

Words from ... the Late, Late Service

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Introduction

This resource booklet is a compilation of various liturgical moments, rants, readings, writings, prayers, and meditations which have been important to the worship life of the Late, Late Service (LLS) and to the personal growth of its members. While our worship is often informed by the church calendar, the structure of this resource does not take for its outline the common lectionary. Such a program is beyond the scope of this small booklet. Nor do we intend, by its printing, to propose an "evangelistic" strategy. We find that systematised formulae for conversion only prove spiritless, and eventually fruitless. This is not to say, however, that the contents of this resource fail in their very purpose, which is to celebrate the good news. We have found that they are in fact a celebration of Christ in our lives, and it is for this reason that each particular item is included here. We simply offer you these moments as stimuli for your worship planning or for your personal enjoyment.

By its very associations with the LLS this collection is eclectic and diverse. We encourage you to make the items included here your own by editing, expanding, altering, truncating, combining, or "otherwising" them to fit your own particular worship context. Many of them may prove especially moving when used in conjunction with the following musical resources:¹

<i>Music from... the Late Late Service</i>	JUMP 002 (1991)
<i>Music from... the Late Late Service 2</i>	Sticky Music - GUM 20 MC (1992)
<i>Music from... the Late Late Service 3</i>	Sticky Music - GUM 25 MC (1993)

Where a particular track from these resources is recommended as a fitting accompaniment to a liturgical event, it shall be so noted. However, we do wish to encourage people "to begin to develop their own material out of their own context."²

We hope you will enjoy this resource booklet, and we pray that you will use it creatively to enrich your worship.

Blessings and peace in your Christian journey,

The Late Late Service
Glasgow, August 1993

¹*Music from... the Late Late Service* and *Music from... the Late Late Service 2*, are available on cassette tape only. *Music from... the Late Late Service 3* is available on both CD and cassette. Contact Sticky Music, Cree House, 4 Townend Street, Dalry, Ayrshire KA24 4AA Scotland.

²*Music from... the Late Late Service 2*, Sticky Music GUM 20 MC, liner notes.

A Brief Statement of Shared Belief

As members of the Late Late Service Community we identify ourselves as the following:

1) Christian people united around the faith of the historical church, as expressed in its most widely accepted creeds and as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. We believe in God, we follow Jesus, and we trust in the presence and the movement of the Spirit.

2) People committed to looking for and living in the Realm of God (traditionally the "Kingdom") revealed in Jesus Christ: called to love one another and to be a healing community seeking the wholeness and liberation of all people.

3) People seeking to live out and express the following beliefs:

-Each human life is a gift from God and each person has equal worth and value. We are called to take an active stand against any relationships, practices or structures which deny or undermine this belief.

-Human creativity is a gift from God, and a way in which we express God's image in us. We seek to encourage and embrace this gift in our worship and life and to enjoy and challenge contemporary culture in all its diversity.

-The resources of the earth are God's gifts to us, for which we are called to take responsibility and show care.

-We are called to live simply, identify with the poor, and know that all material possessions are gifts from God, to be shared for the common good.

The Late Late Service community is our gift to each other, and to God.

A Call to Worship

(to be used as the music begins)

God is here. His spirit is with us. This is not a performance. This is our worship. This is not a rave or a disco. This is our worship. This is not a special event for young people. This is our worship. We invite each other to use the environment, the visuals, the music, and the words, to stimulate our thoughts and draw our hearts to wonder at the goodness of God. Invite God to meet us as we seek to meet God. This is our worship. God is here. His spirit is with us.

A Christmas Tract (From the Christmas Service, 1992)

There are 2 ways you might find meaning in Christianity.
The first is to see it as a cause, some kind of mission or charity that has a purpose to it. The second is what we're talking about this Christmas. It's the outrageous idea of God becoming a human being. The creator of everything finding a way into flesh and blood. And in doing that, the meaning of all life entered into full humanity.

That's what we're celebrating.

And the meaning of life enters humanity still. The meaning of life desires us. Watches our movements and listens to our hopes. The meaning of life is a lover whose gentle fingers occasionally touch and startle us, asking if we can love back, but never using force on us... waiting to be invited to love.

The meaning of life is love. Something intangible by nature. Something that cannot be possessed, bought, or sold. And at Christmas we celebrate the fact that God, the source of all love and meaning, has so desired humanity that He (or She) has taken the risk of becoming vulnerable to what we might do if His life is left in our hands.

And tonight the end of that story is this: that God, the meaning, desires you and me in a way that one of us would desire our partner. Love and desire are about creative union. About being open and receptive to the other, letting them be fully themselves, working for their pleasure, receiving their gifts to you. And when we're open to being God's partner, we find the mystery of meaning:

that the ordinary moments of life have meaning.

Not a meaning that you could put into words,
just a sense of being right, purposeful.

You and I have this choice. A chance to respond to the touch of our lover and receive this union in our souls ... the centre of who we are.

A choice to live life for the meaning of the moment, not just the thrill, and to turn from anything that promises a thrill and delivers meaninglessness.

God is still in Flesh and Blood. Now God is flesh and blood in partnership and love, and like Mary we must say "Yes" to that partnership and discover the meaning of our own individual (and communal) lives.

And perhaps the most unbelievable thing about Christmas is not the absurd suggestion that the Creator actually became a human, it's that through our own experience we actually have a reason to believe it.

Celebrating the Feast (A Quiet Service)

Theme: This service celebrates the feast of God. Its purpose is to point to the ways in which God lavishes gifts upon us with abundance and grace.

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 55:1, John 2:1-11, Luke 14:12-23.

