

Elders and Moments of Worship

Prayers on the Occasion of an Elders' Dedication Ceremony

Leader: Lord, we thank you for this wonderful world that you have created for us. We thank you for our lives at this particular time.

We thank you for making us the way that we are. We thank you for the lives of other people whom we love or who we find difficult to love and who challenge the depth and relevance of our faith in you.

Response 1: *God, our parent in heaven, grant us your sight so that we may see you not only where we gather but also in the most vulnerable and unexpected situations of life around us.*

Leader: Lord, we thank you for this special day and special people who have offered themselves in service for you not only by serving the church family but also by reaching to the family outside. Lord, we seek your abundant mercies upon (names of the elders could be said here) so that they may seek to do things that are pleasing for you, We, as a congregation, commit all our support and respect to these chosen ones.

Response 2: *God, our parent in heaven, grant us your abilities to accept what others do and may we contribute positively to life in general, within and without the church.*

David Jonathan
North India

A Prayer for the Week

Living Lord, Our Risen Christ,
when we meet, talk, cry or laugh with people
as we travel along this week,
we pray that there will be opportunities
to see You at work in the world,
through women and men
as they go about their daily lives.
Encourage us,
to go about our lives
sowing seeds of Peace
In our communities.

Amen

Geoffrey Duncan

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Confession

This is the day that our Lord God has made –
a day for new hope.

Thank you, Lord for the fact that we are here;
for our joys and our sorrows,
our laughter and our tears,
our work and our leisure time.

Thank you Lord for our lives
– so precious –
and may we remember that other peoples' lives are precious
too,
as we live in our local communities set within the global
framework;
and for the increasing need for understanding about living
with many different people;
for our families and our friends;
for our holidays and refreshment.
We give this day and all our days to you Lord for service
with people

Please forgive us for the wrong things that we have done in recent days. For the unkind words that may have hurt someone and for unpleasant thoughts about our friends and neighbours.

We know Jesus that you will forgive us. Please help us not to do these wrong things but instead help us to help people whoever they are – to be kind and thoughtful – and get on with everyone.

Geoffrey Duncan

Full of Grace and Truth

(based on John 1:14)

God of truth,
who lives in us,
help us to be people of truth;
to resist copping out when questions get difficult,
looking for easy answers to life's complexities,
or meeting openness with narrow mindedness.
Rather, shine in us,
that full of grace and truth,
we may show life's fullness
as your daughters and sons.

Janet Lees

Transforming Us

(based on Jeremiah 20:7-13)

Liberator God, we sing to you
for you are just and do which is right.
Life and breath, freedom and love
are your gifts to us.
Yet, with every breath,
our humanity catches up with us
and faith comes hard.
Violence and destruction are around us
and even within us;
we become afraid to speak your name
and claim your love.

[silence]

Even so, your fire still burns in us
as you are so ready to forgive,
both our personal shortcomings
and our communal failures.

We are thankful that you see right to the hearts and minds,
that peace and justice are your standards
and that love is your everlasting gift.

We declare that this is the new life we have received.

Janet Lees

Treasuring Us

Holy God,
who chooses and treasures us,
you love us.
You keep faith with us
even when we do not keep faith with you;
breaking our promises to and for each other,
giving the poor few chances,
afraid to confront injustice.
You know our struggles
and our frustrations.

[pause]

We are amazed
that you have set your heart on us,
choose us, treasure us
and forgive us.
We thank you, generous One.

Janet Lees

Expand Our Vision

(based on Rejoice and Sing 498 God Be in My Head)

God, be ahead of understanding;
expanding our vision of the world and the church
as we pray and work together.
God, be beyond seeing;
challenging us to probe the ready answers
as we look deeper into our local situation.
God, be more than words;
echoing in both sound and silence
as we tune into the small voices so easily ignored.
God, be the fundamental beat of life;
steadying us for clear thinking
in the ups and downs of our experience.
God, be beyond life itself;
so that whatever marks the beginning or end
we may know we are always in your company.

Janet Lees

Lord of Life and Love

Lord of Life and Love, give us fresh insights for the ways in which we use resources with our people skills and our finances. Help us to appreciate the need to re-evaluate our skills and our purchasing power and ensure that we are supporting people in need, without strings attached, in local and global communities.

Enable us to work together for justice in our neighbourhood, the nation and the world.

