



# Heart Cry



## Inside this issue:

Echoes of His Voice	2
Anam Cara	3
Lorica	4
Caim	4
Threshold Prayers	5
Prayer Calendar	5
Tools to enhance your prayers	6

March 2008

## Of Lambs and Lions

March. We've heard the silly little rhymes and superstitions. In like a lion, out like a lamb. Or vice versa. If only life were that simple.

Lambs and lions are quite the opposites in nature. Herbivore and carnivore. Ruthless predator, helpless prey. King of the jungle, Docile Follower. These are the pictures these beasts set before us. And yet somehow, in this season, because of something as silly as the weather we pair them together.

Did you realize that the common picture of the lion and the lamb lying down together isn't a Biblical one? Wolf and lamb, yes. Child and adder, yes. Calf and lion, or lion and ox, yes, but not the familiar pairing. That imagery comes from a far more regal source, not the prophecy of the coming Kingdom that Isaiah gives us in chapters 11 and 65 of his recorded work. The lion and lamb are pictures of Christ, facets of His persona. He is the Lion of Judah, the

Lamb who was slain before the foundations of the world to take away our sins. He is sovereign, but He is also gentle beyond belief. He is the object of our adoration and awe.

This time of year, I am reminded again and again of Christ who is both the lion and the lamb. And of the Kingdom He desires to build. It is a Kingdom of peace and hope, built upon His very essence. Christ is in us, or the Kingdom will never come to pass.

Of course, I often find myself having a difficult time balancing both leonine and lamb-like qualities. At times I roar with frustration, both at injustice and at the foolish things I cause, while shrinking away like a frightened lamb at the prospect of having to stand up. Praise be to God! Christ never struggles in this manner.

He is regal. Always. His strength supports us. His power will endure. His kingdom is forever.



And He is always gentle to the meek and lowly. He will not destroy us for our folly, nor chase us away as mere prey. He is not unchanging like the March winds, but steady, sure, secure.

And because of that, we find peace in Him. His Kingdom shall reign over all the earth. And we will be a part of it.

*"Lord Jesus, you are the lamb and the lion. You are my King. I worship You.*

*"Help me to stand firmly in Your love when the winds howl about me, or all seems calm. For in You and You alone must I find my peace. Amen.*

## Coming Soon to a District near you!

Be on the lookout for invitations to regional prayer gatherings that will be hosted by leaders in your local district. This is a very important time to be seeking the Lord in prayer as we prepare for the ministry of Bishop-Elect Kevin Leibensperger, and step into the next phase of ministry within the Evangelical Congregational Church.

There will also be opportunities for you to join with the Prayer Mobilization Team at the upcoming National Conference. It's our hope that you will keep your eyes open and your calendars clear so that you might join us at these powerful ministry opportunities.



**“Worthy is the  
Lamb, who was  
slain!”**



## Echoes of His Voice

**“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.” - Isaiah 11:6**

There is a time coming. Dare I say it is close at hand? When the Kingdom of God will be more than imagination and hope, but a reality upon the earth. Our whole world will change. The ideals of the Garden will be restored. Conflicts will cease. Peace will reign. O, how I long for that day. *“May Your Kingdom come quickly, Lord Jesus. Our world is obviously not what You desire it to be. We long for Your peace to reign. Bring Your Peace. Bring Your hope. And might I be an agent of that peace.”*

**“This is what the LORD says to me: “As a lion growls, a great lion over his prey— and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor— so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights.” - Isaiah 31:4** I need to remind us that nothing happening in the world takes the Lord by surprise. He is not frightened or shaken by the things that overwhelm us. He will not be disturbed - even when our world is falling apart. So cling to Him. No matter how many rise against Him, His reign is sure. *“You truly are the High King of Heaven. You have won our victory on Calvary’s Cross. Defend us, O Lord.”*

**“Like a lion coming up from Jordan's thickets to a rich pastureland, I will chase Babylon from its land in an instant. Who is the chosen one I will appoint for this? Who is like me and who can challenge me? And what shepherd can stand against me?” - Jeremiah 50:44** I can never forget that the Lord is our Defender. None can stand against Him. No one will overthrow Him. And He is roused to defeat our enemies. He will bound in to our rescue like a lion charging across the plains. *“Rise to my defense, O King of Creation.”*

