

A Service of Lament and Healing

A translation of this liturgy is available in Spanish by clicking [here](#).

About this liturgy

This outline of a worship service was designed by a group of lay and clergy leaders within the Episcopal Church as a way for the church-at-large to respond to an anticipated overturn of *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022. The service may be just one way you may choose to respond pastorally to those who will be affected by the overturn of this historic precedent.

Since 1967, The Episcopal Church has maintained its “unequivocal opposition to any legislation on the part of the national or state governments which would abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions [about the termination of pregnancy] and to act upon them.” At the same time, we also recognize that issues surrounding family planning and reproductive health are complicated for many in the church, and we intentionally designed this liturgy so that all have space to be together in the presence of the Holy One in a time of grief, fear, confusion, hurt, and lament.

We offer this liturgy, then, as a gift to the wider church and religious communities, including our ecumenical and interfaith friends. We leave it as an intentionally “open” document so that faith leaders may adapt prayers to local customs or circumstances. (Especially in an interfaith setting, appropriate sacred texts representing all faith traditions will need to be included.) It is a starting point—a framework of options and ideas around which to build. We invite you to adapt it to your own setting and context in the hopes of being a voice of healing and hope.

Yours in Christ,

The Very Reverend Katie Churchwell, Dean, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

The Reverend Charlie Dupree, D.Min., Rector, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia

The Very Reverend Gray Lesesne, D.Min., Dean, Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis

Ms. Yuri Rodridguez Laureani, Seminarian, University of the South at Sewanee

The Reverend Katie Nakamura Rengers, Staff Officer for Church Planting, Episcopal Church Center

The Reverend E. Suzanne Wille, Rector, All Saints’ Episcopal Church, Chicago, Illinois

Gathering

As the people gather, a few options to consider. Choose what's right for you, based on your context:

- The people gather in silence.
- A single instrument (guitar, flute, piano, bells, singing bowls, etc.) plays.
- Bells toll.
- The church bells toll 49 times, once to commemorate each year that women have been protected by the United States Constitution to the liberty of making their own healthcare decisions, until today.
- As the congregation gathers, they are invited to repeat or sing the following mantra, either silently or aloud: *For God alone my soul in silence waits. God is present in me, in us.*

Music

See suggested selections at the end of the liturgy.

Opening Acclamation

Officiant: For God alone our soul in silence waits.

People: **God is present in me, in us. Amen.**

Call to Worship

The Officiant welcomes the People with these or similar words

Tonight, we gather in the wake of the Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade, changing decades of settled law. We might be angry. We might be frightened. We might be confused. We might be numb.

Tonight, we come together as a community in the wake of this shock. Tonight this is a place to hold all of these feelings, not to solve anything. Tonight, this is a place to bring all of our feelings, all of our fears, a place to rest in a time of chaos, of cacophony. Not everything we say or pray or sing tonight will be for everyone, for there are many people, many feelings, many convictions in this room. Rest in what is for you; let go of what is not.

In this time of fear and conflict, come, rest: whatever you feel, whatever you believe. Come, rest: whether you need to cry or to be silent or to cry out. Come, rest: with your fears and your worries.

This is a place, this is a time for lament. This is a time for reflection. This is a time for us to come together.

Hope will come. Action will come. Joy will come.

But for now, just be.

Reading 1: A piece of contemporary literature or a sacred text

Suggested contemporary literature:

An Excerpt from *A Liturgy of Longing* by Sandra Maria Van Opstal, found in Sarah Bessey's *A Rhythm of Prayer: A Collection of Meditations for Renewal*; Convergent Publishing, 2021.

We believe you are at work bringing peace. True peace—flourishing, wholeness, and well-being. We hear your words of truth and know in our minds that you are: Lord, the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome.

You show no partiality.

You defend the cause of the fatherless, motherless,
and the widow.

You love the stranger.

We believe and we feel overwhelmed—sometimes it is hard to believe that you actually care about the injustice and suffering. When we don't see your work. When we sense the apathy from the church. When we feel small and forget that we were designed to be different and to make things different.

When we feel overwhelmed by the darkness in the world—the violence, injustice, poverty, oppression, abuse.

Give us hope not to be overcome.

Give us eyes to see your goodness for our world.

Give us the strength to hold the pain of injustice in our world and faith that it will end.

Give us courage to be honest with ourselves about why and how we are doing justice.

We believe. *So*. Empower us to disrupt our broken thinking by learning *truth* from diverse leaders. Enable us to discover the *beauty* of justice and inspire action in others. Embolden us to display your *goodness* in the world.

OR

Ice Storm by Robert Hayden, *American Journal*; Liveright Publishing, 1982.

Unable to sleep, or pray, I stand
by the window looking out
at moonstruck trees a December storm
has bowed with ice.

Maple and mountain ash bend
under its glassy weight,
their cracked branches falling upon
the frozen snow.

The trees themselves, as in winters past,
will survive their burdening,

broken thrive. And am I less to You,
my God, than they?

