

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. **Amen.**

We wandered in confusion out of the Garden.

We are a wandering, searching people.

From the time we found ourselves stumbling out of the Garden, we have been trying to find our way back, and all of Creation with us has groaned for fullness, consummation, and depth of relationship. We remember very little of our Eden sojourn, and what we recall is foggy and confused, like the morning's recollection of the night before, separated by too much sleep.

So we wandered, and we searched.

We remembered, but could not recreate.

We remembered something of what it had been like, to be in direct relationship with God, and right relationship with one another and all Creation. We could not create that reality for ourselves, though, as our hands and our wills were now somehow frustrated, clumsy, fumbling. It was God who had made us in the Garden, and first of all it was God that we sought.

Our ancestors tried to find the things that separated them from God.

We worked and waited, and from time to time our ancestors found God in the land in which they lived, in the quiet moments and the desperate nights of their lives. They glimpsed what right relationship might look like, and began to catalogue the ways that they went astray from that distant, faded memory of wholeness and of Kingdom and of home.

They sought the promised land to which they were called home.

They found themselves in exile, and heard God calling them home to their land, and they hoped for a new Eden, a permanent place of fulfillment, peace, and connection with God, a lush and verdant paradise beyond the desert of their journey.

None of those who set out would make it there, but their children and their children's children called it a promised land: the object of their yearning, and a locus for communion with the God of that land.

God was with them in another land, too.

When they again found themselves far from home, exiled to a strange land at the hands of another people, again they longed and yearned and found that God was with them. God was with them even apart from the land out of which they had been taken; God was with them, unfettered by their alienation from where they had been, who they had been.

They found how boundless and omnipresent God was.

When they returned home, they found their relationship with God and the rest of the world was different: that though many people did not know God, this was not because of God's limitation, but because of how God had been made known to the world. Others came and occupied the promised land, and made them prisoners in their home, and they worked all the more to maintain their connection to God and to one another, and their identity as God's own.

God came among them to show them freedom.

In the fullness of time, God came among them, as a man like us, and he lived as though he were not in a captive land, a fallen universe, surrounded by a people of strange speech. He lived as though he were free, and he spoke to people as though they were free, and as though for all their limitations, they could still be connected to God, they were still God's own, and there was nothing apart from God to which they ought to be beholden.

He spoke of love and of comfort; of repentance and forgiveness; of the changing of the human heart, and the transformation of the whole world.

The disciples/apostles saw the circle growing once more.

His friends saw in his life, and in his death, and in his transcendence of the limitations of both, that the circle was once again being cast wider, that something new of God was being made known, that something old of God was hidden no more.

Creation was waiting for this old thing to be revealed.

Creation itself was waiting, too, for this old thing to be revealed. For there once again to be the hope of right relationship, of connection and wholeness, for the interdependence of all things.

God is revealed to us in the multiplicity and depth of relationships.

God is found, after all, in relationships. Moving out into the world has never been about how God's people, us included, can share of our own goodness, and remake the rest of the world in our image. Relationship has been how we discover more of who we are, of who God is, and of what to make of life on this strange rock, in this vast cosmos, feeling so alone in all Creation.

It has been a journey of seeking and of finding, of being transformed bit by bit and little by little.

We work imperfectly towards the object of our hope.

We are already God's own, and also not yet living in the way, and in the place, upon which we have set our hope. We will not make it to the Promised Land, in fact, in this life; but may from time-to-time glimpse it beyond some distant sea. We might see a little more fully how like the Garden the world around us is, even though it is not the Garden. Through love, we bridge the gap that seems to separate us from one another, as God first loved us to make us, and to save us.

We find the fullness of God's image for us in diversity.

However much all things remain fallen, all things and all people still shine with the glory, the light and love, the animating energy and creative force of God. As we move out into new lands and meet new people, we see a little more fully what God is up to, and are challenged to see more fully what being in relationship with one another and with God might rightly, really be.

We do not hope for what is in our reach.

We do not hope for what is seen, either in ceasing to be differentiated from the people and world around us, nor in exerting our own imperfect will upon one another. We hope, instead, for a distant, faded memory that we no longer hold all of.

We discover that there is no land from which God was absent.

We find it in seeing how God is at work to save, to renew, to replenish and invigorate all things and all people. We see that those we would dismiss as broken still bear the imprint of God's own labours. We discover that there is no land from which God was ever really absent.

We find that going forth to discover God is what saves us.

We slowly discover that the things which would bind us were always of our own making, and that we are freed of them not simply by denying them, but by venturing forth boldly, to meet the stranger, to love our enemies, and to work for the salvation of all.

This is what the Church is.

This is the story of Pentecost: of the birth of the Church, and how God is revealed to people in the diversity and variety of their own tongues, in their own hearts.

We come together as the Church to continue Christ's mission to reveal the power of self-giving love, of right relationship, and of communion with God to the whole world, and to ourselves.

We can glimpse more fully the object of our hope, and our home.

When we take up that work, and see what God is really up to, we can at last imagine more fully what the Garden must have been like, and perhaps in time can truly believe that there is a home prepared for us in the Kingdom for which we are made. **Amen.**