

A Liturgy for Christian Unity and Identity

There is so much, O Lord, that pulls us from You
So much that separates us from each other:

Prejudices and pride,
Possessiveness and self-preservation,
Polemics and pundits
Doctrinaire principles and dogmatic politics.

We are so easily swayed to interpret happenings,
Both harrowing and happy,
Along party lines, dismissing or highlighting
According to pre-formed answers and platitudinous cliches.

Instead of showing compassion to the afflicted,
we pledge our partisan allegiance.

Instead of standing in solidarity with the suffering,
we perform our ideological polemic.

Instead of leading with listening, lament, learning, and love,
We defend ourselves, deny complicity, and denounce the call to
repent and repair.

And all the while You see, O Lord,
And whisper to us with words from Your prophet:
Learn to do right; seek justice; defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

All the while You hear, O Lord,
The voice of our brother's blood crying from the ground
And You beckon us back to hear Your incarnate Word, who said:
The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me
To proclaim good news to the poor
To announce freedom for the prisoners
And recovery of sight for the blind
To set the oppressed free
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

All the while You are present, O Lord,
Living and active through Your Word and Spirit,
Calling us to return and remember
That You have made us--

A people peppered to be the whole panoply of polyethnic pigment--
Into one new humanity,
Breaking down the dividing wall of hostility
And supremacy and subtle, yet sacrosanct oppression.

Give us memory for this our oneness in Christ,
So that we think and speak and act,
Not as figures in man-made stories that beget division and malice,
But as characters whose character and pattern of life
Is given in the story of Jesus, the Mediator between peoples,
The Mediator between heaven and earth.

Determine every act of our imaginations,
Every responsive minute in our bodies,
Not by the defensive posture of partisan polemic,
But by the way of suffering love that encounters us in Jesus Christ
And initiates us into a way of
Kindness, gentleness,
Generosity, patience,
And respect toward the neighbor who is next to us,
Our neighbor with whom we may disagree,
But whom You nevertheless call us to love.

Form us to be little images and pictures
Who mirror the Image of God, Jesus Christ,
And imitate, not the way selected by the many--
Boisterous and belligerent voices who bite and devour and consume,
But the way of the voice of God,
Whose vivifying words of truth cut between bone and marrow, soul and body
In order to heal wounds, soothe sores, eviscerate evil,
And comfort the afflicted.

As You have made us one before, O Lord,
Join us together again.

Call us to live the one, true life of
Self-examination, self-denial,
Confession and repentance and repair in the Name of Jesus Christ,
And through these acts shape us into hopeful beacons
that shine your Triune light:
The united yet diverse, diverse yet united Light
that is the Life of the whole world.

Amen.

A Liturgy to Pray with Those Who Can't Breathe

You are, O Breath of God,
The Lord and Giver of life,
Spirating from the Father's source
Proceeding through the Son's mediation.

Like an eagle protectively hovering over tumultuous waters,
Bearing Your young on wings of refuge,
You were in the beginning the God guarding
Life from death,
 Light from darkness,
 Cosmos from chaos.

But You not only guarded life, You gave it.
Taking dust, particles in themselves nothing,
You breathed and formed life,
Expanding, enlarging, and generating,
Creating from the clay a creature fearfully and wonderfully made,
Knit together in the womb of the earth with Your gentle craftsman skill,
An image bearer of You:
 Radiant in splendor,
 Mirroring Your beauty
 In the full panoply of pigment and personality.

As Your creatures, God, we were made to breathe.

But we, O Lord,
We humans who have historically been
enslavers and taskmasters,
oppressors and destroyers,
abductors and kidnappers
We have marred Your image,
Flippantly demeaning Your carefully knitted creation
Fearlessly and wonderlessly crushing Your precious people of color.

In a riotous reversal of Your guard over life,
We have rushed like chaotic waters up to the necks of Your beloved,
Kneeling down, pressing the face of Your innocent child
Into the nothingness of dust, the nothingness of death.

And his voice that gasps for eight long minutes,
the blood of Abel that's spilled on the earth,
cries out to You from that dust, that ground:
 I can't breathe.

Do You hear this cry, O Christ,
You who also could not breathe as You heaved
Under the weight of unjust evildoers,
Throat hoarse from songs of lament,
Body torn and bloodied by perversion of justice,
Lungs lost for air, asphyxiated?

Do You hear his cry, O Christ,
He who also could not breathe as he heaved,
Calling out, like a child in need of his mama,
Just as You cried out for Your Father in heaven: Father!
God! Have You forsaken me?

Do You hear this cry, O Christ,
As Your creatures and children,
Brothers and sisters continue to be
Crucified by purveyors of unjust policies?
As fathers and mothers of brown bodies like Yours
Are made sonless and daughterless and childless
By the death-dealing destruction of systems and practices
Crushing communities and people of color?

Do You hear this cry, O Christ,
This cry for breath,
 This cry for rescue,
 This cry for repair,
 This cry for renewal,
 This cry for resurrection?

Return to us. For without You, without Your breath
Reforming all things--
 All politics,
 All economies,
 And all societies
 All churches--

Into the image of Your justice,
We will not breathe; we cannot breathe.

Amen.

A Liturgy Longing for Rescue from Injustice (Psalm 22 for George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor)

This neck was made by You, O God,
Fearfully and wonderfully made,
Made to speak and sing and breathe in praise of You,
But now--O God,
 I cannot speak,
 I cannot sing,
 I cannot breathe.

Strong bulls surround me,
Dogs encircle me,
The waters come up to my neck,
Weighing down on my throat,
I'm sunk in--no, under--the slime of humans,
Exhausted from my calling out:

How long, O Lord?

These legs were made by You, O God,
Fearfully and wonderfully made,
Made to stand and walk and run in praise of You,
But now--O God,
 I cannot stand,
 I cannot walk
 I cannot run.

Strong bulls surround me,
Dogs encircle me,
Armed with weapons of war,
Cold and calculating,
Doing what is right in their own eyes,
They take my life and I lie here,
no place to stand, nowhere to run,
No one to help:

How long, O Lord?

This body was made by You, O God,
Fearfully and wonderfully made,
Made find its rest and peace and calm in You,
But now--O God,
 There is no rest,
 There is no peace,
 There is no calm.

Strong bulls surround me,
Dogs encircle me,
As my body lies here,
Resting on my bed,
Their arrows they shoot at me,
They pierce my skin, I can count my bones,
And their restless chaos, senseless slaying,
Takes my life away:

How long, O Lord?

Won't You rescue, O God, Your people from violence?
Won't You defend Your creature from injustice?
Won't You hold Your child, fearfully and wonderfully made,
 whom You knit together in mother's womb,
Won't You hold this child near?

You've done it before, for that is who You are:
 The one who rescued Jesus from death,
 After having rescued Israel from slavery.

Rescue again. Hasten the day.
Reform. Rejoin. Repay. Repair. Redeem. Restore.
Return.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Making an Important Decision

O God, whose decision at the very beginning
Meant life and not death,
Right and not wrong,
Freedom and not slavery,
Make me now decisive for good and not for evil,
 As a martyr determined to stay true in face of fire,
 As a leader resolute through
 The shame and ridicule and derision of many,
To follow You.

Decide, determine, and define me into faithfulness:
 To walk this tortuous and tight ridge
 with pitfalls on every side,
 Keeping my gaze firmly fixed
 on Christ and the cross,
 Where Love decided for good
 To give Himself for the life of the world.

By Your mercy, give us wisdom:
 To discern the things that really matter,
 To disentangle truth from error,
 To negotiate competing goods and interests and concerns.