Lord of Life and Love, give us the spiritual strength to participate in activities which will bring about better living conditions for people in developing nations. Lead us to a renewed understanding of what it means for women and men to be empowered; for our neighbours and our global friends, who live in poverty in the marginalised communities, to reach their potential in education, skills and income generation.

Enable us to understand and appreciate the resilient nature of marginalised women and men; to know that all life is valued and to rejoice with them as they continue to become increasingly resourceful people.

Lord of Life and Love, open our minds to existing and new ways of caring for people and sustaining Earth. Lead us to discover with people, in partnership, fresh, energetic methods of communicating improved ways of Living in remote, barren villages or industrialised, polluted cities.

Enable us to turn around our life-styles; to become less demanding in our wants and desires so that we are able to experience new ways of Living. Awaken our consciences to become pro-active with people wherever they are in your world.

Lord of Life and Peace, help us to discover, now – today – the many faces of Justice and Peace waiting to be pursued. Help us to know how we can be alongside people ...
(Please name here areas of the world where there is violence, terrorism and war ...)
Keep us well-balanced as we take positive action to support suffering women, men and children wherever they are.

Enable us to be more informed; increase our understanding; lead us to greater wisdom and compassion. Prompt and prod us to be spiritually more open for gospel-action and to see the face of Christ in the stranger. Lord of Life, Love and Peace hear our prayers and act upon them as you will.

Amen

Geoffrey Duncan

Spirit of God

As you prompt us
Open our eyes to see the needs in your world,
Open our ears to hear the cries
of the poor
of the suffering
the marginalised
give us the courage and the tenacity to take our spoken
prayers into serious action.
Move us from our security
To take risks just like Jesus
And as you want us to do now
To walk with humankind
Knowing that you, Spirit of God, will support us
As we meet you please
Re-assure
Re-new
And re-commit us to a life of service
With so strings attached
Where we will stand for justice and peace
Spirit of God, on this (Pentecost) * Day may things change
because of us.

Amen

** Please be flexible with the use of the Day as this prayer can be used on many other occasions.*

Geoffrey Duncan

A Psalm

(for the leader and all the people)

Bless the Lord, my soul;
Lord, my God, you are very great.
We sing to you in dances.

You are the love which moves the sun and stars,
you are the source, centre and spring
of all that lives and loves;
this have you done for your true love.

You call us to the dance
with simple steps and ever-changing patterns,
where all have space and freedom.

We call to you with inarticulate groans
and thwarted yearnings;
following Christ our partner
with clumsy, shambling gait,
dragging our feet.

And in your grace, you turn and come to us,
rejoicing in the dance;
acknowledging our smallest steps,
you take us by the arm
and lead us
in more and more glorious
configurations.

Lord, my God, you are very great,
wonderful you are, and wonderful your works.

Bless the Lord, my soul.

Fleur Houston

Hymn to Jesus

Jesus, Lord most kind companion
We would bless your holy Name
Praise your ministry of healing
And your love that's still the same.

Jesus, Lord for ever caring
We would praise your patient ways
Human sorrows always sharing
giving aid in darkest days.

Jesus, Lord for ever faithful
Keep us in your heavenly way
always learning from your teaching,
seeking pardon every day.

Jesus, Lord help us to see you
in the troubled, wounded ones.
Let us pray for all despairing,
both your daughters and your sons.

Rosemary Watts

Come to Us Now Lord

Come to us now Lord, surrounded by so many things,
keep our focus on you, the righteous King of Kings.
Help us to work and pray for social justice every day,
for your gifts of faith and courage as we follow in your way.
'Thy kingdom come' – you taught us, Lord to pray.
Jesus abide in us, and in the hearts of all humanity.

Rosemary Watts

God of Beginnings and Endings

God of beginnings and endings
Help us to remain focussed on you.
God of hope and love
May we in silence hear your voice.
God of joy and peace
Open our hearts and minds
To encounter you in the
Great variety of human experience.

Keith Brown

Benedicite

Written for Blackbird Leys but could be used in other situations

O give thanks to our God who is good,
whose goodness endures for ever.

You sunrise and sunset, night and day,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

Cherry and chestnut trees, starlings and rooks,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

Roses and lavender, butterflies and voles,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

All you whippets and punters, footballers and fans,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

All tower blocks and flats, houses and caravans,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

Churches and Leisure Centre, shops, schools and pubs,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

All you men and women, black and white, young and old,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

All you saints and martyrs of this estate,
give to our God your thanks and praise.

O give thanks to our God who is good
Whose goodness endures for ever.

