

'Not Feeling it'

A pastoral service for tough days and holidays

You are welcome in this space, however you are feeling today.

Whether today is hard or holy, sorrow-filled or sacred –
you are welcome to share these words and reflections.

Starting out

Find somewhere that is quiet. Make it comfortable for you.

Do what you need in order to know that you are safe. You may want to make a drink, perhaps shut a door, maybe light a candle, and possibly put on some comfortable clothing.

The words, pictures, and questions in this booklet are an invitation to spend some time with yourself and with God, especially when days are difficult and memories are painful for whatever reason.

Throughout the booklet, a blanket is used to help us reflect and pray. You may want to have your favourite blanket with you as you read through these words. Use your blanket as you see fit as you follow the reflections.

We live in a world now where we read words on a page quickly. To help us slow down a little, and to let the words speak for us and speak to us, you may want to read them out loud. There is also a version of this service available on YouTube which you are invited to use too.



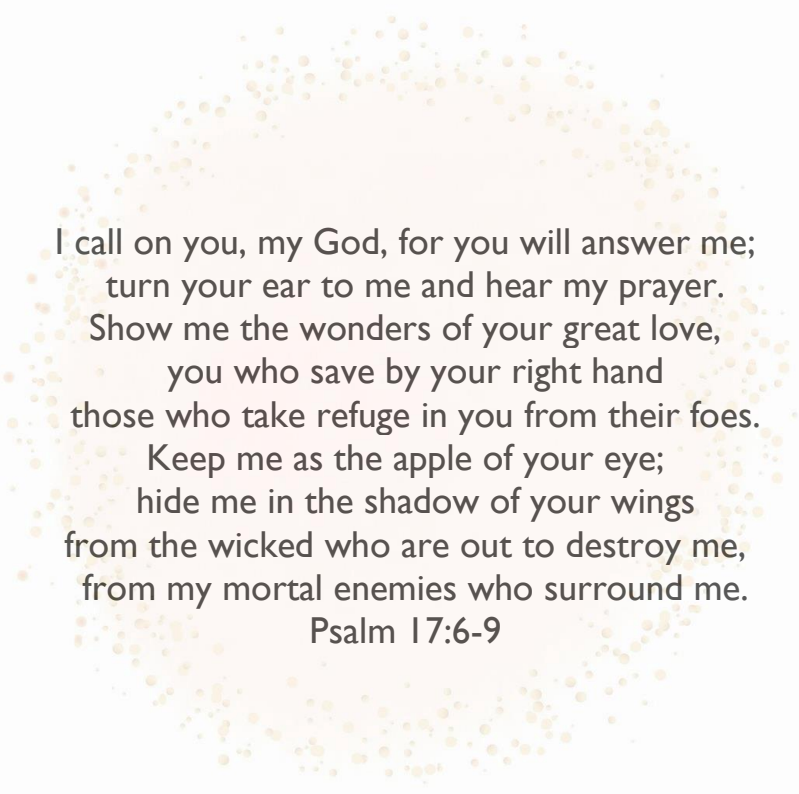
There are six movements to this service, each one includes:

- o a photo
- o a short introduction to the movement's theme
- o a quote from Zoe Clark-Coates (a leading practitioner in grief in the UK)
- o a question for you to spend some time with
- o a short prayer inviting God to help you move on and into your journey

The service is designed to move between the movements, but you may want to stay with a particular section for a while and come back to this when you are ready to do so.

This is a pastoral service for when you aren't feeling it.

You are really welcome to share this space with us and with God.



I call on you, my God, for you will answer me;
turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.
Show me the wonders of your great love,
you who save by your right hand
those who take refuge in you from their foes.
Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings
from the wicked who are out to destroy me,
from my mortal enemies who surround me.

Psalm 17:6-9

The world wants us to think that we need to have it all together
...let me tell you it's a lie.

I'm flawed but strong, expectant yet hesitant, hopeful and afraid.

I'm covered in scars.

Scars that speak of wounds previously present.

Scars that say I once lay wounded on the floor,

but have since risen from the ashes.