Silence is kept to name particular matters in need of discernment
and guidance.

We are so weak, O Lord, so finite,

So limited by space and time and ignorance.
We cannot live wisely unless You send out
Your Spirit of wisdom to fall on us and nourish us
As rain falls softly from the heavens
And nurtures the grass to graduate into growth,
To move in its proper direction.

Give us, then, O Spirit of resurrection power,
Power to see, not what lies ahead,
But the proper path to tread in order to meet
What lies ahead with faithfulness, mercy, and love,
With a posture of humility that admits weakness and error,
And a firm resolution to keep
to the path You decided to tread for us:
 The path of self-giving love, the path that leads to peace.

For where else could we go?
You alone are the Word who leads to life and peace.
In You alone is lasting wisdom found.

Amen.

A Liturgy Longing for Peace

We know, O prince of peace, that we were made
for paths of peace.

When You sang creation into life, its harmonious melody
Reverberating echoes of Your inner love, You did no violence,
But gently, calmly, peaceably, You spoke,
And there was life, called to follow You on peace's path.

But we have strayed far off this path of peace,
Wandering in a foreign country of aggression,
Wasting our harmonious heritage on passing pleasures of power,
Trading the estate of friendly connection given by You,
For the restless frontier of rugged self-pursuits and protection.

Now we languish among pigs, muddied, anxious, and empty,
We sing a song of violence and attack, leaving chaos in our wake,
And forcefully, aggressively, antagonistically,
We bring death.

Let Your way of peace and love, resonating beneath all things,
Beckon us back, like a native tune long lost, forgotten,
Beckon us back home.

Turn us from the bellicose battles between peoples and nations
And beckon us back to Your vision of a world
Where all languages, tribes, and people
Propagate Your kingdom of peace.

Turn us from belligerence among communities and between people,
Which poisons fellowship and destroys relationship,
And beckon us back to Your community
Where divisions are healed
And people are joined into one.

Turn us from restless violence within,
Which tosses our hearts, our minds, and our lives,
This way and that, from pride to despair,
And beckon us back to Your home,
Where the festive feast fosters freedom and joy,
And our identity rests secure in You.

Run out to meet us.
Give us the signet ring.
Place on us new clothes.
Kill the fattened calf,
And bring us back to peace.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Reading a Lot of Scripture

We thank You, Lord, that You have not left us bereft,
Or bobbing alone as a buoy pulled to and fro
By the winds and waves and currents of this life,
But that You have given us the stable rock
 of Your Word--Jesus Christ--to whom these prophetic and apostolic,
These old and these new words point as witnesses,
Drawing us to meet You in living relationship
And belong to You in the life-giving comfort of an unshakeable connection.

Yet as we open this book that holds the words of life,
We cannot help but notice that these words are:
 Ancient, preceding us in time,
 Strange, coming from a foreign land,
 Many, requiring dedicated time, enduring attention, and assiduous
 discipline.

Help our frail and weak hearts, O Lord,
For it seems every time we sit down to read,
We are overwhelmed by the amount we have to read,
Overcome by the oddness of some sayings,
And outmatched by their antiquity.

As we approach these ancient words,
Give us humility to let our new and modern lives be read by these letters
From older mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters.

As we approach these strange words,
Give us readiness to learn about God
From the story of a people foreign, yet also akin to us.

As we approach these many words,
Give us patience to sit with rapt and fixed attention
And persevere through exhaustion and tedium,
To come to know You in these capacious volumes.

In all these things, O Lord,
We pray that You would give us understanding,
Knowing that we are, on our own,
Incapable of receiving this story and discerning Your truth
Without Your gift of illumination.

Illuminate, then, our imaginations.
Light up our lives.
Give Your lamp to guide our feet,
And Your light to guard our path.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Returning to Work

O Lord, You've made us linger here awhile,
Afflicting us with the grace of a sabbatical,
Making us cease our daily routine,
And giving a chance to rest with You.

We praise You, Lord, for the goods that we've learned in this time:

That life is about more than work, money, and productivity,
That caring for human life sometimes means remaining apart,
That we are Your people, called to be priests, even if we can't
come together.
That death awaits all humans, and Your resurrection alone
gives hope.

Thank You, Giver God, for these and many other gifts.

Silence is taken to contemplate these and other goods.

But we acknowledge that we didn't always use this time well:

Instead of resting when appropriate, we grew anxious about
work.
Instead of making care for human life our main concern, we
grew polarized and politicized.
Instead of remaining rooted in Your people and Your mission, we
wandered off alone.
Instead of facing death with love and hope, we grew fearful of
its power.

Forgive us, Lord, for these and other wrongs we've done.

Silence is taken to confess particular sins to God.

Having unburdened ourselves, O Lord, we sense a new day is upon us:
A new day to live,
A new day to work,
A new day to walk the path your Spirit guides us on.
A new day to re-enter the patterns and rhythms and routines
That marked our days before the virus.

And yet, we pray, as we re-enter common activities,
Don't let us return to our old ways of being and having and doing.

Kindle in us a new desire, a new fire, to walk in newness of life.
Awaken us to unnoticed wrongs. Purge us of built-up habits.
Root out routines that numbed us to the beauty and goodness and truth
Of You, Your creation, and each other.
And call to us, positively, to the practice of righteousness,
To relate with our co-workers, neighbors, and community partners that
we've missed,
By embodying the way of Christ, the way of the cross:
The way of love,
of truth,
of patience,
of gentleness, of kindness,
of generosity.

Form our hearts to be a people after Your own heart
And shape our lives to image forth the character of Christ:
To become characters in the story of the One
Who came into His world,
And will come back into His world,
To return all things to their proper place.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Using Media

Father, Son, and Spirit,

You've told us the truth

That we too easily forget:

There's one and only one
Mediator between God and humans
The human Jesus Christ.

Remind us of that truth, then, Jesus Christ,
As we use and continue to face reality
Through media of other sort:

Livestream and Zoom calls,
Facebook and Instagram.

Though they have their role and function
Too often, it is sadly true,
These other mediators seek and succeed

To captivate our imagination by
captivating our attention,
Forming us to be a distracted people
Incapable of sustained, patient focus,
And quiet, receptive concentration
On the things that really matter:

Your speech to us in Scripture,
The next-door neighbor's need,
The faithful life of love.

But we, too, carry blame and idly let these media
lead us into wandering:

Wandering into wallowing,
Wandering into wasted time,
Wandering into wayward living.

Mediate for us, Lord Christ, and mold us toward
moderation.

Make us mindful as we make use of media,
To find the proper medium and balance between
Right use and mindless indulgence.

Cultivate creativity in us,
so that we don't simply consume,
But also cooperate in the construction
of community.

And fashion us to fixate and focus,
Not on these images and words,
But on the Image and Word of God,
Faithfully following His form of life
Of truth and holiness and peace.

Amen.

A Liturgy To Pray Before Reading Scripture

Speak, O Father, as You spoke at the start,
Making worlds, spinning stars,
Exploding with art,
And singing the song that generates life,
Speak now, O Father, re-story our heart.

Speak, O Word, as You spoke, became flesh,
Taking bones, grasping dust,
Entering our death,
And singing the song that reconciles life,
Speak now, O Word, and heal us afresh.

Speak, O Spirit, as You spoke on that day,
Smoking fire, rushing gale,
Ending Babel's way,
And singing the song that resurrects life,
Speak now, O Spirit, and raise us, we pray.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Missing Friends II

Father, Son, and Spirit,

Before anything else was, You were
Not existing as a solitary individual in gloomy isolation,
But rather as a being-in-relation in glorious communion:

Three-in-One and One-in-Three
Abounding in the eternally
Joyful, playful, and delightful Love
That waxes and never wanes,
That grows and never shrinks,
That builds and never breaks.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever, Amen.

