

PRAYER POEMS IN PRAISE OF GOD & HIS CREATION

This Kaleidoscopic World

Soul-hush't, I bow before You, Lord,
to think that from a swathe of infinite darkness
You might cut the cloth of this kaleidoscopic world,
drawing together strands of nothingness,
lovingly spinning them ... teasing them
into gossamer thread, bright as dew-dappled web;
weaving an intricate pattern of texture and harmony ...
to create a world of indescribable beauty.

And then, Lord, to risk placing this thing of beauty
in the hands of men, knowing their weakness ...
their propensity for sin ...
and to watch their inept management
and crass abuse,
yet leave them free to choose ...

Your graciousness, Lord,
evades the confines of this shrunken mind.

In our Innermost Being

Almighty God,
here we are, gathered in Your presence,
and You enfold us in Your arms,
a small, but integral part of Your creation.
Do we feel Your breath as it stirs new life
and hope in our hearts?
Do we hear, as we rest our heads upon Your breast,
the steady pulse of Your heart beating?
Do we know our innermost being
as creatures that ride the winds of change,
shaped and reshaped in endless process
as You continue to mould a universe,
vast and star-spangled, rich in diversity, colour and shape,
yet intricately interwoven as a thing of great beauty?
Who are we? Who are we ...
but a single pulse in this wild throb of life,
and touched to harmony as we strike a chord together
in this majestic symphony that You create?
Oh God! You are One, as this world is one.
May we, too, be as one in our thinking and our doing ...
In our innermost being.

The Word

Almighty God, You spoke ...
from a firmament of darkness, there emerged
a world rich in colour and light,
peopled and punctuated by sound and movement.

Your Word

in power and grace for a race disgraced
entered the world, deflowered,
permeating it with fragrance,
subtly transforming the most unsavoury alleys,
dank crannies and crevices of gloom,
painting the squalor with the radiance
of Your Son.

In our words
resides Your Word, Lord,
by our lips Your Word is spoken ...

sometimes gasping as a smoke addict
in a nicotine infiltrated haze ...
sometimes heaving with the urgent sobs
of a runner, fully expended ...
sometimes gently stirring the dust,
setting cobwebs a'tremble
with the softly beating wings of a Dove ...

but, in us and through us,
You choose to speak.
Cleanse my lips; control my tongue, O Lord,
for Your Word brings life, not death.

SONNETS IN PRAISE OF GOD & HIS CREATION

Sea-scape

I sense lip-licked salt and surf-horses blow,
wind-tangled fish-net hair whispering free,
the gritty sand and the abrasive sea-
motion beneath my skin. My self may throw
my life in space as line cast for minnow ...
the magnitude of this scene gives to me
the feel of life unbound by what might be
and certainty that tracks, soft-sinking now,
will last after the wave-lapping touches
those impressions clear. Timeless spectre folk
of life-tread stand poised in the footpatches
that mark Your direction. I will not balk
at, nor renounce the sea's enormity –
shell-cast as gifts in my proximity.

New Dawn

In cool and naked early morning light
I wake to feel the stir of foetal day.
The hadidahs careen across the way,
a challenge in their strident laughter clip't.
Whispered leaf-kindling memories of night-
warmth filter through open windows to play
in air-stroked harmony and applique.
The dawn usurps my senses – shimmer-bright.
My home, tree-sung and laughter-touched free breathes
with me in right-mind. Thus I know my worth ...
know that God created me like the leaves
touching the night-quiet with quickened breath.
God's image and creation's perfection
shape me as I receive His redemption.

Rain-cloaked Thoughts

Tonight, in rain I stood and thought of You.
Soft-cloaked in thunder brilliant, water-wrung,
my self, with laughter-drops so full, I flung
the touch and smell of water-wet there too,
where wild and free the tree-tossed wind-weft blew
a shower soft-soaking, sibilant sung
across a space of touch undone – and rung
loud and dazzling in stormy midnight blue.
Flung out in spaceless, timeless rapture yet,
the clatter-wild rain-womb enfolds my trust
and life and thought in gentle skyfall wet
wonder. This tumultuous motion, soul-hush't
with joy – this moment's motion – is complete,
self-soaking deep as sodden moss and peat.