Opening Music: "Holy Space" (LLS3)

A Prayer of Confession:

The prophet Isaiah wrote:

"Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you that have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?
And labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."
-Isaiah 55:1-2, NRSV

We have been taught that possessions and prosperity go hand in hand.
For the times when we have believed it, forgive us, Lord. **FORGIVE US, LORD.**

While we know we can not earn your blessings, we have been taught that we do not deserve to be blessed.
For the times when we have believed it, forgive us, Lord. **FORGIVE US, LORD.**

We have been taught that your hand is an empty, angry fist.
For the times when we have believed it, forgive us, Lord. **FORGIVE US, LORD.**

We have failed to recognise that our worth comes from the fact that you find us worth loving, you find us worth dying for. Yet, we have been taught to expect little or nothing from you.
For the times when we have believed it, forgive us, Lord. **FORGIVE US, LORD.**

We have, at times, been sold a model of ourselves as perfectly self-reliant, and we have built upon it, shutting out others, and in doing so, we have shut you out as well.
Forgive us, Lord. **FORGIVE US, LORD.**

Draw near to us and reassure us that you are both giver and forgiver. Forgive us for wine watered down, and with a richness that money can not buy, please bless us, in Jesus' name ...

Amen.

A Ritual of Reflection:

[This ritual involves the placement of various items at certain focal points in the worship setting. The following invitation to the these focal points, referred to as stations, explains their purpose sufficiently. However, it should be noted that, along with the items displayed for

tasting, sampling or consideration, certain visual images may strongly enhance the idea of God's generosity. For example, where milk and honey are displayed, a slide image of a mother with an infant might be used to express God's loving nurture of humanity. Similarly, where wine (or grape juice) is displayed, bunches of grapes of various colours might be gathered as well, along with various grains, to accentuate the variety and beauty of God's gifts to us. Where bread is displayed, some flour might be lightly sprinkled to demonstrate the care and work which God puts into the process of blessing us. Finally, the place setting at a dinner table intended for a friend, should be prepared in such a way as to look appealing to an individual personally in need of society, inclusion, love, or any of the many blessings of heaven. Of course, the space around the central table, on which an open Bible and other items of the feast may be displayed, should be adequate to allow people to share this food, and visit afterwards. The idea is to communicate a sense of God's genuine good will and generosity, an appreciation for God's lavishness, while remaining short of promoting various forms of modern gluttony, nevertheless coaxing one or two beads of perspiration from the guardian of your group's coffers. The ritual should allow for about 15-20 minutes for each person to make the rounds. Some quiet, instrumental music, preferably solo acoustic guitar or piano, can greatly enhance the setting of this ritual.]

Invitation to the Feast:

Set up around the room are four different areas, each with different foods. These are to symbolise the richness of the feast of life in God. Each area symbolises a different issue in life, and is there so that we may meditate on these things while sitting at these areas. The wine symbolises the joy, the joy that God pours into our lives. The bread is symbolic of justice, the justice needed in this world. Everything that we have belongs to God, and is there so that we may share it with others. The milk and honey represent the things in our lives that God gives to us which we can not buy. At this place you may wish to think about what these things are in your life. At these three areas, please taste the foods as you would partake of God's gifts. The last area is a place of invitation. Here we may think of another person who we would like to experience God's feast in a greater way, and at this place, you may light a candle for this person. This mediation will last for about 15 minutes, in the course of which you may go to all the areas, or just stay in one place. Let's begin.

A Time of Meditation

A Prayer of Intercession:

We recognise before God that what we own are gifts that we are looking after. He has called us to join in the feast of life and to share this feast with others.

WE PRAY FOR BREAD AND JUSTICE.

We thank you God that our supermarkets are finally stocking a fair trade coffee. That means that the workers who have grown and picked the coffee, and their families benefit directly from the purchase.

We pray that we will refuse a bargain that leaves others without the means of life.
May our world trade not in human lives but so that all may live.

WE PRAY FOR WINE AND ABUNDANCE.

Our God, you who have made an extravagant earth with more seeds than can possibly be fertilised, fruits that fall to the ground heavy with smell and juice, worlds of fertility and forest and growth and colour that no one ever sees,

Help us your people not to be a begrudging people
Help us to enjoy the abundance and share what we have easily. Amen.

"Our God in Heaven" (LLS2)

We Share the Gifts

A Couple of Rants (A Feature of the Celebration Service)

Rant is our word for exhortation. (If the Celebration Service is a bit like a *rave*, then it must be the right place for a *rant*.) The rant is as close as our Celebration Service comes to a sermon. It is usually accompanied by drum track, which by itself can sustain the energy level created by whatever has come before in the service, usually a selection of dance tracks. A solo, up-tempo, hi-hat will suffice. The tempo and choice of percussion sounds can be varied to gradually create additional tension, or release it, depending on the particular text of the rant. For instance, a bass drum alone can be quite menacing, or it can be added to a fast drum loop to reinstate a dance feel and signal the end of the rant.

Here are two rants which have been used in our Celebration Services. (Drum loops not included.)

1. "The possibility people."

Listen, we're talking about a break out.
A break out from the prison of self-repeating fear ...

We're not talking about religion or a moral code, tonight we're talking about liberty for the captives. For you and me.
For people held captive by fear, by ignorance, by prejudice, by paranoia of others.

There are two ways only: Love and Fear.
There are two desires: to protect and build walls, or to liberate into new possibilities.

We are the possibility people.

We are the people God wants to meet and liberate.

To liberate from fear and self-protection in relationships.
To liberate into a new space of possibility and purpose.

That new space is the Realm of God. Present every moment of our lives.
Poised, pregnant with redemption and liberation. Touching every moment that is NOW.
Every moment of the present is a moment of eternal life.
Every time it is NOW is God's time.
It's not religion, it's not church, it's the outpouring of the Spirit into the world.

Invite God into your NOW time.
NOW today, NOW tomorrow.
NOW is the time of the Salvation, NOW is the time of Liberation.
NOW is the time of New Creation, NOW is the moment of the new possibility.

We are the possibility people...

Do not act out of fear.
Do not act out of fear of yourself and the bad that remains in you. Do not run from it.
Give it to God. Perfect love drives out fear.