Amen indeed, and we will say Amen again:
For it is not as if Your reality alone, O God, is marked by communion.

When You made us, Your creatures, You said,
“It is not good for a human to be alone.”

Let there be friendship:

Seeing and being seen,
Hearing and being heard,
Helping and being helped,
Gladsome meeting and being met.
I and You together,

Locked as one in human encounter.

Just as You cannot be without the other Persons, Trinity,
So we can't really be without each other as humanity.

But in this time of sweeping sickness
We've been tasked to remain at distance,
And separate from friends and fellow humans,
The very human reality that You have given for our good.

And so, with simple hearts, we say in one accord:

O Lord, we miss our friends.

We miss our fellow partners placed with us on life's path.

We miss the parties, graduation celebrations, and joyous weddings.

We miss the funerals, the somber gathering, the sober hallowing of a
faithful life.

We miss the baptisms; we miss the Word proclaimed; we miss the
Table of the Lord.

We miss the personal presence of pilgrims gathered to feast.

We miss each other and know it is not good to be alone:

It is not good to be apart from friends.

Make us counterparts to each other once again,
Just like You made the human a counterpart long ago.

Give us patience to wait with expectation for the grand return of
friendly meeting,

Just like we await Your return and restoration.

And cultivate in us a greater appreciation for the friends we miss,
So that when we come back together we might not fear

To name the truth and say:

Thank you for your friendship.

It is a gift.

I can't be human without it, without you:

my friend.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Missing Friends and Feasts

You made us for relation, Lord,
Your being is given in this word:
To know and be known by another,
To partner and walk with each other.

One has even said it best
That comradeship and joy, friendship,
Are not themselves just means to ends
But the very goal, to find true friends.

At least that's what you hinted to they
Who were with you before the fray
That brought you to the point of death,
You said, "We're friends, we know in depth" (John 15).

But now we feel ourselves sold short,
This virus loves friendship to thwart,
The meeting of friends, the joys of union,
We long for festive days: communion.

And so we give our hearts to You,
We ask that You would carry us through,
These lonely days and nights and hours,
Bring us again our grand desire.

Remind us, too, that we're together
Even though we cannot gather
For you unite us by Your Word
And Spirit, whom on us You've poured.

In meantime, Lord, we pine to meet,
And look for the day when we'll guzzle and feast
On Christ's food, the body of the Lord,
In the spacious inn at the end of the world.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Making Plans for the Future

Father, Son, and Spirit,

How ludicrous for us to think we can determine, decide, and link
Our lives in clear, successive moves,
So sobered we, with calm, review
Our finite situation.

**Come, O Christ who is our light,
Shine on our path and give us sight,
To see the way in times of blight,
And cling to You in joy or fright.**

How platitudinous for us to say,
“We don’t at all know future’s way,”
But alas it is also always true,
And the truth of it brings into view,
Our finite situation.

**So, come, O Christ who is our light,
Shine on our path and give us sight,
To see the way in times of blight,
And cling to You in joy or fright.**

How gratuitous for us to act
As though we can control impact
Of viruses and work slow-downs
And the truth of it only re-sounds
Our finite situation.

**So, come, O Christ who is our light,
Shine on our path and give us sight,
To see the way in times of blight,
And cling to You in joy or fright.**

Amen.

A Liturgy For Patience

Father, Son, and Spirit,

We’re tired, Lord, of having to wait
For the government to raise the gate
Allowing us to move freely,
Recover any sense of normalcy.

We’d like to work, we’d like to eat
At restaurants, to walk the streets,
To meet with humans eye to eye,
To sit and laugh and stay awhile.

So give us help, enduring God,
To persevere, faithfully plod,
Don’t let our restless hearts lead us
To rash action and selfishness.

Instead, O patient God of peace,
Form us to learn your patient pace,
You wait and have been waiting long,
For us to turn to sing Your song,

But we have sinned and like to speed,
We rush about and, hurried, lead
A pace of life that flies right by
The gifts You’ve placed before our eyes.

We need the power that comes within
A slower life, a long vision
For flourishing inside Your world
Which comes in suffering beside the Lord.

So make us suffering, patient folk
Whose passion is to wear the yoke
Of Christ, which is the burdening cross:
To love the neighbor next to us.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Exercising

O Father, Lord of all the earth,
You who moved all things to life and gave us bodies in delight,
Move me now to exercise,
And let these once limp-lying limbs,
Fatigued by immobility,
Find strength and come alive,
In strained and spry activity.

O Son, and Lord of ransoming blood,
You who move into our flesh, reconciled bodies in Your death,
Move me now to train this heart,
And let my blood-holding veins,
In need of stretch and motion,
Find pulse and start pumping,
In diachronic alteration.

O Sprit, Lord of brittle bones,
You who move to us in breath and give new life out of the dust,
Move me now to discipline,
And let these expiring lungs,
Exhausted by aerobic acts,
Find rest and be renewed,
In this purposeful and practiced task.

Amen.

A Liturgy for the Furloughed & Laid-Off

Father God, You do not forget the furloughed,
You do not look lightly upon the laid-off.
Even as we feel cast off, You call us to cast our anxiety upon You
because You care for us.

Because You care for us,
We cast our anxiety upon You.
Anxiety about provision,
protection,
and purpose—
We cast upon You.

You who hold the nations as if they were a drop in a bucket,
You who pick up the whole world as if it were a grain of sand:
You are big enough to hold our problems,
even as You are tender enough to hold us,
because You care for us.

When we regard the starry night sky,
Tiny pinpricks of white set like gemstones against velvet darkness,
The power of Your creative purpose shines bright.
You who hand-craft hydrogen to burn into helium
at the core of a star to light the earth in the blackest of nights,
You who spin exploding gases into resplendent beauty light years away:
You are the same God who cares for us:
mere mortals,
tiny creatures lovingly set in the vast cosmos,
knitted together in our mothers' womb.

And we are as much Your handiwork as the stars in the sky,
You have designed us for a purpose,
You have laid out in advance the good work we are to do.
And when the clouds obscure the stars,
we do not fear that the stars have disappeared—
Even as the light of my livelihood seems snuffed out,
Let not the cloudiness of my vision obscure my trust in You,
Your provision, Your protection, and Your purpose.
Help me cast all my anxieties on You,
because You care for me.

Amen.

A Liturgy of Longing for Health for the Incarcerated

You know, O Christ, O King of all the world,
What it is to be arrested,
To be imprisoned,
To be held awaiting trial,
To be tried by false witnesses,
Injustice all around
In structure, speech, and act.

“I have come to proclaim good news to the poor.”

And You know, O Christ, O Judge of all the world,
What it is to be judged,
To be condemned,
To be sentenced to death,
To be capitally punished,
Corruption all around
In structure, speech, and act.

“I have come to bring deliverance to the captives.”

And You know, O Christ, O Lord of all the world,
What it is to be hung,
To be criminalized with threatened lungs,
To be without a respirator,
To be in need of healthy space,
Mockery all around:
In structure, speech, and act.

“I have come to set the prisoners free.”

So, come O Christ, remember me, as You’ve come into Your kingdom.
Remember the unjustly arrested,
Remember the unjustly imprisoned,
Remember the unjustly executed,
Even as we remember that You count Yourself among them.
And remember the incarcerated, threatened by disease,
As You hung there, carrying our iniquities.

