

LITANY OF CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD MOVEMENT

By Dr. Kimberly Majeski

Lord of grace and glory, God of the universe, keeper of the stars and our stories, the One who forgives our sins and makes us new, we acknowledge, at once, the greatness of your power, how we have broken your heart for unity, and the magnitude of this present moment.

We observe the shaking of the ground, the dust in the skies, the plight of refugees, the desperate prayers in ICU wards, the tears of healthcare providers, the fear of our children, the injustice in our neighborhoods, and the soldiers in our streets.

We confess that we have long since been asleep. We have been numb and resigned to ignorance in our slumber. We have been insulated and insular, and we have failed to hear the cries of your children.

And even as we have apathetic, ill-informed, mal-equipped, and tone-deaf, we cannot unhear the pleas of George Floyd as he lay in the street, the boot of racism heavy on his neck. We saw, we heard, we knew it so reprehensible that we can no longer turn a deaf ear, avert our pale eyes, refuse to stand with our sisters and brothers of color, and understand ourselves to be anything less than complicit in our times.

We are shaken to action. We are grieved of heart and mind, of body and soul. Even as we pray for the families, the communities of George, Breonna, and other Black lives taken, we must first stare in the face our own history, the poverty of our own choices as a tradition, as a family of faith, we must confess and repent the sins we have carried for so long, too long.

We confess there were moments before, long ago when we the Church of God could've done, should've done differently, could've embraced, should've embraced our heritage and stood firm for racial justice. Instead we chose the path of least resistance, and we stood with power and not the powerless.

We confess that when the issues of racial unity were raised to our leaders, to our forefathers and mothers, they failed us and we could've, should've held them accountable, and we did not; we followed their lead into the wilderness of sin.

We confess and we grieve that we followed Jim Crow when we could've, we should've followed Jane Williams.¹

We confess that we turned our backs on our Black sisters and brothers to embrace white family members and, when it was ours to choose, we dismissed the importance of racial harmony and decidedly did so to focus on the "salvation of white men and women."²

We confess and grieve that we, the Church of God, we who celebrate an open Table, uninvited our Black brothers and sisters to dine as if it were our table upon which to extend invitation. Instead what we could've done, should've done was, "Reach our hand in fellowship to every blood-washed one"³ and, in so doing, spread the table cloth on top of the flames of racial prejudice, sat down as one family—the body of Christ—passed the bread and wine, sang out "I am a child of God,"⁴ and feasted on our love.

We confess that our actions caused sadness, broken hearts, and broken fellowship. What we could've done, what we should've done is stand in unity, refuse to give sway to unbiblical notions of white supremacy, we should have surrounded, protected, stood for and with our Black sisters and brothers in their oppression. We confess that our decisions sent our Black sisters and brothers into exile until they found a new promised land.

We confess that we have lost decades of time and generations of leaders, prophets, and preachers to our sin and our actions might have stifled the flourishing of God that was destined for our world through the Church of God.

We confess we have long failed to celebrate the gift of diversity, to look to the voices of our Black and brown sisters and brothers for providential insight and education.

We confess that in our fallenness we have become two assemblies when we could have been one. We confess that it was the sending away of the Black brothers and sisters that caused them to found a new assembly. Even then, what we could've done, what we should've done was/is, show up, support, encourage, promote, those leaders, those events, those conversations.

1 Jane Williams is one of the earliest African Americans associated with the Church of God. She wrote field notes for the *Gospel Trumpet* regarding the camp meetings she held across the South. As racial tensions rose, she continued to hold unified meetings in spite of pressure to segregate the gatherings.

2 Massey, James, African American Pioneers of the Church, quoting E.E. Byrum

3 Naylor, Charles Naylor, "The Church's Jubilee" (1923)

4 Warren, Barney, "A Child of God" (1907)

We confess that we have had opportunities to set matters right, to confess our collective, inherited sin and we have failed to take responsibility, and we have been derelict in our inaction.

We confess we have been wrong and have wronged so many whom you love and have designed for the service of your church and the building up of the kingdom for the good of the world.

We repent the sins of our community, of our congregations, of the decades, of the generations, we lament the sins of our time.

