

Ruth Fanshaw



Flying Free

Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

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Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

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**This book is respectfully dedicated to my former therapist,
Elaine Arthur, and to The Piano Guys.**

Thank you for helping me to fly free.



I also want to thank my Beta Readers:

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Introduction

I didn't set out to write a poetry book. I just wrote poems, and eventually felt that I had enough decent ones to put together into a book with a coherent theme.

I've tried to arrange them so that they tell a story, to take the reader on an emotional journey.

Each of the poems came out of my own life story, but the order I've arranged them in - the story or journey I've made the book tell - is not, in itself, my journey. (For instance, the first two poems at the start of Part Two relate to two different situations, at two different points of my life, and involving two different people. They aren't even in chronological order.)

Most of the poems in the book express something about my relationship with God.

Some are about how He's brought me through difficult and challenging times, others are about the joy and peace that comes from knowing Him and finding our identity through that relationship with Him. But even in the ones that don't explicitly mention Him, He's always a vital part of the subtext, because He is integral to every part of my life.



I thought it might be helpful to give a quick explanation of some of the poetic forms that I use in the book, for those who are interested in such things. But of course, if you want to skip that and just read the poems, go right ahead!

I rarely begin with the idea that I'm going to write a particular type of poem. I find that I need to let the poem be whatever shape it wants to be. (For instance, I originally tried to make *Buoyant Heart* rhyme,

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and it was a disaster.) But I've found that the following things are useful items to have in my toolkit.

Haikus

A haiku is a form of poetry invented by the Japanese. It has three lines, each with a specific number of syllables. I use the common 5-7-5 format: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third.

I like to work with the idea of a haiku capturing a vivid moment in time, though I've recently discovered that this was the invention of a twentieth century Japanese-American named Kenneth Yasuda.

Cinquains

A cinquain is a five line poem. It works like this:

Line 1: One word - a subject or noun.

Line 2: Two words - adjectives that describe line one.

Line 3: Three words - adverbs or verbs that relate to line one.

Line 4: Feelings or a complete sentence that relates to line one.

Line 5: One word - a synonym of line one or a word that sums it up.

Free Verse

Free verse is poetry that doesn't use a consistent rhythm or rhyme. However, it isn't totally without form - for instance, it still uses poetic lines, stanzas, and strophes, and may still use rhythm and rhyme in places.

Blank Verse

No rhymes, but a regular length to the lines. (Used in *This Now*.)

Rhyme Schemes

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Rhyming Couplets: pairs of lines that rhyme with one another (e.g. *Forty-Five*, *Being Human 2*).

Pattern: AA BB CC, etc.

Traditional Rhyme: alternate lines rhyme with one another. (Used in *Finding the Rainbow*.)

Pattern: ABAB CDCD...

Simple Four-line: even lines rhyme with one another, but odd lines don't rhyme. (Used in *The Turn of the Year*).

Pattern: xAxA xBxB...

Monorhyme: all the lines in a stanza rhyme with one another. It's commonly used in Arabic, Latin, and Welsh poetry. (Used in *Sacred Ground* and *This, Too* - although in both cases the final line of the stanza breaks the pattern.)

Pattern: AAAA BBBB...

Internal Rhymes: a sound in the middle of a line rhymes with a sound in the middle of another line, or at the end of its own line or another line. (Used in *Finding the Rainbow*, *Holding On*.) Difficult to write while keeping the poem authentic, but very satisfying when it works out!

And a number of other variations that I don't know if there's a name for!



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Part One

First Flight

*His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim*

~ from *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan

The Turn of the Year

With Christmas Day over,
Yet New Year not come,
A quiet falls on me
To which I succumb:
A pivotal moment
When things become clear -
The stillness that lies
At the turn of the year.

It's such a brief season,
When time seems to pause,
And soon a new annum
Will open its doors;
Yet always, I feel
I can catch my breath here:
This moment of still
At the turn of the year.

A time to assess things,
A time to reflect,
To sit back and wait
For the dots to connect,
Take stock of my choices,
Perhaps shed a tear -
This moment of still
At the turn of the year.

I gain some perspective:
I see there is scope
To enter the future
With courage and hope.
New insight, new promise,
A new course to steer,
I find in the still
At the turn of the year.

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My Saviour was with me
Through all that has passed,
He still will be with me
From first to the last.
Whatever the challenge
Beyond that frontier,
He'll go with me still
Past the turn of the year.



I've always felt this way about the week between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. It somehow doesn't feel like it's part of either year; a liminal time that belongs only to itself.



Threshold 1

(A cinquain)

Threshold
Liminal, transitional
Adventurous, enticing, beckoning
Start of a journey
Beginning



Forward

I climb the ramp
And go through the Door that Leads to Adventure

I sit by the window
Alert
Expectant
Waiting for the push:
The slight pressure at my back
That will propel me
Forward

A juddering signals change
Movement begins

There is the push

Forward
Into new places

Forward
Into my future

The adventure begins

I smile



I have a physical disability that makes me unable to drive, so train journeys have become very important to me. In my mind and soul, they stand for freedom and adventure.

This poem references:

- The classic BBC children's show *Mr Benn*.