Speak again Your words, which You spoke
To Your fellow crucified one:
Today, you will be with me in paradise,
Today you will be free.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Giving Thanks for Gifts Taken for Granted

O Spirit, Son, and Father,

From whom comes every good and perfect gift,
Forgive us for the gifts we miss
That whisper to us as we pass by
Enclosed in ourselves, beset with trials.

Give to us attention to see Your mercies manifest
And give us right words to name Your gifts gratuitous.

Thank You for birdsong,
And thank You for baby blue sky,
Thank You for crisp, cool air,
And thank You for warmth from the sun,
Thank You for words to speak and sing and pray,
And thank You for fire and pans and forks and plates,
Thank You for human touch that will return,
And thank You for effervescent eyes,
Thank You for ticklish tummies,
And thank You for friendship,
Thank You for stories,
And thank You, Lord, for practices
That let us see Your glory.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Facing Temptation in Isolation I

Ever-Present God,

As Your Spirit drove our Savior into the wilderness,
You have brought us to this place.
Of isolation, of reflection,
Of a slowing from the race.

Yet as we sit, slowly we're swayed.
Weak and ambushed, we haven't obeyed.
As we wait, we are enticed.
In the stillness and silence, the deceiver arrives—
 with twisted words,
 with pictures of pleasure,
 with invitations to wander from our Good Shepherd.

In this wide open space,
You desire to refine us,
But in anxiety and restlessness,
Our complacency binds us.

The enemy, for idle hands, lies in wait;
Space for fleshly pleasure swells;
And though we thirst for you in dry land,
 to quench, we run to other wells—
 of apathetic distraction,
 of yielding to temptation,
 of turning to former sins in isolation.

O Holy One,

I groan with the world in wretched tension,
Desiring obedience to my King in faith.
Yet I find flesh dictating decisions—
"O...who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24)

Only You, O Christ, set minds above—
the noble, the pure, the lovely essence of Your love.
Turn our faces away from the corruption of the earth—
Those foul images and numbing substances from which sinful practice
is birthed.

As we wait in this wilderness, O Spirit within,
Point us to our Savior, who, though tempted, was without sin.
"Lead us not into temptation," He taught us to pray.
So Father, deliver us from evil this day.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Facing Temptation in Isolation II

Lord of Hosts,

May the flesh's roaring lead us to act:
 to take up our sword,
 to fight the good fight,
 to train for godliness,
 not in our strength but in Your might.

May we train our bodies as we soldier on,
Shield in hand against darts of the evil one (Eph. 6:16).
May our prowling enemy cease to devour
As we humble ourselves before You these hours (1 Pet. 5:6, 8).

Shield our eyes, we pray, from any worthless thing (Ps. 101:3). Guide
our ways, we plead, for right and true living.
Fix our gaze, we ask, on the worthiest of loves
Instead of the serpent's poison, whose head has been crushed.

As we fast, unwillingly, from many pleasures of this life,
Help us hunger for You in the midst of the strife.
As You call us to life, help us to choose not death (Deut. 30:19),
For our foe is already vanquished, and Your love is endless in depth.

In You alone is found our strength, our shield, our song,
And it is in our weakness that You are made strong.
Only by Your righteousness are we cleansed from sin's infection,
So deliver us from evil, that we might display the light of Your
perfection.

Help us to know nothing of evil
 but to choose newness of life,

presenting our members to righteousness (Rom. 6:13)
 to live holy in Your sight.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Small Business Owners Struggling to Stay Afloat

Creator God in heaven, hear my prayer:

These days have been hard and these sleepless nights harder.

I try to sleep but I cannot—my mind wanders back and forth
anxious for those under my care:

My employees and helpers,

My vendors and suppliers,

My servers and assistants,

My business—my family.

My debts have come due, or soon will,

God, I don't know if I will make it.

My employees can't work, and I can't pay them—or if I can for
now, for how long, I do not know.

Mouths and stomachs depend on me,

Truly, O Lord, what am I to do?

Everyone wants clarity, and yet, I have no insight to give.

This which has taken me years to build is crashing down on me
in weeks—

O Father in heaven: help me, I am confused in this chaos.

I feel as if I am failing those who look to me for their livelihoods,

Dear Lord Jesus: stay my mind, I have nowhere else to turn.

I mourn for the loss and struggle of my business and I weep for
the tough decisions I must make,

O Holy Spirit: Please resurrect this good work when this
should pass.

But for now, give me all that I need to face tomorrow,

To deal kindly with those whom I must face with hard news,

To speak and act as a wise and compassionate steward of
that and those still in my care,

To creatively save what I can,

To carry on the good work You have given me,

And to rest in my striving, upon You, my Rock and Redeemer.

I trust You, my God, with my all.

And at the last and in the end, even if I should be stripped bare,

Should my business fail and never return, O my God, help me still
to say:

“Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Amen.

A Liturgy for Protecting Those in Violent Homes

Lord God of peaceful power,
Who made the world through spoken word
And not through violent struggle,
Stay the hands of those who think
That they must show their power
Not with peace or patient words but
Domineering slaps and verbs.

Have mercy, Lord, and end this violence.

Lord Christ of peaceful power,
Who suffered spits and slaps and bloody stripes
To free us from enslaving power,
Stand with those suffering violence now,
The men and women, sons and daughters,
For whom home means not shelter,
But instead a zone of danger.

Have mercy, Lord, and end this violence.

Lord Spirit of peaceful power,
Who promises to change the world
And void all forceful battle,
Save and shield Your creatures
Threatened by the daily menace,
Bind their wounds; heal their pain;
Let this old order pass away.

Have mercy, Lord, and end this violence.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Living a Hidden Life

You've asked us, Lord, to hide away
Keep distance, stay at home
Away from friends, associates, and church
to stay the virus growth.

In these historic times we sense
a stirring disappointment
that we will have to do small acts
unhistoric in the climate.

Instead of hero's glory
that we've been trained to want
You give us simple practices
of neighborly restraint.

We'd like to hear the call and charge
to tend the sick, infirm.
But we are asked instead of that
to help flatten the curve.

We'd like to sit with those alone
to bear their burdens with.
But we are asked instead of that
to isolate forthwith.

We'd like to live a public life
of service, helping others
But we are asked instead of that
to serve by taking shelter.

Help us, then, Lord, keep in mind
the faithful acts of those
who came before us yet are not
remembered anymore.

We need imagination
quietly to see
that world change doesn't come at all
through grandiosity.

Glory is achieved, O God,
adhering to Your Christ,
So come help us plod on in faith
and live a hidden life.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Donning a Mask

Almighty King of the cosmos,
You chose to constrain Yourself to human form.
You who had no need to restrain,
Became finite flesh to redeem finite flesh.

If the Son of Man came to serve,
Not to be served
But to give His life
as a ransom for many,
from the insidious destruction of sin,

In the simple of act of putting on this mask,
Let me be so reminded,
That I too might protect the many
now from the virulence of virus.

To love my neighbor as myself is to consider their needs above my preferences,
Their protection paramount to my own liberty
from the sweaty constraints of mere cotton or polypropylene.

When the bands of this mask tug at my ears,
Remind me to hear
The command to love my neighbor as myself
Is conjoined to loving You as my Lord.

When beads of sweat dribble down inside this fabric dome,
Let me recall the blood You sweat in the gloomy garden.

When the contours of this crude mask cut into my face,
Let me remember the lashes that laced Your supple flesh.