We ask you to cleanse us, to forgive us, to make us new. To open our hearts and minds, our eyes and ears, we ask you to enliven our pulpits, to sharpen pens so that we might take to the classrooms, and sanctuaries, that we might go into the streets to proclaim what is true and right, that #BlackLivesMatter.

And we ask that as you raise us to new life, as the old has passed and the new has come, you would appoint us as ambassadors of reconciliation,⁵ that we might be for and with our Black sisters and brothers from here and ever more.

5 2 Corinthians 5:16–21 NRSV

LITANY FOR HEALING

By Rev. W. G. Robinson-McNeese, MD

READER: Most high God of the universe, who was and is and ever will be, we stretch our hands to you, because there is no other help we know. Disease, distress, adversity, public unrest, and spiritual wickedness are rampant in the land, threatening physical and nonphysical lives. Provide the cure we so desperately need. As you have done many times before, rescue us. Make crooked places straight and rough places plain.

RESPONSE: I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

SILENT PRAYER

READER: Lord, arrest the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic consuming our nation's lives and resources. Give us wisdom to behave properly in the face of the pathogen. Give us knowledge to create and refine therapies, medications, and vaccines to check viral spread. Give us understanding to design policies for present and future well-being.

RESPONSE: Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

SILENT PRAYER

READER: We pray for physical health especially for all leaders of this country's government and their families. We need them well if they are to show wisdom; strong while being sympathetic, vibrant as they execute good vision. Please let our leaders value wholeness in all its forms and know true healing comes through love, humility, recognizing you and adherence to your principles.

RESPONSE: That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all goodness and honesty.

SILENT PRAYER

READER: Bless those who are most at risk during this season—first responders, medical, civic, and other essential workers, the elderly, homeless, poor, and disenfranchised. They bear a disproportionate part of the pandemic burden and need special protection. Cover them and guide us all towards fitness and economic strength measured not merely by numbers on charts, but numbers of women and men who are hearty, employed, housed and well-fed.

RESPONSE: Be merciful unto me, O God; for my soul trusteth in thee.

SILENT PRAYER

READER: Give spiritual recovery to thousands whose loved ones have died because of this viral illness. While death persists let your perfect peace reign, offering comfort to all bereaved. Also, refresh those whose loved ones have died of racial virulence, endemic to this country for centuries and affecting groups of every ancestry. Relieve this systemic hurt, while eliminating violence as a tactic of the aggrieved. Forgive the sins of racism and intimidation. Substitute in their place love and anti-racist activism, changing not only attitudes about, but actions towards, the other.

RESPONSE: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

SILENT PRAYER

READER: Lord, God, some struggle more than others during these times of uncertainty, physical distancing, and community isolation. Psychological wounds can be as debilitating as physical ones, especially when acute strain is layered on top of chronic illness. Please guard and tend fragile psyches. Provide encouragement through family and neighbors alike. Let trauma-induced stressors be mitigated for us all, as fears and depressions are eased through our daily walk with you.

RESPONSE: I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performeth all things for me.

SILENT PRAYER

READER: Educate us about education. The pursuit of formalized learning and all its trappings is honorable and worthy of effort. Even so, help us know when to pause, when to stop, and when to go forward with our educational programming during these troubled times. Keep foremost in our minds the safety of our learning communities over the carrying out of strategic plans. And while literacy and acquisition of knowledge are desirable, teach us to follow loftier goals, as well: to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before you.

RESPONSE: Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast.

SILENT PRAYER

READER: Storms rage, wildfires spread, climates change, yet none of this is beyond your power to effect. Show us how to live synergistic with the earth, managing environments with acknowledgement of present need balanced against future good. As we become more in tune with nature, lead us towards increased harmony with one another. Teach us to model social justice and a sincere adoption of beloved community. During these polarized times, meld our public choices with our private beliefs in the matchless power of godly love, so by prudent selections all will know we are your disciples, and through us be blessed.

RESPONSE: My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.