I'm a million layers of complexity,

and proud to say I'll never have it all together,

because I'm human, and while I'm alive,

I'm meant to be this glorious mess.

Safe



A blanket can surround me
when I most need it.
Blankets invites us to be still,
to receive comfort.
Just for a while.

Wrapped up, warm and
cosy, the blanket can hold
all manner of secrets
whispered into its weave.

It can catch all manner of
dreams as they finally float
away.

The blanket captures
evaporated emotions as
they pour their way out,
often unannounced.


This is the place I retreat to.
The place I can be,
beneath the layers.
The place I can relax into
its invitation.
Enfolded within it.

Under this blanket, I am safe.



'Maybe for today, OK is enough.'

Where do you go to, and what do you need, to feel safe?



God,
I need you to enfold me with your love again.
I'm falling to pieces beneath the layers,
and I can't keep holding it together.
I need your peace in place of my pieces.
Wrap me, hold me, and enfold me again.
Give me courage
when this is the hardest thing to whisper into this space today.
Keep my heart safe, in this glorious mess.
Keep me safe from the pain of today.

Protected

As the wind squeals its way through window frames and doorways, I pull the blanket tighter around my limbs.

Huddled beneath the weight, the blanket protects me from the elements.

It protects me from the things that would do me harm.

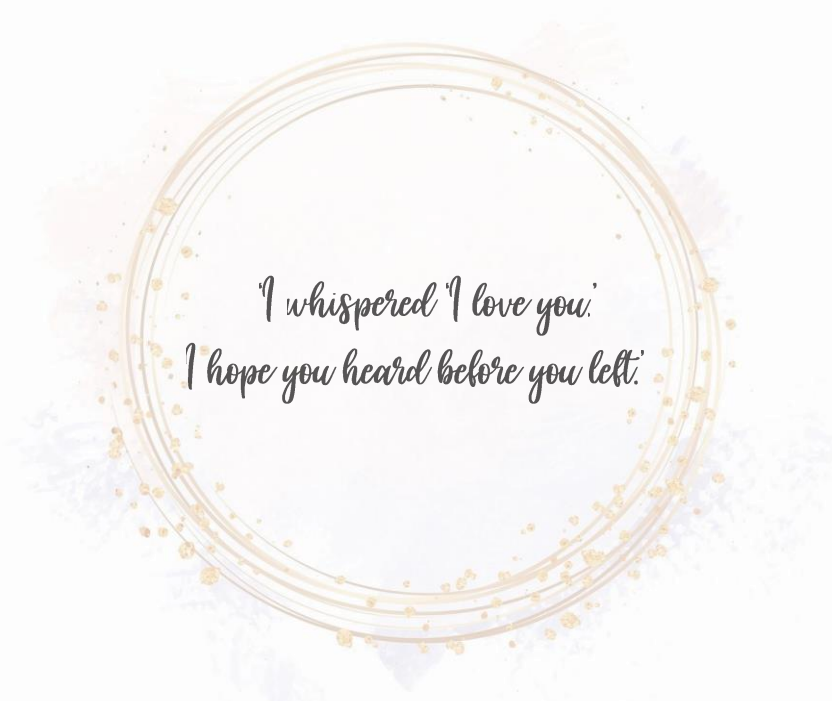
The blanket keeps out that which hurts. Protects from that which squeals alongside my despair. Protects from the weight of the burdens I carry.



The blanket offers protection from the outside in.

