

# **The Work of Standing, the Joy of Dancing: A Spirituality to Sustain the Long Haul**

Address to LGCM AGM  
by Nicola Slee, April 2008

## **Introduction**

Nelson Mandela has written memorably of his ‘long walk to freedom’.<sup>1</sup> For those of us committed to the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons (LGBTs) within the churches, it seems to be a similarly long haul. While civil society – at least in Europe and other parts of the western world – has taken major steps to affirm the legal and civil standing of LGBTs and to celebrate their place in public life, the Church (and I speak as an Anglican) seems racked with indecision, hostility, anxiety and compromise. LGBTs are made to feel that we are a ‘problem’, an embarrassment, a hindrance to the kingdom, a running sore that needs to be healed, or even a positive evil that requires exorcism – instead of the joyous, diverse, wounded but still singing children of God that we are, with unique gifts and stories to share.

Given that radical shifts to a more welcoming and inclusive stance on the part of Church leaders and councils seem highly unlikely, at least in the short to mid-term, how do we resource ourselves for the long haul? This is the question I want to pursue, because it is a very real one for me and for others with whom I am engaged, in my own particular location, in trying to move the listening process on, in trying to get some genuine listening and sharing going – often painstakingly slowly, with great effort and at considerable cost to those few who are prepared to speak honestly and openly about their lives. I want to explore the nature of a mature and liberative spirituality that will resource us for the long haul, and to see if I can identify some of the essential marks of such a spirituality.

## **Sources for a Spirituality of Standing**

As I have pondered this question, I have found myself drawn towards the metaphor of ‘standing’. We might want to speak, with Mandela, of walking towards freedom – to consider ourselves on the move – but the reality for me feels frequently otherwise. At the very least, there is a huge tension between the immense strides that have been made in civil society in the past few years (represented by new legal rights and protections but not limited to that) and a sense of paralysis, stalemate and standstill within the Church where, if anything, we might feel that we have moved backwards into greater invisibility, fear and a certain hardening of the status quo (represented in the Anglican communion by reactions to the appointment of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, the Canadian church’s authorisation of rites to bless same-sex unions, the Jeffrey John debacle, the Windsor report And All That). I frequently feel that I inhabit dual universes, worlds that occasionally collide but mostly do not touch. There is one world in which it is utterly unremarkable and even potentially boring to be gay, lesbian, bi or trans, in which we know our lives and others know them to be much the same as any-one else’s, with their mix of humdrum ups and downs and occasional moments of glory. (And, actually, LGBT Christians are no more or less orthodox or radical, faithful or faithless than our heterosexual brothers and sisters – except perhaps we might with justification say that simply to *be* Christian and LGBT requires a whole lot more faith than most straight Christians ever have to think about.) Then there’s another world in which our sexual identities are a constantly spotlighted stigma – or, and often at the same time, an unmentionable taboo, rather like cancer was some decades ago, something people dread even to mention in case they might get infected by it. I frequently fail to recognise myself or my gay and lesbian sisters and brothers in official church pronouncements or reports, where our ordinary, extraordinary lives – offered to the church in all their halting brokenness and beautiful unremarkability – are never received as the profound gift of grace that they are. We stand in that place of tension between worlds, straddling parallel universes, longing to move on and to move our churches on into the freedoms we enjoy and begin to take for granted in the secular world, yet unable (for the most part) simply to walk out and away from those churches we both love and hate, churches which are to us sites of frustration, wounding and oppression at the same time as they have been and continue to be sites of grace, privilege and communion in the love of God and the life of the Spirit.

I speak of ‘the work of standing’, then, because it does, indeed, require immense effort to stand and keep standing in this place of tension and contradiction, without being able to move forward and without being dragged backwards to some place where the hard-earned freedoms we have won are betrayed. I did consider inviting you all to stand for the duration of my address to make my point more viscerally, but decided against it! Rather, I want to explore with you, to play with, this metaphor of ‘standing’ to see if it might provide us with some insight into the kind of spirituality that we require in this place in which we find ourselves.

‘Standing’, of course, is a common enough term, part of everyday parlance. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary has four dense pages covering the history of usages of the term. Let me highlight a few that may have particular resonance for us. We speak of taking a stand, standing one’s ground, standing a chance, standing watch. Figuratively, to stand can mean to remain steadfast, firm or secure; to endure, last, to remain valid, to hold good. By extension, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, ‘standing’ could refer to a state of checked or arrested movement, a state of being unable to proceed in thought, speech or action, a state of perplexity or nonplus (and this is exactly how it can feel to be LGBT in the church) – from which we get the term ‘standstill’. In its transitive usages, standing can mean to confront, face, oppose; to resist, bear the brunt of; to endure, undergo, be submitted to a trial or test; to face or encounter without flinching or retreating.

