

What We See In The Wilderness

Reflecting on our experience of
life during a global pandemic

**Psalms written by members of the Halstead Area
Team Ministry Lent Course 2021.**

About These Psalms

The psalms in this booklet were written by members of the Halstead Area Team Ministry Lent Group, in March 2021, during the coronavirus pandemic, when all our church services were being held online. Our Lent course, conducted by The Reverend Katie De Bourcier, Rector of St Andrew's Halstead, over Zoom, was one of the highlights of dull weeks being spent largely at home, with those in our households or 'bubbles'.

The headline of our Lent Course, 'What We See in the Wilderness', was sublimely appropriate for our situation. In our penultimate session, The Reverend Katie asked us to compose a psalms, so we did, and we read them to each other during the last session. Our psalms lay bare our many different raw emotions during Lent in lockdown... bewilderment... searching for God and our sense of the presence of God... our need for forgiveness and our thankfulness... our wonder... and most of all our love for God.

Rosemary Johnson
One of the authors.

Authors:

Jay Ainge

Annette Corble

Suzie Dodd

Terry Hawthorn

Margaret Hill

Elaine Jones

Stuart Jones

Bret Johnson

Rosemary Johnson

Angela Kerrison

David Kerrison

Ann Norris

Sharon Quilter

Paula Sillett

Rachael Simpson

Brian Vidler

Katrina Williams

Copyright for all creative works in this booklet remains with individual authors.

The Lord brings me challenges beyond reproach.
Not to test and dismay me but to extend my ability to
comprehend his masterful manner
In directing my life
In widening my experiences
In supporting me through troubled times
In rejoicing with me in my thanksgiving
For all that He has provided
For all He surrounds me with
For those I care for and who care for me.
For my faith in knowing that whatever may befall me
The Lord is with me, around me, before me, above me.
And holding me in love and protection all my days.

Brian Vidler

Praise be to thee O Lord,
Who has made heaven and earth!
How can I know you more
And the splendour of the Earth?
I see you in the glory of the morning
When I give thanks for my resting.
I see you in the sunshine of the day
And the rain that sustains the earth.
I see you in the change of the seasons
And in the circle of life.
Your love shines on me in all I do
And you guide me through the day.
When I pray if I am weak, your strength sustains me,
And when I pray if I'm lost, you show me the way.
And at the end of the day I give thanks for the blessings you
bestow on me,
And I shall praise you forever!

Katrina Williams

A PSALM FOR ALL

1. O Lord keep your people in the faith
2. And lay down your eternal kingdom upon them
3. For they have called out to you in trouble and distress
4. And have sought strength from the power of your holy spirit
5. The children have waited patiently upon your word
6. And have found solace from your guidance and wisdom
7. You have brought light to our knowledge and understanding when we lived in fear
8. Grant now the benefits of your healing to all the nations of the earth
9. Let the whole world now rejoice in your risen presence
10. And keep us for ever hereafter in your grace and truth

Bret Johnson

Lord you are my constant, my rock, my 247 friend.
Always there to listen, to guide and tend.
Your grace overwhelms me, the unconditional love you show.
I know no-one like you, with your confidence I grow.
The pandemic has shaken me, my family, my friends my life.
I'm fearful of the future and that covid will run rife.
Lord reassure me, soothe me show me the way,
How to live life post lockdown, day by day.
Lord of goodness, there's been pain, loss and heartache.
Pour out your healing to all those hurting, do not wait.

Rachael Simpson

Oh Father God, in the wilderness of Covid, stay close to us. Help us to keep our eyes on you rather than trying to peer into a distance that only you can see.

For you guide us step by step and illuminate our path when we stay close to you.

Your tender care enfolds us in parental love and we can relax and feel safe in your arms.

You hold us in the palm of your hand, where our names are written, our names and those of our loved ones gone before us.

The closeness of your continuous presence fills us with joyful praise and augments the constant proclamation of your fathomless creativity by the beauty of the natural world.

