

Moment of Blessing

Occasion of Homicide

GREETING

Grace and Peace to all of us in the name of our Loving God. We stand on holy ground – for God is with us, doing what God always does, calling forth life, especially here, especially now. Immanuel is the God who is with us always and everywhere! There is nowhere we can flee God's presence and nothing can separate us from God's love – not tragedy, not violence, not even death. This is why we reclaim this space as a place of life, community, hope and forgiveness. Yes, even the violence that has occurred here is being reclaimed in love, and called forth as holy witness to life itself.

DECLARATION

We come together in this space and at this time of grief, acknowledging the violent act committed against our [sister(s)/brother(s)] _____.

We confess that this tragedy is part of a wider failure to create safe communities that are humane, compassionate, just, and filled with dignity and hope for all.

PRAYER

We ask that God may grant us peace.
That in our pain we may find comfort,
That in our confusion we may find a measure of understanding,
That in our anger we may find forgiveness,
That in our sorrow we may find hope,
That in the aftermath of fear we may find strength and healing.

Come Holy Spirit and baptize us again in the sea of your love, where we release our useless fears and relax into your mercy. Inside this new love we die to all that is false. By your power made perfect in weakness, awaken us to the mystery of life and speak to us again the truth of our deepest identity hidden in you. "You are my child whom I love with you I am well pleased."

PSALM 23

LEADER The Lord is my Shepherd.
ALL I shall not want.
LEADER The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures.
ALL The Lord leads me beside still waters.
LEADER The Lord restores my soul.
ALL The Lord guides me in right paths.
LEADER Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
ALL I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and staff give me courage.

MATTHEW 5

LEADER Blessed are the poor in spirit.
ALL For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
LEADER Blessed are those who mourn.
ALL For they will be comforted.
LEADER Blessed are the meek.
ALL For they shall inherit the earth.
LEADER Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
ALL For they shall be satisfied.
LEADER Blessed are the merciful.
ALL For they shall obtain mercy.
LEADER Blessed are the pure in heart.
ALL For they shall see God.
LEADER Blessed are the peacemakers.
ALL For they shall be called children of God.
LEADER Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.
ALL For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

A TIME OF SHARING

What are we seeing, hearing, and feeling in this moment?
(Participants may share briefly)

AFFIRMATION OF SIGHT

[Sister/Brother] _____, we see you. We acknowledge your death and your life. You did not leave this world unnoticed. We hold your memory in our love and care, affirm that your life was and is treasured by God.

LITANY OF DELIVERANCE

LEADER	From the prevalence of sexual assault...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the ravages of drug and alcohol addiction...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the hopelessness of suicide...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the brutality of murder and violence...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the corruption of senseless death...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the ways human dignity is stripped...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the bitterness of homelessness and empty pockets...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the snare of mental illness and all discrimination...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the silence of apathy and neglect...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the deserts of ignorance and suffering...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	From the arrogance of racism and despair...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	And from all evil ...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	And from all evil...
ALL	Save us, O God
LEADER	And from all evil...
ALL	Save us, O God. Amen.

Song

JESUS, NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

Jesus, Name above all Names
Beautiful Savior, Glorious Lord
Emmanuel, God is with us
Blessed Redeemer, Living Word

CHRISTO, NOMBRE MAS ALTO

Christo, Nombre Mas Alto;
Salvador Nuestro, Glorioso Senor
Emmanuel, Dios Con Nosotros;
Pan De La Vida, Cordero De Dios

Song

OUR CITIES CRY TO YOU

To the tune of amazing grace

Our cities cry to you, O God
Out from the pain and strife,
You made us for yourself alone
But we chose alien life.

Our goals are pleasure, gold and power
Injustice stalks our earth,
In vain we seek for rest, for joy,
For sense of human worth.

Yet still you walk the streets, O Christ!
We know your presence here,
Where humble people love and serve
In godly grace and fear.

