

FOREWORD BY JON TYSON, PASTOR OF  
CHURCH OF THE CITY, NEW YORK

# Liturgies for Hope



Sixty Prayers for  
the Highs, Lows, and  
Everything in Between



UNCORRECTED  
PROOF

AUDREY ELLEDGE  
AND ELIZABETH MOORE

Praise for  
**Liturgies for Hope**

“As someone who has spent many hours praying, here’s what I’ve come to realize: it’s still very hard to do. One of the best gifts that has helped me develop my life with God is the prayers and liturgies of others. I often need the words of others to help me form my own words. This is what Audrey Elledge and Elizabeth Moore do for us in this needed book. They offer beautiful words to help us access the longings of our souls and bring them to God. If you’re looking for a jumpstart to your spiritual life, start here.”

—RICH VILLODAS, lead pastor of New Life Fellowship  
and author of *Good and Beautiful and Kind*

“This is a marvelous book. I am not surprised it emerged from one of the urban epicenters of our global pandemic—of course this fierce hope would grow in such a place and such a season. Audrey Elledge and Elizabeth Moore weave rich Scriptural imagery into powerful, prayerful poetry covering topics that are at once universal but also timely in their particularity. The liturgical pronouns shift between *we*, *you*, and *I* in a way that is spacious and welcoming. Best of all, this book compelled even this solitary

reader to reach out to her friends; these are liturgies that simply must be prayed in the company of others.”

—CHRISTIE PURIFOY, author of *Placemaker*

“*Liturgies for Hope* will be a trusted companion for those who struggle to find words for the cry of their hearts. In this book, Audrey and Elizabeth encourage us to lay our deepest requests before the Lord as a humble act of worship. This collection of prayers stirred my heart’s affection for Christ by reminding me of the strong hope we have in Him.”

—HUNTER BELESS, founder and host of the *Journeywomen* podcast and author of *Read It, See It, Say It, Sing It!*

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WATERBROOK

## LITURGIES FOR HOPE

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Published in the United States by WaterBrook, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Elledge, Audrey, author. | Moore, Elizabeth (Penguin Random House), author.

Title: Liturgies for hope: sixty prayers to help you lay down your fears / Audrey Elledge and Elizabeth Moore.

Description: First edition. | Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, [2022] | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: “Sixty contemporary, comforting liturgies that break through the noise of modern life to offer time-tested wisdom for readers navigating burnout, anxiety, and other stresses”—Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022002694 | ISBN 9780593442807 (hardback) | ISBN 9780593442814 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Prayers.

Classification: LCC BV260 .E36 2022 | DDC 242/.8—dc23/eng/20220627

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022002694>

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

[waterbrookmultnomah.com](http://waterbrookmultnomah.com)

ScoutAutomatedPrintCode

First Edition

*Book design by Elizabeth A. D. Eno*

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## Foreword

The global pandemic of 2020 hit all of us differently but profoundly. In some sense we are all still reeling from the collective trauma. Being a pastor was especially challenging, as my whole community needed tending to, and doing it in New York City—the epicenter of the crisis at the time—made it particularly challenging. Sirens sounded through the city twenty-four hours a day, carrying people in perilous condition to overwhelmed hospitals. A palpable sense of dread and fear blanketed the city.

Adding to the angst, there were so many mixed messages about what we were supposed to do, think, and believe. Both secular and religious sources got caught up in reaction and response. Fear, hysteria, misinformation, and despair were dripping the toxin of anxiety into our hearts, one update at a time. I remember grasping for what to say, some kind of comfort or lament, but words often failed me. The Psalms emerged as a source of comfort, as Scripture is timeless in a holy way, but I longed for some-

## FOREWORD

thing that would express *this* moment and carry a defiant hope, from someone who had been through it.

On Easter morning, some new liturgies began to emerge. These words seemed ancient yet immediate, and they spoke with strange authority and deep understanding. They pierced the endless noise of both local and national media and spoke to the human heart in a deep way. I kept asking where they came from and was delighted to find they were written by two women who have quietly served in our church community for some time. Audrey and Elizabeth had a front-row seat to what people in New York City were saying and feeling during those early days of the pandemic. Feeling the pain and longings of the city, they gave voice and language to what we were going through. They put pen to paper to express our collective fears, hopes, and desires and ultimately gave us words when we had none.

