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NOTES ON USING THIS BOOK

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES you will find liturgies for use in a number of different ways. Some are meant to be read by a “Leader” and the “People,” as in a traditional liturgical service or responsive reading. Others are intended for personal use, either read silently or aloud. And still others may contain multiple speaking parts for use in a group.

However, none of these formats should be considered rigid. One might choose to split up a personal liturgy to be read in parts by a group for whom the subject is applicable. And likewise, those liturgies written for a “Leader” and “People” may be of equal value to the lone reader.

The prayers included in the “Liturgies of the Moment” section are designed for memorization so that they can be recalled at need.

For those wishing to reproduce a liturgy for use with large groups, individual liturgies are available for download at www.EveryMomentHoly.com. Downloads are available for both personal use (such as with family and friends) and public use (such as for church services or public events). Further details are available on the website.

It’s hoped that the liturgies in this book, no matter how they are used, will serve as prayers to encourage readers in practicing mindfulness of the constant presence of God and draw them toward greater recognition of the eternal echoes resounding in every moment of our lives.

NOTE: Many liturgical resources already exist for church ceremonies of communion, baptism, marriage, last rites, etc. These might be found in texts such as *The Book of Common Prayer*, or the Books of Order for various denominations. The prayers in *Every Moment Holy* are not intended to supplant this wealth of resources created over hundreds of years. Rather, these are offered as supplemental prayers and liturgies for moments not specifically addressed in those core liturgies of the church.

SAMPLE

FOREWORD

BY DOUGLAS KAINÉ MCKELVEY

FROM THE MOMENT OF OUR BAPTISM into the death of Jesus, we begin the practice of dying by degrees—dying to self and to our self-centered pursuits of anything that wars against our vocation as disciples. We begin the long, sanctifying process of taking up our crosses each day, seeking to crucify those parts of our hearts that yet cry *Me!* and *Mine!*, and surrendering piece-by-piece those territories of our souls we had so long claimed as our own, now submitting them instead to the lordship of Christ.

What we don't always see is how that daily dying to self is a part of the same process that finds its final culmination for the believer in physical death. For in that last leg of our mortal journey we release all material goods we've accumulated, all comforts and entertainments and pleasures of this world, all illusions of our own power or mastery over life, and all temporal human relationships, and we grasp instead in our finally emptied hands, the hand of our Lord and Shepherd, who is the only constant, the only relationship that we do not release in that transition from life to death to life everlasting.

This truth is perhaps at the heart of a more robust theology of dying that we would do well to reclaim, reexamining also in that light the ways in which we relate to and care for the dying and the grieving among us. Such care should not be the sole purview of therapists and practitioners of medicine, after all—though they each have their valuable places. But neither of those fields is generally equipped to offer spiritual shepherding, nor compassionate community, nor to infuse the journeys of the dying and grieving with the great and central hope contained in the sweeping story of God's redemptive works across history and into eternity—namely, that death is not

the end, that all creation will be made new, the children of God resurrected unto eternal life in glorified physical bodies in which we will live and play and take joy, all to the glory of God, in community, in creativity, in worship, in wonder, and in celebration. Remembrance of this story, and of how our own deaths find their context in it, is one of the great gifts the church has been given to steward, and a gift that we ought to continually offer to one another. It is the best hope in all of creation.

Ours is the honor and the responsibility of conducting and carrying one another through this valley of shadow, till we reach the edge of that river bank and the one we love must abandon upon that shore the last of all they carry, wading out into those waters where they will be met by their Creator and Redeemer and lovingly led the rest of the way across as the veil falls away and life is swallowed in Life.

In the end, all our hopes hinge on the central truth of the Resurrection. Christ died and was raised again to life, and the same power that raised him to life will raise us again as well, and also those we have loved and lost in this life—all whose hopes were also set on Christ. In the face of our own deaths, or the deaths of those we are privileged to know and love most in this pilgrimage, we all need to be reminded again and again of this great story and of its storied end.