Spinning Top

So tenderly You touched my self to life,
I sang as spinning tops soft-hum and whirl
in motion, smooth and fluid. In that swirl
of love-life infinite, vortexed belief
perceives that past remnants are not enough,
confronted with this blue-pure thought-pearl
that You nourish as You watch me unfurl.
I ache lest You should find worthless the love
that Your touch awakes in my dormant soul.
The giddy whorl of spiral motion free
is inspiration-fused, in beauty whole
through Your soft-touch soul-stroke that breathes in me,
twirling in a haze of joyous motion –
Jesus-filled sparkling exhilaration.

POEMS IN HONOUR OF GOD'S CREATION

White-Bellied Gulls & Wind-Tossed Skies

Incandescent, sea and sand shimmer bright.
The white bellied gulls straddling wind-tossed skies
dip and glide, shredding silence with their cries.
I lift my face, aglow with warmth and light.
Stretch out my arms with rampant dreams of flight,
and, soft upon the breeze, hear whispered sighs.
The unvoiced yearnings of the past arise
to lift the soul, though tethered as a kite,
to soar above the mundane things of life.
I feel the shifting sand beneath my feet
as waves swirl – a reminder of the strife
that we impose, in greed, as we compete
to claim a space larger than we deserve,
killing the life we struggle to preserve.

The Rhythm of God's Creation

Sun-gilded gliding in somnolent splendour;
slick-soaring in silent blue shadow ...
free in the rightness of being.

Blistered and broken, dark mantle-cloaked
in the restless ache of our living ...
endlessly weary of this tiresome existence.

Creation's contrasts, so skilfully blended,
we painstakingly unpick and repatch
in a garish and comfortless quilt of our own making ...
complex and formless.

Yet our heartbeat pulses in harmony
with solid mauve mountains and fern-shaded forests,
with rainbow shifting sands and wave-pounding froth ...
part of the rhythm of God's creation.

Haiku Cluster on the Earth

life all a'quiver
shimmer of half-light
day wakes

crisp startled day
clad in muted rose
touch me too

magnolias
bird talk and sunbeams
good morning

brilliant blue
laundered clouds drip-dry
forever ... today

sun-drenched birds in flight
swirl and glide
free in God's sight

earthrooted tree
stolid, mighty
filigree leaves

brittle leaves skip
on pavements cold
warm autumn hues

hands cold face aglow
threadbare sun
i reach for warmth

moon reflected
splendour ... waters
repose, tranquil

PRAYER POEMS: WALKING & TALKING WITH JESUS

Exiled Nazarene

(Inspired by Luke 4:14-30 & Isaiah 61:1-2)

In a torrent of anger and frustration
they drove You from the town
absorbed in Your destruction.

Yet minutes earlier, they had wondered
at the infinite grace and wisdom of Your words,
one among their number and a mere carpenter's son!
A'quiver with excitement at passages branded
into the very fabric of their inner beings,
promising a reprieve ...
freedom from domination,
and vengeance, swift, clean and complete,
they anticipated ...

With a ripple of expectation,
they heard Your gracious words
of love, mercy and compassion
limited in the confines of their minds,
to the oppressed, the Jewish nation,
and eagerly awaited Your pronouncement
of impending retribution.
Puzzled by Your statement
that no prophet is welcome among his own people,
they stirred, then, with a whisper of intense suspicion ...

only to explode in fierce condemnation,
rejecting outright Your brazen omission
from the greatest of prophets, Isaiah,
that they would glory in an extended day of vengeance,
when they would once more enjoy supremacy,
doling out bounty as they had been forced to receive it.

