



Dispersed Non-contact Non-digital Worship resources

These resources are specifically designed for those without access to online resources and streaming of worship services. They can be used over the phone, or copies sent or delivered to people who are in home isolation, in frontline workplaces, in a hospital bed. They are designed to either be led by a minister, chaplain or pastoral carer or used solely by an individual or household. We will be adding to this list regularly from resources developed and shared across the church.

Prayer in a time of uncertainty:

- Prayers of the People amid COVID-19
- Daily prayers of hope

Connections between Faith and Community:

- Neighbourhood prayer walk
- Solidarity candle activity

Living in Hope Reflection Series

Liturgies for a Dispersed Church:

- Blessing and prayers for the palliative care journey
- Blessing and prayers in the valley of the shadow of death
- Blessing and prayers for a loved one's passing



Prayer in a time of uncertainty

When there are no answers to make sense of what is happening around us all over the world; when we are feeling helpless and hopeless in the face of the ever-increasing crisis of this pandemic, prayer becomes our heartfelt response. Prayer connects us to God who is wholly other than ourselves and the situation around us. These prayers are a starting point for ourselves and for those around us.

Prayers of the people – amid COVID-19 pandemic

(prepared by Rev Kath Behan)

God beyond all things, creator, redeemer, sustainer; You know the number of hairs on our head, the number of grains of sand on the beach; You placed the stars into the night sky, You separated the waters of the deep, You formed and shaped every creature and breathed life into existence – God we come to you this day with arms outstretched and open hands. Some of us come with hearts full of fear and anxiety, some come with hearts full of hope and light, some come with pain, some with confusion, some with moments of joy to celebrate in the midst of the craziness that is unfolding around us. Whatever we bring, remind us in this moment, God, that You have all things in hand.

We cannot make sense of the situation that is captivating the whole world at this time. For many of us, this current pandemic experience is not in our frame of thinking. And so we gather together, even as we are dispersed in our homes, to cling to the story of hope and reconciliation that Christ proclaimed and lived out, that dares to say in the face of crisis, we don't need to be afraid. No matter what our situation is, or becomes, You, God, have already gone ahead of us into every moment of doubt, fear, darkness, crisis and trauma, so that we will never be alone or lost from your presence.

And so in that confidence and hope, we bring our concerns to you on behalf of ourselves, our loved ones, our community, and our world.

God, we pray for healing and restoration for those who are struggling with illness, pain, ill health, and rehabilitation. We pray for those suffering from COVID-19, and their carers watching helpless. Bring them peace and wholeness amid the flurry of activity surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

We pray for all who are caught up in the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic. We think of the healthcare workers, medical staff, emergency workers, teachers, police, and leaders of our government and community organisations. We pray for those waiting anxiously for loved ones struggling to return home to Australia, and for those traveling at the moment unable to return home. Help all to respond to this changing situation with grace, courage and calm. And help us as a community to be creative in finding ways of supporting those who are on the frontline of this pandemic.

We pray for our world leaders, that you would give them wisdom beyond their years, to make tough calls based on the best medical advice, and not on trying to please people. Help us as a community to support our leaders, to hold them to account in constructive ways, and to be part of the solutions that are offered.

We pray for all churches as they come to terms with the fast changing nature of this world crisis. May we as the body of Christ, look for ways to partner with one another out of love and care for the sake of the common good. Help us to be brave enough to hold things lightly so that we can let go of what doesn't work in this situation, and be open to trying new ways of being the church in the world. Help us not be afraid of doing things differently, and may we be inspired as individual disciples of Christ, to take up our crosses personally, and look for ways that each of us can share Christ's love and hope with our neighbors, and those who are most vulnerable in our community.

We pray that the fear that has taken hold of many in our community, pushing them to see only their own needs, could be lessened with an outpouring of love and care from each of us, so that our communities could find new ways of being more aware of one another. There are so many ripples and impacts that will continue to come out of this unfolding COVID situation, that many of us are and will be unaware of. So help us as your people of hope, to be intentionally mindful of those who are facing real and imminent job losses, those who are facing housing difficulties, those who are facing the helplessness



associated with others' actions impacting their already-deficient immune system, those who are facing the loss of their business and livelihood, those who are facing burnout from the ever-increasing demands of this crisis, and those who are struggling with anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, and other mental health challenges.

And God even with all of this, we can still say that we are blessed. Even these difficult times are a blessing to us, because they remind us of your presence with us in so many delightful ways. And so we give thanks for the unexpected phone calls, the small gifts of food and toilet paper dropped on our doorstep, the moments with those we love, and the creative ways that our communities and church have sought to continue to connect us to each other. Thank you God that in all situations, we can say that we are blessed abundantly.

God, as we face the days and weeks ahead, help us to breathe deeply of your Spirit of peace.

Help us to lift our eyes to the heavens, not to ignore what is going on around us, but to be reminded that You are God.

Help us to be still in the chaos.

Help us to listen and be alert to those around us.

Help us to seek out those who may be forgotten.

And help us to trust that in all things, despite what seems like all evidence to the contrary, that You work all things for good.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.

And so I invite you to join with me, wherever you are, to say together the prayer that Christ taught us – even if you can't remember all the words:

Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name.....



Daily Prayers of Hope

(prepared by Rev Kath Behan)

- (At the start of the week):
God of life, as we enter the week ahead, we ask for the grace to cherish every single moment as a gift. We ask that you would speak to us in the little things, the mundane activities, the begrudging tasks, the ordinary stuff, that we might learn the humility that comes with recognizing your presence in places we usually don't value highly. For as we practice seeking your presence in these moments, we are reminded that your kingdom's greatness lies in its most vulnerable, earthy, raw ordinariness.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of the stillness**, amid the flurry of activity, I hear your gentle whisper, piercing the noisy din, pricking my soul so that I can't ignore it.

You are here God.

You are not silenced.

No matter how much the world tries to encroach, crowd, squash, disregard...

You are here God.

You have always been here.

You will always be here.

Your gentle whisper heals me...and welcomes me home...

...Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer..

- **God of future dreaming**, each day we awaken and prepare ourselves for the day ahead. Not knowing and not expecting that where we finish the day is so often far from where we began. We offer a prayer for what is before us even when we cannot see or imagine what will come to pass. We pray in faith and hope for we have nothing else to cling to.

And so we bring ourselves to you again at the start of this day. May you fill us with the courage that will be required to make wise decisions for ourselves and those around us. May you bless us with the wisdom that will be necessary to discern healthy and life-giving next steps to take. And may you surround us with a clear sense of your deep peace that will sustain us as we make plans or wait patiently or listen intently or dream boldly.

For you have already gone ahead of us into this day, this week, this month, this year. And you are already preparing the way ahead for us - a way full of joys and griefs that we may not understand as we are making the journey, but that we will choose to trust it will ultimately bring us life.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of wonder**, today let us take a breath. Let us draw deeply from You who are the source of our life. Let us wait with patience, take silence, ponder wistfully, and listen carefully - for You desire to whisper into our souls your dream for all of creation.

Give us the courage to dare to resist the fast current of work and activity and busyness around us and within us.

Give us the perseverance to withstand the pull of expectation and obligation and compliance coming at us from all directions.

Give us the will to turn away from all that seduces us into thinking we are the masters of our own fate.

And give us rest from our labour, that we might be renewed and transformed as people of 'the way'.

...Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of the mountains** that echo your splendour and majesty throughout all the earth. May this day proclaim with gusto that You are life, that You are healing, that You are grace, that You are greater than our darkest fears, and that You are unfathomable beyond our deepest uncertainties.



May this day we rest in your arms of love.
May we breathe deeply of your spirit of mystery.
And may we sing with the angels in the midst of our ordinary and mundane lives.

...Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of messes**, sometimes we find ourselves sitting in disorder and unplanned moments. What we'd like to be doing is replaced with a derailed day, and suddenly we feel out of control and lost. And it's so easy in those moments to allow ourselves to be drawn into a way of being as reactionary and passive bystanders in our own day. And in so doing we forget our centred place in You.

God help us to see that disorder and mess and chaos is not something to be afraid of - but rather an opportunity presenting before us to practice the art of letting go, of humility and vulnerability, of learning to live at peace in the liminal space of the 'now and then not yet'.

God help us in these moments to halt the urge to give in to what is around us, threatening to de-centre us.
And fill us with the courage and peace to hold fast to Your way of clarity that stands firm right in the very midst of the mess.
Let us hear your gentle voice in the storm calling us back to you.

...Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of peace**, we lift our heads this day toward the warmth of the sun. For where there is light, there is hope. And where there is hope, there is the possibility of joy. And where there is the possibility of joy, there is peace. And it is a peace that passes all understanding - despite the chaos, despite the tyranny, despite the darkness that threatens to overwhelm us.

So engulf us in your light, O God of hope.
Embrace us with your warmth, O God of joy.
Encircle us with your calm, O God of peace.