Being Human (Version 1)

My purpose is not to please a man
My purpose is not to keep a house
My purpose is not career motherhood
My purpose is not a successful career

I have no wish to manipulate
I have no wish to dominate
I have no wish to lose myself in a family
I have no wish to lose myself in a job

I am not a seductive temptress
I am not a domestic angel
I am not a hardened superwoman
I am not a baby factory

I am a human being

I am a complex individual
I am interested in diverse and disparate things
I am stronger in some areas, weaker in others
I am sometimes right and sometimes wrong

I want to live a fulfilling life
I want to complete what God calls me to do
I want to do what I can do well
I want the freedom to be myself

My purpose is to love and please God
My purpose is to enjoy His love and embody it
My purpose is to give to the world what only I can give
My purpose is to become the best version of myself



This poem split into two while I was writing it: a rhyming version and a non-rhyming version. Its non-identical twin comes next.



Being Human (Version 2)

I don't exist to please a man,
Wield cleaning cloth and frying pan,
Nor worship kids or a career –
These things are not why I am here!

I don't want to manipulate,
Nor master, rule or dominate.
I do not want to lose myself,
In family or in seeking wealth.

I am no seductive temptress,
Nor angelic household empress;
No machine promotion-taker
Nor a patent baby-maker.

*I'm a human, that is all;
With my own life, and my own Call.*

I am a complex mix of things:
Of interests, traits and ponderings.
I'm sometimes weak and sometimes strong;
I'm sometimes right and sometimes wrong.

I want fulfilment, just like you:
To do what God wants me to do.
To use my skills and use them well -
The freedom just to be myself.

My purpose is to please my Lord:
To be myself – complete, restored!
To give what only I can give
And show His love by how I live.



Flower Child

You stand in the field, one amongst many.
You stretch towards the sky,
Reaching for the distant sun.

You see so many around you:
Taller, brighter;
They seem to get more light than you.

Others unfurl,
Scarlet in the sunshine -
But you are still in the bud.

*Do you think the Sender of the Light has forgotten you?
Little Flower, your time will come.*

~ ~ ~

You grow in the field, one amongst many.
Your roots dig down, deep down into the dry ground,
Reaching for elusive moisture.

You see so many around you:
Greener, fresher;
They seem to find more water than you.

The earth is hard,
And you are thirsty.
Sometimes, you fear that you will never bloom.

*Do you think the Sender of the Rain has forgotten you?
Little flower, your time will come.*

~ ~ ~

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Do not envy
Those who bloom before you,
Those who already spread their petals to the sun.

They will not steal your light.
They will not steal your rain.
Their beauty takes nothing from you.

You, too, will flourish; you, too, will bloom.
All the flowers will bloom together:
The beauty of each will enhance all the others.

*Do you think the Sender of Growth has forgotten you?
Little flower, your time will come.*

~ ~ ~

Do not force
Your tissue-paper petals
Out of the bud.

Do not strive;
Do not crush your own fragile beauty
In your hurry to bloom.

Do not fear
That your time is lost.
When He wills, your bud will open.

*Do you think the Sender of Wholeness has forgotten you?
Little flower, your time will come.*

~ ~ ~

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Drink deep of the light that finds you.
Drink deep of the rain that reaches you.
Dig deep, and be grounded in the nourishing soil.

You are not forsaken, but loved.
You are not forgotten, but cherished.
He is sending what you need.

Your petals will unfurl,
Delicate and magnificent,
And your face will lift to greet the smiling sun.

*Never think He has forgotten you.
Little flower, your time will come.*



This poem was inspired in large part by a story I heard many years ago at the Keswick Convention, from a youth leader called Collette Leroy.

She told us how she'd been admiring poppies by the roadside, and saw one that hadn't opened yet, so she decided to try to open it herself. The flower came out mangled and damaged. She felt that God was speaking to her through the experience, telling her to wait for His plan to unfold in her life: that His plan and His timing are far better than anything we could 'make happen' for ourselves.

That story has always stuck with me, and has often helped me over the years.

Thank you, Collette.



This Now

How can I steward my soul well
In this Now?

How can I keep up my courage
How can I protect my own peace
How can I keep my Faith thriving
In this Now?

How can I follow my purpose
How can I pursue my passion
How can I fulfil my calling
In this Now?

~ ~ ~

How can I be light in the dark
Of this Now?

How can I salvage sanity
How can I help those in need
How can I lift others' burdens
In this Now?

How can I reach out in kindness
How can I give comfort and care
How can I bring hope and healing
In this Now?

~ ~ ~

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How can I make the world better
In this Now?

How can I encourage others
How can I celebrate the good
How can I share Gods love and light
In this Now?

How can I show people Jesus
In this Now?



This poem is my response to the COVID-19 crisis. I believe these are questions we all need to be asking ourselves fairly regularly, but especially during challenging times. The answers will be different for each of us and each of us needs to find our own answers for ourselves.

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
~ Ephesians 5:8, 16; NKJV



Be the Change

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world light
Instead of darkness.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world love
Instead of hate.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world hope
Instead of despair.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world kindness
Instead of cruelty.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world care
Instead of neglect.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world clean laughter
Instead of tears.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world comfort
Instead of pain.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world joy
Instead of misery.

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Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world respect
Instead of disdain.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world mercy
Instead of revenge.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world creation
Instead of destruction.

Today I am grateful for every person
Who brings the world healing
Instead of harm.

May I be such a person.



I wrote this one after I'd read something that had disturbed and upset me very much - the kind of thing that makes you feel like the darkness in the world might actually be winning.

