

Liturgical Resources for use following the acts of September 11, 2001
compiled by the Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

Chalice / Candle Lightings

We kindle this flame as a symbol of the light
we would keep glowing in our lives:
of appreciation for those who
differ, loving kindness for
those who suffer,
esteem for all who remind us
of our heritage and calling
as agents of the Most High.

Philip Randall Giles

Opening Words

We, whose journeys are always beginning
We, whose mission always awaits us
We, whose visions are bent on loving,
We gather together here.
We gather as a community drawn together
out of common need,
each toting our own carpetbag of treasures and dreams.

We gather together seeking meaning,
yearning to understand life in all its dimensions-
as it challenges and expands,
as it burdens
as it consoles and heals.

We gather together with questions-
the kinds of questions that
provoke us to the path of action.
We gather with hope,
the kind of hope that pulses on through uncertainty.

We gather with tenderness,
the kind of tenderness that can only be born from knowing
human capabilities as well as human imperfections.

We gather wanting certainty, and having none,
but we are wakeful to possibilities

as we seek discernment and gentle judgment.
We gather, then, unbounded-but close.
We gather thirsting.
We gather, drawn to our Source, our Creator. Amen.

Marni Harmony, adapted

Prayers

Even when the gates of heaven are shut to prayer, they are open to tears.

The Talmud

The human spirit has enormous resilience.
But it is pushed to the limit by grief following the tragedy we have witnessed:
sudden and unexpected death,
the loss of so many lives.

These vicious attacks defy our understanding.

It hurts.
We grieve.
We do not understand, nor do we accept the logic of terrorists who go about a path of willful destruction.
It is an assault on the very soul of our nation, and for some, it is a personal assault as well.

We begin to go through the torturous journey of weeks and months until somehow the scattered pieces of our souls slowly move forward from the painful shadows.

And so we are here with mixed emotions:

deep sadness
numbness
anger
grief
helplessness
fear.

We come seeking
answers
comfort
understanding
hope
peace.

"Our spirit's healing temple is someone else's available and understanding heart" says the writer (Howard Thurman).

And so we pray that there will be those who offer
a listening ear, a healing touch.

We pray that there will be those who will not shrink from our untidy suffering,
for it is through the support of these souls that we might find a balm, a salve, and begin to
heal our pain.

We pray for strength, for
a few more morsels of faith
a few more nuggets of time when we can empty our minds of it all
and little spaces in our days and nights when we can touch another soul, and be held in
someone else's embrace.

Help us to find the hope that lies
beneath what our eyes can see and our ears can hear.

Help us to hold fast to the belief
that there is still goodness in this world.

Help us to respond out of love rather than out of fear.

Help us to trust again, knowing that
"the ark of the moral universe is long" and that it does indeed "bend toward justice."

Mend once again our brokenness,
and guide us toward the path of peace.

Blessed be. Namaste. A' Salaam Alakim. Ashe, Shalom, and Amen.

Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

The Inescapable Divine

Waiting is a window opening on many landscapes. For some, waiting means the cessation of all activity when energy is gone and exhaustion is all that the heart can manage. It is the long, slow panting of the spirit.

For some, waiting is a time of intense preparation for the next leg of the journey. Here, at last, comes a moment when forces can be realigned and a new attack upon an old problem set in order. Or it may be a time (for) reassessment of all plans and of checking past failures against present insight.

Waiting may be the long moment ahead when the landscape stretches far in many directions and the chance to select one's way among many choices cannot be denied.

For some, waiting is a sense of disaster of the soul. It is what Frances Thompson suggests in the line, "Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke." The last hiding place has been abandoned because even the idea of escape is without meaning. Here is no fear, no panic, only the sheer

excruciation of utter disaster. It is a kind of emotional blackout in the final moment before the crash. It is the passage through the zone of treacherous quiet.

For many, waiting is something more than all of this. It is the experience of recovering balance when catapulted from one's place. It is the quiet forming of a pattern of recollection in which there is called into focus the fragmentary values from many encounters of many kinds in a lifetime of living. It is to watch a gathering darkness until all light is swallowed up completely without the power to interfere or bring a halt. Then in that darkness, to continue one's journey with one's footsteps guided by the illumination of remembered radiance. This is to know courage of a peculiar kind, the courage to demand the light to continue to be light even in the surrounding darkness. To walk in the light while darkness invades, envelopes, and surrounds. This is to wait on the Lord. This is to know the renewal of strength. This is to walk and faint not.