Not that we would live a complacent and apathetic life. And not that we would ignore what is going on around us.
But only that we would find ourselves renewed and reminded of the source of life, in which we live and move and have our being.

For Yours is the kingdom, the way of grace; Yours is the power, the way of vulnerability; and Yours is the glory, the way of humility - forever and ever.

...Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of wonder**, awaken us this day to your presence, your spirit, your heart for this world.
Awaken us to our hidden thoughts that often seep through into our interactions with others.
Awaken us to the cries of those struggling with fear and hopelessness.
Awaken us to the longings within our communities for belonging and friendship and hospitality.
Awaken us to the injustices against your children that break your heart into a million pieces.
Awaken us to life, that we might live fully and presently and hope-filled and grace-laden in this moment today.
Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...
- **God of life**, the repetition of our days can sometimes be so draining. We wake, we busy ourselves, we attend to matters routine and exceptional, we sleep, and we start all over again. It is a continual movement that sometimes leaves us with a sense of futility about life. And when world news continues moment after moment to keep affirming what is the same fearful rhetoric, we find ourselves, without realizing, slipping into a kind of paralysis.

There's only so much shaking of our heads, or sighing, or weeping, or protesting we can do before we start to lose courage and strength and slip into a despair.



God of life, we desperately need you to do something new in us every day. We cannot do this journey of life on our own strength. There is too much that brings us down and causes us to lower our heads and hide under the covers.

So may your spirit of life renew us this day with a hope that sings with the angels. May your spirit of courage fill us again to keep pounding our fists and railing against injustice. And may your spirit of healing soothe those parts in us that are battered and tested, and strengthen us to lift our heads once again.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Mark 5: "Daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed."*

God of healing, as this day unfolds before us, we acknowledge the parts within us that are unwell - the innermost hidden places that are in need of your healing and peace.

When we are unwell, we are laid low and struggle to find the strength to face the tasks before us, to lift our heads above what ails us, to see beyond this particular moment. And we become stuck in this place.

But then you call to us to come - to rise up and be well; to embrace your peace that passes all understanding; to be healed perhaps even more importantly of our internal wrestling and unwellness; to step out in faith that can't see fully and yet hopes deeply in the promise of Your life and presence with us.

So let us dare to be well this day. Let us dare to be people of faith this day. Let us rise in peace and healing no matter what ails us physically or emotionally or spiritually. For Christ calls us to come.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of new life**, you are a god of endings and beginnings, of seasons and cycles, of deaths and resurrections. When we find ourselves at a crossroad on our life's journey, you call to us to lift our heads and to embrace this liminal space. And as we cross over the threshold from one adventure into another, your promise to us is and has always been, 'do not be afraid, for I am with you.'

So on this day that for many is a day of endings and threshold crossings, may your spirit of life fill the wonderings, may your spirit of grace enfold and bear the crossing, and may your spirit of hope go before us to prepare the way ahead. For in you we live and move and have our being, even as day turns to night, and winter turns to spring.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of the seasons**, there is something unsettling and yet also heartening about the transitions in our lives. While seasons bring their own particular patterns and energies, they do not stand apart from the broader story of our lives. In you, God, we live and move and have our being, and in this creative process, we experience both the breaking open and the redemptive work of your spirit of life within us - it's unsettling and heartening work.

This day may we look upon the transitions in our lives in this profound way. May we open ourselves to your work in us, in our attitudes, relationships, dreams and hopes. May we let go of one season gracefully and ready ourselves for the next. And may we sing and dance as the wind of your spirit blows within, around and through us, to lead us to the next place in our life's journey.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of grace**, this is the day that You have made, we will rejoice and be glad in it!
We will joy-again in this day.
We will search for joy.
We will speak joy.
We will breathe joy.



Not the kind of joy that relies on happiness and giggles,
but the kind of joy that stirs in the deepest part of our souls - the kind of joy that is a yearning mixed with hope, a longing mixed with life, and a decision to name, despite what might be going on around us, it is well with our souls.

May this day we sing with the angels!

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Isaiah 40:31: "But those who trust in the lord will find their strength renewed; they will rise in wings as eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint."*

God of courage, for many of us our strength is spent, our bodies are weary, our souls are bruised - perhaps because of the disappointment in our world; perhaps simply because of the burden of our human frailty.

You know this well don't you God! You carry us in these times when we cannot lift our heads. And you never cease in calling us to new strength each day, despite what has come before.

So call us again this day, O God. Draw us into your arms that we might lift our heads and breathe deeply of the life you have given us. Envelop us in your grace and fill our hearts with your unending hope beyond hope. May this day we rise again like eagles and soar without weariness. And may we invite those around us to do the same.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of hope**, we give thanks today for the gift of life and for the blessing it is to be alive and aware and present in this world.

We give thanks for the gifts of sight and sound and touch and taste, that we might glimpse your magnificence in the ordinariness of our day.

And we give thanks for the gifts of love and hope and compassion and mercy, that we can experience another paradigm of possibility daring this world to ascend above the despair and uncertainty and fear.

As we go about our day, cause us God to be present with you in the conversations and interactions we will be blessed to encounter. And when there are words that disappoint and actions that betray, fill us with courageous hearts that we might respond with pure grace and pure light.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **Sovereign God**, as this day unfolds, it would be so easy to lose ourselves to the noise of the impending chaos of our world's stage. It would be so easy to slip into a state of anxiety about what the future might look like depending upon which leader personality is given a voice, in our own country and on the other side of the world.

But this would be a madness of our own making!

For we choose to follow Christ, the savior of the world, lord of lords, prince of peace, conqueror of death and evil, healer, reconciler, lamb of God. THIS is the one in whom we have hope. THIS is the one who is our witness to light and life. THIS is the one who will save us from our very worst ourselves.

So today, may the entanglement of anxiety in us be released. May love swell in our hearts to overflowing. And may we become the embodiment of the one who breathes resurrection from death.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...



- *Psalm 121: "I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber."*

God of the hills, I lift my eyes this day in search of your presence. I marvel in the extraordinary idea that I am 'kept' by the one who made heaven and earth; that I am surrounded and held and hemmed in by that which is beyond all that frightens me.

I long to be your witness to hope today. Yet I know my weaknesses that cause me to lower my eyes and see only what is threatening to my ego, my control, my narrow vision.

God of the hills, may today I dare to lift my head to see your light. May my feet remain steady on your promise that you will never leave me or forsake me. And may I seek your help in the moments of uncertainty I will face.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- **God of love**, there are so many expectations upon us that may await us this day. So many assumptions, pre-conceptions, judgements, poor decisions, and selfish motives, from within us and from those around us, that have the potential to derail our day. And we could so easily open our hearts to these distractions that we wouldn't even notice our 'lostness' under the weight of them.

But God, you call us to live differently. You call us to rise above those distractions; to lift our heads and see beyond what pulls at us, what teases us, what seeks to turn our attentions from what is truly important and life giving.

So fill us, God of love, with hearts supple enough to stretch beyond these distractions, and rugged enough to withstand the temptation to give these distractions space in our day.

And in so doing, may we spend our day 'with' you, instead of 'striving for' you...

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of all life**, we affirm that it is you who gives life in all its fullness.

We affirm that it is you who holds heaven and earth in the palm of your hands. We affirm that it is you who has conquered the depths of hell so that death no longer has a hold over us. And we affirm that it is you who brings hope even in the midst of the most frightening or ugly or oppressive of situations.

May this day be a reminder to us of the words of your son: 'do not be afraid, for I am with you always'. And may we too find the courage to laugh at the darkness, to mock the fear that paralyses, and to celebrate fun and frivolity and laughter as precious gifts of life.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Psalm 139: "O lord you have searched me and known me...you know when I sit and I rise..."*

God of the universe, the day unfolds before me and within it there is an air of anticipation that springs to life. What is your work for this day? Where will you be found?

You know when I sit and when I rise, but I'm not sure I can say the same for you. I confess that I am too easily blinded by my own being and my vision becomes filled with my needs, my fears, my anxieties, my ego.

...and there's no chance of knowing you...

God of the universe, may your spirit of life move me this day. May I get out of the way of myself so that I am freed to witness your divine presence around me. May I lose myself in your grace, such that my fears lose their hold on



me. And may I be found and heard and truly known by you my creator.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Psalm 46: "Be still and know that I am God."*

God of the stillness, as the clamour and chaos of the world's discontent swirls around us, we find ourselves swept away and lost in the quagmire of fear and insecurity. Sometimes what is before us is too much to bear, and we would prefer to run away from it all.

...yet hiding behind the fear doesn't bring us life...

God of the stillness, save us! Save us from our crippling fears. Save us from our paralyzing thoughts. Save us from our stinging actions and behaviors. We beseech you God on behalf of our world that is crying out for relief: save us with your life-giving grace.

...for you are the source of all life and hope and healing and restoration...in you we put our trust...

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of mercy and grace**, there are words that sing and breathe and speak of life and dreams and imagination and hope and grace and mercy and reconciliation. And these are the words I will cling to today. When I hear criticism, I will shout out grace. When I hear vitriol, I will cry out beauty. When I hear fear, I will sing out hope.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer.

- **O God, 'my boat is so small and your ocean is so big'!** And sometimes the vastness of this magnificent yet hard world in which we live, threatens to overwhelm us with hopelessness and helplessness. For we are but nothing - like chaff blown in the wind; like flowers that bloom today but wither tomorrow...

...and yet...still you are present with us in the midst of our longings...

...still it is your very vastness and beyondness and otherness that births a new hope in us...

...still, despite being overwhelmed, we are held, and we are cherished, and we are called out, and we are given new eyes and a new heart...and we are found...

Lord in your mercy, as we sit in our small boats gazing out into your big ocean...hear our prayer...

- **God of the stillness** and God of the chaos, we acknowledge how easy it is for us to be distracted by the clamour and chaos around us. We find ourselves drawn into conversations, or seduced by unfolding events, that we turn our thoughts away from you and allow the clutter to slowly but surely overtake us and quench our spirits. And we wonder why we are exhausted with little left for those in need, including our very selves.

May this day we choose to stop. May we listen ever so intently to your imperceptibly gentle voice, that we find ourselves instead drawn into a space that is large enough to bear even the most tiresome of thoughts. And in the process, may we find ourselves re-named and re-embraced as your children of light and hope and peace and stillness.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer

- **Generous God**, as we prepare for the day ahead to unfold before us, we ask for the courage to enlarge our hearts to those around us. We confess that opening our hearts wider can be confronting because it places us in a



vulnerable position, and that makes us fearful.

Enlarging our hearts to those around us forces us to let go of our disappointments and our anger; it challenges how we understand people; and it dis-comforts us out of our neatly packaged worldview. And sometimes it can feel as if we are being backed into a corner, and losing our very self.

And yet...

...You come to us, generous God, full of overflowing grace and unconditional love, reminding us that in the kingdom of God, there is no need to fear, for you are with us, and your heart is big enough for all...

May it be so for us this day.
Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Isaiah 43: "But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...
...Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old...
...I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert...
...I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins..."*

God of redemption, for all who this day are walking in fear - bring your peace. For all who this day are facing an uncertain future - bring your hope. For all who this day are grieving losses and heartbreaks - bring your comfort. For all who this day are angry or hurt or broken or lost - bring your very presence to surround and bear them up.

...for you are God beyond all things...

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Psalm 37: "Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,
for they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.
Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.
He will make your vindication shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause like the noonday.
Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;
do not fret over those who prosper in their way,
over those who carry out evil devices.*



*Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.
Do not fret—it leads only to evil.
For the wicked shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land."*

God of hope, in the midst of the clamoring voices, the turmoil and grief, the chaos and disappointment of the world around us...

...may there be healing...
...may there be reconciliation...
...may truth unfold...
...may kindness and goodness and generosity shine...
And may we be transformed as your people of hope.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Psalm 31: "But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."
My times are in your hand"*

God of the wind and rain, may your grace blow upon us and discomfort us today. May our contentment be challenged. May our self-assuredness be critiqued. May our ignorance and apathy be provoked. And may our hearts be moved.

...but not for the sake of bringing chaos and confusion...

...only that we might be blessed with the opportunities to remember again that we are nothing without you, that in you and not ourselves do we live and move and have our being, and that you call us into a life-giving kingdom of humility and trust and honest vulnerability...

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Matt 14:28: Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come."*

God of mercy, like Peter we are eager at times to join with you in your transforming miracles of hope in the world. And we even have the capacity to audaciously ask you to call us into roles, jobs, relationships, community engagement, so that we can experience the wonder of working alongside you, in step with your heart for the world.

...and for a time we walk in step with you...

But then something overtakes our brash courage and naive vision. And we take our eyes off you and succumb to the words of others, or our own insecurities, or the pressure of expectations, or the harmful actions of others.

...and we start to drown in our own fear...of failure, of disappointment, of hurt, of paralysis...

And yet, even then, you stand right beside us, reaching to pull us out from the swirling chaos. You see us as we are - full of childlike faith, and full of grownup doubt. ...and you still love us...

'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water today...!' And let us hear you say, 'Come.'

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of peace**, as we enter this day, we ask for strength if we are weary; courage if we are afraid; calm if we are anxious; comfort if we are grieving; hope if we cannot see beyond what's in front of us; healing if we are broken; and tenacity if we are stepping into uncharted waters.



May we open our eyes to your presence all around us today - but so too may we open our eyes to the stories of others around us, that we might deepen our compassion and empathy for them, even while we may not know what they are facing.

Lift our heads that we might see ourselves as part of a grander community of hope. And in the process may we see your face in one another.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *"We are not human beings trying to be spiritual...we are spiritual beings trying to be human..." (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin)*

God of mystery, we praise you because you have created a world of wonder and majesty beyond our imaginations. You set the stars in the cosmos and the things hidden in the deepest, darkest part of the earth. You spoke and the platypus came into being. You breathed and the lily sprang forth. You sighed and we in all our complexity were birthed.

All things come from you, borne from your very existence, out of the dust of your presence. In your image we speak and move and live. We are yours.

So may this day your spirit of life sing in us. May we cast off the shackles of our humanness and see the world as you see it. And may we commune with your divine presence, even in the midst of our mundaneness.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of gentleness and humility**, we come before you on bended knees, not out of obligation or expectation, but because we are drawn to your warmth and light. We cannot help but bow our heads in gratitude and hope, that you offer us a life beyond our imaginations.

Despite what is going on around us, you invite us to breathe deeply of your grace, to rest in your unconditional love, and to be filled with your courage and strength that can face even the most terrifying challenge.

And all this offered in gentleness and humility, amid the noise and clamor of pride and self-interest and ungrace. For this we give thanks.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Matthew 11:28 - "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

God of promise, as this day begins, we celebrate that we are part of your grand story of hope. We bring to you the burdens we carry, that they would be gathered together and held within your arms of grace. We do not come expecting that you wipe away our struggles for the sake of simply making life easier for us. We come, instead, because we long to learn from you and take on the character of Christ in every part of our living. Teach us God how to face the situations of seeming impossibility with hope. Fill us with the courage to be bold in caring for ourselves. And strengthen us to be wise and discerning in how we respond to the chaos of the world around us.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Psalm 46: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,*



*though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult...
Be still, and know that I am God!*

God of peace, there is so much talk of fear at the moment - fear over what might happen to us and to our children...just so much fear. And it would be so easy to distract ourselves from our fears by hiding ourselves behind walls. But the truth that's hidden deep within us, if we're honest with ourselves, is this: there are no walls high enough to protect us and our loved ones from pain and brokenness and terror and even death.

This is a painful and scary truth to name out loud...

...and yet...

...your promise to us through the Psalmist proclaims another truth...

...that naming this truth about our fears does not condemn us to a desolate life - but rather by naming our fears, we can find ourselves held in the arms of our Creator who is the source of all life and who stands beyond all pain and terror and brokenness.

I choose this day to 'be still and know that You are God'. And into your hands I place myself, my loved ones, my community, my world, that beyond all the terror, there is still abundant life to be found - if we have eyes to look for it.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Psalm 139 - "O Lord you have searched me and known me..."*

God of grace, I look outside to the sky and see the vastness of this world stretching beyond the horizon. Such a reminder of your presence with me. I may feel the fear rising in me as the world seems to spin out of control; I may struggle to articulate what's important to me as I listen to the words of others; and I may tire of seeking to follow you in obedience and faithfulness....but yet I hear the Psalmist's words pour over me again and again, "O lord you have searched me and known me"...

...and I am held in your arms as you shelter me from the storms...

...and I am home again...

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *"A thick and shapeless tree-trunk would never believe that it could become a statue ,admired as a miracle of sculpture, and would never submit itself to the chisel of the sculptor, who sees by his genius what he can make of it." - Saint Ignatius*

God of creation, you see infinitely more in us than we can begin to grasp. Where we see failings, you see possibility; where we see insecurity, you see hope; where we see fear, you see imagination.

God, fill us with the courage to trust our lives and our futures into your hands. Fill us with an inner strength that clings tightly to you even as the waves of the world's brokenness swirl around us. And surround us with your peace that passes all understanding, that we might lift our heads above the chaos and sing with the angels.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Matthew 9:20 "Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was*



made well."

God of life, when we struggle with disappointment that seems to have no end in sight, there is a part of us that longs to reach out and touch you in the hope that a connection with you might just turn the impossible around and make everything better. This is the deep cry that wells up from our souls when we have no words left to make sense of that which disappoints and disillusion us.

So we offer this cry, that we may hear the words, 'take heart, your faith has made you well'.for we want to be well...

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Matthew 8:23 "And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?"*

God of salvation, there is much around us at the moment that causes us to cry out to you, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" The fear of terror, the fear of an unstable world, the fear of change, the fear of the loss of our dreams and hopes, all come together and lead us to cry out to you to save us, for we cannot see beyond what's in front of us.