SILENT PRAYER

READER: Now, oh God, when it is yours to call and ours to answer, lift us off our knees and onto our feet to make constructive difference. Equip us for an ever-changing world. Give us liability for all oppressed, and charity to embrace all mankind. And since darkness cannot drive out darkness, lead us in paths of reconciliation rather than division, teaching us to fight with courageous voices rather than clenched fists, remembering: the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Ground us in unity, equity, integrity, and righteousness, so in all disputes we follow your instructions to study war no more.

RESPONSE: For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

SILENT PRAYER

...Amen!

LITANY FOR A DEEPER ECONOMY

Adapted by Jim O'Bold from an original litany by Fran Pratt, "Litany for Money: A Deeper Economy."

God, you created humanity, and humanity exists in an economy based on money. People are suffering economically in many ways due to the pandemic. People are losing their jobs. People are getting evicted from their homes. People are getting sick and have hospital bills. People are dying from COVID-19 and not providing needed income to family and loved ones. People are losing physical connections with others that can help. People are using up valuable economic margin that will affect their future.

We acknowledge that money profoundly affects our lives. We acknowledge that dealing with money requires our attention and effort. We acknowledge that the love of money is a root of evil. We acknowledge our temptation toward greed. We acknowledge that money and hard work are linked. We acknowledge that money and privilege are linked. We acknowledge that poverty is an ongoing problem, and that your heart is for the poor.

We remember the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. We remember the Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl in Matthew 6. We remember Jesus talked about money as much as he talked about the kingdom in the four gospels. Whether we currently see the world from a position of scarcity or abundance, money and stewardship seem worthy of prayer.

We confess our love of money. We confess our equating money with power and status. We confess our squandering of resources. We confess our hesitance to risk, to invest, and to have faith. We confess our obsession with possessions. We confess our worry when needs arise. We confess our jealousy of the riches of others.

Give us our daily bread. Give us enough, but not too much. Give us treasure that moth and rust do not destroy. Give us riches of life, relationships, and joy. Give us wisdom to handle money in ways that reflect your character.

Help us to steward well that which you choose to give us authority over. Help us to have healthy attitudes towards money, to neither disregard nor idolize it. Help us to use our money for your kingdom work. Help us to care for the needy, the orphan, and the lonely. Help us to be generous, as you have been generous towards us. Help us to be disciplined and work hard, and be rewarded accordingly. Help us to save for times of need, and for pleasure. Help us to trust in your care and provision.

May we, your children, exist in a deeper economy; not an economy based on money or power, but on grace. May we live, not from scarcity, but from the abundance of your kingdom. Amen.

SCRIPTURE ON HEALING

All verses shown in The Message translation

But you—you serve your God and he'll bless your food and your water. I'll get rid of the sickness among you...

Exodus 23:25

He forgives your sins—every one.
He heals your diseases—every one.

Psalms 103:3

There's more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next.

Romans 5:3–4

I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.

Jeremiah 29:11

He spoke the word that healed you, that pulled you back from the brink of death.

Psalms 107:20

God, pick up the pieces. Put me back together again. You are my praise!

Jeremiah 17:14

But now take another look. I'm going to give this city a thorough renovation, working a true healing inside and out. I'm going to show them life whole, life brimming with blessings.

Jeremiah 33:6

Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

SCRIPTURE ON JUSTICE

All verses shown in The Message translation

But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously.

Micah 6:8

Learn to do good. Work for justice. Help the down-and-out. Stand up for the homeless. Go to bat for the defenseless.

Isaiah 1:17

"I've had it with you! You're hopeless, you Pharisees! Frauds! You keep meticulous account books, tithing on every nickel and dime you get, but manage to find loopholes for getting around basic matters of justice and God's love. Careful bookkeeping is commendable, but the basics are required.

Luke 11:42

You're one happy man when you do what's right, one happy woman when you form the habit of justice.

Psalms 106:3

Justice makes no sense to the evil minded; those who seek God know it inside and out.

Proverbs 28:5

Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way.

2 Timothy 3:16

Well, the message hasn't changed.

God-of-the-Angel-Armies said then and says now: "Treat one another justly.

Love your neighbors. Be compassionate with each other."

Zechariah 7:9

Then the King will say, "I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me."