Fleur Houston

Mothering Sunday

Mother God, giver of life, creator of new worlds, you nurture universes within your enfolding presence. As a child in the womb is unaware of the mother who carries it, so are we unaware of your Spirit holding us in life, nourishing and supporting us. We listen to the muffled sounds of the world rushing by, and rarely notice the beating of your heart in the midst of it. For your all-encompassing, life-giving presence we praise you.

Mother God, eternal home-builder, bread-winner, labourer of love, you never cease toiling for the health and welfare of your beloved creation. For your life poured out for us, we praise you. Mother God, passionate with love for your world, in Jesus we see you bear the agony and disappointment of our failure as if it were your own, you graciously tolerate our arrogant certainties that we know best, you put your very life on the line for your vulnerable children. For your life, sacrificed for us, we praise you.

Like argumentative children, we have not acknowledged our unity in you, and our responsibility for the peace and harmony of your world-wide family. We blame each other for the wrongs of the world and self-righteously wash our hands of guilt. We allow others to bear the punishment for our failure, as if the death of Jesus has taught us nothing. We are sorry for the failures of the past that have tolerated, even encouraged, bullying in communities, in families, in international affairs. We are sorry for the violence being inflicted in our name.

Come between us, gentle Spirit. Calm our anger and desire to blame everyone except ourselves. Encourage us to look with love into the hearts and desires of others. Bring out the best in war currently being waged by our State. Phrase becomes redundant otherwise.

(paragraph 1, with acknowledgement to Margaret Hebblethwaite)

Dick Wolff

In the Beginning you Were ...

Creator, in the beginning You were,
and your love could not be contained.
From the overflowing of Your love you sang us into being
that we might share love and wonder, and join Your song.

In the exuberance of Your Love You created a world of diversity
and beauty beyond our imagining,
and with Your hands made each of us unique,
so special that each difference may be a cause for rejoicing:
for learning, sharing, loving,
for rhythms and harmonies with You, and with each other.

We praise You, creator, together with words and with music,
and in the silence
with our hearts.

But Creator, what have we done?
We have taken our trust away from You,
labelled, owned and destroyed the gifts of Your natural world.
We have taken the diversity of one another
as reason to reject: by colour, by language, by talent, by
belief, by difference.
We have taken even the greatest gift of Your love in flesh
among us
And believed our science and structures were better and
more reliable.
We have even, glimpsing Your Spirit, tried to hoard love
to ourselves.

Forgive us Creator, for all the times we have tried to limit
Your love
and chosen not to recognise You in our neighbour,
twisting ourselves, and each other, out of shape in our fear.

Help us to lose this foolish pride before You, and learn the
humility to accept Your offer to partner in this amazing
creation, in all its diversity, beauty and pain.
We thank You that, whenever we try to erect our definitions
around You,

the power of Your Spirit breaks through, assuring us of forgiveness when we come to You, creating us anew as loved and forgiven people.

Wendy White

Holy Spirit of God

Holy God, you cannot exist, for you are before any existence was. How can you be the *centre* of our life's pilgrimage, home of our hearts? – for you are in *no* place and *no* time ... *all* places and *all* times. The compass needle of our hearts swings wildly in all directions: we are lost without you, and lost within you.

Forgive the arrogance of the religious heart that claims to know you.

Jesus of Nazareth, only uncreated child of God, we turn to you for you are nonetheless one of us, and you have loved us. You are human like us, walking the roads of Galilee and Jerusalem, 2000 years ago. Our hearts' compass needle swings about in the mystery of God, and then points steadfastly to you. We take our bearings from you, we seek to walk your 'Way' ... we crucify you.

Forgive the arrogance of the religious heart that tries to recruit you to its own cause, and use your name as its Big Excuse.

Holy Spirit of God, comforter and disturber, life-giver, opener of doors: no sooner do we know you have touched us than you are gone. You it is who steer the compass of our hearts towards the real Jesus, the *living* Lord. You it is who put the ultimate choice before us – life or death? You it is who makes the choice *easy*, even when choosing life *means* death.

Forgive the closed minds and stubborn wills of the religious heart that turns your exuberant loving freedom into doctrine, Scripture, law and habit.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I dare to declare to you :
though we *have* chosen, and will choose *again*, deadness,
lifelessness, lovelessness and our own comfort – Christ
has, in his own body, broken the bonds that hold us in this
slavery. It is not inevitable. The door to life in the Spirit
remains open. Let us walk through it together, humbly
rejoicing in the name of Jesus.