But maybe the salvation we cry out for is actually more to do with being saved from ourselves and our own limitations and weaknesses. We need saving from the very fears that we cling to and from the inability we have to ground ourselves in your story of hope that dates to believe love conquers all fear.

God, on this day we ask desperately that you would save us from ourselves, so that no matter what is happening around us that we are powerless to control, we can choose instead to speak out and act out of a different story.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Luke 1:57 "Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her."*

Merciful God, you are marvelous beyond words. You bring life where there is barrenness, hope where there is only fear and despair, and redemption where there is brokenness. And this leaves us speechless.

Like it was for Elizabeth, a barren old woman, we too can find ourselves in times in our lives when we struggle to see beyond our barrenness - and yet right in the midst of that hopelessness and nothingness, you step in and bring your grand mercy to us, and new life is born.

So God, we bring to you those on our hearts this day who are in that place of wondering, of uncertainty, of anxious waiting. May your spirit of peace that passes all understanding remain with them in their waiting, until your appointed time when new life and healing and reconciliation will burst forth.

For as sure as the sun rises each day after the dark night, it surely will.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Matt 7:24. "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock."*

God of promise, we thank you that we can face challenges head-on when we build our lives on your kingdom story. We see that it's not because of any of our doing or any of our holiness that this unfolds - but because your kingdom story of grace, mercy, reconciliation, generosity, humility, hospitality and vulnerability undergird us with a strength



and centredness that the kingdom of this world doesn't understand.

For the rains do come, and the floods do engulf us, and the winds beat upon us almost toppling us to the ground...and yet...if we anchor ourselves in your story of redemption, if we daily tether ourselves to your story of hope, then no amount of external pressure can ever shift our feet from your holy ground.

And for this we are eternally in your loving debt!

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of grace**, as I open myself to this day, I ask for wisdom to appreciate the people I interact with, tenacity to look beyond my initial fears and grievances and disappointments, strength to remain tethered to the 'other-ness' of your story of grace in the midst of the clamping voices of the world, and hope to see the moments where you are present bringing reconciliation and healing.

May I not miss one little iota of this day - for this is the day that the lord has made, and I will rejoice and be glad in it.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Matt 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

God of hope, why couldn't you make the gate of life wider and the road easy to travel! Sometimes it can feel like we spend all our energies trying to find this gate because it's so narrow, and picking ourselves up off the road that causes us to stumble. And in the process we can so easily forget what we're looking for in the first place. We become distracted by the looking and the stumbling that we forget to simply follow where Christ leads.

God, help us to let go of the struggle to find the narrow gate, in our family situations, our work contexts, our community interactions - and instead simply follow Christ's command to love. May that become clear to us, and may we find that we are walking that narrow path as we do.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer

- *Matthew 6:24 "Do not worry about your life...can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life..."*

Sovereign God...yes I do have to confess that I may succumb to a little worry at times...! And yes...I get in my head that worrying cannot in any way add anything to my life, except to instead drain it of joy and hope and courage.

But when the world around me feels like it's screaming out of control, it's really hard to find my feet and not be afraid of the worst that could happen to those I love and care for in my family, my community, my world.

So worry allows me to feel like I'm doing something active about it all.

What I forget, though, is that worry is really robbing me of the story of hope that has given me life, and robbing me of the possibility that maybe, just maybe, the God who created the universe might actually have all things in hand.

So today I choose to live into those words of invitation from Jesus: 'do not worry about your life...but strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as all..' Today I choose to live into God's kingdom of grace, hope, mercy, reconciliation, goodness - even if what I see around me speaks to the contrary. And as I do that, maybe I will end up seeing those things regardless.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer.



- *Matt 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread..."*

God of hope, there are days when we can feel so overwhelmed by what is expected of us, whether in work life or family life or relationships or civic responsibility. It is so easy in those times to allow ourselves to be distracted from the life you offer us freely. We allow the expectations for today, and for tomorrow, to rob us of the peace and joy you promise us - and we end up finding ourselves looking beyond the horizon for hope and fulfillment, saying 'then it will be better, easier'.

And yet you offer life in these words, 'give us this day our daily bread'. You invite us to lay aside our overwhelming struggles with life and instead ask for just enough from you for THIS day. Just enough hope, just enough peace, just enough light, just enough mercy for today. No more and no less, so that we learn and embrace the gift of patience and humility that comes with trusting our lives into your hands, God.

For your kingdom imagination is far more magnificent than anything we can come up with.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Matt 6: "and your father who sees in secret will reward you."*

God of grace, you are the source of all life. You are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. You have given life to all creation and your presence permeates all moments, all places, all people.

And so you see all things.

You see the love and kindness and mercy done in secret. And you see the anger and pain and disappointment shown in secret. You know our hearts and our minds even more than we do. Such knowledge can be confronting for us - but so too it is comforting and healing. For to be known so intimately by our creator is to be cherished and valued and given more worth than we can imagine for ourselves.

And so for all that you see, that the world doesn't see, we ask for grace, mercy, forgiveness, affirmation, courage and hope.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Matt 11:28-30. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

God of peace, I awaken slowly this day. I carry with me the many stories I've heard this week - stories of joy and laughter, stories of grief and terror, stories of hoping and dreaming, and stories of despair and turmoil. And sometimes though the stories are a privilege to hold, they are also at times a little too much to bear.

God, how do you carry our stories in your heart? How is Christ's burden lighter when Christ has taken on the sin and brokenness of the world?

God, I want to learn from you. I long for the gentle and humble heart you offer, that I may continue to hold the stories of humanity lightly and with deep compassion. I pray for rest for my soul today, and for those on my heart who are burdened with life.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Matthew 5:13. "You are the salt of the world...but if salt loses its saltiness it's good for nothing... You are the light of the world...no one hides their light under a lamp stand..."*

God of creation, you are awesome and majestic and at the sound of your name, new life springs forth where once



there was barrenness. I cannot comprehend your glory. I also cannot comprehend that you invite me to partner with you in bringing transformation to this broken world.

You call me salt and light, and that scares me a little - because I know that in the times when I am apathetic and fearful and selfish, I do not flavour or lighten the world as you call me to.

God forgive me for those times. May today be different. May I embrace who you've created me to be in all my uniqueness, and may I be brave and courageous to open myself to others and tell the story of the hope that I have in Christ. May my life point the way clearly to you God.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Matthew 5:1 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.."*

God of grace, why do we struggle against the idea and reality of being poor in spirit? Why is it that to be in want, to lack, to fail, to experience inadequacy, to feel anger, are attributes that we resist vehemently? What stops us from having a suppleness of heart, and a gentle soul, that not only accepts our limitations and poverty, but embraces and even seeks out this way of being toward the world around us?

God - today show me how to love being poor in spirit. Help me to long for the freedom and liberation that comes with not having to defend or cling tightly to the facade that I have it all together. Show me your kingdom of heaven today.

...Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Mark 12:28 "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

God of love, I have to say that love is such a challenging concept! It Sounds so simple - love God and love others as we love ourselves. If only love WAS that simple! Because love costs. Love can be painful and heartbreaking. Love takes all of our pride. Love forces us to confront our selfish selves.

...but love also releases us from our own worst selves...!

So God of love, may your deep love for us release us to love ourselves and others with more grace and humility and hope than we can imagine.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Luke 1:46: And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant."*

God of creation, like Mary I too sing this prayer today. As I look over the past days and weeks and years, I see the path that I have travelled, and I'm amazed at the favour you have shown me. Even in times of despair and want and fear, I can see that you have been present. And while maybe then it was hard to bring myself to rejoice, I am learning the art of seeking joy again in my remembering.

I am still mystified that you would invite me to join with you in what you're doing in the world. And yet that seems to be your way. You eagerly choose those who struggle and fail, those who have lost hope, those who cannot see the way ahead, those who stutter and stammer and limp and crawl. Maybe because in all our lowliness, you then have the freedom to bring great wonder and light.

So, God of creation, take this lowly servant today. Teach me more about humility and grace. And may I join in your



adventure of reconciliation for all the world.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- **God of the unexpected**, why am I always surprised by your workings? Why is it not second nature to me to wait expectantly for you to move and weave and transform situations that to me look impossible? God I wish I had the peace in my spirit that would liberate me from my inability to trust unfailingly in you. Then I wouldn't have to waste so much energy and confidence in sitting with unanswered questions and an uncertain future.

All this is to say: thank you God for stepping into my world and filling it with great hope in small moments of affirmation. I will cling to these moments as I continue to journey through the many more moments ahead that will be unclear. As the Psalmist says, 'I trust in you my Lord, I say you are my God; my times are in your hands.'

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- **God of new mercies every morning**, I come into your presence. It is a new day, and with the new day comes opportunities for seeking out life in all its goodness and hope. I have busyness and activity today, yet also I have space to sit in your presence.

May I engage in the activity with intention. And so too may I embrace and savour the space to sit and soak in the moments to sit in your presence. In my doing and in my sitting, may I be alert and attentive to your gentle voice.