For a day is coming—an actual day, real enough that it could be marked on a calendar if we had access to such mysteries—when we will be eternally freed from death's presence. Imagine the feast and the festival we might attend that day, the songs, the stories, the thanksgiving and adoration, the creative expression in art and poetry and dance, the jubilation and celebration when that liberation is finally achieved and the presence and the glory of God illuminates the landscape, and each of us, for the first time in our lives, are unselfconscious and without fear, newly awakened to the beauty, the wonder, the glory of God revealed, and reflected in his people and in his creation.

Lord Jesus, come quickly! Haste that day of wholeness and joy!

Now in these remaining days between that great breaking of death's power once and for all at the cross, and the destruction of all last vestiges of death's presence when Christ's kingdom is finally fully established, each of us must still reckon with our own mortality. We must still grieve. We must still learn what it means to mourn with those who mourn. For we are a people called to love sacrificially. And love is always sacrificial—partly because anything we love we will lose in this life. There is no love of others that does not necessarily open us to loss, wound, and grief. But we do not grieve without hope.

These prayers and liturgies are offered in light of that eternal hope—and in the hope that they might serve the Body of Christ, encouraging us to give ourselves more fully to the experience of our present sorrows in light of those unshakeable joys to come, to better learn what it means to nurture, serve, encourage, and carry one another, and ultimately to reclaim a greater sense that these journeys of dying, caretaking, and grieving are holy moments to be experienced in communion with God, and in fellowship with one another, just as any other facet of our discipleship.

Death need not be cause for ultimate dismay.

Death is not, and will never be, the end.

Christ has already seen to that.

There is a joy that awaits.

There is a hope that lights this darkness.

There is a journey that leads us inevitably to the great declaration:

Christus Victor!

Christ victorious!

Christ has conquered death!

All praise be his.
All glory, his own.

Now, O Lord, take the meager, insufficient offering of these many words,
and if it please you, bless and multiply their benefits,
for the nurturing of your people.

Amen.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE



Invocation

SAMPLE

O Spirit of the Living God, who raises
your people from death to life,

the comforting of your children
in their hard journeys through the valley
of the shadow is, from beginning to end,
your work, not mine.

I am neither wise enough, nor compassionate
enough, nor tempered enough by present griefs,
to form prayers adequate to serve these your
people in the face of an enemy so formidable
as death.

I am wholly unfit to enter the holy sufferings of
others, to give guidance or true comfort,
to speak words of consolation that would name
the wounds of dying and grieving hearts,
or wrap them in compassionate
embrace, or remind them
that there remains a firm, eternal hope
which will outgrow and outlast death itself.

If this is not your work, then I would not have it
be mine. For I would not bid the grieving hang
their sorrows or their hopes on any words that
cannot bear their weight.

So then, take this meager measure of anything
I might give, O God, and bless it

A LITURGY BEGGING
THE GRACE TO

Accomplish What Is Beyond Me

for the benefit of your people.
Breathe spirit and life into these flawed forms.
Let my insufficiencies be met
by the multiplying power of your grace.

I know I will encounter discouragement
in this labor.
I know I will often experience the creative
process as an impossible struggle against
self and darkness.

FOR WE ARE HIS
WORKMANSHIP, CREATED
IN CHRIST JESUS
FOR GOOD WORKS,
WHICH GOD PREPARED
BEFOREHAND, THAT WE
SHOULD WALK IN THEM.
—EPHESIANS 2:10

Even so, be at work in and through me, O Lord.

I will sometimes falter, lose heart, abandon
course, and be tempted to turn to diversions
and old comforts that cannot sustain.

Even so, be at work in and through me, O Lord.

On my best days I might be too confident in my
own abilities to recognize the depth of my need,
but more often I will be too empty, too spent,
too crippled by my brokenness to believe I have
anything to give.

Even so, O Lord, be at work in and through me.

In the end, this is my sole means of stewardship:
to repeatedly ply the imperfect talents with
which you have entrusted me, daily offering

to you my poverty, begging you to fill the hollow forms of my offerings.

O Holy Spirit, meet, fill, and quicken now, these insufficient gifts. Inspire prayers that would shepherd and comfort your people—even in their dyings, even in their griefs—voicing their mortal laments and their eternal hopes, gently turning their gaze to the promise of coming resurrection, to the hope of a world remade, and to the splendor of the King who soon returns to redeem all sorrows.