It is instructive to consider the social and ritual occasions on which we stand. We stand in the presence of greatness: for royalty (if we are monarchists), for those in high office, for the living and the dead. We stand at the entrance of the bride and the coffin; for the reading of the Gospel and for the Eucharistic prayer. We stand in the presence of the holy, the numinous, the liminal; for those moments of passage, of crossing over, when we move from one fundamental state or condition to another. As one might expect for a word with such a wide range of usages, it crops up often enough in popular sayings, songs and hymnody. From ‘Stand and deliver!’ to ‘Stand by your man’ and ‘Stand up, stand up for Jesus!’ there are plenty of examples that come readily to mind.

When we turn to the Bible, we find that the terms ‘stand’ and ‘standing’ are also frequent. Standing in the presence of God denotes the nearness and holiness of God; the angels and archeangels are those who stand in God’s presence (Luke 1:19), as do the prophets and friends of God (Moses takes off his shoes on mount Horeb because he stands on holy ground [Exodus 3:5]; Elijah repeatedly refers to the God ‘before whom I stand’ [1 Kings 17:1, 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14, 5:16]. By contrast, those who are aware of their sin ask ‘How then can we stand?’ (2 Kings 10:4). ‘If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand?’ (Psalm 130:3). (See also Psalm 1:5, 24:3, 76:7; Malachi 3:2, Revelation 6:17). A particular favourite of mine is the story in Exodus 17, when Moses grows weary from standing on the hilltop at Rephedim and holding his arms up – which God has instructed him to do to keep the Israelite army winning the battle against the Amelekites – and has to sit down on a stone and get Aaron and Hur to hold up his flagging arms. The Bible is realistic about the wearisome work of standing!

Standing in the Bible is also a stance of witness and testimony, as well as of solidarity. Peter in Acts 1 stands to address the crowd (Acts 1:15), and this is more than a pragmatic action. As the Egyptians pursue the Israelites on their escape from slavery, and the people fear for their lives, Moses tells them, ‘Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today’ (Exodus 14:13). Their task is only to stand still and look; God does the rest. This same service of standing and looking is offered by the women at the cross, who stand at a distance, watching and enduring Christ’s death when the men have deserted (Mark 15:14, Matthew 27:55, Luke 23:49).

Ultimately, it is God and God’s Word – the self-expression of God – that alone stands: ‘The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever’ (Isaiah 40:8). Job looks forward to the revelation of God in the latter days: ‘I know that my Redeemer lives and that he will stand upon the earth’ (Job 19:25); and Stephen, the first martyr, sees the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Because God stands and God’s truth will forever stand (see Psalm 33:11 ‘The counsel of the Lord stands for ever’), ‘standing’ is also used as a metaphor of judgement. ‘See, the Judge is standing at the doors’, proclaims James 5:9; and Ezekiel is called to ‘stand up on your feet’ in order to hear what God will

proclaim to him (Ezekiel 2:1). (It is a great irony that, in his trial, Jesus – the judge of the whole earth – stands before Pilate to be judged [Matthew 27:11]). In Jeremiah 6:16, standing at the crossroads is used as a metaphor for discernment: ‘Thus says the Lord, “Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it”’.

Equally, because God stands and God’s truth stands, those who stake their life upon God may also stand, and this sense of enduring faithfulness (primarily that of God and derivately of the believer) is found frequently in Paul. In Romans 5:2, Paul speaks of ‘this grace in which we stand’, and it is precisely because he is confident of this grace in which the believer’s life is rooted that he can make the frequent appeal to Christians to ‘stand firm in your faith’ (Galatians 5:1, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Philippians 1:27) or, similarly, ‘stand firm in the Lord’ (1 Thessalonians 3:8, Philippians 4:1). Paul’s exhortatory use of the metaphor echoes Jesus’ command to the paralytic to ‘stand up and walk’ (Mark 2:9), as well as the same command given by Peter and John to the lame man in Acts 3. The command in both instances is performative of the act, and the result is healing and release.