Do not act out of fear.
Do not act out of fear of others in your daily lives.
They are God's even if they do not know it.
They may twist and turn in the discomfort of themselves, putting the weight of their burden onto you, but they are God's. Your moments with them are possibility moments.
Love them. Resist their evil.
Care enough to confront, but do not act out of fear of them.

Do not act out of fear.
Do not act out of fear of the society around you.
Do not lock your doors and perpetuate the cycle of fear.
Find your vocation and break down the walls that exclude the realm of God from your community.
We are loved.
We are offered new possibilities.
Resist the paranoia, resist the consumerism, resist the racism, fascism, snobbery and escapism.
We are loved.

Do not act out of fear.
Do not act out of fear for the end of the world ...
 hiding away from the complexities of a world Hell-bent on destruction.
We are loved.
The love of the Creator breaks into out NOW moments
 asking us to love the world He made, the world She mothered into being.
Love life. Love the world.
Resist evil, resist destruction, resist exploitation, resist injustice, but do not give up.
There is no God in escapism. God is liberating our interactions with new possibilities.
We are the possibility people.
This is the possibility world.
Create. Love. Intervene.
Receive the Holy Spirit of Healing, of Passion, of Desire, of Liberation.

2. *"God is dead."*

I WANT TO TAKE YOU ON A JOURNEY

IT IS A JOURNEY OF THE IMAGINATION

IF YOU CAN - LEAVE THIS PLACE
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND FOLLOW ME.

WE'RE GOING SOMEWHERE SCARY.

SOMEWHERE DARK, COLD AND THREATENING.
WHERE THE SMELL OF DAMP PRESSES AGAINST YOU
AND DISSOLVES YOUR FEAR INTO A COLD, UNWELCOME SEA OF
ANTICIPATION.

YOU ARE AWARE OF YOUR BODY
AND YOU ARE AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS
BUT YOU CAN'T SEE THEM.

THIS IS A PLACE OF SADNESS,
OF DEEP LONGING WHERE HOPE HAS VANISHED,
AND ALL THAT IS LEFT IS THE DULL, ACHING THROB
OF LOSS AND LONGING.

IT'S TOO FRIGHTENING IN HERE.
IT IS UNBEARABLE TO BE IN A PLACE WHERE
ALL HOPE IS GONE.

YOU THINK BETTER OF IT,
TURN AROUND AND MAKE FOR THE DOOR
THROUGH WHICH YOU CAME IN
BUT BEHIND YOU IT'S DARK.
PITCH BLACK.

YOU PANIC,
SPIN AROUND SEARCHING THE BLACKNESS FOR A PINPRICK OF LIGHT,
A DOOR, A WINDOW, A KEYHOLE
BUT ALL YOU DO IS LOSE YOUR BEARINGS
AND YOU'RE EVEN MORE HOPELESSLY LOST THAN BEFORE.

THIS
MUST
BE
HELL.

YOU BECOME CONSCIOUS OF THE SILENCE.
YOUR EAR HAS BECOME USED TO IT.
AND YOU BECOME AWARE THAT THE SILENCE
IS NOT BECAUSE NOBODY IS THERE...
IT IS A BLEAK, TENSE ATMOSPHERE,
CHARGED BY THE HELPLESS, INEXPRESSIBLE MISERY
OF THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN UP HOPE FOR RELEASE.

THIS
MUST
BE
HELL.

WHERE IS HOPE?

WHERE IS LIGHT?
WHERE IS GOD?

GOD COULD NEVER COME HERE.

GOD LIVES IN LIGHT,
BATHED IN BEAUTY,
EVER RESOURCEFUL, EVER CREATING, EVER LIVING.

GOD DOES NOT BELONG HERE.
GOD COULD NOT EVEN FIND THE DOOR.
GOD IS FAR, FAR, FAR AWAY.

THERE IS ONLY ONE DOOR TO THIS PLACE.
ONLY ONE WAY IN. ONLY ONE STATE TO BE IN.

THAT DOOR, THAT WAY IN,
THAT STATE IS DEATH.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY GOD COULD FIND THIS PLACE
THAT IS IF GOD
WERE TO DIE.

YOU SENSE A CHANGE IN THE ATMOSPHERE
LIKE AN IN-DRAWING OF BREATH AT SOMETHING
UNFORESEEN AND UNPREDICTABLE HAPPENING...
THERE IS A MIXTURE OF HORROR, CONFUSION AND ANTICIPATION

GOD IS DEAD

THEY ARE SAYING GOD IS DEAD.

THE CHRIST, THE GOD, THE SOURCE, THE MAKER, THE CREATIVE
EVERLASTING LIGHT OF THE WORLD ... IS DEAD.

HE IS COMING,
COMING INTO OUR DARKNESS,
COMING INTO OUR DESPAIR,
INVADING OUR INEXPRESSIBLE HOPELESSNESS -
COMING TO TERRORISE DEATH
WITH HIS INEXHAUSTIBLE, ETERNAL LIFE.

DO NOT RUN AWAY!
DO NOT HIDE!
DO NOT CLING TO THE FAMILIARITY OF DESPAIR, BECAUSE IT IS ALL YOU
KNOW.
THERE IS A DISTANT LIGHT,
GROWING BRIGHTER.

THERE IS A STRONG MAN,
FIGHTING OFF THE JAILER OF DEATH.
THERE IS A POWER TOUCHING AND TRANSFORMING THE LAST GREAT
ENEMY.

WELCOME HIM.
ASK HIM TO TOUCH YOU.
ASK HIM TO LIGHT THE DARKNESS AROUND YOU.
THERE IS A HOPE IN HELL.
THERE IS A RESURRECTION...
THERE IS A NOISE IN THE DISTANCE.
IT IS THE SOUND OF A GIANT STONE BEING ROLLED ASIDE...
THERE IS LIGHT FLOODING IN.
THERE ARE ANGEL VOICES SINGING.
THERE IS GREEN GRASS,
WARMTH, SUNLIGHT...
AN ENDLESS DAY IS STARTING...

