

Liturgy in a Dangerous Time



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

#4

Sunday 10 May 2020

Welcome to another edition of this liturgy in a dangerous time – we've drawn inspiration for our series title from the great Bruce Cockburn who sings of the need to 'kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight'. Keep your eyes on that dazzling blackness, and watch the cracks spread across it.

It's difficult though, isn't it, to deal with the fact that this dangerous time is one of both darkness and light. On the one hand, we are witness to acts of bravery and kindness, generosity and compassion, and on the other venality and cruelty, fear and misery.

That though, is our existence, and our world, in microcosm – while some live in privilege, others are trapped in squalor. While some aspects of the natural world draw our eyes upwards and make us go 'wow' – others sneak into our lungs and try their best to kill us.

Again our liturgy seems to bounce between these two pillars, these inescapable realities of life, 'the poor you will always have with you' recognised Jesus just as he encouraged reckless generosity.

Please use this material in the way that seems best to you, we are one people, with many different perspectives and approaches, our earnest hope is that you will be blessed by what you find here.

An opening

There's something about persistence
That can grind down
And yet build up.

The persistence of rivers
And that of trees
Are somehow the same.

The persistence of love
Wearing away our corners
Then sending us soaring.

A chant

'Someday, when men have conquered
the winds, the waves, the tides,
and gravity,
they will harness for God
the energies of love,
and then,
for the second time in history,
man will have discovered fire.'

(Teilhard de Chardin)

Join in the chant with Justin Grounds'
lockdown choir [in this video](#).

[\(Justin Grounds\)](#)

simonjcross.com/dangerous-liturgy

A quote

"Trees are poems that the earth writes
upon the sky."

(Khalil Gibran)



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

A walk

Take a couple of minutes to walk
quietly in the woods with me.

[Click here for the video](#).

A prayer

Lead us along soft forest floors
and across shallow streams

Let your dappled daylight
draw us out of our darkness. **Amen.**



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

A poem

The Dark Tower

Critical junctures reignite
ancient mystical beliefs
of who you are.

Enrich and elaborate upon them
to bridge the chasm between
nihilism and belief.

You have been banished into the
woods.

You are to distance yourself from
others in a tower.

Neither stairs nor a doorway
are before you.

Just endless days of waiting.
Mornings of despair.

But the beat of your heart is ethereal.
Let down your hair and
allow your mind
to escape from the tower.
Your spirit is not supposed to be
holed up there.

An epic origin story
unfolds.

A synthesised narrative obliterates
your pain.

A rebirth of mysteries and who made
you.

You are finally free again.

[\(Sapphira Olson\)](#)

A verse

“The mountains and hills will burst
into song, and the trees of the field
will clap their hands!” [\(Isaiah 55:12\)](#)

A beat

Immerse yourself in [this gentle
rhythmic composition](#) from Sekrit.

[\(Sekrit\)](#)

An activity



(Original drawing by Robert Ferre, final graphic by Vicki Keiser)

You might like to print this labyrinth, for children to experiment with, or use it together as a finger labyrinth, slowly tracing the pattern with your forefinger, using it as a meditation, a deliberate slowing of the mind, a return to the centre of things. These

ancient patterns have been used by people over millennia, they draw on shapes and ratios found in nature and held sacred within many traditions – they encourage prayerful pausing, and a careful, respectful engagement with the twists and turns of life.

A thought

There is much warranted discussion about how this time of pandemic will change our lives – spiritually and otherwise. The major point often made is around what could be termed Digital Theology and Accessibility. Christians worldwide have been making new resources, livestreaming worship and praying with folks online in creative ways. Groups such as [Disability & Jesus](#) and the [Centre for Digital Theology](#) at Durham University have rightly been banging the drum for this new wave of accessible content with ripe missional potential being something that cannot simply stop after this lockdown.

The question that has been rattling around in my head for the past few days however, is what else has been unveiled? What else is poking out amid the sands of the status quo desert? Behold, God can do a new thing. We are called as a Church by the Holy Spirit as she reveals more and more of

Godself to us to develop in our vocation as the Body of Christ and this can lead to changes in our doctrine, praxis and liturgy among other things. We have seen this lesson of accessibility and we cannot go back now. When I have parishioners telling me that they have never interacted so much with Holy Week in their lives as this year, or that they have never prayed as much, we cannot simply pull the plug on this. But what else might there be?

