



NEW
VISIONS
NEW PSALMS

In July of 2020, amid the isolation of the Coronavirus pandemic, the people of New Visions Community United Methodist Church undertook a study of the Psalms. Listening to the voices of those ancient songs, our people were invited to try their hand at creating some psalms for our own day. The psalms that follow are the words and visions that came from that inspiration.

THE VOICE, A Psalm

Bill Hunter

How long, Lord?
How long, Lord, must I suffer from this ugly curse?
How long until I will be free?
How long must it go on?
How long, Lord?

As long as I can remember it has been there.
As long as I can remember I have had to deal with it.
It is as if I was born with it.
It is as if it is a basic part of my being.

How long, Lord?
How long, Lord, must I suffer from this ugly curse?

Yet, Lord, I know this curse does not come from you.
Still, I can't rid myself of it.
No matter how hard I try; no matter what I do; the ugly
curse raises its ugly voice.
It is always there, lurking in the shadows.

Should a non-white person walk, jog, bike, drive by, it raises its
ugly voice.
From deep inside of me, it screams, **"WHAT ARE THEY DOING
HERE?!"**

How long, Lord?
How long, Lord, must I suffer from this ugly curse?

This is a public street, a public sidewalk. Why shouldn't they be
here?
Yet, there the ugly voice is, screaming from deep inside of me,
"THEY DON'T BELONG HERE!"

Why, Lord? This is not what I was taught by my family?
This is not what I was taught by my Sunday school
teachers or my pastors.
Where did it come from? Why can't I rid myself of this
ugly curse? It is contrary to everything I believe.

How long, Lord.
How long, Lord, must I suffer from this ugly curse?

Every time it raises its ugly voice, I scream, **"OUT! YOU
ARE NOT WHO I AM! OUT! OUT! OUT!**
And, yet, there it is. No matter what I do or say- there it
is, raising its ugly voice.
Every time a non-white person saunters by- just mind-
ing their own business- there it is.
From deep inside of me, that ugly voice screams, **"THEY
SHOULD NOT BE HERE!"**

How long, Lord?
How long, Lord, must I suffer this ugly curse?
How long until I will be free?
How long must it go on?
How long, Lord?

Whether I like it or not-there it is.
Whether I like it or not, I have no power to stop its
scream.

Lord, I accept the truth.
Lord, I do not like it, but I accept the truth-at the core of my be-
ing, I am a racist.
Whether I like it or not, it is part of who I am. I am a racist
All I can do is accept the fact.

Yet, Lord, I know this curse does not come from you.
This ugly curse can raises its ugly voice all it wants, yet, I know it
is not **YOUR VOICE**.
For, also, from down deep inside me, I know another truth.

You do not take the ugly voice away but you give me
another voice.
A voice to say **"NO!"** and to act on this **"NO!"**
I have the power to say **"NO"** to what I know is wrong.

I have the power **TO BE** the person I have always said **I
AM**.
I have the power **TO BE** the person **WHO WELCOMES ALL**
who pass my way.

I can't rid myself of the ugly curse or silence its ugly
voice.
But, I can say **"NO!"** and **ACT THE OPPOSITE** of what it
screams.

I have the power to say **"YES!" TO ALL** who pass my
way.
I have the power to **STAND UP**

And one day, Lord, enough people will **LISTEN** to **YOUR VOICE**
from deep inside their being.
And one day, Lord, enough people will **ACT** on **YOUR VOICE** saying,
"NO!" to the ugly voice.
And one day, Lord, enough people will say **"YES!"** to all who pass
their way.
And one day, Lord, enough people will **STAND UP TO ANYONE
WHO DENIES THE TRUTH THAT ALL MEANS ALL!**

And, then, then, Lord, then, the day will come when
children all over the world will be born who no longer
are cursed by this ugly voice that non-white people are
somehow less.

For, when that day comes the children will not only
HEAR YOUR VOICE of **"YES!"** to all,
they will **LIVE** it, too.

