

Wednesday Morning Worship/Devotions - GA16

Unless otherwise stated, liturgy written by Malcolm Gordon

8:30am: Call to worship:

Hail to Christ, the King,
Ruler who lays down the power to destroy,
Leader who treads through the costly journey
And into the shadow places of life,
That we might find the rising of life before us:
Hail to Christ, the King,
Born to be first witness to God's truth,
Whose might lies in mercy,
Whose throne is placed in the midst of humble people.

Hail to Christ, the King.

- *Dorothy McRae-McMahon*

Song: *Blessed be your name*

Prayer of Confession:

In memory of Leonard Cohen, we bring you our cold and broken hallelujahs; naming the aches and the wounds which we carry, and the conviction that you will hear them all the same.

In memory of Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus, we bring to you our dashed hopes, the certainties and convictions that have guarded us, but which have now deserted us.

In memory of Donald Trump and Kaikoura, and stark revelations of our own powerlessness...

In memory of wakeful nights, hardened hearts, waves of regret and moments of madness.

In memory of fingernails gnawed in worry and eyes clenched shut in regret, we hold our lives and our world before you - such as they are.

We confess we might wish them to be different in so many ways. But they are not. At least not yet. And it is in that 'not yet' that we set our hope. That you have your ears open to whatever kind of hallelujah we can muster, be it broken, discordant, barely whispered or desperate. For your heart is set on leading us on the way everlasting. Lead us on we pray.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Song: *Have faith in God*

Reading/Drama: Luke 24: 9-16

Reflective questions: 'What are we walking backwards away from?'

'What has come to an end before we were ready to let go?'

'What ending do we fear the most?'

Closing Song: *Attend to the Ground*

Benediction:

**We believe that God is present here,
Meeting us within our meeting,
Speaking into every heart,**

**Offering wisdom for every mind
And breathing hope into every soul.
We believe that, in Christ,
All things are possible
And in the Spirit
All life is being made new.
This we believe.**

- *Dorothy McRae-McMahon*

Thursday Devotion

Call:

Enter the waiting in hopefulness
For the Christ will not turn away from us
Prepare yourself this day with a faith
Which carries us towards the presence of God without fear
**For Christ will come in love,
The Christ will come with grace upon grace**

Turn around and find the surprising presence of kindness,
Inviting truth without judgement,
Frail as a child and strong as all goodness.

**For the Christ will come in love,
The Christ will come with grace upon grace**

- *Dorothy McRae-McMahon*

Song: *In Christ alone*

Confession: *We treasure what you end (p27 Brueggemann)*

Song: *O God you search me and you know me*

Reading/Drama: Luke 24:13-23

Questions: **What ending do we fear the most?
 How do we feel disappointed by God?
 Where has our fear turned into anger? Can we name this before God?**

Song: *Attend to the Ground*

Benediction:

**We believe that God is present here,
Meeting us within our meeting,
Speaking into every heart,
Offering wisdom for every mind
And breathing hope into every soul.
We believe that, in Christ,
All things are possible
And in the Spirit
All life is being made new.
This we believe.**

- *Dorothy McRae-McMahon*

Friday Devotion:

Call:

Getting on board the disciple ship
was not what I expected.
I imagined clear sailing,
Jesus at the helm,
the congregation a happy crew
learning the ropes together.

Back then, I didn't know how close quarters
can sometimes drive us
to gnawing on the ties that bind.

Conflicts rolling over us like sea billows.
Doctrines, finances, personalities,
all these loomed large
until they were dwarfed by
a tsunami of debate on inclusion and exclusion.

The wind came from every direction,
and we either cut or lost the anchor somewhere.

It was a dark and stormy night,
and though the call was for
"All hands on deck",
we were tossed over like Jonah.

Adrift on the sea, we tread water,
looking for a whale of a solution.
Imagine our surprise when Jesus appears
walking on this wind-swept sea.

Looking at both the overthrown
and the throwers-over,
he throws out the one-word life-line:
"Come."

- Carol Penner

Song: *Here is love, vast as the ocean*

Confession:

I have tried to write a hundred eloquent prayers,
Giving voice to our pain and to your healing grace.
But today I can find none. I confess I am bereft. But I will not be silent.
Do not forsake us O God.

A dozen beginnings become a dozen dead ends, as my prayers pool at my feet. And all I have to offer you for myself, for my church, and for my world, are tears of confusion and grief.
Do not forsake us O God.

You O God are beauty and wholeness, and you deserve to be loved better than I can muster. You deserve to receive words and lives of cadence and grace, but my heart is heavy, my feet are like lead, and my voice can find no song for a time like this.

