

Wes Conn: Morning.

Congregation: Morning.

Wes Conn: Welcome to morning prayers. We'll begin today's service with the responsive reading from the black Appleton Chapel psalter book. Psalm selection, number 127 found on page 64. Please stand as you are able.

Wes Conn: Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Congregation: Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

Wes Conn: It is in vain and that you rise up early and go late to rest eating the bread of anxious toil. For he gives to his beloved sleep.

Congregation: Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.

Wes Conn: Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one's youth.

Congregation: Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. He shall not be ashamed when he speaks to his enemies at the gate.

Wes Conn: You may take your seats.

Choir: (Singing)

Sally Hammel: God, I have no idea where I'm going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think I'm following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you, and I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope I will never do anything apart from that desire, and I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the road, the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are ever with me and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Sally Hammel: I first discovered this prayer by Thomas Merton during a course I took at the healing prayer ministry at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in New York City. I carried around on an index card in my wallet. It's very reassuring because it gives me permission to not know what I'm doing. I'm new to this faith business. I come from New York City where I had a 30-year career in advertising, digital media, finance. I'm comfortable being a businesswoman where facts and figures rule. Faith? Not so much. In fact, I only applied to Harvard Divinity School on a dare, and yet when I look back over my life, I see way markers similar to the pilgrimage theme we're exploring here at Memorial Church this year. My life has been a sort of pilgrimage.

Sally Hammel: Six years ago I was diagnosed with triple negative invasive ductal carcinoma. Cancer. I remember hearing the words chemotherapy and looking around the doctor's office for a wastebasket to throw up in. No, no, not me. This couldn't be happening to me. I didn't have time for cancer. I had a budget meeting to go to. I shared the news with a friend who advised, "You can't tell anyone about this. It'll be the kiss of death for your career, especially at your age." I considered this. I could devise a plan to schedule my chemo around vacation and holiday time. I could get a wig. I could even wear makeup. I could hide.

Sally Hammel: No one would have to know, and yet something inside told me to let go, surrender, ask for help. You don't have to do this alone. That big voice encouraged me to share my truth, my authentic self. Through sharing that experience. I healed and help others to heal. I became a volunteer at Sloan Kettering Hospital where I speak with other cancer patients, and we help each other here. Three years ago, following the treatment in 2016, I walked the Camino de Santiago, a 500-mile pilgrimage across Spain. Full disclosure, I only did 250 miles, but still. This journey is transformational. Again, asking for help and sharing my truth opened doors to conversations and opportunities I could not have imagined. It was on this journey that I first thought about becoming a hospital chaplain, a path that I am now pursuing at HDS. By sharing my truth, my life has been transformed.

Sally Hammel: At Harvard, there's tremendous pressure to measure up and not let anyone know that we're struggling, especially at this time of year, three weeks into the semester when the reality of the workload really kicks in. You can see it in people's eyes. When I admit I don't know what I'm doing and stop trying to do it alone and share my truth, others open up and share their own struggles. Ella had a flat tire on her bike. Ian couldn't find that photo he needed for the presentation he's giving in an hour. Jack's back went out. Nancy's daughter has the flu. Everyone's dealing with something. Sharing my struggles allows others to share their own struggles. We are not alone.

Sally Hammel: Today I urge you all to take a risk and share your struggles. In the words of Thomas Merton, be brave and say, "I have no idea where I'm going." You'll be glad you did, and I'm confident God will be pleased.

Wes Conn: Please join me in saying the Lord's prayer together, found on the reverse of our order of worship.

Wes Conn: Our Father, who are in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Wes Conn: Please join me in singing the hymn O For A Closer Walk With God, number 292 in your Crimson Harbor hymnal. Number 292.

Congregation/Choir: (singing).

Wes Conn: Receive now this benediction. May the Lord keep you from evil and may the Lord keep you in your going out in your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Amen.

Group: Amen.