Dear friends of God,

Do you need a respite?

Some of you know I rise early. Mostly because I can't get back to sleep. Dark-thirtyish fears and yearnings *tangle* with insomnia. Tension escalates. Prayers unravel.

So, I head for the living room, light candles, switch on my dollar store blue and green fairy lights, then settle under my favorite quilt in the wing chair. My right palm knows the way to my breastbone by heart, index fingertip touching my throat. But I don't speak. And try not to think.

Some nights it's a two-palm endeavor to breathe slowly—attentively—my open hands a lattice over my lungs. Thank God for restorative deep breathing.

Soon dread and ache tango with insomnia.

Sooner or later the windows catch my attention, almost cinematic: the evergreen canopies, remote star-fields, and sister moon with her myriad moods and manifestations. For me, the scenery outside, and within, usually precedes words.

Gradually, the view, the stillness, and the changing light usher in reverie. Impressions unfold. Admissions and wishes unfurl. If the psalmist's word *selah* means "pause to pray," as many scholars suggest, the words you're about to read, born of watchful silence, might appeal to you.

I want to float them your way like a skiff. Step aboard if you wish. Savor them one at a time on a sleepless night or anytime you need a haven.

You might even share them with others over the course of a quiet hour, taking turns reading one aloud, then journaling or debriefing together. You may find, as I have, your experience overflows the moment, seeking some form of further expression.

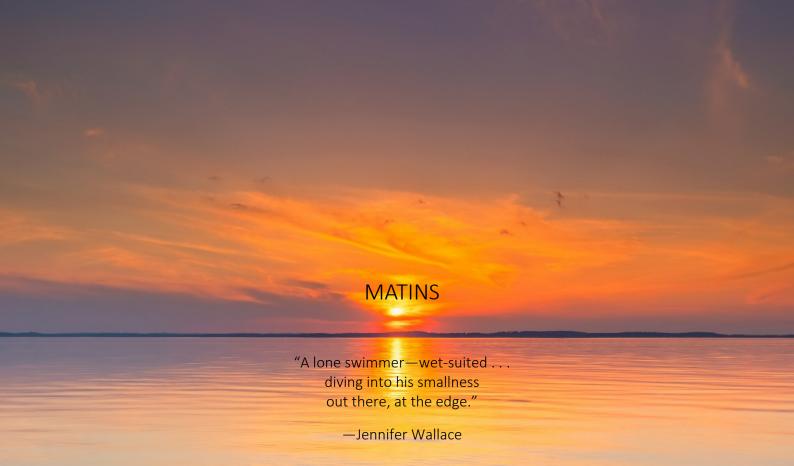
You'll find four entries, a poem, thematic resources, and a breath prayer for lighting a candle. I've titled this foray "Matins," after the ancient, post-midnight call to worship, observed worldwide, especially in monasteries and abbeys.

In hopes you'll enter with me, for respite and reverie . . .

