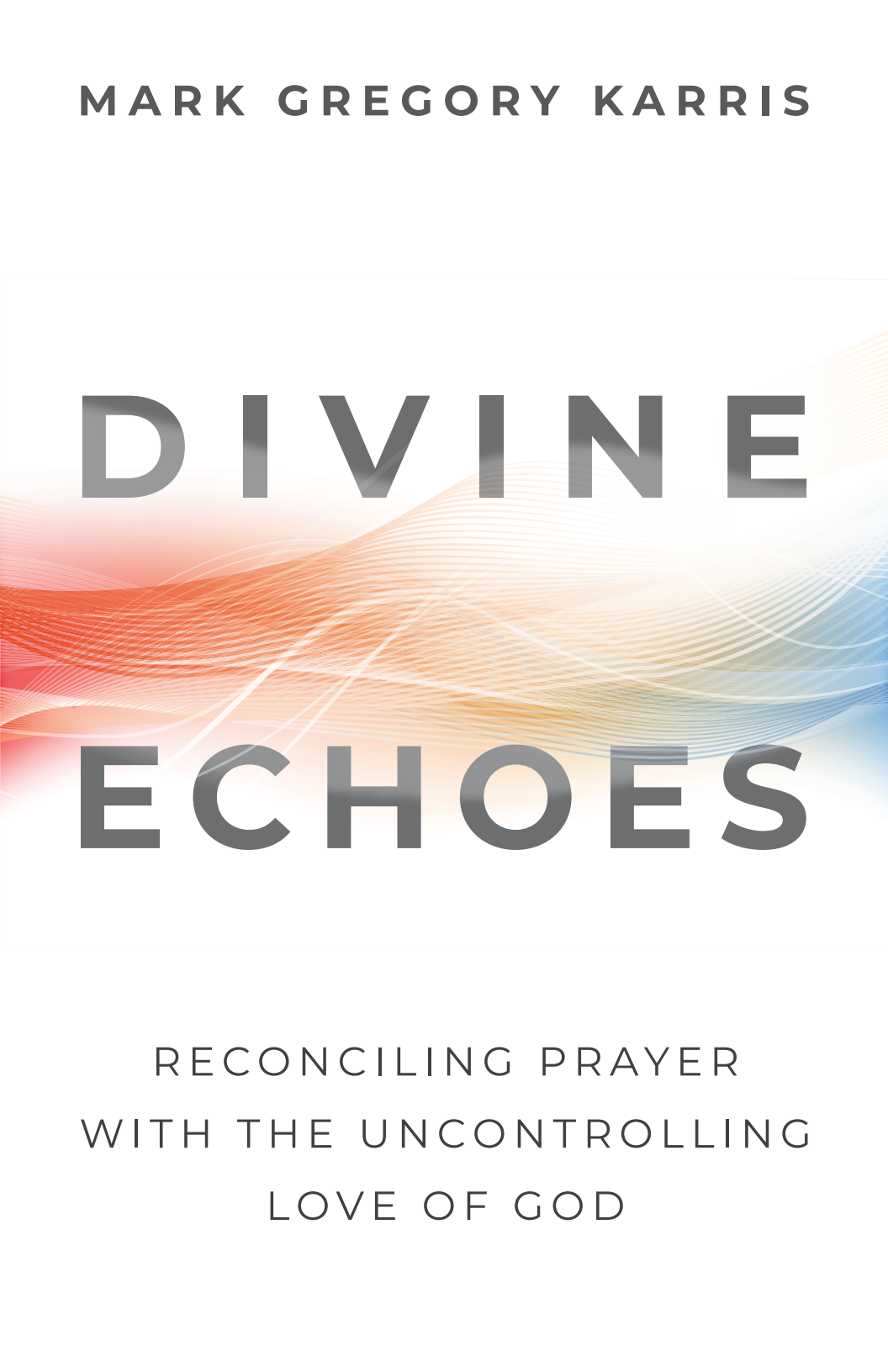


MARK GREGORY KARRIS

The background of the cover features a series of flowing, wavy lines in shades of orange, red, and blue, creating a sense of movement and depth. The lines are layered and overlap, giving the impression of a dynamic, ethereal landscape.