The most extensive usage of the metaphor in Paul is, of course, the famous passage in Ephesians 6, when the apostle calls the believer to ‘put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil’, so that, ‘having done everything’ the believer may ‘stand firm’ (verses 10, 13). It is this passage, of course, which gave rise to hymns such as ‘Soldiers of Christ, arise’ and ‘Stand up, stand up for Jesus’. It should be noted, however, that in Ephesians, the military imagery is used in an entirely defensive way, that is, to describe the protection of the Christian against the attacks of the evil one, and is not used to suggest or condone an aggressive or offensive stance. To return to Exodus 14, there is no need for the believer to fight, for ‘The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still’ (Exodus 14:13).

All these biblical associations were taken up in the early church’s practice of praying in the standing posture, continuing the custom of standing in the synagogue and Jesus’ own practice, if gospel hints are anything to go by (Luke 9:28-32, John 17:2a). Standing was the favoured posture for prayer, as we see in the earliest catacomb frescoes which show figures standing with arms held aloft, in the gesture familiar to

many of us in liturgical or charismatic prayer. Mary and the saints are frequently shown in this orans posture, in icons and other representations. [First set of illustrations, showing the orans posture in the catacombs and in iconography of the Virgin.] The upright posture for prayer – which is still the normal position in the eastern churches – speaks powerfully of a stance of respect, attentive alertness, readiness for action, as well as endurance. For feminists such as Marjorie Procter-Smith<sup>2</sup>, standing to pray with eyes open and with head unbowed has become symbolic of a stance of watchful alertness and a refusal to adopt a passive or compliant posture in a patriarchal church where it is not safe to close one's eyes or bow one's head. If I may quote myself:

We must pray with eyes wide open, refusing to see nothing of what is hidden, secret – blatant lies.

We must pray with heads held high, refusing to bow in obsequiousness to prelate, priest or pope.<sup>3</sup>

Alongside such resistant, counter-cultural meanings, standing can also token gratitude, joy and praise when the heartfelt thanksgiving of the believer wells up and compels one to one's feet. Perhaps it was such an overflowing of joy, as well as the sense of being in the presence of greatness, that inspired King George II to get to his feet when he first heard Handel's Hallelujah chorus. No one really knows why he stood, but I do know that something quite indescribable and palpable is added to the impact of that astounding music by rising to one's feet with every other member of the audience.

I hope to carry all of these associations and resonances, and others that you will be bringing, with us, as I turn now to sketch out what I see to be the key elements of a spirituality of standing. I will attempt to portray a spirituality that is generous and compassionate, prophetic and playful, contemplative and engaged, costly yet transformative – rooted in the reality of God and the Gospel, as well as the world in which we are set.

### **A Spirituality of Standing**

First and foremost a spirituality of standing is a **spirituality of presence**. Standing offers no more and promises no less than simply staying put, being with the other.<sup>4</sup> Let us be present to and for and with each other, in the presence of that ‘present, ever-present Presence’ who has, in the words of the poet Kathleen Raine, ‘never.. not been/ Here and now in every now and here’.<sup>5</sup> We do not have to justify ourselves, explain ourselves or defend ourselves – to ourselves, one another or to those who deny or assail our presence. We simply have to stand; as Henri Nouwen puts it, ‘standing in the world with head erect, solidly rooted in the knowledge of who we are, facing the reality that surrounds us and responding to it from our hearts’.<sup>6</sup> Let God be our defence, if we need one. The fact that we are here today, sharing presence in the Presence, says far more than any words can. We are queer and we are here. We stand here for ourselves and for the ones who are not here but wish to be or perhaps don’t dare to be. We are here *as* church; as Christ’s presence and body in the world in all its queer erotic beauty and desirability. And when I talk about ‘queer’ I don’t mean primarily a category of sexual identity so much as a way of being in the world that is marked out, in Hopkins’ lovely phrase, by being ‘counter, original, spare, strange’.<sup>7</sup> However we choose to name or define ourselves (or not) – whether as gay, lesbian, bi, trans, queer, fluid, straight or some combination of any or none of these – we are here in all our unfinished, singular and beautiful human particularity, each one of us mirroring and manifesting something of the strangeness, beauty and, yes, queerness, of God, as surely as every other creature in the cosmos does; perhaps, in some way, *more* than other creatures, simply because we are part of that great company of the *anaweim*, God’s excluded little ones, those Jon Sobrino names amongst ‘the poor’ – not in any financial or material way (look at us, for goodness sake!) but in the sense that we are amongst those excluded from access to the centres of power and significance, at least in the ecclesial sphere<sup>8</sup> – who therefore, simply by their exclusion (and not through any particular moral or religious virtue of our own, thank God) point to the Queer God who is always and everywhere squeezed out from the centre, rejected by the establishment and crucified by the powers that be – and whose very being is ceaselessly oriented towards all who are similarly excluded. Actually, I find myself wanting to say, aren’t we *all* at least a little queer? ‘There’s nowt as queer as folks’, as the saying goes. It’s just that some of us are able and willing to manifest our queerness, in all its quirky originality, more openly and obviously than others – not, as some seem to think, in order to confirm the rest of humankind, the straight

folk, in their heteronormativity, but precisely as a signal and an invitation to all to enter into the playful possibilities of their as yet unexplored queerness. Now there's a thought for the primates to play with!

