

# Worship Service

BY AMBER INSCORE ESSICK

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## *Call to Worship*

Come now to praise and sing;  
come, bow before the Lord, our maker.

**He is the Lord, revealed in all his mighty works;  
he is the Lord, revealed in the stories of old.**

We have come to praise God, the author of life,  
**the Lord, who writes us into his story.**

Lift up your hearts to God, the source of our being.  
**He is the Lord, we lift our hearts to him.**

## *Invocation*

God of love, we come to you.

You, O Lord, are the God of story and song, of wisdom and law. You have spoken to us through the ages, binding us together in one common narrative. You have given us the Scripture, a treasure we can hold in our hands.

Draw near to us now, breathing life into our hearts. Just as you have spoken to your people of old, speak to us in this hour. Write yourself into our hearts, that we may be written into the story of your love.

Amen.

## *Chiming the Hour*

### *Silent Meditation*

In your mind's eye, try to recall the first Bible ever given to you. Picture the giver, who represents the countless people through the centuries who have handled the texts you received. Give thanks for the people who introduced you to Scripture and nurtured your love for the sacred texts of our faith.

### *Hymn of Praise*

"From All that Dwell below the Skies"

From all that dwell below the skies,  
let the Creator's praise arise;  
let the Redeemer's name be sung  
through every land by every tongue.

Eternal are your mercies, Lord;  
eternal truth attends your Word;  
your praise shall sound from shore to shore,  
till suns shall rise and set no more.

*Isaac Watts (1719), alt.*

*Tune: DUKE STREET*

### *Witness of the Old Testament: Ezekiel 3:1-3*

*(This reading calls for two readers, one for Ezekiel in the light print and another for the LORD in the bold print.)*

He said to me,  
**O mortal, eat what is offered to you;**  
**eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.**  
So I opened my mouth,  
and he gave me the scroll to eat.

He said to me,  
**Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you**  
**and fill your stomach with it.**  
Then I ate it;  
and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey.

### *Prayers of Confession*

Lord, your word is both a wound for us and a balm.  
With it you pierce our pride and our illusions of self-sufficiency.  
You reprove our selfishness and arrogance,  
you strip away our condescension,  
and we know that not one of us has yet arrived.  
**Forgive us our sins, and heal us with a word from you.**

We confess that we have sinned against you and against one another.  
At times we have thought that we alone hold the key to interpreting Scripture.  
We have disregarded the voices of others –

though without them we cannot hope to hear your Word in its fullness.

**Forgive us our sins, and heal us with a word from you.**

We have read your Word selfishly in order to justify our own thoughts.  
We have failed to read it prayerfully, seeking guidance and wisdom  
from above.

We have used your words to serve our own ends,  
lording ourselves over others and rebelling against your teachings.

**Forgive us our sins, and heal us with a word from you.**

We need every word you will speak to us.

We need the words that come down through the ages to speak for us:  
we need the voices in the Scripture who grieve to voice our own pain;  
we need the stories of divine blessing to breathe purpose into our lives;  
we need the songs of old to draw us into their joyful refrain.

We need your words, passed down through the ages,  
to understand the mystery of our God, the holy three in one.

**Heal us with a word from you, so that we may be whole.**

### *Words of Assurance*

Having confessed and turned from our sins, and believing in God, know now that by the power of the Holy Spirit, God forgives us in Christ. Be made whole. *Amen.*

### *Hymn of Petition*

“Many Books, One Holy Canon”

Many books, one holy canon, many authors, voice divine,  
forging saints through faithful teaching, Scripture speaks to every time.  
Law and prophecy and wisdom, prose and poetry and song,  
gospel stories and epistles – Living Word inspired by God.

As we hear the sacred readings and respond “Thanks be to God,”  
may the living words transform us, fill our temples with Christ’s love.  
May we listen and interpret with divinely opened minds  
in our worship and our study, as we take the bread and wine.

Breathe your Word into our hearts, Lord; may it guide us on the way.  
May the spirit, not the letter, be the law that we obey.  
Give us insight and discernment; let your Scripture read us, too.  
May it mold us as your people; may our lives proclaim good news.

*Ann Bell Worley (2014)*

*Tune: NETTLETON (pp. 55-57 of this volume)*

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*Witness of the Psalmist: Psalm 119:103-105*

How sweet are your words to my taste,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
Through your precepts I get understanding;  
therefore I hate every false way.  
Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path.

*Litany of Dependence*

For all those who seek to follow you,  
**your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.**

For the stay-at-home mom at the end of her rope,  
**your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.**

For the farmer who gets up before dawn to tend and to plant,  
**your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.**

For the teacher seeking moments of openness in a student's life,  
**your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.**

For the scholar who studies diligently and faithfully,  
**your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.**

For the child whose budding faith needs nurture,  
**your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.**

For the pastor and the truck driver, for the nurse and the janitor,  
for everyone who seeks to follow you,  
**your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.**

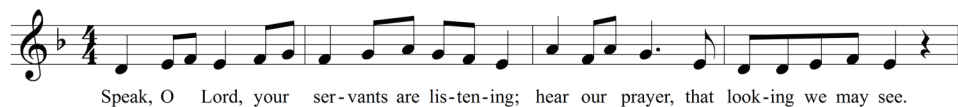
We do not wish to choose our own path,  
but to walk the path you lay out for us,  
the path that leads to you. **Amen.**

*Witness of the Gospels: Matthew 4:1-4*

(Read the passage in the manner of *Lectio Divina*.<sup>1</sup>)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

*Song of Preparation*"Speak, O Lord"<sup>2</sup>*Amber Inscore Essick (2014)*

Tune: SPEAK, O LORD

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*Sermon**Silent Reflection*

It happens that while listening to the Word the heart is touched by a particular saying and set on fire. Then one must stop and let the fire spread quietly.

*Olivier Clément (1921-2009)*<sup>3</sup>*Benediction*

Hear now the words of the Apostle Paul to his friend and disciple Timothy:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

*2 Timothy 3:14-15***NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> *Lectio Divina*, or "divine reading," is an ancient way of reading Scripture. It has been long practiced in monastic settings and is now often followed by other circles within the Church. It entails hearing a scripture passage read aloud several times, with a period of prayerful silence following each reading. Rather than trying to interpret the meaning of the passage, the hearer attempts to enter into it. In other words, if the reading were the passage where Jesus says "my peace I leave with you," the hearer would not try to figure out the meaning of his words so much to enter into the story and receive the peace Jesus gives.

Here is one way to practice *Lectio Divina* (though there are others). Read the passage three times, allowing a period of silence after each reading. During the first reading, try to

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imagine the story as if you are there, hearing sounds, smelling scents, and so on. During the second reading, listen for a word or phrase that catches your attention. During the third reading, listen for what the Holy Spirit might be saying to you through the Scripture.

2 The composer grants permission for the reproduction of this chorus in conjunction with studying the *Scripture* issue of *Christian Reflection*. All other rights are reserved.

3 Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Texts from the Patristic Era with Commentary*, translated by Theodore Berkeley, O.C.S.O., and Jeremy Hummerstone (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995), 100.

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