

# EVENING DEVOTION

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Coming Through the Wilderness of Loss

## GATHERING

**Hymn**            “My Heart Flows On” (verses 1 and 2)            Sing the Faith #2212

Note: if you are unfamiliar with this hymn and/or uncomfortable singing it without accompaniment, consider reading it as poetry, using one reader or asking participants to read alternating lines/verses.

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: Let us give thanks

All: Creator God, we thank you for your neverending love for all creation. We know that your breath gives us life and that your word brings life out of death.

Leader: We give thanks for all the experiences of life that have helped us to see beyond this present journey. For those things that teach us to combine labor and rest in this life, to appreciate the gifts of the cycling seasons and to know that the Holy One sustains us in times of need.

All: God loves in us. God cares through us. God laughs in us. God cries in us, as nowhere else.

Leader: In the Spirit of Christ we continue to pray:

All: Eternal Spirit, Earth-Maker, Pain-Bearer, Life-Giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven—may the hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the people of the earth! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope, and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

*(Maori version of the Lord's Prayer, from the New Zealand Book of Common Worship)*

## THE WORD

### Scripture Reading

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word” (2 *Thessalonians* 2:16–17).

### Reflection

Despite the title, this is not intended to be a time of sadness. As a CCT and a family we have suffered many losses, and are experiencing impending loss as we meet at this time and in this place. But scripture tells us that through grace, God gives us comfort and hope. There is a

benediction that includes thanksgiving for “good hope and precious memories.” As persons mature, they often come to appreciate those words more and more. And in that order—good hope, precious memories.

Along the same lines, there is a quote from Dr. Seuss that says, “Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.” Simplistic, but good to remember.

Yes, we must all trudge through the wilderness. No, we can’t avoid that journey. But thanks be to God for the good hope and precious memories that bring us to the other side, stronger for having known and loved those whom God has also loved and taken to God’s self. May we be not only comforted, but strengthened as scripture says: “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word” (2 *Thessalonians* 2:16–17).

## RESPONSE TO THE WORD

**Hymn** “My Heart Flows On” (verses 3 and 4) Sing the Faith #2212

Note: if you are unfamiliar with this hymn and/or uncomfortable singing it without accompaniment, consider reading it as poetry, using one reader or asking participants to read alternating lines/verses.

## SENDING

**Blessing\***

On my heart and on my house  
the blessing of God.

In my coming and in my going  
the peace of God.

In my life and in my seeking  
the love of God.

At my end and new beginning  
the arms of God to welcome me and bring me home

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This resource was prepared by Pauline Rowles, synod representative (Synod of Lincoln Trails) and chair of the Nurture Committee of the Churchwide Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women (CCT/PW), for the CCT’s evening devotion on March 8, 2007 in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

\**Celtic Prayers from Iona* by J. Philip Newell (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997)

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