**The Dark Night of the Soul – a Meditation with chant**

Some of you may be familiar with the concept of the dark night of the soul – an experience of which some of our mystics speak – famously amongst them St John of the Cross.

It is spoken of in differing ways, but is often a place in which we find our old certainties gone – our once familiar understanding of God and of ourselves. It can therefore seem a place of darkness - a place in which we may feel vulnerable, fearful, abandoned, lost.

But it can also be a place in which our longing, our hunger, our reaching out to God may be fuelled by a fresh intensity. It can be a place where in the darkness we penetrate the depths of pain and love and a new thing is born.

Shortly before the story of the transfiguration, Jesus teaches his followers – “those who lose their lives for my sake will find them”.

Jesus also said: “unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and dies it remains but a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. *(John 12).*

The story of the seed from which ultimately we reap the grain harvest, is also the story of the dying and rising of the Son of God. It is the story and pattern of our own lives and faith.

In your hand you hold a small grain of wheat on which you may like to focus as we offer our prayers to God of the harvest of life. At the end of our sung and spoken prayers, you are invited to offer your own silent prayers as we bury our seeds in the earth of God’s love and nature’s promise.

*Chant / refrain*

*As you lose your life, lose your life,*

*As you lose your life, you find it.*

*As a grain of wheat, is buried deep,*

*As you lose your life, you find it.*

Here we stand stripped and bare

as branches open to the sky’s scrutiny

the wind’s purging and the cloud’s enveloping.

The seasons turn -darkness approaches, night falls.

O God of the seasons our times are in your hands

may we trust to the cloud of unknowing.

*Chant / refrain*

Here we stand, lighter for shedding

all that would prevent us embracing the darkness

the confidence of our life’s summertime.

The sun is dying and we are no longer dazzled by its light.

O God of the seasons may our eyes attune to the darkness

may we learn in the hidden place new lessons of love and longing.

*Chant / refrain*

Here we are invited to enter the darkness

to enter without fear,

to enter it with an aching love,

to know the absence in which we find presence

the aloneness in which we discover intimacy -

O God of the seasons may the cloud of unknowing

be for us the place where we know and are known.

*Chant / refrain*

Here our lives are hid with Christ,

buried in the womb of the earth,

offered – that we might take them up again

with the kiss of life and the rising of the sun

God of the seasons, bring fruitfulness of our lives

and bring to birth your new creation.