

**An LGBTQ+  
Poetry Mass  
for the  
University  
of Warwick**

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**19 February 2022.**

This is a service of Great Thanksgiving for God's love for us, God's world, our lives, and the love that is in us and surrounds us. The poems selected to augment the Anglican liturgy of Holy Communion become prayers.

In choosing only the work of writers from across the ages whom we identify as LGBTQ+ the intention is to give thanks and praise to God for our own unique part in God's creation, in all our diversity and difference. A writer's particular identification (as 'L' or 'G' or 'B' or 'T' or 'Q') is not indicated since labels do not make a poem or a person any more real than they already are. The titles of the poems are included when these identify it further than the words of its first line.

Do please come forward to receive the bread and wine if you are accustomed to so doing. If not, then please come forward for a blessing. Or, you may prefer to remain seated, and enjoy an extended moment of stillness instead. Please join in by speaking the responses printed in bold.

*Rev. Dr. Paul Edmondson, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and St Andrew's Church, Shottery, Stratford-upon-Avon.*

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:  
**Amen.**

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

*A bidding prayer.*

Lashes of white light  
binding another hailcloud -  
the whole onset all over  
bursting against our faces,  
sputtering like dead holly  
fired in a grate:  
And the birds go mad  
potted by grapeshot  
while the sun shines  
in one quarter of heaven  
and the rainbow  
breaks out its enormous flag  
oily, unnegotiable-  
over the sack-draped backs  
of the cattle in their kingdom.  
*'Peace' by Adrienne Rich.*

*Hymn*

**Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord:  
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;  
Tender to me the promise of his word;  
In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.**

**Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name:  
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;  
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
His holy name, the Lord, the Mighty One.**

**Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might:  
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;  
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,  
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.**

**Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word:  
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.  
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
To children's children and for evermore.**

*by Timothy Dudley Smith.*

*We sit.*

*A collect for purity.*

**Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

*A collect for our sexuality.*

Almighty God,  
we thank you because we are fearfully and wonderfully made,  
and are dependent on your grace  
for our loves, our desires, our relationships:  
hear us when we cry to you from our depths,  
seeking to connect,  
so that our mortal bodies may always be reminded  
of the immortal longings of our human being,  
revealed to us through your Son,  
the Word made flesh,  
Jesus the anointed one,  
who lives and reigns with you,  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

*An invitation to confess our sins.*

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes  
I all alone bewep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings'.  
*by William Shakespeare.*

*A moment of silence during which we call to mind our own and humanity's many failings.*

*Our confession.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

God so loved the world  
that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ  
to save us from our sins,  
to be our advocate in heaven,  
and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,  
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments  
and to live in love and peace with all.

**Most merciful God,  
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we confess that we have sinned  
in thought, word and deed.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart.  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
In your mercy  
forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are,  
and direct what we shall be;  
that we may do justly,  
love mercy,  
and walk humbly with you, our God.  
Amen.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*We stand.*

A Gloria.

The process of through is ongoing.

The earth doesn't seem to move, but sometimes we fall  
down against it and seem to briefly alight on its turning.

We were just going. I was just leaving,  
which is to say, coming  
elsewhere. Transient. I was going as I came, the words  
move through my limbs, lungs, mouth, as I appear to sit

peacefully at your hearth transubstantiating some wine.  
It was a rough red, it was one of those nights we were not  
forced by circumstances to drink wine out of mugs.  
Circumstances being, in those cases, no one had been

transfixed at the kitchen sink long enough to wash dishes.  
I brought armfuls of wood from the splitting stump.  
Many of them, because it was cold, went right on top  
of their recent ancestors. It was an ice night.

They transpired visibly, resin to spark,  
bark to smoke, wood to ash. I was  
transgendering and drinking the rough red at roughly  
the same rate and everyone who looked, saw.

The translucence of flames beat against the air  
against our skins. This can be done with  
or without clothes on. This can be done with  
or without wine or whiskey but never without water:

evaporation is also ongoing. Most visibly in this case  
in the form of wisps of steam rising from the just washed hair  
of a form at the fire whose beauty was in the earth's  
turning, that night and many nights, transcendent.

I felt heat changing me. The word for this is  
*transdesire*, but in extreme cases we call it *transdire*  
or when this heat becomes your maker we say  
*transire*, or when it happens in front of a hearth:

*transfire.*

'On trans.' by Miller Oberman.

*We sit for our first Bible reading.*

The Song of Songs 8:1-7.

O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

This is the word of the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

*We stand for our gospel reading.*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

John 15:4-17:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.  
These things I command you, that ye love one another.

This is the gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*A moment of silence.*

In the power of the Spirit, and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

*A prayer for the Church.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, when you were about to suffer, you prayed for your disciples that they might all be one, as you are in the Father and the Father in you.  
Look down in pity on the many divisions among those who profess your faith.  
Heal the wounds which the pride of man and the craft of Satan have inflicted on your people.  
Break down the walls of separation which divide Christians.  
Look with compassion on all souls and bring them together under the Holy Catholic Church.  
*by St John Henry Newman.*

*A prayer for peace.*

Move him into the sun—  
Gently its touch awoke him once,  
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.  
Always it woke him, even in France,  
Until this morning and this snow.  
If anything might rouse him now  
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds—  
Woke once the clays of a cold star.  
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides  
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?  
Was it for this the clay grew tall?  
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil  
To break earth's sleep at all?  
*'Futility' by Wilfred Owen.*

*A moment of silence.*



*A prayer for all kinds of love.*

If I was dead,  
and my bones adrift  
like dropped oars  
in the deep, turning earth;

or drowned,  
and my skull  
a listening shell  
on the dark ocean bed;

if I was dead,  
and my heart  
soft mulch  
for a red, red rose;

or burned,  
and my body  
a fistful of grit, thrown  
in the face of the wind;

if I was dead,  
and my eyes,  
blind at the roots of flowers,  
wept into nothing,

I swear your love  
would raise me  
out of my grave,  
in my flesh and blood,

like Lazarus;  
hungry for this,  
and this, and this,  
your living kiss.