My best,

Laurie

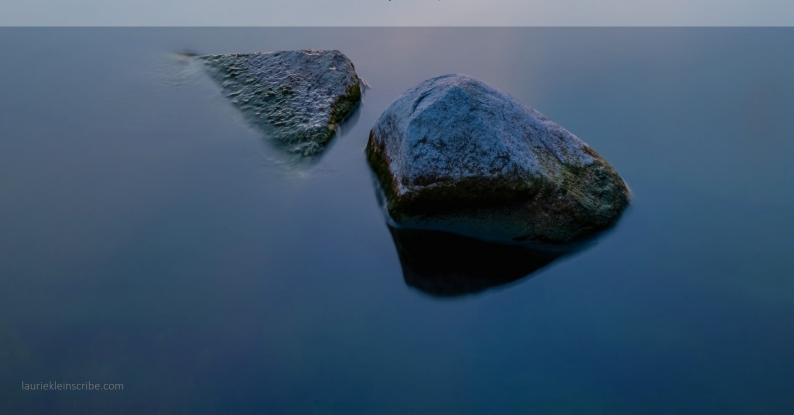


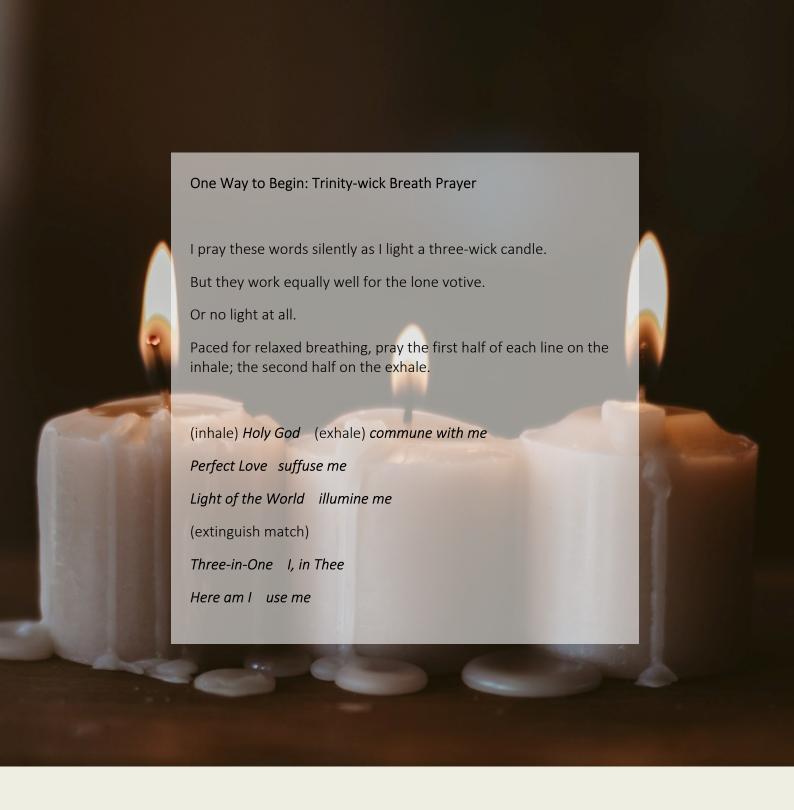


God of the cosmos, God of the cell, peerless . . . and perilous: your blazing, ineffable name begins with a letter apostrophe-small, little flame of the Hebrew alphabet:



"Yud" is for YHWH—beyond comprehension yet near as my next breath—blessèd Always-in-All, amen.