Do not forsake us O God.

Yet as discordant and despairing as it may sound,

I will give you *this* voice,

for I have no other,

and even as I pray you are delivering me from the tomb of disempowered silence.

For this ugly groan is a sharing in God's Spirit, it is being formed on the lips of Christ, and whispered in the ear of the Most High.

We are not forsaken. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Assurance:

Jesus is always travelling towards us,

In all our lostness,

In all our weakness and failures.

This God is never defeated by who we are.

Receive the Christ. Receive the grace that is offered.

We are forgiven!

Thanks be to God.

- Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Song: *We are one* - Latafale Auva'a

Reading/Drama: Luke 24: 13-29a

Questions: **How do we feel disappointed by God?**
 Where do we sense the rhythm of Christ's life in ours?
 What is causing us to stumble as we seek to keep step with Christ?

Closing Song: *Attend to the Ground*

Benediction:

We believe that God is present here,

Meeting us within our meeting,

Speaking into every heart,

Offering wisdom for every mind

And breathing hope into every soul.

We believe that, in Christ,

All things are possible

And in the Spirit

All life is being made new.

This we believe.

- Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Saturday Devotions

Call:

Watch, wait, hope!

Even now, the tender leaves of peace

May be growing on the trees of life.

Watch, wait, hope!

For the wonder of new love

May be moving towards its birthing.

The Christ will come.

The Word of God will not fail us.

Keep awake!

For the shadows of our doubts will be lifted

And the singing if sounding in the distance.

The Christ will come

The Word of God will not fail us.

- *Dorothy McRae-McMahon*

Song: *10,000 Reasons*

Confession:

God of grace,

We confess that our hope is too meagre.

We find ourselves hoping for things that are only *just* beyond what we have. We hope we get home from Assembly in one piece. We hope that the AGM goes smoothly. That we will find the money for our building project. We hope that we might be able to afford a minister for another year or two. That we might have a *job* for another year or two. We hope that person won't leave our church, or that *this* person will. We hope we can just make it through til after Christmas when we can stop and rest for a while.

Our hope has betrayed us.

We aren't really sure you are coming at all.

And so we muddle on as best we can.

But we confess, if we were to pile these meagre hopes together and set them alight, there would not be warmth enough to thaw our fear, and give us courage. There would not be a light worth setting on a hill for weary pilgrims to set their course by. We are like children who have discovered that Santa Claus isn't real, and that mum and dad haven't got much money to spare this year. So we have lowered our sights, and set about making do with what we have, with what we can scrape together. Like the Israelites in Egypt, we are resigned to our fate.

And we own up that we are scared. We are scared to hope incase you disappoint us. Because we've been there and it hurts. O God how it hurts. And we are scared to look the fool, even though you never were. We are proud that our church is not one of the weird ones, or at least not one of the *really* weird ones, and we like being respectable. But your hope endangers that and it endangers us. Your hope is too wild and unruly.

Yet you call your people to audacious hope. The Prophets always waited until the night was at its darkest before unleashing their most blazing convictions of your freedom-bringing faithfulness. To an exiled people, enslaved and demeaned, Isaiah brings word of a highway homeward through the impassable wilderness, and streams of water nourishing the barren wastelands. He stands and faces the darkness saying, 'I beg to differ'.

And so into the silence we whisper, 'Maranatha - Come Lord Jesus'.

Come and deliver the captives.

Come and give sight to the blind.

Come and deliver the oppressed.
Come and set a dance in the feet of the lame.
Come and bind up the broken hearted.
Come and bring down the mighty, and raise up the lowly.
For with mounting courage, we say to you that we are not satisfied O God with the status quo. We are not satisfied O God with making the best of a bad situation.
We are not satisfied O God with mere words of hope, until those words take on flesh and dwell among us in grace and truth.
May your hope take on *our flesh* and dwell in the midst of this world.
May your hope take us captive and ruin us for the ordinary forever.
May you give us courage to hope not only for ourselves, but for the world you so love.
We pray in the name of your audacious hope, made real in our midst, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Assurance:

Greater than all our expectations
Wider than all our horizons
Stretching forth before us
Is the grace and kindness of God
We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

- Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Song: *Open our eyes*

Reading/Drama: Luke 24: 13-35

Questions: *What is causing us to stumble as we seek to keep step with Christ?*
 How have you come face to face with Christ this week?
 How are your steps homeward going to be different from those that brought you here?

Closing Song: *Attend to the Ground*

Benediction:

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