

A SERVICE FOR LENT

Note to leader: This works well as a candlelight service. Light some candles to begin with and leave some unlit for individuals to light during the service. Select one person to read the A parts and one to read the B parts, perhaps one male and one female. Assign parts 1 through 11 to members of the group. Perhaps hand-number 11 of the bulletins and allow readers to draw their parts. Allow brief silences between poems and scripture readings.

Let the opening minutes of quiet and silence allow you a space of personal contemplation. You are welcome to approach the table and light a candle at anytime during the service, as a way to present a joy or concern to God and present company, in wordless meditation.

WELCOME

PRAYER

HYMN #506

I Sought the Lord

READING:

“Comfort in Mourning, Death and Rebirth”

Italicized scripture from Psalm 139, Ecclesiastes 11:4-5 and Psalm 25: 1–2a, 4-5

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A. *O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.*

**Reader 1 A faint light wakes my slumb’ring soul,
Dread numbness to reveal.
Countless years of unknown fears
Have crushed my spirit’s zeal.**

B. *You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my every thought when far away.*

Reader 2 **I sink in lonely sadness
When my heart attempts to pray
My friend has gone, the grief is long
Far seems the light of day.**

A. *You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am.*

Reader 3 **The worlds I know inside and out
Are both one tragedy.
The hungry child, the bleeding wild,
Where's our humanity?**

HYMN #242

Sing three times through

Stay with Me

B. *You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord.*

Reader 4 **The earth spins on insanity
Our work seems but in vain.
The troubled nations need salvation
Does any hope remain?**

A. *You both precede and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to know!*

Reader 5 **Lord guide me in this strangeness!
Where had this darkness birth?
A storm of tears for all the fears
Streams freely to the earth.**

B. *I can never escape from your spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there.*

Reader 6 **Where's God in all this suffering?
Are all these thoughts just mine?
My frantic heart feels far apart
From anything Divine.**

REPEAT HYMN #242

Stay with Me

Sing three times through

A. *I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.*

Reader 7 **The suff'ring's loud now in my mind
Ungodly paths it traces.
For troubles deep, I cannot sleep
In dark and scary places.**

B. *To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you.*

Reader 8 **Christ knew before his suffering
That sorrows cannot last
Foes arise, the body dies—
He simply let it pass.**

A. *If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.*

Reader 9 **Oh God, you are alone my hope!
Dear Christ be near and tender!
Then breathing still, let silence fill...
This night speaks of surrender.**

REPEAT HYMN #242

Stay with Me

Sing three times through

B. *You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.*

Reader 10 **How wond'rous now my God enfolds,
What floods of Love inside!
Love counsels me and makes me free
Love, be my only guide!**

A. *You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God! They are innumerable! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up in the morning, you are still with me!*

**Reader 11 God uses us to touch the world
In ways we cannot know.
Let's play our parts with open hearts
And join Love's endless flow.**

B. *Those who wait for perfect weather will never plant seeds; those who look at every cloud will never harvest crops. You don't know where the wind will blow, and you don't know how a baby grows inside the mother. In the same way, you don't know what God is doing, or how he created everything.*

A. *To you O Lord, I lift up my soul. I trust in you, my God!...Show me the path where I should walk, O Lord; point out the right road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you.*

HYMN #433

Go My Children

SENDING FORTH

All: To you, O Lord, we lift our souls. Your mystery surrounds us, how can we know your ways? We mourn, we sigh, we pray, we fall silent, we surrender, we trust. We rejoice in you! In Love we come to you. Let us be as Christ to one another. Let us enfold one another in the comfort of your warm and loving kindness.

"You are invited to exchange the sign of peace with one another."

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