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there ... If I say, "Surely, the darkness shall cover me," even the night shall be light about me. The darkness and the light are both alike to thee. (Psalm 139, KJV)

Howard Thurman (excerpt from a sermon)

I am afraid of nearly everything:
of darkness,
hunger,
war,
children mutilated.

But most of all, I am afraid of what I might become:
reconciled to injustice,
resigned to fear and despair,
lulled into a life of apathy.

Unchain my hope, make me strong.

Stretch me towards the impossible, that I may work for what ought to be: the hungry fed,
the enslaved freed,
the suffering comforted,
the peace accomplished.

Anonymous

I feel the suffering of millions.
And yet, when I look up at the sky,
I somehow feel that everything will change for the better,
that cruelty too will end,
that peace and tranquility will return once more.

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is sadness, joy;
where there is darkness, light.

O Divine one,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
not so much to be understood, as to understand;
not so much to be loved, as to love.

(more)

For it is in the giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

I Want to be Better

The concern which I lay bare before God today is my need to be better:

I want to be better than I am in my most ordinary day-by-day contacts:

With my friends--
With my family--
With my casual contacts--
With my business relations--
With my associates in work and play.

I want to be better than I am in the responsibilities that are mine:

I am conscious of many petty resentments.

I am conscious of increasing hostility toward certain people.

I am conscious of the effort to be pleasing for effect, not because it is a genuine feeling on my part.

I am conscious of a tendency to shift to other shoulders burdens that are clearly my own.

I want to be better in the quality of my religious experience:
I want to develop an honest and clear prayer life.

I want to develop a sensitiveness to the will of God in my own life.

I want to develop a charitableness toward my fellows that is greater even than my most exaggerated pretensions.

I want to be better than I am.

I lay bare this need and this desire before God in the quietness of this moment.

Howard Thurman, Meditations of the Heart

Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment, my future associates in the executive branch of government join me in beseeching that Thou will make full and complete our dedication to the service of the people in this throng, and their fellow citizens everywhere.

Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land. Especially we pray that our concern shall be for the people regardless of station, race, or calling.

May cooperation be permitted and be the mutual aim of those who, under the concepts of our Constitution, hold to different political faiths; so that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory. Amen.

*President Dwight David Eisenhower
from his 1953 inauguration address*

Out of the depths I cry:
Who will hear my voice?
Out of the pain I cry:
Who will make space for my living and my dying?
Out of the years I cry:
Who will remember?
Who will remember?
My soul awaits:
*More than those who watch for the morning.
More than those who watch for the morning.*

*Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley
Inspired by Psalm 130 and Maya Angelou*

REST IN PEACE, by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat
(based on the poem "Call Me by My True Names" by Thigh Nat Hahn)

I am a World Trade Center tower, standing tall in the clear blue sky, feeling a violent blow in my side, and I am a towering inferno of pain and suffering imploding upon myself and collapsing to the ground.

May I rest in peace.

I am a terrified passenger on a hijacked airplane not knowing where we are going or that I am riding on fuel tanks that will be instruments of death, and I am a worker arriving at my office not knowing that in just a moment my future will be obliterated.

May I rest in peace.

I am a pigeon in the plaza between the two towers eating crumbs from someone's breakfast when fire rains down on me from the skies, and I am a bed of flowers admired daily by thousands of tourists now buried under five stories of rubble.

May I rest in peace.

I am a firefighter sent into dark corridors of smoke and debris on a mission of mercy only to have it collapse around me, and I am a rescue worker risking my life to save lives who is very aware that I may not make it out alive.

May I rest in peace.

I am a survivor who has fled down the stairs and out of the building to safety who knows that nothing will ever be the same in my soul again, and I am a doctor in a hospital treating patients burned from head to toe who knows that these horrible images will remain in my mind forever.

May I know peace.

I am a tourist in Times Square looking up at the giant TV screens thinking I'm seeing a disaster movie as I watch the Twin Towers crash to the ground, and I am a New York woman sending e-mails to friends and family letting them know that I am safe.

May I know peace.

I am a piece of paper that was on someone's desk this morning and now I'm debris scattered by the wind across lower Manhattan, and I am a stone in the graveyard at Trinity Church covered with soot from the buildings that once stood proudly above me, death meeting death.