**“Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” - Revelation 5:5** “In Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my light, my source, my song.” This song by Robin Marks has been an encouragement to me. It lifts me up in times of distress, because I recognize it echoes the reality of the Gospel. My hope is restored when I lift up my eyes and see the Lord, whether in scripture or in song. And isn’t that the point? When we see Him, we no longer can weep. We find joy in His presence. *“Turn my eyes once again to You. You have triumphed over all -including the judgment we deserve. Why should I fear when You are close at hand?”*

**“and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.” - Revelation 10:3 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” - John 1:29** That’s the kind of lamb/lion comparison I’m looking for. And the Lord Jesus is truly the One who brings them about. He is both incredibly strong and incredibly gentle. He will shake the world with the sound of His voice, but he roars against the sin that enslaves us. And that sin is taken away by His love. *“You took away the world’s sin, and mine as well. Your voice secures me. Your love sustains me. Thunder in my heart, and bring me to Your perfect peace.”*

**“In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” - Revelation 5:12** At the end of the day, no matter what struggles have come, or hardships we have been forced to endure, we can find ourselves secure in the presence of the Lamb who is a Lion, God’s one and only Son, our Lord Jesus. And when we see His presence our response has to be one of praise. *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honor, and especially, my praise. Turn my heart to praise you. May my voice join in the unending chorus of Your praises.”*

## Anam Cara

In Celtic tradition, followers of Christ developed close, life-long relationships with at least one other follower of Christ. It was very close to what we would call an accountability partnership, or a Discipling relationship, but it was more than that. They truly were "Soul Friends". An anamcara was someone to whom we would confess our deepest sins and secrets, and know that they would not turn their back on us. It was a person who would inspire us and encourage us to be the person Christ had in mind when He created us.

In the past few years we've taken to stressing the need for these kinds of relationships again. It seems to be a part of the creation of the Districts of the EC Church - an attempt to

join together in unity and fellowship and mutual support and ministry. It is the impetus behind intentional discipleship - willfully joining with one or two others in a triad to focus in on a specific section of God's Word, to share the experiences of our lives, and to pray. But the Anam Cara experience is much more than that. It is intentional lifelong partnership between spiritual peers. It is giving yourself as equals to someone who will help you grow.

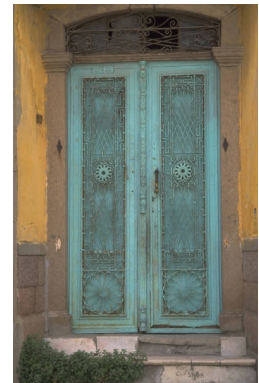
For the past ten years, I have journeyed through the best and worst of times with two such men. They have stood by me, railed at me, vented with me, shared their frustrations, and I have shared mine. We have walked through the loss of loved ones, the loss of jobs, and

the loss of dreams - only to be reminded that God is faithful. We've supported one another in prayer, partnership, and finances until our Anamcara were able to see God's hand still providing for their need. And for these men, I will always be grateful.

Find partners in prayer. Partners in life. Be honest with them. Even when it is painful. If they are truly Godly, they will accept you, and even though perhaps they will offer correction or redirection, it will be done in love.

Where do you turn when you're in need of someone to share your burdens? A soul friend is one who embodies Christ. With them, you truly feel His arms about you.

I pray you find one.



**“Where do you turn when you’re in need of someone to share your burdens?”**

## Seek God for the City 2008

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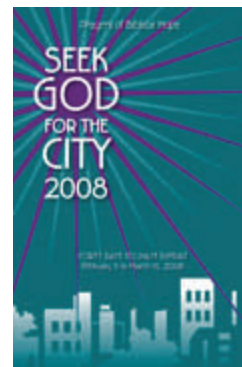
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Caption describing picture or graphic.

