IDEAS & RESOURCES FOR LAMENT AND THANKSGIVING
FOR YOUTH AND THOSE WHO MINISTER WITH THEM

What is this document? A resource for individuals or groups (specifically teens and young adults) to name and share experiences of loss, grief, anger, alongside hope and solidarity in the midst of COVID-19.

Who created this? The Confirmation Collaborative is a group of Christian formation leaders in The Episcopal Church who come together in person and virtually to live out its mission: “We believe, and the research confirms, that confirmation is the claiming of baptism and an invitation to a life of deeper discipleship lived in community. When confirmation preparation is done intentionally and done well on the local and diocesan level as baptismal affirmation, it has an impact on the spiritual lives of youth as part of a lifelong call to discipleship. It can transform ourselves, each other, and the entire Church.” Formed in March 2019, read more here.

Who is this for? Youth and young adults (and those who minister with them)

Why is this important? At this time of social distancing and the cancellation of many milestones of a young person’s life (graduation from high school or college, prom, senior activities, sports, performances, driver’s licenses, confirmation, etc.) there is a need to acknowledge such loss.

How can this be done? Through individual expression and/or online gatherings (zoom, Google classroom, etc.). If at all possible, gather young people together in advance for their input and creation of any liturgy or expression you may choose to create. Invite them to offer contributions in word, image, music, or any expression they may find unique to their own personality or the group’s identity.

Note: Not all dioceses or congregations have staff who can provide opportunities for youth to gather online for them to create and/or adapt the resources suggested below. Many clergy and volunteers on the parish level (as well as individual youth) could use a resource already created. Those who have the capacity to adapt and create their own expresses are encouraged to do so, and if possible, share with those communities in your region that do not have the means or ability to do so. Whatever is created, please make it accessible through a variety of venues and networks so that it reaches the local level where the need may be highest, understanding that dioceses and large congregations have the capacity to create and share such a resource much more easily.

Articles for Leaders

● The Year Without Graduation. To the Class of 2020: This is your loss, and we need to pay attention. Even in a pandemic. by Jill A. Johnson-Young, LCSW, Grief therapist,
international speak on grief and dementia, author, LCSW at Central Counseling Services. April 5, 2020

- *Naming loss and gratitude with young people in these uncertain days* by Brad M. Griffin from Fuller Youth Institute

**Ideas for Individuals, Congregations, and Dioceses to Create**

Any of the below ideas can be done by an individual or group (using an online platform and always observing social distancing). For any project you may choose to use, don’t forget to use a hashtag so others can share and connect with you. Some suggestions: #Classof2020 #SeniorMemories #CovidYouthUnite and tag @iamepiscopalian

**Daily Devotions**

- Create a *daily devotion post*, making sure there are a variety of learning styles/modalities used such as listening, reading, and doing.
- Use *Instagram* for story sharing and invite youth to submit pictures, poems, and prayers. Compile their stories into a video and share on your church’s website and social media platforms.
- Create *Canva* posts of psalms, prayers, images. Invite contributions (see further in this document some prayers, psalms, and scripture that can be used) from all members of your congregation.

**Memorials and Slide Shows/Videos**

- Create *memorials* “to your senior year” through a collection and compilation of videos, images, and photos of experiences you shared together over the past year/s.
- Invite youth to create an *Ofrenda* (Day of the Dead) altar of objects; a recognition that we are surrounded by the communion of saints - living and dead. It is a celebration that can be done at home or in churches. Invited individuals to take photos and post on Instagram or compile them all into a video.
- Create a *digital quilt* symbolizing unity. Invite individuals to submit a square (photo, Instagram post, poem, etc.) and merge them together in a video presentation or physical object that can be shared at a later date when all are gathered (or hang outside your church for “drive-by viewing”).
- Compile photos of youth and/or group photos of their experiences together. Create an *online slideshow* put to a favorite group song and intersperse it with prayers, psalms of lament, and psalms of joy.
- Make a *Memory Map* using *Praying in Color* techniques.
- Create a Liturgy of Lament (see below)
- Use paper or stones to express one’s feelings.
  - (Individually): Write a regret, lament, intention on paper or stone
(For a group): Reflect on the stages/steps/memories of your time together: earliest memory of the group, achievements, anecdotes, challenge faced, how they currently feel, what they are missing/grieving, a hope for the group or individual

- Dissolve or burn paper, build a path or cairn with the stones
- Individuals go to their church property separately, add their stone/paper to create a large display, path, etc. Photo the finished installation.
- Stepping-stones of one’s faith journey from “yesterday to today” using construction paper footprints (templates could be provided online and/or mailed out to individuals to use) and then added (one at a time following a schedule) to an installation outside your church building such as a sidewalk or covered walkway.

Creating a Liturgy of Lament

A lament is a feeling or expression of deep sorrow or mourning of a loss or death. Many individuals and families are mourning the loss of rites of passage that will not occur in the ways that had been expected with “pomp and circumstance,” parties, and the gathering of family and friends for celebration. All of us need a means to express our thoughts in tangible ways. Below are ideas on how to create a Liturgy of Lament, with the hopes that young people will be invited to participate in the crafting of any such liturgy.

It is only after we lament, after we face and express the pain and negativity and get it all out, that healing can begin. Theologically, by facing and going through death (Good Friday), and waiting (Holy Saturday), we can come to new life, to resurrection (Easter).

A template for writing a lament – this is the formula that should be followed using scripture, prayer, sharing thoughts, etc.

1. Turn to God
2. Bring your complaint
3. Ask boldly for help
4. Choose to trust in God

Examples to tap into:

- **Cry to God**: Psalm 44:24-26; Psalm 13:2-3
- **Prayer in Anger**: Psalm 79:6, 10, 12; Psalm 92:2-4
- **Personal Affliction**: Psalm 25:16-20
- **Trust in God**: Psalm 85:8-10; Psalm 4:7-9
A template for a Liturgy of Lament:

1. Song
2. Prayers of Lament
3. Psalm
4. