

Written Service by Revd Pauline Crispin for Sunday 10 January 2021

Lord God, we awake to this new day and we come into your presence.
We come as we are, with our thoughts and cares.
Meet us now in this time of worship.
May we bring open minds and receptive hearts.
We approach you in worship and with praise.
May each one of us know your presence. Amen.

Gracious God, we pray today that the light of your presence and your sustaining grace may be known by those for whom these are dark times.
We pray for those who are bereaved and struggling with the question why,
who are having problems with relationships and family life,
who are having to come to terms with being told they have life-threatening disease,
who are coping with mental health problems.

Gracious God may all for whom we pray know the power and strength of your presence.
May your love fill their lives, and may you be the light that enters their darkness,
turning despair into hope and peace. Amen.

Genesis 1:1-5: In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Sing or Read:

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art ;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord ;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be ;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight ;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might ;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower :
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise :
be thou mine inheritance now and always ;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart :
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won ;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Reflection on the reading:

We must allow for poetic license here, as throughout the creation account. We must remember that the writer's purpose is not to write about scientific data but to tell exiled Israelites that God is the creative force behind the universe—and to encourage them with the knowledge that, despite their current circumstances, they are in the hands of a loving and all-powerful God who will redeem them.

Today there are many people who feel as though they live in darkness or that life is so chaotic, they are being showered with fears and anxieties. We have doubts about the raising of future generations in a complex and cruel world. The rapid changes in technology overwhelm us. How can we find our way? Who will provide us light to live in the darkness?

In Genesis we read that God created light in the midst of darkness. "Let there be light," God said, and there was light. Somehow, God created the heavens and earth out of total chaos.

Perhaps chaos is not all bad. We tend to be fearful when things are chaotic. We long for order and harmony. We do not like to be caught off guard. We go to great lengths to create an environment where we are safe, immune to disaster and protected from anything out of the ordinary. This is one of the main reasons why, this past year, with the pandemic, has been so tough for us all. Chaos is perceived as stressful, harmful, or even evil. Yet, it was from chaos that God created the earth.

Our society is becoming more and more diverse. Everything is changing. Who will give us light to find our way?

God created the world out of chaos. Therefore, chaos must be the forerunner of creativity. By resisting chaos, we prevent creativity. By embracing chaos, we enable creativity.

Just take a moment to think about times in your life when creativity has come out of chaos. It does not even need to be deep and theological or a moment of great insight. It could just be when you have decorated a room in your house or decided to redesign your garden. Maybe you are a knitter or sewer, or you have made a special meal or baked an extraordinary cake for a particular celebration. During the process you may look around the room, garden, kitchen or wherever, and the whole place looks chaotic. You can start to wonder why you began the task in the first place and maybe you should not have bothered and left well alone! However, with perseverance, you know that at the end of the task there comes creativity.

I believe that what God created was a sense of balance. Our lives need to be offset by opposites. Work is offset by play. Alertness is offset by sleep. Seriousness is offset by humour. The way to bring some order to our chaotic lives is to strive for balance.

There was once an old man who summoned his three adult children to his bedside. His business had become successful and he wanted one of his children to take over as the future president of the company. He told them to go out and buy whatever they wanted, but to spend no more than £10. However, whatever they bought it had to fill the room from corner to corner.

His children accepted the challenge willingly. Each was excited for the opportunity to lead the family business. The first child returned with two bales of hay. He took the hay and threw it in the air, filling the room with hay. But, in a few moments the hay settled on the floor. The second child returned with two pillows. He tore open the pillows and feathers filled the room. But, after a few moments they too settled on the floor.

The third child returned, and the father said, "And what did you bring?" The child answered, "Well, Dad, I invested £5, gave £4 to the church. I took the remaining £1 and bought two things; a candle and a box of matches." He then lit the candle with a match, reached over and turned off the lights in the room and the room was filled with light. "Well done, my child. You will be the president of my company," said the father.

Like the man's child, each of us has a light to shine. A single flame can light the way for someone in darkness. A single act of kindness, a word of encouragement can make the difference, helping others to find their way. We can find our way too with a little order in our lives. But let us never fear chaos for chaos can lead to creativity.

Prayers of intercession

Lord, who created order from the chaos,
bring light to darkness. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

In places of war and conflict, where there is famine and suffering,
where we struggle to see how we can make a difference,
bring light to darkness. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

In our own communities, for those who are poor,
for the homeless and hungry,
for the lonely and the prisoner,
bring light to darkness. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

In those whose lives are made harder by illness ...,
and those who search for peace and cannot find it,
bring light to darkness. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

In the lives of those who are grieving ...,
bring light to darkness. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

In the lives of those we know,
and for ourselves, bring light to darkness. **Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

Sing or Read:

- 1 Just as I am, without one plea
but that you died to set me free,
and at your bidding, 'Come to me !'
O Lamb of God, I come !
- 2 Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings within and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come !
- 3 Just as I am, you will receive,
will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve :
because your promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come !
- 4 Just as I am — your love unknown
has broken every barrier down —
now to be yours, yes, yours alone,
O Lamb of God, I come !
- 5 Just as I am, of that free love
the breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
here for a time and then above,
O Lamb of God, I come !

Charlotte Elliott (1789–1871) *adapted by* Jubilate Hymns (*alt.*)

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**Lord, help me to be open to your prompting as I seek to discover what you would have me be and do.
Remind me again and again that you have promised to be my guide and companion on my journey. Help
me to look forward with renewed commitment,
and bless my thinking and speaking and doing. In your name. Amen.**

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and
with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen