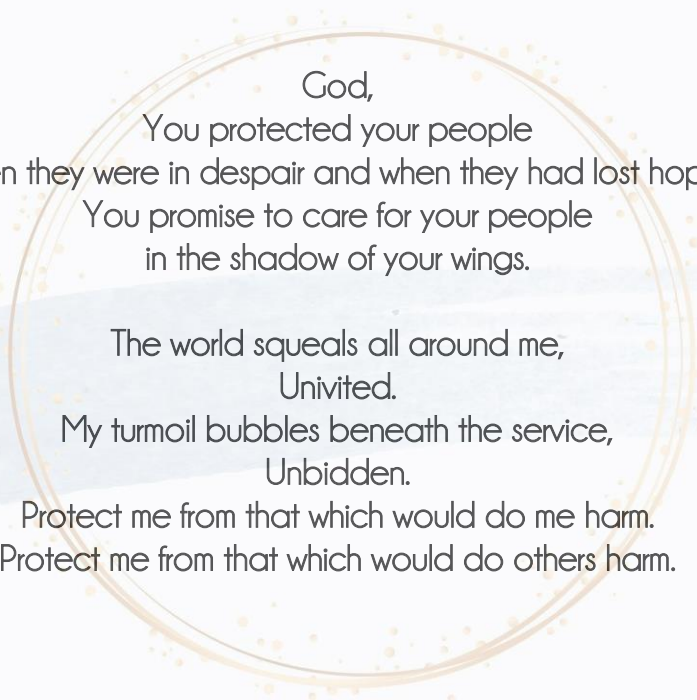
The blanket offers protection from the inside out.

With this blanket, I am protected.



*I whispered 'I love you.'
I hope you heard before you left.*

What do you yearn to be protected from?
Who are you protecting?
Who and what protects you?



God,
You protected your people
when they were in despair and when they had lost hope.
You promise to care for your people
in the shadow of your wings.

The world squeals all around me,
Uninvited.
My turmoil bubbles beneath the service,
Unbidden.
Protect me from that which would do me harm.
Protect me from that which would do others harm.

Remembered



Some blankets are more
special than others.
They have been lovingly
made and carefully chosen.
The fabric holds the scent of
those who matter most.
The frayed edges tell the
stories of the generations
who have shared the space
beneath it.

There are blankets which
matter.
Which have been made.
Or gifted.
Or held in precious times
and cast many memories.

Just as the blanket was once
chosen, woven, crafted.
I choose to hold the
memories close today.
Bittersweet memories of all
that I once had,
and all that I have lost.

Treasured.
I wish you were here, now.
I miss you.

*'Just when you think you're going to make it,
you're driving down the road and you pass a field
and you see a flower, and it reminds you.*

Or you hear a tune on the radio.

*Or you just look up into the night and, you know, you think,
'maybe I'm not going to make it.'*

*Because you feel at that moment the way you felt the day you
got the news.'*

What memories are evoked by a blanket for you?
Who are you treasuring today?

God

Memories can be powerful things
of things spoken, and of things best left unsaid.

From the trivial to the traumatic,
memories of them remain treasured;
woven into the fabric of my soul.

Keep those I treasure, safe
until we meet again.

Hidden

Brush it under the carpet.
Leave it to deal with later.
Keep it all hidden,
With grit and determination.
The blanket can hide all manner of
'stuff.'

Except that the pile just keeps getting
bigger.
As much as I hope the blanket covers
up for me well enough,
I know deep down that its
camouflage is only a few fibres deep.
And this 'stuff' is so much deeper.

So, I carry it with me,
Hoping that I can keep it all hidden.
Except it creeps out when I least
expect it.
When I can't contain it.

A trigger wafts past, and the memory
sticks in my throat.
I notice what I no longer have,
and the loss rises within me, as if for
the first time.

I want to keep things hidden.
To stay in control.
Because so often, I think I am out of control.

So, I cling onto one thread at a time.



What if instead of running from the pain,
we run towards it?

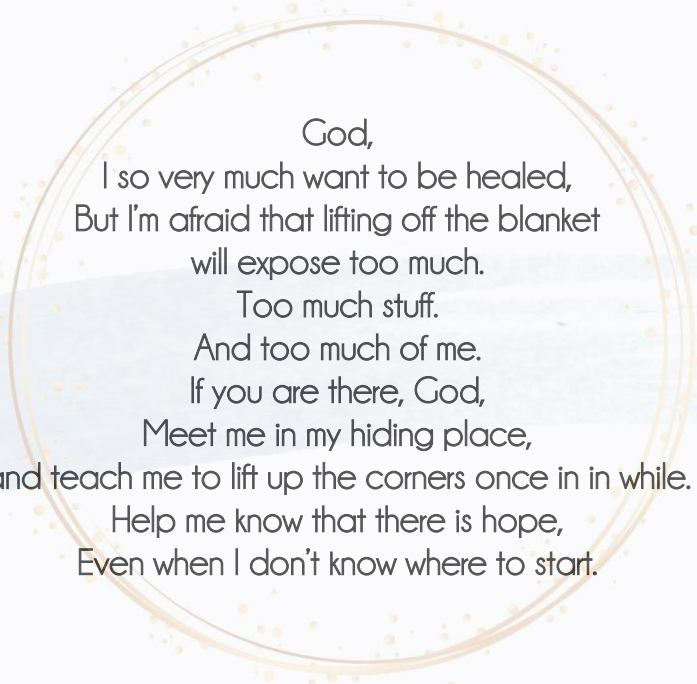
What if we treat the grief as a friend,
rather than as an enemy?