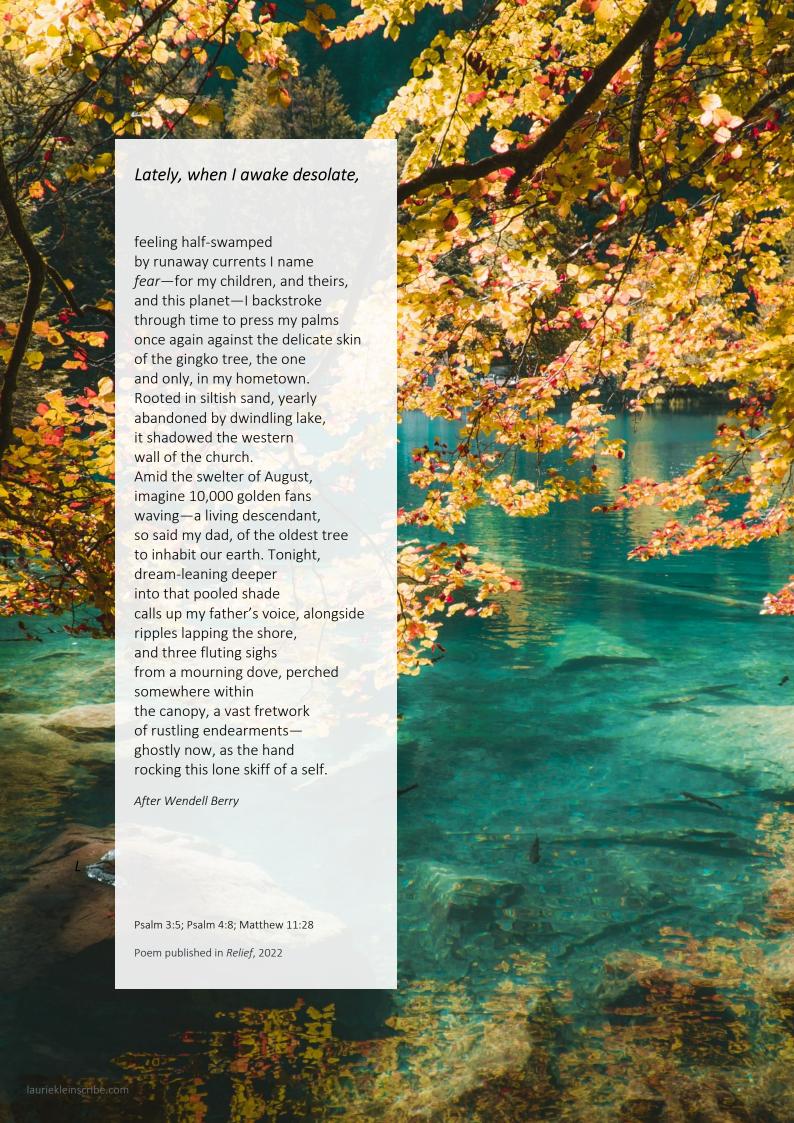


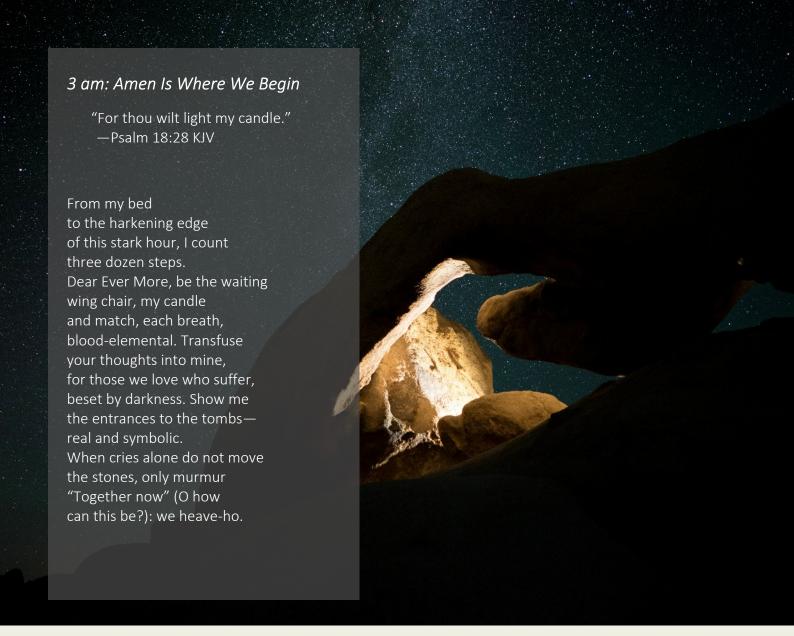


"The very act of lighting the candle is a prayer.

I enter into it as one enters a room."

—Brother David Steindl-Rast





DEAR EVER MORE: How do you bear it? Over millennia—everywhere, every moment—you witness countless endings. Even now, myriad lives are struggling, painfully blocked.

Am I someone's impediment?

We both know I'm overly prone to jumpstart rescues. Forgive me.

You don't need my help, not one bit . . . yet you beckon. And these outstretched hands, these buckling knees, can't thank you enough. I love you, O Lord, my strength.

Where do we start?

"Jesus told them, 'Roll away the stone.""—John 11:39 (TPT)

Vapor

"...in Your light
we see light." —Psalm 36:9 NIV

Full moon in a fringe of lunar tulle, icy yet pulsing, are you

my haloed companion, or the hallowed searchlight of God, trained on me? Perhaps you are wholly aloof—quintessential moon-self,

watching me squint and wonder,
What am I skirting?



DEAR MAKER OF SUN AND MOON: I want to love this world you've entrusted to us. Sometimes the ordeals of the living engulf me. You see my dread; you know my fear of getting involved. Why do I sidestep anguish? I'd like to be known for sharing your love. Preferably, from a distance.

So, I resolve to pray . . . then forget. Or, in the name of self-care, withdraw. Sometimes retreat is needful. But when? For how long? How do I tell?