Amen.

AN EXHORTATION
MAKING SPACE

To Speak of Dying

Children of the Living God,

Let us now speak of dying,
and let us speak without fear,
for we have already died with Christ,
and our lives are not our own.

Our dying is part of the story
that God is telling to us,
and part of the story
that God is telling *through* us.

It is not a dark and hopeless word
we must take pains to skirt or
mention only in hushed whispers lest
our conversations grow awkward
and uncomfortable.

Rather, death is a present and
unavoidable reality, and one
through which we—the people
of God—must learn to openly
walk with one another.

Yes, it is cause for lament. Death is
a horrible and inevitable sorrow.
It is grief. It is numb shock and
raw pain and long seasons of
weeping and ache. And we will
experience it as such.



But it is more than all of that.

For it is also a baptism,
a prelude to a celebration.

Our true belief that Christ died
and was raised again
promises this great hope:

That there will be a newness of life,
a magnificent resurrection that
follows death and swallows it entirely.

Death will not have the final word,
so we need not fear to speak of it.

Death is not a period that ends a sentence.
It is but a comma,
a brief pause before the fuller thought
unfolds into eternal life.

Beloved of Christ, do not
hide from this truth: Each of
us in time must wrestle death.
In our youth we might have run
in fear from such lament, but only
those who soberly consider their
mortal end can then work backward
from their certain death, and so begin
to build a life invested in eternal things.

We should remember death throughout our lives, that we might arrive at last well-prepared to follow our Lord into that valley, and through it, further still, to our resurrection.

Death is not the end of life.

It is an intersection—a milestone we pass in our eternal pursuit of Christ.

Yes, death is an inhuman, hungering thing. But it is also the pompous antagonist in a divine comedy. Even as it seeks to destroy all that is good, death is proved a near-sighted buffoon whose overreaching plans will fail, whose ephemeral kingdom will crumble.

For all along, death has been blindly serving the deeper purposes of God within us—giving us the knowledge that all we gather in this short life will soon be scattered, that all we covet will soon be lost to us, that all we accomplish by our ambition will soon be rendered as meaningless as vapor.

Death reveals the utter vanity of all our misplaced worship and all our feebly-invested hopes.

DO YOU NOT KNOW
THAT ALL OF US WHO
HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED
INTO CHRIST JESUS
WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS
DEATH? WE WERE BURIED
THEREFORE WITH HIM BY
BAPTISM INTO DEATH,
IN ORDER THAT, JUST
AS CHRIST WAS RAISED
FROM THE DEAD BY THE
GLORY OF THE FATHER,
WE TOO MIGHT WALK IN
NEWNESS OF LIFE. FOR IF
WE HAVE BEEN UNITED
WITH HIM IN A DEATH LIKE
HIS, WE SHALL CERTAINLY
BE UNITED WITH HIM IN A
RESURRECTION LIKE HIS.
—ROMANS 6:3–5

And once we've seen, in light of death,
how meaningless all our human strivings
have been, then we can finally apprehend
what the radical hope of a bodily resurrection
means for mortals like us—and how
the labors of Christ now reshape
and reinterpret every facet of our lives,
rebuilding the structures of our hopes
till we know that nothing of eternal worth
will ever be lost.

Yes, we are crucified with our Lord,
but all who are baptized into his death
are also resurrected into his life, so that
we live now in the overlap of the kingdoms
of temporal death and eternal life—

and when it is our time to die,
we die in that overlap as well,
and there we will find that our dying has
already been subverted, rewritten, folded in,
and made a part of our resurrection.

Have we not all along been
rehearsing Christ's death and
his life in the sacrament of his
communion? We have been both
remembering and rehearsing
our union and reunion with him.

O children of God, do you now see?
 Your pursuit of Christ has always
 demanded a daily dying to your own self,
 and to your own dreams.

That final, brief sleep of death is but the last
 laying down of all those lesser things, that
 you might awake remade, set free, rejoicing
 in the glorious freedom that will be yours.