DIVINE ECHOES

RECONCILING PRAYER
WITH THE UNCONTROLLING
LOVE OF GOD

APPENDIX 1

COMMUNAL PRAYERS

The following communal prayers by various authors, scholars, and laypersons are examples of “conspiring prayer” and are grounded in God’s uncontrolling love, issues of social justice, and human partnership.

OPENING SERVICE PRAYER¹

Gracious and Loving God,
you love it when we come together to be with you.
We thank you for a new day and another opportunity
to meet together to worship and acknowledge you.
We honor and welcome your presence today;
open our eyes to all you want to do among
us by your life-giving Spirit.
Help us to be expectant and to leave knowing that
today we have met with the Risen Christ.
Help us to know in life-transforming ways
of the vast extent of your passionate love for us
and of your forgiveness and grace.
Help us to know in our heads and hearts that you are truly with us
in all our complex life circumstances.
Help us now to relax in your presence and receive
the good things you want to give us.
Give us the freedom to worship you wholeheartedly,
our Maker, Redeemer, and Sustainer.
We ask this with the authority of your son
Jesus, the Messiah and our Savior.
Amen.

OPENING PRAYER FOR UNITY AND MINDFULNESS²

God of Blessing,
you call all creation to new and abundant life.
By your Spirit, the earth and all living things flourish—
plants and trees, birds, beasts,
insects, reptiles, fish, people, and every other living organism.
We pray for
the well-being of all your creation,
understanding of our diversity and difference,
peace in our communities, with our neighbors,
and with those of different faiths,
hope and healing for indigenous peoples,
and reconciliation in the wider community.
Keep us mindful of the mistakes of the past,
and help us not to repeat them.
Amen.

BENEDICTION FOR WANDERERS³

Now, as you go,
wandering in dusty circles
through wilderness, longing for the Promised Land,
know that God wanders with you,
reveling in each step,
full of delight at the time spent with you.

So, wander!

Wander and be fruitful,
wander and grow,
wander and receive your new name—

Beloved.

Wander and know
that you do not wander alone.

Wander in Peace.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE HOMELESS AND THEIR LOVED ONES⁴

Dear God, we lift up to you those who
are homeless this evening.
We also pray for those who love them, who
may be feeling helpless to aide them.
You already know all of the wonderful
possibilities for good in this situation.
We know that you are always working
for their continuous well-being.
Open our eyes to ways we can be of assistance
to these individuals and their families.

*(Let us take a moment of silence and listen with
God for how we may creatively love them)*

May their hearts be open to cooperate with your Spirit
in making wise choices, remaining safe, and discerning
the good possibilities from the bad as they arise.
Also, uphold their families during the uncertain
times they find themselves in.
Whether it is unknown where a loved one is
tonight or whether that loved one is OK,
may they reach out and commune with
you, the God of all comfort
and the God who never leaves or forsakes them.
May their communion with you give them
peace and soothe their anxious hearts.
In the name of Jesus, thank you for hope.
Amen.

THESE HANDS: A PRAYER⁵

(People stand, hands over chest.)

We take a few deep breaths.

*(Pause for at least three breaths. Then make
fists and raise them line by line.)*

We live in a time of clenching fists:
in anger that threatens,
in greed that clutches,
in worry and fear that tense and tighten.
This is no way to live.

(Open hands and thrust them outward, as if breaking chains.)

And so, we let go.
We take a few deep breaths.

*(Pause. Lower hands, palms open, facing
upward, raising them line by line.)*

Our hands are empty.
We acknowledge our powerlessness.
We are not in control.
We are but humble protagonists in your great story of love.
We receive your grace that heals, forgives, and liberates.
This is the way to live.
And so, we open our hands, our hearts, our minds, our doors.
Ahhhh!