What manner of man would dare to question,
with unflinching authority, their rights so clearly stated?
Was that, Lord, the root of their frenzied rejection
and fierce anxiety to rid themselves
of Your disturbing presence ...
an innate knowledge that You were the expected Messiah?
And yet, knowing You as one of their own,
they wilfully cast You out from Your home town
and chose, in place of Truth,
to imprison themselves behind the bars
of their own misperceptions,
preferring self-deception and self-justification.
I, too, evade the Truth, driving You out of my life
as if it belonged to me, denying the price You paid to set me free.

In the Mould of Humankind

(Inspired by Luke 8:22-25)

Galvanized into frenetic action,
wave-tossed and wind-torn,
they fought the fury of the storm,
while You, Lord, in a swathe of tranquillity,
slept pillowed in the stern of that storm-swept boat ...
a shard of light in a torrent of darkness.

Consumed with fear, those men of meagre faith
broke your rest, bewildered by Your inner peace,
perceiving in it mere indifference to their plight.
But, when You rose, Lord, and spread your arms
in firm command that the elements should cease
their paulty quarrel and clamorous complaint ...
in the stillness of the aftermath, a void too great for comprehension,
those elemental fisherman, in the mould of humankind,
collapsed in terror at Your feet, wondering yet not perceiving.

A Balm upon Your Feet

(Inspired by John 12:1-8)

Lord Jesus,
as Mary Magdalene knelt at Your feet,
alabaster jar in hand
with tears and nard intermingling in equal measure,
Judas looked on, counting the cost not in tears wept,
but in drops of precious oil, wasted.
Yet soft-soaking over cracked heals and swollen ankles,
soothing the bitter anticipation of a final journey still to come,
this oil was, indeed, priceless beyond measure.

With a whisper of touch, her cloud of hair
gently towelling dry Your dusty feet,
Mary had no thought of cost,
but poured out her heart freely
as a soul unshackled
from the darkness of demon possession
knowing the reality of the way of the cross
still to come.

Give to me, also a fallen woman,
the courage to enter Your presence too, Lord,
alabaster jar of obeisance clutched to my guilty breast,
and to pour out my joys and my sorrows
as a balm upon your feet,
not counting the cost in coins
as Judas Iscariot did,
but in the scars upon Your hands
and feet,
towelling them dry
with the tresses of my soul
and marking me eternally
as Your possession.

Calloused Feet

(Inspired by Luke 22:7-23 & John 13:1-12)

Like Simon Peter, Lord,
I cringe to think of You
washing my dirty, calloused feet.
It's easier by far to take on the role of Mary Magdalene,
pouring oil upon Your feet ...
feet that have walked the distance of gospel love
for a world gone wrong.

But my feet, Lord,
have meandered paths of wilfulness,
danced in darkness and are spattered
with the mud and slush of human degradation.
I shudder to think of Your hands,
so pure and unsullied,
touching the very essence of my sin.

Yet, like Peter, Lord,
I crave Your touch upon my hands and head,
to feel Your fingers smoothing away my guilty tears,
chaffing away the loneliness of hands
that have failed to reach out
in love and service to others.

And You invite me, Lord,
to sit at Your table;
to break bread and drink
from the covenant cup
in an intimate gesture of ultimate fellowship
with God Himself
and His children ...

only with my feet cleansed by Jesus
can I take my place in this company of saints.

Triumphant Parody

(Inspired by Mark 11:1-11 & 15:6-15)

The rhythmic plod
of a humble donkey's hooves
stirring up squalls of dust
in the noisy city streets.

Palm fronds waving
in a stormy sea of green,
shedding leaves like feathers
moulted from a giant bird of prey.

Raucous laughter, triumphant acclamation
resounding through the heat-laden city:
"Hosannah, hosannah in the highest;
hosannah to the King."

Amidst this clamour, Lord,
this fervent declaration
of acceptance and profound expectation,
was Your heart sorely burdened?