O Lord, in the Upper Room, as You feasted for Your last Passover,
You did not delight in decadence, or creature comforts.
Instead, You tucked a towel into Your belt.
Down on the ground, You knelt,
Wiping grime from weary, dusty feet,
Showing that to love is to serve
And to serve can be uncomfortable.

And yet if we love as You have loved us,
The world will know we are Your disciples.
And so, this mask I don,
Heartened that with this meager means of service
To the flesh You came to restore,
In this, the smallest of constraint,
I follow You,
Lovingly protecting the other,
As I learn to love You more.

Amen.

A Liturgy for the Protection of Medical Personnel

Father, Son, and Spirit,

The work of healing others,
As You know well, is battle.

Its battle against invisible powers
That long to demean Your creation
By twisting life into death.

Its battle for Your crippled creature
Who longs to live and move and have its becoming
By participating in your life-giving being.

Its battle that requires courage and resolve
For patient care and disease exposure,
To soothe the suffering and bless the dying.

And its battle that requires armor:
Frog-mouth and facemask,
Gauntlet and gloves,
Sword and stethoscope.

But above all, Lord, its battle
That can be won only if You fight
And war on our behalf.

So let this battle belong to You, O Lord:
Some put their trust in chariots
Some put their trust in horses,
But we put our trust in the name of the Lord
To protect us from dark powers.

Protect, then, Lord:
Protect these researchers as they make remedies for this poison.
Protect these doctors as they wage war on this plague.
Protect these nurses as they take care of wounded persons.

Protect us, Lord, and give us boldness
To patiently bear this burden,
Until the redemption of our bodies,
When you will heal, and we'll be sick
No more.

Amen.

A Liturgy for the Spouses & Families of Essential Personnel

Father, Son, and Spirit,

You know what it is like to send
Your loved one into danger.

Before the worlds were weaved
You determined to give Yourself in aid,
To enter the realm of darkness,
Facing threats, disease, distress, and death
All for the sake of another:
Your creature, Your covenant partner, Your friend, Your child.

And so Christ went.

Christ went to cleanse.
Christ went to help.
Christ went to rescue.

Christ left the safety of Your Triune life
Out of love for people,
In the strong power of His divine health,
For the purpose of restoring life.

And so now must my spouse go.

She must go to cleanse.
He must go to help.
She must go to heal.

He must leave the comforts of this house
Out of love for people,
In the meager power of human health,
For the purpose of keeping life.

Strengthen her with resilient resolution, as Christ was resolute.
Calm her into patient perseverance, as Christ was perseverant.
Keep her life in Your strong hand, as Christ was kept by You.

Give us memory to recall that You hold all our lives
In the life of Christ Your Son
Who You raised to life on high and
Who gave his Spirit of resurrection to us,
Promising, one day, unending bodily life with You.

As we send out into peril,
Let our lives be stirred by the hope of that reception
That will one day come with re-creation.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Another Morning in Pandemic

O God of Life,

We wake once more, by Your very power,
to Your steadfast love,
Your new mercies,
Your sustaining grace.

We wake once more to Your loving rule,
Yet also to the loss of life,
the lament over sickness,
the weariness of a world clouded by confusion,
pierced by pain and panic,
heavy in helplessness—

“It wasn’t just a dream.”

We slip on clothes and sip our coffee for some semblance of normalcy,
And we remember your declaration upon creation:

“It is not good for man to be alone.”

But alone we feel;
isolated we are;
stuck we seem.

Sovereign Lord,

As we breathe in breath while many lose life,
help us exhale in honor of the One who has
numbered our days.
As we wake, even in saddening sameness,
help us worship the One who never changes.
As we tread these uncertain waters,
help us trust the One who dictates their depths.
As we begrudgingly welcome another day of waiting, weary of these
roaring waves,
help us find joy in the One who stills the storm.
As we groggily greet again this new life alone,
enable us to know the nearness of the One not
far from anyone.

O Triune God,

loving fellowship in Your very being,
bring comfort in our longing for incarnate communion.

In Your grace,
give us patience as we long for reunion.
give us hope as we hunger for healing.
give us empathy as we embrace the hurting.

And as we are far from others, O God with us, keep us close to You,
we pray.

Amen.

A Liturgy before Live-Streaming Worship

Great and gracious God,
As we come to worship You,
We admit that we are conflicted:
Grateful to “gather” in the means we have been given,
And yet quickly so very weary of this digital medium.

Grant us gritty perseverance and grateful attention.
Deliver us from temptation to distraction:
From the tyrannical parade of noisy notifications
And the hectic beckoning of a simple household chore.

For truly, the holiness of each moment
Depends only upon our awareness of Your Presence.

And so as we prepare to worship in this live-streamed manner,
Tune the Spirit who lives within us
To the intimate connection of worshipping together in a thousand
living rooms,
Oh, that we could hover like Your Spirit did over the waters, brooding over
each living room:
Where some dance with reckless delight like David in his underwear,
Where some might break their version of alabaster with the abandon
of the forgiven,
Where some might weep with joyful remembrance at Your
faithfulness to restore,
Where some might sit quietly, in stillness, longing to enjoy Your
presence with another once more.

Unite us in spirit, we pray,
Even as You have united us in person before,
May we become aware of Your personal presence in our own living room,
And in a thousand more besides.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Sabbathing in the Midst of Sameness

It used to be the case, O Lord,
That being home served as a signal
To take this day at ease:
To seek to see God,
To temporarily terminate toil,
To rest in recreation,
To linger in leisure,
To feast with friends.

But now this place has been
Deluged with drudgery:
My table, a work station,
My couch, a Zoom site,
My kitchen, a break room.

There is no longer spatial separation
To signify the start of Sabbath.

But even though we lack the spatial sign,
Give us the timely one:
For you create a temple out of time,
Blessing seventh day,
Sanctifying space by hallowing those hours.

So make these hours holy, Lord, and pleasing in your sight:
Free me from anxiety and fear,
And free me for attentive faithfulness,
So I might feel your glory,
So I might shelter in your shining light,
So I might dwell in the day of your divine delight,
So that, O Lord, I might find rest,
In this Your templed time.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Families with Young Children at the Start of the Day

Parent: Father God, You are great, big, strong, and fun,

Will You teach us today?

As we pray, we ask that You would shape our hearts to want to do these things.

Parent: Help us to listen well. [Parent cups ear]

Child: Help us to listen well. [Child cups ear]

Parent: Help us to love well. [Parent puts hand over child's heart]

Child: Help us to love well. [Child puts hand over parent's heart]

Parent: Help us to laugh a lot. [Parent can tickle here if child likes tickling]

Child: Help us to laugh a lot. [Parent might get tickled back]

Parent: Help us to learn from You. [Parent puts both hands over own heart]

Child: Help us to learn from You. [Child puts both hands over own heart]

Parent: We thank You that Your Son Jesus shows us what it looks like to listen, to love, to laugh, and to learn. And we thank You that You gave us Your Holy Spirit who helps us do the same. So we pray this in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to all this, together we say:

Parent & Child: AMEN!

A Liturgy for Families with Young Children at the End of the Day

Parent: Father God, You are great, big, strong, and fun. This morning we asked You to teach us today.

We asked that You would shape our hearts to want to listen [cups ear], love [touches child's heart], laugh [tickles], and learn [touches own heart]. Now would Your Holy Spirit show us where You answered our prayers today?

Short discussion: parent asks child/ren if they can see where God helped them do these things well today. Parents can also lead by example in sharing where they themselves felt God was helping them, and help provide examples of child's own behavior as well if their child can't think of anything.