Yes, hate death!

It is an enemy—
 but an enemy whose end approaches, and
 whose assault can inflict no lasting wound.

Yes, weep and grieve!

But more than that, believe!
 The veil is thinner than we know.
 And death is thinner still.
 It cannot hold any whose names are
 dearly known to God. Rejoice in this!
 Death is neither a grey void, nor
 a dungeon cell—but a door.
 And when Christ bids us
 pass through at last,
 we pass from life to Life.

Amen.

... SHARE IN SUFFERING
 FOR THE GOSPEL BY THE
 POWER OF GOD, WHO
 SAVED US AND CALLED US
 TO A HOLY CALLING, NOT
 BECAUSE OF OUR WORKS
 BUT BECAUSE OF HIS OWN
 PURPOSE AND GRACE,
 WHICH HE GAVE US IN
 CHRIST JESUS BEFORE
 THE AGES BEGAN, AND
 WHICH NOW HAS BEEN
 MANIFESTED THROUGH
 THE APPEARING OF OUR
 SAVIOR CHRIST JESUS,
 WHO ABOLISHED DEATH
 AND BROUGHT LIFE AND
 IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT
 THROUGH THE GOSPEL,
 —2 TIMOTHY 1:9-10

SAMPLE

LITURGIES FOR

Seasons *of*
Dying



God my Rock, Fortress, and Eternal Foundation,

Be present in this first moment of my fear,
for the footings of my life as I've known it
are shaken. Unwelcome news has tilted
the world suddenly, robbing me of balance
and bearing, casting all plans for pleasant
futures in a wavering light.

How am I to process this hard report, O Lord,
this intrusive revelation of my own frailty
and mortality—frailty, coupled with a fear
that further tests, treatments, and consultations
could lead to news still worse, and that this
moment might, in hindsight, be seen as the
beginning of the chapter that will close with
my final breath.

O God Who Fights for Me, be present in
this first confusion. Be present in this first
uncertain distress. Be present in my passage
through denial, anger, frustration, and fear.
Shepherd me through every anxiety as I—
and all who love me—seek to absorb this blow.

Be near in ways that I can sense and know.
Convince me of your care. Be my everlasting
rock, my unassailable fortress, my fierce defender.
Steady the spinning of my world.

Amen.

A LITURGY FOR

When the News Is Bad

INCLINE YOUR EAR,
O LORD, AND ANSWER
ME, FOR I AM POOR AND
NEEDY. PRESERVE MY LIFE,
FOR I AM GODLY; SAVE
YOUR SERVANT, WHO
TRUSTS IN YOU—YOU ARE
MY GOD. BE GRACIOUS
TO ME, O LORD, FOR TO
YOU DO I CRY ALL THE
DAY. GLADDEN THE SOUL
OF YOUR SERVANT,
FOR TO YOU, O LORD,
DO I LIFT UP MY SOUL.
—PSALM 86:1-4

A LITURGY FOR
 Seasons of
 Uncertainty

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS
 ABOUT ANYTHING,
 BUT IN EVERYTHING
 BY PRAYER AND
 SUPPLICATION WITH
 THANKSGIVING LET YOUR
 REQUESTS BE MADE
 KNOWN TO GOD. AND
 THE PEACE OF GOD,
 WHICH SURPASSES ALL
 UNDERSTANDING, WILL
 GUARD YOUR HEARTS
 AND YOUR MINDS IN
 CHRIST JESUS.
 —PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7

In the midst of whatever follows, O Lord,
 let me meet your mercies anew,
 and anew, and anew.

In the midst of my dismay, fix my eyes again
 and again upon your eternal promises.

How this ends—that is up to you.
 If the next news is favorable, I will
 praise you for the ongoing gift of life.
 If tomorrow's tidings are worse, still
 will I proclaim your goodness, my
 heart anchored ever more firmly in the
 eternal joys you have set before me.

And when, whether days or decades from
 now, you finally bid me rise and follow you
 across the last valley, I will rejoice
 in your faithfulness even there.

Especially there—

praying *Thy will be done*,
 and trusting by faith that it *will* be done.
 That it *is* being done. Even now.
 Even in this disquiet.