Question:

What other new or forgotten things are arising?

What else are you seeing? Are new discipleship practices emerging? Are we being called to a more outward facing, bolder proclamation of the Gospel across all mediums available? Are we rediscovering monasticism in our daily lives? Within the storm it is hard to see the bigger picture and the real black grief of human loss will not leave us now for some time.

Nevertheless, perhaps at least we can pray for the eyes to see and ears to hear God at work, with us in the dark, so that we at least remember some of His signs when we come out the other side. Those signs may lead us in uncomfortable directions and in a crisis sometimes all we want to do is cling to the familiar. But new things do not always remove old things. Let us dare to follow his way, listen and see what new highways God is laying down in this wilderness.

[\(Danny Pegg\)](#)

Question:

Have you become aware of any new highways in this wilderness?



[\(Rostylav Savchyn on Unsplash\)](#)

A poem

Stay at home

Stay at home. Save lives. Protect the NHS.

Stay at home. Save lives. Protect the NHS.

Stay at home. Safe at home. Protect the NHS.

Stay at home.

Safe at home.

Protect....ed.

At home.

Home is where the heart is

But if your heart's not in your home

Where do you go?

Where do you go

Just to flop,

Just to stop,

Just to lay down

And breathe

Find that place

Of safety and ease.

Where do you go?

Where do you go

When the news

With all its views
Brings no comfort
But just rattles
And racks up battles
For you to fight
Where there's nowhere
To take flight.
Where do you go?

Where do you go
When your four walls
Are small walls
And hold you
In some kind of turmoil
Where do you go?

Where do you go
When the room looms
Black and blue
A flick,
A kiss,
A twist of a fist,
The taste
Of a thick, cut lip
Where do you go.

Where do you go
When you're lying in bed,
Filled with the dread

Of an opening door
A heavy tread
On the floor
Stomach sick and sore
It's been going on
Since you were four.
Where do you go.

Where do you go?

Where do you go?

You stay at home.
You save lives.
You protect the NHS.

You stay at home.
Safe at home.
Protect.....ed

At home

(Fiona Parker)

A reading

John 14: 1:14

[\(Click here to read a version\)](#)



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A reflection

Where are you going?

Reflections on verses from John 14.

“You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to Jesus, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (v. 4-6)

Familiar words, much used, and arguably misused. Jesus is not offering systematic theology or a critique of other world religions or promoting any particular religion. He tells his followers that they know the way – for him that way was death. We can recast his words as ‘life, death and reality’. In his journey through life, and now heading towards death, a death his followers do not want to hear about, he is on his way to, or back to, God. Jesus’ followers still

often do not want to talk about his death, as death, or our own, though now we have no choice. There is a daily coronavirus death toll on the news, we are conscious of mortality as never before. Jesus looks at his own approaching death and says, ‘this way, follow me.’

We have got so used to saying, maybe even shouting – ‘Jesus is the Way!’ We have confronted people with it, used it as threat and criticism, Jesus does not. He tells his friends that the way to God is through death, a way he was himself taking. It seems simplistic to say it but I don’t recall hearing it said – if Jesus is the way, or on the way, then he is not the destination. He is not drawing attention to himself, the more we isolate ‘the way, the truth, the life’ the more it seems that it is all about Jesus. He had God in his sights, yet we turn his way-pointing into a tribal slogan.

There was a Sufi mystic, Al-Hallaj, who famously, in the Islamic

tradition, shouted in the centre of the city of Baghdad in 922 CE – ‘I am the Truth’ (and yes, Truth is a name of God). He wasn’t making a claim to be divine, he was overcome with love of the Divine, so close that he identified completely with the Divine Reality. He was also, as a Sufi, a follower of Jesus.