Burdened in the face
of their crass duplicity,
as You turned Your eyes
upon the long, long road to Golgotha?

Lord, how great was the ache
that clawed at Your innards
as You smiled and waved,
acknowledging the crowds?

Crowds that would cleave the city
so short a time after
with the cry: "Give us Barabas!
Crucify Jesus ... crucify him!"

Crown of Thorns

(Inspired by Matthew 21:1-11 & 27:27-31)

From jubilation and hosannas
along a palm-strewn highway
with greetings for a King
to open mockery and a crown of thorns
is a vast distance to travel in so short a time;
yet this was just the beginning
of Your journey to hell and back again,
loaded with the dirty baggage
of humankind for all of time.

Stripped of Your garments,
You maintained Your dignity in silence
and suffered with humility
the public humiliation of their mockery
as they jeered and spat upon You,
King not only of the Jews,
but of all humanity.

“Ride on, ride on in majesty!”
was the echo that accompanied
Your first stumbling steps
as You staggered beneath the weight
of the cross that You accepted on my behalf
and faced, with infinite courage,
the steep and rocky road
to Your ultimate destination –
Golgotha, place of the skull.

Thank God Your journey didn't end there
but crested the hill to seek out new horizons far beyond.

Garden of Gethsemane

(Inspired by Matthew 26:36-46 & Luke 22:39-46)

Tonight, Lord,
the wind blows cold in the dark of night
and carries the echo of Your cry:
“Keep watch with me! Watch and pray!”

I kneel and feel hard flint beneath my knees.
Are these splinters from my sin-encrusted heart,
hardened and fractured by my failure to stay awake?
Are these my tears, frozen and broken shards of bitter regret
as I recall the endless wastelands of my neglect?

One hour is all You asked of me!
One hour set apart from a lifetime
of self-absorption and excess
to keep watch with You, Lord!

In the dark reaches of the night,
You wrestled and yielded Your life for me
while I slept.
How bitter the gall of my defeat;
how costly the price
of that sweet temptation to sleep, my soul, O sleep;
oblivious of the anguish caused by my complacency.

Overwhelmed with sorrow, Lord,
and grappling with the consequences of my failure,
You sweated blood and tears for me,
while I slumped beneath the weight
of my unawakened soul.

Forgive my indifference, Lord; teach me to pray
that I may answer Your call to keep watch
lest Your betrayal be marked in blood upon my hands,
for the hour is come, my Lord!

Kiss of Betrayal

(Inspired by Matthew 26:6-16, 47-56 & 27:1-10 & Isaiah 6:5-7)

This Judas, Lord,
with dulcet lips and venomous affection –
is he the mirror of my soul
as I profess my love for You while armed
with an arsenal of arrogance and self-interest?
What subtle deceptions have I used, my Lord,
to justify my actions?

Have I, like Judas,
scoffed at those who dare to weep at your feet,
alabaster jar in hand
and knotted tresses glistening
with the oil of their self-abasement?
Do I, like Judas, count the cost
and tip the scales in favour of thirty pieces of silver,
pocketed rather than spent?
I'm so afraid, Lord,
that my excuses and hypocrisy will intertwine
like a rope knotted in a hangman's noose.

O Lord,
if I embrace You with a false heart
and lies upon my lips,
I pray You singe me with coals of purifying fire as Isaiah,
in the presence of the Holy One;
and set me free, my Lord,
from bondage to this Judas-self
for guilt itself would strangle me
but for the love You bear for me.

Crowing our Denial

(Inspired by Matthew 26:69-75 and John 21:15-19)

When does the blindness yield to dawning light;
as the cock crows and the truth of our denial stands out
against the periphery of the new day?

Lord, You were steeped in the darkness
of betrayal and abandonment
when Peter denied and denounced You.
Yet Peter is my brother ...
his weakness the same as mine;
his bitter tears track furrows
deeply etched in my face.