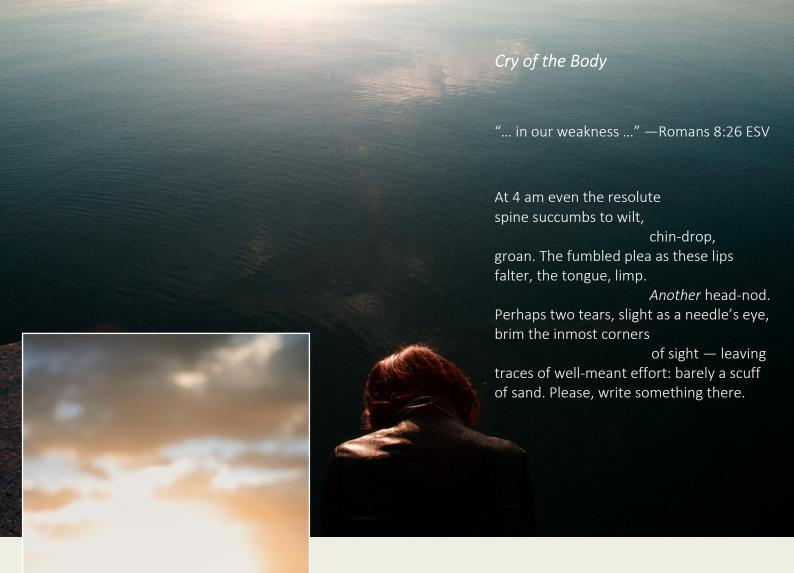
Deliver me from sideways piety seeking a halo.

I need you, O Lord, my light. Help me reflect you—all the way through.



Soon now, the sun will rise. Already the skies are clearing, the low-lying fog is melting away. In you alone, all shall be well. From now until then, please guide me . . .

"Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." —Matthew 11:29 (The Message)



DEAR RABBONI WHO KNEELS BESIDE ME: stretch out your hand again. Inscribe my frailty with words that breathe. I don't even know sometimes why I hurt.

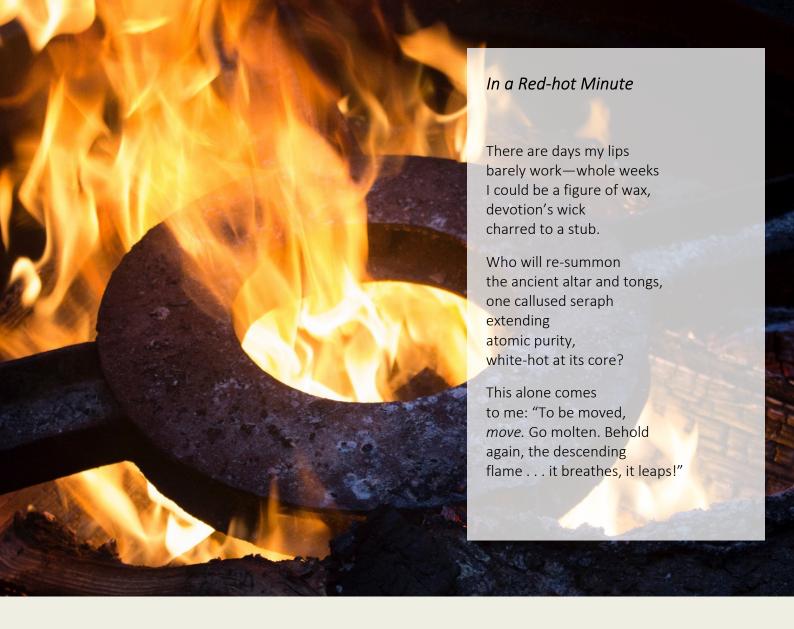
Summon the gentle Hoverbird to translate ache, fold language around fatigue, then carry it all to the Father. I need you, O Lord, my hope.

I am willing to be weak.

And wholly yours (as is, alas), abashed yet gratefully joining the vast Amen.

For we scarcely know how to pray.

"But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words."



DEAR HEARTH OF MY HEART: I'm tired, and prayer feels too hard. Will you tell me a story?

"Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See [Isaiah], this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'

"And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"—Isaiah 6:6-8 (NIV)

Ah. In other words, onward. All I need already fills my emptied hands. And so, yes—albeit a costly one.

I trust you, O Lord, my life. With everything . . .

Notes

"Lately, when I awake desolate," by Laurie Klein, published in *Relief*, 2022.

Brother David Steindl-Rast, <u>Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer:</u> an Approach to Life in Fullness.

https://gratefulness.org/brother-david/about-brother-david/https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/practices/view/26502

Psalm 18:28: *The Holy Bible, King James Version*. Cambridge Edition: 1769; *King James Bible Online*, 2022. www.kingjamesbibleonline.org.

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