

A meditation of thanks for over twenty centuries of mission

¶ *N.B. This meditation can be used 'as is' or as a template. Each 'century' begins with a reference to the resurrection and ends with a response for the congregation. The material in between can be altered to reflect the focus and interests that need to be represented on any particular occasion.*

Almighty and eternal God,
you sent your Son Jesus Christ
to be your Word in our world.
Once he had risen from the dead,
and been taken up into the highest heaven,
you poured out your Spirit on his disciples,
empowering them to tell the good news to the world.

**Hear us now as we praise you for the women and men
who have gone out to proclaim you to the nations,
leaving the comforts of home
for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel.**

In the first century after Jesus had triumphed over death
you empowered the apostles by your Spirit.
Peter and Paul, Mark, Andrew, Silas, Barnabas, Timothy and Titus
brought the Gospel around the Mediterranean world.

**We thank you for their tenacity and effectiveness.
Though small in number,
they transformed the then known-world
by proclaiming your love and singing your song.**

In the second century after the angel asked the myrrh-bearing women
why they looked for the Living One among the dead,
you empowered the Church to grow.
Saints whose names are unknown to you alone
spoke your message and proclaimed your love.
People began following you, O God,
in Monaco and Algeria, Sri Lanka and Bithynia,
Portugal and Morocco, Austria and India,
and among peoples within the Persian Empire.

**We thank you for their perseverance.
May we have their courage and dedication,
building up the Church, by your grace,
as they did in their day.**

In the third century after Jesus burst his three-day prison,
Christians began to gather in Switzerland and Belgium,
and Denys established the Church in Paris.
Abgar, King of Edessa, embraced the Christian faith in Turkey
and Christian communities grew in rural Italy.

**We thank you for their willingness to be led by your Spirit.
They proclaimed your Good News to the world.
Like them, may we declare your offer
of eternal life for all.**

In the fourth century after the joy of resurrection had filled the universe,
Gregory brought your light to Armenia and Albania,
Nino of Cappadocia brought your truth to Georgia,
and Frumentius brought your love to the Ethiopian kingdom of Axum.
Hayyan began preaching your Gospel in Yemen,
and Ulfilas translated it for the Goths in Romania.

**We thank you for their willingness to follow your Son.
By your grace, may we follow in their footsteps,
confidently making known your love for us all.**

In the fifth century after Jesus had destroyed death's sting,
Patrick evangelized the Emerald Isle,
and Ninian spoke of Christ Jesus to the Picts in Scotland.
Christians began to worship you, the only true God, in Liechtenstein.
The first bishop was ordained for your Church in Afghanistan,
and another for the Christian community in Uzbekistan.

**We thank you for the boldness
with which they proclaimed the death and resurrection
of your Son.
May we follow them, by your grace,
in telling out the Good News.**

In the sixth century after Jesus had taken away the grave's victory,
Rémi evangelised the Franks,
and Celtic saints like Kessog, Brendan, Finnian, Kentigern,
Moluag, Canice and Columba
travelled around Ireland and Scotland preaching the Good news.
Julianus from Constantinople and Theodore the Egyptian
began evangelizing in Nubia,
and, after a generation, Longinus, a Christian from Nubia,
preached in Sudan.

Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory to Canterbury
to bring the Gospel back to the English

**We thank you for their desire to make you known.
May we, like them, have hearts that are ready
to help you in your mission, O God.**

In the seventh century after darkness was banished for ever,
Christians settled in Andorra,
and Irish saints like Columbanus, Gall and Killian crossed the Channel
to preach your Gospel in Western Europe.
Saints such as Paulinus, Aiden, Chad and Cuthbert
brought your love to the people of England,
and Bishop Amandus of Elnon preached your Gospel to the people of Belgium,
to the Slavs along the River Danube
and to the Basques in Navarre.

**We thank you for these people who gave their lives to you.
Like them, may we also wholeheartedly follow you,
the God of our salvation.**

In the eighth century after Jesus had risen from the dead,
the Dutch were evangelized by Willibrord and his companions
and Boniface, an Englishman, preached in Germany.
Irish monks reached Iceland,
bringing with them the good news of God-with-us.