Matthew 25:40

SCRIPTURE ON ECONOMICS

All verses shown in The Message translation

Speaking to the people, he went on, “Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot.”

Luke 12:15

Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.

1 Timothy 6:10

Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.”

Luke 6:38

You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceeding even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

God, my shepherd! I don’t need a thing.

Psalms 23:1

Sooner or later we’ll all have to face God, regardless of our conditions. We will appear before Christ and take what’s coming to us as a result of our actions, either good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10

God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you’re ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done.

2 Corinthians 9:8

“Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God’s Law and Prophets and this is what you get.

Matthew 7:12

MAY I

Holy God,

As I take a moment to pause and catch my breath, it is not lost on me the immense loss, grief, distance, and division this year has brought. Pandemic. Economic strife. Racial disparity. The list goes on.

God of grace, mercy, and love, instead of being apathetic to situations and circumstances that might not impact my personal self and daily life, may I be empathetic to the heartaches and outcry of my fellow sister and brother who are marginalized and cast down.

Instead of being complicit in unjust and oppressive systems, may I allow myself to be convicted and compelled to pursue compassionate allyship. Instead of being isolated from those who are not like me, or those who I tend to deem “other,” may I choose to stand in solidarity with them. Instead of taking a posture of power and privilege, may I humble myself before your throne and be reminded that I am not the one who determines who has a place at the table you have prepared.

I give you permission to convict me, Holy Spirit. May I have the moral courage to not only listen to you, but to live, walk, speak, and act as an agent of your restorative love. Amen.

Courtney Rice Alford

BE STILL

Lord God, we pause for this moment to be still in your presence. We know that you are God. We have assurance that, when you speak, your voice is greater than the noise of this planet and your presence is without limits.

For in this moment we are still, we silence the noise of:

- The pandemic sweeping the globe,
- The racial injustice that distracts and destroys, and
- The economic crisis that inflicts fear and doubt.

Lord God, we remain still in this moment. We have stopped striving, struggling, pushing, and trying to manage circumstances. Lord God, be our refuge and strength. Be very present with us.

- Be very present with us;
- Be Jehovah-Jireh, our provider;
- Be Jehovah-Rapha, our healer;
- Be Nissi, our banner; and
- Be Jehovah-Shalom, our peace.

Lord God, in this still moment, you are exalted among the nations. You are exalted in the earth. You are the Lord Almighty, forever and ever. In the strong name of Jesus, amen.

Arnetta McNeese Bailey

AN RN'S PRAYER

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. —Isaiah 53:5 NKJV

Heavenly Father,

We ask that you touch every healthcare worker, those in food and environmental services, laboratory services, and all those who deliver care to your people. Father, you are the Great Physician and we believe, by faith, that you can do all things but fail! Give us the strength to do the work you have called us to do in the hospitals, nursing homes, private care, and rehab facilities.

We lift those diagnosed with cancer, autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases, heart disease, respiratory and GI afflictions, neurological diseases, and COVID-19. Father, touch families who have lost loved ones to illnesses and tragedy.

We pray for the anointing of our hands as we continue to do the work. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Vanessa M. Burton

WE CONFESS WE HAVE

Read 1 Kings 19:1–12. Meditate on verses 11 and 12.

In silent stillness, center your heart and mind with this prayer:

Gracious God, in days past you disclosed your regenerative presence to Ezekiel when hope seemed as insubstantial as fistfuls of midnight fog. In our own day, pandemic, racial injustice, societal discord, and economic adversity sear our skittish souls like a sizzling skillet.

Still my mind and heart amid the cyclonic winds of change deconstructing and demolishing familiar landscapes, the seismic tremors toppling jury-rigged certainties, the raging infernos reducing sure hopes to sooty ashes. Lead me to quiet inner spaces as I listen for your “gentle whisper” (NIV).

Gift me with a fresh inkling of next steps—humble, trembling, toddler-like though they might be—that I may bear your transforming love, light, and spirit as I walk with others in our wobbly, woe-begotten world. Amen.

Sam Collins

WE CONFESS WE HAVE

Lord Jesus, you know us and our blind spots. You know we find it hard to admit we have sinned. We often think other people need to change but we don't. Yet in many ways, we have separated ourselves from you and from others.