I am utterly yours, O Christ.
 In the midst of this uncertainty,
 I abandon myself again to you, the author
 and the object of all my truest hopes.

Amen.

LEADER: We were not made for mortality
but for immortality,

PEOPLE: and so the faltering of our
physical bodies repeatedly takes us
by surprise.

The aches, the frailties, the injuries, the
impositions of vexing disease and worsening
condition are unwelcome evidences of our
long exile from the Garden.

**Even so, may the inescapable decline
of our bodies here not be wasted.
May it do its tutoring work, inclining
our hearts and souls ever more vigorously
toward your coming kingdom, O God.**

While we rightly pray for healing and relief,
and sometimes receive the respite
of such blessings, give us also patience
for the enduring of whatever hardships
our journeys entail.

**For what we endure here,
in the deterioration of bone and joint,
blood and marrow, muscle and ligament,
vitality and mobility and clarity,
is but our own small share of the malady
common to a frayed creation,
yet yearning for a promised restoration.**

A LITURGY FOR THE
**Feeling of
Infirmities**

Give us humility therefore in our infirmities,
to ask and to receive, day by day,
your mercies as our needs require.

**Where our dependence on others increases,
let us receive their service as a grace
rather than a shame.**

Let us trace in the hands of our caregivers
the greater movement of your own hands,
for you ever meet us and uphold us
in our weakness.

**And in those moments when
our bodies betray our trust,
work in us by our own hard experience
a more active and Christlike compassion
for the sufferings of others.**

MY HEART IS STRUCK
DOWN LIKE GRASS AND
HAS WITHERED; I FORGET
TO EAT MY BREAD.
BECAUSE OF MY LOUD
GROANING MY BONES
CLING TO MY FLESH.
PSALM 102:4-5

Give us also a sense of humor
to wink at our weaknesses now,
knowing that they are but the evidences
of a perishable body
that will at your beckoning
rise again imperishable, and that the
greater joke is the one played upon death.

**By the inevitable dwindling of our strength,
may the mettle of our true hope at last
be proved, rising as the memory of a song
stirring deep in the bones,
a martial melody of which our difficulties
are but the approaching drumbeat,**

reminding us that this flesh and blood
is soon to be transformed, redeemed, remade.

**The infirmities we incur today
are but the expected buffetings of a battle
at the victorious end of which our birthright
will be forever reclaimed.**

So may the decline of our bodies
incline our hearts and souls
ever more vigorously
toward your coming kingdom, O God.
Ever more vigorously.

Amen.

O Christ My Hope in Present Troubles,

Today I approach this treatment with
a measure of trepidation and uncertainty,
but I approach it also with the guarded hope
that it will prove effective, slowing or stemming
the advance of the condition besetting me,
perhaps even turning the tide of my dis-ease
so that I might see whatever now threatens me
driven into retreat, or even defeated.

A LITURGY BEFORE A

Medical Treatment

I beseech you, O God My Father, be merciful,
 be gracious, be kind. Let what I undergo today
 prove something more than an empty exercise.

Mitigate the pain and discomfort I might
 encounter today and in the days to come.
 Let this treatment be productive. Renew
 my body. Restore health and vitality. I wish
 to live and love and serve and take delight
 in the good gifts of this life as long as I can.

YOU KEEP HIM IN
 PERFECT PEACE,
 WHOSE MIND IS STAYED
 ON YOU, BECAUSE HE
 TRUSTS IN YOU.
 — ISAIAH 26:3

But even as I ask these things, I understand
 that I will die one day, as will all who live
 and breathe. Even if today's treatment
 is effective, buying me additional months
 or years of life, it does not change the narrative
 that I am mortal, that I will face decline and
 death, and that—most important of all—
 I am always and forever your child,
 held by you, known by you, loved by you.

And when at last I release
 all things at my dying—
 all things but my love of you
 and trust in you—
 I will there be met by your
 grace, your beauty, your unveiled presence,
 and I will know that I have lost nothing,
 but have gained everything,
 and that for all time.