[\(Jens Johnsson on Unsplash\)](#)

Jesus wanted his followers to have this deep connection to God, the Father. As Jesus’ followers we have to accept that if we are on the way to God, then like Jesus, we are the way too. Jesus is urging the disciples to accept that they know God, sufficiently enough to understand the confusing things that he is telling them, that the physical journey through the Holy Land and the

journey to come only lead to God.
When we bang on about Jesus being
The Way then we have lost our way.
Set against what is usually said about
The Way offering any other take on it
might seem provocative at best,
though Jesus was provocative ...

It needs to be said that there are many
ways, we each have our own way and
that way leads from us to God, there
is no other way. We cannot travel
anyone else's path and they cannot
travel ours but we will all travel,
though we may not know it, or where
we are going. Only God does. Jesus
does not tell us to attempt to divert
other people from their way and
follow ours, they are already
journeying. We can, of course, share
with them but it is not up to us to
attempt to relabel or 'convert' them.
How shocking would it be to see
Jesus' way as opening up rather than
drawing theological boundaries?
Maybe God would like it! Perhaps we
could like it too.

[\(Julian Bond\)](#)



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

A prayer

Lord of creation

I thank you for the abundance that
surrounds me

Lift my eyes up from my worries

To delight in all that you have made

Help me to see through the fog of
fear and worry

To once again notice and experience
delight

To hear the singing of birds, the call
of foxes, the snuffling of badgers

To smell afresh flowers, food cooking
and candles

To see the bright streaks of colour
that are flying birds

To see the smile of a friend across the
street, even from a distance

To see, hear and experience art, music
and poetry

Help me to be attentive

To the gifts before me

But also

Help me to be attentive

To the signs of your kingdom

Help me to notice what might easily
be missed

To witness your work in the world

To witness your Kingdom

Inspire me to creative action

To innovate

That I might witness to your work in
the world

That I might witness to your
Kingdom

Amen

[\(Tim Watson\)](#)

A poem

The way

The truth

The life

Jesus, God on Earth

He experienced our pain

He showed us how to live

He leads us ever onwards

Follow and believe

[\(Emma Major\)](#)

A closing

Lord Jesus, your first miracle was
turning water into wine at a wedding
feast:

**Give us the gift of seeing the
extraordinary in the ordinary.**

Lord Jesus, you took one boy's simple
lunch and made a feast for thousands:

**Give us the imagination to see
that, in your hands, what we have
to offer is enough.**

Lord Jesus, you ate and drank with
the marginalised and the outcast:

**Give us the courage to both give to
them and receive from them.**

Lord Jesus, beneath the looming shadow of the cross, you shared a last meal with friends:

Help us to face our own mortality, growing kinder and more able to savour life.

Lord Jesus, you ate with your disciples to show the truth of your resurrection:

Help us not to despise the physical things of life because you made them blessed.

Lord Jesus, the Emmaus disciples knew you not in words, but in your breaking of bread:

Help us to know you when we meet you, even if you don't do what we expect.

Lord Jesus, you cooked breakfast for your friends before calling them again to follow you:

We remember that you call us friends because we do what you command us.

Lord Jesus, you were broken for us like bread:

We remember you each time we eat, each time we are full and each time we feel broken.

Lord Jesus, you were poured out for us like wine,

We remember you each time we drink, each time we celebrate and each time we feel dry.

Lord Jesus, you promise us a place at the banquet in heaven, with you forever.

As we eat, as we drink, as we love you and one another, remember us. Amen.

[\(Caroline Beckett\)](#)

This series is curated by [Andy Campbell](#) and [Simon Cross](#). This week we have contributions from: [Caroline Beckett](#) (vicar, goth, bringer of hope), [Julian Bond](#) (freelance interfaith activist), [Liz Chart](#) (observer, sense-tester & way finder), [Simon Cross](#) (writer), [Justin Grounds](#) (violinist, composer, music producer), [Mark Kensett](#) (photographer), [Emma Major](#) (lay pioneer minister & poet), [Sapphira Olson](#) (trans woman, poet, illustrator), [Fiona Parker](#) (full time ace person), [Danny Pegg](#) (priest, curate, playwright, nerd), [Sekrit](#) (drummer, percussionist, DJ & composer), & [Tim Watson](#) (priest, illustrator & poet).