May I rest in peace.

I am a dog sniffing in the rubble for signs of life, doing my best to be of service, and I am a blood donor waiting in line to make a simple but very needed contribution for the victims.

May I know peace.

I am a resident in an apartment in downtown New York who has been forced to evacuate my home, and I am a resident in an apartment uptown who has walked 100 blocks home in a stream of other refugees.

May I know peace.

I am a family member who has just learned that someone I love has died, and I am a pastor who must comfort someone who has suffered a heartbreaking loss.

May I know peace.

I am a loyal American who feels violated and vows to stand behind any military action it takes to wipe terrorists off the face of the earth, and I am a loyal American who feels violated and worries that people who look and sound like me are all going to be blamed for this tragedy.

May I know peace.

I am a frightened city dweller who wonders whether I'll ever feel safe in a skyscraper again, and I am a pilot who wonders whether there will ever be a way to make the skies truly safe.

May I know peace.

I am the owner of a small store with five employees that has been put out of business by this tragedy, and I am an executive in a multinational corporation who is concerned about the cost of doing business in a terrorized world.

May I know peace.

I am a visitor to New York City who purchases postcards of the World Trade Center Twin Towers that are no more, and I am a television reporter trying to put into words the terrible things I have seen.

May I know peace.

I am a boy in New Jersey waiting for a father who will never come home, and I am a boy in a faraway country rejoicing in the streets of my village because someone has hurt the hated Americans.

May I know peace.

I am a general talking into the microphone/s about how we must stop the terrorist cowards who have perpetrated this heinous crime, and I am an intelligence officer trying to discern

how such a thing could have happened on American soil, and I am a city official trying to find ways to alleviate the suffering of my people.

May I know peace.

I am a terrorist whose hatred for America knows no limit and I am willing to die to prove it, and I am a terrorist sympathizer standing with all the enemies of American capitalism and imperialism, and I am a master strategist for a terrorist group who planned this abomination. My heart is not yet capable of openness, tolerance, and loving.

May I know peace.

I am a citizen of the world glued to my television set, fighting back my rage and despair at these horrible events, and I am a person of faith struggling to forgive the unforgivable, praying for the consolation of those who have lost loved ones, calling upon the merciful beneficence of God/Yahweh/Allah/Spirit/Higher Power.

May I know peace.

I am a child of God who believes that we are all children of God and we are all part of each other.

May we all know peace.

From SLT: #463

My heart is moved by all I cannot save:

So much has been destroyed.

I have to cast my lot with those who, age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.

Adrienne Rich

#496

From arrogance, pompousness, and thinking ourselves more important than we are, may some saving sense of humor liberate us. For allowing ourselves to ridicule the faith of others, may we be forgiven.

From making war and calling it justice, indifference and calling it tolerance, pollution and calling it progress, may we be cured.

For telling ourselves and others that evil is inevitable while good is impossible, may we stand corrected.

God of our mixed up, tragic, aspiring, doubting, and insurgent lives, help us to be as good in our hearts [as] we have always wanted to be.

Harry Meserve

Additional Recommendations

The following from *Peace Prayers: Meditations* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992)

- p. 13 Henri J.M. Nowen [a prayer for peace]
- pp. 28-29 Lament [of a mother], Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki
- p. 35 Jim Wallis (the necessity of prayer for one's enemies as a deterrent to war)
- pp. 38-39 Oscar Romero
- p. 40 Martin Bell
- p. 75 Singing with Angels
- p. 85 Oscar Romero

and *In Every Tiny Grain of Sand: a Child's Book of Prayers and Praise* (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2000)

- p. 12 Muslim
- p. 17 Hindu
- p. 23 Chandogya Upanishad
- p. 31 Julian of Norwich
- p. 41 Gaelic
- p. 56 Reeve Lindbergh (based on Psalm 139)
- p. 60 Psalm 121
- p. 67 Jewish

Sacred Texts

My soul is deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is.

Judaism, Lamentations 3:17

Deliver me, O God, from the wicked;
preserve me from the violent,
from those who plan evil in their hearts
who stir up conflicts every day,
who sharpen their tongues like serpents,
venom of asps with their lips.

Judaism and Christianity, Psalm 140

Do not take life - which God has made sacred - except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority to demand retribution; but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life, for he is helped by the law.