I hope that Audrey and Elizabeth's liturgies do the same thing for you, wherever you are and whatever you're facing. I pray that these words will draw you deeper into the love of God, help you fix your eyes on things above, and echo with the comfort of the One who is acquainted with both grief and joy.

Jon Tyson  
Lead Pastor, Church of the City New York

# Contents

FOREWORD BY JON TYSON	ix
AUTHORS' NOTE	xv
<b>i. FAITH</b>	1
A Liturgy for Those Who Don't Pray	3
A Liturgy for Those Wrestling with God	7
A Liturgy for Those Deconstructing Their Faith	10
A Liturgy for Those Who Have Been Hurt by the Church	14
A Liturgy for Those Embracing the Mystery of Faith	17
A Liturgy for Those Who Worship the Wrong Thing	20
A Liturgy for Those Struggling with Secret Sin	23
A Liturgy for Those Who Have Been Complicit in Injustice	26
<b>ii. VOCATION</b>	29
A Liturgy for Those Who Don't Love Their Job	31
A Liturgy for Paying Bills When There's Not Enough Money	34
A Liturgy for Gardening	37
A Liturgy for Learning a New Skill	39



## CONTENTS

A Liturgy for Those Working Through the Night	41
A Liturgy for Those Who Are Too Busy	43
A Liturgy for Creativity	45
A Liturgy for Caregivers	48
<b>iii. HEALTH</b>	51
A Liturgy for Those Worried for Their Physical Health	53
A Liturgy for Those Prone to Binging	55
A Liturgy for Fasting	58
A Liturgy for a Lunch Break	61
A Liturgy for Going on a Walk	63
A Liturgy for Falling Asleep	66
A Liturgy for Those Who Wake in the Night	69
A Liturgy for Those Deprived of Touch	71
<b>iv. RELATIONSHIPS</b>	75
A Liturgy for Friendship	77
A Liturgy for Feeling Butterflies Around Someone	79
A Liturgy for Loving Someone Who Doesn't Love You Back	81
A Liturgy for Saying Goodbye	84
A Liturgy for Showing Kindness to Strangers	88
A Liturgy for Those Concerned for Loved Ones	91
A Liturgy for Those Without Words to Comfort Others	94
A Liturgy for Those Struggling to Forgive	97
A Liturgy for Those Contemplating a Breakup	100

## CONTENTS

<b>v. WONDER</b>	103
A Liturgy for Those Looking for Joy	105
A Liturgy for Those Who Haven't Belly Laughed Recently	108
A Liturgy for Commuting	111
A Liturgy for a Road Trip	114
A Liturgy for Those in Need of a Good Cry	117
A Liturgy for Giving Thanks	120
A Liturgy for Generosity	123
A Liturgy for Those Who Are Homesick	126
<b>vi. MYSTERY</b>	129
A Liturgy for Waiting for a Dream to Come True	131
A Liturgy for a Disappointment	135
A Liturgy for Empty Space	137
A Liturgy for the Fear of Missing Out	140
A Liturgy for Waves of Grief	143
A Liturgy for Those Who Don't Know How to Help	146
A Liturgy for Letting Go of Your Younger Self	148
A Liturgy for Those Who Can't Be Good Enough	151
A Liturgy for the Aftermath of a Crisis	154
<b>vii. CONFESSION</b>	157
A Liturgy for Perfectionists	159
A Liturgy for Jealousy	162
A Liturgy for Those Who Feel Self-Conscious	165
A Liturgy for Those Battling Fear	168
A Liturgy for a Lonely Evening	170

## CONTENTS

A Liturgy for Those Who Feel Forgotten	172
A Liturgy for Those Who Feel Like Something Bad Is About to Happen	175
A Liturgy for the Morning After a Bad Decision	178
A Liturgy for Those Consumed by Media	181
A Liturgy for the Unfaithful	183
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	185

## Authors' Note

*Liturgies for Hope* started as an act of defiance against fear. As New York City teetered on the brink of the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020, we (Audrey and Elizabeth) asked each other, “What can we, lovers of words, create to recognize and push back the darkness?” Unsettled by the flood of frightening headlines, unhelpful think pieces, and mindless escapism, we began to wonder whether we, as writers, could create an anchor for our beloved and sorrow-stricken city to hold on to—something that would last beyond the sickness, isolation, and toilet-paper hoarding of the pandemic. So, with morning light spilling onto paper (read: keyboards) and open Bibles, we set out to put form to the shapeless depths of grief in our community.