**We thank you for their steadfastness
in witnessing to the Christ.
May we also keep you at the forefront of our minds.**

In the ninth century after Christ our Passover had been sacrificed for us,
Anskar, Archbishop of Hamburg, evangelized the Danes and the Swedes,
Cyril and Methodius proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom to the Slavs,
and the Bible was translated into Slavonic.

The first missionaries reached what is now the Czech Republic
and Prince Boris of Bulgaria converted to the Faith, along with his people.

**We thank you, that by your grace,
your gospel was reaching more and more people.
May we, empowered by your Spirit,
tell out the good news to others,
both near and far.**

In the tenth century after Jesus had harrowed hell,
missionaries from Hamburg had reached Norway
and, once told of the Good News,
the Norwegians proclaimed it in Iceland;
Christianity came to the Faroe Islands too.
Mieszko I of Poland converted to Christianity
and brought his people with him;
Princess Olga and, later, Vladimir the Great, of Kiev came to the Faith
and their people were baptised.

**We thank you for the example of faithfulness
you provide us in these people.
Like them, may our lives be moulded by your Spirit,
so that, by your grace,
others may be drawn to you.**

In the eleventh century after the seal of the tomb had been rolled away,
Leif Erickson brought the gospel to Greenland and possibly to Canada,
Queen Margaret brought Christ's love to the poor in Scotland,
and King Stephen of Hungary sent evangelists into Transylvania.

**We thank you, O God,
for the message of love these people shared.
Now, a thousand years later,
may we share that same message of love
by whatever means we can.**

In the twelfth century after Jesus had burst forth from the tomb,
Henry, a bishop, evangelized in Finland,
and Otto of Bamberg brought the Good News to the Pomeranians.
By the end of the century the Bible was available in twenty-two languages.

**We thank you, source of light and life,
for the Bible translators who, like Mary,
brought your Word to life.**

**May we, like Mary,
bring forth the Christ to a world yearning for your love.**

In the thirteenth century after the myrrh-bearing women
came to the tomb with their spices,
Francis and Dominic founded orders that preached throughout Europe
and Clare and her sisters prayed for the salvation of the world.
Christians appeared in Lithuania
and Mindaugas their king was baptized.
Princess Elizabeth of Hungary gave her wealth to the poor
and founded hospitals for the sick.

Anthony of Padua preached Christ's love to the people of Lombardy.
Sava became the first Archbishop of Serbia,
John of Monte Corvino became the first Franciscan in China,
and Ramon Llull opened a centre to train missionaries for Tunisia.

**We give you thanks for all these your servants.
May their examples inspire us and rouse us to action.**

In the fourteenth century after Jesus led the way safely home to heaven for us,
Franciscans preached the Good News in Sumatra, Java and Borneo,
and Jordanus, a Dominican Friar,
established the first Catholic diocese in India.
Churches were established at Samarkand in Uzbekistan
and at Almaliq in Azerbaijan.
Stephen of Perm enlightened the Komi people of Russia,
learnt their language, and gave them a script with which to write.
The Scriptures were translated into Icelandic,
and John Wyclif produced the first Bible in English.
**For all these blessings we thank you, God of every generation.
May we, by your grace, help the spread of the gospel,
and the translation of your Holy Word.**

In the fifteenth century after Mary Magdalene mistook the risen Jesus
to be a gardener
Vincent Ferrer preached all over Europe,
and Portuguese Franciscans preached in the Cape Verde Islands,
the Azores and in Madeira
The King of Benin asked for a church to be established in his kingdom
the first Christians were reported in Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal.
The Church was born in Angola and missionaries arrived in the Congo.
The Gospel came to the New World
when missionaries arrived on the island of Hispaniola,
baptizing Guaticaba along with other members of his household.
The first Christians were reported in Kenya
and missionaries travelled to Zanzibar.
Your Word thundered out all the more loudly
as Johannes Gutenberg's movable-type printing press
revolutionized the production of Bibles

**O God, we give you thanks for your audacious servants
whose desire it was to make you known among the nations.
Let us, like them, take our place
as co-workers with you.**

In the sixteenth century after Jesus opened paradise to us
the Jesuit Francis Xavier brought the Good News to God's people
in India, Japan and China.
The Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas was ordained in Cuba
and evangelized the people of Mexico,
speaking up for the human rights of indigenous Mexicans and of slaves.
The Martyrs of Japan were crucified at Nagasaki,
Paul Miki preaching from his cross as he died.
Missionary work was begun in Mozambique and Venezuela,
In Florida and California.
The first Indigenous bishop in Sub-Saharan Africa, Don Henrique,
was consecrated by Leo X and worked in Congo
Bengal was opened to Christian missionaries.
The freedom of the English Church was regained by Henry VIII.
The evangelization of Peru began
and within 50 years a university and hospital for the Indigenous
had been established by the Church.