What is it you are calling out from me?
Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Mark 11:13 - "On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs."*

God of the changing seasons, this story of fig trees puzzles me. Jesus sees from a distance a fig tree in leaf, but when he comes closer, he sees what's actually there. Fig leaves from a distance mean the fruit has already come, but up close the leaves only highlight what's missing and what's out of season.

And I'm confronted God by what is seen in me from a distance, yet on closer inspection is left wanting...

Do I promise more than I'm able to give? Do I create a picture of myself and of you that's counterfeit? Do I lack the authenticity to be honest and vulnerable and accepting of my limitations and failings? Or do I think I can be all things to all people, out of pride and self-interest?

God, show me how to be real about who I am and what you have called me to. Help me to only seek your eyes of unconditional love and acceptance. And lead me to bear the fruit of life and hope and grace that will last.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- **God of creation**, you are the source of all life. You are present in all things, giving life and hope where there is only despair. But God I confess that so often I don't see this because I'm not looking. I assume I know where and in whom I will discern your presence, and so I order my day with this expectation. But in doing so, I miss where you are unexpectedly birthing reconciliation and grace and mercy and creativity.

God I long for the faith of those who don't assume and expect like me. I long for the faith that trusts my anxieties into your eternal hands. I long for the faith that frees me from proving myself, or seeking certain results, or cautiously stepping into dreams that become so measured they cease being dreams.

God, liberate me from a small mind and small faith, that I may rest in your unending grace today.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...



- *Mark 10:32-45. "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."Jesus called them and said to them, 'whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'"*

God of mercy, I want to make plans that everyone will think are great! I want to do the 'right' thing, the generous act, the gracious response, so that all people may come to know you. But I notice in saying that, my focus and attention are all on me! I may have 'good' motives for all these things, yet I confess that what lies at the core are my desires, not yours. In the picture I create in my head of those moments, it's of me doing for others...but I don't think that's what you meant by being a slave and a servant to all.

God, show me what it takes to be a guest in my community - to place myself not as a doormat, but rather as someone who takes a step back from the centre and does more listening and hearing and watching and attending to where you are standing and being present. God, grant me the humility to see you today.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer..

- *Psalm 139:*
"O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me..."

God of wonder, how can I make sense of this? How can I wrap my head around how much I'm known by you - even so much more than I know myself? It is both wonderful and frightening. To be known so intimately at times makes me want to run away and hide, maybe because I'm a little afraid of what you are calling me to, and perhaps also because I'm a little afraid of how I might respond.

God of wonder, I pray desperately, do not let go of me no matter how much I may struggle and squirm. Fill me with a courage that is borne of the absolute trust Christ had in you as he faced what was ahead of him. And may I know peace unending as I place myself on your hands. Do with me what you will.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- **God of grace**, today I pray for humility. I hear your call to go into all the world and make disciples, but sometimes I take with me my pride, my myopic vision, my self-righteousness. Sometimes I think I have all the answers. But I do not.

And so I pray for humility. That I may see the world as you see it. That I may have a supple heart and gentle hands to hold lightly what I believe you're calling forth from me, alongside what you're already doing in the world around me.

Lord in your mercy...hear my prayer...

- *Mark 9:40 "Whoever is not against us is for us."*

God of grace, I come into your presence as I prepare for the day ahead. I confess to you the inner urgings of my soul to ready myself for those moments of opposition and competition from those around me - moments when what rises within me is the need to defend myself, or prove myself, or even to fight back. I know these feelings stem from fear, and they rob me of the ability to see the world with grace.



God help me to let go of the struggle. Help me to see myself as you see me - your child, created in your image. Fill me with the courage and grace to see others not as threats but as fellow human beings who share the same hopes and dreams for ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. And may I learn to embrace those I fear and see them as you see them.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- **God of creation**, where shall we find you this day, we wonder? We've heard you in the terrifying wind and rain and seen you in the powerful waves. We've even sensed you in the calm after the storm when the debris is washed up and what was once standing is no more. So where shall we find you this day, we wonder?
Will you be found around the dirty dishes in the sink?
Will you be found when we are stuck in the morning traffic?
Will you be found when our children cry because they've lost their favourite toy?
Will you be found in the silent, unanswered questions we hide deep in our hearts?
God of creation, may this day we search for you in the mundane, in the precious, in the anger-filled, in the frightened, in the joyous moments that will grace us.

For this is the day that the Lord has made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- *Isaiah 40:31. "But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."*

God of courage, there are seasons in our lives when we find ourselves burdened with weariness from the stuff of life and the encroaching darkness of the world around us. And everywhere we turn there seems to be another evil, or another conflict, or another piece of chaos, or another disappointment and grief. And we wonder how much more must we endure before the dawn appears.

So we come to you on our knees because there is no other place or posture we can take that will not be defeated.

On our knees we can see the world differently.

On our knees we recognize our absolute need of you precisely in the midst of the terror around us.

On our knees we have nothing left but to open our hands and our hearts to the desperate hope we have in you, that there will come a day when all tears will be wiped away and suffering will be no more.

And so we wait...

...and in our waiting may our strength be renewed - not for a fight, but for even greater humility...that we may witness to the inconceivable and unbelievable grace of Christ in our lives and in those hidden corners of our world...

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- (A Prayer at Week's End):

God of wonder, as the week ends, we are mindful as we look back at the moments we've missed seeing your wonder and miracles all around us - the moments of delight that could have captured our soul; the moments of deep sorrow that could have stirred our compassion; for the moments of uncertainty that could have provoked us to face our fears; for the moments of righteous anger that could have stirred us into action.

Many moments of missed opportunities...

...and yet...you are a redeeming and recreating God, and your promise to us is that your mercies are new every



morning - because great is your faithfulness to us.

So may this day be a new morning with new mercies. May we let go of the lost moments, and choose instead to embrace what is before us this day, with eyes wide open and hearts ready to join with you as you bring hope into our broken world.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- (As the week ends):
Saint Ignatius: "There are very few people who realize what God would make of them if they abandoned themselves into his hands, and let themselves be formed by his grace."

God of grace, as the week ends, we look back over the path we have travelled to see where you have led us. Moments of wonder, moments of grace, moments of courage, moments of disappointment, moments of anger, moments of regret. So many moments that have shaped us into the people you have created us to be.

God, though sometimes we don't like to acknowledge it, all the moments we encounter with you bring us to new places of understanding and awareness. We see ourselves and those around us differently only because of the journey we take through the myriad of moments you place before us.

And so, God of grace, we give you thanks for our 'becoming' this past week. Do not stop leading us and forming us for more than we can grasp. Enlarge our worlds and break open our hearts, and show us how to continually abandon ourselves into your hands.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer...

- (A blessing for the end of the week):
God of life, at this week's end, after all the emails have been written, the conversations shared that had to be had, the programs planned, the calendar filled in, the tense moments endured, the brief Facebook meme giggles let loose, the dishes washed, the clothes hung on the line, the gardens watered, the bills paid, the children cuddled, the weeping friend prayed with....

....after all that Lord....

...we are still with you...

...and we can breathe deeply again, and boldly take sabbath time out to remind ourselves that You are our centre, our hope, our life, our breath...

...and we can say again, 'it is well with my soul'...



Connections between Faith and Community

In this time of isolation, it could be easy for us to slip into the space of separating our personal faith expression from the call of Christ to 'go into all the world' – especially when going into all the world is a public health risk at this time. But Christ's call to love one another is an integrated call. We can't love God, and ourselves, without at the same time loving others, even if we're isolate. Community connection even in a time of lockdown is an inherent part of our faith practices. We just need to become more creative about it! Here are some starting ideas for how this can work.

Neighbourhood Prayer Walk

(prepared by Rev Melanie Wheeley)

Do you walk around your neighbourhood for exercise? Why not do a prayer walk!

The prophet Habakkuk in Chapter 2:1, says "I will climb my watchtower and stand at my guard post. There I will wait to see what the Lord says..."

Habakkuk waits to listen with his eyes for what the Lord is wanting to say. I wonder what the Lord will show you, as you listen with your eyes on a prayer walk around your neighbourhood? Who is God asking you to pray for as you walk past that bike in your neighbour's yard? That empty park bench? That bus stop?

What to bring:

Water bottle, walking shoes, bible if you want to read scripture along the way.

You can begin and finish at any location you choose.

Begin with a prayer:

Loving God with each step that I take on this prayer walk, may I be a vehicle of your love, mercy, peace and hope. Help me to listen with my eyes and to pray for what I see. Amen.

Some helpful scripture you may want to read as you get started: Colossians 1:9-14; Jeremiah 29:11-14; Psalm 130:5-6; 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

As you begin walking take notice of what is happening around you.