We have thought we could keep our promises to you and still live life on our own terms.

We have failed to recognize that outward chaos is a telling symptom of chaos within.

We have allowed our confirmation biases to obscure our seeing your truth.

We have been loveless toward others whom you also created in your image, our sisters and brothers.

We have missed the mark of being like you.

Lord, we confess our sins. We ask for your forgiveness. We pray for grace, wisdom, and courage to live as healed people. Please help us remember your call to serve others with *your* attitude, *your* mind, in *your* name. Amen.

James R. Cook

THE GOD OF EVERYTHING

God of grace and love, who has saved us from sin; sanctified us through Your Spirit; lifted us out of the pits of despair, destruction, and sin; set us on the firm foundation of your Word, hear our prayer.

Your children are suffering under the weight of plagues that have driven us into isolation, racial injustice, segregated worship, and financial hardship. We cry out to you to heal prejudice, destroy racism, and care for us as you clothe the lilies of the field or the birds of the air.

Destroy this pandemic; destroy all forms of disunity and racial separation; heal us and allow us to trust you for our economic wellbeing.

We praise your name, testify of your goodness, and witness to the unity of the Spirit.

We pray this in the mighty name of Jesus, Savior, Healer of body and soul; who is neither color nor gender, old nor young, but the God of all of us; the God of everything—amen.

Jeff Frymire

PRAYER FOR OUR FRIENDS IN HAITI

God who created the universe, we humbly present our Haitian brothers and sisters to you now as they face a time of political uncertainty, a time of economic hardship, and a time when they need your reassurance, your touch, and your guidance.

We believe in your comfort, your wisdom, and your touch as the hardships of this world threaten the availability of basic necessities. May your Spirit be palpable and undeniable!

Mark and Kathy Fulton

YOU & YOUR HOUSEHOLD WILL BE SAVED

Prepare to be in the presence of the Lord. Get comfortable and clear your mind of any distraction that can hinder your prayer. Ask God to come and speak to you through this time of prayer. Prayerfully read Acts 16:31: They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (NIV). Read again, slowly, and reflect on every word of that verse. What is God telling you at this hour?

Now pray:

Dear heavenly Father, at this hour I come before you, just as I am, without pretenses or appearances. May your Spirit fill my heart, my mind, and my spirit. I recognize that all strength comes from you; that there are issues bigger than I, and that I totally depend on your mercy and intervention.

Thank you for the promise you extend not only to me, but to my family. That promise gives me the strength to face the struggles of the present time. Trusting that word, I confess with my mouth that I believe in you. I know that you are saving my household and that your presence covers and protects us. Thank you, Jesus; I love you. Amen.

Mary Ann Garcia

LORD JESUS, YOU ARE ENOUGH

Sit quietly, hands on lap, with open palms. Take five deep breaths, read slowly:

Jesus, Lord Jesus—Lord, have mercy...have mercy—on me, on our community, on our country, on our world—your world.

Jesus, thank you for your Spirit living in me. Holy Spirit, fill me. Open my heart so I can listen—to you, to my loved ones, to those crying out. Help me seek to understand before seeking to be understood. Open my mind to learn, to see the world the way you do; to serve, to give.

Help me to love—freely, unconditionally; like Jesus—everyone, always.

Spirit, help the world see your fruit in me. Help me live out grace and peace, as a wounded healer, as an advocate; like Jesus—for those who are lost, poor, desperate, oppressed; for those who have no voice.

Lord Jesus, you are enough. Thank you. I love you. Amen.

Scott Green

JESUS CLEANSSES TEN LEPERS

Read Luke 17:11-19. Answer a few basic questions:

- Is the location of this story important?
- What is the request of the lepers?
- How does Jesus respond?
- What is the relationship between obedience and healing?
- What is the relationship between praise and healing?
- How important is it that the one who returned to Jesus was a Samaritan?
- “Your faith has made you well.” Only the Samaritan heard this. What do you make of that?

Read the story again three times from three different perspectives:

- The nine lepers that didn’t return,
- The one Samaritan leper that did return, and
- The disciples (while the disciples are not specifically mentioned, it is hard to imagine that they are absent).