Simply to *be*, then, and to stand as we are, for who and what we are, is a witness, an invitation and, at the same time, a protest against the norm and the status quo – whatever the norm is; a protest against any and every attempt to limit or restrict or control the gracious free gift of God. Presence is a testimony, points beyond itself to something or someone signified. I'm reminded of those extraordinary standing figures of Anthony Gormley's that have begun to people our landscape and city scapes and can also be found in some churches. [Second set of illustrations of Gormley's work] They are naked and mute, some obviously gendered, others more featureless; mysterious and utterly arresting, compelling attention. They are a presence that speaks, even if we are not sure exactly what they are saying. In some such way, a spirituality of standing is also a **spirituality of witness and, by that token, a spirituality of protest**. We are called to stand in the open; to stand tall; to stand up to be counted; to stand so that we may be seen. Insofar as we may. Gene Robinson quotes Harvey Milk, the first openly gay supervisor of San Francisco, who said 'The most political thing any of us can do is come out'. And Robinson adds, 'it is also the most religious thing we can do'<sup>9</sup> – because our identity as queer sisters and brothers called and loved into being by God speaks, in and of itself, of divine grace and mercy and of God's election of the most unlikely and the least: most especially in contexts where that reality is denied. As is often said and as many of us know, in the end it is not argument or evidence that convicts and converts (important as it is to engage with the debate) but the sheer intractability of human presence and story: knowing someone who is good, honest, upright, whose love of God and others cannot be doubted – and who just so happens to be gay, lesbian, bi or trans.

I said we need to stand tall 'insofar as we may'. Coming out can only be an individual imperative, not something we impose on others (I do not believe in outing others), and there are many sane reasons why many of us do not do it, or if we do, only partially and selectively. Gene Robinson again: 'in dioceses and provinces around the globe headed by very conservative leadership, there are no safe places for anyone to talk openly about these issues without fear of negative consequences, and gay or lesbian

people would have to be crazy and virtually suicidal to come forward to tell their story'.<sup>10</sup> The fact that no small number of us *are* willing to be visible and to claim our names and our identity and share our stories is testimony to the empowering Spirit of God in our midst and a challenge to those who do not yet feel they can join us. Respecting those who, for good reasons, remain in the closet, I want at the same time to challenge each of us to take whatever steps we can towards increasing visibility because it is this in the end that will compel change. In particular, in the present climate, it behoves those of us who are lay and whose livelihood does not depend on the church, to take a lead in standing up and speaking out when we know that it is so much more dangerous for our ordained sisters and brothers to do so. I want, too, to salute all those who are willing and have been willing over many years to stand up and be counted, often at great cost and no small risk – today, in particular, we are saluting Richard for his tireless willingness to stand, but we can think of many others too, here and worldwide – bishops, clergy, theologians, writers; the well-known and the less known – those who show us what it means to take a stand, and who empower and encourage us to do so by their boldness.

Such saints also remind us that we never stand alone, and that a spirituality of standing is therefore a **spirituality of solidarity**. We stand by and alongside and for one another, especially for those who cannot stand, but whose presence is nevertheless palpable and powerful – a silent, invisible company of the spirits of the just who compel those of us who may stand to do so. Gene Robinson tells of meeting with a gay and lesbian fellowship group in Hong Kong and of the enormous significance to them of his willingness simply to meet with them and stand with them. 'They wanted to thank me, they wanted to touch me, they wanted to tell me their stories'.<sup>11</sup> The memory of that fleeting visit of the gay bishop of New Hampshire will surely inspire and embolden them for years to come. When we feel terribly exposed and alone, we do well to remember those others around the globe who are standing with us. And, by the same token, when we are wearied of having to stand up once more and give account of ourselves, fed up of our sexuality being constantly in the spotlight – when heterosexual marriage and celibacy are rarely problematized within ecclesiastical discussions as the oppressive and abusive patriarchal conditions they often are – we need to remember that our brothers and sisters elsewhere look to us for courage and depend upon us for their very lives.