Pray for what you see:

1. **A courthouse:** For justice for the least among us; for care and safety for the homeless/those in prison.
2. **Government buildings:** The removal of political barriers; unity amongst political parties in the face of crisis; for the unemployed; for pressure points in our systems that usually regulate our life together and are currently overloaded. For the peace and protection of staff and first responders to COVID-19.
3. **Banks and businesses:** For pressures faced; fair distribution of resources and economy.
4. **Hospitals/doctors surgeries:** For continued peace and protection of staff and first responders to emergencies.
5. **Schools:** for the continued education of children, provision of access to resources (internet, technology, books) for those who cannot afford them. For the teaching staff and parents of children. For those who are home schooled.
6. **Parks, café's, places people usually gather:** For the future time where they will once again be frequented.
7. **Places of worship:** For the ways in which a dispersed community might continue to worship, witness and serve.
8. **Community groups and organisations:** For eyes to see the people/people groups other systems of service are not seeing and for the provision for those people.
9. **Homes and accommodation:** For the elderly, the families, the single parents. Especially pray for those who are socially isolated and for opportunities to ensure a safe and connected community.

Especially pray that the people in your neighbourhood might discover faith in Christ, leaning into the hope that is offered through relationship with the Creator of all things.



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Finish with this prayer:

Creator God, you hold all people in your hands and I thank you for the gift of living a life in relationship with you. I trust you for my future and the futures of the people and livelihoods we walked past today. Amen.

Ways to include children/families in the neighbourhood walk:

- If you have done this walk with a child or family member it is a great time at the end of the walk to talk about what you saw and prayed for.
- For an extra twist, you may want to decorate a rock with encouraging messages/words of hope and leave them in strategic places along your walk for others to find and be encouraged by.



Living in Solidarity

(prepared by Rev Melanie Wheeley)

We are designed for relationship, each one of us purposed for interdependence. Living in solidarity is about respecting our neighbours and fellow human beings, it is also valuing who they are as individuals. Below is an activity that can help you to practice solidarity. Whether you are self-isolating or working from home, take 10 minutes out of your day for this moment of faith praxis.

Have a dedicated candle for lighting at regular times during the week. You can do this on your own with the people in your household. If you wanted to, you could also do this online with friends. A quiet space for this action of solidarity is useful.

You will need:

A candle, matches, a quiet place for reflection.

1. **Begin by lighting the candle.** As it is lit, here the words from the gospel of John 1:5: *“The light shines in the darkness (Jesus is that light), and the darkness has not overcome it”*.
2. **Reflect on these words from scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-27. How does the body working together and each part being uniquely separate reflect the practice of Solidarity?
3. **Pray (an action of solidarity).**

*Holy Spirit, source of light and strength,
Thank you for the call to become peacemakers of your world
and the opportunity to stand in solidarity with those around us
in times of both joy and despair; of celebration and pain.*

4. **Continue in prayer, take time to pray a prayer of solidarity for your locality** – you may choose your own or follow the prompting questions below:
 - What are you grateful for?
 - In this time, in this moment, what is bringing you hope?
 - Who in your street, neighbourhood, nation, world needs your prayers today? Where does Gods light of hope need to shine in the darkness? Pray.
 - NB. It may be helpful to have some prompts like a newspaper handy for this.
 - Pray a prayer of hope for the world, naming all those people/events/places you have identified needs the light of Christ to shine into.

A Prayer to Conclude your walk:

*God of all things empower each part of your body, the church, to play its part in being your hands and feet.
May we together each, in playing our part come together to form the whole body of Christ.
May we be one as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in the person of the Trinity.
May the people of our street and neighbourhood know the very real hope that is found in through Jesus Christ.
Amen*



Living in Hope – Reflections in a time of fear and uncertainty.¹

(prepared by Rev Kath Behan)

These reflections can be used in any setting, as daily opportunities for individuals and households to share around a meal together, or in conversation with someone you're connected to over the phone. Consider making an intentional time of connecting with another, using each reflection as a guide and a check-in, especially in a time of community lockdown.

When we find ourselves in situations of difficulty and suffering, whether through ongoing illness, broken relationships, or facing disasters, we come to a place where we are forced to stop and think about the meaning of our lives. We are brought face to face with our own mortality and we start to question all that we hold to be true. This is a healthy human response to suffering because it invites us to invest into searching out the life that we sense deep within us is either missing, or of which we need to be reminded.

This is the essence of hope in the midst of suffering: a belief and a trust in the possibility that there is more to life than what we see with our eyes. If our lives lack meaning or purpose, if we cannot see beyond our circumstances, if we doubt that there can ever be fulfillment, then all that is left for us is despair and resignation. But if somewhere deep within us we sense the stirring of a thirst for new life and possibility, then hope fills us with an openness to the world that keeps us moving along treacherous paths ahead.

Hope, then, is about being willing to let go of what we once knew to be true with our eyes, and looking deeper to see where the signs of life are all around us.

What are we waiting for...

Questions about hope must begin from a place of honest assessment of our lives – of looking ourselves in the mirror and asking ourselves what we truly believe is important in life. Is our life on earth ultimately one of finality in death? Or, do we believe that our lives have meaning beyond death? It may seem morbid to be asking questions about death when perhaps that is not our immediate reality. But these questions are significant because our attitudes to life and our plans for living always reflect our attitudes to death¹: if we believe there is no life after death, then our life now may be defined by a pursuit of self-indulgence, and hope is only that which can be seen with our eyes. If we believe that new life comes after death, and our life on earth has a purpose beyond this world, then our hope will be in the pursuit of meaning greater than ourselves. This is not to say that hope in life after death is about ignoring or denying the reality of the present. On the contrary, it is about stepping deeper into the rawness of the present, such that we take the opportunity to seek out a richer experience of life in the midst of the pain and suffering, so that new life can be experienced in the here and now.

*What are you hoping for at the end of this life?
How does naming the hope that you have,
generate and sustain your life in this moment now?*

Where do we begin...

The aim of this set of reflections is to offer some thoughts about how to make sense of the difficult times in our lives. As has already been mentioned, our understanding of the meaning of death will necessarily determine how we live our lives. For this reason, the discussion in this booklet will specifically continue with the fundamental belief that the Divine God, creator of heaven and earth, is the source of all life. Thus, we will begin from the standpoint that there is new life for all people after death, and so our lives on earth here and now necessarily have a meaning and purpose that is far greater than ourselves.

¹ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.119.*



There is an old proverb that says, ‘as long as I breathe, I hope’ – that is, the breath of my soul is hope for life, the fulfilled life.² If this is what we can proclaim, then right now, as we breathe in and out, we are claiming a hope beyond hope that there is life to be found in the midst of our circumstances.

*Stop for a moment and focus on your breathing – in and out, in and out.
As you breathe, think of each breath as a moment of hope for life.
This may be all that you are capable of doing at the moment – but that is enough.
And slowly you may be surprised by the stirring deep within you for life...*

Hope proclaims that we are not alone in this world...

There is a moment when you’re standing at the edge of the ocean as the waves lap around your feet, and the sand begins to disappear beneath your feet with the swirling of the water, and the waves continually pound against you, forcing you off-balance just a little...when you’re reminded that you are not alone in the world. There is a greater presence all around us. God who knows the number of grains of sand on the beach, who knows the number of hairs on your head, is with us. Oceans, mountains, creeks, rosebuds, grasshoppers, sunrises, sunsets are all promises that point beyond themselves to the beginning of something greater. Hope is that which seeks not endings, whether it be the end of pain or life or discomfort, but rather seeks the beginning of new life³ where we are more concerned with asking, ‘God, where are YOU?’, than we are with asking, ‘How can God allow this to happen?’ The difference between these questions is the difference between personally connecting **with** God, and wondering **about** God.

*What would it be like for you to ask the question,
‘God where are You right now?’*

Has anything changed for you in asking this question?

*Do you still need to ask the other question,
‘How can God allow this to happen?’*

Hope demands honesty and the freedom to cry for justice...

To stand before God, the creator of all things, is at once terrifying and liberating – terrifying because we cannot hide ourselves from our Maker, but liberating because it is our moment to be fully known. To be fully known means that we are free to drop the masks that we wear to hide our true selves from the world, and instead we are given permission to acknowledge what we are really feeling inside. When we name our pain, when we are free to shake our fists at the injustice of our situation; when we ask the hidden unresolved questions that well up from deep within our soul, we find ourselves in an honest relationship with God. And though we may not receive the answers we’re looking for, though some answers we would never understand even if they were given to us, the very act of relating truthfully to God allows us to be in a place where God can touch our hearts with God’s presence.

This is what gives us the courage to live again. The pain may still be present, and may continue for a time to come, but we can begin to find a new life in the midst of that pain, rather than succumb to the dull resignation in which nothing matters and we may feel more dead than alive.⁴ Not that this is a denial of the present, but rather we find ourselves taking a journey to a place where we can choose to look for signs of life within the darkness.

