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*A Measure of Breath*

by Mark Richard Robinson

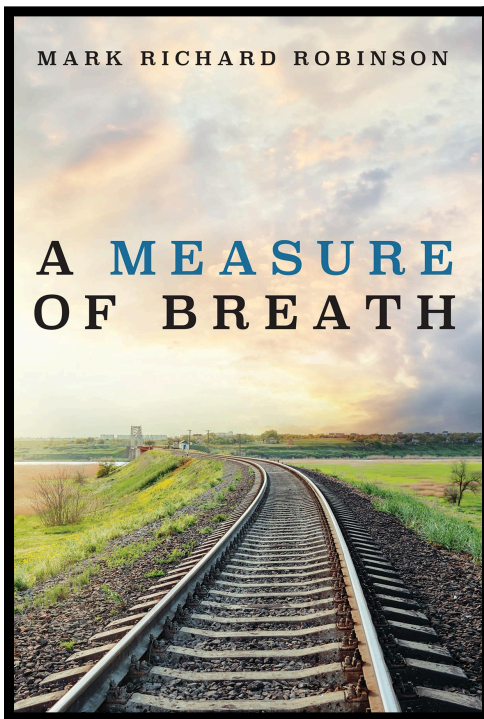
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## New Title from Mark Richard Robinson

### *A Measure of Breath*



On a train journey to a church disciplinary meeting, a minister carries the weight of illness, memory, and the quiet ache of betrayal. *A Measure of Breath* is a contemplative novel that explores what it means to lead when one's own wounds remain unhealed—and when silence in sacred spaces has done deep harm.

As the train moves forward, so does a reckoning. Through memory, lament, and moments of hard-won clarity, the minister confronts not only his past but the cost of survival itself. This is not a story of triumph but of witness. Of choosing to speak when it would be easier not to. Of breathing, even when breath is pain.

*A Measure of Breath* invites readers to sit with uncomfortable truths: about faith, justice, leadership, and the stories our bodies carry long after words have failed.

Whether you are a person of faith, a survivor, or someone who knows what it is to walk through fire and still serve others, this book is for you.

**Mark Richard Robinson** is a minister of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom. Educated in London and Cambridge, he serves three congregations in the North Lea Valley Pastorate, where his ministry is shaped by the conviction that God's presence breathes through ordinary life.

His writing draws from lived faith, liberationist theology, and the hope that endures through silence, struggle, and grace. He shares life with his wife, the Revd. Dr. Tessa Henry-Robinson. They have four adult children and three grandchildren.



## Interview with Mark Richard Robinson

### **What inspired you to write this book?**

The idea for *A Measure of Breath* emerged during my sabbatical when I was reflecting on the endurance of faith within families and communities shaped by trauma. I kept seeing the same question rise in my ministry: how do some people hold love for God after histories marked by illness, loss, injustice, or long stretches of silence? I sat with many who felt close to giving up believing because God felt far away, and others who had lived through similar pain yet kept their faith moving forward. I found myself searching for what keeps that breath alive when history places weight on the chest. The novel grew from that search; a theological meditation carried through story, experience, and hope.

### **How does this book connect with your ministry?**

The book rises from my pastoral life. For years, I have walked with people wrestling with illness, bereavement, betrayal, disappointment, and the heavy truth that the Church has not always stood on the side of justice. Writing allowed me to listen again to those experiences and honour them through a different medium. The work became another way of paying attention: to wounded stories, to the persistence of faith, and to the quiet spaces where God's presence gathers strength.

### **What do you hope readers will take away?**

I hope readers sense that God's presence rests within the smallest breath that keeps moving forward. The story invites a rediscovery of faith as something alive — fragile, fierce, and fully human — moving through memory, silence, injustice, and the healing work of God's future. My hope is that readers recognise endurance as holy ground and feel the rise of a quiet assurance that every breath carries both the ache of lived experience and the promise of God's life among us.

### **What makes this book distinctive?**

This is a theological novel shaped by breath, presence, and the struggle for dignity. It holds together faith, memory, worship, and imagination without separating them. The book speaks of divine presence as something that moves through the scars of history and the commitments of everyday life. It explores how God's Spirit stirs within the pursuit of justice and how inherited wounds can rise into testimony.

### **How does the theme of breath function within the story?**

Breath acts as a thread that carries the reader through silence, memory, struggle, and renewal. It becomes a way of naming divine presence without reducing God to spectacle or noise. Breath also marks the

resilience of communities who continue to rise after histories that tried to crush their spirit. Every character's breath becomes a testimony — a living sign that hope still has work to do.