We take a few deep breaths.

(Facing palms outward, raise them line by line.)

We extend our hands in blessing.

As we have been blessed, so we bless.

We hold no weapons and make no threats.

We seek peace with all and we make peace for all.

It is better for us to give than to receive.

Make us instruments of your peace, Living God.

We surrender our lives to your purposes.

May your Spirit fill our lives and work through these hands.

Amen!

We take a few deep breaths.

(Pause, hands pressed together over heart)

We open our eyes.

We see your light in one another:

a flickering candle in the dark,

a quiet glow at dawn,

a rising sun for this new day.

We call forth that light in one another,

and we honor one another with these hands.

May the peace of Christ rise in you.

*(People silently turn and honor one another,
praying a silent blessing over each other.)*

PRAYER TO THE ONE WHO IS LOVE⁶

Creator and Sustainer,

we believe that you are love—
not merely loving, as if your love were
one attribute among many,
but love itself.

We believe that love defines the very essence of who you are,
that all your attributes are facets of this one thing:
others-oriented, self-giving, *kenotic* love.

And because you are love,
we know that we can trust you.

Because you are love,
we know that your heart is always for us,
and that your work in this world is always for our good.

We know that every good and perfect gift comes from you,
and that every evil is a deviation from your will.

But because you are love,
you do not force your will on anyone or anything.

Instead, you invite us to partner with you
so that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And when we partner with you,
you lead us into new and better ways of being.

This is what we desire, Lord.

We thank you for your invitation,
And we accept with gladness!

Help us to yield,
every day and every moment,
to your way of love.

PRAYER FOR THE BROKEN⁷ (BASED ON PSALM 34:18)

God, wherever we go, we walk among
those who hide unspeakable pain.
In our desire to give hope, help us to
create safe spaces for the hurting.
May this space also be a place where they
can seek help and share their pain.
Empower us to be Jesus to the broken.

**The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and
saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

We all have stories. Every story is important.
Our stories mold and form us.
Our stories break and transform us. God, help
us to value the stories each other holds.
Help us to create sacred spaces to hold those stories in safety.

**The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and
saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

Help us to be your tangible love through
the conscious choices we make.
Help us to courageously enter into the other's pain.
Help us wisely tell the victims that their
wounds were never part of your plan.
Allow us to share your love in creative ways.

**The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and
saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

Let us pray this prayer of dedication,
asking God's guidance for seeing others' brokenness
as our opportunity to show God's love.

(All)

**God, help me to see others for who they are
and not what has happened to them.
Help me to see their pain without judging their behavior.
Help me to act in ways that will be a bridge
of trust between you and the hurting.
Help me to hear your prompting,
demonstrate your active love,
and step into broken lives in ways that make a difference.
Help me to not control behavior in others
but instead love them to wholeness.
Allow me to speak hope into their lives.**

**We are the eyes that see the pain.
We are the feet who walk beside.
We are the ears that listen.
We are the arms that hold them as they heal.
The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and
saves those who are crushed in spirit.
Amen.**

PRAYER FOR SHALOM⁸

God of all people, places, and situations,
we come to you in prayer as forgiven people
seeking your strength and peace.

We have come to hear your wisdom as
we bring our petitions to you.

In this time of prayer, enlarge our capacity for love.
Sharpen our vision so that we may faithfully work
for the well-being of all your people
and your world.

We pray for shalom for all of those who dwell on the margins
of the economic systems in every country
and who suffer the pain and anxiety that comes
with a minimal income or financial insecurity.

We pray for the vulnerable, for the elderly and the children,
and especially for those who are hungry or sick.

Help us to partner with you so that our
world will more and more
reflect the values of your kingdom.

We pray for the time when we all acknowledge
that there is enough for everyone
and when everything is shared so that all
are able to enjoy your creation fully.