*'If I was dead' by Carol Ann Duffy.*

*A moment of silence.*

*A prayer for all who suffer.*

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.  
What hours, O what black hours we have spent  
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!  
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

With witness I speak this. But where I say  
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament  
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent  
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree  
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;  
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.

Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see  
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be  
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.  
*by Gerard Manley Hopkins.*

*A moment of silence.*

*A prayer for all who mourn.*

Dark house, by which once more I stand  
Here in the long unlovely street,  
Doors, where my heart was used to beat  
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—  
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,  
And like a guilty thing I creep  
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away  
The noise of life begins again,  
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain  
On the bald street breaks the blank day.  
*From 'In Memoriam' by Alfred Tennyson.*

Merciful Father:

**Accept these prayers,  
for the sake of your son,  
our saviour, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

*We stand to share in the Peace.*

Jesus said, 'Blessèd are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

*We offer one another a sign of God's peace.*

*The holy table is prepared.*

*Hymn*

**Just as I am - without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,  
- O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am - though toss'd about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings and fears within, without,  
- O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am - poor, wretched, blind;  
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,  
- O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am - Thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
-O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am - Thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down;  
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,  
-O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am - of that free love  
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,  
Here for a season, then above,  
-O Lamb of God, I come!**

*by Charlotte Elliott.*

*If you are able to, please remain standing for the whole of the Eucharistic prayer.*

The Lord is here.

**His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Blessed are you, Lord God, our light and our salvation;

to you be glory and praise for ever.

From the beginning you have created all things

and all your works echo the silent music of your praise.

In the fullness of time you made us in your image, the crown of all creation.

You give us breath and speech,  
that with angels and archangels,  
and all the powers of heaven,  
we may find a voice to sing your praise:

How wonderful are the work of your hands, O Lord.

As a mother tenderly gathers her children,

you embraced a people as your own.

When they turned away and rebelled

your love remained steadfast.

From them you raised up Jesus our Saviour,

born of Mary,

to be the living bread,

in whom all our hungers are satisfied.

He offered his life for sinners,  
and with a love stronger than death,  
he opened wide his arms on the cross.

On the night before he died,  
he came to supper with his friends and,  
taking bread, he gave you thanks.

He broke it and gave it to them, saying:

Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

At the end of supper,  
taking the cup of wine,  
he gave you thanks, and said:

Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it,  
in remembrance of me.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died:**

**Christ is risen:**

**Christ will come again.**

Father, we plead with confidence  
his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross;  
we remember his dying and rising in glory,  
and we rejoice that he intercedes for us at your right hand.  
Pour out your Holy Spirit  
as we bring before you these gifts of your creation;  
may they be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

As we eat and drink these holy things in your presence,  
form us in the likeness of Christ,  
and build us into a living temple to your glory.  
Remember, Lord, your Church in every land.  
Reveal her unity, guard her faith, and preserve her in peace.  
Bring us at the last with the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
St Michael, and all your saints,  
to the vision of that eternal splendour  
for which you have created us;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
by whom, with whom, and in whom,  
with all who stand before you in earth and heaven,  
we worship you, Father almighty, in songs of everlasting praise:  
**Blessing and honour and glory and power  
be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

*We sit.*

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:  
**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread,  
And forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us,  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory, are yours,  
Now and for ever.  
Amen.**

We break this bread  
to share in the body of Christ.  
**Though we are many,  
we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

*A prayer of humble access.*

Coming together  
it is easier to work  
after our bodies  
meet  
paper and pen  
neither care nor profit  
whether we write or not  
but as your body moves  
under my hands  
charged and waiting  
we cut the leash  
you create me against your thighs  
hilly with images  
moving through our word countries  
my body  
writes into your flesh  
the poem  
you make of me.

Touching you I catch midnight  
as moon fires set in my throat  
I love you flesh into blossom  
I made you  
and take you made  
into me.

*'Recreation' by Audre Lorde.*

*Everyone is now invited to come forward and share in the Holy Communion, or for a blessing (just bow your head). If you prefer, you may remain in your seats, and reflect on the mystery of things. A moment of silence follows the end of the distribution.*

*We stand.*

*A prayer of sending out*

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;  
And I was filled with such delight  
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,  
Winging wildly across the white  
Orchards and dark-green fields; on - on - and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;  
And beauty came like the setting sun:  
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror  
Drifted away ... O, but Everyone  
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.  
*by Siegfried Sassoon*

*We remain standing for the final blessing.*

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and in his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you always. **Amen.**

*Hymn*

**Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.**

*Great is Thy faithfulness,  
Great is Thy faithfulness,  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

**Summer and winter and springtime and harvest  
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.**

*Great is Thy faithfulness...*

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside.**

*Great is Thy faithfulness...*

*by Thomas O. Chisholm.*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

