

Light a Candle Virtual Prayer Vigil
March 26, 2020

- I. **Welcome, friends!** We are strengthened by your presence and the desire that has compelled you to be here this evening.
- A. As the effects of this pandemic surge, many are likely asking, “Where is God right now?” We believe that God is always present to us, always motivated by good intent, eager to offer companionship, help and wisdom, no matter where we are or what we face.
1. If we were to imagine this present moment, we might picture an X.
 2. The top part of the X represents our temporal reality: all the physical, emotional, spiritual, and economic impact of the Coronavirus bearing down upon us and our world.
 3. The bottom part of the X represents the spiritual reality: God’s loving presence, benevolent goodness, and active involvement in our lives and world.
 4. In the middle is a point of convergence; the place we pray “into.”
- B. The X reminds us of a favorite quote from the late Eugene Peterson:
- “The assumption of spirituality is that always God is doing something before I know it. So, the task is not to get God to do something I think needs to be done, but to become aware of what God is doing so that I can respond to it and participate and take delight in it.”**
1. Our invitation is to become aware of what God is doing
 2. To respond by praying “into” what God is doing
 3. And to do whatever we can to participate with God in what God is doing
 4. That’s what we hope to do this evening as we hold vigil together
- C. During this prayer vigil, there will be three movements:
- A. Light the candle
 - B. A brief time of lament
 - C. “Pray into” places of convergence where temporal and spiritual realities intersect, and the needs are most profound

II. Lighting a Candle

- A. Let’s begin with a minute of silence before you light your candle.
1. Consider who it is or what it is that you particularly want to lift-up to God tonight
 2. Once you have named this person, or this need/desire, light the wick.

- B. Now consider the flame:
1. See how bright it burns? That's how bright the light of Christ burns within you!
 2. The Apostle John described the Christ-light this way:
The Word (Jesus) gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:4,5)

III. **A Time of Lament**

- A. Lament is the act of joining our honest emotions with honest language and expressing our sorrow to God, who longs to bear witness to it. When we lament, space within us is cleared out, opened up, for God to meet us where we are.
1. Even Jesus, as he was dying, quoted Psalm 22, and lamented, saying
 2. "Father, why have you forsaken me?"
- B. We'd like to invite you into a brief time of lament
1. What are you feeling? What are your honest emotions right now?
(Express them to God; type them out in open chat if you'd like name them)
 2. What are you grieving the loss of—both tangible and intangible loss?
(Express them to God; type them out in open chat if you'd like to name them)
- C. **Together: God-of-all-comfort, who is near to the broken hearted and those who are crushed in spirit, receive our lament. As we grieve what we have lost, create space in us for faith, hope and love to flourish—for You and all people.**

IV. **Prayers and Petitions (After each petition, we will pause for you to pray for specific people or instances of which you are aware.)**

- A. Believing that God is already at work, we pray for solidarity and collaboration between and within governments and health agencies; internationally, nationally, and locally
- For governments and health agencies around the world to work together in sharing information and resources
 - That all wars would cease, all acts of aggression curtailed; and for the protection of immigrants living in camps from the spread of this virus
 - For our president and congress to work toward and agree upon a plan for the common good of our country
 - **Together: O God, come to our assistance. O Lord, make haste to help us. (Psalm 70:1)**

- B. Believing that God is already at work, we pray for medical personnel serving in hospitals and medical centers
- For doctors, nurses, and all medical staff to be protected from the virus and sustained as they work courageously to care for those infected
 - For the manufacturing and distribution of resources needed to test and treat those who are ill
 - For those who have contracted Covid 19; for their healing and recovery; that they might turn to God in their hour of need
 - **Together: O God, come to our assistance. O Lord, make haste to help us. (Psalm 70:1)**
- C. Believing that God is already at work, we pray for the stress and strain on families, and those without families
- For parents, especially single parents, to find resources within themselves, ones they didn't know they have, in order to care for their children; for those suffering financial distress because of loss of work.
 - For the healing of family systems as they experience conflict, as domestic abuse spikes. Protect those at risk.
 - For those without family or support, who are alone, even dying alone
 - **Together: O God, come to our assistance. O Lord, make haste to help us. (Psalm 70:1)**
- D. Believing that God is already at work, we pray for our own transformation through this difficult and uncertain time
- That we recognize how God is at work and open more fully to what God is doing "in us" in this present moment
 - That we might know how God is inviting each of us to participate with God's work in our world: in our families, neighborhood, and extended community
 - **Together: O God, come to our assistance. O Lord, make haste to help us. (Psalm 70:1)**
- V. Final Prayer
- A. **Together: For you, O Lord, are the helper of the helpless, the hope of the desperate, the savior of the tempest-tossed, the harbor of voyagers, the physician of the sick. Become all things to all people, O You who know each person and their need, each house and its necessity. Preserve, O Lord, this city and every city and country place from plague, famine, earthquake, flood, fire, war, battle, invasion, and riot.** (From the prayer liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church)
- B. One last time, look at the flame of your candle; lift it high and observe how the light expands. In the same way, may the Christ light shining through our lives expand and reach the corners of the earth. Amen.