sun that sets beyond us,
the moon that rises above us,
the earth that is beneath us,
the friends that are around us,
your image deep within us,
the rest that is before us. Amen.

May the Spirit of God,
who brooded over the waters
and brought order out of chaos,
find a home in our hearts
and settle our minds as we sleep
that tomorrow we may wake
and live to God's glory. Amen.

In peace we will lie down and sleep.
In the Lord alone we safely rest.
Guide us waking, Lord, and guard us sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ,
and asleep we may rest in peace.
Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.
Keep me Lord, as the apple of your eye.
Hide me in the shadow of your wings,
and by your wounds, holy and glorious,
guard and preserve us all through this night. Amen.

The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night
and a perfect death.
Bless us, O God, in our sleep with rest,
in our dreams with vision,
in our waking with a calm mind,
in our souls with the friendship of the Holy Spirit,
this night and every night,
till greater life shall call. Amen.

LECTIO DIVINA

Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within you ... (Colossians 3:16)

The aim of lectio divina, or sacred reading, is to let the Living Word speak directly to your heart. First, choose a Bible text, something not too long. Then wander between the stages, back and forth, until you feel done. If you are not sure how to choose a text, many of the verses in this book would be suitable, especially those about Jesus.

LECTIO

Read the text, aloud if possible, several times, slowly. Get a sense of what the passage is saying. Which word or phrase stands out? What surprises you, shocks you, or makes you weep or smile? Does anything sound like direct speech?

MEDITATIO

Meditate on the passage. You might imagine yourself into the story, inhabiting and reflecting on different characters but always looking towards Jesus Christ. You might ask questions about the passage, and listen for an answer. You might reflect on how the passage speaks into your life with words of promise, encouragement, comfort or challenge.

ORATIO

Reflecting on what has just been spoken into your life, pray. Talk with God, and listen for anything else God might want to communicate with you. You might feel called to respond in action. If so, tell God what you feel called to do, and ask for God's guidance and help.

CONTEMPLATIO

Words have their limits. It is time now for silence as you simply rest in the Living Word, who loves you.

WRITE YOUR OWN COLLECT

Sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth! (Psalm 96:1)

It is good to pray sturdy prayers, tried and tested by generations of the faithful. It is also good to pray in new ways, in our own voices. You might like to write your own Psalm ... or why not try writing a prayer? This is how to compose one form of prayer, called a 'collect'.

Step 1: Think of an aspect of God's nature or Jesus' life and work which is important to you. Remember a story or verse in the Bible which describes it. Read and reflect on this text.

Step 2: Address God using an aspect of this story e.g. Jesus our friend, Jesus our healer, Father God, Lady Wisdom ...

Step 3: Expand on this aspect, drawing on Biblical imagery.

Step 4: Ask for something related to this aspect of God.

Step 5: Explain why you are asking for this.

And that's it! Here's a collect I wrote as an example, drawing on imagery in Proverbs 1:26-3:2; see also 'Handwashing' (1 & 2) and 'Generosity'.

WISDOM

Lady Wisdom: You call out in public places, inviting all to learn from you. Grant us the ears to hear your call, and the courage to seek wisdom over cleverness; insight over easy answers; integrity over popularity. Because wisdom leads to knowledge of God, and full and flourishing life. Amen.

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