And, then, **YOUR VOICE** will call out the next ugly curse.
And it will raise its ugly voice.
And **WHOSE VOICE** will the people **LISTEN TO?**

Jane Elizabeth Brakhage

A Psalm, a lament

Lord of the Universe, Lady of Light;

I call to you from this pit of darkness – Help me! Please help me!

The way before me is treacherous and unclear. I don't know how to go on any farther.

I remember the days of feeling your presence near me. They seem so far away right now.

I know in my head that you are still near even though my heart can't feel you.

I know your presence, like your love, is always near me. You are never far from me.

Only my ability to sense you is dimmed.

How do I go on? How do I move from this darkness back into the light?

How do I get to the place where I can feel you near me again?

How do I go on when I do not know the way?

I stand in the darkness, alone and not alone.

I wait for some light.

And then I feel it, a sense of hope. It is just a flicker, but it is enough.

I know I can go on once again. The way is still before me and you are near.

Jane Elizabeth Brakhage

Psalm 2

Waiting.

I am waiting.

I feel alone in my heart, but know you are near in my head. I just can't feel your presence. Life goes on around me. I feel so separated from everything and everyone. I feel like I am standing still amidst a flurry of activity, isolated in a void that is empty.

Yet will I praise you. For you are amazing. Awesome. The Source of all.

I have been in this place before and know now that I will not be here forever. So, I wait to feel you near me again. I yearn for your presence even while knowing you are already here. This knowledge keeps me going. I have not lost all hope. I can still go on.

Yet will I praise you. For you are faithful. Constant. The Lord and Lady of Life.

This void is a familiar place, but I am no longer comfortable here. There is a lesson for me to learn in order for me to move back into life. So, I wait expectantly. Knowing that what I need to learn will be revealed to me in time.

I am waiting.

Waiting.

Psalm 3

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know that I am.

I am still on the outside, waiting. A storm of emotions rages inside me – pain, yearning, impatience, anger. I want this darkness to go away! I want to return to the place where I can feel you are near and not just know it is so.

Be still and know that I am.

I try to calm the storm inside, but I just want to scream into it – let me go! Let me return to a place of calm, peace, and love! Go away!

Be still and know that I am.

What can I do with this tempest inside me? How do I release it, let it go? What does this storm have to teach me? I am really tired of learning patience so I hope that is not the lesson this time.

Be still and know that I am.

I sit quietly, putting myself into your presence. I turn my focus to you and breathe. Around me the storm starts to quiet. I breathe in, I breathe out. The raging emotions start to calm. I breathe in, I breathe out. Equilibrium returns. I am still, inside and out.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still.

I am still, inside and out, breathing in your presence. The lesson to learn comes to me.

Trust. I hear a voice say, "Trust me. Everything is in my hands. You can trust me."

My heart cries out, "It is so hard to trust! It is so hard to let go of control!" I don't want to relinquish my hold. But, in truth, I have no control. It is just an illusion. The situation is truly out of my hands.

Be still and know that I am.

I look at my hands resting in my lap, clenched. I relax them and release my hold on the situation. I let go. I breathe in, I breathe out. The tightness in my chest uncurls. I can breathe deeper now. I breathe in, I breathe out.

Be still and know that I am.

I am still. I know you are. The storm dissipates. All is quiet again. And I feel you near. I breathe in, I breathe out.

I am still and know that you are.

Jane Elizabeth Brakhage

Psalm 4

I watch you wasting away, slipping away before my very eyes.
Why? Why must we go through this?
My heart is breaking as our lives are torn apart by illness.

I want to hold you close, hold on to you for as long as I can.
How can the Divine do this to us? Why is this happening?

I will not get answers to these questions. They are not the point.
The Divine is here, walking this path with us. I am comforted by this Presence.
But I am still scared.

I am not ready for this parting, if part we must. I'm not ready to finish this life
On my own. I am afraid to trust that everything will be all right
Whatever happens.

I keep going because I have to. I keep going because there are still things to do – dishes,
Laundry, chores. I keep going despite wanting to run away and hide from all this.
I keep going so you can keep going, too.

