

EVERY
moment
HOLY

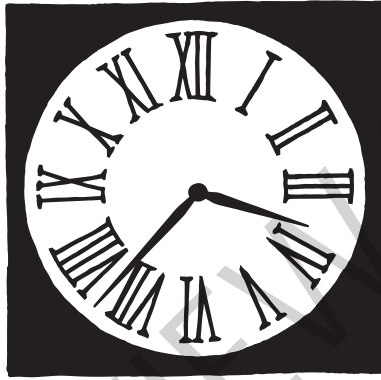
VOLUME III: The Work of the People

Coming Fall 2023



RABBIT ROOM
— P R E S S —

DOUGLAS KAINE MCKELVEY



EVERY
moment
HOLY

VOLUME III

THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE



RABBIT ROOM
— P R E S S —

EVERY MOMENT HOLY

©2023 Douglas McKelvey
& Rabbit Room Press

Rabbit Room Press
3321 Stephens Hill Lane
Nashville, TN 37013
info@rabbitroom.com

EDITORS Douglas McKelvey
& Pete Peterson

ART DIRECTOR Ned Bustard
DESIGN Ned Bustard

ISBN 9781951872168

First Edition
Printed in China

LEADER: All rights reserved.

PEOPLE: No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews, illuminated manuscripts, or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

"For the Resurrection of Faith," "For Town-Planning," and "For Wisdom and Learning" by Dorothy L. Sayers are from Manuscript, DLS / MS-599, stored in Dorothy L. Sayers papers, folder 486, pp. 19–30, undated, stored at the Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. Used with permission.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

For Leslie Anne Bustard—

you had the faith,
and courage,
and good hope,
and humor,
to model for your friends
what it means
to live well,
and also to die well,
in Christ.

You were both
poet and poem,
giver and gift.

Well done, dear sister.

Well done.

(1968—2023)

IF YOU'D LIKE TO PRINT COPIES OF A LITURGY FROM THIS BOOK FOR USE
AT A SMALL GATHERING OR PUBLIC EVENT, INDIVIDUAL LITURGIES ARE
AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT WWW.EVERYMOMENTHOLY.COM.

VISIT THE WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION.

CONTENTS

<i>Notes on Using This Book</i>	xiii
<i>Foreword</i>	xv

INVOCATION

Entreating the Lord to Bless These, Our Small Offerings	xxi
---	-----

LITURGIES OF LABOR & VOCATION

For Those Who Desire Community in Their Calling	3
For Beginning the Study of God	5
For Learning a New Language	10
Before Teaching	15
Before a Job Interview	18
For Those Employed in Manual Labor	22
For One Who Cares for an Infirm Parent	27
For Mechanical Repairs	31
For Unseen Labors	33
For One Who Works the Nightshift	37
For Yard Work I	41
For Yard Work II	45
For Joy in Good Works	48
For Town-Planning	49
To Begin the Day's Creative Labors	51
Of (Re)Dedication to the Way of the Amateur	57
For Baking Bread	63
For Artists & Makers	67
For Beginning an Artistic Work	69
Of Intercession for an Artist at Work	72
Before Writing a Poem	75
Before Writing	80

CONTENTS

For Those Who Build Boats	83
For Those Who Labor Upon the Seas	87
Before Piano Practice	89

LITURGIES OF CREATION & RECREATION

For Finding God's Glory in Creation	97
Before Looking at a Work of Art	97
Before Contemplating Poetry	101
Before Writing a Letter.	103
For Planting a Tree	106
For The Loss of a Tree	113
For Kindling a Fire	116
For Resting in God	116
For Sunrise	117
Before Fishing	121
Before Exercising.	123
Before Playing a Board Game	125
For Solo Gamers	128
For Birdwatching	129
Before Sailing	135
For a Walk in My Neighborhood	137
For a Walk in the Woods	143

LITURGIES OF BLESSING & CELEBRATION

Of Praise to God for Salvation.	147
For Wisdom & Learning	148
For a Sponsored Child	149
For the Pilgrim	153
Before Hosting	154

CONTENTS

For Taking a Meal to Others	159
For the Wrapping of Christmas Gifts	160
For Sleeping & Waking.	163
Before Sleeping	164
On a Day of Recovery from Sickness	164
Dedicating Our Diverse Offerings to the Lord	166

LITURGIES OF PETITION & PROVISION

For Those Experiencing Relationship Conflict in the Church	171
Of Intercession for a Minister	177
Of Corporate Intercession for Ministers	182
For a Single Person Going to Church	186
Before Writing a Difficult Message	191
Before Giving an Apology	195
For One Overwhelmed by Turbulent Emotion	198
For One Suffering Anxiety.	201
For Those Dismayed by Chaos.	206
For Those Distressed by Intrusive Thoughts	211
For One in Need of Courage Just to Get Out of Bed	214
Before Meeting People from Other Cultures	217
For Those Who Find it Hard to Speak.	222
For the Resurrection of Faith	225
When Someone You Love Believes Differently than You	226
For a Perfectionist	230
Begging the Grace to Love One Man or Woman Well.	234
For Getting Dressed	239
For Dropping Off a Child at School	241
After a Child's Meltdown	244
For Responding to a Child's Needs	248

CONTENTS

For Parenting a Child with Special Needs	250
For Welcoming a Child in Foster Care	257
When a Child in Foster Care Leaves	262
For Nursing Mothers	265
When Breastfeeding Isn't Going as Planned	269
For Long Hours Caring for an Infant	271
For an Infant's Medical Procedure	272
When a Parent is Exhausted	273
For a Lonely Holiday	274
For One Who Suffers a Degenerative Condition	277
For Becoming an Instrument of God's Peace	283
For One Drowning in Debt	283
For the Increase of Devotion	287
For Relapse	288
For Air Travelers	289
For Those Anxious About Air Travel	292

