

A SERVICE OF LIGHT

- REMEMBERING THE IMPACT OF A PANDEMIC -

Introduction

Someone you love has died. The death of a loved one is always difficult, but it is likely that the pandemic has made the circumstances of the death, as well as your family's grief, especially challenging.

Hospital visitations, travel, and gatherings have been severely restricted. You may have been prevented from visiting the person who was dying, travelling to be near the person or other loved ones, and even holding a funeral (or the service you wanted). And others may have been unable to visit you and offer their support in person.

No matter the cause of the death, these exceptional circumstances are no doubt making things even more distressing for you and your family.

Grief is our emotional response to loss. Many emotions, including anger, guilt, sadness, depression, loneliness, hopelessness, and numbness may be present after the death of a loved one. While grief is a universal experience and all of us will experience grief many times over the course of our lives, every grief experience is also unique. We do not grieve in the same way over different losses, and individual survivors grieve the death of one person differently.

At this particularly difficult time, it is important that we give ourselves permission to feel the emotions we are feeling, which may change from day to day or even from one moment to the next.

Losing a loved one in the midst of a pandemic is a traumatic experience. If we lose someone suddenly, or if we were not able to be with them while they were dying, our grief responses are complicated by the traumatic nature of the loss.

This service allows us to acknowledge our loss, to express our love for the one who has died and to gather in support of one another in a way we were not able to do at that time.

The service begins in silence so all may participate in a time of reflection.

Preparation

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

Let us pray:

**God of mercy, hear our prayer
for ourselves and for our families
who live with painful thoughts and memories.
We pray for strength for today,
courage for tomorrow
and peace for the past.
We ask these things
in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
who shares our life in joy and sorrow,
death and new birth,
despair and promise. Amen.**

Ministry of the Word

THE FIRST READING

Isaiah 40: 1, 25-31

The reader says

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter forty,
beginning at verse one.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.
To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal?
says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength, mighty in power,
not one is missing.
Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel,
'My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my God'?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

At the end the reader says

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 121

1. I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where is my help to come?
2. My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.
3. He will not suffer your foot to stumble;
he who watches over you will not sleep.
4. Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel
shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5. The Lord himself watches over you;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
6. So that the sun shall not strike you by day,
neither the moon by night.
7. The Lord shall keep you from all evil;
it is he who shall keep your soul.
8. The Lord shall keep watch over your going out
and your coming in,
from this time forth for evermore.

THE SECOND READING

Matthew 11: 28-30

The reader says

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter eleven,
beginning at verse twenty-eight.

Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

At the end the reader says

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A hymn may be sung.

Liturgy of Remembrance

The Paschal or other candle is lit and placed in a central position.

We light this candle to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face and the memory that binds them to us. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

We take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts ...

All say

**Lord, each of us takes our loved one by the hand
and leads them to you, the God of love.**

Here we present them to you.

**Accept our love and thanksgiving
as we entrust them to your loving care.**

We ask that you ...

save a place for us beside them,
fill us with motivation and energy when we feel like giving up,
remind us, when we are desolate, of our true homeland,
help us to find joy in the people, events
and the beauty of nature which surrounds us.

We thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives.
We believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again,
when we are all in your presence forever.
May this truth sustain us in this time of loss.

Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us, O Lord.
Comfort us in our sorrows.
God of consolation, draw near!
For you are our strength and hope. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us now confidently ask God for all the good things we need:

For ourselves as we gather together
as people coping with our many different losses.
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For our families and friends,
that we may continue to help and support one another,
and that you may bless them with love, peace, and joy.
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For every person we have loved who has died,
for all the losses we know in our lives,
that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise.
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For greater understanding of the lessons of love
as taught by Jesus.
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

God of great compassion and love,
listen to the prayers of these your people.
Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones,
the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus,
who taught us to pray.....

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation
 but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
 now and for ever. Amen.

or

Our Father, who art in heaven:

hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE LIGHTING OF INDIVIDUAL CANDLES

may take place here.

Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, and brokenness.

As we light our candles we offer our wounds to the God who loves us deeply,
carries our pain and bears our sorrows.

A list of names may be read if this has not already taken place.

God waits patiently, gently calling out, “Come to me all who labour and are
heavy laden, I will refresh you.”

I invite each of you to come forward and light a candle. As you light the candle,
remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close
until we are able to shine.

*Those present may come forward for the laying on of hands and a blessing, or may
return to their seat.*

These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go
out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

As we have gathered in this place, we embrace and claim the darkness that is
present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with
the darkness, we also know that we gather to be illumined by the light of the
Christ.

Going Out As God's People

ACCLAMATION OF THE LIGHT

Christ calls us out of the darkness
into his marvellous light.

His light shines in the darkness.
We rejoice in his glory.

From the rising of the sun to its setting
his name is proclaimed in all the world.

May the light of Christ comfort and sustain us
and lead us to new pastures of healing and peace.

Blessed be God, the light of the world.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

THE BLESSING

If a priest is present

May the Lord fill you with light, comfort, peace, and joy.
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

If no priest is present

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

THE DISMISSAL

May the hope of Christ sustain us through this darkness.
That together we may shine again. Amen.

Copyright

This material is Copyright © 2021 Representative Body of the Church of Ireland.