Parent: Thank You, God! We are happy to see how You meet us when we pray and how You help us be more like You. Thank You, God.

Child: Thank You, God.

Parent: We have joy, joy, joy! [Bouncing, jumping, or dancing]

Child: We have joy, joy, joy! [Bouncing, jumping, or dancing]

Parent: We asked that You would shape our hearts to want to listen [cups ear], love [touches child's heart], laugh [tickles], and learn [touches own heart]. Now would Your Holy Spirit show us where You offered to help us today, but we did not want to listen [cups ear], love [touches child's heart], laugh [tickles], or learn [touches own heart]?

Short discussion: parent asks child/ren if they had a hard time accepting God's help today. Parents can also lead by example in sharing where they themselves struggled, or felt they didn't accept God's help, or ask questions about child's own behavior as well if their child can't think of anything.

Parent: God, it is so good to be able to come to You and say we are sorry. It is good because You are good, and You always love us, accept us, and forgive us. So we say we are sorry for the ways that we hurt You and one another today.

Child: We are sorry for the ways that we hurt You and one another today.

Parent: We are sad, and sorry. But we are also glad and grateful, because You have forgiven us. So we say: Thank You, God!

Child: Thank You, God!

Parent: Because of Your love for us,

Child: Because of Your love for us,

Parent: We have joy, joy, joy! [Bouncing, jumping, or dancing]

Child: We have joy, joy, joy! [Bouncing, jumping, or dancing]

*Optional: Here, parent and child may wish to add the song:
"I've Got the Joy in My Heart"*

I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart,
I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart to stay.

And I'm so happy, so very happy
I have the love of Jesus in my heart.
(Down in my heart)

And I'm so happy, so very happy
I have the love of Jesus in my heart.
I have the love of Jesus, love of Jesus,
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart,
I have the love of Jesus, love of Jesus,
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart to stay.

Parent: Thank You, Jesus, for Your joy! Help us tomorrow to listen [cups ear], to love [touches child's heart], to laugh [tickles], and to learn [touches own heart].

Parent & Child: AMEN!

A Liturgy to Pray in the Blurring of Days

God of power, God of providence,

Our days are blurring, bending, blending
Our hours are tripping, dragging, sighing,
*The sameness of our days, the sameness of our places as we stay,
closes in and constrains,*
Our roles in working, loving, and schooling are swirling into a single
potent concoction
But the missing ingredient, it seems, is adding in relaxation.

God of power, God of providence,

Teach us to see that You define, distinguish, and bound as Your act of loving care,
We look to Your work of creation to see Your systematic separation,
During days that blur unbounded,
We desire to know how to play,
In the bounded safety of a sandbox:
Four low walls and a base to keep the sand in place,
But with open views and freedom to play in this space.

God of power, God of providence,

In the cadence of Your creation, teach us to follow Your rhythms of all life.
You created the world with orderly design:

First, You formed light and dark, sea and sky, land and soil.
The light You called day, the dark You named night.
And God, You saw that it was good.

You separated the waters with the expanse of the sky.
You set the boundaries of the sea, gathering the waters like a curtain
You pulled back to reveal the land You made appear,
You told the mighty roar of waves they could go so far but no further.
And God, You saw that it was good.

You made dry land emerge, fertile, ripe, and ready to bear fruit,
budding and sprouting as joyful bursts of Your creative life.
And God, You saw that it was good.

Then all that You formed: light and dark, sea and sky, land and soil, You filled.
You fashioned great lights to govern the skies:
The greater light to burn bright during the day,
The lesser light to luminesce the night,
And studded the dark sky with glinting diamonds.
You made these lights for signs and for seasons, for days and years.
And God, You saw that it was good.

God of power, God of providence,

You spoke swarms of sea creatures into being to fill the seas according to their kinds,
You sung the birds of air into being to fill the skies according to their kinds,
You told the creatures of sea and sky to be fruitful and multiply,
And God, You saw that it was good.
You filled the earth with land animals to reproduce according to their kinds,
And God, You saw that it was good.

God of creation, God of creativity incarnate,

Finally, You formed humankind in Your own image,
And God, You saw that it was very good.

And then, God, You did the unthinkable, that we dare not hope to do,
You surveyed all Your creation, and then You ceased to do.
You sat back, and You rested,
You reveled in the completion of Your work.
Though truly there's always more to do, You chose to cease from doing.
At peace, You blessed the seventh day and made it holy, set apart
unto You,
Because You rested from all the work that You had done.

*And if rest is good enough for You, the One with no limit or constraint,
Teach us in our finitude, to model ourselves after You.*
To survey Your creation, and to see that it is good.
To offer You our limits and our constraints,
To seek You in the blending of our days,
To choose to set apart holy moments unto You.
Moments where we rest, moments where we choose to cease.

*And if rest is good enough for You, the One with no limit or constraint,
Teach us in our finitude, to model ourselves after You.*
Yes, You surveyed all Your creation, and You ceased to do,
You sat back, and You rested, reveling in the completion of
Your creation.
But as history reveals to us, it's not as if there was nothing left for You to do,
You keep upholding creation, and the work of redemption You continue,
And so even though our work is never done,
You hold us in our finitude that we might put our trust in You.
At peace, You blessed the seventh day and made it holy, set
apart unto You,
Give us "seventh days" and make us holy, set apart
unto You.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Rediscovering the Awe of Creation

Lord, as I prepare to step outside these four walls of sheltered life,
Open wide these eyes of mine to the wonders of delight.

Oh, to drink in deeply the fragrance of the air, perfumed by the
budding of new petals

Let my skin come awake with the rustle of this playful breeze
Let my hearing be tickled by the fluttering of young leaves.

Oh, the sights to behold underneath the vast sky of Your creation,
What a gift to see Your other creatures rejoicing in simplest of
sensation.

Fill my heart with wide-eyed wonder,
As an infant exploring the world outside the womb,
Let all I see be like a mystery to be traced anew,
Help me take not for granted one detail of Your design,
For I, Your creature, long for wakening in wondrous awe.

Amen.

A Liturgy for the Protection of Essential Personnel

Father God, we are so grateful for those deemed Essential Personnel
By their labors, we are fed, protected, cared for, and supplied.
But LORD, these are anxious times,
And their fears we pray You would subside.

O Jesus, You who walked on water,
Every day they leave the safety of the boat,
And try to take their days in stride,
But every day they are on the frontlines,
And facing exposure besides.

And so we ask that You protect them,
And stay their gaze upon You,
And when in their fear, they waver,
Reach out and hold them above the water.

O Holy Spirit, You are the wisdom, and power, and love of God,
Grant them all these, Your gifts of grace,
And sound mind and courage in all they face,
Watch over them in love, and keep them safe each day,
We thank You for their sacrifices,
Hold them fast, we pray.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Resolving Marital Tension

**As one: This marriage is a gift, O God,
Which we will someday have no longer when we die.
Remind us of the beauty that it is to be bound,
The joy that comes in being joined,
The peace on offer to journey through the hours of this life
With the persevering presence of a personal companion.
Amen.**

Take silence to contemplate the weight of these truths.

Husband: We're in this marriage, God, because You brought us together.
Wife: Just as you led Eve to Adam long ago, so you led us ___ years ago to unite together as one.

**As one: One flesh, one life, one joined imagination
Crafting a home,
Creating a little culture,
Building a total pattern of being in the world filled with
Mirth and mutuality,
Aid and assistance,
Labor and leisure.**

Husband: But I have failed in my responsibility as your husband.
Instead of helping, I often hurt.
Instead of working-with, I often wound.
Instead of partnering in attentive presence to you, your work, our kids, our marriage,
I often focus on myself.

