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1. RIVERS IN THE DESERT

PSALM 126: 4-5

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

SYNOPSIS

A prayer with the central image of delight and surprise at how things can change.

SONGWRITER'S NOTES

It is bothersome to some that there is a dimension to God that is hidden. The mystery of God is not so much like a puzzle or deception—though we are in good biblical company when we might experience the Divine that way—but more like how molecules are hidden in everything around us, including our own bodies, or like how your love for your dog is hidden in every look you give her.

Psalms 126 is marked “A Song of Ascents,” a traveling song for the pilgrimage to Mount Zion. Musically, “Rivers in the Desert” has a happy little groove.

SONGBYTE

The particular desert referred to here is the Negeb Desert where, indeed, there is seasonal flooding that creates creeks and rivers. It is always anticipated, always hoped for, never something to be taken for granted.

Life can change on a dime. To pray this psalm connects us with Jesus' Beatitudes in Matthew 5. Though Jesus is always bent on calling our compassion to those classified as poor and hungry, these Beatitude blessings can also be read as being for all of us when we are in a season of need.

In a beatitude moment of prayer, there is no “us” and “them.” There is only all of us together, and some of us are in moments of plight and hunger.

PLACE IN WORSHIP

Call to Worship
Centering for Prayer
Sending Song

TIMES OF USE

Third Sunday of Advent, Year B
Fifth Sunday in Lent, Year C
Lectionary 30, Year B complementary (October 23–29)
Day of Thanksgiving, Year B

RIVERS IN THE DESERT
PSALM 126

Richard Bruxvoort-Colligan

D G sus4/C D G sus4/C D G sus4/C D G sus4/C

Refrain

Riv - ers in the des - ert, laugh - ter out of weep - - ing,

D G sus4/C D G sus4/C D G sus4/C

our hope is ground - ed on - ly in God.

G A C

4. WAIT FOR GOD

PSALM 27:14

Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

SYNOPSIS

In the final line of Psalm 27, we are invited into the holy practice of waiting for-hoping for-trusting in anticipation so central to our Hebrew roots of faith.

SONGWRITER'S NOTES

This psalm is not scheduled in the Revised Common Lectionary for Advent but it certainly can be useful in this season.

Advent is a strong feminine season where we do well to pay attention to the women among us to lead the way. Mary and Elizabeth in particular are central in the Christ story of the gospels. The song "Wait for God" invites us to consider three important moments of faith: In stanza one, a season of ripening and preparation as pregnancy with Mary and Elizabeth; stanza two, a readiness with the women with their lamps fueled; and stanza three, solidarity with those who wait, as with Jesus in Gethsemane.

SONGBYTE

Does your mind wander in prayer? You're in good biblical company! Some scholars suggest that Psalm 27 was originally two prayers with the break between verses six and seven. There seems to be a shift in voice at this point, but this in itself may be a gift of the text, an invitation to consider what we think prayer is.

In a full life, we have all kinds of things to process in the presence of God, including our gratitude and our cry for help, or the passion of grief and a second later, a moment for thanksgiving. I'm glad for faithful, meandering prayers in what we call scripture models.

PLACE IN WORSHIP

Holy Communion distribution
Prayer or Preparation for Prayer
Holy Communion

TIMES OF USE

Third Sunday after Epiphany, Year A
Second Sunday in Lent, Year C

PSALM 27

Richard Bruxvoort-Colligan

and watch and hope_____ and wait for God._

WAIT FOR GOD

PSALM 27

Richard Bruxvoort-Colligan

Capo 3: *D* *D/G $\flat$* *G* *A sus4* *D* *D/G $\flat$* *G* *A sus4*
F *F/A* *B $\flat$* *C sus4* *F* *F/A* *B $\flat$* *C sus4*

1 Wait for God, _
 2 Watch and hope, _
 3 Stay with me, _ } be strong and let__ your heart__ take cour-age._

D *D/G $\flat$* *G* *A sus4* *D* *D/G $\flat$* *G* *A sus4*
F *F/A* *B $\flat$* *C sus4* *F* *F/A* *B $\flat$* *C sus4*

Wait for God, _
 Watch and hope, _
 Stay with me, _ } be strong and let__ your heart__ take cour-age._

D *D/G $\flat$* *G* *A sus4* *D* *D/G $\flat$* *G* *A sus4*
F *F/A* *B $\flat$* *C sus4* *F* *F/A* *B $\flat$* *C sus4*

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7. SHOUT FOR JOY

PSALM 98:3-4

[God] has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness

to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen

the victory of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

SYNOPSIS

A song of celebration that God is present here and now for the whole of creation.