LITURGIES OF SORROW & LAMENT

For Remembering Places & Times To Which We Cannot Return	299
For the Loss of Faith in a Hero	301
For One Living Behind Bars	308
For Those Wearied by Winter	313
For One Whose Friends Have Moved on to a New Stage of Life	318
For Contemplating the Empty Bedroom of a Child Who Has Left Home	323
For Leaving a Loved Home	327
For Giving Your Children Bad News	332

CONTENTS

After a Fight Among Siblings	335
Upon Receiving Rejection for a Creative Work	339
For Those Mourning the Loss of a Church	342
For Those Who Are Envious of Another's Answered Prayer	345
For Those Who Feel Distant from God	349
For the Tolling of the Passing Bell	353

LITURGIES OF THE MOMENT

For the New Year	359
For Purity of Heart	359
Before Answering an Unwanted Call I	359
Before Answering an Unwanted Call II	360
After Speaking in Haste	360
For Discernment I	360
For Discernment II	361
Before Tuning an Instrument	361
For God to be Glorified in Us	362
For Grace to Seek God	362
When Tempted to Procrastinate	363
For Those in Bondage	363
For Election Day	364
A Liturgy for Meditation on God's Word I	364
A Liturgy for Meditation on God's Word II	365
A Liturgy for Meditation on God's Word III	365
Before an Exam.	366
For Desiring the Knowledge and Illumination of God	366
For the Righteous Use of Communication Technologies	367
Upon Pausing Social Media	367
For Wasted Moments	368

CONTENTS

For Centering	368
For Caring Less About the Opinions of Others	368
For Daily Stewardship of Gifts.	369
For Anchoring Heart & Hope	369
For the Purity of the People of God	370
When Washing Dishes	370
For One Suffering Long Emotional Pain.	371
For Offering Oneself to God	371
Of Intercession for the Stranger.	372
Upon Lighting a Candle	372
For Giving Feedback	373
For Receiving Feedback	373
Upon Feeling Rejected.	374
Upon Receiving Kindness from a Friend	374
Upon the Breaking of Something Precious	374
For Weariness	375
For Opening the Heart to God.	375
For Speaking the Truth in Love	376
To Center the Heart Upon Waking	376
Upon Nighttime Infant Feedings.	377
For When the Baby Isn't Sleeping	377
Upon Observing a Toddler's Early Steps	378

BENEDICTION

A Liturgy of Praise to Christ Who Labors Through His People .	381
---	-----

<i>Contributors</i>	389
-------------------------------	-----

NOTES ON USING THIS BOOK

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES you will find liturgies for use in a number of different ways. Some are meant to be read by a “Leader” and the “People,” as in a traditional liturgical service or responsive reading. Others are intended for personal use, either read silently or aloud. And still others may contain multiple speaking parts for use in a group.

However, none of these formats should be considered rigid. One might choose to split up a personal liturgy to be read in parts by a group for whom the subject is applicable. And likewise, those liturgies written for a “Leader” and “People” may be of equal value to the lone reader.

Some prayers are written with the intent of daily or routine recitation, and others are for use on special, memorable, difficult, or even tragic occasions. The prayers included in the “Liturgies of the Moment” section are designed for memorization so that they can be recalled at need.

For those wishing to reproduce a liturgy for use with large groups, individual liturgies are available for download at www.EveryMomentHoly.com. Downloads are available for both personal use (such as with family and friends) and public use (such as for church services or public events). Further details are available on the website.

It is hoped that the liturgies in this book, no matter how they are used, will serve as prayers to encourage readers in practicing mindfulness of the constant presence of God and will draw them toward greater recognition of the eternal echoes resounding in every moment of our lives.

Many liturgical resources already exist for church ceremonies of communion, baptism, marriage, last rites for a dying person, etc. Those might be found in texts such as *The Book of Common Prayer*, or the Books of Order for various denominations. The prayers in *Every Moment Holy* are not intended to supplant that wealth of resources created over hundreds of years. Rather, these are offered as supplemental prayers and liturgies for moments not already specifically addressed in those core liturgies of the church. Those desiring a framework for a baptism service, for instance, are encouraged to look to whichever of those existing resources seems most appropriate to their need.

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

FOREWORD

IT IS A POINT OF DISCUSSION in some theological circles whether the Greek word *leitourgia*—from which we get our word *liturgy*—is most accurately translated as “the work *of* the people” or “the work *for* the people.” I would suggest there might be ample room in the word to encompass both meanings.

Because what Christ has done for his people, and what we, as his body, are to be about in response, are—together—from beginning to end, the work of Jesus for, and in, and through his people.

Jesus has done a good work *for* us.

The Holy Spirit is doing a good work *in* us.

And God equips and calls each of us to go out and do good works,
works that he has prepared in advance for us to do,
and that he alone, by his power and his Spirit,
will bring to completion *through* us.

In this sense, for the child of God, all of life ought to be seen as liturgical, because every part of life is meant to be lived as a facet of our unceasing labor of worship. Our relationships with spouses, parents, children and friends, our caretaking, our town-planning, our artmaking, our storytelling and music making, our gardening and governing, our baking, our tending and maintenance of things, our greetings and our goodbyes, our learning and studying, our eating and drinking, our contemplations of truth and beauty and the natural world, our labor and leisure, our love, our hope, our loneliness and fear and discouragement and loss and grief, our repentances and forgivenesses, our hardships and celebrations—all these parts of life are to be lived in view of the work of Christ *for* us, and in willing surrender

to—and participation in—the ongoing work of Christ *in* and *through* us.

