

MANITOWOC COOPERATIVE MINISTRY

PRAYER & DEVOTION GUIDE (March & April 2020)

We offer this tool to help you supplement your own prayer life in these challenging times of pandemic in our world.
Use any or all of the following as you are led to help nurture your soul. ~ Pastor Judine & Pastor Matt

Friends: We are disciples of Jesus, who choose to follow him so closely that the dust he kicked up with his feet still coats our clothes today (*Mike Slaughter/Rebel Jesus*). This discipleship has us accountable in answering and in living out the question “Who Is Jesus today?” amidst a virus that has slowed down the world.

Jesus is the Christ, still revealed to us in community...and we remain in community through him. Therefore:

Love has not been cancelled.

Prayer and meditation has not been cancelled.

Conversations have not been cancelled.

Kindness has not been cancelled.

Reading of scripture has not been cancelled.

Songs and hymns have not been cancelled.

Worship, as a way of life, has not been cancelled.

Hope has not been cancelled.

EMBRACE ALL THE GOOD THAT REMAINS!

--Clergy Coaching Network

A Prayer

Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love today. Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another. Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders. Come to our aid, O Christ, and heal us, for You are our Divine Physician. AMEN!

A Meditation and Visualization

We close our eyes to the world, now, seeing only a vision of you—full of glory and light—and we draw you closer, until you are face to face. It is beautiful to look into our eyes. It is beautiful to hear you say my name. Your light and love encompass me, and every cell in my body is responding, responding as if dancing in the greatest joy. Stay with me, Jesus. Expand Your light through me and around me. Transform what is not of Love; light up the darkness within me, so I may demonstrate Your Love to all.

A Prayer

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace. Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace. Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace. Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth. Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace. Jesus Christ, heal us. AMEN!

A Prayer

God of the journey, you invite us, the church, “to accept the cost and joy of discipleship” and “to be your servants in the service of others.” In so doing, may your presence be our guide and Jesus our model. May we respond to you in loving faithfulness. AMEN!

A Prayer

O God, we wish to see Jesus! We come before you, to pray, and learn. We come looking for Jesus in Scripture lessons, in our own life experiences, in helping our world, in prayers for each other. We seek to follow in the way of Jesus. We lay bare before God and one another our own wilderness journey filled with some gladness and hope, with reluctance and sorrow, with fear and confusion. O God, speak to us, show us, touch us with your presence! Let our journey in Lent and beyond lead us to Jesus, so that we may show Jesus forth in our lives, our faith community, and our world. AMEN!

A Meditation and Visualization

Settle into your seat and close your eyes.

Visualize a place of emptiness, of shadows.

What comes up for you?

(If this first image is too disturbing, find another place of imagination that offers you comfort and peace.)

Imagine your presence there.

Now imagine that with you is the presence of Jesus as a glimmer of light.

What does that light look like?

Stay there a moment with Jesus, the Light.

As you focus your attention on the glimmer of light, hear this:

For God so loved the World that God gave God’s only begotten child

For God so loved the World that God gave

For God so loved the World

For God so loved

So loved

The World

God

A Prayer of Reconciliation

O God of Comfort and God of Challenge, we come to you this morning the way the Israelites did, full of complaints and dissatisfaction. Nothing is enough; we do not recognize your blessing at work in our day to day lives. Forgive us when we become so comfortable that we moan and groan about the most insignificant details of our lives. In our complaints, challenge us as you did the Israelites, to consider the bigger picture of oppression, injustice, and inequality around us. Forgive us when we close our eyes for fear of what you might show us; keep sending loving and compassionate leaders to open our eyes until we see what you see in our world. AMEN!

Assurance of Blessing

You are blessed because God's image resides deep within each of you. So return God's blessing by the way you love others. AMEN!

A Prayer

Thankful are we for all the blessings of this life; love, freedom, bounty and beauty. The joy we know is beyond our words to speak. We can only image the suffering and pain of human slaves, past and present, which yearn from the depths of their souls to know the freedom we enjoy. We celebrate this day the heritage we have in the cause of human freedom. We celebrate this day our spiritual ancestors who worked for the freedom of the Mendi people on the slave ship, Amistad. May that ship, like the cross, remind us of the ever-present possibility of human evil. And may that ship, like the cross, remind us of the power of divine love. May we, through divine love, shed the false, un-neighborly, covetous and dishonorable desires of the lives we sometimes live and keep the commandments and walk in the way that brings life. AMEN!