Islam, Qur'an 17.33

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

Judaism and Christianity, Psalm 22

Blessed are the poor in spirit
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called the children of God.

Christianity, Matthew 5:3-9

Anyone who kills a believer intentionally will have his reward in hell, to remain there. God will be angry with him and curse him, and prepare awful torment for him.

Islam, Qur'an 4.92

O sons of 'Abdul Muttalib, let there be no retaliation for the act of murder. Do not roam about with a drawn sword...and do not start a massacre of my opponents and enemies. See that only one man, that is my murderer, is killed in punishment for the crime of murder, and that nobody else is molested or harmed or harassed. The punishment to the man who attempted the murder shall take place only when I die of the wound delivered by him, and this punishment shall be only one stroke of the sword to end [his] life.

Islam, Nahjul Balagha, Letter 47

Conquer anger by love.

Buddhism, Dhammapada 223

Nor do I absolve my own self of blame; the human soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His mercy.

Islam, Qur'an 12.53

Never does hatred cease by hating in return;
Only through love can hatred come to an end.

Victory breeds hatred;
The conquered dwell in sorrow and resentment.

They who give up all thought of victory or defeat
may be calm and live happily at peace.

Let us overcome violence by gentleness;
Let us overcome evil by good;

Let us overcome the miserly by liberality;
Let us overcome the liar by truth.

Buddhism, Dhammapada, SLT #597

In wars to gain land, the dead fill the plains; in wars to gain cities, the dead fill the cities. This is known as showing the land the way to devour human flesh. Death is too light a punishment for such men [who wage war]. Hence those skilled in war should suffer the most severe punishment.

Confucianism, Mencius IV.A.14

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the path of righteousness for his name sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

Judaism and Christianity, Psalm 23

Readings

The more we try to say precisely what is in our hearts, the more we find that we are speaking for multitudes of strangers the world over. The deeper we get down to our own fundamentals, the more deeply we represent those of other people. Like all human beings, I live on borrowed time. I never know when my time will run out, but I do know that it will run out. I have no way of knowing what tragedies will befall me at the next step, the next ring of the telephone, the next rising of the sun. My notion of spiritual fulfillment is learning how to accept this fate with a ringing affirmation of all that makes life worth living.

The liberal spirit is my inspiration to be a creative, cooperative human being, in spite of the fact that life may crush me at any moment and death may blot me out. As a skeptic about such matters, I cannot comfort myself with supernatural promises. I know that human existence contains irreducible elements of tragedy and incompleteness. I know that I can never really comprehend the totality of things. I am finite. For me the fundamental question of life is not why but how. How shall I live while I live? This is the bedrock question. In answering it, it matters very much what I believe.

Rev. Jack Mendelsohn, Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age

from "Singing the Living Tradition (SLT)"

SLT #657 - It Matters What We Believe

Some beliefs are like walled gardens. They encourage exclusiveness, and the feeling of being especially privileged.

Other beliefs are expansive and lead the way into wider and deeper sympathies.

Some beliefs are like shadows, clouding children's days and fears of unknown calamities.

Other beliefs are like sunshine, blessing children with the warmth of happiness.

Some beliefs are divisive, separating saved from unsaved, friends from enemies.

Other beliefs are bonds in a world community, where sincere differences beautify the pattern.

Some beliefs are like blinders, shutting off the power to choose one's own direction.

Other beliefs are like gateways opening wide vistas for exploration.

Some beliefs weaken a person's selfhood. They blight the growth of resourcefulness.

Other beliefs nurture self-confidence and enrich the feeling of personal worth.

Some beliefs are rigid, like the body of death, impotent in a changing world.

Other beliefs are pliable, like the young sapling, ever growing with the upward thrust of life.

Sophia Lyon Fahs

SLT #658 - To Risk

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk exposing our true self.

To place our ideals--our dreams--before the crowd is to risk loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try is to risk failure.

To live is to risk dying.

Anonymous

SLT #609 To Serve the People

To worship God is nothing other than to serve the people.

It does not need rosaries, prayer carpets, or robes.

All peoples are members of the same body, created from one essence.

If fate brings suffering to one member

The others cannot stay at rest.

Saadi (Sufi Muslim)

SLT #468 - We Need One Another

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.

We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again.

We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose, and cannot do it alone.

We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.

