



LITURGY OF REFRESHMENT

In a moment I am going to lead you in a short liturgy. Instead of responding with words you will be invited to use the water that you have with you – some in a bowl, and some in a cup or bottle that you will drink. Take a moment to prepare; have your water close by, then relax your body and quiet your mind.

God's ancient people were nourished by the rhythms of Sabbath. In Leviticus 25, we read that the rhythm of normal life was to be disrupted every seventh year when the land would lie fallow. It was a year of leaning in closer to God. And after the seventh Sabbath year there was the year of Jubilee, which began on the Day of Atonement. In that 50th year (a once in a lifetime experience) all the social structures were reset as every family and clan were restored to their original lands. A new beginning, a calling back to God.

2020 was a year that changed almost everything. All our normal rhythms that would signpost our lives were disrupted as we experienced profound changes that were often thrust upon us without warning. For many of us daily existence became a nightmarish new normal as we had to let go of our expectations and hopes that we could resume the life we once took for granted. And yet, we held to the hope that God was present.

It has felt like a prolonged Lent where our experience has included grief and loss; and a year of quietness and rest, and new insights into how God is present and calls us closer.

I invite you to participate in this time of listening and responding to God as we hear words of hope from Psalm 23:

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil;

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff—

they comfort me.

I invite you to dip your fingertips in the bowl of water and trace a path of tears down your face – reflect on the ways God has been present through the loss, the difficulties and trauma of the past year.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths

for his name's sake.

I invite you to wet your hands and wipe your face or your arms – reflect on the ways God has been present and drew you closer for times of cleansing and restoration.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

Sheep will only drink from waters that are still – they are fearful of turbulent water.

I invite you to drink with thankfulness from your cup or bottle – reflect on the ways God has been present and has met your needs and refreshed you.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

I invite you to dip your fingertips in the bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead, or sprinkle water on your head, or draw a love heart or letter J, or just stoke water onto your hand – reflect on the ways God has been renewing the love relationship between you and Jesus.

As we look to the future, knowing that God calls us to journey in faith and hope, take courage from these words of promise and renewal found in Chapters 21 and 22 of the Book of Revelation:

Jesus said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.”

And let everyone who hears say, “Come.”

And let everyone who is thirsty come.

Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

This liturgy was prepared by Dorothy Hughes for the opening session of the Messy Church National Conference, Refresh the Mess, 20 February 2021. Permission is given for use in ministry contexts.