Wife: And I have failed in my responsibility as your wife.
 Instead of helping, I often hurt.
 Instead of working-with, I often wound.
 Instead of partnering in attentive presence to you, your work, our
 kids, our marriage,
 I often focus on myself.

Husband & Wife Alternating (Taking Turns):

Forgive me for my selfishness.
Forgive me for my biting words.
Forgive me for projecting motive to your action.
Forgive me for not seeing the good things you do.
Forgive me for letting a false romantic ideal come between us.
Forgive me for not pursuing you.
Forgive me for my slowness to serve.
Forgive me for my speed to slander.
Forgive me for my destructive habits that hurt our family.
Forgive me for not constructing life-giving practices for our life together.

Husband: There is much to confess.
Wife: And there is much to forgive.

*Silence is taken. Husband and wife now confess their own particular wrongdoings
and extend forgiveness as led.*

Husband: Give us new life, Lord, to repair what is broken in this marriage.
Wife: Raise us anew, Lord, to rediscover the gift that this partner is.

**As one: Help me to see this companion
As the closest neighbor next to me,
Whom you have called me to love,
To serve, to aid, to enjoy, to walk alongside,
As we walk together, following after Christ.**

Husband: Make me gentle, Lord.
Wife: Make me patient.
Husband: Make me kind, God.
Wife: Make me peaceable.

**As one: And above all, Lord,
Make us faithful lovers of each other,
Who mirror the faithful covenant love
You extend to Your people as Your own chosen bride
Whom You loved by giving Yourself,
For whom You cared by self-sacrifice,
For whom You provided by sharing Your Spirit of resurrection.**

Husband: Help us, then, to partner in Your work of resurrection.
Wife: Let us see that, as we serve one another,
We're not just serving one another,
We're practicing resurrection, we're following You.

Husband: Move us to recognize that, as we share responsibilities
In caring and forming our kids,
We're not just caring and forming our kids,
We're practicing resurrection, we're following You.

Wife: Make us acknowledge that, as we humanize each other
And show patience in shortcomings, failures, and faults,
We're practicing resurrection, we're following You.

Husband: Form us to know that, as we show kindness
To each other in small ways--doing dishes,
Sweeping floors, making beds, folding clothes,
extending forgiveness--we're practicing resurrection,
We're following You.

**As one: And, finally, mold our minds to remember that, though costly,
Sustaining a marriage through faithfulness is well-worth the labor,
As we practice living out Your humble servitude,
The reward You give is Your own lasting love.**

Amen.

A Liturgy for Those Fatigued by Video and Virtual Meeting

These retinas, they're tired, Lord, from all this screen blue light
I sit here eyeing Zoom all day, facing faces formed by bytes.
That's not the way it's meant to be,
as the apostle Paul knew quite well
We're meant to *be with* face to face (1 Thess. 2:17),
not mediated through pixel

So even though I'm thankful for some kind of mediation
I'm also quite fatigued by technology saturation.

I'm not to be excused, of course, for often willingly I go
To Netflix, Facebook out of habit, with boredom, life to cope.
Keep me from temptation, Lord, to take the easy way
Of responding to world-weariness by binging screen displays.

And in these Zoomy meetings, now ubiquitous as bread
Focus my attention to listen close to what is said.

And finally, Lord, please make me spend my days in love,
good-doings:
Sit in silence with the Lord, my soul, read books, stop all this
viewing.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Those Dismayed by Economic Downturn

LORD of the harvest,
We question if there will be crops,
For we have tilled and sown and labored,
But have reaped pay-cuts and layoffs,
slashed dividends and shuttered doors,
a bear market and 20-dollar barrels of oil.

We quake at the shaken security of our jobs.
We fear the frailty of our stock futures.
We cringe at the crash of our carefully-planned retirement.

O Lord God, we see giants in this land.
We are pressed down by the weight of our worries,
Dwarfed as grasshoppers by the plight of the pandemic.
And yet: Be strong and courageous, You command.
Do not be afraid, for the LORD is with us, we cry.

Steady our fearful hearts, O God, omnipotent over all creation
Show us Your power, we plead.
When trodden by economic downturn,
Teach us to stand firm
to be strong
to take heart
and depend upon Your deliverance.

Even when our crops crumble and die,
Death has no finality in Your economy,
For You, O Christ, through death were raised to life on high
And You, O Christ the first-fruits, are with us eternally.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Parents Before Working and Schooling

Confession, Lord: I'm not prepared
to bear this weighty task
Of schooling this child of mine
in letters, science, math.

"Draw quantities, write qualities,"
is that the way to go?
Will good intense analysis
make this child grow?

And with these questions swirling,
I'm doubly beset
Not just with how to school,
but how to parent yet.

This child's always flitting
all around the room
She grabs, demands, and, shouting,
turns stubborn right on cue.

It doesn't help, of course, at all,
that along with this I'm bound
To keep working my vocation
amidst loud domestic sounds.

I want, then, first, to thank You, Lord,
for gifts of beauty in this child
For she embodies Your grand delight
in making good things run wild.

But second, Lord, please help me learn
to form this child well
I need imagination,
patience long with her to dwell.

And thirdly, Lord, give me the sight
to see this child needs
Not rigor or loads of hard homework,
but creativity.

Help me, then, to calmly steward
her love for play and making
Toward large words and numbers:
let them grow her fascination!

Lastly, Lord, please grant me grace,
faithfully to know
How to balance home and work,
letting neither of them go.

So, Father, Son, and Spirit,
send Your wisdom from on high
School me in your loving pattern,
teach me--Your needy child.

Amen.

A Liturgy of Lament for Those with COVID-19

These lungs, O Lord, are Yours--You made them.
With the warm wind of Your Spirit,
You breathed into dusty earth the breath of life,
Creating your living creature to stand and steward, to work and worship.
But now I am lying here, trod down by this disease,
Lacking strength to labor, lacking breath to sing:

O God, have You rejected me? (Psalm 43:2)

Those words as well, O Lord, are Yours--You spoke them.
Hanging there on wood, chafing against grain,
Lungs burning, losing air, muscles straining to inhale,
You sang our song,
You cried our cry:

My God, my God, have you forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1)

This life, O Lord, is also Yours--You keep it.
Condemning sin, expiring death,
You roared with victory in Your chest.
And now all things--respired--belong to You,
Including me--I'm not my own:
Comfort's found in this alone.

Why then, O God, do You sit far off? (Psalm 10:1)

This in-between is also Yours--Your patience holds us.
You're sitting there enthroned on high,
Ready to destroy the blight.
So be the God You say You are;
Come act on my behalf.
I pant for You, a thirsty deer,
A beggar, Your child bereft.

Yes, come and comfort, inspiring God,
Raise my life anew.
 Breathe once more into this dust.
 Send Your wind to bear me up.
 Blow Your Spirit, resurrect.

For God, O God, my God, my God:
Our only hope is You.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Those Lamenting Lack of Work

You made us to labor, O working Word,
To tend Your garden ground
As mirrors of Your grand delight
That makes good things abound.

Yet many live without this good
Of fitting work to do,
And others fear the letting go,
The furlough, the "Adieu."

Especially now in this slow time
As business halts and options fall
We're looking at projections
Worried there'll be work at all.

And what a wound it is to bear
The lack of work in life
Self-esteem and proper worth
All but flee from human sight.

So help us, first, O Lord, to see
As old Qohelet once proclaimed
That all the toil in the world
Can't prolong our life one day.