## Lorica

The early Celtic church had many “breastplate prayers”, or “lorica”, which declared the surrounding and encompassing of God. Such prayers were not to make God come - they understood that He was already there, always present, - but to open our eyes to that reality. “In breastplate prayers, the person who prays seeks to become aware of what is already a reality.” The central verse of the ancient Hymn “Be Thou My Vision” is an example of a lorica, or breastplate prayer. I find it frustrating that

this one isn’t in most hymn-books. Maybe it’s too militaristic for most modern tastes, but the simple reality of God’s encompassing protection is something that even moderns must be reminded of.

*Be thou my breastplate,  
My sword for the fight,  
Be Thou my whole armour,  
Be Thou my true might  
Be Thou My Soul’s Shelter,  
Be Thou My Strong Tower,  
Raise Thou, me Heavenward,  
Great Power of my power.*  
Ephesians 6 tells us to “put on

the breastplate of righteousness.” For centuries, Christian warriors have pictured themselves strapping on Christ’s protective power. Recognizing that alone they are vulnerable and weak, but with Christ before them and behind them, above and under them, to the left and to the right, Christ on every side (a paraphrase of one of St. Patrick’s prayers), that they can stand secure. He gives us strength.

May Christ strengthen you step as you clothe yourself in Him.

**“In breastplate prayers, the person who prays seeks to become aware of what is already a reality.”**

## Caim

*“The Mighty Three  
My Protection Be  
Encircling Me  
You are around  
My life, My Home  
Encircling Me  
O Sacred Three  
The Mighty Three”*

Celts had a practice of drawing a “caim”, a circle of protection around themselves. It wasn’t done as a magical practice, but as a visual reminder that God’s loving presence was truly cir-

cling their every step, surrounding them on every side. It could be laid out in stone, or carved into the woodwork, or simply swept into the dirt floors of many ancient dwellings. It was a simple reminder, sure, but one that is oh so meaningful.

Do you recognize God is encircling you? That He is everywhere about you? That there is nowhere you can flee to escape His presence, and that

by extension, no enemy that can catch you alone and unawares since He is there?

Next time you pray, imagine a wall around you on every side protecting you from harm and sealing you in to a sacred space with Christ. That is the imagery and importance of a caim, to know that He is with you, and that nothing can separate you from His love.



Patricius

## Patrick

He was once a slave among the Irish, who had run for his life. Born a Briton, carted away from His family, this man became a hero of the faith. When he found freedom, he sought the Lord Jesus, and became a priest - a missionary called to serve those who were once His captors.

One thing amazes me. He went back to the place of his torment. And he went in love. Why?

Legend has it, that one night, he dreamt of an angel carrying a scroll. " One night I saw a vision of a man called Victor, who appeared to have come from Ireland with an unlimited number of letters. He gave me one of them and I read the opening words which were - 'The voice of the Irish'. As I read the beginning of the letter I seemed at the same moment to hear the voice of those who were by the wood of Voclut which is near the Western Sea.

They shouted with one voice- 'We ask you, boy, come and walk once more among us'. I was broken-hearted and could read no more, and so I woke up. Thanks be to God, after many years the Lord gave to them according to their cry".

I am amazed by the testimony of this man who became the patron saint of Ireland. says "it would be tedious to give a detailed account of all my la-

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Threshold Prayers

One of the most inspiring things I've discovered about the Celtic way of prayer is that it really was a practice of the presence of God. There were prayers for everything from lighting a fire on the hearth to turning down the bedclothes to leaving your home and entering into the world. Like many things Celtic, these prayers were Trinitarian, invoking the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They were not religious rituals, but ways of life, reminders of reality and teachers in theology.