Explore these questions:

- How might each of these three participants have viewed Jesus?
- Is it possible that each participant might have heard the command to “Go show yourselves to the priests” differently?
- Might the disciples have been scandalized throughout this story?
- If all ten lepers were healed, what did the Samaritan gain that the other nine did not?

Now, in light of this story, how might you pray as this pandemic crashes around us?

Here is a start:

“Lord God, you have come to us in Jesus. You know our concerns. You hear our cries. You see us as we are: at risk, tired of this pandemic, worried and anxious, and grieving. You are our healer. You are the healer of our cities, nations, and world. You invite us to follow the “tried and true” ways to healing. You call us to be wise. You call us to let our faith be expressed through obedience. You welcome our return. You welcome our praise. We long, oh Lord, our Savior and healer, to experience your presence. In the midst of this pandemic, in the midst of the rising numbers of infections and deaths around us, we desire to hear your words “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

John M. Johnson

STILL THE ONE

Lord, I am distracted. I feel disconnected and even dislocated. I am not, in these times, where I want to be. Uncertain. Lost. Frantic. Too often alone. Masked. Sometimes, I am frightened.

I feel homeless and cannot find my way. My GPS does not work and the sky signs—the North Star—are hidden by dangerous clouds. Crowds. It seems that much—too much—does not hold and my map is hard to read.

So, I turn my face to your Face: Open my eyes that I might see again. Clearly. To re-orient. To relocate. Until then, I believe I am still yours, even though I feel lost for I cannot see my True North Star; then, and only then, can I navigate the great sea and find my way Home. Lord, Divine Center, I believe you are here. Still here. Still Lord. Still the Center of the universe. Still the One around whom all things revolve.

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”
(Psalm 73:25–26 NRSV).

Arthur M. Kelly

HEAL US!

Dear God, we realize a pandemic engulfs our nation and world. It covers the earth. We are aware of its burdensome impact on the poor among us. People are grieving the death of hundreds of thousands of family and friends. We do give thanks, however, for those who have been healed.

Dear Lord, we humble ourselves before you, for we know we are woefully inadequate for these challenges we face. This pandemic sickens and kills the body, but it also exposes and deepens divisions among us. Forgive us, dear Lord, for politicizing and deepening divisions among us. We repent for being so unloving to one another, for all kinds of reasons, during this pandemic. Lord, I repent—we repent—of our sins. In faith and hope, we embrace your love and promise of deliverance. Heal our bodies! Heal our divisions! Heal our nation!

In the authority of the One God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, amen.

James W. Lewis

OUR GOD WHO MEETS US AT THE CROSSROADS

Our God, the God who never falls silent, the God who most often speaks to us indirectly—through nature and through history: we know that this is not the first time the world has been at a crossroads.

But this is present and real to us. This is our particular crossroads. We are besieged by strife—an apparently never-ending war in Afghanistan. And unrelenting conflict in the Middle East. The entire world is also besieged by the global pandemic of COVID-19. Many have died of this disease; and millions more are sick—some gravely sick.

And then, there is economic hardship as the whole world is feeling the pain of lost jobs and incomes.

We ask for forgiveness. We repent. And we relent. You, God of Abraham, forgive us and intervene in the world as you have done so many times before. And bring back life.

Gilbert Lozano

ALL THINGS NEW

Well, Lord, this year has been nuts.
So many plans disrupted.
School disrupted.
Work disrupted.
Health disrupted.
So many MINISTRY plans disrupted.
So many ministry plans to grow your Kingdom, disrupted.
What's the point of that??
What's the point of any of this??

So many times I have asked, "Can we start over? Can we have another go at 2020?"
But time marches on. The news is often overwhelming. The challenges keep coming.
Fear. Frustration. Helplessness.
Didn't you once say, "Behold, I make all things new?"
Any day now would be fine with me.

I don't know when and I don't know how, but I will cling to your words.
I will choose to trust in your words:
"BEHOLD, I make all things new."
"Behold, I make ALL THINGS NEW."

And in the meantime, please, please develop in me, in all of us:

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-Control

All things new.