AND YOU ARE FREE...
AND YOU ARE LIVING...
AND YOU ARE RESURRECTED...
AND DEATH HAS LOST ITS VICTORY
AND DEATH HAS LOST ITS POWER
AND DEATH HAS LOST ITS DOMINION.

Pentecost TV Scroll

(This was presented as a title-type scrolling text on video in the same service as "*The Possibility People*". It is best read in silence between musical tracks.)

Until it breathes in living matter the spirit of God
is silent

yet there is no life that is unsupported by the breath
of the Creator

The death of Jesus re-formed the commitment of God
to the creation
Tonight we celebrate PENTECOST

It is the day on which the Holy Spirit of God
was released to us

The Holy Spirit is the invisible spirit of Jesus

The Holy Spirit brings to us the secrets
and intentions of the Realm of God

The Holy Spirit meets us at the source of our being

The Holy spirit is inviting us into a relationship

It is the most profound experience of love
and passion

The relationship is that of God - the giver of life,
and Jesus the restorer of life to its intended way

The Holy Spirit takes our hearts to the Heart of God

From our source we are invited to be renewed:
to re-see the world through the eyes of the loving God.
We are invited into a realm of new possibilities

It is at the centre of who we are: our WILL that we
must unite with the restoring spirit of Jesus

It is in the tension of split second moments that the
true intention of our will becomes life

Then we opt from impulse into choices of life
and death

Then we behave in one of two ways:

out of love
or
out of fear.

unique (A Quieter Moment from the Celebration Service)

There are 5 billion people on the face of the globe

There are 5 billion people on the face of the globe

There are 5 billion people on the face of the globe
but only one person like you.

You are born unique
No one ever looked like you
No one's hair, eyes, mouth or body was just like yours
No one's imagination, voice, laugh and taste was just like yours

Sometimes the world makes you scared of your uniqueness and hide it, preferring to copy others for your security.
But like the coils of DNA that contain the code of your individuality
YOU are waiting to unravel the only thing ever to appear on earth with your characteristics.

You know that
You feel that
You need that to be recognised

Who else knows that?
Who else feels that?

God knows
God only knows

YOU live. YOU are valuable

This is the truth
This is the truth contained in God
God is where you find that truth
That meaning.

Your meaning, your uniqueness unwraps in God and unfolds into the world.

When the world processes you it is death.

When God is your source it is life and you bring God into the world.

This is the truth:
You need to live in God and God in you.

Door Creed

INTRODUCTION BY LEADER:

Sometimes we're led to believe that becoming a Christian will make life easier.

But as we learn more about Jesus we find that there are new possibilities in old situations. And where we might previously have made an easy, obvious choice, following the rules of our upbringing, we become aware of new options in old situations.

And we find that second option has the word "truth" written all over it.

But the word "truth" is hard to take in a culture numbed by the enjoying of pleasures based on the misery of others. The truth might be uncomfortable.

And as we go on facing daily decisions we might become aware that any given situation has a choice of doors to go through. The obvious, familiar one, and the new one you're vaguely aware of.

That second door is smaller and harder to find than the familiar big door of consumerism and self-satisfaction.

The second door is not directly in front of us - it is in semi-darkness and may be covered in cobwebs until we turn around and find it.

But as we reach out for the second door we find that the word "truth" is suddenly a lot more attractive. We find that the decision to reach for the other door has somehow given us a sense of being "bigger".

If we go through that door, and take the hard option, we find that we were wrong about the fear of the small, restricting room of the truth ... we find the biggest surprise that our hearts can contain ... because on the other side of the small, dimly lit door is a wide open space. And that wide open space is freedom ... it is the Realm of God.

And once we've been through that door we get used to its feeling, and in more and more situations we begin to see the second, smaller door, and we realise that the big door that we're used to going through actually led to a small room ... a kind of prison.

And we find that the things that we thought when we heard that being a Christian would make life easier was just the same kind of escapism that our consumer generation is always selling us.

But now that we're learning to find the small door, we know the price of freedom, and we know the way of Jesus, and we can see the Kingdom of God.

LEADER:

We will not pray for creature comforts or little signs of God's existence:

ALL: WE WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE DOOR MARKED "DANGER".

We will not try make others satisfy our needs or wants:

WE WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE DOOR MARKED "LOVE".

We will not exploit our neighbours for a better lifestyle:

WE WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE DOOR MARKED "JUSTICE".

We will not let others fight wars of greed in our name:

WE WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE DOOR MARKED "PEACE".

We will not pursue careers just for the sake of money:

WE WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE DOOR MARKED "SACRIFICE".

We will not ignore the consequences of siding with the outcast:

WE WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE DOOR MARKED "PAIN".

We will not wait for voices or symbols from heaven:

WE WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE DOOR MARKED "FAITH".

WE WILL GO THROUGH THESE DOORS IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT, KNOWING THAT JESUS HAS GONE THROUGH THEM ALL FIRST.

A Prayer of Confession

LEADER: Church, listen ...

you have slaughtered the innocent in the pursuit of power,

ALL: WE ARE THE CHURCH. WE CONFESS OUR SIN.

you have held on to wealth when people around you were in great need,

WE ARE THE CHURCH. WE CONFESS OUR SIN.

you have failed to speak out in situations of injustice and oppression,

WE ARE THE CHURCH. WE CONFESS OUR SIN.

you have identified itself with the powerful and wealthy, and not the poor of Jesus,

WE ARE THE CHURCH. WE CONFESS OUR SIN.

you have perpetuated an image of God that is white, male, and middle-class,

WE ARE THE CHURCH. WE CONFESS OUR SIN.

you have allowed the differences between Christian denominations to outweigh that which
you have in common.

WE ARE THE CHURCH. WE CONFESS OUR SIN.