Would I own You as my Lord and Saviour
in fear and darkest night?
Would I confess to knowing You
if threatened at the point of death?
Do I acknowledge You
in the turmoil and crises of my life?

Three times the rooster crowed;
three times you were denied.
And, in my life, countless times –
consumed by anxiety, overcome by doubt –
I've failed to acknowledge You, my Lord.

Will You grant to me the threefold opportunity
to re-declare my love for you
by serving those You hold dear to You?
"Feed my lambs.
Take care of my sheep.
Feed my sheep," You said.

The Brutal Truth

(Inspired by Matthew 27:24-26)

Pilate washed his hands, Lord,
publically proclaiming his innocence
along with Yours,
yet his blood-stained soul declares his guilt.
And I, Lord, with hands daily steeped in lye,
where will I shift the blame
as I evade responsibility for Your sacrifice?

The truth is brutal, Lord,
like nails pounded into bleeding flesh ...
I am unworthy of this gift of love
that blossoms in wounds upon Your hands and feet.

A Woman in the Crowd

Was there a woman in that crowd, Lord,
who dared to confront the agony etched deep within Your face;
to stretch out and tenderly touch the nub of her own guilt,
drenched in blood and sweat;
to bear Your image, unveiled, on the fabric of her life?

Could I ever hope to be that woman,
bold enough to stand in a hostile place
and challenge the world to read the unfathomable story
written upon Your face;
to touch the core of my own sin veiled
behind the cloth of Your self-sacrifice?

Lord, Your broken image is transferred miraculously,
into the very texture of my beingness
as I reach out to touch the One
who touches me to hope and new life ...
the veil is torn asunder; Your image is set free.

Lamb of God

(Inspired by Isaiah 53:7-9; Ezekiel 37:1-14; & Matthew 27:11-26)

My Lord, despised and rejected,
You were led like a lamb to the slaughter;
a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.
Pierced for my transgressions,
crushed for my iniquities,
You remained silent, no breath of protest on Your lips.

Yet how quick I am to bleat my innocence
in the face of abject guilt;
to clamour and protest
against my self-inflicted pain and suffering.
The punishment that brought me peace
was upon You, Lord.
By Your wounds, I am healed.

Is this justice, then?
The justice that I claim so vociferously for myself?
Was it just to release Barabbas in his guilt,
and transfix Your innocence upon the cross
for my infirmities?

That I should receive grace while demanding justice
is beyond my comprehension!
O Lamb of God,
Your guilt offering on my behalf
bleeds new life into these dry bones;
new hope into my cynical soul;
fresh faith to confront my doubt.
Dumbstruck, my Lord,
I gape in silent wonder at Your self-sacrifice.

With Arms Outstretched

Lord,
the enormity
of that gross edifice
raised upon Golgotha
looms over my life
as a misshapen beacon
pointing a crooked finger,
in the face of Your perfection,
at my monstrous inadequacies ...
my blatant rebellion
against Your gentle,
persistent presence.

Before it, Lord,
I cannot stand, but must grovel
with the urgent need
to hide myself ...
to blend with the arid dust
at Your precious feet.
For how, Lord, can I look
upon Your form, transfixed?
How, Lord, can I accept
that, pinioned on its knotted limbs,
is the one shard of light
in my dark existence?
How, Lord, can I survive
my culpability
for this crass offence
against Your humble person?

Yet, Lord,
when I raise my eyes,
incapable of withstanding
Your suffering presence,
the radiance of Your love
and acceptance shimmers across
an endless firmament of indigo,
penetrating to the very depths
of my embattled soul,
raising me in laughter-free
before Your majesty,
my arms outstretched in praise
to my Father in heaven,
who scoops me
into arms outstretched
even, Lord,
as Yours were outstretched
on that man-made thing
that dominates far beyond
Golgotha.

And I thank You,
in words and manner inadequate
to express even the fringes
of my immense gratitude,
Lord.