SONGWRITER'S NOTES

Christians celebrate that God is among us in Jesus Christ. On Christmas Day, we celebrate God's "here and now"-ness in Emmanuel, Jesus' name which means "God with us." It's a special time to sing strongly about the new covenant of God.

As true as it is that Jesus fulfills God's promise in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the people of ancient Israel also lived in God's unfailing, covenant love in a way no less present, no less faithful than today. Therefore, the words of the psalm stretch across Testaments to celebrate the Holy One.

SONGBYTE

Does it bother anyone that God has preferences? Even on Christmas Day we can't get away from God's bias toward those who suffer. What does it mean that our praise is voiced with the resonance of a call to awareness and service?

PLACE IN WORSHIP

Gathering Song
Hymn of Praise

TIMES OF USE

Christmas (Set III)
Vigil of Easter
Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B
Lectionary 32, Year C semicontinuous (November 6-12)
Lectionary 33, Year C complementary (November 13-19)

SHOUT FOR JOY

PSALM 98

Richard Bruxvoort-Colligan

G D sus4 D G C D sus4 D

8va al loco

1 You have come to wake us up, to bring real jus - tice and har - mo - ny. —
2 You re - call your his - to - ry, you love all those — who strug - gle now.
3 You have made your prom - ise clear, like the sun shin - ing on all the earth.

G Em A m7 D

— You have come to wake us up, to bring real jus - tice and har - mo - ny. —
— You re - call your his - to - ry, you love all those — who strug - gle now.
— You have made your prom - ise clear, like the sun shin - ing on all the earth.

G Em A m7 D

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13. SING A NEW SONG FOR GOD

PSALM 96:1

O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.

SYNOPSIS

Celebration! Psalm 96 is in the category of enthronement psalms, proclaiming God's undisputed rule.

SONGWRITER'S NOTES

"Sing a New Song for God" is a festival hymn for Christmas Day.

As the psalm text calls for the vastly diverse array of creation to praise, the song is arranged for musical diversity. Imagine a children's choir, adult choirs, handbells, organ, rock band, and congregation coming together in song!

Some of the melodies within the song are familiar, borrowed from our tradition, but presented with a fresh groove. The refrain also is new, though it uses a familiar text. As a whole, singing the song helps us know what it feels like to be connected to good, old things and simultaneously be all about the new things.

SONGBYTE

Do our songs have a shelf life? What does it mean to "sing a new song?"

Maybe it means in the midst of our old, old stories, to be always be completely present.

To be faithful to God's call to us today may look different than ever before. This might mean engaging "old songs" at times, to remind us how we have been anchored through generations. The historic language reminds us that faith is tried and true, ancient and trust-able.

What about newness? It may mean at some point we don't parrot our parents' faith. It may mean we reject theology that does not call for full engagement of current issues like ethics in business, care of the earth, justice for gay and lesbian persons, and the healing of extreme poverty.

PLACE IN WORSHIP

Hymn of Praise
Christmas Day anthem

TIMES OF USE

Christmas (set I)
Lectionary 9, Year C (May 29–June 4)
Lectionary 29, Year A complementary (October 16–22)

SING A NEW SONG FOR GOD

PSALM 96

Richard Bruxvoort-Colligan

The piano accompaniment is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It consists of three systems of music. The first system has two measures with chords D and G. The second system has two measures with chords Bm and A, followed by two measures with chords D and G, and a final measure with chords D and A. The third system has two measures with chords D and G, followed by two measures with chords Bm and A, and a final measure with the text 'Sing a new'.

D G D A D G

B m A D G D A

D G B m A Sing a new

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