

# Service of Prayer Following a Natural Disaster

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## CALL TO WORSHIP

In our day of trouble, when we are weary and our souls refuse to be comforted,  
**we will call to mind your promise of hope.**

In our day of trouble, when the clouds pour out water,  
 the skies thunder, and we tremble with fearful disbelief,

**we will remind each other of your power to save.**

In our day of trouble, when chaos and destruction surround us,

**we will tell stories of the saints who took refuge in you.**

In our day of trouble, when we seek rest and healing,

**we will meditate on your mighty deeds in worship and praise.**

## OPENING HYMN

### May Hope Rise Out of Tragedy

Eternal Father<sup>1</sup>, strong to save,  
 the cyclones'<sup>2</sup> fury has been grave.  
 We've seen the pictures, felt the pain,  
 of all those caught in flood and rain.  
 O hear us as we cry to thee  
 for those engulfed in tragedy.

O Saviour, whose almighty hand  
 protects all those in every land,  
 send help and aid of every kind;  
 grant we a way to serve may find.  
 O hear us as we cry to thee,  
 may hope rise out of tragedy.

O Holy Spirit, work your art  
 in every place and every heart.  
 Stir great compassion, healing, love.  
 Pour down your blessings from above.  
 O hear us as we cry to thee,  
 may hope rise out of tragedy.

O Trinity of love and power,  
 bless all your servants in this hour,  
 to bring relief, to find a way,  
 to rebuild, and to heal today.  
 O hear us as we cry to thee,

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<sup>1</sup> Creator

<sup>2</sup> Rain storms

may hope rise out of tragedy!

Tune: MELITA 88 88 88 (*Voices United* 322/659)

Words by Paul Mittermaier  
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## OPENING PRAYER

God of Life,  
you are as near to us as our breath.  
In times when we feel you are out of reach,  
and in times when we feel completely enfolded in your love:  
**touch our eyes that we may see you;**  
**open our ears that we may hear your voice;**  
**enter our hearts that we might know your love.**

Grace us with your presence during these difficult times,  
so that we might feel your strength  
and your healing touch.  
In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask these things.  
**Amen.**

## CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Friends in Christ,  
God knows our needs before we ask,  
and in our asking  
prepares us to receive the gift of grace.  
So let us pray ...

Creator,  
storming waters have intruded on our lives,  
leaving us vulnerable, exposed, open:  
We come to you, broken, seeking wholeness.

In our time of need, forgive us for those things that we have done,  
those things that we have left undone,  
and those things that weigh heavily on our hearts.  
(*time of silence*)

In our time of need, provide for us those things that bring about your kingdom,  
the gifts of the spirit  
and the gift of each other.

Above all, remind us always of your steadfast and abiding love.  
**Amen.**

## SUNG RESPONSE

"Stand, O stand firm" (*More Voices* 99)

"Dear God, who loves all humankind" (*Voices United* 608)

"There is a balm in Gilead" (*Voices United* 612)

## PRAYING TOGETHER: A COMMUNITY PRAYER RITUAL

*(Provide multiple small containers or glasses filled with lightly salted water, or lemon water, enough for each congregant, and place them around a large bowl. If there are children, consider giving each a small container of water.)*

We recognize that water can be both a healing and a destructive force.  
 The same water that gently welcomes us into community through baptism  
 can harshly remove us from our homes and communities through storms.  
 Water never disappears; it just takes on different shapes and form:  
 some forms that we can touch: ice, snow, water ...  
 some forms that we can see: blue skies and clouds ...  
 some forms that we can feel: mists, steam, and fog ...  
 and some forms that we experience like falling tears.

The tears that we cry for ourselves and for others is a form of water.  
 Like the water you are holding, our tears are a little salty and bitter,  
*(Invite children to smell or taste the water.)*  
 Sometimes life feels a little bitter.

In these moments, when life feels bitter,  
 we often seek comfort in God through community  
 and through prayer.

With these tears, tears for ourselves and tears for others, please come forward and share  
 your prayers by pouring the bitter water, which represents our tears, into the bowl. In so  
 doing, we symbolically gather our prayers together, reminding each other that we are one  
 in joy as we are one in sorrow (for we are one in Christ).