You are the church of:

Francis of Assisi, who called the church back to serving the poor,

HELP US TO WALK IN THIS WAY.

Elizabeth Fry, who worked to improve conditions in prison,

HELP US TO WALK IN THIS WAY.

William Wilberforce, who fought for the abolition of slavery,

HELP US TO WALK IN THIS WAY.

Desmond Tutu, who joins the voice of the church to the struggle of the oppressed black
community,

HELP US TO WALK IN THIS WAY.

Brother Roger of Taizé, who calls the churches to express their true family unity,

HELP US TO WALK IN THIS WAY.

Mother Teresa, who calls the church back to serving the poor.

HELP US TO WALK IN THIS WAY. AMEN.

A Prayer for Harvest: "God, What Are We Like?"

LEADER: God, what are we like?
None of us over 2 metres tall, but each the centre of our own universe.
How easy it is to be 'me'-centred. How easy it is to get so busy,
or so fooled by our part in "progress" that we don't mind who or what pays the price.

ALL: GOD, OUR CREATOR, SUSTAINER, AND DESTINY, TEACH US TO LIVE IN HARMONY.

LEADER: God, what are we like?
Living in a country so rich we can afford the luxuries of fast foods and leisure time.
And when the poorest in the world start attacking their resources,
in order to get rich quick and be like us, do we offer to sacrifice for a fairer world?.

ALL: GOD, OUR CREATOR, SUSTAINER, AND DESTINY, TEACH US TO LIVE IN HARMONY.

LEADER: God, what are we like?
Part of a self-satisfied church that ecologists point to and say,
"You are as much to blame as any."
Before we preach back in words that are easy to say, help us to say, "Yes, we know",
and to begin a path of repentance and love.

ALL: GOD, OUR CREATOR, SUSTAINER, AND DESTINY, TEACH US TO LIVE IN HARMONY.

LEADER: God, what are we like?
Celebrating Harvest in a world so overflowing with people that, for most,
harvest is never enough.
God, this is what we are like:
we are so overwhelmingly fortunate, blessed, and loved,
that we want to be like Jesus - a child of yours,
freed from greed, and, starting with ourselves,
calling the world to justice, to generosity, and to peace.

ALL: GOD, OUR CREATOR, SUSTAINER, AND DESTINY, TEACH US TO LIVE IN HARMONY.

A Prayer: "Lead Us Not Into Temptation"

LEADER: Jesus, you've called us to be disciples, you've called us to be followers of you.

There is no trial or pain that we can go through that is not known by you, that has not been felt by your flesh and blood.

The same spirit that leads us to God led you into the wilderness.

The same spirit that showed you the secret of love, freedom, wisdom, power and healing speaks to us and calls us to true faith.

Our God, when we hear you asking us to be holy and we're tempted to think of ourselves as better than others, Lord ...

PEOPLE: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

LEADER: When we hear you call us to be peacemakers and we're tempted to just avoid confrontation, Lord ...

PEOPLE: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

LEADER: When you call us to love one another and we're tempted to love only those we like, Lord ...

PEOPLE: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

LEADER: When you call us to care for the poor and the outcast and we're tempted to token acts of charity, Lord ...

PEOPLE: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

LEADER: When you call us to depend on you and we're tempted to depend on the things we say that you gave us, Lord ...

PEOPLE: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

LEADER: And when you ask us to search for you as our first love and we're tempted to look for experiences of God or little signs that you exist, Lord ...

PEOPLE: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

LEADER: ... and deliver us from evil. For your kingdom is freedom and we long to be free as Jesus leads us to you. Amen.

A Prayer of Intercession: "Heaven Help Us"

This prayer may be accompanied by "Heaven Help Us" (LLS1), in which case the response of the **PEOPLE** is a sung refrain.

PEOPLE: HEAVEN HELP US... HEAR US, JESUS.

LEADER: God, there are dreams and there are nightmares. We dream of peace, equality and justice, but behind many doors people are exploited, and behind many eyes tears swell to burst whatever dams might contain them ...

PEOPLE: HEAVEN HELP US... HEAR US, JESUS.

LEADER: Lord, there are fields to harvest and there are fields of blood. If the blood of one cries out to you from the ground, can your ears tolerate the cries of millions from the killing fields of our time: in Baghdad, in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and South Africa, East Timor and West Texas ...

PEOPLE: HEAVEN HELP US... HEAR US, JESUS.

LEADER: God, we long to reach the top of the ladder. But our climb is as often frustrated by the church as it is by the world. The truths we seek are obscured by the pride, the fear, the closed-mindedness, and the cold-heartedness of others and of ourselves...

PEOPLE: HEAVEN HELP US... HEAR US, JESUS.

LEADER: Lord, we seek treasure that lasts, we seek integrity, authenticity, healing and hope, for ourselves, for our loved ones and for our community, for the church and for the world. We know there is power in heaven to help us.

The Prophet's Speech (From "The Garden to the City")

I saw a vision - it was last Thursday at eleven o'clock in the morning,

I was standing on the Necropolis, looking down over the city
and the cold, blue autumn sky broke open over my head
and the Spirit of God breathed on my eyes and my eyes were opened:

I saw Glasgow, the holy city, coming down out of heaven
shining like a rare jewel, sparkling like clear water in the eye of the sun
and all the sickness was gone from the city
and there were no more suburbs and schemes,
no difference between Bearsden and Drumchapel.

I saw the Clyde running with the water of life,
as bright as crystal,
as clear as glass
the children of Glasgow swimming in it

And the Spirit showed me the tree of life
growing on Glasgow Green

I looked out and there were no more homeless people
there were no women working the streets
there were no more junkies up the closes
HIV and AIDS were things of the past
there were no more racist attacks
no more attacks on gay people
no more rapists
no more stabbings
no more Protestants and Catholics
no more IRA graffiti, no more Orange marches
because there was no more hate
and I saw women walking safe at nights
and the men were full of passion and gentleness
and none of the children were ever abused
because the people's sex was full of justice and joy.

