

## Waiting the Long Night



'For the Darkness of Waiting' from *All Desires Known*  
by Janet Morley, published by SPCK.

'Planets' by Kate Rusby from the album *Awkward  
Annie*

'Fare Thee Well' by Kate Rusby from the album *The  
Girl Who Couldn't Fly*

*Opening music and words*

*Planets* by Kate Rusby

In darkest darkness  
and in the brightest light  
**All God is with us**  
through this day  
and into this night  
**God is with us**  
in joy and in pain  
and for as long as it takes  
**God is with us**

So let us offer God  
our thanksgiving and praise,  
let us open our hearts,  
to listen in the darkness,  
and let us invite God to embrace us  
and inspire us  
and make us whole,  
and let us pray for those  
with whom we share this night:

on night shifts in factories,  
watching over buildings,  
cleaning offices,  
stocking supermarket shelves,  
serving in bars and pubs and clubs....

at this festival,  
offering welcome and hospitality,  
talking, listening,  
pondering, struggling,  
weeping, laughing,  
touching and holding....

in ambulances, police cars,  
lifeboats and fire engines,  
staffing phone lines,  
waiting and responding,  
breaking bad news....  
in pain,  
in hospital or at home,  
those kept awake by illness  
or the fear of illness,  
those at the very beginning  
or close to the end of their lives...

those travelling,  
in cars and lorries and planes,  
taxis and night buses,  
those who feel tired,  
or far from home...

those thieving and attacking  
in the dark,  
searching out the secrets of others,  
hustling and walking the streets,  
huddling in doorways,  
listening to those in despair,

Now may the Spirit of God,  
which created us from nothing  
and loved us into life,  
find a home in our hearts  
and settle our minds as we sleep,  
that in the morning  
what we have heard in the dark  
we may speak in the light,  
to God's praise and glory forever.  
**Amen**

*Closing music*

*Fare Thee Well* by Kate Rusby

*Hold on steady and strong,  
Here's the dawn coming on,  
won't be long.  
Oh it's easy to stand in the light  
with the pain.  
In the light I will ever remain.*

and there seems to be no resolution.  
For journalists and all who write,  
and speak and share,  
and blog and comment:  
for their sense of integrity and perspective  
and their brave seeking after the truth  
and bringing it into the light.

We ask your blessing, O God,  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

For those waiting the long night,  
when dawn seems not to come.  
For those whose pain  
is deeper than we can imagine,  
and who fill us with humility  
and remind us that, after all,  
there are other struggles.  
For those burdened by illness,  
by disability,  
by addiction.  
For those who live in chaos or fear,  
and those who have no choices.  
And for ourselves,  
that we keep in heart and mind  
the whole of what it means to be human,  
and stand alongside all  
who suffer and long for the dawn.

We ask your blessing, O God,  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

*You are invited to light a candles if you wish.*

Be present, O merciful God,  
and protect us through the silent hours of  
this night,  
so that we who are wearied  
by the changes and chances  
of this fleeting world,  
may repose upon thy eternal changelessness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

We will lay us down in peace  
and take our rest.  
**For it is thou, Lord, only  
that makest us dwell in safety.**

Abide with us, O Lord,  
**for it is toward evening  
and the day is far spent.**

As the watchmen look for the morning,  
**so do we look for thee, O Christ.**

Come with the dawning of the day  
**and make thyself known  
in the breaking of bread.**

crying out in despair...

and those on the other side of the world  
for whom day is just dawning  
all held in the curve of God's embrace.

*An song of night-time praise and thanksgiving*

For the darkness of waiting  
of not knowing what is to come  
of staying ready and quiet and attentive,  
we praise you O God:  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

For the darkness of staying silent  
for the terror of having nothing to say  
and for the greater terror  
of needing to say nothing,  
we praise you O God:  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

For the darkness of loving  
in which it is safe to surrender  
to let go of our self-protection  
and to stop holding back our desire,  
we praise you O God:  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

For the darkness of choosing  
when you give us the moment  
to speak, and act, and change,  
and we cannot know  
what we have set in motion,  
but we still have to take the risk,  
we praise you O God:  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

For the darkness of hoping  
in a world which longs for you,  
for the wrestling and the labouring  
of all creation  
for wholeness and justice and freedom,  
we praise you O God:  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you.**



## *Prayers of brokenness and healing*

God, help us to find our confession;  
the truth within us  
which is hidden from our mind.  
The beauty or the ugliness  
we see elsewhere  
but never in ourselves.  
The stowaway which has been smuggled into  
the dark side of our heart,  
which puts the heart off balance  
and causes it pain,  
which wearies and confuses us,  
which tips us in false directions,  
the load which is not carried squarely  
because it is carried in ignorance.

God help us to find our confession.  
Help us across the boundary  
of our understanding.  
Lead us into the darkness  
that we might find what lies concealed;  
that we may confess it  
towards the light;  
that we may carry our truth  
in the centre of our heart;  
that we may carry our cross wisely  
and bring harmony into our life  
and our world.

## *A moment of quiet for reflection*

Go in peace:  
know that God forgives you,  
forgive yourself,  
forgive those who have hurt you,  
be tender with one another's wounds  
and be bearers of God's  
wholeness and healing  
to one another, and to the world.

## *Readings*

**Genesis 32.23-32:** The same night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have

seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

## **Personal stories:**

*This is what I wrestle with in the night...*

## *Reflection*

## *Prayers*

So in the quiet of this night, let us offer to God our prayers and thanksgivings.

For the darkness in our world,  
for those places of conflict  
which cry out for the light of justice,  
of peace, of hope,  
and for all those working to bring those things:  
for peacemakers and peacekeepers  
and those who pick up the pieces.  
And for ourselves,  
as we hear and reflect and respond  
to the need around us.

We ask you blessing, O God,  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

For the darkness in our churches,  
for the things which keep us awake at night,  
and with which we struggle.  
For those who feel  
they have been betrayed or diminished,  
marginalised and devalued.  
And for the light:  
for those who have affirmed us  
as we grow in understanding  
what it means to be gay and Christian;  
for those who stand alongside us  
and share the cost.  
For those who listen to our stories,  
and for those who know the stories  
we can't yet tell.

We ask your blessing, O God,  
**for the darkness and the light  
are both alike to you**

For our leaders,  
and those who shape opinion.  
For our bishops,  
and for those trying to help us to discern  
a corporate way forward.  
For ourselves, when that way forward  
jars with our lived experience  
and our deep sense of God,