We partnered with our church home, Church of the City New York, to publish the resulting liturgies online, launching them into the world on Easter Sunday 2020. The response was overwhelming: Our inboxes were flooded with requests to translate the litur-

gies into other languages, and messages from people across the world detailed exactly how the liturgies gave them hope. While *Liturgies for Hope* was born out of the specific turmoil of COVID-19, the response indicated that this collection transcends the pandemic and speaks to the evergreen needs of our time—feeling helpless, being consumed by media, worrying for physical health, needing an overdue belly laugh, and more.

Neither of us grew up in churches that practiced liturgy, yet we found that prayers rooted in the liturgical tradition proved to be a catalyst for our writing. Designed to be read and recited in community, these poetic prayers address the turmoil of the human heart and point toward the steady, unchanging truth of God's presence promised in Scripture. Liturgical prayers were written generations ago by people who observed the collapsing world around them and resolved to offer something more beautiful and trustworthy, something true, something steadying. We wanted to create a similar offering for you, whoever you are and wherever you are. These prayers are meant not to replace your prayer life but rather to awaken, encourage, and inspire it. Ultimately, each liturgy is meant to reorient your hope toward its truest Source and encourage you to press into the ache of holy longing.

We believe that God has provided truth, wisdom, and encouragement in His Word that we can recite, repeat, and meditate on—individually and corporately—and be filled and equipped for every circumstance. These liturgies were prayerfully written based on the promises of God in Scripture, and each liturgy includes a list of the verses that inspired us.

While writing these liturgies, we asked God not only “What do You want to say about this topic?” but also “What do You wish we would say to You?” We hope that these liturgies give language to the wonders and wrestling of your soul, inviting you into new

## AUTHORS' NOTE

depths of honesty and discovery with God. May you continue to encounter the beauty, power, and mystery of God through poetry, through prayer, and beyond.

Audrey Elledge and Elizabeth Moore  
New York City

i.

## Faith



STEP INTO THAT WILD, unrestrained current of hope. Allow yourself to be lifted by its waves and carried by its tide. Consider the reasonable—or perhaps unreasonable—way that a mountain is moved. Cling desperately to a hem. Refuse to let go until healing comes. Be aggressively discontent with apathy, with things making sense. Welcome questions to the table and deny fear the final word. What is faith if not these things—ears that cannot hear but want to, eyes that look beyond the visible to perceive the invisible? What is faith if not remaining vulnerable enough to hope? Though it may remain unseen, cheer for hope. Give it a standing ovation. Clap wildly for something good that is beyond yourself. Trust that Love will not lead you astray. Do not lose heart, but consider the ways that you are being inwardly renewed, the ways that temporary trouble may be achieving something of greater significance.

# A Liturgy for Those Who Don't Pray

**For those who don't believe in God,**

may you speak tenderly to the part of yourself  
that used to hope someone was listening.

**For those who are overwhelmed with all you don't  
understand,**

may you release yourself from the burden of having all  
the answers.

**For those who simply don't care,**

may you sense, deeply and innately, that you are loved.

**For those who refuse to speak to a God who  
allows suffering,**

may you find restoration and healing for the unspeak-  
able pain that you have endured.

**For those who don't know how to pray but want to,**

may you begin by asking for help, as one asks a kind  
father.



Could it be that prayer is less about saying the right words  
and more about the wordless cries of searching hearts?  
Could it be that God is speaking not with thunderous tremors  
but with gentle whispers to the soul?  
Could it be that God is not angry or absent from the chaos  
of our time  
but knocking on the doors of our truest selves,  
waiting to be welcomed, hoping to share a meal with us?