Whatever happens, I will walk with you. I will be there until you reach the point
Where you have to go on without me. The Divine Presence will be there, too.
I am comforted.

Jane Elizabeth Brakhage

Psalm 5

I sit and watch you sleep. I watch you breathe and wonder if this one will be the last one.
I am so worried and afraid. So, I keep watch.

I feel You near and take comfort in Your Presence.
But I am still afraid. Afraid of what the future holds.
Afraid of going on alone. Afraid to hope that things will work out.

I am in limbo, waiting for answers that are slow in coming.
Waiting for some hope to come our way.
I am so tired of waiting.

I watch you sleep and wait. Always waiting.

Jane Elizabeth Brakhage

Psalm 6

Hope is fading from my heart.
Why does it take so long to find answers?
Why do I have to wait until hope fades?
Where are You?

I sit, my heart heavy.
I do not want to go on.
I want to run and hide under my blankets.
Where are You?

Just a crumb is all I need.
Some little sign that things are moving forward.
Some word of encouragement. Something!
Where are You?

My heart sinks a little farther.
It is hard to do the things that need to be done.
I sit. Waiting. Staring. Trusting.
Where are you?

Word comes. Things move forward a bit.
Just a little, but it is enough.
I can move again and get on with stuff.
You are here.

Susan Ledder

Holy One

Holy one, I often see you in the smiling face
and laughter of a child

Holy one, I often see you in strength
of a tree as it reaches for the sky
in it's changing seasons.

Holy one, I often see you in the waters of the world,
ocean waves, tumultuous streams,
rain and calm waters of lakes nestled in mountains.

Holy one, I often see you in faces of those I meet,
marveling in the complex system of cells,
organs and skeletons that make up the diverse human spectrum,
each unique, young, old and all beautiful.

Holy one, I often see you in the many varieties
of other life forms, cows, crops, birds, fish, horses,
giraffes, llamas, cats, dogs -too many to name but wonderfully crafted.

Holy one, I often see you in the variety of our planet's climates and eco-systems,
the dry deserts, towering mountains, islands, prairies and grasslands.

Holy one, help me to see you
where I fear you are not there
and when I don't feel your presence.

Help me hear and see you in everyday life and global situations and to trust.

Susan Ledder

Praising The Great Creator

My heart is full to bursting
So much so I can't find the right words
The words to express what The Great Creator has made!
All my life I have tried to tell
In song and music
In paint and clay
In glass and drawing
In movement and dance
In love and compassion
What the Great Creator means to me...
They are a poor approximation
Of the beauty of God's Love
And the Great Creator's designs,
Balance of light and dark,
Color and hue,
Movement and stillness,
Symphonies of nature's sounds and silence.
The tiniest details in atoms
And sub-atomic particles,
Lovingly crafted!
Yet vast vistas of this world
And other worlds and galaxies
Flung across the expanse
And expanding universe!
My heart, my whole being is in awe...
Of what little it can comprehend of God, The Great Creator.

Susan Ledder

O God

O God! I have tried to live my life in the spirit of your love!
O God help me show your love.
But I am sure I have failed many times.
When will I get it right?
O God, help me show your love.
I have tried to live my life in the spirit of your justice!
O God, help me show your justice.
When will I get it right?
O God, help me bring justice.
O God! Help me bring mercy & grace to conflicts.
But I am certain I have failed. When will I get it right?
O God, help me show your mercy & grace.

Tena Gebers

O Great Omniscient Creator of the Universe
You who have given us each a mere spark of your essence,
we thank you.
You who have provided the delightful rainbow span of light and dark,
we thank you.

You who have sent us the magnificent
melodious auras of sound,
we thank you.
You who have placed within us
the desire to follow your road leading
to all things bright and wonderful,
we thank you.

Show us to be gentle and kind with each living being
Show us that we are strong and wise enough
to be worthy of your way.
Show us that love was your Word in the beginning.
Remind us who we are:
Forever your Children. SELAH

Marilyn J. Wilson

My Beloved

You are my beloved . . .