And as I prayed about it, I started to thank God for every person in the world who lived in the *opposite* way to what I'd just seen.

And that was followed by the thought that I want to be like that, too: I want to be part of the answer, not part of the problem.



Turn the World

An unkind word, unspoken
An unkind thought, unfinished
An unkind deed, undone
~ This is how the world turns

An argument avoided
An anger diverted
A resentment discarded
~ This is how the world turns

An assumption examined
An opinion reassessed
A bigotry abandoned
~ This is how the world turns

A prejudice conquered
A fear overcome
A friendship begun
~ This is how the world turns

A wrong righted
A load lightened
A day brightened
~ This is how the world turns

A word of encouragement
A word of comfort
A word of gratitude
~ This is how the world turns

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A gesture of goodwill
A deed of generosity
An act of kindness
~ This is how the world turns

A sorrow shared
A joy shared
A heart shared
~ This is how the world turns

In the warmth of a smile
In the joy of a greeting
In the fellowship of a hug
~ This is how the world turns

From darkness to light
From lies to truth
From hatred to love
~ This is how the world turns

One day at a time
One life at a time
One choice at a time
~ This is how the world turns

*Be the change
Share the light
Bring the love
~ Turn the world!*



Words & Music

Music living, liting, lifting,
Lightening the listener's load...
And I mean my words to do that.

Music dancing, daring, dreaming,
Disarming depression and doubt...
And I want my words to do that.

Music charming, cheering, changing,
Challenging choices and character...
And I hope my words could do that.

Music calling, calming, caring,
Cascading in a confluence of comfort...
And I'd love my words to do that.

Music soaring, stirring, soothing,
Seeping down the spine into the soul...
And I wish my words could do that.

Music haunting, holding, healing,
Hurrying home into the heart...
And I dream my words could do that.



This poem was inspired by the wonderful art created by The Piano Guys
and how it makes me feel. I wish my words could do that...



By Derwent Water

Silver strewn across the lake
Silver rising from the hills
Silver falling through the air

Poised
Between the past and the future
I sit
Cloaked in peace
For my Father is with me



Part Two

Defying Gravity

*No lion can him fright,
He'll with a giant fight,
But he will have a right
To be a pilgrim*

~ from *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan

A Knight's Tale

Once I built a Castle.
My steed was swift,
And my Sword was bright.
I rode to Adventure and Battle;
I rode for Honour and Valour;
I rode for the Joy of One who called me...

~ ~ ~

It has been a long ride...

I have seen many Battles and many Adventures.
I have met many bandits and wild beasts.
Some have robbed me, and some wounded me;
My Sword has been notched,
And my Castle broken...

But always I have honed the blade and rebuilt;
I have bound up my wounds and ridden onwards,
Scarred but not consumed...

The One who called me led me on;
And in time, I came to a Valley of Peace.
I rested by the still waters, and was content.

~ ~ ~

I met a fellow knight.
A white knight with a good heart.
I admired his courage and his gentleness.
I admired his strength in the One who called us.
It seemed that we would ride together...

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We would share our Adventures;
We would face our Battles side by side.
We would build our Castle,
Shining and bright and set upon a hill...

~ ~ ~

But the knight was... of many colours
And he has burnt my Castle.

The splendour of Carmel and Sharon have been taken from me,
And I have met lions in the Way...

~ ~ ~

I step away from the smouldering ruins.
I set my face to the Sunrise.
For the One who called me calls still...

He steadies my weak knees;
He lifts my feeble hands.
His strength fills my fearful heart, for He comes to save me.

He is the River in my desert;
The parched land will bloom again.

~ ~ ~

I will take up my Sword once more,
And don my armour.
I will still ride for Honour and Valour.
I will be the White Knight.

I will ride again to Adventure and Battle;
Faith is my shield and Joy is my steed.
For the One who calls me is Truth,
And He sets me free from the ruined castle.

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He will build my Castle again;
The foundations shall be of sapphires,
And the pinnacles of rubies.
I will enter Zion with singing;
Gladness and Joy will overtake me,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away...

~ ~ ~

I am the Castle,
Lashed by storms yet comforted;
Anyone who attacks will surrender to me.

I am the Sword,
Forged from disaster to be fit for my work;
No other weapon will prevail against me.

I become the White Knight.

The One who calls is my Master Builder;
He is my Blacksmith and Hammer and Fire;
He is my Armour and Honour and Valour;
He is my Comfort and my Vindication.

He calls...

And I will follow.

~

This poem was born out of my last romantic heartbreak - but it's come to mean more than that to me over the years.

I feel now that it's about my whole life - my whole walk with God - and how He always brings me through the tough times. It's about choosing to be the hero of your own story. It's about character growth and transformation.

It's about hope.

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This poem references:

- *When a Knight Won His Spurs* by Jan Struther
- John 10:2-4
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-11
- Psalm 23
- *This Kiss* by Beth Nielson Chapman, Robin B Lerner, and Annie Leslie Roboff
- Matthew 5:14
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- Isaiah 35
- Isaiah 43:19
- Isaiah 54:11-17
- Ephesians 2:19-22
- Isaiah 40:1-2
- Psalm 35:22-25



Degrees of Separation

My life is satisfactory without you.
I find that, with the passage of time,
 I can enjoy again the things that I once enjoyed.

