

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

321 W. CHESTNUT ST.,
LANCASTER, PA 17603

“And every day, the world will drag you by the hand, yelling, “This is important! And this is important! And this is important! You need to worry about this! And this! And this!” And each day, it’s up to you to yank your hand back, put it on your heart and say, “No. This is what’s important.”



A SPACE FOR GRACE

Welcome to A Space for Grace.

Wherever you are on your faith journey we invite you to pause and pray. As one of my favorite quotes reads, *“Practice the pause. When in doubt, pause. When angry, pause. When hopeful, pause. When tired, pause. When thankful, pause. When stressed, pause. And when you pause, pray.”*

To assist you in your time of prayer, we’ve included a list of prayers, quotes, and poems for your use. Many are from our Book of Common Prayer and others from various authors, poets, and spiritual leaders. Feel free to use them as you see fit, there is no correct order or method. Just open the pages and stop where your heart would like to rest. May they inspire you, comfort you, strengthen you, and invite you into a holy time with your creator, redeemer, and sustainer.

May you be blessed as you pause,

Amanda+

PRAYERS FOR A PANDEMIC OR TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

PRAYER FOR A PANDEMIC BY CAMERON WIGGINS BELLM

May we who are merely inconvenienced,
remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors,
remember those most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home,
remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close,
remember those who have no options.
May we who have to cancel our trips,
remember those that have no safe place to go.
May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market,
remember those who have no margin at all.
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home,
remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country,
let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.

A PRAYER BY THOMAS MERTON

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

PAULO COELHO, THE ALCHEMIST

“Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second's encounter with God and with eternity.”

A LITANY FOR COVID-19 *adapted from the original written by The Rev. Michael Kurth*

Most merciful God, we come to you in this time of anxiety and uncertainty surrounding the outbreak of COVID-19. As the sorrows of our heart and mind increase, we beseech you to save us from all trouble and fear.

For all who have died: receive them into the arms of your mercy, grant them eternal peace, and surround those who mourn with your healing grace.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those directly infected with the virus: help them recover in good health and restore them in body, mind and spirit.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those at high risk of infection, especially the elderly, those with underlying illnesses, the marginalized, and the poor: keep them healthy and free from all sickness.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those in quarantine, the shut-in, and the infirmed: help them find peace, keep them in good health, and renew their mind and spirit.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all hospitals, doctors, nurses, and staff: protect them as they minister to the sick, relieve all stress, and provide the resources and space to meet the needs of all the infirmed.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For first responders: guard them from all harm and grant them strength and courage as they respond to all calls for help.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For service industry workers and those forced to work as their community shuts down: keep them healthy, bestow the resources to best care for themselves and their families, and assure them in times of financial and medical anxiety.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those experiencing financial loss and uncertainty of resources: have mercy on them, alleviate any fear, and provide for them daily bread and wage.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the leaders of this nation and the world: help them make sound and safe decisions to best secure the future of our planet.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all schools, students, teachers, administrators and school staff: as schools close, feed those who will go hungry without guaranteed meals and shelter all students have no place to live.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all scientists and those working to find a cure: inspire them towards your truth and help them discover and disseminate a vaccine and cure.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all media and journalists: protect them from all harm in their reporting and move them to be a vector of truth and certainty, and never fear or panic.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all places of worship: embolden them to be beacons of hope and love and help us to gather however and wherever we can – be it in person or online – to give you praise.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are unable to be with those they love. For people separated by walls, doors, miles, or time.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the young: spare them from harm and fear and keep them a joyful sign of your love and light.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all parents: build in them strength and fortitude for the time ahead and give them the words and witness to be wise counselors and compassionate caregivers.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Stir up in us a spirit of compassion for the time ahead and inspire us to share the Good News of your love and hope.

Amen.

FOR COURAGE BY JOHN O'DONOHUE

Close your eyes.

Gather all the kindling

About your heart

To create one spark.

That is all you need

To nourish the flame

That will cleanse the dark

Of its weight of festered fear.

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD

BCP 814

FOR THE HUMAN FAMILY

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

FOR PEACE

BCP 207

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

BCP 816

FOR THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through the same your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

PRAYERS FOR THE SOCIAL ORDER

BCP 823

FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

BCP 209

Almighty God, you have created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

FOR THE OPPRESSED

BCP 826

Look with pity, O heavenly Father, upon the people in this land who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us. Help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors. Strengthen those who spend their lives establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all. And grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THICH NHAT HANH, TEACHINGS ON LOVE

“Through my love for you, I want to express my love for the whole cosmos, the whole of humanity, and all beings. By living with you, I want to learn to love everyone and all species. If I succeed in loving you, I will be able to love everyone and all species on Earth... This is the real message of love.”