When it seems to us that you have moved further away, we know that you are just strengthening our faith muscles, for you have promised that you would never leave us and your promises have proved to be true.

Oh Lord our God, Almighty Father, may we abide in your presence with all our loved ones in this world and the next, through all the troubles that might afflict us and may your Holy Name be exalted for ever!

Ann Norris

PSALM OF THANKS

**In this time of pandemic, I came to you for protection
Knowing you will be with me, protecting me,
Sheltering me and keeping me safe.**

**You gave me confidence and hope
You provided me with a home when we did not have one
You kept my family safe, you knew my worries
You calmed me in the night, when sleep deserted me
I heard you in the calming of the breath.**

**I marvel at your works in the gift of a baby,
delivered safely when the virus was rife.
I see you in your wonderful creation,
the sun rises and the sun sets.
I know it will rise again because you give me hope and faith.**

**The seasons turn, the clocks change
The sea swells and is calm
The sky glowers and then is bright
All things have a rhythm and a pace –
You are in the small things and the magnificent**

**Thank you for the gift of time to look, pause,
reflect and renew my faith in you
Thank you for providing a safe harbor
when the seas were rough
and a time to gather courage, energy and hope
for the fresh challenges ahead
You are my anchor, my compass and my sail.**

Annette Corble

My God My God

Has't thou forsaken us this day

Oh guide us to you Lord to stay

May we feel your presence in our hearts

And declare your undying love we pray

My God My God

To walk beside us night & day

In weary times in case we stray

Come closer, bind us together Lord

And declare your undying love we pray

My God My God

Oh joyous day that dwells within

Our hearts and minds to celebrate

The risen Lord is risen today

By the power of the cross we kneel and pray

Angela Kerrison

My God, take me by the hand,
Lead me down to where the river flows,
The atmosphere there is full of your spirit,
Your love light there, through the water.

You are our God who is great and mighty,
You make the rivers course to run,
On the river bed our prayers you gather,
We praise you with your river song.

Bring us to your flow in glory,
Wash away our human ways,
Cast away those earthly worries,
Spirit takes us, Souls washed clean.

David Kerrison

A PSALM IN THE WILDERNESS

Lord God Almighty, creator of a wonderful world,

From the solar systems, galaxies and planets to the smallest cells and microbes.

You are a fantastic and amazing creator God.

You enable some to understand DNA, Binary codes and viruses and others to understand bees, dung beetles and plankton.

Yet Lord—what are we doing to your wonderful world?

The toxic pollution of rivers, waters and sea.

The stripping of forests and jungles that soon become deserts.

The killing of animals, birds, fish and vegetation to extinction.

A virus impacting every single nation and person.

We cry in pain at wars, greed and power that cause destitution, destruction and slavery of peoples, at fear, separation, isolation, poverty and hunger.

Forgive us Lord God for all we have done and still do that contributes to this havoc individually and together.

Where are you Lord in this sad dying world that we have caused?

Maybe in kindness, a helping hand, working together, care and concern, and give us love to lift you up O Lord among our neighbours.

Creator of a once wonderful world, come and be with us and hug us all with your open arms of love.

Jay Ainge

Oh God, how majestic you are
How great you are
and yet I am just a speck, a grain of sand
But I am so full of busyness
I give you but a thought
You come close to me, but do I listen?
No, I turn away.
Teach me Lord how to hear you when you speak
Hold my hand and pull me to you,
Enfold me in your embrace.
Forgive me, Lord, how can I think of you so little,
When you are so great and I am just a speck, a grain of sand
Oh God, how majestic you are!

Elaine Jones

Lord God, I praise and worship you.

Your power, authority, knowledge and love are way beyond my comprehension.

You reign over all, you are Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Any yet you hear my prayers spoken out loud and those said in silence.

Help me to realise what a privilege it is to speak to you, the creator of the universe.