Jamie Nachtigall

STIR IN ME

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. —Matthew 5:8 NASB

Lord, when I read this, I say, “This is who I want to be; the pure in heart, because I want to see God for all eternity.” I am fully aware that it is my journey here that leads me into the everlasting. So, examine my heart, Lord. I release any emotion that may hinder your purity—doubt, fear, anger, rejection, anxiety, and anything connected to those feelings. Examine my mind; the seat of my thoughts or ideas that connect to my heart.

Teach me to see my brothers and sisters as you do; whether they sit by the pool of Bethesda, come out of Canaan or Samaria. Or sit in a tree. Let me see others as you did, in need of your loving compassion. Stir up within me the boldness to be genuinely different for you.

Amen.

Rosilyn Noble

A PRAYER FOR UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Most gracious and loving God, we honor you and praise you, but we also want to be honest with you. This moment in history of social distance, hand sanitizer, and loved ones dying alone in starch hospital beds is, well, *unprecedented*. We are weary. We are surrounded by protests and polarized politics and plummeting economies and a never-ending pandemic. We are watching neighbor turn against neighbor.

Yet, *you are still God*.

Thank you, God, for meeting us right here at this moment. Would you humble us as we pray, seek your face, and turn from our grievous ways? As we take these actions, would you hear us, forgive us, and heal our land? Empower us, in holiness and unity, to face these uncertain times with the strength of your spirit. In the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

Alyssa Peterson-DeWitt

PRAYER FOR A WEARY CHAPLAIN

Divine Healer, we still ourselves in your presence, remembering those who work as your hands and feet, to restore others from physical, mental, spiritual, and societal illness. In moments of uncertainty, we ask that you reorient us from our initial self-serving reactions to a posture of service, seeking to treat our neighbor as ourselves and seeking their best interest. Lord, remind us of who you call us to be as part of your body here on earth.

Create in me a new heart when I grow weary and feel that I am deserving to be an exception to the rule. Remind me that I am my siblings' keeper, and that I am responsible to do my part in making your kingdom more safe, welcoming, and inclusive for all your children.

Help me elevate the voices that have long been ignored, and give me grace in the discomfort of it all, O Lord, for I am growing. Amen.

Jennie Prior

SEEK JUSTICE

In silence... in stillness... I seek your holy presence, O Lord. I humbly pray that I may see your face, that I may know the truth, the light, and the love that embody You. As I witness our nation in this time of turmoil, I pray that I will be cleansed of any wickedness that may reside within me and that I may learn from You, O Lord, to love, to truly love all my neighbors, no matter their creed or their color. I believe that you, O Lord, can heal our land, but that healing can only take place when we, your people, come to realize that racism, in all of its forms, is a principality and a power that can be overcome only by way of Your miraculous, loving grace.

Help us, O Lord, to oppose the evil of racism and seek justice for all of your children. Amen.

Kevin Radaker

A CALL TO FAST

Let us proclaim a fast that gets the Lord's attention!

“Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” —Isaiah 58:6–7 NKJV

Dear Lord God, help us to really have the burden for the things that touch your heart. You care about those who are under the bonds of wickedness and suffer under the yokes of injustice. You want us to forsake those things that we say and do which are fed by the forces of darkness and that are passed down from generation to generation. You want us to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless poor, clothe the naked, and be a help to our own families. You want us to care about the downtrodden and seek to help them. When we fast to do those things, you have promised to deliver and empower and restore. Help us to set our hearts, minds, and hands to this type of fasting and submission. Empower us in it, and bless us through it we pray, in the precious and powerful name of Jesus Christ, amen!

“Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, And if you give yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will become like midday. And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell. —Isaiah 58:8–12 NKJV

Dear Lord, we want our light to shine like the dawn. We want our recovery to come speedily. We want our righteousness to go before us. We want your glory to be our rear guard. We want to be able to call and hear you answer. We want you to let us know that you are with us when we cry. Please give us the heart and the strength to be the people who have a heart for you and the things you want in and from us, so that we can experience all the blessings and glory that you desire to pour upon us. Help your people, Lord. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray, amen!