The keen joys of literature and music,
 Of mountains and the ocean,
 Of adventure and imagination,
 are mine still.

I have joy in the company of friends
 and joy in solitude.
I have joy in learning
 and joy in teaching.
I have joy in silence and sound.
I have joy in dawn and sunset,
 and the black, star-dusted night.

I have joy in the scents of pine and lilac
 and clean, fresh air, and of the sea.
I have joy in green and growing things,
 in leaves and blossom and fruit,
 and the passing of seasons.
I have joy in the clean lines of good houses,
 and joy in the magnificent irregularity
 of tree and cliff.

I have joy in myself as a person,
 and a joy deeper still in my God.

These are mine, and mine forever.
At times, these joys so fill me
 that I feel the want of nothing else.

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Yet certain things,
at certain times –
classical music;
a guitar, played with skill and feeling;
a good, sharp joke, well made;
puzzles and post-modernism;
travelling through Derby on the train;
certain songs; certain movies; certain places;
and high intelligence;
and very thin men...

These bring you back to my mind
with a rush of fierce and paralysing pain:
your smile, your laugh, your voice;
your wit; your mind; your soul.
Then I miss you.

It's strange to think that we may never meet again.
You seemed so much a part of me.
I still wonder, at times,
about what might have been...

I have not, as yet, found anyone who can replace you;
but at present, I do not require a replacement.
Though I do not have the joy that you once gave me,
I have many other joys.
I am happy,
as I am.

I shall have a good, rich life without you;
and I expect that I shall love again
sometime.



This was another romantic heartbreak, many years ago. It's about the stage when you're not quite over someone - but you're well on the way. You still have occasional twinges, but you're getting your life back.



Waters of Life

He takes my heart of stone in His hands;
 my granite heart
 my calcified heart.
Gently He takes it;
 tenderly He breaks it;
He breaks it open...

He breaks it open and water gushes out,
 crystalline-bright;
The river flows through my dry places,
 the deserts of my soul,
 bringing Life.

The land that was laid waste,
 my desolate land,
 blooms like Eden.

The well within me springs up into everlasting life
 and my stone heart
 finds flesh
 and beats with blood.



This poem references:

- Ezekiel 36:25-27, 35
- Psalm 105:41
- Revelation 22:1
- John 4:14



Something in the Mist

Hard-packed ground
Sharp with grass:
A force against my bare feet.

Silver-grey clinging dampness presses in,
Cooling the sun to a dim disc of honesty;
I breath it;
It chills.

The surrounding silver shifts with shadow...

Something in the mist.

Something moving:
Ambiguous,
Aware,
Alive.

Something Other.

I move forward:
Tentative;
Uneasy;
Curious.

Drawn.

Movement again,
Dark against pale;
A flicker of the strange,
The unknown.

I follow:
Wondering;
Wary;
Willing.

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Drawn.

The Other moves before me:
Nebulous;
Obscure...
Familiar?

Half-masked, murky, it beckons.
It draws.

I stretch out a hand:
Puzzled;
Charmed;
Enchanted.

I reach out to the hand reaching to mine...
Fingers touch;
Interlace;
Close;
Clasp.

We move closer...

Drawn in...
Drawn out...

I see the Other:
Familiar and strange;
Like and unlike;
Known and unknown.

I see the soul:
Awkward and graceful;
Soft and solid;
Weak and strong.

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I see myself:
Unknown and known;
Unloved and loved;
Within and before me.

I move forward:
I move out of myself...
I move into myself.

I open my arms,
Embrace myself:
Discovered;
Accepted;
Loved.

We merge,
Melt:
Self into self.

One.

Around me, the sun streams through,
Dissolving the darkness into opalescent honesty.

Soft with grass,
The gentle earth
Cushions my feet.

I move forward.



When I first had the idea for this, I intended it to be a short story. But then it seemed to want to be a poem - and who was I to deny it its dream?



Unshamed

That twist of the heart,
as though it were being wrung out
like a soiled dishcloth;
Wanting to curl up around it,
to shield it from view,
To shrink and shrivel around it
until I could crawl inside a nutshell
and close it up behind me.

~ ~ ~

Choosing to uncurl;
Bring it to the Light;
Expose it to the Consuming Fire.

Grace burns away shame.

The heart opens again,
basking in the warmth
of being fully known;

Fully loved.



Halcyon Day

I climbed the hill
Up the steep, cobbled path,
The blessed coolness of the dappled shade
Shielding me from the strong sun.

I stood on the clifftop,
The great, grey house beside me.
Beneath me, the sea:
A glistening, ever-shifting shimmer of turquoise.
Waves surged towards me
And burst themselves in a joyous torrent
Over the feet of the rocks.

Far out and away,
Shifting, drifting light and shadow,
Silver scintillating over the deep blue.

I was alone.

I was alive.

I was me.



It was my birthday. I spent the beginning and end of it with
a dear friend, but most of it alone in a place I love.
It was one of my best birthdays ever.



Sacred Ground

To love my Lord devotedly,
Obeying Him wholeheartedly;
To trust in Him when I can't see:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To live my Faith courageously,
Love to my full capacity,
And see myself as God sees me:
 This is Sacred Ground.

~ ~ ~

To practice generosity,
To care for others practically,
To share resources mindfully:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To guard my heart ferociously,
To steward my soul faithfully,
So that good things can flow from me:
 This is Sacred Ground.