And herein lies the great mystery of the church. God does not need us. He could accomplish his labors by divine fiat. Yet it is his good pleasure to labor through us. And this despite our many foibles and failings. He doesn't need our prayers. Yet he moves in response to them. He doesn't need our acts of mercy, compassion, and generosity; yet he chooses to display his own heart through them. He doesn't need our strengths. Yet he displays his strength in our weaknesses. He doesn't need any of our creative works, our sacrifices, or our service. Yet he invites each of us to play some part in the outworking of his redemptive plan for his kingdom, his people, and his creation. He certainly doesn't need our friendship. Fullness of love and delight exist eternally within the triune godhead. Yet he calls and draws and welcomes us into relationship with himself, and by so doing, he also beckons us into a richness of relationship with one another in the family of God.

So perhaps we could look at it this way: The essential liturgy, the *leitourgia* of Jesus, the work *for* the people, the work of the One *for* the many, is the great overture of God. But in light of that great work undertaken on our behalf, we are invited to participate in the liturgical response of the work of the people, which is also the work of the One through the many. And even these works, accomplished through us, are still the ongoing work of Christ for the many, for it is he who is the head of his people, the church, and he who labors through us to accomplish his ends in culture, in the creation, and across the span of history.

The book that you hold in your hands, *Every Moment Holy, Volume III*, is the fruit of labors undertaken by many in glad response to the work for the people accomplished by our Lord, and in the good hope that what we would create together might in some sense truly become along the way a work of the people, the process nudged and guided by God's Spirit, the end result offered to Christ that he might bless, multiply, and distribute it as he would, for the nourishment of many.

Every Moment Holy, Volume I was penned over the span of a year in 2016-17. *EMH Volume II* (which focused on themes of death, grief, and hope) was a two-year writing endeavor. Community served to shape those prayers in ways that were significant and necessary, but the actual writing of those books was a solitary labor.

This *Volume III*, though, was conceived as an explicit labor of community from beginning to end. More than sixty authors, poets, and songwriters were invited to contribute original prayers, and seven artists were invited to create the accompanying prints. Some are names readers will recognize. Others might be encountered here for the first time. Some are emerging talents in their mid-twenties, with much work before them. Others are more seasoned creators, journeying even well into their nineties, who already have a great body of work behind them. Most authors are contemporary, but some are followers of Jesus who lived decades, hundreds, or even more than a thousand years ago. We are particularly pleased to offer here, for the first time in print, three prayers penned by Dorothy Sayers—prayers only recently uncovered in a library archive.

Sometimes it is a great encouragement simply to learn that the things we struggle with or delight in today are the same for another, even if they might have lived in some other part of the world long ago. The kinship and fellowship of the family of God extends across time, as does the consolation and encouragement we might offer one another.

Who knows? Perhaps in a few hundred years some of the newer prayers and illustrations in this book, so lovingly crafted by these authors and artists in hopes of serving the church, will still be circulating in some form, offering solace, direction, encouragement, or insight to pilgrims who today are not yet born, articulating the cries of their hearts in a way that makes them pause and say, “Wait, how could they have known, so long ago, what I would feel today?”

But the ways in which these prayers circulate and serve the Body of Christ, where and for how long, are not in our hands. All we can do is offer the fruits of this labor to God, to use as he pleases, for his good glory. The work of the people is, after all, from start to finish the work of our Lord through his people, as all of us are called into this great project of divine redemption, called to live and love and labor for the good of our neighbors, for the glory of God, and for the advance of his kingdom as it is worked out across every square foot of creation, in and through every people group, across all vocations and callings and fields of study and labor, across the span of time and history, in every relationship, in joy and in sorrow, in work and rest and play, in all our hours, in every moment.

The advance of Christ's blessed kingdom, even in this age between his first and second advents, is a thing we are always to be about individually and collectively—many parts, one body; each of us laboring unto the same good end, encouraging, equipping, and cheering one another on.

Our hope is that our collective labors to build this book will resound to the praise and glory of Christ who is ever at work, laboring for and in and through his people.

αχρι ημερας

—Philippians 1:6

Douglas Kaine McKelvey

Conon Bridge, Scotland,

Conon Hotel, Room 9

7 June 2023

Invocation

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

O Jesus, who alone might make
a rich feast for many from the
meager offerings of the few,
now receive these our insufficient gifts:
our imperfect talents, our limited resources,
our half-realized intentions,
 our impaired efforts,
and consecrate them for your good purposes
that they might in your hands become
something more than mere proofs
of our own inadequacy.

For you delight, O Christ, in using our poverty
to display the riches of your grace
and in meeting and filling our weaknesses
so they become hollows in which
your mercies and your glories might pool.
Do so now, O Lord, for our
best efforts will never be enough
to bring to meaningful fruition
any labor you have set before us.

Our gifts, even those which in some
way have been costly to us,
will only be as fruits withering
and shriveling on the vine
if you do not coax their ripening
to completion, and tread them in
your press, and transform their bitter
notes into a sweeter wine of your grace.

A LITURGY
ENTREATING
THE LORD TO

Bless These, Our Small Offerings

DOUGLAS MCKELVEY

Apart from you, O Christ,
 we can do nothing. You alone
 can bring to completion the works
 to which you have called us.
 If you do not labor through us,
 all our offerings will be in vain.

