



## 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 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)



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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.**<sup>1</sup>

**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



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*(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.

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.**