I held you in my heart from the start
I knew you in your mother's womb
I showed your father how marvelous you are
I planned many extraordinary days for you
You are loved—You are my beloved.

I created you to be a cherished treasure
You are my unutterably precious child
You are unconditionally loved and accepted
You are my sacred and holy creation
You are loved—You are my beloved.

I walk beside you every moment
I hold and nurture you with love, mercy and grace
I will surround you with my caring presence
I will hear your cries and soothe your soul
You are loved—You are my beloved.

My scriptures will instruct you in love, acceptance and peace
Your brothers and sisters in Christ will strengthen you
Together you will love one another and the world
Together, you will be my family on earth
You are loved—You are my beloved.

You will share my love with all with different colors, gender orientations, and opinions
You will tell others how cherished and precious they are
You will walk beside them in solidarity, love, and peace
You will be empowered to bring reconciliation to our world
You are loved—You are my beloved.

I will carry you when times are discouraging
I will always love you
I will never forget you
Nothing you do can change that
You Are Loved—You Are My Beloved.

Sabrina Howard

Psalm of Light

O God
Your Love is Sol
It shines into my life
making everything alive and glowing
and even on the darkest of days
I trust that You are there.

O God
I can feel Your Light in me
I shine in the universe
but it is so dark here
and you feel so far away
that I cannot see your Love.

O God
So many claim You
Then block Your Light
like an Eclipse
increasing the Darkness
and denying the Light in others

O God
Where are you in the Darkness?
Where are you in the universe
of Black Holes that suck all Light
in an inescapable spiral
from those who carry It in their hearts?

O God
Make me like the Moon
So I may reflect your Light
into the deep darkness of the Night
and help me to see Your Light in others
according to Your will.

Doyle Burbank-Williams

Water Psalm

When the skin of my soul
 is dry as parchment
 And cracked like the desert floor,
You send heavy clouds to shade the sun
You offer love in the gentle rain of friends
Softening the baked clay of my heart

When my throat is coarse and dry
 From lonely crying
 And screaming at the void
You are healing water
You are balm to drink
Soothing my drought-brittle voice

When the well of my creativity has gone dry
 and the pump only produces rust
 And empty wheezes of dusty air
You are water to prime it again
Lubricating, sealing, drawing forth
Deep, cool water from the spring hidden underground

When the unrelenting sun
 Has broiled me red and sensitive
 To every painful touch
You are a cooling pool
You draw the heat out of my burns
Offering yourself to replace the moisture I've lost

When my spirit is the scattered dust
 Blown on an unforgiving wind
 Scouring those it hits because of my fear and pain
You settle the dust with your downpour
You puddle my fragments back together
Making fertile ground for something new

Beverly Kellison

How precious, O Lord, is each person You have created.
How blessed we are that You have placed us in families,
Our dearest relationships defined by Your love.
So painful when one departs, when You take one of ours, my sister-in-law,
to Yourself, to her ultimate home,
It seems too soon, couldn't You have waited more years?

And there is more – her husband, my brother – so ill – confined in rehab.
Because of COVID, I visit him through the window of his room.
We laugh together through glass, by phone -
So sick, yet the spirit You have blessed him with remains -
The newspaperman still interviewing the nurses and therapists -
He knows all their stories.
Heal him, Lord, as You can – we need him!

Our other brother – too far away – the COVID got him,
But You, O Lord, have been gracious and are healing him.
Grant him insights You want him to see -
Make him wiser because You made him slow down.

How gracious is Your love, O Lord;
so generous it overflows in expressions great and small:
You have created beauty – the giant hibiscus flowers in my front yard!
And little friends – like Oliver the Cat – with us for 18 years,
But silent, still, when I came home yesterday.
Is he purring in Your Presence now?
Is he chasing clouds with his vigor restored?

O Lord, Our Lord, how Great You Are!
Far beyond our understanding and comprehension,
Yet You are available to us always,
Loving us always,
Even in sadness and grief, we can rejoice!!