AS EVENING APPROACHED,
 THE DISCIPLES CAME TO
 HIM AND SAID, "THIS IS
 A REMOTE PLACE, AND
 IT'S ALREADY GETTING
 LATE. SEND THE CROWDS
 AWAY, SO THEY CAN GO
 TO THE VILLAGES AND
 BUY THEMSELVES SOME
 FOOD." JESUS REPLIED,
 "THEY DO NOT NEED TO
 GO AWAY. YOU GIVE THEM
 SOMETHING TO EAT."
 "WE HAVE HERE ONLY
 FIVE LOAVES OF BREAD
 AND TWO FISH," THEY
 ANSWERED. "BRING THEM
 HERE TO ME," HE SAID.
 —MATTHEW 14:15-18

For the impossible command
 you gave to your disciples
 on the side of a mountain near the sea
 is the same bidding you give us still.
 Faced with overwhelming need—an ill-
 equipped crowd of thousands of weary,
 famished folk—your followers urged you
 to send them all away to find food.

But you told your frustrated friends:

You give them something to eat.

You said this knowing your disciples
 did not have much at all on hand
 and could never afford enough
 to meet so great a need.

And yet you told them they must
 somehow feed these people.

You give them something to eat.

They waxed incredulous, arguing facts and making excuses:

Eight months wages wouldn't buy enough
to give each man one bite! Let alone
the women and the kids! And anyway,
where could we find such a quantity
of bread for sale in such a sparse
and empty place, no towns of any size
for miles around, just rocky ground
and weeds and empty shore.

They might have thought you harsh
for asking more of them
than they could ever give.
But you were gently teaching them
that any work you called them to
could never be fulfilled apart from you.

What do you have?
you asked them.
Go and see.

And so they inventoried all
the food that they could find
and returning to you from what they
surely thought a fool's errand, reported:

All we have is five *small* loaves and
two *small* fish.

But you did not upbraid them
for their pitiful offering.
You said:

Bring them here to me.

And so you tell your people still:
Your imperfect works.
Your insufficient gifts.
Your meager offerings.

Bring them here to me.

Then you gave thanks for
those offered gifts.
You broke those tiny loaves and fish
and distributed them among
the open, empty hands
of your mystified friends,
instructing them in turn
to give these broken remnants
to the people—five thousand hungry men,
and women and children besides.

And so they did.

And all received,
and all were satisfied,
on two small fish
and five small loaves of bread.

You give them something to eat,
you said to your disciples.

And in the end they did—
by giving what they first
received from you.

What mystery that you chose
to work through them!
What mystery that you choose
to work through us,
your church, your people.

It is the same for us today,
as it was for the twelve.

We never have enough.
We give you what we have.
You make of it a feast.
And hand it back to us
to give to others.

We never have enough.
You ask for what we have.
We lay it at your feet.
You multiply and give it back
to us to give to others.

BUT HE SAID TO ME,
"MY GRACE IS
SUFFICIENT FOR YOU,
FOR MY POWER IS
MADE PERFECT IN
WEAKNESS." THEREFORE
I WILL BOAST ALL THE
MORE GLADLY ABOUT MY
WEAKNESSES, SO THAT
CHRIST'S POWER MAY
REST ON ME. THAT IS
WHY, FOR CHRIST'S
SAKE, I DELIGHT IN
WEAKNESSES, IN
INSULTS, IN HARDSHIPS,
IN PERSECUTIONS,
IN DIFFICULTIES. FOR
WHEN I AM WEAK,
THEN I AM STRONG.
—2 CORINTHIANS 12:9–10

Do so again now, Jesus.
Take these, our meager offerings,
our talents, our time, our treasures,
the fruits of all our labors,
and make of them something more
than we alone can give.

If it please you, take, and bless,
and break, and multiply
these small gifts, that through them
we might minister your life, and hope,
and joy, and comfort, and mercy,
and love to others.

Amen.



O God, who in wisdom
laid the world's foundation,

Remind me it is no trivial task to teach:
to inspect and wonder,
to discipline and discern,
to see the world through the eyes of
those still fresh in learning it,
to show them nature as you made it,
and invite them to know it more fully.

Teaching often seems summed up in mere grades
and emails
and papers
and raised hands
and disruptions,
but really it is a feast,
a community,
a gift,
a discovery of the world
and its inherent value.

We see in teaching a divine act
that forms and shapes; it weaves in
all of history and matter and truth
and goodness and offers it to students
in a way which may guide their thoughts
and their decisions and
may change them for good.

A LITURGY

Before Teaching

ALLIE OSBORN

ARTWORK BY
CRAIG HAWKINS

APPLY YOUR HEART
TO INSTRUCTION AND
YOUR EARS TO WORDS
OF KNOWLEDGE.
—PROVERBS 23:12

In your hands,
 our Great Teacher,
 nothing is wasted or lost.
 No failed lesson plan or disruptive student
 can thwart your plan for all humanity—
 for redemption and restoration.

Thank you for letting me play a
 small but noble role in that plan.
 I pray my students desire to know,
 and not just appear to know,
 or seem to know, or kind of know.
 I pray that all knowledge leads them
 closer to seeing you, and delighting in
 the way you crafted the world.

Do what I cannot—turn their gaze to you.
 And just as the robin does not busy herself with
 anything but the task before her,
 let me teach today, and teach well.

THE TEACHING OF
 THE WISE IS A
 FOUNTAIN OF LIFE,
 TURNING A PERSON
 FROM THE SNARES
 OF DEATH.
 — PROVERBS 13:14

Remind me now of the humanity and
 dignity of my students.
 They are not good or bad students,
 not obnoxious or obedient,
 but human beings, not more or less or other.

My students are dear to you, God,
 capable of great virtue,
 and this is just the beginning of

their lifelong commission,
their ambition of knowing you
 and your creation better, more fully.
Sober me to the reality of my students' future
happiness or future misery.

