

Glimpses of Holiness

Scripture Readings showing many Names and images of Godⁱ

There are four readers. A and D are female, B and C are male. Please:

- **Stand together**, where you can be seen and heard.
- **Practice in the room where you'll be reading**, so that you are at ease in the space, and know how to project your voices or use the sound system.
- **Read everything printed**, distinguishing between three types of language:

1. **Word-pictures, in caps** (e.g. "SHEPHERD," POTTER"). Each is like a stained glass window. Savor it, and speak it with meaning, without over-dramatizing it.
2. **Scripture References** (e.g. Psalm 99:1). Most listeners value hearing the scripture source, so say it in full ("Psalm ninety-nine, verse one"), simply and clearly, as a piece of information. If you decide not to do this, explain that the readings are from scripture, and have the references printed for all to retain.
3. **Scripture Quotations** (e.g. "The Holy One is my shepherd"). Read clearly, and with appreciation, without rushing it.

"Glimpses of Holiness" can be read in full, or as a sequence of three shorter readings. The introduction ("In your mind's eye...") is used once when read in full, and at the beginning of each segment when presented as a sequence.

Options:

1. *All sing stanza 1 of "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise."*
 2. *All sing stanza 1 of "Bring Many Names" (Brian Wren)*
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- A. In your mind's eye, contemplate these powerful pictures of God, delighting in many, and bowing down to none.
 - B. **SHEPHERD:** Psalm 23:1. The Holy One is my shepherd, I shall not want.
 - C. **POTTER:** Jeremiah 18: 6. Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.
 - D. **ROCK, FORTRESS, STRONGHOLD, AND SHIELD:** Psalm 144:1-2 Blessed is the Living One, my rock and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield.
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- A. **KING:** Psalm 99:1 The Most High is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
 - B. **MAJESTIC CREATOR:** Psalm 104:1-3. O Living God, my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind.

ⁱ With thanks to Professor Richard Weis, New Brunswick Theological Seminary

- C. **MIDWIFE**: Psalm 22:9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
- D. **JUDGE**: Psalm 82:1-3. God has taken his place in the divine council; and holds judgment in the midst of the gods. "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute."
- A. **AN EAGLE CARING FOR ITS YOUNG**: Deuteronomy 32:11-13. As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the Living One alone guided Israel, and set him atop the heights of the land.

Options:

1. Solo or sung by all - "The Care The Eagle Gives Her Young" (Deane Postlethwaite, United Methodist Hymnal, #118)
2. All sing stanzas 2-3 of "Bring Many Names"

If a break is made here, reader B continues thus:

- B. *In your mind's eye, contemplate these powerful pictures of God, delighting in many, and bowing down to none:*
- C. **GARDENER** and **VINEGROWER**: Isaiah. 5:1-2 and John 15:1
- D. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.
- B. I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.
- A. **MOTHER**: Deuteronomy 32:18; Isaiah 42:14 and 16; Isaiah 66:13; and Hosea 11:1-9.
- D. You were unmindful of the **ROCK** that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.
- C. For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant. I will lay waste mountains and hills. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground.
- D. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
- C. When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.

- A. LOVING FATHER:** Psalm 103:13; Matthew 6:26; and Matthew 7:11
- B.** As a father has compassion for his children, so the Holy One has compassion for those who fear him.
- A.** Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?
- B.** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Options:

1. *Choral Anthem: either "As Truly As God is Our Father (So Just as Truly is God our Mother)" (Words: Juliana of Norwich; Music: William Matthias, SATB with organ, Oxford University Press, 1988); or "Bring Many Names" (Words: Brian Wren; Music Donna B. Kasbohm, SATB, DESC, Cong, Flute, B-fl trumpet, keyboard, World Library Press).*
2. *All sing stanzas 4-5 of "Bring Many Names."*

If a break is made here, reader D continues thus:

- (D.** *In your mind's eye, contemplate these powerful pictures of God, delighting in many, and bowing down to none:)*
- A. BIRD-CATCHER:** Hosea 7:11 Ephraim has become like a dove, silly and without sense; they call upon Egypt, they go to Assyria. As they go, I will cast my net over them; I will bring them down like birds of the air.
- B. SOLDIER:** Isaiah. 42:13 The Living One goes forth like a soldier, like a warrior he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.
- C. HEALER:** Psalm 30:2 and Psalm 147:2. O Adonai, my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.
- D.** The Living One builds up Jerusalem, and gathers the outcasts of Israel, healing the brokenhearted, and binding up their wounds.
- A. VILLAGE WOMAN, and SHEPHERD:** In Luke 15:1-10, Jesus pictures God's action in terms of a shepherd looking for a lost sheep and a village woman sweeping the house to find her lost coin: male and female pictures, from low-status people, in a pair of parables.
- B.** Some of the titles and designations of Christ are: the Way; the Door through which we come and go to find pasture; Light of the world; Living Water; Bread of Life; Lamb; Servant; Savior; Mother Bird longing to gather us under her wings; and the One who calls us friends, so is our Friend also.
- C.** A closing thought, based on a saying of Charles Hartshorne:
 "God is not the transcendental snob,
 Nor the transcendental tyrant.

God does not ignore creation and creatures
 Nor reduce us to puppets.
 God is, instead, the unsurpassably interactive,
 Loving, presiding genius and companion
 of all existence.”

ALL FOUR TOGETHER: “Thanks be to God! Amen!”

Options:

1. All sing stanza 5 of “Bring Many Names”;
2. All sing “How Can We Name a Love?” (United Methodist Hymnal #111);
3. All sing a doxology.

End of Reading

Note: In these readings, the “tetragrammaton” (*yhwh*), the name of God in the Hebrew Bible (perhaps pronounced “Yahweh”) is rendered in varying ways. Since the word *substituted for it* from ancient times, *adonai* = “Chief, Governor” (English LORD) has connotations of maleness absent from *yhwh*, the word is here rendered with “Adonai” (on the assumption that its English meaning is not “transparent” to many people, or else with “Holy One” or “Living One.” Since YHWH is often interpreted as having to do with the phrase “I am (or will be) who/what I am (or will be), “Living One” is an appropriate rendering.

Brian Wren