So, then, a spirituality of standing has to be a **spirituality of endurance**, a spirituality of the long haul, a spirituality that refuses to give up, however joyless the present seems or bleak the prospect of change. We must stand and keep standing, like those crazy saints that stood on pillars for decades in the desert or up to their thighs in freezing celtic seas whilst barnacles grew on their toes and they went right on praying and praising the Almighty. It is unfashionable in many circles – including those shaped by queer discourse – to speak of ascetism, but there is a necessary ascetism to Christian spirituality and the fact that it has often been distorted is no reason to abandon it but a compelling reason to reshape what we mean by it. The kind of asceticism I am talking about here is the asceticism of holy Saturday, the asceticism of watching and waiting in the place of apparent hopelessness and death, what David Wood in his book *Dark Prayer* calls the ‘prayer of silence in the dark chasm’<sup>12</sup>. This is not primarily an ascetism of the body (although it might be), certainly not a denial of our sexuality, but it is a deep and profound ascetism of the spirit, and it is a suffering in the body ecclesial, the collective body, which leaves its marks on all of us who share the long night – marks, we might dare to hope, that are akin to those transfigured wounds the risen Christ shows to his disciples, marks that therefore speak of hope. But before we speak of resurrection too quickly, let’s not delude ourselves. Not all have endured, or remained standing. Some have been felled, like mighty oaks brought down by lightning. Others have been irreparably stunted or wounded in ways that don’t speak of risenness – and we can all think of members of the company of the fallen. Those who do remain standing don’t do so painlessly, as cattle or horses do; most of us limp or lean against each other, rest in each other’s arms for a while or take turns at sitting down and sleeping for long stretches. We don’t have to all keep standing all the time, thank goodness, so long as there are always some of us doing it.

### **More than standing? The Joy of Dancing**

Is a spirituality of standing sufficient? Doesn’t it sound just a little passive, defeatist, joyless even? Actually, I don’t think so. Paradoxically, when undertaken with intentionality and commitment, standing isn’t mere loitering, standing around vaguely waiting for something to happen. It is labour, it is work; it is a way of inhabiting the present when the present appears not to admit of movement; but it bears its own

strange fruit in its own – or better in God’s – time. Standing and carrying on standing literally grounds us and roots us; as we stand, so we find the power in our standing. As Audre Lorde has written, ‘When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less important whether or not I am unafraid.’<sup>13</sup>

And standing bonds us to the others with whom and for whom we stand; we learn a solidarity in the struggle that cannot be given any other way. And such standing can also, I believe, affect change – in others, in the world, as well as in ourselves.

What good does it do to stand and keep standing? Well, for one thing, it encourages others who have been sitting on the fence to come off and stand with us – as many have done over recent events in the Anglican communion. And, as I have already suggested, the stance of ordinary fallible but faithful LGBT Christians holding on and holding out in our everyday places of work, worship and witness, does have an extraordinary power to convert – a power that we ourselves can’t always see but that, like the silent leaven in the lump, transforms the whole. On the larger political scale, we can call to mind irreversible changes that have come about through the sheer persistent pressure of ordinary members of the populous who simply refused to give up and go home: the downfall of apartheid in South Africa, the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland and so on.

Even so, all this is not quite enough and I can’t finish here. Our bodies are made for more than standing. Perhaps most particularly at a time when we can feel boxed in, constricted, unable to move, stoical standing will not suffice. We need also to dance! Dance is possible in the smallest space: anyone’s living room, a hermit or prison cell, the meanest sanctuary. We can do it alone, for the sheer joy of it, or better, with others; with strangers, as well as with friends and lovers, even with opponents. You don’t have to agree anything with anyone to dance with them, all you have to do is be willing to be in the same space together, to risk shared bodily presence and let those bodies move together. Donald Eadie, in his wonderful book, *Grain in Winter*,<sup>14</sup> reminds us that we need parties for the creation and sustenance of both community and hope; and that the best parties don’t happen in palaces or the corridors of power but on the streets, under motorways and around the makeshift altars that human beings are always making whenever food and drink is shared with strangers. And, just

occasionally, in churches.<sup>15</sup> And aren't parties one of the places where we do routinely stand around, eating, drinking and chatting, with absolutely no intention of getting anywhere? And we dance: shaking it all about, jiggling our bits, looking as strange or as gorgeous as we may. We dance to express joy, or to make it. We dance in celebration of life and in defiance of death. We energise and revitalize the work of standing by our dancing. And we learn, as we dance, what the trees know, how to bend without breaking, how to sway and move with the storms when they come, and, whilst taking the battering, to remain standing.