Teach me to steward their affections well:
 by speaking earnestly of things that matter,
 by carefully separating truth from falsehood,
 by condemning unrighteousness,
 by valuing beauty and whatever is
 true and excellent and praiseworthy.

Teach me to direct them to true goodness,
 to knowing and imitating you,
 to beholding the beauty of a dandelion,
 a novel, an idea, an equation,
and in all of this,
 the harmony of all of creation,
 the thread of brokenness and restoration,
 the appearance of injustice and
 the coming justice of the whole world—
let me remind them and myself that
its goodness sings of you.

Amen.

THE FEAR OF THE
LORD IS THE BEGINNING
OF KNOWLEDGE, BUT
FOOLS DESPISE WISDOM
AND INSTRUCTION.
—PROVERBS 1:7



Father, I have neither the skill nor tools
to repair all that is worn in this world—
all that clinks and clanks and clatters,
all that stutters, stalls, and does not start.
And indeed you do not call me to attempt
what your hands alone can achieve.

Yet you have gifted me in this fight
against the physical effects of the fall,
in the salvaging of what is broken down,
rusted, and out of balance,
to perform a restorative work against
the abrading forces of time, grit,
rust and friction.

So as I begin this repair
I offer my service first to you,
recognizing that there is a
greater context for my labors today.
This law that everything we create
is ever running down and in need of repair,
is an evidence, and a symptom,
of our true condition.

For this world is broken.
And I am broken.
And just as this machine is incapable
of replacing its own aging components,
so am I helpless to fix the grinding
consequences of sin
upon my own soul.

A LITURGY FOR

Mechanical Repairs

JON LOWRY

HE WHO WAS SEATED
ON THE THRONE SAID,
"I AM MAKING
EVERYTHING NEW!"
—REVELATION 21:5a

“Who will deliver me
from this body of death?
Thanks be to God
through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

THEREFORE, IF ANYONE
IS IN CHRIST, THE
NEW CREATION HAS
COME: THE OLD HAS
GONE, THE NEW IS HERE!
—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

You created me for eternity,
and you are not willing to throw away
that which is falling apart.
It is your good pleasure to take
what is seemingly beyond repair
and perform a great restoration.

So even now as I refit this
failing mechanical equipment,
O Restorer of Souls,
perform your restoration in me.

For though I am skilled with machines,
I am not always so skilled at repairing
and maintaining relationships with those
you’ve placed in my life and with whose
service and care I am entrusted.
I ask that your invisible internal work
become more evident in my life
through greater patience,
greater forgiveness, and greater love
for those I encounter today.

Now in this work before me,
as I undertake this repair,

grant me wisdom to trace and identify
the source of mechanical failures.

Give me insight to choose
the best course of action.

And provide peace, amid frustration,
when minor maintenance
turns into major repairs.

O repairer of the broken,
I offer my service to you now.

Amen.

O Lord, who works in a thousand unseen
places, I pause in your presence as I begin my
work today.

Nothing is unknown to you, and you know
that my labors often go unrecognized by
others. At times, this has
disheartened me.

Yet this I believe: to work is a valuable gift.
You've placed me here with an opportunity to
tend these tasks for your glory and for the
good of your children.

A LITURGY FOR

Unseen Labors

KATY ROSE

ARTWORK BY
CRAIG HAWKINS



May I not be blind to the beauty before me.
Be thou my vision, Lord.

For in your sight the task at hand becomes an act of worship. And as the touch of your hand sweeps through, may these labors be sanctified. Holy Spirit, meet me in this work with the power of your presence, for in your presence is the fullness of joy.

Yes, there may be joy here also, even in this.

How much of your work, O God, is unnoticed? You have created all things, and by your Spirit they are sustained.

How often do I neglect to thank you for the breath in my lungs, for the grass beneath my feet, for the varied flavors of food, for colors, and kestrels, and laughter? You have worked all these things into your creation. Indeed, the world revolves around your unseen acts. Yet despite our lack of acknowledgement, you are constant in care and unceasing in service. May I humbly follow this pattern.

As I go about my work today,
give me eyes to see you at work in the world.
Let me not forget the centuries of good and faithful servants who were never recognized on earth, but whose heavenly reward awaited them, secure and unseen.

WHATEVER YOU DO,
WORK AT IT WITH
ALL YOUR HEART,
AS WORKING FOR THE
LORD, NOT FOR HUMAN
MASTERS, SINCE YOU
KNOW THAT YOU
WILL RECEIVE AN
INHERITANCE FROM THE
LORD AS A REWARD.
IT IS THE LORD CHRIST
YOU ARE SERVING.
—COLOSSIANS 3:23

May I be more attuned to brothers and sisters around me who are similarly laboring, many in more trying circumstances than my own.

Let me work today to the rhythm of your Word, inhaling and exhaling, my very breath declaring your abundant kindness:

Let my soul be at rest,
you have been good to me.

Great is your steadfast love.
Your faithfulness endures forever.

You give life and breath to all,
you satisfy every need.

GOD IS NOT UNJUST; HE
WILL NOT FORGET YOUR
WORK AND THE LOVE YOU
HAVE SHOWN HIM AS YOU
HAVE HELPED HIS PEOPLE
AND CONTINUE TO HELP
THEM. —HEBREWS 6:10

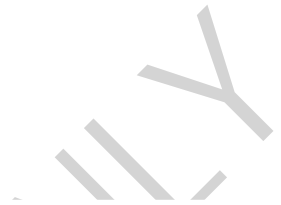
And now, Lord, establish the work of my hands, not for my name but for yours, that these labors might bring blessing from trial, peace from chaos, flourishing from barrenness, justice from abuse, and beauty from its lack.