~ ~ ~

To joy in creativity,
Explore originality,
Express God's image within me:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To use the gifts He's placed in me,
To serve enthusiastically,
Do all things for Him, heartily:
 This is Sacred Ground.

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

To be who I was made to be,
To live my life authentically,
Embrace my own complexity:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To deal with others honestly,
Let God's grace freely flow through me,
Submit to others graciously,
 This is Sacred Ground

~ ~ ~

To rest in quiet tranquility,
Content in my own company,
Accepting myself lovingly:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To share the secrets within me
In honest vulnerability
With those who've shown they're trustworthy:
 This is Sacred Ground.

~ ~ ~

To grieve when loss envelopes me,
Weep unapologetically;
To feel my sorrow searingly:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To revel in life joyously,
To let my soul expand with glee
And laugh until the tears flow free:
 This is Sacred Ground.

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

To know I live imperfectly,
To see my faults unflinchingly,
Acknowledge my humanity:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To take responsibility,
Accept God's grace unstintingly,
Receive forgiveness thankfully,
 This is Sacred Ground.

~ ~ ~

To follow sacrificially,
To share His suffering willingly,
Take up the cross that falls to me:
 This is Sacred Ground.

To live life more abundantly,
Share in His joy ecstatically;
To know Him more transcendently:
 This is Sacred Ground.

~

This is what I want my life to look like. Every day - with varying degrees
of success! - I try to stand my Sacred Ground.

~*~

Lost

(A haiku)

Here in the lone dark
I sob for my lost children
who will never be.



This haiku is the first of a trilogy of poems I wrote the night it really hit me hard that I will almost certainly never be a mother.

It was one of the toughest nights of my life.



Lament & Mending

Much is lost
And some things will never be -
Things that my soul bleeds for.

I ache with the loss of that which never was;
Of those who are not.

Sorrow seers me to my core,
And around my mangled heart
My body convulses in wrenching sobs.

~ ~ ~

Broken.

~ ~ ~

I would have loved them.

I would have loved them.

~ ~ ~

Yet in the darkness of my night You hear my voice,
You catch my tears.

In sweet sounds, You come close
To embrace my lacerated soul.

So gently,
So gently,
In warm and wistful beauty
You speak comfort without words.

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

My Saviour knows.

~ ~ ~

A different ache.

Healing tears.

I say farewell to those I never knew.

I release them.

~ ~ ~

A peace comes then,

And I sleep.

~

Second poem of the trilogy.

This poem references:

- Psalm 6:6
- Psalm 130:1-2
- Psalm 18:6
- Psalm 56:8.

In case anyone was wondering, the music that helped me feel God's presence and love was by The Piano Guys.

~*~

Altared

On the altar
Like Isaac

On the altar
Like Much-Afraid

The desires of my heart

Surrendered
To my Lord

Released
To my Saviour.

~ ~ ~

I rest
In His love.

Peace comes.

Healing begins.

~

The final poem of the trilogy.

This poem references:

- Genesis 22:1-14
- *Hind's Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard.

~*~

Word Babies

So much that I can never do.
But I can do words.

So much that I can never make.
But I make with my words.

So much that I can never share.
But I share my words.

So much that I can never have.
But I have my words.

So much that I can never give.
But I give my words.

So much that I can never be.
But I am my words.



I wrote this poem the same night as the dark trilogy.

I was processing loss and grief for a part of life that I'll almost certainly
never experience.

I felt strongly that this was part of God's answer to me:
that my work is a way for me to express the urge to create that is part of the
image of God in us all; a way for me to give, to share my soul, and perhaps
even leave a kind of legacy.



Holding On

I hope you understand
You're safe within My hand.
Facing the unknown, you're not alone,
You just keep holding on to Me.

And when the storm is wild
Hold onto Me, My child.
Though torrents rage, don't be afraid,
You just keep holding on to Me.

~ ~ ~

And when the world would harm,
Run to your Father's arms!
I'm always here for you, My dear,
You just keep holding on to Me.

I'll wipe away your tears,
My love will calm your fears.
Life may be unkind, but you are Mine,
You just keep holding on to Me.

~ ~ ~

I'm with you,
I love you,
My precious child.

Don't fear now,
Just reach out
Your hand for Mine.

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

I'll bless you.
I'll guide you.
I'll help you grow.

I'll shield you,
Stand by you.
I won't let go!

~ ~ ~

Come close now,
My dear one,
Receive My calm.

Be still now -
Just trust Me.
Rest in My arms.

~ ~ ~

I hope you understand
You're safe within My hand.
Facing the unknown, you're not alone,
You just keep holding on to Me.

And I'll wipe away your tears,
And My love will calm your fears;
I'll bring you home, My dearest one,
You just keep holding on to Me.

~

This poem was inspired by the moving and delicately beautiful
instrumental song *Holding On* by The Piano Guys.

~*~

Lazarus Moment

As I reach for You,
A sudden shock of joy
Jolts through my soul,

And I inhale it
Hungrily,
Like a dead person
Revived.



Sweet Relief

(A haiku)

After heat, coolness.
After frustration, content.
After turmoil, peace.