OR

Suggested Scriptures from the Hebrew/Christian Traditions:

Micah 6:8

God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

OR

Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

After the reading:

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People Thanks be to God.

The Psalm (sung or said)

Psalm 69: 1-4, 16-18

1 Save me, O God, *
for the waters have risen up to my neck.
2 I am sinking in deep mire, *
and there is no firm ground for my feet.
3 I have come into deep waters, *
and the torrent washes over me.
4 I have grown weary with my crying; my
throat is inflamed; *
my eyes have failed from looking for my God.

16 Save me from the mire; do not let me sink; *
let me be rescued from those who hate me and
out of the deep waters.

17 Let not the torrent of waters wash over me,
neither let the deep swallow me up; *
do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.

18 Answer me, O God, for your love is kind; *
in your great compassion, turn to me.

OR

Psalm 139:1-11 or 1-23

1 God, you have searched me out and known me; *
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
2 You trace my journeys and my resting-places *
and are acquainted with all my ways.
3 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
but you, O God know it altogether.
4 You press upon me behind and before *
and lay your hand upon me.
5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; *
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.
6 Where can I go then from your Spirit? *
where can I flee from your presence?
7 If I climb up to heaven, you are there; *
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
8 If I take the wings of the morning *
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
9 Even there your hand will lead me *
and your right hand hold me fast.
10 If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, *
and the light around me turn to night,"
11 Darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day; *
darkness and light to you are both alike.

[12 For you yourself created my inmost parts; *
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
13 I will thank you because I am marvelously
made; *

your works are wonderful, and I know it well.
14 My body was not hidden from you, *
while I was being made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.
15 Your eyes beheld my limbs,
yet unfinished in the womb;
all of them were written in your book; *
they were fashioned day by day,
when as yet there was none of them.
16 How deep I find your thoughts, O God! *
how great is the sum of them!
17 If I were to count them,
they would be more in number than the sand; *
to count them all, my life span would need to
be like yours.
18 Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God!
*
You that thirst for blood, depart from me.
19 They speak despitely against you; *
your enemies take your Name in vain.
20 Do I not hate those, O God who hate you? *
and do I not loathe those who rise up against
you?
21 I hate them with a perfect hatred; *
they have become my own enemies.
22 Search me out, O God, and know my heart; *
try me and know my restless thoughts.
23 Look well whether there be any wickedness
in me *
and lead me in the way that is everlasting.]

Reading 2: A sacred text

Suggested Scriptures from the Christian Tradition:

Luke 4:17-21

The synagogue assistant gave Jesus the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

OR

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my accuser.' For a while he refused, but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

OR

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

OR

Matthew 6:25-34

Jesus said: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

After the reading:

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People Thanks be to God.

Music

See suggested selections at the end of the liturgy.

Sermon/Speaker/Homily/Small group reflections

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

OR

An Affirmation of Faith: A Profession of Faith, by Sister Joan Chittister, OSB *(modified)*

We believe in God who made us all
and whose divinity infuses life with the sacred.

We believe in the multiple revelations of God,
alive in every human heart, expressed in every culture, found in all the wisdoms of the world.

We believe in Jesus, the Christ,
who leads us to the fullness of humanity,
to what we are meant to become.

Through Christ, we become new people,
called beyond the consequences of our brokenness, lifted to the fullness of life.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the breath of God on earth,
who keeps the Christ vision present to souls yet in darkness,
gives life to hearts now blind, infuses energy into spirits yet weary, isolated, searching and confused.
We believe in God who is life.

Amen to courage, to hope, to spirit of truth, to nature, to happiness, to wholeness,
to the partnership of people in God's plan, to the Christ who calls us
beyond the boundaries of ourselves, to forgiveness, and to everything that stretches our hearts
to the dimensions of God.

In all of this, we can surely believe, as God does.

Offertory: Movement/Responding

The Officiant invites the People to respond.

- Ensure that pens, pencils and pieces of paper are available (perhaps giving them to attendees as they enter the worship space). The Officiant invites the congregation to write down thoughts, feelings, emotions, words, and/or the name of persons affected by this decision. Collect the papers or invite the People to bring their prayers forward. The Officiant offers this or a similar prayer while placing the prayers on the altar: *O God, receive the prayers of your people. Receive our hurt, receive our confusion, receive our anger, receive our helplessness. Receive us, Holy One—our everything—into your heart, and strengthen us to move ahead with clarity, wisdom, bravery, and strength. Amen.*
- Have candles available either in front of the altar or at a side altar. Invite the congregation to come up, as they feel called, and light a candle, offering up words, thoughts, emotions, and/or the names of persons affected by this decision.
- Offer a healing station with laying on of hands and anointing with holy oil.

Prayers

A Litany Based on The Prayer of St. Francis

Litanist: We pray for those who, near or far, are without peace tonight. We pray for all who partner with those in need of reproductive health care as they seek and strive to honor the dignity of every human being. We remember physicians, nurses, spouses, partners, friends, and strangers alike: may there be a great network of love and support to meet the demands of the times that lay ahead. May we learn to walk with each other without judgment or shame, knowing that it is with action that peace is found.