I give you my work as an offering.
Do with it as you will.

For my deepest satisfaction comes not from being seen by others, but from being

profoundly and forever seen
and known by you.

Amen.



your finished work.

You prepare a feast for those who would taste of your mercy and grace, so that they would hunger no more.

We have baked this bread to feed the few.
Would it please you, through us, to offer a grace that would feed the souls of many.

Even now, as we savor the scent and flavor of this freshly baked bread,
may our lives be evermore sweetened by the pleasing aroma of Christ.

As we have prepared this bread to nourish the body, O Bread of Life, nurture our hearts.

Amen.

O Christ, through whom all things were made that have been made,

meet me in this lesser making.
 Channel my creativity.
 Guide my hands and heart.
 Give me discipline to steward well my craft.

THEN JESUS DECLARED,
 "I AM THE BREAD
 OF LIFE. WHOEVER
 COMES TO ME WILL
 NEVER GO HUNGRY,
 AND WHOEVER
 BELIEVES IN ME WILL
 NEVER BE THIRSTY.

— JOHN 6:35

A LITURGY FOR

Artists & Makers

NED BUSTARD &
 DOUG MCKELVEY

Let me find a fertile place
to sink my roots within the
long tradition and continuing
conversation of your children
who, across thousands of years,
have sought

to display beauty,
to articulate truth,
to celebrate holy mystery,
and to somehow echo
eternal yearnings
in the things we create.

MAY THE FAVOR OF THE
LORD OUR GOD REST ON
US; ESTABLISH THE WORK
OF OUR HANDS FOR US—
YES, ESTABLISH THE WORK
OF OUR HANDS.
—PSALM 90:17

Let me, in the short span of my life,
contribute something more
to that good conversation.

And let me release my expectations
of the times and places and ways
in which it might be received.

Let me instead simply craft
the finest offering I am able—
within my given limits of time,
and skill, and circumstance—
and then offer it to you to
use it as you will.

Let that be enough for me, O Lord.

Amen.



O Creator and Sustainer
of All Living Things,
hear our lament.

For today we mark the loss
of a cherished part
of your good creation.

Today we mark
the loss of a most particular tree
that we had grown, over time,
to so greatly appreciate.

In this place our eyes long traced
its pleasing lines; its rooted, reaching
shape; the burst of life in trunk
and branch and spindly shoots hungering
toward sky and sun; the play
of shade and dappled light beneath
its spreading canopy; the dance
of limbs in wind.

Across the wheeling seasons, this tree
provided a graceful constant, anchoring
the landscape we inhabit; a silent
witness to the rhythms of our days,
its presence like a never-ceasing prayer;
a poetry of long obedience, arms
upraised in supplication and in praise.
It gave us faithful testimony in its time.

A LITURGY FOR
the Loss
of a Tree

JON LOWRY &
DOUGLAS MCKELVEY

And we were not unmoved by what
your hands, O Lord, had fashioned.
In this tree we took delight.

We saw what you had made,
and it was good.
And that is why it matters
to us now
that it is gone.

And maybe there is
something more besides.
Sometimes a lesser loss like this
will open hidden doors to rooms
of heart and memory where
other griefs are stored.

FOR SINCE
THE CREATION OF THE
WORLD, GOD'S INVISIBLE
QUALITIES—HIS ETERNAL
POWER AND DIVINE
NATURE—HAVE BEEN
CLEARLY SEEN, BEING
UNDERSTOOD FROM WHAT
HAS BEEN MADE, SO THAT
PEOPLE ARE WITHOUT
EXCUSE.
—ROMANS 1:20

So maybe there is something more
we miss and mourn today. And in
this newly hollowed space, perhaps
in some small way we touch again
our ache for that good garden—
unmarred by death,
unrent by storm,
untouched by blight,
unworn by age—that might
have been our birthright.

If so, would you awake at last,
O Lord—in the ready soil of all
our sorrows—that buried seed of

ancient hope, long waiting
to spring to life!

Awake again our holy yearning,
inclining our hearts sharply forward
toward the renewal of all creation and
a glad gathering yet to come, beneath
the beauty of that great, undying
Tree of Life, planted beside the river
that flows through your eternal City,
where death does not wreck
the splendor, where each
created thing will forever offer
constant praise in its kind,
and where no good expression
of your glory will ever wane
or wear, or fall away again.

Even as we mark this loss today,
seal and stir our hearts unto that
better day, O Spirit of God. And
as we journey ever toward it, inhabit
and direct our many sorrows.

Amen.

FOR THE CREATION
WAITS IN EAGER
EXPECTATION FOR THE
CHILDREN OF GOD TO
BE REVEALED. FOR THE
CREATION WAS SUBJECTED
TO FRUSTRATION, NOT
BY ITS OWN CHOICE, BUT
BY THE WILL OF THE ONE
WHO SUBJECTED IT, IN
HOPE THAT THE CREATION
ITSELF WILL BE LIBERATED
FROM ITS BONDAGE TO
DECAY AND BROUGHT
INTO THE FREEDOM AND
GLORY OF THE CHILDREN
OF GOD.

—ROMANS 8:19-21



my thoughts, my heart,
my habits, to more intently see
your love expressed in all the details
of your creation, your world, your people.

As I am daily moved by that wild choir
of praise inadvertently raised
by the bustle of these little beings,
so let my own daily living and interacting
with others also bring you much glory.

Amen.

O God of my beginnings whose Spirit
breathed upon the face of the deep,
I thank you that your breath still moves
upon these waters as I begin this day.

O God who rested after his creation,
I thank you that I have this day free of labor
to sail my little boat,
to delight in your creation for my re-creation.