We pray for peace, healing, and justice for
those struggling in war-torn countries,
those trying to survive, who are mourning or in
need of food, water, shelter, and medical help.
We pray for those fleeing such regions, especially
in _____ and _____.

We pray that borders may be opened and
creative short- and long-term solutions
to difficult problems may be found.

We pray for courageous peacemakers, and for those
people and agencies who dedicate their lives, work,
and energy to alleviating suffering of any kind,
especially those in dangerous situations.
Keep them safe and bring peace with justice swiftly.
May your kingdom come in all its fullness and come soon.

We pray for world leaders, that they will act with integrity,
wisdom, and compassion for the common good.

Our world needs good leaders.

Raise up new peacemakers with courage who will
partner with you against all forms of evil.
Continue to transform us to be effective partners too,
demonstrating your love, forgiveness,
and hope wherever we may go.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR A PERSON WITH LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS⁹

Loving and Compassionate God,
we come seeking healing and wholeness for _____.
We know that you are with _____ in her/his pain.
We know that you seek healing even when a cure is unlikely.
May _____ experience your
companionship, grace, and healing touch.
May _____ know that her/his life is in your loving care
and that nothing can separate her/him from
your love in this life and the next.
Inspire us as friends and family to love deeply
and to share that love with _____.
Open our hearts and hands that we might bring,
by our presence, healing to her/his life.
Bless _____ and those who suffer,
and enable us to be instruments of peace
and healing to all we meet.
In Christ's name.
Amen.

PRAYER FOLLOWING A NATURAL DISASTER¹⁰

God of All Creation,
we see the devastation brought on by
_____, and our hearts are broken.
We feel powerless to help those who are homeless
and hopeless in _____'s wake.
We are tempted to stand on the sidelines
when your children need our help.
We can become overwhelmed by the immensity of need
and the realities of climate change that
have magnified the storm.
Wake us up, O Loving One, to the needs of others.
Inspire us to move from apathy to
empathy and passivity to agency.
Remind us that we are your companions,
that we are your heart and hands,
your wisdom and advocacy amidst the challenges of our world.
Awaken us to the power you have given us already,
and inspire us to claim greater powers of healing
and compassion in companionship with you
that we might truly be your partners in healing the Earth.
In Christ's name.
Amen.

PRAYER FOR A STRUGGLING FAMILY¹¹

Lord God, you know every heart and are
intimate with all the challenges we face.
We lift up to you a family in our church who
is struggling and has requested prayer.
We know you have intimate knowledge
of all they are going through.
We thank you for working to bring good
out of every bad happening.
Thank you also for your constant presence with them,
strengthening, comforting, and upholding each one.
May they recognize you are suffering with
them until this situation is overcome.
In the name of Jesus,
Amen.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING¹²

We come humbly before you, the Uncontrolling God of Love.

We give you thanks.

Your grace is sufficient, even in our darkest hour.
Your hope is the candle within us that never fades.

We give you thanks.

When we see the chaos all around us, your
fierce love reminds us to carry on.

When we grow tired and weary, you
birth within us a new song.

You never allow death, oppression, and
hatred to be the last word.

Your love is endless, your justice relentless.

We give you thanks.

You asked us to join you on a sacred mission,
to spread love throughout the land.

We are your feet, we are your eyes, we
are your ears and your hands.

What an honor it is to represent your name.

To bring good news to the poor and witness
you deliver them from shame.

May you continue to teach us how to be
a community that is grateful.

**God, you are good. Your mercy and
compassion endure forever.**

Your heart for justice is unwavering. We give you thanks.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR REDEPTIVE PARTNERSHIP¹³

Great God, amazing beyond comprehension
and yet willing to partner with humanity,
created in your image.

Continue to persuade us with your prevenient grace,
made new moment by moment,
as we learn more about who you are and how to be like you.

Provide for our needs in community
that we may be satisfied
but never grow too comfortable or
mistake frivolity for necessity.

Forgive us for failing to recognize privilege,
and show us how to be your redemptive agents in the world.