I saw an old woman throw back her head
and laugh like a young girl
and when the sky closed back her laughter rang in my head
for days and days
and would not go away.

This is what I saw, looking over the Gallowgate,
Looking up from the city of death
and I knew then that there would be a day of resurrection
and I believe that there will be a day of resurrection.

"Do Not Judge and You Will Not Be Judged"

(Arklight is a relatively new Christian festival of the arts held in Avoca, Co. Wicklow, Ireland. In 1992, the LLS was invited to lead two worship services, as well as several workshops. In

preparing the worship services, we followed the festival's theme that year, 'Shades of Grey'. This brief talk was given at the second service, at which "Love One Another" (LLS3) made its Irish debut.)

"When Jesus spoke like this, as so often in the Sermon on the Mount, He was using words and ideas which were quite familiar to the highest thoughts of the Jews. Many a time the Rabbis warned people against judging others. 'He who judges his neighbour favourably', they said, 'will be judged favourably by God.' They laid it down that there were six great works which brought a man credit in this world and profit in the world to come - study, visiting the sick, hospitality, devotion in prayer, the education of children in the Law, *and thinking the best of other people*. The Jews, too, knew that kindness in judgement is nothing less than a sacred duty."³ William Barclay in *The Gospel of Matthew*.

At first sight this seems like a straightforward enough command. Then, as you begin to think about it, some questions leap out:

1) How can we live without making judgements? Does this mean you can't judge between right and wrong? When you say, "I really feel that going out dancing is a good thing", that is a judgement, and in a sense you are saying that all those who feel differently are wrong. Or if you say, "Racism is wrong", in a sense you are passing a judgement on anyone acting in a racist way.

2) Didn't Jesus make judgements? For example, when he said, "You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery'. But I tell you, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has committed adultery with her already in his heart." In a sense, Jesus was actually expanding the realm of judgement and making it stricter.

Many of us have spent a lot of time wrestling with these issues without coming to any fixed conclusion, except that they do seem to go right to the heart of putting faith into practice.

One way of dealing with these dilemmas is this:

Jesus was addressing a society where there was a strict, religious hierarchy. People were judged on their obedience to a very large number of laws and regulations. The Pharisees were on many levels the most pious, and therefore, the most respected group in this society, because they were among the strictest adherents to the Law. They were very highly regarded as they were also considered to have helped pull the Jewish faith out of the doldrums by helping to give people exact regulations to follow so that they did not disobey the Law.

Now we all know that Jesus was highly critical of the Pharisees. One of the things He was saying here was, "Do not base your opinion of who is good and bad on judgements about externals. The Pharisees may be on top of this pecking order here in Israel, but under the new order of things I am telling you about, we know that God looks at the inner person. So how do you know who's really good and bad? The Pharisees may be more lustful, less just, and less charitable than anyone else!"

So Jesus was proposing a faith which would be externally suspicious of hierarchy and religious leaders, because external signs don't tell you the whole story. And the other side of this coin

³William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*. (Italics ours.)

is that He opened up the possibility that everyone, no matter how externally bad, was worthy in God's sight.

He went further, because He implied that people who think that they are good are actually *less* likely to be good than those who think very little of themselves. This is why He said, "As you judge, so you will be judged, and the measure you deal out to others will be dealt out to yourselves."

So Jesus was *not* saying, "Don't make judgements about the world, or have a view of what's right and wrong."

He *was* saying, "Don't think that God only loves the people you think are good."

"Don't think that you are good because you adhere to your own standards."

"Don't base your faith on religious externals - let God be the judge."

Finally, another quote from William Barclay, "We have quite enough to do to rectify our own lives, without seeking censoriously to rectify the lives of others. We would do well to concentrate on our own faults, and to leave the faults of others to God."⁴

⁴Ibid.

Greenbelt 1992: "Journeys of the Heart"

Jesus' journey from baptism through temptation provided the central text for each of four morning worship services. They were: the baptism of Jesus, the leading by the Spirit into the wilderness, the temptation by Satan, and the ministry by the angels.

The first service looked at Jesus' baptism and our own, and focused on images of water in scripture (Jesus at the Jordan, the woman who wept at his feet, his washing the feet of the disciples). The central movement of the service, after the gospel readings, included a brief talk on repentance, and a ritual to remember our baptisms, for which basins on stands were provided. People were invited to visit these basins, to touch the water, and to wash if they felt moved to do so. A prayer began the ritual, which was accompanied by "Wash Me Clean" (LLS1).

Repentance

Some talk of repentance in a way that is like the drawing of a sword from its scabbard. They brandish the Word almost as if it were a cold, steel blade ready to inflict its damage. For them, repentance is the final act, like the sword which has met its target. The work of repentance is a deadly blow, chopping something off in order to make things right. Jesus spoke of and lived a life of repentance contrary to that narrow understanding. He, the Son of God, was baptised by an apparent mad man, washed the feet of his followers, and treasured the adoration of an outcast. For Jesus, repentance meant turning from the interests of his self, and turning toward the interest of his Father and others. For Jesus, repentance was a process of continually being open to choices between narrow gratification or the greater good. For Jesus, repentance was not something which had to be done when something went wrong. For Jesus, repentance was an active, life-giving process at the very heart of all his relationships.

How very different this repentance of Jesus from our narrow understanding. Our understanding sees its scope as no more than a means to make things right. Like the blade used to cut away the infected part without dealing with the infection. Jesus's understanding is about finding new life, not just cutting off old infections. It should be our prayer that our understanding of repentance will be transformed by the power of Christ's life, that instead of using the Word and fearing the consequences, like the result of some deadly weapon, we come to think of and treasure its creative potential.

A Prayer for Remembering Baptism

Living God,

A woman's tears drew from the well of her heart's grief,
But in touching the feet of Jesus,
they touched your heart.

