



‘Something Understood’  
A Short Liturgy for the Feast of the Visitation

## REACHING OUT

(You could, if you wish, light a candle with each invocation)

God  
who has encompassed  
all time,  
be present now;

Jesus  
who was enfolded  
in the womb of time  
be present now;

Spirit  
who still entangles  
our time with God's time  
be present now;

so may this time  
be held by love  
and hallowed  
with grace.  
Amen.

*you are invited to keep a short time of silence*

## RECOGNITION and RESHAPING

Jesus  
You are still  
coming into the world -  
spoken through small beginnings  
and in unlikely places,  
and calling us to be both bearers  
and witnesses  
to that word of Life.

where I have not always recognised you  
with the intuitive joy of Elizabeth  
forgive me  
and enlighten my seeing;

where I have not always welcomed you  
with the vigorous joy of John  
forgive me  
and enlarge my heart;

where I have not always spoken you  
with the explosive joy of Mary  
forgive me  
and energise my voice

that I too  
may know  
embrace  
and bear witness  
to Life in all its fullness.  
Amen.

**READING:** LUKE 1: 39-56

**REFLECTION:** [‘Visitation’ by Jacopo Carucci Pontormo](#)

A reflective art video podcast on Pontormo’s painting from  
Dr Debbie Lewer of the University of Glasgow  
(to start the podcast, click on the title above)

**RESPONSE**

Jesus - hidden and yet known -  
for those who recognised you  
joy would also, in time,  
be joined by sorrow.

Keep me steady  
through joy and sorrow,  
faithfully holding  
to the larger view  
of what will unfold  
through your presence in the world.  
So shall I too be part of its realisation  
until the time  
when all sorrow is healed  
in the joy of your Kingdom.  
Amen.

## REORIENTATION

As I move again into time  
keep me attentive  
to the voice of your Spirit  
that I might see and know you  
wherever you are coming into the world;

and through that recognition  
may revelation and rejoicing  
lead  
to a re-imagining  
and remaking  
of the world  
as you intend it to be.  
Amen.

*Liturgy © Pat Bennett  
The Iona Community*

This liturgy and podcast were prepared in partnership with St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Glasgow and with Dr Debbie Lewer, Senior Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Glasgow. It is part of a series entitled 'Bodies in Transition', and two further podcasts and liturgies - for the feasts of Corpus Christi and the Transfiguration - will be released on 11th June and 6th August respectively. You can download a transcript of today's podcast [here](#).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you would like to sing as part of this liturgy, 'Sing out my Soul' by John L. Bell and Graham Maule (from the book/CD 'Love and Anger') or 'Tell Out My Soul' by Timothy Dudley-Smith are two contemporary renditions of the Magnificat.

### **Sing out my soul**

Sing out my soul sing with joy to the Lord;  
sing of the greatness and goodness of God,  
loving the lowly who trust in his word. Alleluia.

Sing out my soul let your faith be confessed;  
those yet unborn will declare how I'm blessed.  
To God's great bias I gladly attest. Alleluia.

God's name is holy, God's mercy is sure;  
and through all ages God's love will endure,  
firing the hearts and the faith of the pure. Alleluia.

God forces ruler to forfeit the throne;  
lifting the unloved, the lost and alone,  
God shows that favour reserved for his own. Alleluia.

Those who are hungry God fills with good things,  
those who are rich into poverty brings;  
pregnant with justice my heart gladly sings Alleluia.

God who is faithful has come to our aid,  
never forgetting the promise he made.  
Each generation sees mercy displayed. Alleluia.

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(If you don't know the tune, you can hear several verses [here](#) at track 12)

## The Visitation - a sonnet by Malcolm Guite

Here is a meeting made of hidden joys  
Of lightnings cloistered in a narrow place  
From quiet hearts the sudden flame of praise  
And in the womb the quickening kick of grace.  
Two women on the very edge of things  
Unnoticed and unknown to men of power  
But in their flesh the hidden Spirit sings  
And in their lives the buds of blessing flower.  
And Mary stands with all we call 'too young',  
Elizabeth with all called 'past their prime'  
They sing today for all the great unsung  
Women who turned eternity to time  
Favoured of heaven, outcast on the earth  
Prophets who bring the best in us to birth.

Malcolm is a priest and poet and chaplain of Girton College Cambridge. This sonnet is from his collection Sounding the Seasons, published by Canterbury Press. Malcolm very generously gives free permission for his sonnets to be copied and shared. You can read more of his work on his Blog



*Inspired by our faith, we pursue justice and peace in and through community*

*The Iona Community  
21 Carlton Court  
Glasgow G5 9JP  
Company No: SC096243  
Charity No: SC003794*