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Prayers of the People – Edition 2

++For whenever you are so led to pause, reflect, and pray++

(Drawn from the Worship Resource for Sunday, March 29, 2020, prepared for First Baptist Church in Needham, Massachusetts during COVID19.)

Lighting the Candle of Life

(You may wish to light a candle or use the photo of our Candle of Life as a focus.)

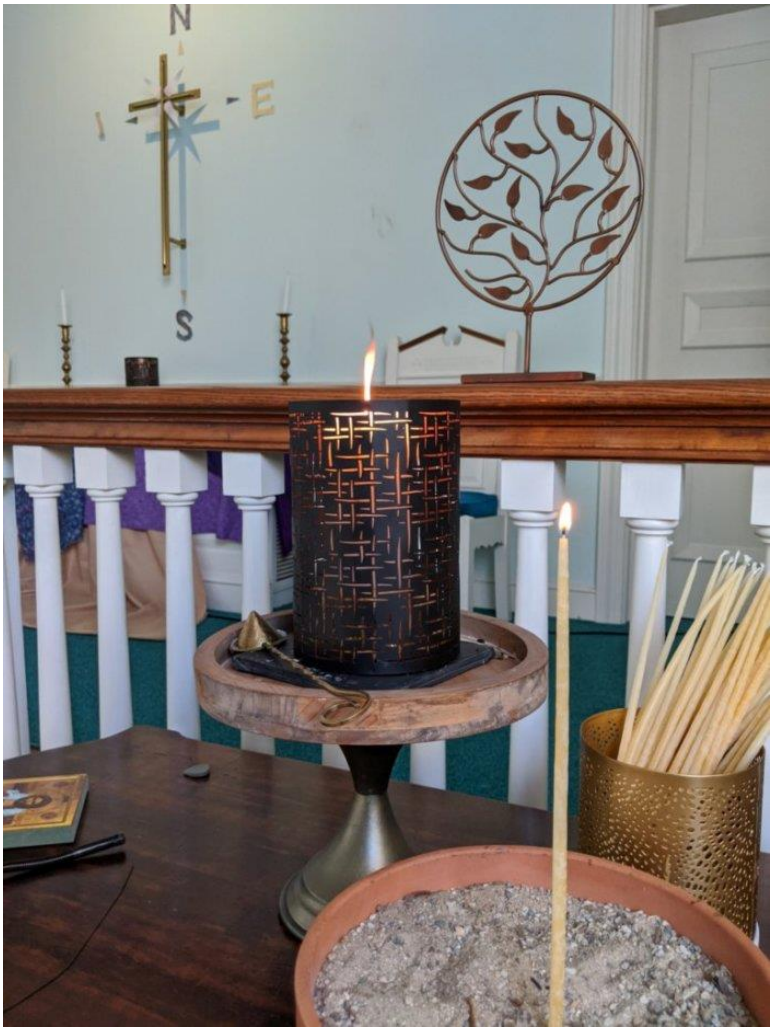
All: We light the Candle of Life — a candle that represents community, spirit, and the fullness of all of life — birth and death and all of the transitions in between and beyond.

A Reading from Psalm 130

(Read the psalm aloud. Pause and notice what image or word stands out or "shimmers" to you.)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.
2 Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!
3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.
5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
6 my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
7 O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
8 It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

ALL: The word of our Lord. Thanks be to God.



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Time of Reflection

(Choose one or more of the following notes to reflect upon the scripture text. Perhaps write your thoughts, call a friend or family member to discuss it, or allow the story to seep into your imagination.)

- What image, word, or phrase stood out or "shimmered" to me? Reflect on its significance today. Consider holding the image or phrase as a focus of prayer this week.

- We are living in a season of waiting and watching in ways we could not have fully anticipated. How may the requirements to shelter in place, self-quarantine, and maintain physical distance offer new insights into how I wait and watch for the Lord?

- The psalm calls us to "hope in the Lord". How am I living into the call to "hope in the Lord"? What about my anxiety, fear, or despair? Can I be both afraid and hopeful simultaneously? What action can I take this week to embody hope?

