

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. Please stand as you are able for the responsive reading. Psalm 100 found in your black Appleton Psalter book and please remain masked throughout the responsive reading.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

May all lands be joyful before you.

Congregation:

O God, serve you with gladness and come before your presence with a song for we know that you are God.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

You yourself have made us and we are yours. We are your people and the sheep of your pasture.

Congregation:

We shall enter your gates with thanksgiving, go into your courts with praise, give thanks to you and call upon your name for you are good.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Choir:

(Singing).

Alex Grayson '22:

A reading from the gospel according to Matthew. "Therefore, I tell you do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or about your body what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly father feeds. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying, add a single hour to your life. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Thanks be to God." I don't know about you all, but I am constantly stressed. While navigating the beginning of this semester, it seems that there's always something that needs my attention.

There are moments where I can slow down and breathe, but these moments are few and far between now that I'm getting older. All the enamor of growing up has worn off now as the realities of adulthood creep in from the horizon, like how to file increasingly complicated taxes or figure out what the heck a 401k is. But standing at the beginning of the equally stressful prospect of senior year, I know that something needs to change about my approach to stress and soon, and perhaps the answer is standing right in front of me. Since returning to campus and in-person classes for the first time since sophomore year, I've begun to notice little peaceful moments around campus that I didn't notice before.

The quiet of Harvard yard when classes are in session, the cheerfulness of an early morning run around the Charles River, and the beauty of the students fleet practice drifting through the courtyard. Before COVID-19, I was constantly running around from class to meeting to work and then class again. I had no time to slow down and enjoy the very campus I dreamed of attending for years. But now as a senior, I have a chance to find that enjoyment again. I'm lucky enough to have Fridays off from class, which is a rare accomplishment for a STEM major like myself and I fully planned to take advantage of what campus has to offer on these Fridays. But I know that this won't be enough to properly address the stress in my life.

If you're a dedicated Morning Prayers attendee, you might remember when I last spoke in February 2020 about my church camp and the concept of thin spaces. For those of you that weren't there, thin spaces are places where the connection to God or broader spirituality are more present. For me, this happens when I'm out in nature or surrounded by a community full of love and acceptance. I find it easier to shed any worries that I might have and become more present in the moment, allowing me to feel refreshed when my time in that thin space is over. But who's to say that that feeling of peace and love must be restricted to those thin spaces? Especially in a world like today's, we could all use a little bit of that thin space magic in our daily lives.

The pandemic has been extremely isolating, even for those of us that have been fortunate enough to stay in contact with our loved ones. The concept of social distancing in itself is complicated, as we're trying to maintain a physical distance while still feeling socially close to others. While things are still uncertain as to when this pandemic will be over there, there little things we can do to provide comfort to others and encourage them that things will be okay eventually. Whether that be a friendly wave to someone across the street that you haven't seen in years, or even just an encouraging comment on someone's social media post. It's a way to remind someone that they're not alone. It can provide them a chance to remember that someone out there cares about them, no matter what grade they get on a test or what recent news they received about a job offer.

When I look back on times when I wasn't stressed, I can now see that it was because I was surrounded by people and places that love and encourage me to be my best and focus only on what I can control. I'm lucky enough that I've been able to find such communities and spaces here on campus during my time as a student, and I hope to continue to place myself in these communities as I move forward into my last year. I encourage you all to do the same, especially for any first years listening in. Starting at Harvard can be a very stressful experience, so instead of focusing on that stress, instead focus on people and places where you felt a sense of home and comfort. Hopefully, you can continue to find ways to experience that feeling throughout your college career, so that you may fully enjoy your time at such a wonderful school.

With these sentiments in mind, please join me in creating a thin space in this very moment through community and prayer. This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready. Lord, for whatever it may be, if I am to stand up, help me to stand briefly, if I am to sit still help me to sit quietly, if I am to lie low, help me do it patiently and if I'm to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words and give me the spirit of Jesus, Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

All who are able to stand. As we continue in that beautiful prayer, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him, "Master, teach us to pray the Lord's prayer."

Our Father, who art 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, the power, the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Now let us sing the hymn, Morning Has Broken, hymn number 40 found in your Crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Congregation:

(Singing)

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

As you leave this place, but never away from God's presence, as you leave this gathering, but never away from God's love, may you create thin spaces. May you surround yourself with people who will help you to know that God is present in the most stressful moments. Amen.