Give us courage to act as advocates
for those who have no voice—for the oppressed,
the marginalized, and the persecuted.

Help us to overcome our unbelief,
holding fast to a faith that recognizes
your work in all of creation
and your covenant with your people.

Make clear the most loving action in all things,
that we might join you in the labor of
bringing the kingdom earthside.

We praise you for who you are and thank you
for what you have done, are doing, and will continue to do
in and through us.

Amen.

INVOCATION FOR CHAOTIC TIMES¹⁴

Come, Great Spirit, come.
Keep our feet firmly on the ground as
our heads touch the skies.
Keep our sight clear and our ears tuned
to voices different from our own.
Keep our words true and our hearts and minds ajar.
Keep our hands empty to fill them with
the needs that arise before us.
Keep our arms spread wide to embrace possibilities.

(Silence)

May our gifts be revealed to us in this time,
that we might do the most excellent actions in your world:
to gladden the hearts of human beings,
and protect the earth we live in;
to fill the hungry, lift up the afflicted, lighten the
sorrowful, free the fearful, release the suffering.

(Silence)

Empower and encourage us, Gracious Spirit,
that we may liberate that which has been
given to us for the good of the whole
so that justice and joy might come to this great world,
so that we would complete the circle
that is your goodness in life.

(Silence)

Come, Generous Spirit, come shine on us and
through us on this day and all days,
that we might step out in courage and in love. May it be so.
Amen.

PRAYER FOR MERCY AND FORGIVENESS¹⁵

God, instead of becoming your agents of mercy and forgiveness,
we, like many of the Pharisees of Jesus's day, find it all too
easy to see the rest of the world as sinners who are under your
fierce judgment and ourselves as righteous and loved by you.

Grant us your divine ability to love
others in the midst of their sin.

Remind us in this very moment
that your relationship with others, and
our relationship with you
is forever based upon your love and acceptance.

Period.

(Silence)

Holy Spirit, remind us in this very moment
that it is not our right beliefs or behavior in
conformity with some moral code
or theological doctrine that causes you to love us.

You simply love us because you are Love.

(Silence)

Help us live in an almost constant state of repentance,
turning back to you and away from all of those
things that so easily capture our attention.

It is only as we repent and turn back to you, entering
a state of prayer and presence, that we experience the
great mystery of your mercy, forgiveness, and love.

Amen.

A PRAYER TO CO-GARDEN¹⁶

Cultivating God,
you are the ultimate source of growth and
transformation in the world.
Thank you for giving clothing to the flowers of
the fields and breathing life into the soil.
We ask that you be the light that warms
our relationship with the ground.
Help us to be gardeners and caregivers of the earth,
that all earth's seeds might be fruitful and feed a hungry world.
May we tread tenderly on the face of the earth with love,
compassion, and mindfulness of each
other and the rest of creation.
In all your infinite names we pray,
Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE: A LITANY¹⁷

Gracious God, Creator of all truth and beauty,
all peace and justice,
you have created all humanity in your image—
all of us bear your fingerprints on our lives,
and you have declared all creation to be good.

But this world has become something other
than what you created it to be.
Instead of love and peace, compassion and grace,
our hearts and hands have contributed to
hatred and conflict,
apathy and judgment.
We have substituted arrogance for humility,
vengeance for forgiveness,
selfishness for service.

Yet, for some reason beyond our ability to comprehend,
you are here, now, in the midst of it all—
in the midst of all our self-made chaos.

How can that be?
How is it that you, the One who is *above*
all, freely chooses to be *in* all—
in all the muck and mire of your creation that has gone astray?

God, we long for peace.

Help us to understand that
although you do not cause everything,
you desire good to come from all that happens.

When we are tempted to contribute to discord,
give us steady feet and calm minds.
When we marginalize, abuse, or steal hope,
turn our hearts and minds toward shalom—
that which is not simply the absence of conflict and injustice
but is also the presence of wholeness,
well-being, and goodness—
to thereby become vehicles of your transforming grace.