Thorn Tree

Gaunt, it rose upon Golgotha,
stretching its gnarled arms
in mute supplication
across a space of eternity ...
a thorn tree shaped
by the hand of man
to pierce and tear the flesh
of Jesus, our Lord,
nailed in twisted perfection
upon its knotted, mocking frame,
opening a wound of unrequited love.

At its feet, Lord, Your agony wept
red blossoms, gently opening
in a profusion of scented petals
quivering with new life.
Transfixed, rent with pain
and the dull ache of rejection,
You bled, for us, a boundless field
of glistening scarlet blooms,
rippling in gentle waves
across an endless horizon ...
ready for harvest.

And You smiled, Lord,
with infinite grace ...
and died.

And I, One Among Their Number

Seclusion-wrapped
in tomb-darkened silence;
the clamour and agony,
the ignominy and rejection
of Your crucifixion still festering,
were You tempted, momentarily,
to remain enshrouded in peace ...
to leave the world wondering
whether You had accomplished
Your purpose?

It would, surely, have been fitting
to respond thus to their cruelty,
their ingratitude;
to have renounced them forever
to the uncertainty
of their redemption?

Yet You emerged, Lord,
to the harsh light of day
to encounter incredulity
and lack of recognition.
You emerged offering comfort
to those who had left You comfortless,
knowing they would deny You,
curse You and crucify You
not just once but repeatedly ...
even to the end of time.

Lord,
my heart cringes to think
that this You did for me,
and I ... one among their number.

Bread of Life

(Inspired by John 21:1-14)

Pre-dawn, smothered
in a pall of darkness
and a heap of soggy, empty nets –
not one meagre catch –
and hearts leaden
with their recent loss,
they turned, defeated,
back to land ...

to find a gentle shimmer
of early morning dawn
touching the golden edges
of the shore
and, etched against the rosy glow,
the figure of a man,
his arms outstretched
in greeting ...

a puff of smoke whispering
across the space of barren water
and an echo of enquiry:
“Have you caught any fish?”
Despondent denial
weighed heavy on spirits
still caught in the dark
of the lingering night.

Brighter glowed the light,
prelude to the day,
and firm across the silvered waters now
skipped the knowing cry:
“Then try the other side!”
A shimmer of certainty,
Brighter than any shadow of doubt,
Stirred weary limbs into obedience.

The glimmer of silvery scales
and dancing fins chuckled
in a boundless stream,
stretching taut the weather-worn nets,
endlessly filling those saddened hearts
with overwhelming joy
and acknowledgement of
their Lord returned.

Breaking their fast
on this sparkling new day,
clustered around the flame,
senses alive to the crisp smell
of fresh fish and newly baked bread,
they understood at last
His earlier words:
“I am the bread of life.”

PRAYERS & POEMS ABOUT LIFE

Bus-shelter People

Bus-shelter people,
hunched in isolation
over your ragged bundles
of misery,
scrawny fingers
poking and prodding
at the bones of a life
prematurely ended ...
the choices, the mishaps shaping
this solitary confinement
that holds you locked
in the shells of your beings.

Unfurl your rheumatic fingers
and stretch out your hands
to a sun that is warm.

Cracked,
perhaps forgotten,
in the debris of your living
is a smile – God-given,
childlike and innocent.
Give it away, toothless man,
just today,
release it from the barriers
of misery and want.
Let it soar free
to shimmer in the light
for a fraction of time
as a shard in the darkness,
anticipating ...

The Twilight People

The twilight people
scrounging around
the periphery of life
scavenging in the garbage
of this shadow land
in the eternal hope
that they will chance upon
a slither of light ...

Shackled to darkness,
Why do we resist
when our real selves
know the truth
of a timeless, sunlit space
awaiting our acceptance?

Or are we commissioned
to remain and toil,
lifting the shades
so that others may see ...
to shovel up the garbage
and reveal
God's own playing fields?

The twilight people ...
my people ...
me.

