



PRESENCE:

LITURGIES OF CARE

Matthew J. Skolnik

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<http://mvpresby.org>

This document also exist in an editable format so that local Christian communities can adapt them to their needs. You may also ask about how this booklet can be used in an interactive training in your local Christian community.

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אָנָה אֵלֶיךָ מְרוֹחֵךְ וְאָנָה מִפְּנֵיךָ אֶבְרַח:
אִם־אֲסֻק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אַתָּה וְאִצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּגֶד:

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee
from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven,
you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol,
you are there.

Psalm 139:7-8

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNION

Although, we celebrate the Lord's Supper together as a body of believers, some are unable to attend public worship, particularly because of their health.

When we celebrate communion with those who are not able to be in worship, it is a continuation of the celebration we enjoy together in public worship.

In Communion, as we seek God's grace, we are joined with Jesus Christ and his Body. Because of our fellowship with Jesus, we are brought into communion with God.

As many people join to Christ in this celebration, we are brought together for perfect fellowship with one another.

Communion is a time for silent reflection, for sharing our burdens, and for celebrating the goodness and grace of God given to us in Jesus Christ.

Communion is also a time for God to strengthen us. As John Calvin writes, the sacrament is "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith..."

Let us worship God and be strengthened together.

OUTLINE

- Call to Worship
- Confession
- Declaration of Forgiveness
- Invitation to the Lord's Table
- Communion Prayer and the Lord's Prayer
- Prayer and Laying on of Hands (healing, wholeness, thanksgiving)
- Breaking of the Bread
- Communion
- Closing Prayer and Blessing

CALL TO WORSHIP (OPTIONS)

Matthew 11:28, 29

Jesus says:

Come to me,

all you who 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.

John 6:35, 37

I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,

and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Everyone that the Father gives me will come to me,

and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.

John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me
and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you
can do nothing.

CONFESSION & PARDON

Call to Confession

In the Lord's Supper,
We meet God face to face.
We communion with the Lord, and with one another.

As we celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of Christ,
As we are embraced by God's forgiveness,
As we are renewed in Spirit
As we are nurtured by the grace of God,
It is right, faithful, and just to confess our sins and needs to God.

Let us pray.

Confession of Sin:

Merciful God,
Your spirit makes us aware of how we have broken
relationship with you, others, and your creation.

We offer to you every lie that we have told,
Every word that has been insincere or hurtful,
Every action that has destroyed or harmed,
Every thought that has harbor hate, angry, and jealousy,
Every desire that is not focused on your glory.

We also give to you all of our brokenness,
Brokenness of body,
Brokenness of heart and mind,
Brokenness of relationship and home,

Brokenness of politics and business,
Brokenness of pride and triumph.

In these moments, hear our deepest and darkest prayers.

[silent prayer]

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS (OPTIONS)

Romans 8:34; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Hear the good news!

Who is in a position to condemn?

Only Christ, and Christ died for us,

Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us,

Christ prays for us.

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

The old life has gone;

a new life has begun.

Know that God has acted to forgive us even before we have asked.

Even if we were to make our bed at the farthest limits of the sea, there the Lord would find us.

Let us rejoice in the Lord, and be at peace.

Amen.

Philippians 2:5-8

Let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—even death on
a cross.

Let us know that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to
everlasting. Every moment is covered with the faithfulness
of God.

Even if we lay in the place of the dead, there God will be
present.

Grace is poured upon you, now and forever more. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

This is the table of the Lord.

Christ is the host and the feast.

The nourishment and the one who welcomes us.

People from all times and places will come here
to eat with us.

People from the farthest corners of the earth with
celebrate with us.

People who we do not know and who we do not
want are present.

The Lord is good beyond what we can imagine.

Let us come for healing, nurture, forgiveness and
communion.

Choose one of these two options

Isaiah 55:1-2

Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

Revelation 3:17-18

You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do
not need a thing.'

But you do not realize that you are wretched,
pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the
fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes
to wear, so you can cover your shameful
nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you
can see.

COMMUNION PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Communion Prayer (may be used as a model)

Alright God, we thank you are faithful, right, and just.

We praise you that your glory fills the heavens,
And we ask that it will fill our praise.

We lift your name higher than the heights heavens
And farther than the vast expanse of space.

We thank you for these common elements of bread and the
fruit of the vine.

We thank you that you use them to strength us in the
weakness of our faith.

We thank you that here, at your table we are greeted with
wholeness, salvation, and forgiveness.