But, secondly, O Lord please give
Some fruitful work in our location
So we might partner in Your life
That's brimming full of good creation.

And finally, Lord, do cultivate
Within our hearts a spirit
Of readiness for kind support
Of those who greatly need it.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Medical Professionals Before Entering a Patient's Room

Guide these hands, O great Physician,
To care for life with single vision
To render rest and calm.

Guard these lungs, O great Defender,
From sneezing, coughing, viral transfer
To breathe out hope instead.

Grant this mind, O great wise Doctor,
Attentiveness and patience longer
To know what path to take.

And give this heart, O loving Master,
Bold courage in this grave disaster
To act with kind resolve.

Amen.

A Liturgy For Those Staying at Home

Father, Son, and Spirit,

We're sitting here these days, O Lord,
Confronted by the same:
Same bed, same house
Same days, same nights
Same walls, same couch
Same politics, same strife

The sameness strikes especially right now
As calls to work in place come in,
Keeping us cooped up, closed off
From creature and creation.

We confess, O Lord, a worry here,
Knowing ourselves well
That we are all too human
And think the ordinary dull.

We long for newness, tricks and thrills,
to keep us entertained
While all along we miss the glory
Right there in the mundane.

Sanctify our minds anew, allow our eyes to see
That you, O Lord, are the God who loves monotony.
Every day the sun wakes up, you yell to it: again!
Each daisy, all the blades of grass awake at your command.

Don't let small repetitions simply lull us to distraction,
But let us learn to love the same with strong imagination.

Give us your faithful posture, then, to dwell in repetition
It was indeed your Son, our Lord, who loved mundane enfleshment.

So form us, God of endless glee, to join your daily freedom
Of finding beauty and delight amidst the routine boredom.

Amen.

A Liturgy for the Washing of Hands I

Wash us, O Father, with the water of wellness
Cleanse us, O Christ, and make us whole
Scrub us, O Spirit, to scour our lives.

From the germs that cling to us, wash us into freedom
From the fear that clings to us, wash us into hope
From the flippancy that clings to us, wash us into care.

Let us engage this time of virus
Wakened by Your gracious waters
Willing to be washed once more.

Amen.

A Liturgy for the Washing of Hands II

Meet me, O Word become flesh, in the washing of this flesh,
As I return to this basin, return my attention to You.

As this flowing water foams soap into suds,
Let Your Spirit form my soul into the shape of
Your Son.

Remind me, O Christ, even in the repetition of this task
that You cleanse not only our hands but also
our hearts.

Send me, O Holy Spirit, washed and made new, made ready,

Your will to do. *Amen.*

A Short Liturgy Before Grocery-Shopping

Father, Son, and Spirit... I would like to buy needed goods. And so would my neighbor. Help me to remember that. *Amen.*

A Liturgy for Those Anxious about Empty Shelves

God of all power,

Remind us that You emptied Yourself to satisfy us.

God over all creation,

Remind us that when the earth was formless and void,
You formed, fashioned, and filled it.

God of all provision,

When the image of empty shelves sends our stomachs
plummeting in fear,

Remind us that when Jesus was hungry,
Alone in the desert for 40 days,
With neither a crumb of bread
nor a drop of water to cross his lips,

The tempter tried
To manipulate Jesus' hunger into grasping
and hoarding,
To use His power to take stone and transform it
into bread,

But Jesus knew his true need,
And ours alike:

“Man does not live by bread alone
but by every word that comes from the
mouth of God,”

God of five loaves and two fishes,

Teach us to trust You enough to bring what we have

That we might see you multiply our paltry supply
That we would believe we have enough to share
And leftovers besides.

God of self-giving love,

Remind us that the two greatest commandments are to love You
and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Out of love for You,

and love for our neighbor,

Help us to buy, not in excess, but to bless our neighbor as ourselves.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Slow Internet

O Sovereign God over all creation,

Limitless and vast

Personal and present:

You spoke and the heavens sprung into being,

You breathed the Word and one hundred billion stars were born,

You are majestic in Your magnitude,

You are powerful in Your personhood.

As our frustration rises

over the painful plodding of pixels and packets and bytes
over limited Internet bandwidths that limp along,

Remind us that You are a God who walked dusty paths

At three miles an hour,

Present to the needs around You,

Participating in the redemption of creation

One footstep at a time.

Remind us, O God of all creation, that

we are Your people, made in Your image,

we are Your people, made to follow You,

we are Your people, made to live at a pace of life

that echoes the cadence and care of Yours.

In this forced slowness,

Remind us that we are finite and limited creatures

With boundaries and bandwidths of our own.

We cannot do it all,

For You alone are God, and we are not.

But we can do something.

Help us to be faithful in the small, slow things,

And trust You to multiply the works of our hands
and hearts.

For You alone are God. We are Your people.

And though we know only in part,

We know that You are God, and we are not.

Amen.

A Liturgy for Loneliness and Isolation

Father, Son, and Spirit,
In this time of disease, in this time of distancing,
we feel alone.

We are isolated from friends,
isolated from colleagues,
isolated from community.

We miss the way incarnate human presence gives life,
eye to eye,
face to face,
life to life,

all of which serves as a sign to the beautiful beginning,
middle, and ending of Christ's story:
bodily creation,
bodily incarnation,
bodily resurrection.

Bodily presence one with another.
Bodily being-with in the festive light of life eternal.

Yet right now we are scattered, quarantined, alone.
We are not with but away.
And we ache for the lasting presence of that future day.

Give us patience to persevere in this time,
trusting your promise that says,
"I will gather them in. For I have redeemed them,
...and they shall return" (Zech. 10:8-9).

Give us creativity to cultivate community in this time,
knowing that the goodness and pleasure of "kindred
dwelling together in unity" (Ps. 133:1)
is worth the somewhat contrived and awkward work of
calling and zooming and streaming.

Give us kindness to care for the most vulnerable in this time
through the concrete acts of phone-calling, grocery-buying,
hand-washing, space-keeping,
hearing and doing the call to "do justice to the afflicted
and needy" (Ps 41:1).

And give us memory to remember in this time
the rare gift that Christian community is;
the rare gift that it is to see each other, hear each other,
help each other, "face to face" (1 Thess. 3:10).

In the strong name of the Trinity, communion itself,
whose faithful presence is with us always,
even till the end of the age.

Amen.

A Liturgy Before Checking the Stock Market

Father, Son, and Spirit,

In Your limitless life, there is

Never scarcity, only abundance

Never loss, only gain

Never recession, only procession

Of goods and gifts and grace.

But our markets are mercurial

our money proves unmanageable

our funds plunge in free-fall

And this forms us to fear.

Turn us to You, as mammon crouches at our door.

Tell us the truth, that all things pass, but You alone remain.

And tend us to love, knowing that You reclaim everything,

acquire everything, gain everything

By giving all away.

For God so loved, He gave.

Amen.

A Plainly Spoken Liturgy After Checking the News

Father, Son, and Spirit,

The news just broke, this just in:

Another test, another case, another human death to face.

I want to wait, to feel not fear, on edge,

But simple sympathy and pain with those teetering on life's ledge.

But then another wave of breaking news comes by

And I am tossed frenetically to face another line

Filled with words that stoke angst more

Words like "sky-rocket," verbs like "soar."

Instead of that, O Lord

I'd like to hear straightforward truth.

I'd like to go about my day aware, concerned, but not possessed.

I'd like to hear some good news too.

I'd like to know what I can do to help and aid and simply bless.

So, come, O Christ, give us your news:

Publish peace, announce the end,

"break in", "go live" with words that mend.

Amen.