What if we talk about our loss and our stories,
rather than allowing others to shroud them in silence?

What then?

Well perhaps we can then begin to heal.

What are you hiding?
What are you hiding from?
What would it mean for the hidden to be healed?



God,
I so very much want to be healed,
But I'm afraid that lifting off the blanket
will expose too much.
Too much stuff.
And too much of me.
If you are there, God,
Meet me in my hiding place,
and teach me to lift up the corners once in in while.
Help me know that there is hope,
Even when I don't know where to start.

Missing



I've always enjoyed picnics,
Curled sandwiches and cooled
drinks scattered over a hand-
me down blanket.
A celebration of family, a gift of
summer's days long gone.

But today, like every day,
there is something.
Someone.
Missing.

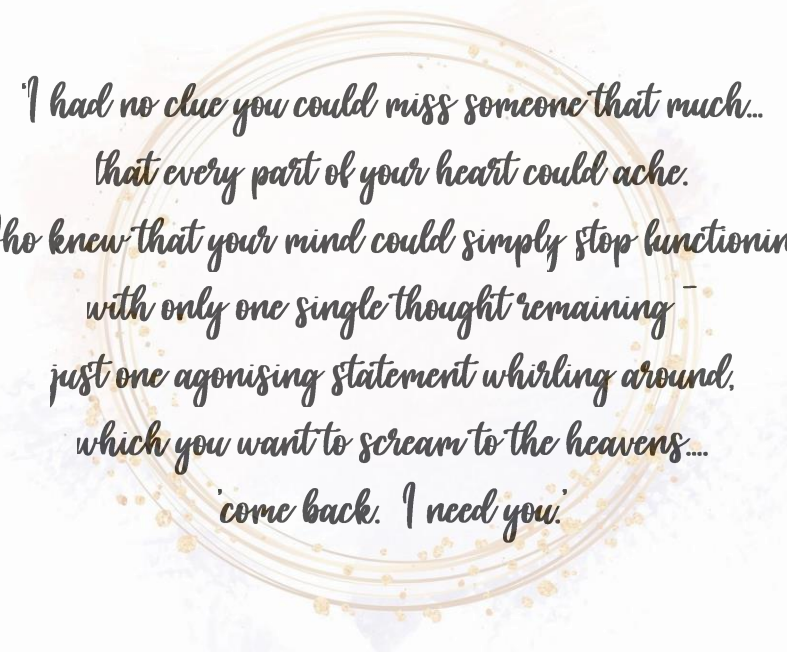
You are not here.

You have left your mark on me,
And when I am still,
I know that there is a missing part of me which left with you.

I didn't want to have experienced any of this.
Different choices and changed events –
life would have been so different.
Most of the time, I can fill in the gaps well enough.
I can ignore the ache in my heart
and the acid scorching my throat
and the saltwater gathering in my eyes.
This emptiness I feel is an old friend to me now.