God, may we be your hands that work for peace.

Even in the midst of darkness and chaos where we do not see it,
you are at work.
You have the power to create beauty through us—
out of the mess we have created.

Give us patience as we work with you.
Gently but firmly restrain us from rushing ahead of you.
As we partner with you, let us see the ugliness in ourselves
and in our world
so that we can transform it
rather than draw a veil over it.

God, help us be your agents of peace.

Keep us from all apathy and hubris.
Let our hearts love so strongly
that they break time and time again
at the sight of unrest.

Let us never be content simply to be peacekeepers,
but let us always work toward being peacemakers
so that our zeal for peace grows brighter and stronger
with each passing day.

Let our hearts be seedbeds,
our minds be drawing boards,
and our hands be instruments
of your peace in the world.

God, sustain us in the work of peacemaking.

Finally, Lord God, we offer this prayer
not for peace “one day”
but for peace now and every day.

Beginning with me.

O God, we will be your partners in peace.
Amen.

PRAYER OF CON-SPIRING¹⁸

O God who is above us and below us, around us
and inside us with each breath we take,
we thank you for the Breath of Life.
From the very beginning we are told,
your Breath, your *ruah*, your presence enlivens the world and
brings all of creation to life.

All creatures exchange your Breath with the trees and plants,
thousands of times each day,
con-spiring together, breathing together,
participating in an interspecies ritual of communion with you,
reminding us of the sacred gift of life.

We have been taught to recognize the body and blood of Christ
in the everyday world of grains and grapes.
May we now learn to sense your presence
in every breath we take
so that we understand that
when we dirty the air,
when our actions make it so others cannot easily breathe,
when we make the creation warm too much,
we stifle your presence, we defile the Breath.

Let us vow that in our life's limit of breaths
we make it so no one has to say, "I can't breathe."

Let us vow that in our life's limit of breaths
our breathmates, the trees, can live and thrive.

O God of Breath,
may each breath we take together—
our con-spiring with each other and the forest—
may it clear our minds and hearts.
May it enliven our vision with justice and compassion.
May it reconnect us with the creation
so that we strive to truly live in communion
with all living beings on this one earth.

And so, with each breath—
(breathing prayer)
YAHHH WEHHH
YAHHH WEHHH
—we remember that life is sacred.

PRAYER TO THE PILGRIM GOD¹⁹

Pilgrim God, you journey with us,
coming alongside,
walking our path.

**Thank you for loving us
and not leaving us alone.
Thank you for caring about our paths
and not leaving us helpless.**

We confess
sometimes we wish you would just get us to the destination.
Sometimes we wish you would at least fix the path.
Sometimes we yearn to not see through a glass darkly.

**This journey is hard.
So much is broken.
We're not sure of how our story unfolds into Yours.**

Sometimes we wish you would do the walking for us.
Sometimes we wish you were not a Pilgrim God.
Sometimes we're not sure we want to be a pilgrim people.

**Yet you faithfully journey with us,
coming alongside, walking our path**

You invite us to faithfully journey with others when it is hard.
You show us how to come alongside
those who suffer brokenness,
walking with those who feel sidelined.

Pilgrim God,
we welcome you and join you as pilgrim people.
We commit to being like you,
walking the path of love and justice for all.
Amen.

APPENDIX 2

INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS

The following individual prayers by various authors, scholars, and laypersons are examples of “conspiring prayer” and are grounded in God’s uncontrolling love, issues of social justice, and human partnership.

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT¹

God of the entire universe and friend to me,
I look to you again today to be my guide.
I will listen for your still, small voice.
I will heed the gentle nudges, the intuitions,
and the positive insights that arise.
I commit myself, once again, to live a life of love.
Help me discern how I might love well today.
Give me wisdom and sensitivity.
I commit myself to respond creatively to your calls.
I commit myself to pursue justice, right living, and generosity.
In light of the needs I see next to me and
those I know of in the wider world,
I commit to responding to your leading.
I will love you, love others, and love myself.
I commit myself, once again, to live a life of love.
Amen.

