



Prelude

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Today, we gather here in this place of refuge,

All: for we are lost, we are lonely, we are afraid.

Leader: Today, we gather daring to wonder if God has indeed come in Jesus,

All: discerning the rejection we have known,

intimate with our failed relationships,

holding our heartache and losses in hands of tenderness.

Leader: Today, we gather with friends and sojourners, a family made one by our brokenness,

All: coming with our hearts full of hope, and our pockets filled with doubts.

Leader: Today, we gather just as we are,

All: for God has promised to meet us here and to welcome us for who we are.

Welcome

INVOCATION AND CONFESSION

Leader: In the name of the Father, + and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

[SILENCE IS KEPT: ~5 minutes]

In this time of silence, you are invited to engage with the sorrows, struggles, and pains you bear into this space. If you desire, you may name them aloud into the silence with one or two words. You may type them in the chat of the Zoom room. If you prefer to pray in silence, we welcome you to do so. This silence may become uncomfortable—simply allow it to be so. If you would like to write your prayers, you can do so using the resources provided.



Leader: We praise you, O God, for you are the Father of mercies and the source of all consolation. You comfort and care for us.

People: We confess the way we feel now. Our hearts feel heavy within us; we are weighed down with the loss of loved ones, the loss of opportunities, the shifting of hopes and dreams. As many people eagerly celebrate Your Resurrection, it's hard for us to lift up our hearts. As many plan to celebrate and sing with joy, we often find the days seem gray and our tongues cannot rejoice. Help us. Embrace us. Heal us. You, who know the grief of the world, meet each of us in our aching hearts. Please hold us close until the days dawn a bit brighter and we find we can walk in delight once more.

Leader: God knows the emptiness we sometimes feel. God knows the feelings of abandonment, anger, loneliness, and grief we sometimes feel, too. God knows us from the depths of our hearts, and God sits with each one of us as we learn to be whole people once more. Be assured of God's love and compassion.

People: Amen.

GATHERING SONG

—WORDS OF HEARTBREAK—

SCRIPTURE

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find not rest...I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast... (Psalm 22:1-2,14)

My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick... For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored? O, that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people! (Jeremiah 8:18, 21-9:1)

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept. (John 11:32-35)

RESPONSE:
Writing, Speaking & Confessing Our Laments

A Prayer for Gun Violence in School

O God of protection and peace,
We come to You weary,
Heartbroken, and afraid.

How do we explain to our children
What it means to practice an active
shooter drill at school
When we ourselves don't have the words?
When we ourselves barely understand?

How has it gotten this dangerous
To be a child
In a desk
In a classroom?

We grieve for innocence lost by way of violence.
Lord, hear our prayer.

We ache for teachers who must prepare for the unthinkable.
Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for every mother and father
Who is forever changed by the unimaginable—
The death of a child



At the hands of gun violence.

We rub our eyes and will our minds to stop the imagery,
For it is too much to hold.
And yet, some must hold it.

O Lord who said let the little children
come to Me,
We have sent our teachers to first-aid seminars
But have not cried out to You to stop the bleeding.

Give us the imagination to see a world
Without violence.
Give us a Kingdom imagination to create a better future
For our children and their children.

We are scared, Lord.
We even wonder how You can allow
Mass shootings of children to happen.

When we walk our children to their
classrooms,
We lament that we quietly assess
How close their tiny cubbies are to the
front door.

But we know this is not Your way,
O Lord.

Help us beat our swords into plowshares.
Help us put down our swords,
Collectively and individually.

Speak peace into our children's hearts
As their little minds try to comprehend
The possibilities of what they're practicing for.

Our job as parents is to keep our children
safe—
How do we do so?
Give us eyes to see.



Give us new vocabularies
And courageous hearts to champion
Our children.

Lord, heal our collective wounds.
Lord, heal our individual hearts.
That crack into pieces
Every time our kids step onto the school bus.

Lord, may we see into Your upside-down
Kingdom.

Give us courage and boldness
To plead the case of our children.
Deliver us from the evil one,
And may our action for a more peaceable
world
For our children
Be a prayer of its own.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Mark 10:13-16; Micah 4:3; John 14:27; Romans 12:21; Matthew 5:9

From *To Light Their Way: A Collection of Prayers & Liturgies for Parents*, Kyla Craig, p. 84-85.

–WORDS OF HOPE–

SCRIPTURE:

In the days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:5)



I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world! (John 16:33)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' (Revelation 21:1-5)

RESPONSE:
Bringing Laments to the Community

Participants Sharing: *As they are led*

People's Response: **Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

SENDING SONG

DISMISSAL:

Leader: Go forth in the name of the promised Christ.

People: Thanks be to God.

All may depart in silence.