O Word made flesh be seen in us
May all we say and do
Affirm you God incarnate still,
And turn all hearts to you.

ISAIAH 61:1-4 (ADAPTED)

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me
because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God.
to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion –
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.
They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated.
They will renew the cities that have been devastated for generations.

PRAYER FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Adapted from "Prayers for a Privileged People" by Walter Brueggemann

LEADER You are the God who has set us in families and clans and tribes, in communities and in cities. We give you thanks this day that you are Lord of the city of _____ and Lord of this very neighborhood.

LEADER We pray for the city of _____ today, and we pray for this neighborhood... and for neighborhoods like it in Jerusalem, Baghdad, Moscow, and a thousand other villages in your cities around the world.

In all of our cities this day...
there will be violence, crime and sharp moneymaking, and also compassion and forgiveness and generosity, and leaders who work for both justice and injustice.

ALL Be our God this day and prosper in the city of _____.
We pray in the name of the One who wept over the city. Amen.

RECLAIMING RITUAL – BLESSING OF THE WATER

LEADER We come together this day to reclaim this space of death as a place of life. This place where violence occurred we are reclaiming as a place of peace. This place that causes fear, anger, and pain, we are reclaiming as a place of hope and community. We reclaim the humanity of both victim and victimizer in God's name.

(Water is sprinkled on those present)

LEADER Come, Holy Spirit, to this place. As we sprinkle this water, come Holy Spirit, and redeem this space and people from the pain and violence that occurred here. Return it as a safe place, a place of love, a place of life, a place of hope. Amen.

ALL That which was taken away from us by violence, we reclaim as a place of life, community, and hope. We pledge to work toward a world free from violence and self-destruction and full of love and hope. We commit ourselves to building community that is humane, compassionate, just, and filled with dignity.

BLESSING OF SURVIVORS

Christ be with you, Christ within you,
Christ behind you, Christ before you,
Christ beside you, Christ to win you,
Christ to comfort and restore you,
Christ beneath you, Christ above you,
Christ in quiet and in danger,
Christ in hearts of those who love you,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

**Participants are encouraged
to lay hands on survivors.**

NEIGHBORHOOD BLESSING

LEADER What is a blessing but a rain of grace falling generously into the lives of those in need; and what neighborhood in this city is without need?

ALL God, we ask your blessing on this neighborhood.

LEADER May the Spirit touch _____ in this morning pause. May this day provide a pathway filled with hope and renewal. May there be work here today that is God's love made visible.

ALL God, we ask your blessing on this neighborhood.

LEADER May a heart of grace and benevolence be born here today.
And may that birth bless each person in this community with hope for the future.

ALL God, we ask your blessing on this neighborhood.

LEADER May the resurrection be experienced in _____ today. As old enemies are moved toward reconciliation, exclusion becomes embrace, and as voices of criticism and hate are transformed into encouragement.

ALL God, we ask your blessing on this neighborhood.

LEADER May greed and excess dissolve into the soil of community gardens where neighbors and families share meals together and where children are free to play and explore their curiosities.

ALL God, we ask your blessing on this neighborhood.

LEADER God, breathe upon _____ so when the people look in the mirror, they may see themselves as they truly are... a beautiful reflection of You.

ALL God, we ask your blessing on this neighborhood. Amen

BENEDICTION

LEADER Our service is ended. As we leave this place, our prayer is that each of us might act in some way to uphold the dignity of every person – so that all would see that violence will not prevail in our community and peace will endure.

Beloved of God, may we go on our day with the courage to love. Return no one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-hearted. Support the weak. Love one another as God loves you. As this is home to the trauma and healing of our [sister(s)/brother(s)] _____, it is also home to God. God blesses both this space and _____.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us because we have been anointed to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to declare the year of the Lord's favor.

We pray all of this in the name of the Father who is for us, the Son who is with us, and the Spirit who unites us all in the never-ending dance of love. Amen.

ALL Thanks be to God.