At the Feet of Jesus

In pristine exactitude, prune-prim mouthed,
we frown upon dust-motes, grease patches
and dog-eared pages ...

soulless secretaries to our sterile existence,
we apron-girth our beings
against the fingermarks of reality,
endlessly treading rung after rung
on a horizontal ladder
of self-inflicted nothingness.

Perhaps, in a moment of madness,
we might skin-the-cat
through the rungs of the ladder
and dangle in daring disarray
in the upside-down world on the other side.

We might feel sufficiently free, then,
to bask in the warmth of nose-freckled laughter,
sticky, chubby fingers entwined
in the fabric of our beings,
riot of colour and form and music ...
that chaotic world around us.

Or we might fling wide the doors
of our shrunken selves
and cartwheel into a world
brimming with the wholeness of being –
gently coming to rest
at the feet of Jesus.

Star-child

Whisper-walk, Star Child, on clouds of pink puffball,
as we butterfly-grope for rainbow dreams
and light shards.

Gentle the people
who gather and jostle in discord around You.
Gentle them softly in their brashness and ignorance,
for they're deaf to the birdcall silently gliding ...
they're blind to the laughter and shimmer of being.

Trembletouch, Star Child, the souls of these children
with sparklebrush painting the hues
and cadences in the symphony of their living ...
death-defied in the essence of Your Being.

Tree-felling

The sough-fluorescence lingers on, and will,
when giants such as these are poised in wind-
whispered expectancy and this hush't mind.
The ambient green, now lush and still,
will listen, quivering with anger chill
and lofty – dignity aghast to find
the stark and mundane mind of humankind.
Their secrets tossed from leaf to bough now still.

The rhythmic hack of axes cleave and gnaw
while rent timber-splintered anguish clamours
the evidence of injury too raw
to heal. Desecrated life's breath leaf-arbors!

As God's appointed stewards we are one.
Tree-felled, man's solace and repose are done.

In Community

(Opening Prayer written for a Session on the "Power of Women in Building Community" at the ARC Conference in Nairobi in Sept 2012)

Creator God,
You are both Mother and Father to us.

At the beginning of time,
You formed us in Your image, male and female,
breathing into us the breath of life.
You shaped us that we might complete each other –
whole in community ...
strong in community ...
complete in community with the earth.

Each one unique;
each one with a time, a place,
a season for bearing fruit.
May Your light illuminate the way,
revealing adventure and opportunity;
may Your hand guide us to places unknown and unimagined ...
to a destination of indescribable beauty and peace.

And, as we journey in Your company, Father/Mother,
may we share our stories,
laugh together, long and hard and deep;
may we have the courage openly to weep
as sisters and brothers in community,
united and unafraid ...
an integral part of Your creation.

A Prayer for South Africa

(Inspired by Daniel 9:4-19 & written in Feb 1994)

Oh Lord God Almighty,
whose love remains ever constant
even with children so flighty,
the sins of this nation make us despondent;
we suffer the burden of guilt –
a wall of intolerance and bondage we've built.

With eyes, ears and hearts closed
to Your infinite wisdom,
willfully ignoring the laws You've imposed
concerning Your Kingdom,
we've turned away from our brothers and sisters,
creating a nation pock-marked with blisters.

Lord, Your purity is boundless
And, before You, we cower in shame,
A people multifariously endless,
All equally sharing the blame.
What do our differences matter,
Since we're all but yeast in Your batter?

Lord, we and our statesmen,
our mothers and fathers,
freely and fiercely you could condemn,
for we stand before You as sinners;
yet we know You as Love
for You sent us Your Dove.

In our wilful rebellion,
ignorant and uncaring of Your Word –
not even pleading the innocence of ambivalent confusion –
we have severed the chord
that bound Holy God and sinful man ...
a chord created long before earth began.