A monastery was founded in the far north of Russia
to proclaim the Good News to the Sami people (Laplanders).
The first Christian missionaries arrived in Vietnam and Paraguay.
The first church was built in Malaysia
and 1,500 converts to Christianity were reported in Thailand.
The Augustinians begin their missionary work in the Philippines and Ecuador
and Capuchin friars preached the Gospel in Trinidad.
Ethnic Chinese were admitted as members of the Jesuits
and their Order began work in Pakistan and Bangladesh.
Manteo, a member of the Croatan people,
became the first American Indian to be baptised
under the rites of the Church of England.

**We thank you, Lord, for the labours of your servants.
May the energy they showed be ours,
as we do your work in the world.**

In the seventeenth century after death was swallowed up in victory,
James I established the Episcopal Church in Scotland,
the first ethnic Japanese priests were ordained,
and John Eliot ministered to the Algonquin, one of the First Nations in the USA,
translating the Bible into their tongue.
Jean de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues, and their companions
brought the good news of Jesus to the peoples of New France (Québec).
Alexander de Rhodes evangelized in Vietnam,
the Discalced Carmelites tell the Good News in Madagascar,
and French Missionaries reached the Côte d'Ivoire.
Thomas Bray formed the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
(SPG) in England
and he also founded the Society for the Promotion
of Christian Knowledge (SPCK).
Christianity was introduced into Cambodia
and Russian monks came to evangelize in China
and consecrated their first church.
In England, the Christian Faith Society for the West Indies was founded
to evangelize the slaves who lived there.

**O God, Trinity of love, we thank you for those who have worked
as Christ's hands and feet throughout these places.
May we be unafraid to go where you send us,
or to help those whom you choose for us.**

In the eighteenth century after the heavens first quaked
because of the endless paschal Alleluya
George Whitefield preached the Gospel of the Lord in England and the USA
and Samuel Seabury was consecrated by the Scottish Church
to be the first Episcopal Bishop in the United States.
Christianity reached Nepal with the Capuchin Friars
and Ippolito Desideri, a Jesuit, went to Tibet to evangelize.
John Wesley worked as a missionary in Georgia
with the American Indians there.
Rev Pugh from USPG worked with African slaves in the USA
– their owners did not want them to become Christian.
Thomas Thompson, the first Anglican missionary to Africa, arrived in Ghana.
Philip Ouaque, a Fetu youth from the Cape Coast area of Ghana who was brought
to England to study by Thomas Thompson returned to Africa after twelve years.
He was supported as a missionary by SPG,
becoming the first non-European priest in the Church of England.
Freed slave George Lisle went to Jamaica as a Baptist missionary.
Eight Russian Orthodox missionaries arrived on Kodiak Island in Alaska.
Within a few months several thousand people had been baptized.
The London Missionary Society was formed
by Evangelical Anglicans and Congregationalists
to send missionaries to Tahiti.
The Church Missionary Society was formed by Evangelical Anglicans.
**Lord, we thank you for the zeal which took hold of these people.
May we, who call ourselves Christian,
also have hearts that burn with the fire of your love.**

In the nineteenth century after Jesus walked with the disciples to Emmaus
and broke bread with them,
Henry Martyn heard Charles Simeon speak of William Carey's work in India
and resolved to become a missionary himself.
He sailed for India and later worked in Persia.
William Wilberforce railed against the slave trade.