Dear God of love,  
show Yourself to us in a way that we can see.  
May we sense our hearts softening within us  
as You whisper to the deepest part of our souls.  
May we discover true spiritual safety  
and many companions to encourage us along our journey.  
May cultural noise not distract or intimidate us  
but guide us closer to You who understand what is beyond  
our understanding.  
May we dare to imagine something greater than this tem-  
porary world  
and be curious enough to uncover the riches of wisdom.  
May we come to love You who love us—  
You whom we do not yet see.  
May we be filled with glorious and inexpressible joy by  
what we receive from You.

*Prayer is not easy, nor does it make sense to many of us,  
but for those who are willing to try, here is a place to begin:*

“God, I want to believe, but help my unbelief.  
I want to pray but don’t know how.

## LITURGIES FOR HOPE

Even when I don't know what to say,  
You are able to interpret the groanings of my heart.  
Help me, Holy Spirit.

There is so much that infuriates me about this world,  
so much that I don't understand.  
I don't see You in suffering.  
I don't see You in injustice.  
I don't even see You in Christians.  
I'm asking You to show Yourself to me.  
I'm open and listening.  
Help me put aside what I think I know about You and get  
to know the real You.  
Teach me how to talk to You in a real way.

There are times when I feel I know You instinctively,  
as though eternity were embedded in my own heart.  
Yet there are also times when Your existence seems  
preposterous.

I refuse to believe in Someone who is a figment of my  
imagination.  
I refuse to trust in Something that is false.  
But if You are true, then even I cannot deny You.  
Let the visible world reveal to me Your invisible nature.  
I don't want to simply know about You, but I want to know  
You.

I remain open to You,  
listening for You in the deep recesses of my own heart.  
Awaken me to Your nearness.

I am listening for You.

Perhaps You are listening too.”

Amen.

1 Kings 19:11–13 • Job 36:26 • Psalm 34:18 • Ecclesiastes 3:11 • Isaiah 55:6–9 • Matthew 6:9–11 • Mark 9:20–24 • Luke 11:1–13 • John 3:16–17 • Romans 1:18–25; 8:26; 11:33 • 1 Corinthians 1:25 • 2 Corinthians 4:18 • 1 Peter 1:8–9 • 1 John 4:16 • Revelation 3:20

## A Liturgy for Those Wrestling with God

Here we are, Oh Lord:  
creature and Creator grappling and grabbing,  
all elbows and dust.  
I did not expect my encounter with You to be so gritty,  
so fleshy,  
and did not plan to struggle in the shadows with my God.  
But tonight You have come, so I trade my sleep for combat  
and my rest for sweat.

*I will not let You go until You bless me.*

All my longings are remembered by You,  
and all my fears laid bare.  
You already know what I doubt and what I seek  
and the name of what I need.

Oh God of Jacob, I wrongly believed my prayer would first  
    be met with an answer,  
but instead, You have given me Yourself  
and have met me face-to-face under the stars.  
You are not a God who rebukes boldness or scorns  
    audacity,  
so I will stay on the mat until something moves.

*I will not let You go until You bless me.*

Winded and wounded, I trust that Your presence here  
    means I am not forgotten.  
Oh Father, You have found me in the desert and refuse to  
    leave me alone,  
unwilling to let Your child go down without a fight.  
Only the living can wrestle,  
so let me draw on Your strength,  
and grant me the sort of persistence You honor.  
May my outward struggle flow from the inner realization  
    that  
I am not grasping for straws  
but rather gripping the wrists of the One who offers His  
    own body,  
the surest thing I can hold.

*I will not let You go until You bless me.*

Oh God of Israel, my bruises are proof that I was not ig-  
    nored.  
I have wrestled with You and triumphed,  
not because I received everything I wished for

## LITURGIES FOR HOPE

or because You succumbed to my will  
but because I have been touched by the One who loves me,  
crippled by grace,  
and have limped into the promised land with a new name.

Amen.

Genesis 32:22–32, *TLB*\* • Psalm 38:9 • Hosea 12:3–5

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