



Gathering and Lighting the Candle

Be still and know that wherever you are,
God is with you.

Light your candle, watch it dance;
a symbol of the light of Christ.

Notice your breathing, in and out,
the breath of the Spirit of life in you.

Call to worship

From before we were formed,
we were loved.

Come and see! The Lord is good.

From before we were born,
we were known.

Come and see! The Lord is good.

From beyond our wildest dreams
we were called.

Come and see! The Lord is good.

Come and see.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we gather, in Gippsland this is the Bunurong, the Boon Wurrung and the Gunnai Kurnai people. We pay respects to elders past, present and emerging and commit ourselves to truth-telling, justice and walking together as First and Second Peoples.

Singing - Here I am, Lord

TIS 658

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night
I will go, Lord, if you lead me
I will hold your people in my heart*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone,
I will speak my word to them,
whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide,
'til their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

*Daniel L. Schutte 1947- TIS 658. Used with
permission. CCLI 241 739*

Listening

Read Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

Prayer

Oh, how well you know me. Intimately you know every part. I am cherished.

Yet if you know me that well I also recognise a sense of being ashamed.

Let's face it, we both know that there is much about me that is not all it can be. I sometimes put distance between myself and you by putting distance between me and others.

... prayer continues

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17 January 2021 – Epiphany 2

Prayer continues ...

If you know my every thought then you know that some of them are churlish, spiteful, judgy, entitled.

The Psalm says you lay your hand on me and I get the image of being wrapped around by your tender touch. You have loved me beyond time itself.

Is there any real way to say thanks for such unimaginable love? Wherever I am, whatever I do, I am still with you. Lead me deeper into your call upon my life. Lead us as your people, further into you.

Praise be to God who offers us forgiveness and redeeming love.

Listening

Read: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)

John 1:43-51

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting Rev. Jennie Gordon

The voice of Eli:

It was not an easy time to be a priest, let me tell you! The word of the Lord was not as vivid as it had once been. It felt like a judgment, this divine silence.

Oh, sorry, let me introduce myself; I'm Eli, priest of the temple. My sons have been monstrously wayward, stealing from the sacrifices, and they won't listen to me. Everything has fallen in around me. I'm old and far too heavy for my frame and my eyes are dim. Having been told once by a man of God that dire things will befall my family, a reversal of the promise of the Lord. I had lost all hope for myself and for the temple.

Except for the hope held in the little lad Samuel. He's been with me for a number of years now, almost grown into a man, but still has a way to go. He's sincere, strong in faith and brave, just like his mother Hannah. I don't know where I'd be without him. He sleeps in there, just beside the ark of God.

Then last night, oh last night, such a thing happened, and it shook me to the core. Let me tell you.

The lamp of God was still burning; early hours of the morning, when he stumbled into my room as if I had called out to him. I sent him back to lie down, of course. Then, like a recalcitrant toddler, there he was again, saying I had called his name! The third time it happened my inner eyes sensed the truth, that the voice of the Lord was calling, and that Samuel didn't know the tone or the timbre of that voice.

Can you imagine! This young one, hardly out of childhood, was hearing the Lord calling to him, to him! Not to me, to him! I am Eli, the Priest, the one who has waited and waited for the word of the Lord to come to me in recent times. But no, I have been bypassed, overlooked, superseded and right then I knew it. My time was over. I told young Samuel to listen, and if he heard his name called again, he simply needed to say, "Speak Lord, I'm listening." I don't know what happened next, but I can guess. I'm waiting 'till the morning when he will speak to me and I will hear what he has heard. I will hear the hard truth from the Lord, through the mouth of young Samuel. My time might be over but there may be hope for the temple.

The voice of Samuel:

I have not had a normal childhood. I've been lying here in the semi-dark each night for as long as I can remember. Each time I wake and turn over, I see the light from the lamp of God falling on the ark of God. This is a holy space, and I am a wholly dedicated, holy child. My mother wanted me so much that she gave me away.