All That Heals

For the rich, silken shimmer
of the blue, breathing ocean;
For the velvet-cloaked contours
of the adamantine mountains;

For the honey-gold glow
of midsummer sunlight;
For the apple-cool comfort
of leaf-shadowed shade;

For the heart-lifting lilt
of well-woven words;
For the life-illuminating insight
of mind-stirring story;

For the warm, empathic embrace
of soul-moving melody;
For the exquisite, timeless tapestry
of heartfelt harmonies;

For the courage-boosting compassion
of faithful friends;
For the spirit-strengthening solace
of faith-filled fellowship;

*For every gift of grace,
For all that heals the heart,
For all that salves the soul,
Good and loving Lord
I thank You.*



Cherished

As a father holds his child
You hold me close to Your heart.

I am cherished;
I am precious in Your sight,
Treasured by You.

My heart opens like a flower,
Bursting with joy
In response to Your love.



Part Three

Flying Free

*Then fancies fly away,
He'll fear not what men say,
He'll labour night and day
To be a pilgrim*

~ from *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan

Promise

(A haiku)

Rain in the desert;
The parched land will bloom again
and there will be growth.



This poem references:

- Isaiah 35:1-2.



Finding the Rainbow

The massing vapours fill the sky
And tower high above the plains.
Beneath their shadow, here am I,
Disquieted by the coming rains.

Too soon, the thunderheads awake,
As tremors shake the shrinking earth.
I wonder what this storm will take,
And will I break, or find rebirth?

*There will be loss. There will be pain.
And yet the Rainbow still remains.*

~ ~ ~

And now the falling droplets pound,
As on the ground pools meet and merge;
The storm rampages, now unbound,
And all around the waters surge.

And now it rises to a flood!
I know I should despise the fear
That all that's true and all that's good,
Will, like driftwood, be swept from here.

*And there is strife, and there is strain -
And yet the Rainbow still remains.*

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

The waters chill me to the bone,
The wind has blown me far from land -
Yet though I suffer, though I groan,
I'm not alone - I'm in His hand:

My Father hears my anxious plea -
Through torrents He stays by my side.
He makes a pathway in the sea.
He'll always be my surest Guide.

*And there is joy within the pain
Because the Rainbow still remains.*

~ ~ ~

And though my heart within me sighs
And by dark tides my soul is swirled,
Yet no more will a flood arise
To reach the skies and drown the world.

His Promise brings a sweet relief,
And so belief in Him holds sway:
The dove *will* bring the olive leaf,
And all my grief will melt away.

*And in my loss, I see the gain
Because the Rainbow still remains.*

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

The storm around still rages wild,
Yet, unbeguiled, I know that He
Will not be angry with His child
And that He's smiled on even me.

Those Rainbow colours now entwine
And my lifeline they soon become.
Awake, my soul! No longer pine.
Arise and shine! Your Light has come!

*The waters will recede again.
The Rainbow always will remain.*



This poem is about my experiences with breakdown and depression,
and how I've experienced God's faithfulness through it all.

It was one of the hardest poems to write, both technically and
emotionally - but there was such a release when I'd finished it!

This poem references:

- Isaiah 43: 1-2, 16
- Genesis 9:8-16
- Genesis 8:11
- Isaiah 54:9-10
- Psalm 57:8
- Isaiah 60:1



Taking Up My Sword

It is okay to tremble.

It is okay to feel your heart pounding,
Your blood racing,
Your pulse thumping in your ears.

And afterwards, it is okay
To feel a little disorientated,
A little out of kilter.

~ ~ ~

You are newly returned to the battle.

You have only just taken up your sword again,
And sometimes,
When the wind is in the biting east,
Your old wounds will gnaw,
And you will remember
The dark
In the dell under Weathertop.

~

This poem references:

- *A Knight's Tale* by Ruth Fanshaw
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien

~*~

This, Too

Hold through the lightning's flash;
Hold through the thunder's crash;
 This, too, shall come to pass.
 This, too.

Hold through the battle's clash;
Hold true, through wound and gash;
 This, too, shall come to pass.
 This, too.

Doubts grew as dreams were dashed;
Hopes blew away like ash -
 Hold true, this too shall pass!
 This, too.

Fears flew like shattered glass -
Made you a scarred outcast;
 Hold through the bruising blast:
 Hold true!

Know Who will hold you fast!
He, too, has walked this path:
 The gruesome nail and lash
 He knew.

~ ~ ~

Breakthrough: the night has passed!
His new day dawns at last!
 His true love is steadfast
 For you.



Buoyant Heart

Riding the bright, translucent waves
Like a white seabird
Glad and free:
My buoyant heart.

~ ~ ~

Circumstance and strain
Like rearing waves
Batter and beat upon
My tender heart.

Worry and stress
Like sharp-edged seaweed
Cut deeply into
My stinging heart.

Fears and anxieties
Like toxic jellyfish
Bring peril and pain to
My tender heart.

Depression and false guilt
Like fishing weights
Drag down and darken
My sinking heart.

~ ~ ~

My faithful Saviour
Walking on the sea
Reaches out to
My drowning heart.

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

My caring Saviour
Severing my biting bonds
Brings freedom to
My hampered heart.

My conquering Saviour
Sweeping away my oppressors
Brings safety and peace to
My healing heart.

My risen Saviour
Cutting away my burdens
Lifts and liberates
My grateful heart.

~ ~ ~

My mighty Saviour
Maker of the World
Created in me
My living heart.

My gracious Saviour
Maintaining the cosmos with His Word
Feeds and nourishes
My vibrant heart.