Help me to listen to your replies, whether it will be in the storm or in the silence or in the wise words of another individual.

It often seems easy in group worship or the study of your word to feel the warmth of your presence, and draw closer to you. But I know God, how much easier it is for me to drift away from you when the activities of the day take over.

Please forgive my lapses and may I focus on you Lord Jesus so your words stir in me right thoughts, right words and right actions.

Help me God to encourage others and I give thanks for the encouragement I have received from fellow Christians.

You are my God, worthy of worship and praise.

Lord God, I praise and worship you.

Stuart Jones

Lord, we are living in a strange land:
The voices of praise in your churches have been silenced,
but the simpler form of worship has helped us focus on you.
We stay at home,
but creation breaks out in all its glory,
The pandemic has highlighted suffering and injustice in our
society,
but so many people have stepped up to give their skills, their
time, their money – and even their lives – to help.
Lord, when we can sing again,
may it be to your glory.
When we can travel again,
may we still care for your creation.
When the Covid restrictions are all lifted.
may we continue to be aware of those in need and see what
we can do to help.
Lord, may we not forget the strange land.

Margaret Hill

Lord, I stand here in my shame
stripped of all I thought I missed.
But in the clamour of everything, still
I am distracted by those things.

I need to be stripped bare more,
to hear you in the stillness.
To cherish the simplicity of your love,
and to praise you in my heart.

Release me from this wilderness of abundance,
for you see right through my shame.
Fill me with the joy of your presence,
through the simple, the quiet, the unexpected and the same.

For whatever is before me or behind,
with you I know I am safe.

Sharon Quilter

1. We praise you, O God; we reach out to you from the wilderness.
2. Through tedium and loneliness, through sickness and anxiety, through poverty and loss, you are with us always: a light to lighten all your people.
3. You stand with the doctor, the nurse and the carer, and you guide the hand of the vaccinator: holy is your name.
4. A life of ease, by still waters, was not in your promise: yet surely your eternal presence is sufficient.
5. As we attempt to walk alongside you on your glorious entry into Jerusalem, in the Upper Room and at the Garden of Gethsemane, to the Cross and your glorious Resurrection: strengthen us so we may stay awake.
6. Those who sneer and scoff, those who seek retribution through violence, those who cry, 'Now, where is your God': may they listen and wonder.
7. Lord, we praise you anew, with head, mind and heart: may we bask in your glory forever.

Rosemary Johnson

Oh Lord hold our hands as we stand on the brink of despair
Lord lead us back to your light
Fire up your flame in our darkness
Give the power of Hope to our sight

Oh Lord be our guide, our advisor
Lord we beseech you to draw near
Anchor us to the right path
Be the constant we need through the year

Oh Lord hear our words as we rejoice
Lord let us bestow you with praise
Sweep us up in your wondrous creations
Surround us with all that will amaze

Oh Lord we hear you, we see you in nature
Lord the wilds of the winds and the skies
Let us never forget you are near us
In our hearts and our minds and our eyes.

Paula Sillett

**To feel the Lord's Presence and Closeness gives us
Hopefulness and Trust when we are Uncertain, Afraid and
question Why on Earth?**

**Our Father Emmanuel is the Lord who shows us we are
Unbroken
and will live forever in his Holy Presence.**

**TRUST is Time to Rest and Understand our Saviours
Tenderness as well as Together we can Realise and Utilise the
Space for Transformation.**

Suzie Dodd

Lord, help me to be humble, to be forgiving, and to be silent when I should;

Give me strength, O Lord, to understand what I should do and be;

I am not worthy to be your foot-stool, but I ask you to accept me for what I am.

We live in dark times, O Lord; help us through our time of need.

Give us the strength that we need in order to remain devoted to your word;

We know that you are King; give us the power to proclaim that every day.

The forces of evil shall never overcome us; we shall always praise your name.

Terry Hawthorn

What We See In The Wilderness