### **Who did you imagine as your primary audience?**

I wrote with readers who are wrestling with faith, whether quietly or openly. People who carry wounds from life, from church, or from history will recognise something of their own journey in these pages. I also wrote for those who long for a more honest conversation about God and suffering. The book reaches toward anyone seeking faith that breathes through complexity, rather than fleeing from it.

### **How did your own story shape the writing?**

My ministry, my heritage, and my encounters with communities navigating injustice all shaped the pulse of the novel. The questions I carry — about faith, endurance, healing, and liberation — echo through the narrative. I write from a perspective that understands how faith and struggle often share the same breath. My lived experience gave the story its texture, its ache, and its hope.

### **What do you hope this book contributes to the wider conversation about faith today?**

I hope the book expands how we speak about God in a world burdened by conflict, fear, and exhaustion. Too often, faith is reduced to certainties or easy answers that dismiss real pain; this work leans toward depth, honesty, and presence. The story insists that God is found walking with those who suffer and striving with those who seek justice. My hope is that it invites a more courageous, compassionate way of imagining faith in our time.

## An Excerpt from *A Measure of Breath*

I know now that victory is not the absence of wounds. Victory is the body, battered and remade, marked by the wars it has fought. Victory is breath that does not come easy, a lung that has forgotten how to stretch, the cruel joke of survival—a heart that beats but remembers too many battle rhythms. But what they do not tell you—what no one ever tells you—is that some battles do not end when the war is declared over.

The doctor told me the cancer was gone, retreated into remission. I had beaten it. I praised God for this victory. I had won. Twenty years have passed since that declaration. Twenty years of marking each year, each test result, each breath as another milestone, another stone placed on the altar of my survival. And only now did the doctor name what my body has known all along. That there are scars of victory. Remnants that linger to remind you even as you try to forget.

The doctor's words made the lingering scars seem like a gift. As if a wound that does not kill you is a blessing. As if breathlessness is simply a reminder of strength. As if all suffering must be rewritten as something noble.

But how do I see it?

Survival is a thing that lingers; we do not walk out of the fire and leave the ashes behind. The body keeps an account, a detailed ledger, that reminds you pain has a memory—that nothing truly vanishes, no matter how you try to forget. And I wonder now, not just what has been lost, but what more my body might yet take from me. Will it fail me in a moment of need? Will I stand before a congregation only to fall silent, breathless, undone?

So when I wake, lungs tight like a clenched fist, I wonder: Is this what the victors feel? Is this how the body remembers? I think of those who came before me, those who broadened their shoulders for me to stand on. What of the battles they fought? What wounds did they carry forward, sewn into their bones, passed from mother to child? Passed on to future generations. What of their scars and the scars that I do not wear but still bear? This is survival. But survival doesn't always mean you are winning. By God's grace, winning comes in various forms. So tell me, what does it mean to win when I still struggle to breathe?

The air is sharp with morning cold as I step onto the platform. The station is a place of motion, of urgency, but my body no longer moves with urgency. The burden of my backpack digs into my shoulders, the duffel bag swings heavily at my side, and I can already feel the warning signs. The tightening in my chest. The way my breath comes short.

The steps to platform 1 loom before me. And I take a deep breath. They are just a few, but enough to remind me that my body is no longer a thing that obeys. I place my foot on the first step.

Exhale.

The second.

Inhale.

The third.

Already, I feel the pull of something deeper than exhaustion. I grip the railing because I need to be steady and because I do not want them to see. Those around me, the morning travelers, the ones with strong lungs and unbroken bodies. I do not want them to see the way my knees falter—my uncontrollable gasping.

## Praise for *A Measure of Breath*

“This book offers a cathartic breath of much-needed oxygen for ecclesial communities burdened by wounds, memories, and betrayal and wrestling with grief, loss, resentment, despair, trauma, trust, hope, healing, faith, love, justice, and redemption. Readers will find their minds stretched, connecting across multiple stories, challenged, and enlarged by Robinson’s personal journey of faith and faithfulness. Delight in a gripping and must-read book, savoring the metaphors and unyielding faith amid breathlessness.”

—Michael N. Jagessar, Retired Mission Secretary for Europe and the Caribbean,  
Council for World Mission

“*A Measure of Breath* is a powerful, personal reflection on survival—the damage we carry, and the light that still burns. Honest and compassionate, it sounds the depths of injury and asks if there is anywhere to go from here.”

—Stephen Tomkins, Editor, *Reform Magazine*