Elizabeth Fry agitated for prison reform.
 Herman brought Orthodoxy to the Aleut of Alaska
 and this was further strengthened by Bishop Innocent.
 Anglicans began worshipping in Cape Town.
 Samuel Marsden and Henry and Marianne Williams arrive in New Zealand.
 Soon Maori missionaries (such as Tamihana Te Rauparaha)
 began converting their own people.
 John Ramsden Woolaston evangelized in Western Australia
 and Lancelot Edward Threlkeld reported in *The Monitor*
 that he was 'advancing rapidly' in his efforts to disseminate Holy Scripture
 among Indigenous Australians of the Hunter and Shoalhaven Rivers.
 Henry Budd became the first indigenous Canadian priest.
 The first Christians were baptized in Tonga
 and missionaries arrived in Samoa.
 Henry Venn (the Church Missionary Society's honorary secretary)
 expounded the basic principles of indigenous Christian missions
 and CMS missionaries reached China and Nigeria.
 The Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) was established in Australia
 and Albert Maclaren and Copeland King, two ABM missionary priests,
 established the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea.
 Jackson Kemper became the first Missionary Bishop in the United States,
 James Hannington, Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa was martyred,
 and Samuel Ajayi Crowther, became Bishop in the Niger Territories.
 John Coleridge Patteson, became first bishop and first martyr of Melanesia.
 Bernard Mzeki, catechized in Zimbabwe, and won the martyrs' crown.
 Alexander Crummell, a priest and son of a slave,
 campaigned against the poor conditions facing blacks in the USA.
 Josephine Butler, social reformer, insisted on rights for prostitutes.
 Anglo-catholic clergy worked in the slums of Britain,
 and the Community of the Resurrection was established in South Africa.
**We thank you for all those who heard your call
 and responded, O God.
 May we also listen for your Spirit's prompting and react.**

In the twentieth century after Thomas had put his hand into Christ's wounds
 Emmegahbowh, became the first Native American
 to be ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church.
 Bishop Charles Henry Brent established the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

Julia Chester Emery,
 National Secretary of the Women's Auxiliary
 of the Episcopal Church's Board of Missions,
 visited every diocese in the US, over forty years,
 and went to Japan, China, Hong Kong and the Philippines,
 coordinating and encouraging work in support of missions.
 Ini Kopuria founded the Melanesian Brotherhood
 The Edinburgh Missionary Conference was held in Scotland,
 beginning modern ecumenical cooperation in missions
 Pandita Mary Ramabai became a prophetic witness and evangelist in India,
 campaigning against oppression towards women.
 Bishop Channing Moore Williams evangelized in Japan and China
 and Apolo Kivebulaya, was a mission priest in Uganda to the Bambuti people.
 Sydney James Kirkby, pioneered outback ministry
 James Noble, became the first Aboriginal deacon
 and Bishop John Oliver Feetham worked as a bush brother in Australia.
 Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah became the first Indian Anglican Bishop
 in Dornakal.
 Roland Allen published mission strategies
 Paul Sasaki, Bishop of Tokyo, endured much persecution for his beliefs,
 being tortured and imprisoned by the Japanese government in 1944.
 Philip Lendel Tsen Bishop of Honan, China,
 helped sustain the people of his district during the bitter war with Japan.
 At the end of WW2, he became the leader of the Chinese Anglican Church.
 Returning from the 1948 Lambeth Conference,
 he was placed under house arrest by the Communist government.
 Jonathan Daniels, human rights advocate and seminarian, was killed.
 A million Bibles were smuggled into China in a single night,
 by the charity Open Doors – Codename: Project Pearl.
**We thank you that you choose messengers
 to send out your good news.
 May we find ever new and creative ways
 to tell others about you
 and your extravagant love for the world.**

In the twenty-first century after the disciples saw their risen Lord
ascend into heaven
the Mission-Shaped Church report led to fresh expressions of your Church
in unlikely places and surprising contexts.
Members of the Melanesian Brotherhood were martyred
as they sought to bring peace in the Solomon Islands.
The Kriol Bible was completed,
the first translation of the entire Bible into an Australian indigenous language.
And, since the beginning of the century,
Amity Printing in China has produced over 54 million copies of the Bible
for distribution in, and beyond, China.

**We thank you that for over two thousand years
you have called ordinary people, like us,
to help herald your reign of love and goodness
to the world which you have created.**

**My we, in our generation,
go where you send us,
help where you need us,
and love as you love us,
so that the world may know you, O Lord,
your Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.**

Text: Robert McLean

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