

Parish of Central Exeter

4th Sunday in Easter 25th April 2021

The Lord is my Shepherd

The reflections this morning are from Chris, intercessions from Jess. Many thanks to you both.

Welcome everyone.

Preparing for worship

We gather:
a community of faith in God's subversive world.
We gather to celebrate
that no darkness can extinguish light,
to remember
that love will always be more powerful than death,
and to trust that
peace will always be stronger than violence.

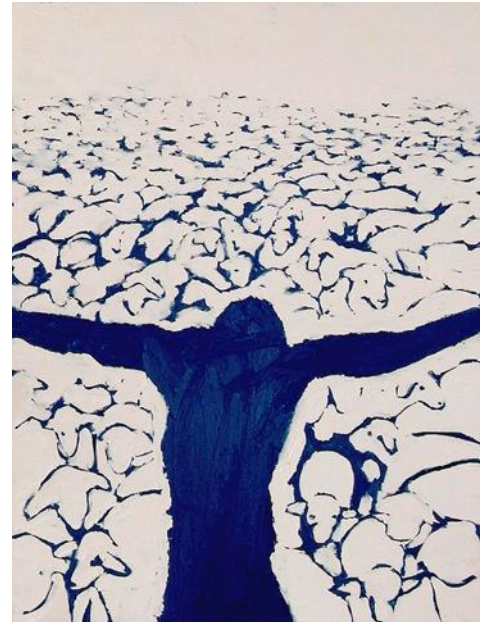
We gather,
people of faith in the light of God's world.
Welcome to worship.

(written by Cheryl Lawrie and posted on [hold this space])

Opening Prayer

In the darkest valley,
at the banquet table;
in the hard work of life,
at the moments of ease;
in our day-to-day reality,
at times set aside—
like this time, now—
for worship, for listening, for paying attention;
with every step we take:
goodness and mercy follow us;
our cups overflow.

(written by Joanna Harader and posted on Spacious Faith.)



Gathering Hymn

'The King of Love my shepherd is,' sung here by the Celebration Choir and the Salvation Army Citadel Band, Sheffield. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWfZ-8s71-k>

Call to Confession

Death could not hold you,
and in your life is our life.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, like a shepherd,
You never stop searching for Your people,
Your care for us anticipates our need.
Before we recognized we needed Your grace,
in love, Jesus gave His life for our forgiveness.

We confess that we need Your forgiveness,
we confess our sins:
You are the shepherd and we are Your flock,
but we admit the times we have tried to take Your place
and take control ourselves.
We admit that we have not always trusted
Your good news to be good for us.
At times we have pleaded with You to care for us,
but we have held back from caring for others
and ignored the needs of others.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Forgive us in the name of Jesus.
Loving shepherd,
teach us by the Holy Spirit to follow You
in the days and places of the weeks ahead.
Through Jesus Christ we pray, **Amen.**

(written by Rev Dan Carmichael, Minister of Lenzie Union. It was posted on The Church of Scotland's Weekly Worship website.)

Words of Assurance

The psalmist says,
*"I am sure I shall see the goodness of our God
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong,
and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!"*
Amen.



Alternative collect for the fourth Sunday of Easter

Risen Christ,
faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep:
teach us to hear your voice
and to follow your command,
that all your people may be gathered into one flock,
to the glory of God the Father.

Worship music

A great song of praise: 'Let all the world in every corner sing.' Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfXldoDnvq4>

Psalm

Psalm 23: Urban version

urban shepherd
you lead us through skyscraper canyons
past carbon monoxide
and mirror glass
and busker
you make us to lie down on park benches
and rest beside sewage settlement ponds
you keep our feet on pavement and escalator and lift shaft
and guide us through the back alleys
of our city

though we enter the concrete crevasse
we will not fear the chaos
for you are with us
you grant us a site in the sun
at a sidewalk cafe
where we drink cappuccino and are glad
you give us doughnut stalls
and film festivals and neon signs

surely your goodness and poverty
will follow us all the days of our lives
and we will come at last to the holy city

(written by Mike Riddell, and posted on Jonny Baker Worship Tricks)

Old Testament Reading

Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.
3 He shall refresh my soul
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5 You spread a table before me
in the presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Gospel Reading

John 10.11-18

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock, one shepherd."

Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Chinese scroll, 1996



Reflection

"The LORD is my shepherd," David sang, millennia ago. And so we sing with him today.