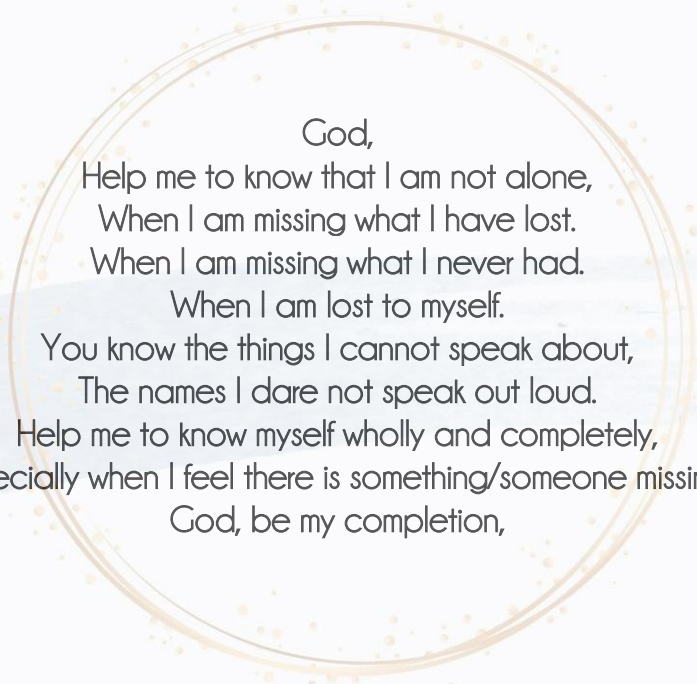
But you are a missing piece, and without you. . . well
...

The blanket reminds me of what could have been,
but will never be again.



*'I had no clue you could miss someone that much...
that every part of your heart could ache.
Who knew that your mind could simply stop functioning,
with only one single thought remaining -
just one agonising statement whirling around,
which you want to scream to the heavens....
'come back. I need you.'*

Who do you miss?
What do you want to tell them?



God,
Help me to know that I am not alone,
When I am missing what I have lost.
When I am missing what I never had.
When I am lost to myself.
You know the things I cannot speak about,
The names I dare not speak out loud.
Help me to know myself wholly and completely,
Especially when I feel there is something/someone missing.
God, be my completion,

Fortress

Is it a pile of blankets?
Or a fortress?
A den?
A Princesses castle?
Or a knight's tower?

It's a place filled with laughter and giggles.
A space for snuggled stories under torchlight, surrounded by the wrappings of midnight snacks (eaten well before the appointed time).

The blankets are a canvas for the imagination,
Where ideas take flight,
Where creativity runs wild,
And, just for a moment,
I can be someone else,
Living another story,
Open to a whole new set of opportunities.

With this blanket,
I can be the hero or the villain,
The saved or the saviour.

I don't have to hurt. I can be free.

This blanket is the fortress for play and self discovery.
The mundane and the ordinary become precious.
Perhaps even holy.



We live in a culture where people crave, seek, and hope for jaw-dropping experiences and life-changing opportunities.

But post-loss

...when your breath has been stolen from your lungs.

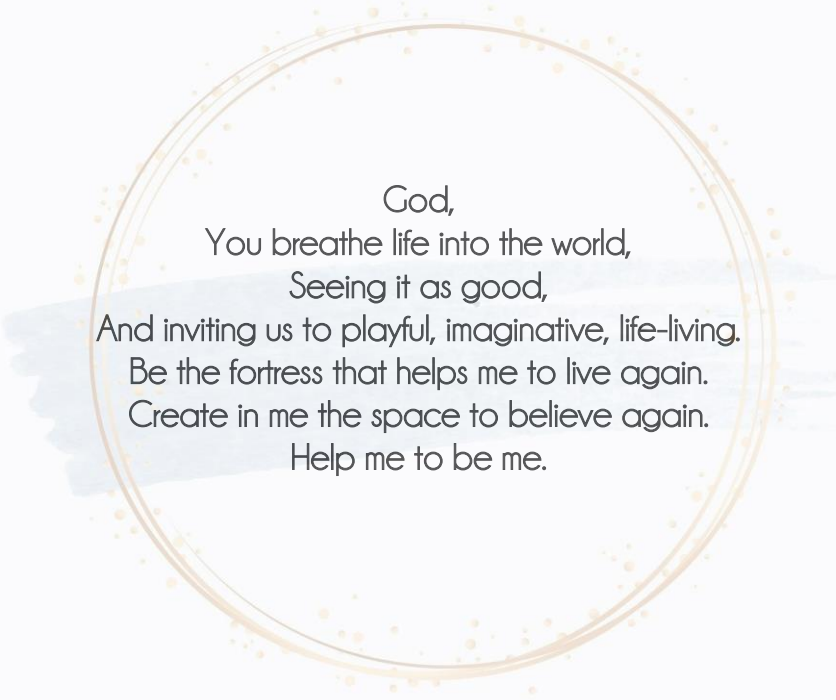
When the world has stopped spinning on its axis.

