Dear friends, March 23, 2020

I want to share with you some Morning and Evening Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, written while he was imprisoned by the Nazis during WWII. I set them to music, for liturgical use, as part of my Doctoral work, and I hope that they might provide solace for you during these days of fear and social isolation.

Until we meet again, let us sing together from wherever we are.

-Joseph Byrd

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**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** (1906-1945) was a Lutheran pastor and theologian who, as part of the “Confessing Church,” opposed the Nazi-sponsored “German Christian” Church, resisting the policies and practices of the Third Reich in both word and deed. For this he was arrested and sent to prison. While incarcerated, Bonhoeffer spent much of his time writing. *Morning Prayer*, and *Evening Prayer* (*Christmas, 1943*) is taken from the posthumous collection *Letters and Papers from Prison.*

In October, 1944, Bonhoeffer was moved from Tegel prison to the dreaded Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse *Gestapo* prison in Berlin, a full year and a half after his arrest. In February, 1945 he was moved again to the Buchenwald concentration camp.

His final transfer was to the Flossenburg camp. Payne Best, an English officer, and fellow prisoner, wrote:

The following day, Sunday 8th April, 1945, Pastor Bonhoeffer held a little service and spoke to us in a manner which reached the hearts of all, finding just the right words to express the spirit of our imprisonment and the thoughts and resolutions which it brought. He had hardly finished his last prayer when the door opened and two evil-looking men in civilian clothes came in and said: “Prisoner Bonhoeffer, get ready and come with us.” Those words “come with us”—for all prisoners they had come to mean only one thing—the scaffold. We bade him goodbye—he drew me aside—‘This is the end,’ he said. ‘For me the beginning of life,’ and then he gave a message to give, if I could, to the Bishop of Chichester…. Next day, at Flossenburg, he was hanged.

His body was immediately cremated and his ashes scattered. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was 39. Days later, the Allies liberated the area.

November 10, 1938 is the only date marked in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Bible. One day after the Nazi’s *‘Kristallnacht’* night of destruction, he marked the date next to Psalm 74, verse 8: *“They said in their hearts, let us plunder their goods! They burn all the houses of God in the land … O God, how long is the foe to scoff? How long will the enemy revile your name?”*

Bonhoeffer wrote to his parents shortly after his arrest in 1943, “I’m learning to practice myself what I have said to other people in sermons and books.”