

Written prayers

Inspired by “live below the line”

From 7-11 May 2012, and 29 April-3 May 2013 the Sanctuary’s co-founders (Liz Baddaley and Jill Andrews) joined thousands of other people in the “[Live below the line](#)” initiative launched by the Global Poverty Project. Both years, the experience prompted daily blogs of reflection which you can read on our worship in action page – www.thesanctuarycentre.org/takeaction - and daily prayers of response which we have included as a set of written prayers here, together with one from 2011, written for those living below the line in reality.

A prayer for those living below the poverty line

Dear Lord, we lift up to you all who live below the line – we thank you that none of them is beneath your notice. You see each one, and know each one completely – for each one is your unique and precious child.

Dear Lord, we ask that you would lift them above the line – we know that you are our perfect Father and all good things come from you. Give daily bread to satisfy their hunger, and give daily hunger for change to us.

Dear Lord, we thank you that you have provided more than enough food in your world. Please soften our hearts so that we, who live so far above the line, would be prepared to share all we have until that line is erased completely. In our day, and in our time, please do it Lord. Amen.

Choosing to pray

It’s hard to know what to pray today Lord.
I sat down to lunch and grace felt trite -
I’m almost embarrassed, ashamed
For I know I am not living below the line.
I wanted to be inspired by this temporary sacrifice
To feel more, understand more... care more...
But it’s been too easy - too interesting -
Too diverting
To make me anything but thankful.
Thankful that I have so much
And thankful that you keep showing me more of you
So that I’m beginning to be open to having less -
Though I wrestle and fight and resist
And half long to return to ignorance
Or deny and justify myself out of what my heart says loud and clear -
That I’m hungrier for change in the world,
And transformation in me
Than this food before me.
Teach me your heart Saviour, Provider, Friend,
For I would choose you, and others, over me.
But I need your help.
So I choose your help
Even when I’m half-afraid of where it might lead.

Praying for wisdom

She's hungrier than I am Lord,
So show me what to do.
From the little I have
Could I give more to her?
Even as I stand on the edge of hunger
And deliberate, justify, back-track...
What might you multiply in my heart
From laid down meals for my friend?
Might I see a glimpse of a sacrifice of praise
Made day after day by lovers and fasters the world over?
And know in some small part what it might be like
To lay down my life for my friend?
Might I transcend an exercise into discovering the truth?
That there's infinite worth in each one you died for.
And when I feed one, I really am feeding you.

A prayer for inter-dependence

Open my hands Lord
Because I want to share what I have
But I so often forget that everything good I'm holding
Is all from you and is given to me
To give again.
Open my hands Lord
Because I want to receive from everyone I meet
But I so often forget that they have good things to offer
That are from you and given to them
To give again.
Change my heart Lord
For I so often compare
And notice the difference
When all I should see is your image revealed seven billion times and never the same
And all I should seek is family - your every good thing to be shared with each one.

A prayer for sharing

Lord, you tell us to pray "lead us not into temptation"
But what about the times when I choose to be led?
Forgive me for when my wants have denied others' need.

Lord, all good and perfect gifts come from you
So why do I grasp onto them like they're my own?
Forgive me for when my wants have denied others' need.

Lord, you have asked me to care for the poor
But they seem so far away when I am hungry.
Forgive me for when my wants have denied others' need.

Lord, you know that my heart desires to love my neighbour,
To follow you in laying down my life.
But I so often fail.
Help me to place others' needs before my wants
And teach me to share your gifts with all.

A prayer for balance

Teach me to walk a tight-rope Lord
Because I don't want to slip straight back into old, easy ways
Of comfort, luxury and greed.
Quick to forget 1.4 billion faces and stories
And eager to hear "you've done enough",
"You need to fit in to some degree"
Or worse still, to believe the lie
That my indulgence is somehow unrelated to others' need.

And yet I want to enjoy what you have given,
Remembering I'm a beloved child
Savouring each good gift from you
And sharing them with my friends right here
As well as with these global neighbours who feel so close.
I want to carry a cross because of the joy you have set before me,
And given already, and give still each day
Living in grace and freedom, not guilt.

So teach me to walk this tight-rope Lord -
Looking to you and the way that you walked
Listening for what you say is enough and too much
Ready to understand that will change because you love me
And refusing to drown out my questions with distractions.
Walk with me Lord, perhaps if you take my hand and stay close
I'll be steady enough to complete the course and balance my act.

A prayer of (dis)comfort

Lord, the table we've come to sit at today is uncomfortable -
Not because of the meagre rations on one side
But because of the comfort on another.

We want to get up and leave it,
To look away and return to our last stage of revelation
Where we were comfortable with our current level of 'sacrifice'.

But we won't.
Because it reminds us of another table – yours.
Where everyone has the same bread and wine because of the incredible cost you paid.

And so in the pain and shame we feel, we'll stay sitting here -
Not because of a commitment to see this week out
But because we long for our whole lives to be transformed and to bring transformation.

Lord, we want to work towards a different table -
Where we thankfully have just enough
And generously and joyously share the rest so there is no more 1.4 billion not invited.

But we don't know how, and we need you in this – as in everything
To show us what is enough. And above all to ensure
That in our receiving and our giving is grace, grace, more grace and always love.

A prayer to open eyes wide shut

Spirit of truth help us to see as you do
The worth, the value, the reality
Of each individual and what they face day by day,
As if they were as clearly in view as our own reflection.

We look at poverty with eyes wide shut -
So many cameras, statistics and information.
But what is it for if we can turn away later?
Or stare it in the face objectively as a distant, disconnected force?

Help us instead look with eyes wide open
To the truth of how hunger feels and drains and degrades.
And to keep lovingly looking on those who face it for real
Until we stop forgetting we're the minority and start acting for change once and for all.

A prayer for food distribution

Lord you taught us to pray 'give us today our daily bread'.
Enough said.
You understand what we need;
You designed us to run on this fuel -
And you made it a delight we can enjoy, not just a chore.
Lord, are we any angrier than you are today
When we look at these statistics next to our unequal plates?
There is enough food for everyone
But the scales are so imbalanced and our hearts so indifferent
That there are cupboards of surplus; skips full of waste;
Just-enough and not-enough rations; and empty plates.
You see them all – and we do too when we're willing to remember.
Please don't let us forget that others need daily bread
And help us share and pray and speak out until they have it.
Because we do not believe inequality is your design.
And we do believe that we can bring enough to everyone
If we lay down our sense of entitlement;
If we follow the narrow way of transformative love.

A prayer inspired by Psalm 40 (NLT)

We have told all your people about your justice.
We have not been afraid to speak out,
as you, O Lord, well know.

written prayers

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We have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in our hearts;
We have talked about your faithfulness and saving power.
We have told everyone in the great assembly
of your unfailing love and faithfulness.

Keep us speaking out Lord – even when it’s uncomfortable.
Give us the strength to live out your message – even when we’re weary.
Fill us with the confidence to keep praying – even when we’re discouraged.
Embolden us with the courage to declare your work as your work.
And above all keep us moving forward on this narrow path
For the sake of the lost, the poor and the broken
And for you – the living, beautiful word who is still - and always - mighty to save.