A Prayer of Confession

In this season of Lent and beyond we reflect on those things that lead us away from the life we desire. We focus on that which we do that oppresses and enslaves others who, like us, are created in the image of the divine. And now we seek the grace that frees us to live in faithfulness to holy love. AMEN!

Assurance of Pardon

The God of who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, is the power that frees us from our sin. Live in the grace of God's love as you walk in the way of Jesus and surely you shall find mercy at the end of that road. AMEN!

A Litany

Pray alongside Psalm 144, as listed below (NRSV translation). Breathe between the verses. Speak, pray, think, hold words alongside so many others holding these words at this time. If you are able, light a candle to direct your own intention, or, hold the tangible thing you have carried to remind you of grace; whatever that is.

"Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle;"

Oh beloved, we are they who follow a God that knows of preparation; for what we do not know will follow in this time. We know that we are not alone. We know we can center alongside generations of prayer and positioning.

"my rock and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer,"

Oh, beloved, we are they who cry out with faith that holds the faith of many, conduits of hope for many who have lost their own, seeking centering in our own foundation of care. Remind us of our reason for doing this work.

"my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues the peoples under me."

Oh, beloved, we are gathered in a web of connection and care, where our messaging is similar. Protect the most marginalized. Hold the community. Do our best.

"O Lord, what are human beings that you regard them, or mortals that you think of them? They are like a breath; their days are like a passing shadow."

Oh, beloved, our mortality is before us in ways we didn't anticipate. We remember our faith of resurrection. We remember ashes, remember witness, remember community. Remember God's story which is present in this day and all days.

“Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down; touch the mountains so that they smoke. Make the lightning flash and scatter them; send out your arrows and rout them.”

Oh, beloved, we are they who are praying for intercession. Someone, someone, come and offer a solution. For the vaccines. For the broken systems. For the healthcare industry. For the competing values of capitalism and care. For those who invested time and energy and care into events that will not happen in the near future. For clear-headed leadership of our country.

“Stretch out your hand from on high; set me free and rescue me from the mighty waters, from the hand of aliens, whose mouths speak lies, and whose right hands are false.

Oh, beloveds, we pray for the deliverance from misinformation and opinions functioning like facts. We pray for reason and science to have a stronghold in our collective responses. We pray for care of our people, that no more may die unnecessarily from preventable circumstances of any kind.

“I will sing a new song to you, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you, the one who gives victory to kings, who rescues his servant David.”

Oh, beloveds-- we who can be moved to tears in music, or have a day shift in song. We who know the creativity of God’s created people and our collective response to delight in beauty. May we lean into those beautiful things. May we remember the moments of community at its best, and pull from that to hold the response needed in these days.

“Rescue me from the cruel sword, and deliver me from the hand of aliens, whose mouths speak lies, and whose right hands are false.”

Oh, beloveds. Let us cry out in supplication together for the work we must do. Let those who stand in our way, the naysayers and those who cannot perceive the systems we set up as valuable, not be the voices defining our actions. Let us hold fast to our faith, our call, our responsibilities of care.

“May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars, cut for the building of a palace.”

Oh! Beloveds. Let us set up something for our collective children and children’s children. Let us evolve together in ways that our grandchildren will be proud of. Let us create flexible systems of support that add wisdom into our human condition for times of struggle. May we listen to the wisdom of the young in their adaptability, and not hold them to our own pain.

“May our barns be filled, with produce of every kind; may our sheep increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields, and may our cattle be heavy with young. May there be no breach in the walls, no exile, and no cry of distress in our streets.”

Oh, beloveds. May we know everything we need to know. May we share everything we need to share. May our leaders step up and in. May we hold everything we need to hold. May our personal boundaries serve to protect our emotional and spiritual selves.

“Happy are the people to whom such blessings fall; happy are the people whose God is the Lord.”

Oh beloveds, may there be grace upon grace, and joy upon joy. May there be moments of laughter in the midst of the chaos, and support aplenty. May we know we are not alone in the midst of preparation and love and care. And may we hold close to the heart WHO we are and WHOSE we are: beloved children of a Compassionate, Loving, Healing God.

 <p>Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry churches serving together</p>	First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) 920.682.4688 – 502 N 8 th St, Manitowoc, WI 54220 (MCM Downtown)
	Peace United Church of Christ (UCC) <i>formerly St John’s & First Reformed</i> 920.682.6121 – 3613 Waldo Blvd, Manitowoc, WI 54220 (MCM Westside)
	Pastor Judine Duerwaechter 920.286.2133 judine@mcmunited.com
	Pastor Matt Sauer 920.860.6880 matt@mcmunited.com