*(Invite people to come forward and to say their prayers aloud or silently as they pour water  
 into the bowl. Have on hand a small container for the empty cups.)*

## SUNG RESPONSE

*(One or more can be sung repeatedly as people come forward.)*

"Maranatha" (*More Voices* 19)

"Confitemini Domino" (*More Voices* 16)

"Come now, O God of peace" (*Voices United* 34)

"O God, hear my prayers" (*Voices United* 948)

*(Once all those who wish to have had an opportunity to come forward, provide words of  
 assurance similar to the following.)*

In scripture we are told that God has seen and knows our suffering and longs to wipe away every tear from our eyes. We are told that God will lead us beside still waters and restore our souls.

As we pray with our tears, may we also find the courage to give thanks and affirm the faith that we share together, remembering that we are never alone:

### **A New Creed**

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.

Thanks be to God

### **SCRIPTURE**

Alternative passages to the lectionary readings might include:

Isaiah 26: 3–4	Trust in the Lord
Isaiah 53: 1–12	Surely [God] has borne our griefs
Isaiah 61: 1–3	Bind up the broken hearted
Psalm 13	How long must I bear pain?
Psalm 20	May [God] grant your heart's desire
Psalm 23	You anoint my head with oil
Psalm 88	Let my prayer come before you
Psalm 91	My God in whom I trust
Psalm 121	I will lift my eyes to the hills
Psalm 130	Out of the depths
Psalm 139: 1–17	You discern our thoughts

Psalm 146	God lifts the bowed down
Romans 8: 18–27	Suffering not worth comparing
Romans 8: 31 <i>b</i> –35, 37–19	Nothing separates us from God’s love
Hebrews 4: 14–16	Draw near the throne of grace
I John 5: 13–15	If we ask anything [God] hears us
Revelation 21: 1–7	A new heaven and a new earth

## SERMON

- A collection of prayers and worship services to be used in times of natural disasters can be found at:  
<http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/worship-resources-in-times-of-natural-disasters/>
- Numerous links to prayers, liturgies, hymn suggestions, and pastoral resources for ministry amidst natural disasters can be found at:  
[http://www.textweek.com/response/natural\\_disaster.htm](http://www.textweek.com/response/natural_disaster.htm)

## PRESENTATION OF OFFERING

### Invitation

May we be moved by compassion,  
to share willingly and generously  
for the sake of your ministry in this world.

### Prayer

In times of sorrow we seek you.  
In times of lament we cry to you.  
In times of joy we praise you.  
At all times, we give you thanks.  
Amen.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE PRAYER OF JESUS

God of Creation,  
We live in a world where both beauty and danger are found.  
Hear our prayers for those who have been overcome by disastrous water and floods in  
(*name the city*).

For all who are in need of healing ...  
for all who are disabled by injury or illness ...  
for all who are troubled with confusion or pain ...  
for all who are in pain ...  
for all who cannot find adequate food or shelter ...  
for all who have lost their homes, churches, community centres, and workplaces ...  
we pray and ask that you help heal the pain of all who are affected.

Strengthen with your presence all who are numb with fear and distress.

Guide those who anxiously search or wait for loved ones.  
Be near those who are grieving, and bless them with your peace.

In the midst of disaster we give thanks for moments of generosity and human-kindness...  
Grant tenderness, strength, and wisdom  
to the doctors and nurses, police and military, fire-fighter and emergency  
responders;  
to all who minister to human need in our time of distress.

We gather these prayers by saying together the prayer that you taught us:  
Our Creator ... (*Prayer of Jesus*)

## CLOSING HYMN

"I feel the winds of God" (*Voices United* 625)  
"O God, our help in ages past" (*Voices United* page 806)

## COMMISSIONING (*Voices United* 349)

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet  
walk with you on the road.  
May the Christ who serves with wounded hands  
stretch out your hands to serve.  
May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart  
open your hearts to love.  
May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,  
and may everyone you meet  
see the face of Christ in you.

*(Consider processing the bowl used in the Community Prayer Ritual to the narthex or back of the church and inviting people to touch the water as they leave as a reminder of their baptisms, if they are baptised, or the prayers of the community that they hold with them.)*

## BENEDICTION

"Let us, O God, depart in peace" (*Voices United* 961)  
"May the blessing of God go before you" (*Voices United* 962)  
"May the grace of Christ attend us" (*Voices United* 963)  
"The Lord bless thee and keep thee" (*Voices United* 965)

*(Opening Prayer, Prayer of Confession, and scripture suggestions were adapted from resources in Celebrate God's Presence.)*

## ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

Consider including two appropriate prayers that appear in ***Gathering, Pentecost 2, 2013***:  
"Prayers of the People," on page 24, and the "Call to Worship," on page 32.