My blessed Saviour
Giver of life
Breathes peace and hope into
My thriving heart.

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

My precious Saviour
Treasuring me
Guards and cherishes
My well-beloved heart.

~ ~ ~

My loving Saviour
Master of the Waves
Rides life's tides forever with
My buoyant heart.

~

This particular poem is specifically dedicated to Elaine Arthur, my former therapist, who helped me through the worst part of my recent breakdown, and who prompted and encouraged me to write this poem as part of my healing process.

Thank you, Elaine!

~*~

The Art of Healing

I open my soul to my Saviour,
Exposing the scratches,
The scars,
The stains.

Together, we lean into the pain.

We wash the wounds with words
Melting through the mire to the meaning,
Unearthing understanding,
Cleansing with clarity.

And my soul stands gleaming,
Glistening,
Growing,

Quenched and sated,
Full and fresh,

Restored,
Replenished,
Refreshed

Like a garden after rain.



This is about how God uses the act of writing poetry to bring me healing.
I believe that He can do this through the creation of any kind of art,
but for me, it's poetry.



Winging it

Not a beast in
Some dark corner,
Left to languish on the ground;
Not confined by
Stress or sorrow,
Not a spirit that's earthbound!

*Above the things that trouble me:
I am the bird, and I fly free!*

~ ~ ~

Try to cage me,
Try to snare me,
Tether me with biting strings -
I will break out,
I'll elude you:
See me spread my shining wings!

*I live in thrall to nobody:
I am the bird, and I fly free!*

~ ~ ~

Lark arising,
Eagle soaring,
Swallow, glad in arcing flight!
Blackbird trilling,
Thrush rejoicing,
Nightingale distilling light!

*Exultant lift and melody:
I am the bird, and I fly free!*

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

Magpie pleased with
Shine and sparkle;
Hawk of undiminished scope;
Seagull gliding,
Wheeling, climbing;
Dove of kindness, peace, and hope.

*I meet life optimistically:
I am the bird, and I fly free!*

~ ~ ~

Wren, light hearted;
Bluebird, joyous;
Falcon, scorning to be tame;
Owl pursuing
Truth and wisdom;
Phoenix, reborn from the flame!

*Alive with light and energy:
I am the bird, and I fly free!*

~ ~ ~

Swan, serene, and
Puffin, comic:
Oddity and work of art;
Sparrow seeking
Homely comfort,
Raven with a pilgrim heart.

*Embracing contrast within me:
I am the bird, and I fly free!*

~ ~ ~

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

Like the robin,
Openhearted,
I'll seek healing till I'm whole;
Like the peacock,
I will learn to
See the beauty of my soul.

*Pursuing life relentlessly:
I am the bird, and I fly free!*

~ ~ ~

I was made for
Joy and purpose!
Made for freedom, made to fly!
Made to swoop and
Spin and tumble -
I was made to kiss the sky!

*A heart defying gravity:
I am the bird, and I FLY FREE!*

~

I feel that writing this poem marked a significant step in my personal journey towards learning to see myself as God sees me: as His beloved child, created in His image.

I hope it will help others to see themselves that way, too.

~

The poem was partially inspired by the feeling I get from the song
Defying Gravity, written by Stephen Schwartz.

~*~

Threshold 2

(A cinquain)

Threshold
Safe, secret
Dividing, separating, guarding
Marking the safe boundary
Sanctuary



Sabbath

(A haiku)

Finding my stillness:
my deep heart of quiet joy
in my Saviour's love.



Sunlight

Sunlight through my window,
Golden on wood.
I look out on my garden,
Green and growing.
Alive.
Above, the great, blue shell of the sky,
Clear and clean.
I drink in the light.
And the gladness is mine.

At my desk, I sit and write.
I build worlds,
I shape understanding.
Nothing disturbs my focus.
I am lost in the joy of creation.
At the end of the day,
Something exists that did not before.
I drink in the satisfaction.
And the words are mine.

In my neat little kitchen,
I create again:
Mixing flavours like colours,
Like notes.
Find the right herb.
Make it blend.
Make it sing.
I drink in the enjoyment.
And the taste is mine.

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

At evening, I read
In the soft-lit quiet.
I relish the flow of words,
The grace of language,
The structure of thoughts.
I am struck by new ideas,
New ways of thinking.
I drink in the solitude.
And the peace is mine.

~ ~ ~

And the sky is mine,
And the stars are mine,
And the sun is mine,
And the rain is mine,
And the sea is mine,
And the hills are mine,
And joy is mine,
And the life is mine.

~

When I wrote this, I was feeling deeply contented with my life,
and deeply fulfilled. I wanted to capture that feeling and express it.

~*~

Forty-Five

I'm getting lines around my eyes
From times I've laughed and times I've cried;
My hair's beginning to go grey -
I won't be dying it! No way!

I've done some things I'm proud to own,
And others I could wish undone;
I've had both triumphs and regrets:
Things to cherish, or forget.

I've been struck down - but not destroyed.
I've known heartbreak. And I've known joy!
I've not done all I hoped to do -
But still, I've had some dreams come true.

Life hasn't gone the way I planned -
But always, God has held my hand,
And though tough times have come my way
He's with me, every single day.

Whatever paths I have to tread
I know *He* knows the way ahead:
Whatever comes, of joy or pain,
He'll bring me safely home again.