O God who gathered all on board an ark,
bless my little boat and all who board her.

A LITURGY

Before Sailing

MALCOLM GUTE

ARTWORK BY
STEPHEN CROTTS

O Christ who stood with Peter in his boat
and said, "Launch out into the deep,"
now come on board with me
that I too may launch out into the deep
and know I always float upon the surface of
your mystery.

Now as I sail, sail with me,
with me in calm and storm,
and even as your waters lift my boat,
lift and sustain me.

HE ALONE STRETCHES
OUT THE HEAVENS
AND TREADS ON THE
WAVES OF THE SEA.
—JOB 9:8

You have told me that the wind blows
where it wills, and I know not whence it
comes or where it goes, so as I trim my sails
to this day's wind and set my course,
may my soul's sails be filled with breath
of your Spirit that I who am borne by water,
blown by wind, may also be
born again of water and the Spirit.

And lastly, Lord,
at day's end when my sails are furled,
and I am home in harbor,
may that home-coming sing of the greater one,
when I shall reach your heaven-haven,
out of the sway and swing of the sea,
harbored with my savior in the heart of Love.

Amen.



Even so, give us the grace
we need to trust you,
your plans for our family,
and your plans for this child.

O Lord, again, we thank you for the time
we've had with this child. We pray that you
will use our family as you will, to help bring
about your plans for the world. Give us
wisdom to know when, and if, we should open
our home, and our family, to another child.
Help us to love others as we love ourselves,
and help us always to point others to you
for their good and for your glory.

Amen.

ASSYRIA CANNOT
SAVE US; WE WILL NOT
MOUNT WARHORSES.
WE WILL NEVER AGAIN
SAY 'OUR GODS' TO
WHAT OUR OWN HANDS
HAVE MADE, FOR IN YOU
THE FATHERLESS FIND
COMPASSION."
—HOSEA 14:3

O God of all tender compassion,

Like a woman in labor, you tell us
that you gasp and pant for us.

As a mother comforting her child,
you commit to comfort us.

Through the Holy Spirit, the prophet Isaiah
spoke the truth of the Lord—that a mother

A LITURGY FOR

Nursing Mothers

JESSICA HOOTEN
WILSON

“CAN A MOTHER
FORGET THE BABY
AT HER BREAST AND HAVE
NO COMPASSION ON
THE CHILD SHE HAS
BORNE? THOUGH SHE
MAY FORGET, I WILL
NOT FORGET YOU!
—ISAIAH 49:15

cannot forget the baby at her breast
and has endless compassion
for the child she has borne,
so too, the Lord has promised not to forget us.

When we feed our infant
hour after hour today,
remind us that we are
emblems of your compassion.
As nursing mothers, we show forth your glory.
We are visible reminders that you, O Lord,
remember your church.

When we are worried that we do
so little during this season,
that we are unseen in our giving,
remind us of Mary, your humble mother—
of her pierced heart,
of her pondering soul,
of her nourishing breast.

As we behold our tiny beloved,
we pray that our souls, like Mary’s,
would magnify you, Lord.

In offering food to our new-born babe,
we thank you, Jesus, for being our sustenance.
In feeding and nurturing our soft, helpless one,
we thank you, Jesus, for being our daily bread.
Jesus, you gave your blood and your body.
We, too, give our bodies to your service.

When we are spent and tired and sore,
we remember your pain.
When we give of ourselves
continuously this day,
we hold close the memory
of your sacrifice.

God, our Father, who in scripture
also likened yourself to a mother,
we ask you for strength for mothering.
We offer prayers for all earthly mothers,
that you would encourage and sustain them,
for all spiritual mothers, as they pour
themselves out to disciple others,
and for all the precious newborn
of your church, that they might receive
all necessary nurture and sustenance
for their good flourishing.

Amen.

"FOR A LONG TIME
I HAVE KEPT SILENT,
I HAVE BEEN QUIET
AND HELD MYSELF BACK.
BUT NOW, LIKE A WOMAN
IN CHILDBIRTH, I CRY
OUT, I GASP AND PANT."
—ISAIAH 42:14

MY FLESH AND
MY HEART MAY FAIL,
BUT GOD IS THE
STRENGTH OF MY
HEART AND MY
PORTION FOREVER.

—PSALM 73:26

that these little gifts of joy and
delight—like bright petals riding
a swift stream—are daily passing
me by, unmarked because I am
too tired to find them.

Refill my heart, O Lord.
Restore my soul.
Revive my mind.
Renew my strength.

Open my eyes to the diamond-
sparklings of your mercies embedded
in each fleeting moment.

Let me live—even these wearying
days—more alive to the constant
movements of your grace.

Amen.

A LITURGY FOR
**A Lonely
Holiday**

WAYNE GARVEY &
DOUGLAS MCKELVEY

O God from whose glad Trinity
all good fellowship flows,
my heart endures a slow,
sad ache across this
holiday season.

While others gather merrily
with family and friends, I quail
at the specter of being alone.
I wish it were not so. But here I am—
somehow arrived at a place in life
where I have no one close with whom
to celebrate. Amidst these festive days
I feel the heightened pangs of isolation.

Yet, Lord, I know this to be true: that you
ever welcome me into your company. You
draw near the broken. After all, are not
these hallowed days set aside to celebrate
your coming into this world to redeem,
restore, and make of us your children,
your heirs—your family?

So sit with me, Lord, as I grieve my
present loneliness. Wrap me in
your welcoming presence.
Relieve this ache. Redeem this
season of looming sadness, and
awaken my heart to the deeper
joys of those bright tidings first
announced to humble shepherds
adrift in their own lonely watches of night.