So remind me today
as I submit to this treatment—
remind me each time I am tempted
to fear or worry for myself or my family,
or even tempted to self-pity—
remind me that my future
is already settled.

And if Christ has secured for me such a
blessed eternal station, then he has surely
proved himself worthy to be trusted with the
lesser anxieties that trouble me here.

Whatever comes of this treatment will in
no way diminish anything upon which my
best hopes are fixed. In that great assurance
give me courage, strength, and peace inexplicable,
that I might bear your presence and shine your
light of love and mercy, even to those who
serve me today in their practice of medicine.

Now lead me through this treatment
and all other hardships of this temporary exile,
O Christ, and when it is your good pleasure,
lead me home to you, to your joyous kingdom,
your enduring city, your glad fellowship of
friends and angels and all created beings
who eternally adore you.

Amen.

A LITURGY FOR THE
Morning of
a Medical
Procedure

INTERCESSORS: You designed our bodies, O Lord, with a wondrous capacity for regeneration and healing. You give wisdom and knowledge and skill to those who by long training in their professions learn to diagnose and treat ailments of the body. And you, by your Spirit, sometimes effect miracles of healing that even the most skilled of practitioners cannot duplicate.

PATIENT: Today, as I submit myself to this procedure, I ask, O Lord, that by all means your care toward me would be manifest, for I am utterly dependent upon you. Give to my body immunity and vitality that I might recover quickly. Give me strength and health to resist complications. Give to my medical providers wisdom, skill, and insight. And by your Spirit, transcend even what body and medicine at their best might do. Where it is needed, bring the healing of your own touch to bear in my mortal frame.

Be merciful, O God.

Show your goodness to me, and to those who share my concern. Be now my physician, my mender, my healer. Even in the midst of this procedure, let me rest in you.

Amen.

FOR THOSE FACING INVASIVE, CRITICAL, OR HIGH-RISK PROCEDURES, AND FOR THOSE FRAUGHT WITH WORRY, THE FOLLOWING SECTION MAY BE ADDED.

As I approach this procedure
I acknowledge my own fears at the possibility
of outcomes I cannot control.

O God unshaken by any circumstance,
be now my rock and my refuge.

Still my racing thoughts.
Speak peace to this gale-storm of
my insecurities. In the midst of
my concerns, give me grace
to receive without bitterness
the presence and support of friends
who, seeking to ease fears they cannot
understand, might utter unhelpful things.

Give me also grace to trust,
to rest my trepidations in you,
for your purposes and your presence
transcend all possible outcomes.

**Whether the end result of this procedure
brings news that is good, bad, or
uncertain, nothing that is essential or
eternal will have changed;**

My great hope is secure.
Let me rest in that.

YET YOU ARE HE WHO
TOOK ME FROM THE
WOMB; YOU MADE
ME TRUST YOU AT MY
MOTHER'S BREASTS. ON
YOU WAS I CAST FROM
MY BIRTH, AND FROM MY
MOTHER'S WOMB YOU
HAVE BEEN MY GOD.
PSALM 22:9-10

At the end of this day,
I will still be your child, utterly dependent
on you, utterly loved by you.

At the end of this day,
my life will yet be hidden with Christ,
even as it now is.

I will remain an heir to the promise
that this imperfect, mortal body,
though it faces temporary decline,
will one day be swallowed up
in a glorious immortality.

**We pray for good outcomes from
this procedure, O Lord.**

We ask for good outcomes, pleading that you
would be mindful of our mortal frailties,

**but we know that regardless of the
tidings to come, you are tender
and present and sovereign over
all circumstance,**

and what is more, you love us
fiercely and eternally.

Therefore I would trust you to lead
me well along the paths of any
wild and perilous country.

You are my shepherd.

This day will hold no surprises for you.

Let me rest in that.

Amen.

LEADER: Christ Our King,
Our world is overtaken by unexpected calamity,
and by a host of attending fears, worries, and
insecurities. We witness suffering, confusion,
and hardship multiplied around us, and we find
ourselves swept up in these same anxieties and
troubles, dismayed by so many uncertainties.

PEOPLE: Now we turn to you, O God,
in this season of our common distress.