You crave normality.

The mundane is now not so boring.

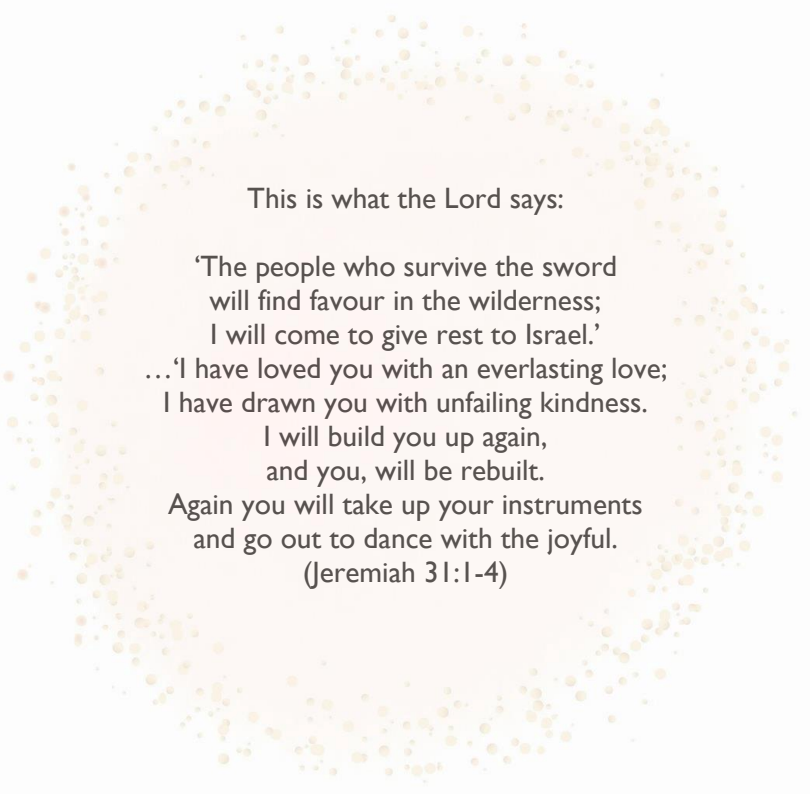
Grief shows you the precious moments of life
are right there in the ordinary.

Where does your imagination take you today?



God,
You breathe life into the world,
Seeing it as good,
And inviting us to playful, imaginative, life-living.
Be the fortress that helps me to live again.
Create in me the space to believe again.
Help me to be me.

The last word



This is what the Lord says:

‘The people who survive the sword
will find favour in the wilderness;
I will come to give rest to Israel.’
...‘I have loved you with an everlasting love;
I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
I will build you up again,
and you, will be rebuilt.
Again you will take up your instruments
and go out to dance with the joyful.
(Jeremiah 31:1-4)

It may not feel like it now. But there is hope. There is a forever-promise made with us, offering us another tomorrow. There is an everlasting love tinging the edges of our grief, sorrow, fear, shame, and anger – calling us to live on.

And one day, we will find joy again.

One day, you will find joy again.

Help to move on

This service is only part of your journey, and you might want or need additional support. The people and the organisations below may offer you the help that you need, when you need it the most.

The Good Grief Trust - <https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org>
an organisation which signposts to a range of tools and resources to help
people live well with grief

Cruse - <https://www.cruse.org.uk>
a bereavement charity

Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org>
a safe place for those thinking of suicide

You can also ask for prayer or find out more about Christianity at
www.christianity.org.uk

Feel free to contact your local minister for one to one support for you or your
family.