In our flagrant disobedience,
we harvest a bitter crop,
seeded in the arid soil of selfish expedience,
arrogantly refusing to call a stop
to the source of this turbulence;
this suffering, corruption and violence ...

suffering born of those bereft of their loved ones,
of pain, hunger and unemployment ...
symptoms all of diseased hearts become stones,
shrivelled with unconcern and discontent.
And even in the midnight of our despair,
of Jesus' presence we remain unaware ...

our minds, Lord are closed to the Truth;
and You, in Your holy wrath, remain just,
leaving us to gather the bruised fruit of this earth
in consequence of our invidious lust ...
our awful, unlawful transgression
of discrimination, injustice and widespread oppression.

Now, God of incomparable grace,
who, with tender and endless compassion,
sent Jesus to suffer the sins of our race,
we confess to You our heinous sin.
We have perpetrated wrong;
yet, Lord, to You we belong.

Oh, Father God, in Your mercy,
we pray, grant us forgiveness;
protect us from the outcome of our policy
of inequality, that has made us worthless ...
an object of abject international scorn;
for this loss, Lord, we deeply mourn.

Abba, Father, hear our plea.
For Your sake and the sake of Your Kingdom
release those self-made bonds. Set Your people free.
Open wide Your eyes to the desolation
of these Your children, Your heirs.
Father, dear Father, please answer our prayers!

We kneel before You, wholly unworthy,
yet certain that in Your graciousness
You will reveal Yourself to us in Your mercy.
Lord, we can no longer endure the sunlessness
of an existence deprived of Your light.
Cast forth Your radiance; cast out our blight.

Father, please listen!
Father, forgive!
Father, hear us and act!
For the sake of Your Kingdom,
for we are Your children;
do not delay
but hear us, we pray.

SONNETS IN CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

Symphony of Two Trees

The moon glows with iridescent delight
at the sight of two trees entwined as one
and clad in multifarious blossom.

Riding high above them, she casts her light
in gentle auras of shimmering white,
celebrating their joyful unison.

She knows the strength of two – in her wisdom –
who climb together to their fullest height
and who spread their boughs to double the shade
that shelters their roots. “Listen,” she whispers,
“the songs of your leaves the wind will have made
into symphonies for you to disperse –
a gift to those that forget how to love ...
who refuse a place to harbour the Dove!”

Patterned Splendour

In patterned splendour fuse and knit as one –
a filigree of colour, texture, form,

or symphony with cadence, lilt, rhythm –
walking in unison through tears and fun.

As dappled forest carpets in the sun,
a’sparkle with light and shadow, reform
yourselves ... quiescent, caring. Make a norm
to live life in total fascination

for each other. Seek deep within the soul
for that essence, those tender spots, and merge.

Prepare to bleed as one, heal as one ... whole
and unbroken by your differences. Purge
yourselves. Walk the path as one and draw near;
but protect your core. Hold it always dear.

Ever-widening Horizons

With the feather-bright touch of your childhood
and memories of endless tomorrows
you straddle a new threshold that narrows
before you ... then kaleidoscopes outward
in ever-widening horizons. Could
you, alone, relish the flight of swallows?
A long-stemmed rose? A red wine that mellows
in candlelight? Take care! Shun that adulthood
that would urge you to turn aside from joy
and laughter ... from childlike play ... to smooth out
the wrinkles, painting life in shades of grey.
Stretch across a space and, whisper-soft, flaunt
a togetherness free from all constraint.
Marriage should be explored without restraint.

Dreams

Dark in the hidden recesses of life
we hide our secret delights, pretending
that this our solid front is not dreaming ...
dreaming of intangible birds in flight.

We cut chunks of self to suit, with a knife,
sharpened by others’ needs, remembering,
when we touch, the call of the birds soaring
free. Our treasure we discover at night –
and rediscover – together, the lid
having been lifted so that we can peep
at our joys and ambitions that are hid –
to be replaced with care before we sleep.

But, someday, the lid will break and our dreams
will unfurl as blossoms in spring – not dreams.