We thank you that you tend to our hearts individually, but
that you united us, here, with all the works of your hands.

We thank you that as we see others at your table, that you
remind us that your grace extends farther than what we
sometimes want, and farther than what we could imagine.

Have mercy on us as individuals and as your body, the Body
of Christ.

Weave us into relationship with one another in real, true, and faithful ways.

We thank you for the life of Christ, where you declare that you are with us.

We thank you for the death of Jesus, where you proclaim that you are for us.

And thank you for the resurrection of our Lord, when you showed the cosmos that you have defeated both sin and death.

In these moments, may you truly be the vine which nourishes, truly be the bread which feeds, and truly be our source of hope and peace.

We thank you that you hear the pray that Jesus taught us to pray together:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed by 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 debts,
As we forgive our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
And the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.

Laying on of Hands (prayers specific to those whom we are celebrating communion with: healing, wholeness, thanksgiving)

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 22:19-20

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take, eat.

This is my body, given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, Jesus took the cup, saying:

This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Whenever you drink it,

do this in remembrance of me.

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup,
You proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord,
until he comes.

COMMUNION

name, the body of Christ, which is our life.
name, the blood of Christ, which is our joy.

CLOSING PRAYER

Great and Almighty God, we thank you that you meet us here, that we might abide in you and you in us.

In our weakness, accommodate our fragile faith, and grow us in thanksgiving, worship, and service. **Amen.**

BLESSING

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord be kind and gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace.

CHAPTER 2

SEARCHING FOR HEALING AND WHOLENESS

This ministry is for individuals, families, or groups who are experiencing a particularly difficult time. It may be used with the church family, or in a hospital, home, or nursing home.

OUTLINE

- Opening Sentences of Scripture
- Opening Prayer
- Naming our Needs
- Laying on of Hands (and anointing with oil)
- Closing Prayer
- Blessing

OPENING SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE (OPTIONS)

Psalm 27:13-14

I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord,
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

Isaiah 40:31

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.

OPENING PRAYER

The following or a simple pray be offered.

Let us pray for God's healing faithfulness together:

High Lord of heaven, and ruler of all,
Today we acknowledge our need for you:
The blind seek sight,
The prisoner begs for freedom,
The ill look for healing,
The downtrodden ask to be lifted up,
The lonely long for communion,
Families and communities desire wholeness,
Minds cry out for peace,
Hearts look for strength.

Almighty God, touch our wounds, relieve our hurts, and restore us to wholeness of life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

NAMING OUR NEEDS

Jacob ran in fear from those whom he cheated and deceived.

Hannah burst into the temple to pour her heart out to God.

The Hebrew children cried out when enslaved.

King David repented as he sinned against God and others.

In Naomi's bitter plight, she did not ask for Ruth's companionship, but God still provided for her need.

Whether we name our need in this moment or hold them quietly in our hearts, let us offer our deepest struggles to God, and may we listen to one another with empathy, assurance, forgiveness, care, and mercy.

What are your deepest needs today?

[Share your struggles and hearts with one another.]

At this time, it may be appropriate to sing a simple song, such as "Spirit of the Living God."

*Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on us,
Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on us.
Break us, melt us, mold us, fill us.
Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on us.*

LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING WITH OIL (OPTIONS)

The following prayers may be used verbatim or as a guide. They may be used before or after a prayer offered by the leader.

The leader dips her or his thumb in the oil and makes the sign of the cross on the person's forehead, adding of the following blessings.

1. Gracious God, may your Spirit surround, fill, nurture, and heal name. May they know, and may all the world know, that you have the power and desire to heal and make whole. In this broken, may you make all things new, as you will in the age to come. **Amen.**
2. Jesus, as the Living Word of God, speak now to name. May your word of grace sustain, may your word of peace strengthen, and may your word of healing grant life in this moment. **Amen.**
3. Almighty God, with all of the power which was demonstrated in your act of creation, with all the might that was experienced in the resurrection of Jesus, and with all the glory that will be seen as your Kingdom is unfolded, heal name, and make us whole. **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord we are mindful that in some moments your healing is instantaneous, and in other moments we walk on a pathway and journey towards healing.

In all forms, we give you thanks that you are the one who is mighty to save. Save us in these moments, and save us in all eternity.

May we live within the midst of your rule, and within the presence of your way.

Praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

BLESSING

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CHAPTER 3

SEEKING REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

At times, individuals are burdened by a heavy conscience and are looking for the assurance of forgiveness. This ministry is to bear witness to the goodness of God given to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE

- Opening Sentences of Scripture
- Opening Prayer
- Forgiveness and Repentance
- The Peace of Christ

OPENING SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE (OPTIONS)

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Philippians 1:3-6

I thank my God every time I remember you.
In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy
because of your partnership
in the gospel from the first day until now,
being confident of this,
that God who began a good work in you will carry it on to
completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:14, 17-18

We believe that Jesus died and rose again;
and so it will be for those who have died in Christ.
God will raise them to be with the Lord forever.
Comfort one another with these words.

OPENING PRAYER

The following or a simple prayer may be offered.

Let us pray that we might know the grace of God in Jesus Christ:

God of all mercy, we know that you are the God of Justice, Faithfulness, and Righteousness. We pray that in this time of need that you will pour your love into our hearts and over our lives. May we worship you in these moments, uttering praise to your name, as we seek your forgiveness and grace in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins,
God who is faithful and just
will forgive us our sins
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Galatians 6:1-3

Loved ones, if someone is caught in a sin, you should
restore them gently...Carry each other's burdens, and in this
way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are
something when they are nothing, they deceives himself.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,

In these moments, we have become aware that we are in need of your healing and salvation. Our sin is too much to carry by ourselves. So we come to you together, knowing that we need you.

Today we recall the words of your scriptures, that all of us have sinned. We have all fallen from your glory. We all stand speechless before you.

On our knees we fall.

We cry out for your mercy, and we have no choice and no life apart from you.

In these moments, condemn and restore.

With these simple breaths, judge and redeem.

O Lord, hear our prayers.

[Silent or spoken prayers may be offered.]

Amen.

It may be appropriate for the leader to continue to pray for all those who are present.

Declaration of Forgiveness

1 John 4:9-10

God's love was revealed among us in this way:
God sent the only Son into the world
so that we might live through Christ.
In this is love, not that we loved God,
but that God loved us
and sent the Son to be
the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Friends, in the name of Jesus
you are reconciled with God. **Amen.**

THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Philippians 4:7

May the peace of God, which passes all
understanding, keep your heart and your mind in
Christ Jesus.

Signs of peace and reconciliation may be shared.

CHAPTER 4

AT THE TIME OF DEATH OR A TRAUMATIC EVENT

During a traumatic event, such as a death, a servant of Christ, can not take the pain away or remove the hurt from the circumstance. Pain and grief are real and are a natural part of what it means to be human.

While listening, praying, and sharing, the Christian servant is to be a fresh reminder of the saving acts of God throughout history, and point to the One who saves.

The following or some variation may be suitable for those experiencing a traumatic event.

OUTLINE

- Opening Sentences of Scripture
- Opening Prayer
- Moments of Lament and Peace
- Recognition of Mixed Emotions
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Peace of Christ

OPENING SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE (OPTIONS)

Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 66:13

As a Father has compassion for his children,
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear God.
As a mother comforts her child,
So I will comfort you, says the Lord.

Psalm 124:8

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.

Isaiah 40:11

God will feed his flock like a shepherd;
The Lord will gather the lambs closely,
and carry them in against the bosom.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you;
My peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled,
and do not let them be afraid.

Romans 6:3-5

When we were baptized in Christ Jesus,
we were baptized into his death.
We were buried therefore with him
by baptism into death,
so that, as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life.
For if we have been united with Christ
in a death like his,
we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 14:8

If we live, we live to the Lord,
and if we die, we die to the Lord;
so then, whether we live or whether we die,
we are the Lord's.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
who comforts us in all our sorrows,
so that we can comfort others in their sorrow,
with the consolation we have received from God.

1 Thessalonians 4:14, 17-18

We believe that Jesus died and rose again;
And so it will be for those
who have died in Christ.
God will raise them to be with the Lord forever.
Comfort one another with these words.

OPENING PRAYER

The following or a simple prayer may be offered.

Let us pray that we might know the grace of God in Jesus Christ:

God of all mercy, today we are reminded of the day you stood and cried over the death of Lazarus.

Lord of all life, today we call to mind when you healed the blind, the lame, the deaf, and the mute.

Almighty and Everlasting God, today recall the hour of your death as you shouted that your work was finished.

We know that in life and in death, we belong to you.

We know that in celebration and mourning, we belong to you.

We remind one another that when we are broken and overcome with grief and despair, that you might us in our pain, and that you gather with us in our agony.

Today we prayer especially for...

Today we give you thanks for the glimpses of goodness and faithfulness, even in this suffering. So Lord, we give thanks for...