We don't have to wait for the party to begin to start dancing. Yes, we stand in the place of tension between the unfulfilled 'now' of deep yearning and the tantalising 'not yet' of the kingdom<sup>16</sup> banquet, when all hungers will be sated and all God's queer children set free. And in our standing we feel the tension, one foot in both camps, and it fatigues us to our bones. Like Moses at Rephedim, we have to sit down on whatever stones are to hand and ask brothers and sisters around us to lift up our arms. Or maybe not. Instead of sitting down, in dejected exhaustion, why not leap up and join the dance? And why not invite others, even and including our opponents, to dance with us? Can you imagine all the bishops and primates at the Lambeth Conference at a huge all-night disco, and what might not emerge out of them dancing together? We don't have to wait for the party to begin to start dancing. Just do it. In our dancing we pre-empt the joyous freedom of the children of God, we enter into the joy of our God, we give our yes to the party invitation that Christ ushers ceaselessly – to all who are childlike and eager enough to want to party. When others might expect us to give up and go home, we are those who are deciding, not only to keep standing, but to start dancing. [Third set of images showing dancing in a variety of contexts]

I can't think of a better way to end this reflection than by reading a poem by my partner Rosie Miles which captures just the spirit of exuberant, subversive and passionate faithfulness which is what we need to keep us standing and dancing where we stand.

So here we are  
Dancing on the edge,  
The dangerous and delightful edge.

So here we'll be  
The irritant in the eye  
Of the church:  
The cracked lens through which it needs to see.

So here we'll not be silent, or invisible,  
But we'll say our names  
And show our colours  
And others will know  
Who we are.

So here we'll laugh and love and dance  
And sing and play and drink and  
Whose edge is it anyway?

This edge, we say,  
Is ours; and we will  
Fill that edge  
To overflowing:  
Loving it with passion,  
Embracing it with desire,  
And flirting unashamedly with the centre.

This dangerous and delightful edge  
Is the edge where we are dancing,  
So, here we are.<sup>17</sup>

## Acknowledgements

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995)

<sup>2</sup> Marjorie Proctor-Smith, *Praying With Our Eyes Open: Engendering Feminist Liturgical Prayer* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Nicola Slee, 'Praying Like a Woman', in *Praying Like a Woman* (London: SPCK, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> And for this reason, whilst I am aware that the metaphor of 'standing' might be ambivalent for persons for whom physical standing is problematic or impossible, I consider it applicable to all, however differently able bodied we may be. Some of those who most exemplify the characteristics of a spirituality of standing are, in fact, those who do not and cannot literally and physically stand. It's possible – indeed necessary – to stand tall spirituality from a variety of physical postures.

<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Raine, 'The Presence' in *The Presence: Poems 1984-87* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1987), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, revised ed., 2006), p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Pied Beauty', in W H Gardner (ed.) *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Jon Sobrino SJ, 'Getting real about the Option for the Poor' in Julian Filochowski & Peter Stanford (eds.) *Opening Up: Speaking Out in the Church* (London: DLT, 2005), p.26.

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<sup>9</sup> Gene Robinson, *In the Eye of the Storm* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), p. 97.

<sup>10</sup> *In the Eye of the Storm*, p. 143.

<sup>11</sup> *In the Eye of the Storm*, p. 137.

<sup>12</sup> David Wood, *Dark Prayer: When all words fail* (Harlech: Cairns Publications, 2004) p.11.

<sup>13</sup> Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, in *The Audre Lorde Compendium: Essays, Speeches and Journals* (London: Pandora, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Eadie, *Grain in Winter* (Peterborough: Epworth, 1999), ch. 22.

<sup>15</sup> For example, in the wonderful church of St Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco, where much of the liturgy is danced and where the walls are decorated with images of dancing saints and a dancing Christ. See [www.saintgregorys.org](http://www.saintgregorys.org).

<sup>16</sup> I speak of 'kindom' in preference to 'kingdom', as a number of feminists and others do, to avoid the monarchical associations of the latter and suggest the bonds of affection and connectedness that characterise the former.

<sup>17</sup> Rosie Miles, 'So Here We Are', in Geoffrey Duncan (ed.) *Courage to Love: An Anthology of Inclusive Worship Material* (London: DLT, 2002), pp. 78-9