But then, "*I am the good shepherd*," says Jesus, son of David. *I am the one about whom David sang. I am the One in whom God's eternal Word has come among you.*

"*I am the good shepherd.*" Actually, "good" is rather a weak translation. "Beautiful" or "noble" would get it better.

So why is Jesus the *beautiful*, the *noble* shepherd?

Of course human shepherds care for their sheep: but they do it to profit from them. *This* shepherd cares for the sheep for *their* sake, so that they may dwell in his house for ever!

Sheep die for the shepherd, so that the shepherd may earn a living and we may have our roast lamb for dinner. *This* shepherd dies for the sheep!

Indeed, he becomes like one of the lambs who are killed, and all for their sake—something we recall every time we declare, as we will in a moment, "Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

No wonder then he is called the *beautiful*, the *noble* shepherd!

Why do we remind ourselves of this during the great fifty Days of Easter, at a time when we are celebrating our Lord's resurrection? Because, I think, it reminds us what Easter and our Lord's resurrection are actually *about*.

In our anxiety to defend the reality of Easter story—the reality of the empty tomb, of the one who ate and drank with his disciples after he had risen from the dead – in our anxiety to defend all that – we can sometimes be in danger of seeming to talk about it as if it were *merely* an historical event whose *historicity* was to be defended, as one might defend the historicity of the battle of Waterloo or Julius Caesar's first invasion of Britain, and then go on to speak, perhaps, of its "results" or its "importance".

But the resurrection of Jesus Christ is *not* like that. Certainly the appearances to Mary Magdalen and the others, the empty tomb, the eating and drinking together – yes, these were real events that happened in the past, and it's important for us to remember and celebrate them. But they are important precisely because the resurrection of Jesus himself, if he is who we say he is and the resurrection was what we say it was, is not *merely* an event in the past and can never be that. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is also *a factor of the present*. As the Lord of the Dance song has it, "they knocked me down, but I leapt up high, for I am the life that can never, never die!" Exactly! Or as an un-named disciple of St Paul put it at some time during the first Christian century, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever" (Hebrews 13.8).

So the Risen Christ is not merely the someone who rose from the dead two millennia ago but also the Living One who enters my life and confronts me *now*! And he does so as my shepherd, as the beautiful, noble shepherd who endured the cross for me and for all.

“Other sheep I have,” he says, “which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock, one shepherd.”* When we all—from different “folds” though we may be: different churches, different faith traditions, no faith at all, whatever—when we *all* participate together in that general resurrection, when through Christ God reconciles “all things to Himself” (Col. 1.20) in the life of the one flock with the beautiful shepherd, then and there, by God’s grace, all will find meaning and glory. Then and there we shall realise that the good shepherd has been with us always, even in “the valley of the shadow of death”. Then and there, I think, our life will begin, our *real* life, for which everything before it will turn out to have been preparation – never unimportant or wasted, of course: indeed, precious and glorified – but still only preparation, a tuning up of the orchestra for the great symphony of eternal life, the true drama of heaven. Then and there shall begin what David promised all those millennia ago, “and we shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

* The KJV (following Jerome’s Latin, presumably) offers a somewhat disastrous mis-translation here at John 10.16: viz. “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” The gospel does not say, however, that sheep who are not “of this fold (*tēs aulēs tautēs*)” are to become “one fold (*aulē*)” but that sheep from *various* folds will be “one flock (*mia poimnē*)” (John 10.16). The evangelist’s Greek is quite precise and clear: the vision is not of *uniformity* (one fold “winning” out over other folds) but of *unity*.

Prayer

We thank you that we are yours, created for your glory;
that you have called us all by name,
that through Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep,
who lived and died and rose again for us,
you have redeemed us;
and that your love will never finally let us go, or ultimately give us up.

We thank you that so often you have come to us
in the ordinary and everyday things of life, in our work and in our leisure .
Help us there to seek you and find you and serve you,
as in Christ you have sought and found and served us.
We ask it for his sake. **Amen.**

— from *Companion to the Lectionary*, Volume 3, by Neil Dixon.