MOMENTS OF LAMENT AND PEACE

Today, we do not give thanks for evil, pain, loss, and destruction. And we cry out to God in pain.

Yet, we give thanks for the witness of the scriptures, that we can pour our heart out to God in grief and lamentation.

With the voice of the faithful from every generation, we listen to God's word in Psalm 130 together:

*Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.
If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in God's word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with God is full redemption.
God will redeem Israel from all their sins.*

God's mercies are new every morning, yet today we suffer.

The Lord's steadfast love never ceases, yet in this moment we cry.

The Almighty's grace endures, yet we taste our tears, and have no words.

Gracious God, as we seek your peace that passes all understanding, we give thanks for your countless blessings, especially in this time of sorrow.

So Lord, we give thanks for...

RECOGNITION OF MIXED EMOTIONS

In some circumstances it may be helpful to acknowledge the mixed emotions of those who are gathered.

Sometimes people feel guilty at a time of loss when they feel joy and sorrow.

Some feel thankful that suffering has ended while being distraught at loss.

Others feel relieved that a time of struggle is over and yet they mourn.

In addition, some feel relief and guilty.

In this, please remember that the cross is:

- a tree of life and a tree of death
- a place of judgement and forgiveness
- a location of Christ's surrender, and one of God's power

Likewise, in Genesis, we are reminded that both the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil are both in the center of the garden and have a place of honor.

For any who feel mixed emotions this day, please remember that God has the ability to hold all of this together. There is no right nor wrong feeling nor emotion.

And now, if it is helpful for you, let us name our emotions together...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

When we are at a loss for words, it is helpful to settle in to Christ's peace through the family words of faith. Let us pray the Lord's Prayer together.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed by 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 debts,
As we forgive our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
And the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.**

THE BLESSING (OPTIONS)

Philippians 4:7

May the peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, forevermore.

Hebrews 13:20, 21

The God of peace,
who brought back from the dead
our Lord Jesus Christ,
make you complete in everything good
so that you may do God's will,
working among us that
which is pleasing in God's sight,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be the glory forever and ever.

CHAPTER 5

SCRIPTURES OF COMFORT, HOPE, AND PEACE

There is a companion booklet with all of these passages printed. The following is quick reference guide of helpful verses. This document also exist in an editable format so that local Christian communities can adapt them to their needs.

As you visit with others, you may find it helpful to read these passages in isolation or as part of liturgies which are printed above.

Isaiah 35:1-10

Even the desert will be glad

Isaiah 40:28-31

The everlasting God

Isaiah 61:1-4

The Spirit of the Lord is...

Psalms 6:2-4, 6-9

Be merciful, I am faint...

Psalms 22:1-2, 14-15, 19, 22-24

Feeling forsaken

Psalms 23

The Lord is Shepherd

Psalms 27:1, 4-9, 13-14

The Lord is Light & Salvation

Psalms 42:1-5

Longing for God

Psalms 69:1-3, 13-17, 29-30

Rescue me, answer me

Psalms 86:1-7, 11-16

Answer me, have mercy

Psalms 103:1-5

Praise the Lord, heal, redeem

Psalm 121
Psalm 130
Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24
Matthew 5:1-12
Matthew 10 and Mark 6
Matthew 11:2-5
Matthew 11:28-30
Mark 10:13-16
Luke 4:40
Luke 5:12-16
Luke 8:43-48
John 12:1-11
John 14:1-6, 25-27
Acts 3:1-10
Romans 8:13-23
Romans 8:26-28
Romans 8:31-39
Romans 12:1-2
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
1 Corinthians 15:12-34
1 Corinthians 15:35-58
Galatians 3:15-29
Ephesians 4:1-16
Philippians 4:4-9
Colossians 3:1-17
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
James 5:13-16
1 Peter 1:3-9
Revelation 21:1-7

Help comes from the Lord
Waiting for the Lord
Search me and know me
Blessed are the...
Sending of the 12
Are you the Messiah?
Come to me, all who are weary
Let the little children come
Jesus lays on hands to heal
Lord, if you are willing...
Woman touches Jesus' cloak
Mary anoints Jesus
Troubled hearts
Peter heals
Becoming children of God
Help in our weakness
God is for us
Renewing of our minds
Paul's history of Gospel
The destruction of death
Death has no victory
The Law leads us to Christ
Unity in Christ
Rejoice in the Lord always
Since you have been raised
We have a great high priest
The Lord will act
A living hope
A new heaven and new earth