Holy God, as we recite the prayer Jesus gave us, may your
Spirit awaken the words in us:

The Lord's Prayer

Dick Wolff

Lord, We are a Worried People

Lord, we are a worried people.
From the time we wake each morning we worry about:
the weather, the state of the roads, whether we have
sufficient clothing and is it fashionable.

We worry about the day ahead, our job prospects, our
health, our loved ones and our pets.
We turn on the news and we are told to worry even more:
about the state of our food,
the state of our hospitals,
the stock market,
our strange neighbours.

In a land of plenty we are told to worry about:
pensions and savings,
employment levels
illegal immigration.

Occasionally we are invited to worry outside of our self-
centred universe and we worry about:
war
flood,
famine.

Lord, we are worn out with worrying.

We ask You today to restore our sense of perspective.
We need reminding to celebrate, and to praise You.
God, You created the universe before we were,
and created all we see.
You became part of creation, became an ordinary chap,
who chose the way of the cross,
chose to be subject to our will,
so that we could see, for all time, by Your resurrection,
that in the end is life,
rich abundant life,
for all, for ever.

Forgive us when we worry, remind us of Your love.
Teach us to recognise the genuine concerns and take action.
Show us how to stop wasting time, instead to praise You,
turning to our neighbour and sharing Your good news,
and sharing their joys and sorrows.
Help us to recognise Your kingdom now,
not to ignore the poverty and pain around us,
but to work with You to bring Your light, Your help
into the darkness.
To stand beside.
To listen.
Forgive us when we try to do this alone and fall back
dispirited,
Forgive us when we take ourselves too seriously while
ignoring our neighbours.

Wendy White

God, You Take Our Breath Away

Creator,
You who made everything,
can You really hear us?

Love,
definition of love,
do You really care that much about each one of us?
God,
God who we cannot comprehend,
You take our breath away
as we struggle to hold a vastness, at which our minds recoil,
with a love for each one of us,
created and known as individuals.

God, we have no words,
We cannot define You except that You exceed all definitions.
Higher, vaster, richer than all our imaginings.
Our praise becomes silence as we contemplate You.

But You, seeking to love and how us love,
(not wanting empty praise or gratitude
but to bring us into relationship with Yourself)
have poured Yourself out to Your creation and become man,
one with us to show us what love can do.
To help us glimpse across our feeble boundaries –
so much more!

You have stood beside us...and let us nail You to the cross,
because that too was needed to show us the strength and
power of Your love.

Lord, as we struggle to hold the seeming impossible,
help us to hold onto the truth of Your resurrection and
praise You.
Knowing resurrection is not the past
but resurrection and new creation, for each one of us, now,
as part of Your love.

Wendy White

Creator, We Praise and Adore You

Creator, we praise and adore You ...

and the words become empty because we have repeated so often what is far beyond our grasp.

When we look up you are there – in the vastness of unfolding space we glimpse your immensity.

When we look down you are there – in the beauty and complexity of detail, the molecular dance beyond our vision.

When we look around us you are there, in the play of dark and light, sound and silence, in water, air, land.

We cannot begin to encompass all you are, but, made in your image, we catch glimpses in one another of the complexity and richness of relationships, in love, in laughter, in friendship, in the myriad communities we are part of.

But, most of all, when in your desire for us to truly know, to share, your nature, which is love, you became man and walked with us, we see love worked out in humankind. Even to what we perceive as the end. And then you turned the shabby death of a criminal into new life when you showed us resurrection. Turning, with the gift of your Spirit, an uncertain band of travellers and hangers-on into messengers of love for all people for all time.

Creator, how often have we repeated this story but not made it our own? You turn awesomeness of love into something we could recognise, and gave us your Spirit so that we too could know we are part of Your love and share it with others. Yet too often we have been content with our decent little lives and chosen to ignore the promptings of Your Spirit which would show us a world made new.

Forgive us when we have put ourselves first at the expense of others, when at work we have clung to our salary, our way and ignored the cries of the unemployed, the untrained, the rejected. Forgive us when our standard of living ignores the cries of the third world for fair wages, for health care, education, food, water.

Forgive us when our time is so hoarded to ourselves we have ignored the stranger, the sick, our neighbour, our family and rationed the giving of ourselves to others and to you.

Forgive us the fear of loving. Forgive us when we ignore your Spirit, the great disturber, help us to trust that your love is infinite and grows by giving.

Wendy White