Worship Song

'Jesus good above all other', sung here by the choir of Wells Cathedral.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G28-iKN2hNo>

Intercessions

Just as we know the voice of the Good Shepherd, we trust that God knows our voices - so we gather together our needs and the needs of the world:

For all those who shepherd the Church, our bishops, priests, lay ministers and all the many who lead us in faith and help guide the flock:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For nations at war with themselves and with other nations, and for all people affected by violence, that leaders may find ways to understand and work with difference and so find a way to bring justice and peace to their lands:

Lord, hear our prayer

For all who suffer or have suffered physical, mental or emotional trauma, that they may find relief and comfort, especially during this time of crisis:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who are on the frontlines of this Covid-19 pandemic, especially our doctors and nurses, our healthcare workers and first responders, for all who are now returning to work, even though the severity of the virus seems to be abating, may God continue to protect and keep them in good health:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are sick, may the risen Christ visit them with healing power and new hope. For those who have died, may they live forever with Christ in the glory of resurrection. For those left behind, may they find comfort in your sustaining and everlasting love:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us have a moment here to pray for those things we hold in the silence of our hearts - the things we are worried about or those we care about:

Lord, hear our prayer.

That all of us gathered in our homes - or wherever we are - who are sharing these intercessions, may know the peace of the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Often we go astray, like sheep without a shepherd. Call us back to you through the words of your Son, the Good Shepherd, who shows us the way to eternal life with you.

Accept these prayers in his name who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, life-giver, pain-bearer, love-maker
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe.
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world.
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings.
Your kin-dom of peace and freedom sustain our hope
and come on earth.

With the bread that we need for today, feed us.
For the hurts that we inflict on one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love
now and forever. Amen

Developed in the early 1980s by the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness

Affirmation

I believe I need a shepherd.
Because I am sometimes timid and other times overconfident,
because I often don't know the best path yet pretend I do,
because I rush into dead ends or lead others into hazardous places,
because my brightest ideas are seamed with darkness,
because the things I crave may not be what is good for me,
I need a shepherd.

I believe in Jesus, the best possible shepherd;
his wisdom leads me to the best opportunities,
his word comforts me when I'm anxious or afraid,
his arm steadies me when I feel weary and heavy-laden,
his wounded body displays the cost of my rescue.
I believe in Jesus, the best possible shepherd.
I believe that I do not find him but he finds me,
that I under his care by virtue of sheer grace,
the love he gives me is to be shared with others,
that he treasures my name and prepares a place for me,
that his fold transfixes earth and heaven.
I trust Jesus, the good shepherd. **Amen.**

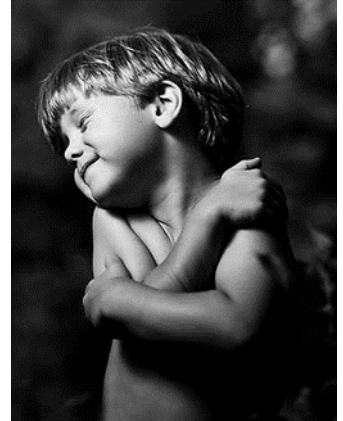
(2002 Bruce D. Prewer)

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.



Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

You may like to listen to: Christ is risen from the dead', sung by the Langford Singers. Music is by Nigel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-LHFy40z78>



Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Merciful Father,
you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd,
and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again:
keep us always under his protection,
and give us grace to follow in his steps;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A prayer of St Columba

My dearest Lord.
Be Thou a bright flame before me.
Be Thou a guiding star above me.
Be Thou a smooth path beneath me.
Be Thou a kindly shepherd behind me.
Today and evermore.

Blessing

May the truth of Easter
The joy of Easter
And the blessings of Easter
Be with us this day and all days
Amen

Closing Hymn

We close with the Easter hymn 'The strife is o'er'. We heard this version two weeks ago, but it's worth hearing again! Sung by a virtual choir and orchestra from St Martin's in the Fields, but not London – this is an episcopal church in Philadelphia, USA. Words are below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAyi64eagTI>

1 The strife is o'er, the battle done;
the victory of life is won;
the song of triumph has begun.
Alleluia!

2 The powers of death have done their worst,
but Christ their legions has dispersed.
Let shouts of holy joy outburst.
Alleluia!

3 The three sad days are quickly sped;
he rises glorious from the dead.
All glory to our risen Head.
Alleluia!

4 He closed the yawning gates of hell;
the bars from heaven's high portals fell.
Let hymns of praise his triumph tell.
Alleluia!

5 Lord, by the stripes which wounded thee,
from death's dread sting thy servants free,
that we may live and sing to thee.
Alleluia!



Scroll down for coffee break

Coffee Break

Over 480 paintings survive from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries which include goldfinches in a Christian religious setting. A common one is the Virgin Mary with baby Jesus holding a goldfinch. Why?