The prophet proclaimed: “The people
who sat in darkness have seen a great Light!”
And surely that darkness included such
loneliness as mine, a longing that only

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS
ORPHANS; I WILL COME TO
YOU. —JOHN 14:18

you can wholly fill. So by your grace, I will choose again to fix my heart on you, O Light of the World, knowing that though I feel lonely in this moment, I am never alone.

I am yours. You are mine.

And in time this rooted truth will bloom, its joys reaching back across the hardest parts of life to gloriously rewrite the narrative of every lonely hour. I will see one day how even in this ache your Spirit was at work to shape my heart into a nearer likeness to the heart of Christ, who also knew the pain of isolation.

YET I AM ALWAYS WITH
YOU; YOU HOLD ME BY
MY RIGHT HAND.
YOU GUIDE ME WITH
YOUR COUNSEL, AND
AFTERWARD YOU WILL
TAKE ME INTO GLORY.
WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN
BUT YOU? AND EARTH
HAS NOTHING I DESIRE
BESIDES YOU.
—PSALM 73:23–25

With that bright hope as anchor, let me begin to turn my thoughts outward, so that you might send me—now tendered by my own loneliness—to perceive and to meet the needs of others who might also feel estranged, or alone in this season.

And in that turning, remind me again that you are Emmanuel,
God with us!

God with me.

All praise to you, Emmanuel,
most merciful God,
who came to us in flesh,

A LITURGY FOR
**Giving
Your
Children
Bad News**

JANEL DAVIS

O Lord, in a few moments
I have to tell my kids one of the worst things
I hope they will ever hear.

Have mercy on us, O Lord.
I know you love them more than I
could ever love them.

Help me remember that truth
as I watch the pain cross their faces,
and also in the coming months
as I shepherd them through the grief
that is sure to follow.

May this moment of awful revelation
not become a memory that might uproot
their budding faith, but rather one that plants it
deeper within them, turning their young hearts
to you in the midst of their dismay and giving
those gospel seeds the resiliency they need to
flourish for a lifetime, no matter the suffering or
the circumstances they experience in their lives.

Help me not to fall apart as I tell them, Lord.
Help me hold my emotions together so that
I don't scare them, but also let me open enough
of a window into my own sorrow that they
might see that it is okay and good to grieve,
to weep, and to express their feelings.

Sovereign Lord, this news is so awful
my children likely won't even understand
some parts of it. And I'm not sure quite
how to explain it. Grant me wisdom, insight,
and understanding to communicate
just enough that they might comprehend
this heartbreak in an age-appropriate way,
but also such that no horrid,
graphic details would lodge
in their dreams
and imaginations.

I rely on you, Holy Spirit, to be
my counselor, nudging me toward
what to tell and what to hold back.
Let me be sensitive and responsive
to your voice that I might
in this moment become a conduit
of your wisdom and
your love for my children.

There will almost certainly be a loss
of innocence in learning of this news.
My children will begin to understand
hard truths about life and humanity.
Till now I've tried to guard their hearts
from things too dark for them to deal with.
I've tried to show them the flourishing
and the beauty of your good creation.
Now they will also hear of the horrors that

PRAISE BE TO THE GOD
AND FATHER OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER
OF COMPASSION AND THE
GOD OF ALL COMFORT,
WHO COMFORTS US IN
ALL OUR TROUBLES, SO
THAT WE CAN COMFORT
THOSE IN ANY TROUBLE
WITH THE COMFORT
WE OURSELVES RECEIVE
FROM GOD. FOR JUST AS
WE SHARE ABUNDANTLY
IN THE SUFFERINGS OF
CHRIST, SO ALSO OUR
COMFORT ABOUNDS
THROUGH CHRIST.
—2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–5

followed on the heels of the fall.

Lord, may they know that you are still good. May they better see why the news of your coming kingdom is such a great hope. May they begin to learn how you will subvert even this evil, somehow using it for the good of your people and for your glory.

I entrust their innocence to your hands.

YES, MY SOUL, FIND
REST IN GOD; MY HOPE
COMES FROM HIM. TRULY
HE IS MY ROCK AND MY
SALVATION; HE IS MY
FORTRESS, I WILL
NOT BE SHAKEN.
—PSALM 62:5–6

Lord, our great Healer—redeem the trauma this brings to our lives. Let your redemption be active in ways we cannot even imagine. Redeem the shock and the wounds we will feel. And redeem the wreckage in the lives of those affected most directly.

Do not let this trauma lodge for long in our bodies, spirits, or minds, O Lord. Make us resilient. Let our faith become more rooted and fierce in the face of storm and darkness. Give us a grit that would glorify you, using even this experience to make our lives more sheltering for others in their sorrows.

Hold us, heal us, and comfort us, Lord Jesus. We entrust you with all that is good and all that is awful in our lives.

Be near us in the hard conversation
soon to happen. Be our balm and our
guide, our counselor and our shepherd,
in the hours and days and months that follow.

Amen.

PARENT: O Prince of Peace,

SIBLINGS: **Bring peace into our hearts,
and peace into our home.**

For we have made a mess of things.
Tempers have flared. Anger and hurt
pushed love and kindness out of the way.
**Now we find ourselves in need of
the repentance and repair that only your
Spirit can work in and between us.**

Heavenly Father, You sent us your Son,
the Prince of Peace, not only to make a way
from the messes we make back into your loving
arms, but to show us the way to practice giving
and receiving forgiveness with each other.
**Remind us now, how our forgiveness,
asked for and extended, becomes forever
a part of the story of your Kingdom.**

A LITURGY

After a Fight Among Siblings

ELLIE HOLCOMB &
DOUGLAS MCKELVEY