Through all the good and bad I've known
I've lived and learned and laughed and grown!
I've been brought safe through time and tide,
And all my scars I wear with pride.

And it is good to be alive!
I *like* being forty-five!



The Dove

(A haiku)

Peace sits in my heart;
like a warm, white dove, gently
it nests within me.



Lilac Time

In long, soft plumes
The lilac blooms
Dance in the breeze;
The flowers are stirred,
As though they heard
Life's melodies.

The blossoms crowd,
A massing cloud -
Life unrepressed!
Yet through the leaves
Their fragrance breathes
A wistfulness.

Through April days
The lilac sways
To its own song;
Joyous and free,
Or minor key -
The dance goes on.

So briefly here!
Yet every year
It lifts my heart.
Before my eyes
New hopes arise;
A new song starts.

Some loveliness
Will come to us
For just a while;
I will embrace
Each touch of grace,
And I will smile.

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

And when it's gone,
New blessings come
By God's design:
The roses grow,
The leaves turn gold,
The crisp snows shine.

Though seasons shift,
Each perfect gift
Is from above:
All blessings flow
That we might know
Our Father's love.

I know I must
Learn how to trust
In what He's planned;
I'll find delight
As I hold tight
My Father's hand.

My heart will soar
As I explore
His love's expanse;
Through all life's tunes,
Like lilac blooms,
I'll learn to dance.



This is one of the deeply personal ones.

It was inspired partly by an image I'd seen of a child in a purple dress dancing with her daddy. They were doing a 'dip', and her face was full of joy and trust. As I was looking at it, I felt that God wanted me to trust Him that way.

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

And then a little later, I was watching the lilac blooms across the street
from me dancing in the wind. I've always loved lilac. It only blooms for a
few weeks, but it's so lovely, and its fragrance is so beautiful. And it always
speaks to me of spring, and of hope.

And somehow, the two ideas combined in my head: the child dancing
in the purple dress, and the purple dancing lilac.

That feeling of joyously dancing with my 'Daddy,' appreciating each
blessing He sends, and of learning to trust Him
whatever season of life I'm in.

And that's what I was trying to express in this poem.

It was only some months after I'd written it that I noticed
I'd written it in waltz time.



Epilogue

The Morning

(A song)

Verse 1:

Well I've had my winters,
My nights of the soul.
I have stood my desperate watch
Through the dark and the cold

And I've seen things
That I wish I'd never
Had to see.
The darkness brings
Tears of hollow pain -
But I've seen the morning!

Verse 2:

Well I've had dreams shattered,
I have lost my way.
I have been rejected,
I have been betrayed.

And I've lost more
Than I thought could ever
Come back to me.
I've hit the floor,
Broken and confused -
But I've seen the morning!

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

Chorus 1:

The night has passed
And the day is here!
Here's light at last!
Falling bright and clear.
A new day's dawning
As His love flows free!
I've seen the morning:
Joy has come to me.

Verse 3:

Through my deepest valleys
And all the pain I've known,
Even in my darkest night
I was never alone.

And I've grown wings
As I've learned to trust in
God's love for me.
Now my heart sings
Of the Healer of my soul
Who has sent the morning.

Verse 4:

And new dreams are growing
As He shows me the way.
All His love and faithfulness
I can never repay!

He's given more
Than I thought could ever
Be meant for me.
And I adore
My Master and my Friend
Who has sent the morning.

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

Chorus 1:

The night has passed
And the day is here!
Here's light at last!
Falling bright and clear.
A new day's dawning
As His love flows free!
I've seen the morning:
Joy has come to me.

Chorus 2:

The night has passed
And the day is here!
Here's life at last,
Past a new frontier!
A new day's dawning
As His grace flows free!
I've seen the morning:
Hope has come to me.

Bridge:

Though this world may grieve us
He will never leave us!
Though this life may shake us
He will not forsake us!

Chorus 3:

Your night will pass
And your day will break!
His Light will cast
The shadows far away.
Your day is dawning!
Hope will come, you'll see:
He'll send the morning,
And the darkness will flee.

Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

Chorus 4:

Your night will pass
And your day will break -
So just hold fast
Till new life awakes!
Your day is dawning,
Joy will come, you'll see:
He'll send the morning,
And He will set you free.



“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

~ Deuteronomy 31:8; NIV

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

~ Psalm 30:5; NKJV



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About the Author

Ruth Fanshaw is full-time geek, and wishes you could get paid for that. The great loves of her life include the ocean, trees, and pizza. She's a huge fan of Doctor Who and NCIS, and is shamelessly addicted to her favourite band, The Piano Guys.

Ruth creates poetry to explore and process her life experiences – especially the journey from brokenness towards wholeness – or to celebrate the things she loves. Her work has appeared in the poetry journal *Time of Singing*.

Ruth has a neuro-immune condition called M.E. (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) and has also navigated two breakdowns and many bouts of anxiety and depression. Living with these illnesses has challenged her in her walk with God, yet also enabled her to experience His love on a deeper level.

Her Christian faith is the bedrock of her life.

**To find out more about Ruth and her work,
visit her websites:**

Poetry & Christian non-fiction: Theology for Real People ~ ruthfanshaw.com

Fiction: Adventures for Thinking People ~ rmfanshaw.com



Flying Free: Poems for Pilgrim Hearts

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