Be merciful, O Christ, to those who suffer, to
those who worry, to those who grieve, to those
who are threatened or harmed in any way by
this upheaval. Let your holy compassions be
active throughout the world even now—
tending the afflicted, comforting the
brokenhearted, and bringing hope
to many who are hopeless.

**Use even these hardships to woo our hearts
nearer to you, O God.**

Indeed, O Father, may these days of disquiet
become a catalyst for conviction and
repentance, for the tendering of our affections,
for the stirring of our sympathies, for the
refining of our love.

**We are your people, who are called by you,
We need not be troubled or alarmed.**

A LITURGY FOR A

Time of Widespread Suffering

Indeed, O Lord, let us love now more fearlessly, remembering that you created us, and appointed us to live in these very places, in the midst of these unsettled times.

It is no surprise to you that we are here now, sharing in this turmoil along with the rest of our society, for you have called your children to live as salt and light among the nations, praying and laboring for the flourishing of the communities where we dwell, acting as agents of your forgiveness, salvation, healing, reconciliation, and hope, in the very midst of an often-troubled world. And in these holy vocations you have not left us helpless, O Lord, because you have not left us at all.

Your Spirit remains among us.

**Inhabit now your church,
O Spirit of the Risen Christ.
Unite and equip your people
for the work before them.**

Father, empower your children to live as your children. In times of distress let us respond, not as those who would instinctively entrench for our own self-preservation, but rather as those who—in imitation of their Lord—would move in humble obedience toward the needs and hurts of their neighborhoods and communities.

You were not ashamed to share
in our sufferings, Jesus.

**Let us now be willing to share in yours,
serving as your visible witnesses
in this broken world.**

Hear now these words, you children of God,
and be greatly encouraged:

The Lord's throne in heaven is yet occupied,
his rule is eternal, and his good purposes
on earth will be forever accomplished.
So we need never be swayed by the brief and
passing panics of this age.

**You are the King of the Ages, O Christ,
and history is held in your Father's hands.**

We, your people, know the good and glorious
end of this story. Our heavenly hope is secure.
In this time of widespread suffering then, let us
rest afresh in the surpassing peace of that vision,
that your whole church on earth might be liber-
ated to love more generously and sacrificially.

**Now labor in and through us, O Lord,
extending and multiplying the
many expressions of your mercy.**

Amen.

AND HE WILL SWALLOW
UP ON THIS MOUNTAIN
THE COVERING THAT IS
CAST OVER ALL PEOPLES,
THE VEIL THAT IS SPREAD
OVER ALL NATIONS. HE
WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH
FOREVER; AND THE LORD
GOD WILL WIPE AWAY
TEARS FROM ALL FACES,
AND THE REPROACH OF
HIS PEOPLE HE WILL TAKE
AWAY FROM ALL THE
EARTH, FOR THE LORD
HAS SPOKEN. IT WILL
BE SAID ON THAT DAY,
"BEHOLD, THIS IS OUR
GOD; WE HAVE WAITED
FOR HIM, THAT HE MIGHT
SAVE US. THIS IS THE
LORD; WE HAVE WAITED
FOR HIM; LET US BE
GLAD AND REJOICE IN
HIS SALVATION."
—ISAIAH 25:7-9

A LITURGY FOR
 Those
 Who Tend
 a Loved One
 in Decline

You know, O Lord,
 how much a heart can take—
 the limits of our love, the limits of our strength.
 You know the toll this long-term caring for
 another exacts from body, mind, and soul.

For the grief we know is not the sudden
 sword-fall of a single, tragic moment.
 Rather it is like a steep, spiraling staircase
 which we descend for endless days and nights,
 tending a loved one whose independence,
 awareness, and enjoyment of life are diminished
 incrementally, step-by-downward-step,
 as helplessness increases.

We lament each past happiness that will
 never come again, comparing what is *now*,
 to what was *then*, those good memories ever
 added to our growing inventory of things
 passed out of reach; but we mourn also
 the lost possibilities, the dreams and joys and
 might-have-beens that now will never be. And
 all the while we grieve to see how each small
 mastery of life gives way to greater need.