PRAYERS FOR THE NATURAL ORDER

BCP 827

THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS BY WENDELL BERRY

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

THE SUMMER DAY BY MARY OLIVER

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don’t know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE

O God our heavenly Father, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

PAULO COELHO

“We can never judge the lives of others, because each person knows only their own pain and renunciation. It's one thing to feel that you are on the right path, but it's another to think that yours is the only path.”

PRAYERS FOR FAMILY AND PERSONAL LIFE

BCP 828

FOR FAMILIES

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you set the solitary in families: We commend to your continual care the homes in which your people dwell. Put far from them, we pray, every root of bitterness, the desire of vainglory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy wedlock, have been made one flesh. Turn the hearts of the parents to the children, and the hearts of the children to the parents; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we may evermore be kindly affectioned one to another; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

FOR GUIDANCE

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

BRENÉ BROWN, THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION

“We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known, and when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness and affection.

Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow, a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each one of them – we can only love others as much as we love ourselves.

Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and the withholding of affection damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they are acknowledged, healed and rare.”

FOR QUIET CONFIDENCE

O God of peace, you have taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A PRAYER OF SELF-DEDICATION

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

LYRICS TO “LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH” BY JILL JACKSON MILLER AND SY MILLER

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth,
The peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Father
Brothers all are we,
Let me walk with my brother
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me,
Let this be the moment now;
With every step I take,
Let this be my solemn vow

To take each moment and live each moment
In peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

A PRAYER ATTRIBUTED TO ST. FRANCIS

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen.*

“HOPE” IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS - (314) BY EMILY DICKINSON

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

PRAYERS FOR NATIONAL LIFE

BCP 821

FOR SOUND GOVERNMENT

O Lord our Governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations of the earth.

Lord, keep this nation under your care.

To the President and members of the Cabinet, to Governors of States, Mayors of Cities, and to all in administrative authority, grant wisdom and grace in the exercise of their duties.

Give grace to your servants, O Lord.

To Senators and Representatives, and those who make our laws in States, Cities, and Towns, give courage, wisdom, and foresight to provide for the needs of all our people, and to fulfill our obligations in the community of nations.

Give grace to your servants, O Lord.

To the Judges and officers of our Courts give understanding and integrity, that human rights may be safeguarded and justice served.

Give grace to your servants, O Lord.

And finally, teach our people to rely on your strength and to accept their responsibilities to their fellow citizens, that they may elect trustworthy leaders and make wise decisions for the well-being of our society; that we may serve you faithfully in our generation and honor your holy Name.

For yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Amen.

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.

We furthermore thank you for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence upon your mercies alone.

Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he overcame death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.

Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know him and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. *Amen.*

PEMA CHÖDRÖN, THE WISDOM OF NO ESCAPE: HOW TO LOVE YOURSELF AND YOUR WORLD

“There is a story of a woman running away from tigers. She runs and runs and the tigers are getting closer and closer. When she comes to the edge of a cliff, she sees some vines there, so she climbs down and holds on to the vines. Looking down, she sees that there are tigers below her as well. She then notices that a mouse is gnawing away at the vine to which she is clinging. She also sees a beautiful little bunch of strawberries close to her, growing out of a clump of grass. She looks up and she looks down. She looks at the mouse. Then she just takes a strawberry, puts it in her mouth, and enjoys it thoroughly. Tigers above, tigers below. This is actually the predicament that we are always in, in terms of our birth and death. Each moment is just what it is. It might be the only moment of our life; it might be the only strawberry we’ll ever eat. We could get depressed about it, or we could finally appreciate it and delight in the preciousness of every single moment of our life.”

WENDELL BERRY

“You mustn’t wish for another life. You mustn’t want to be somebody else. What you must do is this:

“Rejoice evermore.

Pray without ceasing.

In everything give thanks.”

I am not all the way capable of so much, but those are the right instructions.”

ON JOY AND SORROW BY KAHLIL GIBRAN

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked. And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears. And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy. When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."
But I say unto you, they are inseparable. Together they come, and when one sits, alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.

Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy. Only when you are empty are you at standstill and balanced. When the treasure-keeper lifts you to weigh his gold and his silver, needs must your joy or your sorrow rise or fall.

I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee;
A poet could not be but gay,
In such a jocund company!
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.