Mark K. Richardson

WELCOME, HOLY GOD

Holy God, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; giving God, of parted waters, wilderness, and manna; powerful God, of Rachel, Rebecca, and Ruth; mysterious God, of dry bones, crying rocks, and whispering voice; Loving God, whom Jesus reflected in all ways—

We hunger for strength beyond ourselves to hold us up so that we may hold others up. We lament about wasted opportunities, wasted dreams, and wasted lives. We yearn for a peace that overcomes the floods of hate and fear and disinterest. It is your love that we need in our hearts, homes, and culture.

We take this moment to stop. Stop the noise of raging winds that bring fires over hillsides and hurricanes from beaches. Stop the evil that threatens to envelope and surround us. We say stop.

And we say welcome.

We welcome our holy, giving, powerful, mysterious, loving God into this moment and into every moment to come.

Amen.

Mary Stephens

WE ARE WORN

Lord, we are worn. Wave after wave of fear, frustration, anxiety, anger, confusion, and chaos have relentlessly buffeted our hearts. We have tried to stay afloat, but we are exhausted, and we don't know what to do.

As the wind and waves rage around us, calm the storm in our hearts. Help us to know when to step out of the boat and when to join you for a time of rest. Either way, may our eyes be fixed on you.

May we not focus on ourselves or our circumstances, on our rights or being right. Instead, teach us to see you in the faces of the vulnerable: the ill, the oppressed, the widow, or the child in our home. Speak peace to our hearts, we pray, and cause it to shine as a beacon of hope to all who need to find you in the storm. Amen.

Abby Torgeson

GOOD THINGS

Lord of the past, present, and the future,

I pause now to listen. Direct now my attention to the contours of your movement in the world around me. Father, I now choose to rejoice as I acknowledge one truly good thing you have been doing around me. I join the community of saints in proclaiming: “Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!” (Revelation 15:3)

Lord, I trust you. I trust that you care for a breaking world. I trust that your heart is for and your attention is on those who are struggling even now to breathe; those who are struggling even now to pay their bills; those who are struggling even now to maintain a base level of mental health. I ask you now to reveal more of your perspective to me.

Lord, the pandemic has limited me in so many ways. But I dare now to ask: what opportunities are available to me now that were actually not available before? How, O God, might I make myself available?

I lean into your word for me from the book of Ephesians: “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” (Ephesians 2:10)

Lord, what good things have you held back just for me to do in this tumultuous time?

I’m thankful, Lord. Amen.

Jason Varner

GOD-DEFINED

God of the Universe, you made us to be God-defined. You set the parameters long ago, creating every human in the image of You. But we have chosen to define ourselves; call ourselves by our own names. We each make our community in our own image with our own understanding, then shake our fists at the sky asking why things are the way they are—even blaming others who call themselves by other names. Reveal to us this day how to be God-defined.

My Child, you have made for yourself a mud castle and called yourself after its likeness. But this is not what you were made for.

I have called you to much more.

You don't even know you sit in the muck; making kingdoms that don't grow living things.

Come out of your kingdom, out of your mud castle.

See the reality that you have mud on your face.

Wash in the river of my Spirit.

And come to me.

Then we can return and raze the castle you made; plant the seeds of a living garden that grows and bears fruit needed for the hungry world at hand.

Come to me.

Let me define you.

My name for you is much lovelier than any you are currently sitting in.

Let me name you.

Return to me.

Audrey Weiger

ANCIENT OF DAYS, BE NEAR

Creator God, you've prepared this day for us. Because we have a story with you, we bend our hearts and our minds to our awareness of your presence. In your good plan, you've allowed the sun to set on our yesterday. You invite us into the nascent dawn of the present in this twenty-four-hour adventure.

Where chaos is the slogan, restore your peace. Where destruction is the agenda, upend the plan. Where division is the refrain, rewrite the melody to tune to your harmonies of joy and hope. Set in motion through us a mighty wave of love and light that will not be extinguished.

We take your hand, Holy Companion, and step out in faith on the footpath you've made ready. Our faltering spirits are refreshed in the possibility of another walk with you.

With the psalmist, we say, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

Amen.

Carma Wood