We grieve the whole way down.

To care so very much, while knowing how our
 labors will eventually end—not with recovery
 and wellness, but with a final breath,

a hand held, and then a warmth slipping away—
that is a hard knowledge, day-by-day, to carry,
for we are not nursing this dear one back to
health, but stewarding their slow surrender of it.

Love is wearying in this way,
and even we who deeply love the ones we serve,
need grace upon grace upon grace
lest we despair. For in our giving,
we are ever drained and so often depleted.
We long for what we are too long without:
respite and refreshment. So be our rest,
O Christ, when there is no other rest to find.

In the midst of long nights and lonely grief,
be our comfort. Be present with us in the
deepest heart of our hard service. Even as we
carry this burden, let us know we are also
carried by you, so that through this season,
your tender compassions and your unfailing
love become our strength. As our own reserves
are exhausted in these labors, teach us what it
means to lean always upon your strong arms.

Renew our strength.
Rekindle our hope.
Replenish our love.

Now let your holy promises shape and
shepherd our imaginations, that we might

come to view these acts of service, not as they seem when framed by our weakness and grief, but from the truer vantage of eternity, in which all our long labors of sorrowing love are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

IF THE ONE TENDED IS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS,
ADD THE FOLLOWING:

Let me find strength and joy not only in the remembrance of the promised glories that await me, O Christ, but open the eyes of my heart to also see this one I love, not as they now appear in their fading, but as they will one day be, liberated from this decay.

Let me tend them in their decline, remembering I am serving one who, though they die, will also one day rise again to vibrant life, to walk the fields and streets of this remade world, in a body immortal, beautiful, physical, and whole. Let me often glimpse that vision of them rejoicing in their eternal prime, in their very flesh reflecting the unveiled splendor of their Creator in some dazzling array so gloried as to overwhelm mortal eyes.

For that is where all of this is going.

These hours given to tending them are not lost
and rendered meaningless by death,
but instead are as well-invested
as time could ever be.

These acts are the tear-watered seeds
that will bloom into resurrected joys.

Let me peer into this mystery even now,
O Christ, with eyes of faith seeing how
every small service I render to my loved one
—to your precious child—
is an act that echoes forward into that eternity.
Even as I lament the temporary losses I am
witness to, let me also rejoice at the knowledge
of their approaching redemptions.

This will not be a story that ends
in the defeat it now seems.

O my soul, look at this suffering one.
Can you begin to see them as they
will one day be? Do you believe these
promises of God? Can you receive,
even now, the certainty of such hopes?

Yes, there is weeping here, and
yes, there will be a goodbye.
And then they will be hidden
for a time, with Christ, in God.

THUS IT IS WRITTEN, "THE
FIRST MAN ADAM BECAME
A LIVING BEING"; THE
LAST ADAM BECAME A
LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT. BUT
IT IS NOT THE SPIRITUAL
THAT IS FIRST BUT THE
NATURAL, AND THEN THE
SPIRITUAL. THE FIRST MAN
WAS FROM THE EARTH,
A MAN OF DUST; THE
SECOND MAN IS FROM
HEAVEN. AS WAS THE
MAN OF DUST, SO ALSO
ARE THOSE WHO ARE OF
THE DUST, AND AS IS THE
MAN OF HEAVEN, SO ALSO
ARE THOSE WHO ARE OF
HEAVEN. JUST AS WE HAVE
BORNE THE IMAGE OF THE
MAN OF DUST, WE SHALL
ALSO BEAR THE IMAGE OF
THE MAN OF HEAVEN.
—1 CORINTHIANS 15:45-49

But when our King returns,
they *will* return with him,
to a creation remade.
And our sadness now will be seen
in retrospect,
as but the birth pangs
of the eternal joys to come.

Remember that, my soul.
Remember that end is the ocean
to which all rivers and rivulets of history flow;
that is the end—and the beginning—
our own story rushes to meet.

Yes, this time is hard.
Take heart.
It is only for a time.

So let me serve this loved one now,
in light of the glory of who they will be
when all these losses we lament
are recompensed ten million times.

Amen.