Hymn 500 *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* PRECIOUS LORD

(You may choose to sing or recite the words to this beloved hymn by Tommy Dorsey.

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near,
when my life is almost gone;
hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall:
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When the darkness appears
and the night draws near,
and the day is past and gone,
at the river I stand, guide my feet,
hold my hand:
take my hand, precious Lord,
lead me home.

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Prayers of the People

Prayerful Meditation

"Without opening your door,
You can open your heart to the world."
–Tao Te Ching 47

We Hold in Prayer…

(Many of the prayers are requests from members of our congregation during this season of COVID19. They are offered here for you to join our community of faith in keeping vigil and praying for you and the world today.)

As a community of faith gathered in Spirit when we cannot be in person, we offer our hearts and voices in prayer where we are, as we are, entrusting the Spirit's moving among us and responding far beyond our individual reach and influence…

For beloved folk living in assisted living communities that currently have disrupted routines, very limited access to visits and contact with the outside world. For their safekeeping, forbearance, and health and the wellbeing and dedicated effort of the staffs who serve alongside them… and souls we know personally who are in these groups whose names we speak aloud… ***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer…***

For persons living within isolation and loneliness, who do not have access to internet or extended family, and who are finding these daily societal changes destabilizing and further distancing. We pray for persons experiencing heightened anxiety from endless and contradicting news reporting and upended patterns of work and home life…and for souls we know personally who are in these groups whose names we speak aloud… ***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer…***

We pray for souls who are facing unemployment and the fearful uncertainties of the near future. We pray for persons tasked with the painful work of laying off and firing employees and colleagues that businesses cannot currently sustain… and for souls we know personally who are in these groups whose names we speak aloud… ***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer…***

We offer thanks for families, neighbors, and friends who are reaching out and caring for one another, preparing meals, gathering groceries, sending notes, calling, and ensuring needs are met…and for souls we know personally who are in these groups whose names we speak aloud... ***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.***

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We pray for persons who are unable to find adequate housewares and food at groceries and for the essential businesses endeavoring to keep the public supplied while ensuring everyone has according to their need. For the continued health and safekeeping of employees who continue to put themselves at risk, to interact face-to-face with the public, and provide essential services…***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer…***

We offer thanks for the comfort and guidance of scripture in such a time as this, especially Psalm 91, and hold to God's promise to be our shelter and refuge. And we give thanks for prayers shared over the phone, internet, and through window glass…***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow…***

We hold persons who have shifted from going to work and school to doing so online and from home. For continued flexibility, stable internet connections, good humor, and a humane level of expectation of what can be done and when…and for souls – individuals, families, and roommates – who are in this group whose names we speak aloud…***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer…***

We celebrate the small, daily acts and momentous achievements and project completions people are making despite all the obstacles created over these weeks…***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.*** And for all persons committed to working in research and on projects that require ongoing attention, focus, and dedication regardless of new requirements and restrictions…***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer…***

We offer thanks for unplanned space to slow down, reflect on the goodness of people, and cherish time with family…***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow…***

For the beauty of nature that continues to move us toward spring with no regard of virus or social upheaval…***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.***

And for the prayers of our hearts that you, Holy One, know even when words cannot hold them… ***Hear my prayer, O Lord.***

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The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction

(Speak these words of benediction knowing that you are part of a loving community of faith. If you lit a candle at the beginning, you may wish to blow it out now.)

One: Our blessing to one another is that we are here for one another, that we are with one another, that we celebrate and remember one another along the journey.

ALL: We extinguish the Candle of Life, but the Light continues to shine within us. As we pass the peace we carry the Light of the Candle of Life from this hour into this world and beyond, offering peace, hope and light wherever the journey leads.

Passing of the Peace

(Picture in your mind's eye the faces of beloved souls with whom you would share the peace of Christ in person if you could, and offer each one your blessing of peace.)

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

One: Let us greet one another in peace as we prepare for the journey ahead.

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