² *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.99.*

³ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.35.*

⁴ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.35.*



*Take a moment now to name your fear today.
Shake your fists at God if you need to.
Ask the questions you've been too afraid to ask anyone.*

*What signs of life are around you today?
What words or actions have you experienced that affirm life and hope?*

*After considering these questions, ask yourself,
'Do I feel closer to God?'*

(There are many stories in the Bible of people who have questioned God. If you want to read further, why not read the story of Job in the Old Testament; or the Psalms, particularly Psalm 88, 6, 10, 13, 22, 43, 69, 130)

Hope means awakening to the reality of life...

There is an old folktale about a vain emperor who loved to parade through his kingdom showing off his beautiful clothes, while ignoring his royal duties. One day two men from a neighbouring kingdom, who heard about the silly emperor, decided to devise a plan to fool the emperor. They went to him and announced that they had the ability to create a garment for the emperor using the most prestigious golden cloth imaginable. They told the emperor that the cloth was so fantastic that it was only visible to those who were wise and worthy – fools could not see the magical cloth. The emperor heartily agreed and the men set to work on the clothes. When the emperor came to be fitted, he stripped down and the men pretended to dress him in the cloth. The emperor being too blinded by his own vanity didn't see his own nakedness. He proceeded to parade through the kingdom, and the people not wanting to be considered fools, obliged the emperor with applause. All until one child in the crowd shouted out, 'but look, he's only wearing underwear!' At that, the emperor looked down and realized he'd been fooled.

There can be a danger when facing suffering, in creating a fantasy world around us in order to dull our senses from the pain.⁵ Sometimes it is just too hard to contemplate what is before us, especially if it is unknown. And yet, the very act of protecting ourselves from suffering also serves to shield us from the possibility of knowing joy and peace and love. The fact is that whatever we look for, we will find – if we look for our fears to be confirmed, they will be; if we look for signs of hope and grace, we'll see them dancing around us. Hope is about waking ourselves up from the dream-world of nothingness so that we can be alert and watchful for the signs of life in the midst of the terror. Hope is about accepting reality for what it is, and in the process discovering that reality is far richer and more surprising than our most fantastic fantasies that in the end may imprison us in a cage of fear and disempowerment.⁶

Take a moment to consider if you've created a fantasy world to stop you facing the pain.

*What sights, sounds and smells do you notice today that you hadn't noticed before?
What do you they tell you of God, of love, of possibility?*

How does it feel to face the reality of your present – both the pain and the possibilities?

*Try praying to God with your eyes wide open.
How does that change your prayer?*

Try also praying the following prayer as you wake up in the morning, and see how this prayer changes your day:

⁵ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.82.*

⁶ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.83.*



*“Get up, let us be going.
Let us wake up and see
what God is bringing on this new day.”⁷*

Hope remembers the past in order to tell a new story for the future...

When we are bereft of seeing the path in front of us, it can be helpful to turn our eyes and look at the path we’ve already trodden. Remembering the past, though it may be painful, is an opportunity to remind ourselves that we have indeed come through difficult times before. But more than that, we have grown and changed along the way with the experiences we have lived. When we look back upon our lives, we were never the same then as we are now – time affords us the distance to be able to reflect upon how we faced the struggles of the past, so that we can either learn from our mistakes, or remember helpful tools for facing crises now.

And as we remember the past, we can make empowered choices about how our future story might look. It means we even have the opportunity to tell a new story. In the past we may have been too fearful to face difficult situations, but that doesn’t have to mean we will be too fearful now. The fact that we are still alive and still breathing may be all that we have to remind us that the fear we once knew, does not need to have the power over us that we once thought it did. We have survived despite the fear – so we have the strength within us to live without fear again.

*When have you had times of difficulty in the past?
What helped you through those times?
What things didn’t help you?
Can you draw upon the helpful actions, and cast aside the unhelpful actions, to face your current struggles?*

What have you learnt about yourself in your suffering to this point?

Take a moment to affirm the strength and courage that you DO have in this moment here and now – even if it is only a little more than nothing.

Hope is the belief in possibilities for new life that can’t yet be seen...

This is perhaps the most crucial aspect of hope that must be wrestled with. At some point, hope is all about faith – a decision to put our trust in something that is beyond our sight. It is an expectation that the life we live will continue to progressively grow and transform. We expect every morning when we wake up from sleep, that we will be different people at the end of the day, having had experiences and interactions with others that continually shape us into people of ever-deepening complexity. So it shouldn’t frighten us that there is life to be lived that we can’t yet see.

If we could see what was ahead for us, there would be no fear but there would also be no wonder, and life would become a dull boredom that would have no purpose or meaning. Hope challenges this sadness by offering glimpses of a possibility that the way things are do not need to be the way things will always be. If we know that God, the Source of all life, is waiting for us wherever we are, then our ability to step into the unknown is strengthened. Though we can’t see the particulars of what is ahead of us, we can see that regardless of what happens, life can be found as we actively participate in hope through loving, forgiving, and caring for each other in the world we share. In doing so we will find new life in places we never dreamed there would be.

Consider trying to see the stories around you in a different way: can you see how stories of floods, cyclones, earthquakes, illness, broken relationships can become instead stories of compassion and justice and hope?

⁷ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p. 84.*



*How could you participate in these stories
in order to see them differently?
Perhaps you could pray for the people involved;
you could find out more about the people and the situations within the stories.*

Perhaps you could even do this for your own story.

Hope is accepting its contradiction as both a future expectation and a present reality...

There is a reality about hope that must be named because the very nature of hope means living in the space or gap of what is often called, 'the now and the not yet'. It is recognizing that we are forced to live at times in contradiction⁸ – between the reality of the present, alongside the hope for an outcome yet to come. In wartime when the end of war is declared, it takes time for the troops to leave. When a rooster crows in the early hours of the morning to announce the day has begun, there is still time before we arise out of bed. When a person undergoes surgery, it takes time before the wound is healed even if the infection has been removed. Contradictions are not easy to hold together, and honesty requires that we acknowledge this.

But if hope all comes down at some point to a decision of faith and trust, then part of that acceptance is the realization of the mystery of life that cannot be fully understood or explained. If we believe in a God who is beyond all things, then we must acknowledge there is much about God and the life God has given us that we will never comprehend. Sometimes we even find ourselves reaching the point where all we have left is to hope, because if we didn't cling obstinately to hope, then what would become of us?⁹

If healing in its truest sense refers to restoration and wholeness, both physically, emotionally, spiritually, then what future healing do you long for?

What healing do you know now?

Is there a gap between those two answers?

How does asking these questions help you to live with the contradiction of your life in the here and now?

Hope is active and revolutionary, not passive and apathetic...

Anyone who is in the middle of a difficult situation knows that hope is not passive by any means! To choose to have hope is a costly choice because it requires of us to live in a way that is not always tangible to those around us. For those not living with the reality of pain, it can at times be easy to see hope as an escape from reality or a denial of present circumstances. But hope that is grounded in a faith that there is more to life than what we see, is far from blind. Rather it is intentionally active and transformative because it invites us to step deeper into the life we're living: at no other time in our lives are we more aware of the power of hope than when there is only despair all around us and we have nothing left to hang onto but hope. Often it is the darkness surrounding us that allows us to see more clearly the light of hope that is possible.

There's a wonderful scene in the movie "Apollo 13"¹⁰, based on the true story of the ill-fated 13th Apollo mission bound for the moon flown by American astronauts Lovell, Haise and Swigert, in 1970. The mission is aborted due to technical failures, and there is fear for the lives of the astronauts to get home safely. While waiting for the astronauts' return, the media replays a television interview with Lovell, in which he is asked by the interviewer if there have ever been occasions when he has had an aeroplane emergency that caused him to fear for his life.

⁸ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.90.*

⁹ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.90.*

¹⁰ *Apollo 13. dir. Ron Howard, Universal Pictures and Imagine Entertainment. Universal City, CA, 1995.*



Lovell responds by saying, “I remember this one time - I'm in a Banshee at night in combat conditions, so there's no running lights on the carrier. We were in the Sea of Japan and my radar had jammed, and my homing signal was gone... And so it was leading me away from where I was supposed to be. And I'm looking down at a big, black ocean, so I flip on my map light, and then suddenly, everything shorts out right there in my cockpit. All my instruments are gone. My lights are gone. And I can't even tell now what my altitude is. I know I'm running out of fuel, so I'm thinking about ditching in the ocean. And then I look down and there, in the darkness, there's this green trail. It's like a long carpet that's just laid out right beneath me. It was the algae - that phosphorescent stuff that gets churned up in the wake of a big ship. And it was leading me home to the carrier. If my cockpit lights hadn't shorted out, there's no way I would have ever been able to see that. So you never know what events are going to transpire to get you home.”

Hope changes lives because it helps us see other ways that we can participate in the healing that we're longing for. It requires us to engage rather than sit back and wait for things to happen. When we do, we find treasures in the darkness that we would never have seen before. It may be the realization of the many blessings we've taken for granted to this point. It may be an appreciation and a greater empathy for what others have had to face. It may be a deeper understanding of our place on this earth and the purpose of our lives.

What has your experience of suffering taught you?

