

Courtney Godwin:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Courtney Godwin:

Welcome to our last morning prayers of this term. Our speaker this morning is the choir secretary, Sophie Choate. Welcome. You're here always. Welcome, specially. Will you please rise and join me in our responsive reading, Psalm Number 13, found in your black psalter. How long, oh Lord, will you ignore me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

Congregation:

How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

Courtney Godwin:

Look at me. Answer me, oh Lord, my God. Restore the luster to my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Congregation:

Lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him," my foes exult when I totter.

Courtney Godwin:

But I trust in your faithfulness. My heart will exalt in your deliverance.

Congregation:

I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.

Courtney Godwin:

You may be seated.

(singing)

Sophie Choate:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Sophie Choate:

I will start with a reading from the Pixar film, The Incredibles. "I can't believe you don't want to go to your own son's graduation." "It's not a graduation. He's moving from the fourth grade to the fifth grade." "It's a ceremony." "It's psychotic." As I approach my own psychotic ceremony together with my fellow classmates, I would like to reflect today on transitions. I think it was in the pandemic that I truly

came to appreciate the transitions of college life. There I was, trying to gather the willpower to travel just a few feet from my childhood bed to my desk to take a couple of Zoom meetings. And let me tell you, it really didn't seem worth it. How had I ever managed to actually pack a bag with everything I need for the day, walk all over Cambridge from classes to meals to rehearsals and back, greet friends along the way, and look vaguely presentable while doing it? The digital technology that's enabled us to connect during the pandemic had essentially stripped my routine of the transitions that my brain so dearly needed to reset, readjust, and remain sane.

Religious liturgy is full of beautiful transitions. Here at Mem Church, we start off by processing through the sanctuary to our seats, sometimes making eye contact with different congregants, always hoping that Ed won't notice if our processional speed is uneven. We stand up and sit down several times throughout each service. We say all amen to acknowledge our agreement and transition between or out of spoken messages. All of these miniature transitions are not strictly necessary to the message of each service, but they're so beloved to me. And there are the bigger transitions too. Morning prayers are a somewhat arduous transition into the workday. Sunday service somehow keeps the weeks from completely blurring together. And each season of the liturgical year allows us to reflect over and over again on the transitions of Jesus' life and our own.

It is sometimes tempting to try to avoid or hide transitions altogether. My dear friend and colleague Isaac recently spoke about the inherent awkwardness of the transition from the unfamiliar to the familiar. As a musician, transitions often feel like the most vulnerable parts of a performance. You may be surprised how much more comfortable I feel actually playing or singing than, for example, walking on and off the stage, tuning my instrument in front of an audience, or actually staying on stage long enough afterward to bow, graciously and accept applause rather than scurrying away as quickly as possible. However, transitions a performance, both musical and logistical can be sacred times of community, reflection and appreciation.

When the topic of my Harvard graduation first came up, I was reluctant to encourage my family to attend. My parents and brothers are currently stationed in Chad in Central Africa on assignment for the US military, and their trip to Cambridge will require several long flights in the middle of my brother's school year. Plus, I couldn't help but feel that graduating was one of the least exciting things I do in college. It's really just a transition coming after all the real achievements and challenges of our time at Harvard and before those of our next phase. But I hope we will give ourselves grace in whatever our next transitions may be and reach out to others in our communities accepting their outreach in return as we navigate these changes. Those awkward in-between times that we take for granted or even complain about now may be the very thing keeping us healthy.

I'd like to conclude with a few words of thanks. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to spend this time in community with you as we transition out of morning prayers for the year and as I transition out of this community that I've loved so dearly since the fall of 2018. I am grateful to Ed for believing in me. I am grateful to my co-secretaries and secretaries before me for their endless support, friendship, and thoughtful leadership. I am grateful to my quad squad for so many beautiful walks at 7:44 AM sharp. I am grateful to the Memorial Church staff for the care they show in going above and beyond for this community. I'm grateful to all of you for showing up this once or hundreds of times at this ungodly, yet somehow incomparably godly hour, and listening to whatever sounds we manage to make each day. Most of all, I am grateful to my fellow UChoristers. Every note, breath, hug, step, tear, baked good, GroupMe message and gesture of friendship has meant so much to me. UChoir love. Thank you.

Courtney Godwin:

Will you please join me in prayer? Dear God, as we leave this year together, some of us for a few months and some of us for much longer, send us out in peace with the knowledge that your love will always guide us, and the knowledge that the friends we've made in this place will always be like us. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Courtney Godwin:

Please rise in body our spirit for the Lord's Prayer. Our Father...

All:

... 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 and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Courtney Godwin:

After the service, please join us downstairs for Mem Cafe. And in the meantime, please join us in singing our closing hymn, number 90, God Be With You Till We Meet Again.

(singing)

In this time of transition, may we remember that transitions are sacred times of reflection. They are both ungodly and incomparably godly, like this time together. Help us to reach out to our communities and accept the love that they send out to us in return. May God be with you until we meet again. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.