COME LORD JESUS²

Friend of Sinners, friend of mine, thank you.
Thank you for so much—for you, for me, for my life,
for my family, and for my friends.
Thank you for your provision, for your
guidance, for your wisdom.
Thank you for making me—for dreaming me into
existence and inviting me into your great rescue
mission to redeem the world back to yourself.
For so long I have lived for myself—for my
dreams and my desires and my well-being—
but today I commit myself to living for you—for your dreams,
for your desires, and for the well-being of all of humanity.
Help me today to be you to those who cross my path.
When people look into my eyes, may they see you.
When they hear my words, may they hear you.
When they feel my touch or my embrace, may they feel you.
May my words today inspire and challenge
and build up and push forward.
May they give hope, show grace, and exhibit mercy.
May they bring heaven ever closer to earth.
Come, Lord Jesus.
Come into my life afresh today
so that I might carry you into the lives of others.
Amen.

DEAR SOUL FRIEND³

So often, I wish I were a better friend to you.
I get so distracted, so preoccupied with my concerns.
I'm so busy inwardly and outwardly.
I can't stay still long enough just to reach out and
touch you and let you touch me, too—
almost like we were at a coffee shop together.
I am not afraid of you. I love you and long to be closer to you.
Perhaps sometimes you long to be closer to me, too?
Do you ever get lonely?
Do you ever wish you could just relax a
little, like on the seventh day?

I fear that "church" may be part of the problem.
Sometimes when I am in church listening
to music that praises you,
I feel like I am at a pep rally and that we are
cheering for you so that you might love us.
I don't think you want or need our cheering.
It may even embarrass you a little.
There's a humility in your style; you don't
mind living in the shadows a bit.
But I think you want our friendship—not for
our sake alone but for your sake, too.

I am told by open and relational theologians
that you can't and won't control us.
They say that your power is of a different
sort: luring, empowering, guiding.
I'm glad about that. But I'm guessing you grow a
little weary of exercising all of the uncontrolling
power on your own, without our help.

You must be so busy. I want to help you rest.
I know a little place on Third and Main;
it's called Seventh Day Coffee Shop.
I'll meet you there.

You've given me so much over these years:
your love, your forgiveness, your humor,
your power, your playfulness, your guidance, your hope.
You are so strong, but maybe a little lonesome.
How about this time I give something back?
10 a.m. sound good?
It's my treat.

EVENING PRAYER FOR THOSE IMPRISONED⁴

Jesus.

Savior. Brother. Friend.

Guard my soul in this cell of night.

Defend me from self-injuring doubt and debilitating fear.

Gift me with the sleep that heals.

May those I have harmed forgive me.

May those who've injured me be forgiven.

I ask this in your name—you who knew no sin.

Jesus, be Savior, Brother, and Friend

to those who are lost

or locked away from your love.

Soften the hearts of those who condemn.

Strengthen the lives of all who long for freedom.

When morning comes, may mourning end.

Bend the bars of death.

Help me rise and praise you.

Let me see the sun,

my Savior, Brother, and Friend.

Amen.

PERSONAL PRAYER FOR THE DAY AHEAD⁵

You have invited Christ-followers to actively partner with you
and with others who share your values. I accept that invitation.

I pray that as I journey with you throughout this day,
your Spirit will enable me to be more like you.

I pray that I will be gracious as you are gracious,
forgiving as you are forgiving, and
generous as you are generous.

Help me be continually aware of your
presence and activity in the world,

and embolden me to witness to your faithfulness and love.

May I be an authentic ambassador of you and your kingdom.

May all that I say and do reflect your character and
be appropriate activities of your kingdom.

I ask all this in the authority of Jesus, the Christ.

Amen.

APPENDIX 3

MEDITATIVE PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS

The following meditative prayers and reflections by various authors, scholars, and laypersons are examples of “conspiring prayer” and are grounded in God’s uncontrolling love, issues of social justice, and human partnership.