And the waters Jesus used as he served his disciples
Washed away (his) lofty position
and pledged to us that we are one.

Awesome God,

Before there was even light in creation,
Your Spirit moved upon the waters.

Now, we take the waters upon us,
and ask that again your Spirit be here.

Amen.

The second service examined Jesus' journey into the wilderness. It focused on the need for quiet, open space, for time away from distraction. The service included a meditation, a journey into the wilderness, which was accompanied by a series of long chords (the Late Late's special, non-intrusive, slow-changing background music), and followed by "Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled" (LLS2). A brief talk ("**Into the Desert**") and a prayer concluded the service.

A Meditation: "Journey Into the Wilderness"

- I -

Meditation has often been considered a journey, a journey made by seeking calmness, and through that calmness, better awareness of more subtle movements of the mind and heart.

Most spiritual traditions use some form of contemplative technique. This prayer journey is a reflection and a way of imaginative encounter. We are not emptying ourselves; we're just closing off other distractions as a discipline of the mind.

In this exercise tranquillity is not the ultimate goal. Relaxation may be one of the benefits, but in the end, the goal involves taking a different, non-self-centred perspective.

We would like to help guide your thoughts, so that you can make your own journey, and perhaps take a new perspective on some of the paths travelled.

Whether you participate or not is up to you. If you want to opt out, that's okay ... maybe you can just use the time as quiet time.

- II -

If everyone could find their own space now ... you might want to lie down, or (at least) sit in a relaxed, comfortable position, as this will last around fifteen minutes.

In this time, there *will* be noises around you ... just let them move around you. Don't worry if you need to cough, or shift your position ... just be at ease.

If you've found your space now, we'll begin.

Become quiet now, shut your eyes, and try to hear your own breathing.

We're going to think through relaxing our bodies now... do you think your body's relaxed?

Think about its surface ... which parts are touching the ground, and which aren't ?

Try this: tense every muscle up as tightly as you can ... including your face. Tense, tense, tense ... Now gently let it go. Relax it. Let it drop away, slowly, but let it go.

Try that once more ... tense up, tighten everything in your body ... clench ... and slowly, gradually, relax. Relax. Let everything go.

Think your way through your body, now, think about how relaxed each part can be. Start with your toes, your feet ...

Move through the muscles on up your legs ... they're completely loose now ... hardly part of you at all any more.

Now leave your legs behind ...

Go to your fingers, on up to your wrists, moving up your arms to your elbows ... your shoulders

...

Think about your neck ... your head ... your face: how relaxed can it be? Let the muscles just slip away ...

- III -

Keeping your eyes closed, think about the space around you now. There are people close by, but for each of you there's a space ... a bubble around you, an area where only you are.

In your mind, let the space around you spread out ... let it get bigger until you can't reach and touch its edges anymore. You are the only one in it. Your breath may be the only sound.

Let your space open out some more, open up to the sky. The sky is clear, the day is warming. Feel the sun on your face. Now the horizon is far away from you. Become conscious of the amount of space in this wilderness.

This is not a place like the one you have come from. There are no walls. There is only space. There are no timetables, no meetings to get to, nothing to prepare. There is only the warmth of the day. There are no streets, no traffic ... there is only you, and the open sky. Feel just a bit of a breeze. Be aware of the earth below you, holding you up. What does it feel like? Is it grassy, or made of rock? Feel its texture.

Know the openness around. Look towards the horizon. Note the shape of the landscape. See what grows here.

- IV -

Now, just for now, there *is* no time. There is *all* time. There is nowhere you have to be, nothing you should have had done yesterday. There is nothing that needs tidying or putting away. Everything is in order in this open space ... a clear, easy space, spread out ... open upwards.

In that other place, the place we have come from, there are things we have meant to do, always reminding ourselves of, but forgotten in the busy-ness of the days. In that other place, somewhere half buried in the bustle, there is a person you mean to care for. There is something you mean to put in order, if you could just take the time to sit down and really think it through.

In this openness, in the now, when your face is gently touched by the sun, there is all time, there is all space. Think what it would be like, to bring just one of those thoughts, those half-buried concerns here, where there is nothing to hold you in, when there is nothing to call you away.

Just enjoy being able to think about that, without the pressures of normal life. Enjoy the new perspective.

- V -

Now somewhere, where you can just see them, there is another person out here. You can't quite tell if he has seen you yet. He seems to be gazing out at the horizon. Don't worry about him ... you are still in the warmth. He is too, I guess ... the breeze is soft.

In time, maybe you can go over and meet him. You may not recognise him, but he doesn't seem threatening.

He has seen you. He knows you're out there like him, enjoying the peace and the life.

Join him now. Take a place nearby. Like you, he has left behind another place. He has come away from people who ask questions and make demands. He has done the same as you. He has come away, because he could not think clearly when there were sounds calling, when there were things before his eyes that needed to be done. He needed time to escape as well. He needed to be away, in the quiet, in the clear, to think, and not think, and look into himself, and look out to the horizon. Share a bit of your experience with him ... from your life, from your other place ... what did you bring?

Sit with him in silence a while. It is good to know that others come out here too, to find what they need.

Now take your leave of him ... wish him well with his thoughts.

- VI -

The sun has moved in the sky, and you will need to go soon. It's okay because you know you can come back, if your life in that other place, in the place you have come from, becomes too bounded. You know this open place, and you can come again.

Now you can begin to become aware again that the earth is under you, holding you up. Wherever you are, it will still do that.

And wherever you are, there is always a space that is yours ... even in your busy life, there is a space your body occupies where nothing else can be at the same time. It is your space. It is a little piece of what you had under the open sky ...

Now, even when there are others close by, there is your body in your space. You can still hear your breathing. It never stopped.

Think about your body now again, about your breathing. Feel the movement of your lungs. Feel the earth holding you up. Which parts of you are against it? Your legs, part of your body, your head ... find your hands again ... slowly move your fingers. Very soon, we're going to be returning to the place we started from on this journey. Keep your eyes closed, but remember what it looked like. Prepare your mind to return to that place.

