

Prayers Remembering the 10th Anniversary of 9/11/01

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on behalf of the Kentucky Council of Churches*

Introduction:

As communities of every faith gather to remember the tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the resulting pain and suffering, Christian faith has much to say about how we are invited to hold the past in order to live into the future.

These prayers were commissioned by the Kentucky Council of Churches and are offered to all the churches of the commonwealth as one means among many to witness to our unity in Christ as we commemorate these events and their aftermath. Churches across the state are invited to use some or all of these prayers on Sunday, September 11, 2011, or at any other time where they would be helpful. You are welcome to adapt them as appropriate to your context and to reproduce them for your congregation.

There are two prayer resources that may be used alone or together. Both prayers intercede for painful memories and the victims, as well as for our “enemies,” and the transformation of “mourning into dancing.”

The first is a longer collect or pastoral prayer that may be read by a single leader or divided amongst different voices. It is designed as a whole piece to reflect the many facets of needs and feelings surrounding the anniversary, but individual sections stand on their own if you choose to extract only a portion of the words.

The second prayer resource is a responsive litany based on the “fruits of the Spirit” related in Galatians 5:22. The litany uses the present tense to reinforce the sense of proleptic healing power of these spiritual fruits in our midst despite tragedy and brokenness. The flow moves from remembrance to future joy and peace, so not only is it a memorial prayer, but also asks God’s help as we move from reflection to action. Each of the 9 aspects of Godliness are contained in a changing 11 word congregational response as we gather, weep, remember, marvel, confess, submit, soften, revel, and steep in God’s healing love.

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Collect or Pastoral Prayer

This prayer may be read by one reader or used with different voices for each paragraph or section.

Lord, in the midst of our grief and the memory of our loss, we gather in your presence and remember: We have feared the terror of the night; We have seen the sacrifices of the brave; We have cried the tears of the lost, and we have clenched our fists and raged against the pain and damage. We have wept and mourned, lashed out and retaliated, we have healed and hoped. Now we gather in your presence to be whole and to walk humbly with our God as the years unfold.

For the families of the many victims we pray that by your mercy life may rise even from ashes. We pray especially for those whose lives are still broken by the tragedies of that day, and ask that by your grace and mercy tattered hearts may know your touch, healing their shattered spirits, reknitting for them a world of hope, and granting them rest from the fury and frustration unjustly imposed upon them.

In the many heroes who sacrificed themselves for others we see the face of Christ. Strengthen those who hold their memory sacred in their needs as you have strengthened all who lay down their lives for their friends.

We pray also for our enemies, Lord. And what we pray for our enemies you have also taught us to pray for ourselves: that they, we, and all of your creation may be free from the powers that turn blessing into burning; free us and them from all that warps our minds and turns to hate the love you intend for all.

Holy one, you are our God in trial and rejoicing. As we remember past tragedy, we seek your wisdom that we may proffer future blessings in your name. Now and in the years to come, help us to place our trust solely in your word and way, and not in imperfect paths of our own design. Our hope is not in the towers we build, or in the roar of war, or in the fervor with which we proclaim our outrage or our piety. Our salvation is in the way of your Christ, in your mercy, and in our kinship with you. Though we mourn and are poor in spirit, may we yet find your kingdom and be blessed.

Thus bless those who gather and remember this day. Bless those who seek the healing after the hurt, and grant us the wisdom we need in this year and all that follow: that we may reap what is of life even in the midst of death. In every circumstance, Lord, bless your people and your world that we may rest and rise, live and die and be reborn in the compassion of Christ. In so doing, may we live always as sisters and brothers at peace, healing a broken world. Amen.

LITANY of INTERCESSIONS

These intercessions are based on the 9 fruits of the Spirit identified in Galatians 5:22: Joy, Peace, Forbearance, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control & Love.

One: O God who brings life from death, we commemorate this day the loss of life, the tragic sacrifices, and remember with sorrow the broken results of terror in our midst. With lives rebuilding, countries changed forever, and hearts still breaking, we pause to ask that good may yet rise from the ashes and smoke. Help us neither forget our past, nor be in bondage to it.

All: *God of Goodness, we gather in your presence and are healed.*

One: We remember the dead from every family, the losses from every nation. In New York may they be at peace. In Washington, may they rest. In Pennsylvanian fields may their spirits be gentled. For those who grieve, cradle them dearly in your mercy and care.

All: *God of Love, we weep in your presence and are healed.*

One: In you we honor those whose urge to help overcame their instinct for preservation: the ordinary persons who in a flash of fire and dust became extraordinary servants of God. We bless those who gave their life and health to save others. We praise you for their faithfulness and skill, and we raise our voice in thanks for the sacrifices they made. They have lived the example of Christ and have shown us the way.

All: *God of Faithfulness, we remember in your presence and are healed.*

One: For the many ways in which your people of every state, every nation, and every religion have reached to one another with kindness in a time of need. For those who sustained the families of victims, for those who offered their services and time, for those who comforted, doctored, and nursed the world when all seemed lost we offer thanks and count every act of grace as a gift from you.

All: *God of Kindness, we marvel in your presence and are healed.*

One: We confess, Holy One, that fear and frustration to this day overwhelm us. It captures our best self and makes possible evil in ourselves that we deplore in others on this day. For all those who seethe, and when anguish tempts us to distraction and despair, leaven our fury with the fruit of forbearance that even when wronged we may bear the face of Christ to a world in need.

All: *God of Forbearance, we confess in your presence and are healed.*

One: "God most merciful and gracious, you have created us all of one blood not to despise each other, or that hatred may cause us to swerve from what is just. Rather you have taught us to pray even for those we conceive to be our enemies among our brothers and sisters and for those who have declared themselves to be our enemies. We pray for all who are tempted to pervert their devotion of you into hatred of others; for all whose hate is strong and who see good in the harm of others.

All: *God of Self-Control, we submit in your presence and are healed.*

One: When in the course of our celebrations or disappointments we are tempted to carry praise or blame too far¹ remind us of the frailty of all human judgment and temper our passions with mercy for all. Not seeing all we cannot know all, and we cast our hopes on you for ourselves and for all around us.

All: *God of Gentleness, we soften in your presence and are healed.*

One: We rejoice, O Lord, that the darkness of this world has not overcome your light, or the gifts of your people. You have resourced our strength, and empowered our resolve. We have found pearls of great price in our struggles and exult that your love is stronger than death. With you, our hope is renewed each day and your loving power is everlasting.

All: *God of Joy, we revel in your presence and are healed.*

One: In all our living, in all our frailty, in all our struggling and striving as we seek faithfully to live your love and know your will, grace and guide all nations that all may be filled to brimming with your just and loving peace. Still our souls, soothe our minds, settle our fears, and lift our hearts so that the days of war and terror, within and without, will one day be no more.

All: *God of Peace, we steep in your presence and are healed.*

One: Remembering our past and facing our future, we boldly pray as Jesus taught saying...

Please Conclude with The Lord's Prayer in the tradition of your community.

¹ From "O Star (the fairest one in sight)" by Robert Frost