She wept in this space, blubbing like she was drunk, imploring God to allow her to conceive. Promising that the fruit of her womb, her firstborn, would come back to the temple, to live with the old man, Eli, the priest with the rotten sons.

... reflection continues

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Reflection continues ...

And here I am, and life was mostly predictable, until last night. Now everything has changed. I thought it was the old priest calling and calling, until he told me to lie still and listen, and I did. When I heard my name again, I trembled and asked the Lord to speak, just like he told me to. I listened, just like he told me to. I wish it hadn't happened.

I have a terrible message for Eli from the Lord. Why, why, why didn't the Lord speak directly to him? Why me? Why give me the story to tell, I'm just a kid.

I can't get back to sleep. The lamp of God is almost out, dawn's colours are creeping through the windows and under the door. The time of telling is near. What does this mean, for Eli, for me, for the temple? What if my tongue won't shape the words? What if he doesn't want to hear them? What if I never hear that voice again, calling my name.

What if ... ?

*Whose voice do you resonate with? How does the old give way to the new? Who are the young prophets in our church? It's not an easy time ...
Speak Lord, we are listening.*

Responding:

Prayers for World and Community

Loving and compassionate God, you stand beside us and call to us, call us out of our complacency and into a place where we feel every bump, every ripple.

When those around us hurt, we hurt too.

We pray for all those who are grappling with big issues, those who are afraid or alone.

We pray for those we know who are sad, and we pray for those we don't know too.

We hear your call on us in the night like Samuel did. What response are you asking of me, God?

How can I support and encourage others in their call too?

You call people of all ages and abilities.

We pray for the children in the enthusiasm and energy of their youth. We pray for them in their vulnerability and in their enormous potential. You hold them as they grow, just as you have formed together their many parts.

We pray for the teenagers and young people as they decide about their identities and what sorts of things give them meaning. We pray for them as they learn and grow. We pray for them as they make choices and go on to seek the dignity and economic opportunity of good employment, of other things which give them meaningful lives.

We pray for the young families and for all the things that cause concern as they seek to provide nurturing homes and loving care to the next generation. We pray for those who care for others in whatever form that takes. And for those who feel alone.

We pray for the elders as they age and go on through the years, may we remain open and passionate and responsive to your call, in whatever age or stage we are at. May we always be open to hear your call and be ready. Help us to let go when we need to, and encourage and empower others to hear you too. May our response always be "Let it be with me according to your word".

Prayer continues ...

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17 January 2021 – Epiphany 2

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

Offering

Bless all that we are and all that we offer. May the gifts we bring bless us and bless others through the ministry and outreach of the church, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

Contributions to this Fig Tree Worship Resource come from our ministers across the Gippsland Presbytery. You can download them each week from the website:

<https://gippsland.unitingchurch.org.au>

Singing - God of my breathing

Tune: SLANE, traditional Gaelic melody TIS 547

God of my breathing and God of my heart
Spirit embodied in all human parts
Would that this body, from head to the toes
Bring forth your glory in all that I know

God of my eating and God of my taste
Flavor my nourishment
full with your grace
Bless what comes in through
this mouth that it might
Bless how I live with the kindness of Christ

God of my hearing and God of my sight
Bless all I find from the moment I rise
Deep in my dreaming, your table be found
Prayerfully offered, these visions and sounds

God of my footsteps and God of my path
Where these feet travel
may they know no lack
Shoes on the pavement or toes in the soil
Carry your servant
where Christ bids them go

God of my memories, Lord of this mind
God of the moment whose vision is time
All I remember and all I forget
Hold in your keeping so this soul might rest

God of my limits and God of all truth
You who have knit me with joy in the womb
Would that this body from head to the toes
Bring forth your glory in all that I know.

*God of My Breathing from Worldmaking by
Richard Bruxvoort Colligan Used with permission
- CCLI 241 739*

Blessing

May you always be attentive
to the call in the night.
For God knows you by heart
and calls you by name.
Come and see, come and follow.
Just let go, "Here I am".

And may the God who knit you together before you
were born, surround you.
God behind and before you,
whatever life's stage,
God with you still. Amen

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