

2021 Holden Evening Prayer Around the World Leaders Guide

Each year Holden invites Villagers across the globe to create community through participation in the Holden Evening Prayer. This year more than ever, the world cries out for healing, justice, and mercy. Let us support and draw strength from one another, reaffirming our values as people called, equipped, and sent to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Recognizing that worship during a pandemic is fraught, we encourage you to engage in whatever ways are possible and meaningful for you in this context. If you can safely and easily host Vespers '86, the Marty Haugen setting of Holden Evening Prayer, please do so! If you and your community can gather virtually to engage in a modified Prayer Around the Cross, a guide is also offered for that. Whether in spirit or person, we come together with others to pray and build community while guarding one another's health.

2021 Readings for Vespers '86:

Isaiah 40:21-31:

21	Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?	mighty in power, not one is missing.	
22	It is God who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in;	27	Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"?
23	who brings the great to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.	28	Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. The Lord does not faint or grow weary; the understanding of God is unsearchable.
24	Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when God blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.	29	The Lord gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.
25	To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.	30	Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;
26	Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? The one who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because God is great in strength,	31	but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Excerpt from Dr. Bayo Akomolafe in *These Wilds Beyond Our Fences*:

Hope is not all light and bliss. There are aspects to hope that are haunted, dark, and shadowy. In a sense, to entertain hope is not merely to give in to a linear unfolding of events; it is to allow oneself to be touched. It is to recognize that there are other possibilities - wild possibilities - and that these possibilities will not leave us intact. To meet hope open-faced is to surrender to a logic that is beyond our kind¹.

OR

Prayer Around the Cross

Note that you are encouraged to modify this text and these directions to fit your own context. Chant suggestions are at the bottom of the document.

If you are gathering virtually, use this time to darken your space and sit quietly with a candle in front of you. Meditate on the flame and the chants as our prayers rise together as one.

Gathering Music

L1: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

L2: Welcome to Prayer Around the Cross. It is our practice, as a community, to gather for a service of prayer and simple song. Tonight, we center ourselves in our shared yearning for healing. We see the deep brokenness of our world, in our communities, in the news, and in ourselves. Hear our ache for justice, our longing for truth.

L1: We gather as people of faith, faith in the goodness of all people, faith in the possibility of meaningful life for all.

L2: We gather with joys, and sorrows, and doubt. We gather to offer our gifts, our questions, and our needs.

¹ Bayo Akomolafe, *These Wilds Beyond our Fences* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2017) 281.

L1: We light beacons of hope, signs of our quest for truth and meaning, in celebration of the life we share together². (adapted from Christine Robinson)

L2: We gather together tonight acknowledging that our lives are bound together with the lives of peoples and places across the whole world.

CHANT #1 [See Song suggestions below]

Reader 1 and Reader 2 alternate reading.

L1: Tonight we honor the words of lawyer and social justice advocate Bryan Stevenson. In his book *Just Mercy*, Stevenson writes: "There is a strength, a power even, in understanding brokenness, because embracing our brokenness creates a need and desire for mercy, and perhaps a corresponding need to show mercy.

L2: When you experience mercy, you learn things that are hard to learn otherwise. You see things you can't otherwise see; you hear things you can't otherwise hear.

L1: You begin to recognize the humanity that resides in each of us."³

L2: We are all created with a common humanity, a reflection of the divine. Give us eyes to see each other's place in the great tapestry of creation.

L1: We all need mercy. Give us ears to hear the echoes of our own brokenness.

L2: So many people are sick, hurting, disparaged, disenfranchised, dying. Be with them, God, surround them in peace that passes all understanding. And be with us, that our hearts and our hands, our tears and our laughter, may be given to the healing work of the world.

L1: For we know when we reach out to hold each other, we are holding you... when we lift each other up, we are uplifting you. We feel the blistering brokenness around us and in us, Creator God, and we pray for strength to be the salve.

CHANT #1 repeated while Leaders light the candles around the cross

L1: When the music begins again, all are welcome to pray or reflect.

² Christine, Robinson. #448 "We Gather This Hour." (*Singing the Living Tradition*, Hymnbook Resources Commission of the UUA, 1993).

³ Stevenson, Bryan, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015) 290.

L2: Come as a person beloved in the world. Come with all that weighs heavy on your heart. Come with all that dances in your heart. Come to nurture and sustain your spirit.

[pause]

L1: Come and center yourself, to sit quietly, to listen, and to pray.

L2: Come now, to the healing power of the cross.

CHANTS #1, #2, and #3 [See Song suggestions below]

Closing – After the chants

L1: We go forward now, with hope for the care of a wounded world. In the words of Dr. Bayo Akomolafe, “Hope is not all light and bliss. There are aspects to hope that are haunted, dark, and shadowy. In a sense, to entertain hope is not merely to give in to a linear unfolding of events; it is to allow oneself to be touched.

L2: It is to recognize that there are other possibilities - wild possibilities - and that these possibilities will not leave us intact. To meet hope open-faced is to surrender to a logic that is beyond our kind.”

L1: As you leave tonight, may you be nourished by the knowledge of Christ’s deep love for you, and supported to live out that love in the world. Send us into the world as healers in your name. Go in peace.

Postlude – quiet music

Song suggestions:

A) *ELW*

- 151 - Kyrie, Dinah Reindorf
- 549 - Thuma Mina, South Africa
- 721 - Goodness is Stronger Than Evil, Desmond Tutu, SA
- 752 - Lord Listen to Your Children Praying, Ken Medema

B) *Singing Our Prayer A companion to Holden Prayer Around the Cross*

- 1 - Bambalela, South Africa
- 5- Christ Our Peace, M Haugen
- 16 - If We Live, R Vegdahl
- 19 - It Won't Be Long, R Makeever
- 23 - Let Not Your Hearts, R Vegdahl
- 29 - Nada te Turbe, Taize (in Spanish and English)
- 30 - O God We Call, Linnea Good

Feel free to substitute any songs or chants that are meaningful to you. A list of Taize songs can be found [here](#).