The legend is that the goldfinch encountered Christ on his way to the Cross and was so saddened by the sight that it flew onto his head and tried to pick out the thorns from the 'crown'. In doing so drops of Christ's blood fell onto the little bird, making some of the feathers red. (There are also similar stories where it is the robin or other birds with splashes of red in their plumage.)

It's an enchanting story but is it any more than a medieval version of Rudyard Kipling's 'Just So' stories? Presumably no-one really believed that before the crucifixion goldfinches or robins had different colours. Perhaps the deeper idea is that the natural world, God's creation, is affronted by the enormity of the events that are unfolding, and this spreads to even the smallest of birds which try to take what action they can to show their love and to prevent the outcome. Is this an anthropomorphic flight of fancy, or can we see an allusion to the deeper links that bind living things together?

There is another reason too perhaps as the goldfinch may have been considered to be in its own way a physician just like Jesus. There was an old belief that there was one bird, the Charadrius, which had the ability to heal the sick by staring back into their eyes. In the late middle-ages the plague was common place in Europe and seemingly unstoppable. By including the goldfinch in paintings with Jesus and the Virgin, artists were also trying to invoke the curative powers of the bird for their audience – a kind of good luck symbol.



Madonna and Child, c 1400 by an anonymous master. How in Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

As well as holding a goldfinch, the infant Jesus has a pendant of coral around his neck which at that time was believed to protect against evil.

Scroll Down for Night Prayer

Night Prayer

4th Sunday of Easter
25th April 2021

In the garden: with the birds

Introduction

We are staying in the garden, and this evening when hopefully you can still hear the birdsong as the light starts to fade, spend a little time reflecting on the role of our feathered friends in matters spiritual.



Call to Worship

When God tripped over the stars this week
and send great lightning sparks across the night
God's name was Power

When God stood in the morning dew a few weeks back
and whispered Mary's name fresh from the tomb
God's name was Life

When God held out hands to Thomas
and hold him to hold on and follow
God's name was Shepherd

When God pours water this morning
and asks us to find heaven in every drop
God's name is Grace

When God shook us awake today
and hollowed out an unused moment in front of us to step into
God's name is Creator

When God found us waiting here
in the space between heaven and earth, now and not yet
God's name is Love

Friends, let us worship
the God of many names

(written by Roddy Hamilton, and posted on Mucky Paws.)

This Evening's Music

'There are hundreds of sparrows.' This is a song from the Salvation Army and also in our hymn book! There aren't many hymns involving birds, but this is one – to start with at any rate. It may be for children – yet the message is for everyone.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHg_OVPgBQI .

Reading Luke 12: 6-7, (New International Version)

⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷ Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Do Not Worry

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

Reflection

Birds have long fascinated humans, and not only because they can do what we can't: jump into the air and fly. They are everywhere we have settled on Earth, and in many places we have not. We admire them for their variety of shapes, feathers, and song. But we are also often annoyed and sometimes scared by them. So it is little wonder that birds have inspired so much art, music, and folklore, and that all religions make references to birds.

Because birds occupy the space between earth and heaven (heaven in the sense of up there) they are often seen as divine messengers. Ravens for example are the means whereby the Norse god Odin found out what was happening in the world, and ravens also were sent by God to bring food to Elijah during a drought. (I Kings 17: 4-6).

Some birds tend to get a bad press, others good ones. Vultures never come off well because of their scavenging life-style – ‘Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather’ (Luke 17:37). Eagles however which belong to the same family as vultures, and are not noted for peaceful behaviour, do much better. ‘He fills my life with good things, So I stay young and strong like an eagle.’ (Psalm 103:5)

I would like to focus on just one bird – well known in our gardens – and not mentioned once in the Bible – The blackbird.

Many saints become associated with birds. A few months back in Coffee Break we mentioned St Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, and his link with swans. The most well-known saintly animal lover is St Francis of Assisi, and one that is less well-known – I wonder how many of us have heard of him – is St Kevin, the first Abbot of Glendalough (now in County Wicklow, Ireland).



St Kevin's chapel, Glendalough

Kevin (or Chaoimhin – the fair-begotten) is a sixth century Irish saint. After becoming a priest, he established himself at Glendalough to find God in solitude and prayer, creating a

hermitage on the lakeshore. It seems he had an extraordinary closeness to nature and found his companions in the animals and birds around him. Kevin soon became known as a holy man and others came to Glendalough to seek his advice, to be healed and to follow his way of life.

Gradually, small monastic communities were established and over time the monastic settlement at Glendalough grew to become one of the great spiritual centres of Christianity in Ireland, flourishing for a thousand years after St. Kevin's death. Kevin's story is often referred to as a journey from solitude to community.

