

Prayer in the Morning.

based on Methodist Worship Book – Tuesday
from page 5.

Prepared by Rev. Andrew Farrington

O Lord, open our lips,
and we shall praise your name.

God is our refuge and our stronghold,
a timely help in trouble.

There is one body and one Spirit,
just as there is one hope
held out in God's call to you.

1. Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
triumph o'er the shades of night ;
Day-spring from on high, be near ;
Day-star, in my heart appear.

2. Dark and cheerless is the morn
unaccompanied by thee ;
joyless is the day's return,
till thy mercy's beams I see,
till they inward light impart,
glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

3 Visit then this soul of mine ;
pierce the gloom of sin and grief ;
fill me, radiancy divine ;
scatter all my unbelief ;
more and more thyself display,
shining to the perfect day.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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Blessed are you, Lord our God,
Giver of life,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
At the opening of this day
you call us out of darkness
into your marvellous light.
Blessed are you for ever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 98

A psalm.

- 1 Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvellous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.
- 2 The LORD has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the
nations.
- 3 He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.
- 4 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;
5 make music to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,
6 with trumpets and the blast of the ram's
horn—
shout for joy before the LORD, the King.
- 7 Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.
- 8 Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;
9 let them sing before the LORD,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity.

Ephesians 5:8-14 New International Version (NIV)

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Some thoughts:

I know that I am in a very privileged position. It is my role to listen carefully to peoples' stories. Perhaps more than ever I am very aware that 'lock-down' is bringing its joys and its challenges. Some are permitted to work 'as normal'. Many are blessed with a sanctuary of garden to tend and enjoy the clement weather. Some are still able to walk out further and see the daily miracle of spring growth. First bulbs and early budding, then leaves, now blossoms and flowers. Daily, the

vista and the aromas change. All the work of God in creation. Contact with friends and family is easily facilitated. Rooms can be tidied and forgotten games rediscovered. All things can rejoice. This balanced by those who are now finding the same few walls becoming a prison; homes have become schools and workplaces; and the hours of silence stir their own sense of foreboding and emptiness. Others are becoming 'stir -crazy' and we are all longing for the moment of release.

I have been re-reading from the Book of Nehemiah today – especially the moment when, after years of exile in Babylon, After a period, a death, servitude, danger and difficulty, God's chosen one have returned to Jerusalem and re-established worship again. There is much rejoicing and great expectation. Then they hear the words of the Law of Moses once more and realise how far they have wandered from the pathways of the Lord. They depart from the temple and establish 'booths' in which they dwelled until, covered in sackcloth and ashes, they gather again and hear, at length, Ezra recalling the great story of God's relationship with his creation. The deliverance from Egypt, the passing through the Red Sea, the years of wandering and doubting, and the crossing of the River Jordan and entry into the promised land of milk and honey. They recall that God is gracious, merciful and just. Once more they pledge to walk in God's law by observing all of the commandments of 'the Lord our Lord'. Most particularly they write strict rules for observing the Sabbath day of rest. They all add their names to this pledge.

From their experience in Babylon they have returned to what they imagined would simply be the restoration of that which they remembered or heard about – their idealised version of Jerusalem. Yet, they rapidly realise that what they had held dear was not necessarily wholly in keeping with God's will. So, they find new emphases and orders. They adapt and order that history may not repeat itself.

I wonder what we will discover when we eventually return to our places of worship and fellowships. Yes, we will, we must, rejoice with glad and thankful hearts. We will have lived through a new 'pass-over' of gladness. We also will be changed by our experiences. Will we have faith enough to pause and reflect in our 'booths' before restoring God's church?

Lord. Lead us from darkness into light. Helps us to show your goodness, compassion, grace and mercy on those for whom this period is dangerous and difficult. And, please Lord, help us to discover only that which pleases you.

(A diversion if you wish – I have recorded a story for my Grandchildren – 'Can't you sleep little bear?' See how the dark is overcome and peace established <https://youtu.be/q7t2RPwVjB4>).

Thank you for your caring for each other; for bearing the pains of others; for your willingness to hold Christ lights and offer yourselves that we might together share in this faithful journey. Amen.

Let us our prayer with all God's people
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who ever lives to pray for us.
We pray for the needs of the world...
We pray for the Church....
We pray for all in trouble or distress...
We pray for all who make a new beginning
today..

Silence,

God of compassion and mercy,
listen to our prayer.
May what we ask in Jesus Christ you Son
be done according to his word, who said:
'ask, and you will receive,
seek and you will find,
knock and the day will opened to you.'

To you, merciful God, through your Son,
in the lifegiving Spirit,
be glory and praise for ever. Amen,

The Lord's Prayer.

Lord our God, as with all creation
we offer you the life of this new day,
give us grace to love and serve you
to the praise of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Rev. Andrew Farrington