We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement we might endure, and stand again.

We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

George Odell

The Body is Humankind

I am a single cell in a body of four billion cells. I am a single cell. My needs are individual but they are not unique.

I am interlocked with other human beings in the consequences of our actions, thoughts, and feelings.

I will work for human unity and human peace; for a moral order in harmony with the order of the universe.

Together we share the quest for a society of the whole equal to our needs,

A society in which we need not live beneath our moral capacity, and in which justice has a life of its own.

We are single cells in a body of four billion. The body is humankind.

Norman Cousins

#584 - A Network of Mutuality

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

There are some things in our social system to which all of us ought to be maladjusted.

Hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear, only love can do that.

We must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation.

The foundation of such a method is love.

Before it is too late, we must narrow the gaping chasm between our proclamations of peace and our lowly deeds which precipitate and perpetuate war.

One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal.

We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.

We shall hew out of a mountain of despair, a stone of hope.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

In a world with so much hatred and violence,

We need a religion that proclaims the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

In a world with so much brutality and fear,

We need a religion that seeks justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

In a world with so many persons abused and neglected,

We need a religion that calls us to accept one another and encourage one another to spiritual growth.

In a world with so much tyranny and oppression,

We need a religion that affirms the right and conscience and the use of the democratic process.

In a world with so much inequity and strife,

We need a religion that strives toward the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

In a world with so much environmental degradation,

We need a religion that advocates respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

In a world with so much uncertainty and despair,

We need a religion that teaches our hearts to hope, and our hands to care.

Scott W. Alexander

Cherish Your Doubts

Cherish your doubts, for doubt the attendant of truth.

Doubt is the key to the door of knowledge; it is the servant of discovery.

A belief which may not be questioned binds us to error, for there is incompleteness and imperfection in every belief.

Doubt is the touchstone of truth; it is an acid which eats away the false.

Let no one fear the truth, that doubt may consume it; for doubt is a testing of belief.

The truth stands boldly and unafraid; it is not shaken by the testing:

For truth, if it be truth, arises from each testing stronger, more secure.

Those that would silence doubt are filled with fear; their houses are built on shifting sands.

But those who fear not doubt, and know its use, are founded on rock.

They shall walk in the light of growing knowledge; the work of their hands shall endure.

Therefore let us not fear doubt, but let us rejoice in its help:

It is to be the wise as a staff to the blind; doubt is the attendant of truth.

Robert T. Weston, SLT #650

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. ... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

...

The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extremists of justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Closing Words / Benedictions

[And now],
Since the struggle deepens
Since evil abides, and good does not yet prosper.

Let us gather what strength we have,
what confidence and valor
that our small victories may end in triumph,
and the world awaited be a world attained.

Barrow Dunham

In addition to the traditional concept of true commitment that means you are willing to die for what you think is right, make equal space for the womanly concept of commitment that means you are willing to live for what you believe.

June Jordan

Hold on to what is good, even if it is a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe, even if it is a tree which stands by itself.
Hold on to what you must do, even if it is a long way from here.
Hold on to my hand even when I have gone away from you.

Nancy Wood

Hymns from *Singing the Living Tradition*

1 May Nothing Evil Cross This Door
2 Abide with Me
115 God of Grace and God of Glory
123 Spirit of Life
131 Love Will Guide Us
134 Our World is One World
135 This is My Song (recommended as a closing hymn)
136 Precious Lord, take my hand
206 Amazing Grace
318 We Would be One

352 Find a Stillness
360 Here We Have Gathered
354 We Laugh, We Cry
396 I Know This Rose will Open
401 Kum ba Yah

WHAT CAN I OFFER?

words by the Reverend Elizabeth "Kit" Ketcham written April 1999, revised, Sept., 2001

TUNE: # 34 in "Singing the Living Tradition," Gift of Love 8.8.8.8.

What can I offer to repair
those human souls so torn and bared
by violence and deep despair?
Where can God be in this dark hour?
The children cry, all parents fear,
Our lives are shattered, then we hear
the voices calm and kind and clear.
Might God be near in this dark hour?
Our hearts are breaking, yet our grief
brings saints and heroes, brings relief,
Brings hands and hearts in firm belief
that God be here in this dark hour.
When evil comes and lives are torn,
When wicked deeds cause us to mourn,
In human hearts hope is reborn
for God is here in this dark hour.