MEDITATIVE REFLECTION FOR AN INVITATION TO PRAYER¹

(One can use jazz underneath—sax and drums)

Silence, nothingness, in the darkness.

Silence, waiting to be broken.

Yearning, reaching out, touching.

A note, a beat, a sound.

And the vast heavenly host stands still

as the rising comes, not yet spoken,

breaking, calling, luring,

a sense of wonder rising,

rising out of the earth.

In the garden of the rising sky,

can you see, coming through the fission of

the earth, along the water ways,

the movement of rising, the sky of peace,

the sky of mercy, the sky of love,

the sky of memory and sharing,

the sky of blessed life, seeking completion?

Wholeness, healing, sky full of light.

God's dreaming,
calling over the chaos, the beginnings of life rising.
Listen to the intensity, listen to the harmony.
The cry of love.
From the inner imagination, from the edge of experience,
love comes tumbling down.
Like a watcher at the moment of dawn,
love comes to us
uninvited, without our calling, overtaking us.
This grand creation,
this global, circling transformation,
this heart-stopping beauty,
bringing together all that is and will be.
We are there, in that moment, standing
at the tomb on tiptoes, looking
through the veil to the rising,
feeling the touch of love,
feeling the love in our souls.
No longer distracted,
our pores are open.
Our heart is open.

Silence.

ART AND RELIGION: A PRAYER OF ALTERNATE DEFINITIONS²

*(Slowly read and internalize each definition.
This in itself can become a meditation.)*

art: complexity held in delicate tension; exploration of matters of ultimate concern

artwork: a worldview made manifest

beauty: a harkening to the wholeness of Eden; the bringing about of shalom

creation: collaboration, relational emergence; productive interdependence

knowing: acquaintance with the unknowable

meaning: elucidation of relations, interconnections, implications, contingencies

observation: imagining from within another's worldview; empathy training

openness: finding self in the other; receiving the other as self; active passivity toward the Divine Other.

truth: the intersection of worldviews

religion: complexity held in delicate tension; exploration of matters of ultimate concern

(Pray the prayer below in its entirety or focus on any one stanza, line, or word:

- 1. Read as written.*
- 2. Substitute words for their above definitions.*

3. *Read again using new definitions. Spend time with each combination.*
4. *Meditate on new meanings, new outcomes, new implications, new consequences, new actions.*
5. *Pray for the Spirit's prodding.*
6. *Return to prayer over time as desired until you feel all meditations are exhausted.)*

Relational God,

may our religion birth our artwork,
may our artwork encourage observation,
may our observation motivate creation.

May our creation generate meaning,
may our meaning foster openness,
may our openness enact truth.

May our truth produce knowing,
may our knowing beget beauty,
may our beauty be our art, our religion.

May it be so. Amen.

(If/when all meditations are exhausted, consider the given combinations above. Reconsider, recombine, rewrite, redefine; discover new relations. Pray for the Spirit's prodding. Test each new combination against the Spirit's prodding. Meditate on new meanings, new outcomes, new implications, new consequences, new actions.)

A Prayer³

O God, I am counted among those who dwell in hell, for I have forsaken the inexhaustible fountain of Your Word. Guide us now to be strong, to have understanding, that wherever there is a length to the days, or wherever there is life, we might find Holy Wisdom with Your Light and Your Peace.

May we be turned toward Her, for She has lived among us and has commanded the leopards of the mountains; She is the Law and Commandments of the people of old. May we be drawn to Her Light, and may that Light live in our hearts and be spoken on our lips.

Living within us, we have intermixed the bread and wine,
which She has offered to us, so our footsteps may be guided
by Her Light, our tongues be the language of justice and
righteousness, and Her Wisdom perfume every
tomb and ambry we liberate, and bestow upon
the humble the fullness of Her treasures of Love.

Amen.

Proverbs 8, Song of Songs 4, Baruch 3