People: Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Litanist: We pray for the hubris of humanity, that by acting legislatively, we assert that we can know the journey of another and deem it unworthy. We pray for an end to the dehumanization of those who claim autonomy of body and mind. May we be those who can love beyond our own needs and choices, knowing that it is within ourselves that we must first sow love if it is to grow through us.

People: Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

Litanist: We pray for those who have already been shamed and belittled and caused harm by their choices to seek reproductive health care. We pray for those who have already been harmed by state legislation that limits education and access to safe care. We pray for those who, because of fear or shame, cannot gather with us now in community.

People: Where there is injury, pardon;

Litanist: We confess, God, that we are a United Divided States. And we wish that we were in perfect harmony with you and with each other, and that pregnancy would only occur in situations of love, safety, perfect health, and to the benefit of mother, child, family, and community. But that is not so now. In our discord, may we find grace for each other. In our discord, may we offer supportive and caring companionship to each other. In our discord, may we find union with you, the God who loves us. May we be committed to union in the face of imperfect circumstances, imperfect relationships, and imperfect democracy.

People: Where there is discord, union;

Litanist: We pray for an end to legal action, rhetoric and violent acts that target reproductive health care providers. We pray for the day when health care providers, women and their families, can exercise their rights to reproductive choice in security and peace. We pray for those who are not of

the same mind regarding reproductive rights and choices, that all may be led to wise actions and safe choices. May our earthly faith, combined with the faith of the great cloud of witnesses, be strengthened to meet the days and demands that lay ahead.

People: Where there is doubt, faith;

Litanist: We pray for those who are afraid, lost, and in the midst of turmoil of spirit and mind. We pray for those who lament the loss of bodily autonomy, for those who fear the loss of other civil rights, and for those who fear the unknown of the world ahead. We pray especially for all who will be disproportionately affected by a lack of reproductive rights, especially people who are Black, Indigenous, Asian, Brown, People of Color, trans and nonbinary. We pray for all who live in poverty, and for those who live in rural areas, who will also be disproportionately affected. May we be resolved in our commitment to hope, knowing that to hope in God is to never hope in vain.

People: Where there is despair, hope;

Litanist: We pray for those who have died because they lacked access to safe health care. We pray for the loss of life yet to come from forced childbirth and illegal abortion. We pray for the continued assault on the respect, dignity, and citizenship of those in need of reproductive rights. May we remember that there is no darkness too dark for you, God, and that your presence is never-failing.

People: Where there is darkness, light;

Litanist: We pray for the most vulnerable among us, especially children and families who will be affected by this decision. May we remember and make sacrifices to care for all who will face economic hardship, hunger, and difficult choices because of this new ruling. We pray for those in grief and sorrow as they look to the future with dread and trembling. We pray for those who do not see the promise of hope and those for whom life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness will never be realized. May we be comforters for those in sadness and bearers of joy for those who have none.

People: Where there is sadness, joy.

Litanist and People:

***Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.***

***For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

OR

The Lord's Prayer

New Zealand Book of Common Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever.
Amen.

Concluding Words of Blessing

The Officiant says these, or some other blessing

Friends, as you go out tonight into what may feel to some like a new, strange and uncertain world,
may God make you an instrument of God's peace:
Where there is hatred, sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

God our Mother, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, be among us always. Amen.
(based on the Prayer of Saint Francis)

Music

See suggested selections at the end of the liturgy.

List of suggested hymns/music

- Love take a walk with me (*By Charles Murphy*)
 - [Lyrics](#)
 - [Video](#)
- Don't be afraid (*by Ana Hernández/Fran McKendree*)
 - [Lyrics](#)
 - [Video](#)
- You shall cross the barren desert (*Wonder, Love, Praise 811*)
 - [Lyrics](#)
- Abide With Me (*Hymnal 1982 662*)
- O God, Our Help In Ages Past (*Hymnal 1982 680*)
- Lord, Make Us Servants Of Your Peace (*Hymnal 1982 593*)
- There's A Wideness In God's Mercy (*Hymnal 1982 470*)
- Heal Me, Hands of Jesus (*Wonder, Love, Praise 773*)
- I Want Jesus to Walk With Me (*Wonder, Love, Praise 805*)
 - [Video](#)
- Keep Me Every Day (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II 173*)
- Now It Is Evening (*My Heart Sings Out 159*)
- O Mary Don't You Weep (*traditional African-American Spiritual*)
 - [Lyrics](#)
- Hazme un instrumento de tu paz/Lord Make Us Instruments of Your Peace (*By Sebastián Temple. In Flor y Canto*)
 - [Lyrics](#)
- Danos tu luz (*by Juan Espinosa. In Flor y Canto*)
 - [Lyrics](#)
- Nada te turbe/Let nothing disturb you (*Taize. In Flor y Canto*)
 - [Lyrics](#)
 - [Sheet Music](#)
 - [Video](#)