Today we stand on yet another threshold. We always do. We are about to enter the world. We need to be relevant and real. And I find an ancient prayer helpful for stepping across the boundary between the sacred and the mundane (for 5th century Celts, there was no difference): *"I will kindle my fire this morning in the presence of the holy angels of heaven. Without malice, without jealousy, without envy, without fear, without terror of any one under the sun, But the Holy Son of God to shield*



*me. God, kindle Thou in my heart within A flame of love to my neighbor, To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all, To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall, O Son of the loveliest Mary, From the lowliest thing that liveth, To the Name that is highest of all.*

## March 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Pray for the encircling of God's love.
2 Healing for those whose lives seem dry.	3 Prayer for women's ministries.	4 Ask the Lord to forgive those who have harmed you.	5 Seek music to flow in heartfelt worship.	6 The peace of God to pass all our understanding.	7 The passion of Christ to call us to commitment.	8 The strength of God to power us.
9 Jesus to bring us newness of life.	10 Ask for a willingness to yield to the testing of the Lord.	11 Rest for our weary souls.	12 The power of God to preserve us.	13 The wisdom of God to instruct us.	14 The way of God to direct us.	15 The shield of God to defend us.
16 The host of God to guard us.	17 That Christ would be with us, before us, in us, and over all.	18 That we might be free from all deceit and hypocrisy.	19 That we would arise in the strength of the Trinity.	20 Heartless people to be warmed in Christian passion.	21 Ask the Lord to allow you to celebrate His love.	22 God's protection amid dreary days.
23 The kisses of the Father to cover us.	24 Lamb-like gentleness to affect our relationships.	25 Ask the Lord to supernaturally provide for your needs.	26 Seek Christ for an anam cara - a soul friend.	27 Protection from your enemies.	28 God's hand to guide, His shield to ward.	29 Pray to be bound to the Lord in love.
30 Seek an awareness that Christ is before you.	31 Leonine courage to face changing days.					

## Schedule of Events

- **March 11**  
Daylight Savings Time Begins
- **March 17**  
St. Patrick's Day

## HEARTCRY

Evangelical Congregational Church  
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Myerstown, PA 17067

### Touching the world with prayer

The prayer mobilization team of the EC Church exists to encourage people to touch the loving heart of Father God in the open, ongoing communication we call prayer. If you have stories of prayer - answered, or waiting to be answered, lessons you've gleaned, or experiences you've had while praying, we'd love to hear them. If you'd like to share specific requests, we'd be glad to include them too.

Please keep in mind, however, that this newsletter is created well in advance of its release. If you would like to share a timely prayer need, please use the EC prayer chain.

## Patrick

*(Continued from page 4)*

bours or even part of them". It is clear he met with many different hardships in Ireland. He thanked God who rescued him twelve times when his life was in danger, and goes on to say: "I came to the Irish heathens to preach the Good News and to put up with insults from unbelievers; I heard my mission abused, I endured many persecutions even to the extent of chains; I gave up my free born status for the good of others".

And to carry him through in trying times? "I ask God for perseverance, to grant that I remain a faithful witness to him until my passing from this life... I pray those who believe and fear God, whosoever deigns to look at or receive this writing which Patrick, a sinner, unlearned has composed in Ireland, that no one should ever say that it was my ignorance if I did or showed forth anything however small according to God's good pleasure; but let this be your conclusion and let it be thought that - as is the perfect truth - it was the gift of God".

## Tools to enhance your prayers

### Music

Iona - "Journey into the Morn",  
1995 Forefront Records

Eden's Bridge - "Celtic Worship" 1995

"Celtic Psalms" 1996

"Celtic Praise" 1997

"Celtic Worship 2" 1998

"Celtic Reflections on Hymns" 1998

Kathryn Scott - "Satisfy" 2003  
Vertical Music

"This Is Love" - Vineyard Music  
2003

The Crossing - "Dochás  
(Hope) Diamante 1996

Michael Card - "Starkindler"

### Covenant 1998

Sheila Walsh - "Hope" Integrity  
1998



### Books

"The Celtic Way of Prayer"  
Esther de Waal. Image  
Books. 1997.

"Wisdom of the Celtic Saints"  
Edward C. Sellner. Ave  
Maria Press. 1993.

"Anam Cara" John  
O'Donohue. Cliff Street  
Books. 1997.

"The MacMillan Book of Earliest  
Christian Prayers" F.  
Forrester Church & Ter-  
rence J. Mulry. Collier  
Books. 1988.