What blessings have been revealed for you that you have taken for granted in the past?

How have you changed in the process of living through your suffering?

*Why not consider acting upon these revelations –
perhaps tell someone close to you how much you love them and how proud you are of them;
or offer forgiveness for a broken relationship in need of mending, even if the fault is not yours;
or simply give thanks that you are alive and able to tell your story to others as a gift.*

Hope helps us to live...

Quite simply, life can either be affirmed or denied. It is a choice to have faith and hope in what we can't see, or to only believe in what we can see. But regardless of what our choice, the facts of our situation may not change much. Whether we hope in new possibilities or whether we sit in despair, our pain and our circumstances may still continue – but our ability to live through them in a life-giving way will be very different. Hope always seeks life; while despair can mean the death of our reason to live. Without hope there is only hollowness and barrenness.¹¹

But in order to truly experience life in the midst of suffering, we must slow down.¹² Suffering does that to us. It is a forced 'slowing down'. It saps our energy. It limits our ability to function well. It reminds us of our vulnerability and our need for others to support us. But there is nothing wrong with this. In fact in our individualized and fast-paced world, this is actually a gift for us. It is a gift to have the time to say what we need to say to those we love. It is a gift to have the space to look around us and appreciate the richness of the life we're living. Not that suffering is something we would wish on anyone, or that is given to us to teach us and shape our character – no-one would be so cruel as to suggest this. Rather, because of suffering, in the midst of suffering, despite suffering, we can be helped to live again.

In what ways can you say you've been truly experiencing a full life up until now? In what ways haven't you?

What would you consider are the important parts of your life now?

¹¹ *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.94.*

¹² *In the End – the Beginning. The Life of Hope, p.122.*



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What parts are not important anymore?

What has changed for you in this journey of suffering?

What is it that you need, and that you want, to affirm for your life into the future?

**May your journey through the dark places
be a journey filled with hope and peace
as you seek out the life to be found here.
You are not alone – God, the Source of all life, is with you.**



Liturgies for a Dispersed Church

Sharing in rituals, familiar liturgies and blessings in times of uncertainty is what keeps us connected as the body of Christ. In the days and weeks ahead there will be times when we need to re-think how we understand the expression of the fundamental elements of our faith and experience. These liturgies are offered as a starting place for us to navigate these uncharted waters.

Blessing and Prayers for the Palliative Care Journey

(Prepared by Rev Heather Allison)

Life is a Journey

Life is a journey on many roads, but God is always with us.
Sometimes we lift our faces to the sun, and God is with us.
But sometimes there is a hard journey through pathways of pain, and fears in dark places.
But God is with us, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Oh God who travels with us in the shadows,
We want to move forward in faith, but the way ahead seems so dangerous and we stand in helpless fear before the hiddenness in our future.
Stand beside us, gentle Christ.

Hear the word to us in Jesus Christ.
I will never leave you nor forsake you, even to the end of time
I will walk with you down the pathways of death and lead you to eternal life.

The candle is a sign of the light, warmth and power of the Holy Spirit.
(light candle and draw near)

See the light for the journey and believe that the Spirit always moves ahead of you
Stretch out your hands and feel the warmth of the flame.
It is the warmth of the love of God, and our love for you

That love will surround you wherever you go
Take into yourself the power of the Holy Spirit, that you may be given courage for the next step of the journey
We are the Body of Christ for you, so you are one with Jesus Christ, who heals us, comforts us, protects us and lifts us up to walk forward again

Receive this gift, and claim the life that is before you.

(Adapted from "Echoes of our Journey: liturgies of the people", Dorothy McRae McMahan, Joint Board of Christian Education: Melbourne, Vic, 1993)

God of gentleness and strength

God of gentleness and strength, comfort (name) with the great power of your love
In our grief and confusion, in our doubt and questions, help us find peace.

May we know the certainty of God's love in all that we experience.
May we be aware that God walks with us and carries us in hard times.
Let the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, come upon us now,
and be our companion as we navigate the days ahead.

Amen.

To everything there is a season

To everything there is a season,



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A time for every purpose under heaven;
A time to be born, a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
A time to weep and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn and a time to dance;
A time to keep and a time to cast away.

(Pause for silent reflection)

Loving God, we have known the time for planting,
for laughing and for dancing.
The joys of happier days can never be taken from us.

Let those joys soften our uncertainty and questions at this time.
May our acceptance of our human fragility,
and our assurance of God's faithfulness in this life and beyond, sustain us.

Help us to a place of peace and acceptance,
and through this, may we bless and sustain others.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen



Blessing and Prayers in the Valley of the Shadow of Death

(prepared by Rev Kath Behan)

This liturgy is prepared for those family and friends who are not able to gather at the bedside of a loved one who is near to death. It is a way of acknowledging this part of the journey, even though they cannot be present with their loved one. It can be led over the phone, preferably by a chaplain/minister/pastoral carer, or even another family member, at the bedside of their loved one, or even remotely if unable to be present at the bedside. In this instance it may be helpful for dispersed family members to hold a photo of their loved one as the liturgy is read.

We Gather to Hear God's Word

We gather in this moment
to remember God's word of hope to us:

(Psalm 23)

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

(Romans 8:38-39)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers,
nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We Respond in Faith

God of all ages, of all that is – seen and unseen, we come to You in this moment of farewell.
Remind us now of Your presence with us,
and of Your promise to us that You will never leave us or forsake us.
Give us the courage to surrender our loved one _____ into your eternal care,
knowing that You will keep them safe



and they will know joy and peace unending.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

God says:
Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you.

_____ (name):

For you, Jesus lived.
For you, Jesus died.
For you, Jesus rose again.

Therefore, as a reminder of that love and grace,
we mark the sign of the cross on your forehead
*(or if unable to be present with the person:
'we draw the sign of the cross on this photo of _____ (name)'.)*

_____, we send you into the next part of your journey
with our love and care.

When you are ready to go, we free you to take this journey.
Even though you are precious to us,
we will not cling to you,
for we know in our hearts new life is waiting for you.

(offer to dispersed family to draw the sign of the cross on their photo of the person)

We go forth by faith:

Receive this blessing of comfort from God who made you and loves you:
The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
Do not be afraid. **Amen.**



Blessing and Prayers for a Loved One's Passing

(prepared by Rev Kath Behan)

This liturgy is prepared for those family and friends who are not able to gather in the immediate time following a loved one's passing. It is a way of acknowledging the immediate loss, particularly if there will also be a limit to those who are able to attend a funeral service. It can be led over the phone, preferably by a chaplain/minister/pastoral carer, or even another family member, at the bedside of their loved one, or even remotely if unable to be present at the bedside. In this instance it may be helpful for dispersed family members to hold a photo of their loved one as the liturgy is read.

We Gather Together:

God, who breathed life into being,
forming the stars and the streams,
and the grains of sand on the beach,
draws us here together in our grief and pain.

In this moment there is only the emptiness of sorrow and loss,
made all the more difficult with the restrictions and isolation in our community at this time.
We are overwhelmed by the mystery of life and death that takes our breath away.

Yet we remember, in the midst of our confusion and distress, that we are not alone.

May the unending peace of God's spirit be with you now,
And also with you.

Let us hear some words from Scripture:

(Psalm 13:1-2)

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
Must I bear this grief for ever, and have sorrow in my heart day after day?

(Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus said: Come to me, all you that are weary and whose load is heavy,
and I will give you rest
...for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

(Romans 8:35, 37-39)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We respond in faith:

God of all ages,
of all that is – seen and unseen,
in our darkness let your light blaze,
that in our loss we may yet be found.

We confess that we are slow to accept death as an inevitable part of life.
We confess our reluctance to surrender our loved one into your eternal care.
Remind us now of Your presence with us –
that You weep as we do;
You know our brokenness and pain;
and You long to comfort us in Your arms.

May Your Holy Spirit come upon us now.



Grant us your love and peace as we reach out to comfort one another.
Be our companion as we live through the days ahead.
And even as we mourn, may all that we feel, think, say and do
bear witness to the hope we have
that in death there is also new life.
In the name of Christ, **Amen.**¹

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

God says:
Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you.

_____ (name)
For you, Jesus lived.
For you, Jesus died.
For you, Jesus rose again.
Therefore, as a reminder of that love and grace,
we mark the sign of the cross upon your forehead
(or if unable to be present with the person:
'we draw the sign of the cross on this photo of _____ (name)').)

May _____ know God's grace and mercy,
joy and peace,
now and forevermore.

Loving God, giver of life,
All that we are and hold have been given on trust from you.
What you have given to us we return to you.
We commend your son/daughter _____ to your everlasting love and mercy.
Give him/her joy and gladness in your presence;
Give him/her the assurance of your forgiveness and love;
Give him/her your peace, now and forever. Amen.

We go forth by faith:

As you move into a time of remembering and grieving for _____,
receive this blessing of comfort from God who made you and loves you:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.



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QUEENSLAND SYNOD

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
Do not be afraid.

Amen.