You are among many others, and yet still in a space all your own.
When you are ready, open your eyes again ...

Into the Desert

"Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."
- Matthew 4:1

"The LORD says about his people, 'I am going to lure her and lead her out into the wilderness and speak to her heart.'"
- Hosea 2:16

"Jesus says, 'When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.'"
- Matthew 6:6

Not every desert in our lives is one we are led into by God, and not all time we spend wandering in the wilderness is time given to God. But God does lead his people into the desert, not to punish them, but as an act of love.

Hosea tells us that God "lures" his people, God "woos" us away from a thousand other things that are making a claim on us, and leads us jealously to a place in which we can be alone with God our Lover.

The desert is not a place of escape. If the desert we are in is a place of trouble in our lives then it is obviously not so. Even if we choose to spend time away in the desert it is not to escape, just as the monastery is not an escape from the world.

The wise monk, Thomas Merton, said that we must only leave the world to learn to love it more. We must only leave behind needy people in order to become more committed to serving them. We must only embrace celibacy in order to deepen our love for men and women and ourselves. We must only vow poverty as a way of learning to see true value in the world. We must only "waste time" with God as a way of discovering what the time of our lives is for.

The desert is not a place for self-hatred or masochism. The Holy Spirit leads us into the desert to speak to our hearts. To go into the desert is to go on a journey of the heart.

Closing Prayer

LEADER: Let the Holy Spirit come.

**ALL: LEAD US TO THE WILDERNESS,
TAKE US OUT OF TIME,
GUIDE US INTO UNCLENCHED MOMENTS,
OPEN US TO CALM.**

LEADER: When we're overwhelmed by the confusion of world events and start to despair,
when we hear so many calls and don't know which to answer,
when we see so many things that need doing and don't know where to begin,
let the Holy Spirit come.

**ALL: LEAD US TO THE WILDERNESS,
TAKE US OUT OF TIME,
GUIDE US INTO UNCLENCHED MOMENTS,
OPEN US TO CALM.**

LEADER: When we squeeze ourselves into others' expectations, or them into ours,
when we lose sight of what we have to offer because of all the world
demands, let the Holy Spirit come.

**ALL: LEAD US TO THE WILDERNESS,
TAKE US OUT OF TIME,
GUIDE US INTO UNCLENCHED MOMENTS,
OPEN US TO CALM.**

LEADER: When we make promises to fit you into our time, forgetting that you are beyond
all time,
when we need it, Lord, so much that we can't even ask,
let the holy spirit come.

**ALL: LEAD US TO THE WILDERNESS,
TAKE US OUT OF TIME,
GUIDE US INTO UNCLENCHED MOMENTS,
OPEN US TO CALM.**

Greenbelt 1993: "Field of Dreams"

A Prayer of Approach

Dear God, you are the God of truth. You are the God of covenants.

We are a people who do not belong, a people in search of a new land,
a people in search of place.

As you promised the land of Canaan to Jacob, You have promised us a homeland,

a kingdom, a place where our dreams will be fulfilled,
a field containing the treasure of our truest selves.

We gather here in your name. We welcome you, and we trust you to welcome us.

In gratitude, we trust in you to fulfil your promises.

Be with us in this time of worship, so that we may humbly offer our praise, and know your loving and comforting presence, in Jesus' name ... Amen.

A Meditation: "I Am Your God"

Concentrate on the feel of the surface of the ground under your body ... the ground supporting you and holding you up, pressing up from underneath you. Feel its touch under your feet, your legs, your back, your head. Then think of your whole body supported by the ground.

Then imagine that you are looking up to the roof of this tent. And you know that beyond the roof is the sky, bright blue for a new day (or grey ...).

And then imagine that you are looking down on your body. What does it look like from above? Imagine its size and its surface. Then begin to move upwards, seeing your body from a greater distance. Move higher and higher. Remember your body within this tent but move upwards so that the tent looks smaller, and you begin to see more of the site as if you were ascending in an aeroplane, and then more of the countryside, and the farms spread out below, and you can just make out the roofs of the villages. Climb higher and higher, but without forgetting your body and its place.

And then imagine more and more of the earth's surface lit up by the light of the sun and the moon. Its surface is rough and pitted and surrounded by a coloured aura. You are reaching the stars, and you are surrounded by the planets and galaxies and shifting patterns of light, and the light is strangely close and far away at the same time. But you have not forgotten your body left thousands of light years away on the surface of the earth gently spinning out its time.

And then imagine moving back through the solar system so that you are descending and getting closer to the earth's surface again, as if it is coming up to meet you ... the round earth, the outline of the continents, the island of Britain and England and the tents of Greenbelt, the focus becoming more and more detailed. You see more clearly the body that you left behind.

Imagine that this is a journey between two realms ... and it is a journey that God is taking between earth and heaven, crossing the distance, as if there is a ladder with its tip out of sight. And God is reaching down from the cosmos by this ladder. And the foot of the ladder is at your feet. Your body is the place where heaven and earth are meeting. You are the place in between. You are small and located on the ground, but you see things beyond your reach. And in this place God comes to you.

Think again of the sensations in your body as it rests on the ground and imagine that this body is touched by God. It is caressed by the angels from heaven. In this body, heaven and earth can meet. And blessing and love and promises are poured out on to it.

Now, imagine that God speaks to you and says,

"I am your God.

I am the God of your father and your mother, and of their fathers and mothers. I am your God.

I am the God of this earth, its matter and substance. I am your God.

I am the God of Jesus Christ, who came from infinity to humanity. I am your God.

I am the God of this place, these poles and canvas, this space. I am your God.

This is a holy and blessed place, because I am here.

I will bless you and protect you. I will never leave you. Wherever you go, I will be with you. Each space that you live in, I will live in. And I will bless you ..."