The most frequently retold storey about Kevin involves the saint and a blackbird. Seamus Heaney tells us all about it in his poem.

St Kevin and the Blackbird by Seamus Heaney

And then there was St Kevin and the blackbird.
The saint is kneeling, arms stretched out, inside
His cell, but the cell is narrow, so
One turned-up palm is out the window, stiff
As a crossbeam, when a blackbird lands
And lays in it and settles down to nest.
Kevin feels the warm eggs, the small breast, the tucked
Neat head and claws and, finding himself linked
Into the network of eternal life,
Is moved to pity: now he must hold his hand
Like a branch out in the sun and rain for weeks
Until the young are hatched and fledged and flown.

*

And since the whole thing's imagined anyhow,
Imagine being Kevin. Which is he?
Self-forgetful or in agony all the time
From the neck on out down through his hurting forearms?
Are his fingers sleeping? Does he still feel his knees?
Or has the shut-eyed blank of underearth
Crept up through him? Is there distance in his head?
Alone and mirrored clear in love's deep river,
'To labour and not to seek reward,' he prays,
A prayer his body makes entirely
For he has forgotten self, forgotten bird
And on the riverbank forgotten the river's name.

1996 in 'The Spirit Level'.



'St Kevin and the Blackbird', by Clive Hicks-Jenkins, a contemporary Welsh artist

In the poem after recounting the story of how the saint finds the blackbird nesting on his hand, Heaney invites us to imagine ourselves as Kevin, and what it would feel like if we were doing the same. At one level we should ask: Would we share his reasons for continuing to keep his hand outstretched, despite the pain? What are the messages about the relationship between nature, the divine and humanity?

Or could we go beyond all this – St Kevin gives himself over entirely to supporting the life of the blackbird and her chicks, and in doing so forgets his own preoccupations so that he is 'alone and mirrored clear in love's deep river.' This is reminiscent of Jesus saying: 'Whoever tries to gain his own life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will gain it'. (Matthew 10: 39).

What is the blackbird in your life that needs supporting right now?

We Pray

Why are we so slow to recognize you, God?
Sure, you come in many guises,
but you give us an awful lot of clues.

Wherever there is beauty,
there you are.
However our bodies and souls are nourished,
there you are.
Whenever there is delight,

there you are.
Whoever offers us connection and belonging,
there you are.
Whatever progress is made toward a more just world,
there you are.

Somehow, though, not only is it hard to see you around us,
it's also often difficult to see you *in* us.
We don't like what's reflected in the mirror,
what we hear in our recorded voices,
what bubbles up in us in our most unkind or vulnerable moments,
what we feel like we lack in talent or recognition or worth.
And yet, we are made in your image,
just like everyone else around us.

Clear away all that keeps us from recognizing you.
Grow our awareness of your presence within.
Join us at the heart with your beloved ones around us.
And in so doing,
reveal to us your presence
and give us your peace.
Amen.

(Laura Stephens-Reed posted on Revgalblogpals)



'Nest' by Clive Hicks-Jenkins

Closing Prayer

Your presence, Lord:
eternal, all encompassing, elusive,
consoling, invisible, palpable,
immanent, divine, faithful,
caring, abiding, challenging,
mysterious, gracious, persistent,
compassionate, forgiving and loving...

Your presence, Lord:
above me, beneath me,
before me, behind me,
on my left, on my right,
within me, beside me,
wherever I am,
wherever I turn,
wherever I run,
wherever I hide,
wherever I go...

Be with me, Lord, when I'm wide awake
and be present to me in my sleep and my dreams
that awake I might keep watch with you
and sleep deeply and safe in your presence, your peace...

Blessing (The Blessing of St Francis)

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May he show his face to you and be merciful to you,
May he turn his countenance to you and give you peace.
May the Lord bless you. Amen

Closing music

'She sits like a bird.' This is Bee's reworking of John Bell's tune. The words are below.
<https://www.parishofcentralexeter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/She-sits-converted.mp3>

She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,
Hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;
She sighs and she sings, mothering creation,
Waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.

She wings over earth, resting where she wishes,
Lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies;
She nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder,
Nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.

She dances in fire, startling her spectators,
Waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned;
She weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,
Nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained.

For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence,
Gifted by the Saviour in eternal love;
She is the key opening the scriptures,
Enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

Thanks

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*The Virgin of the Goldfinches by
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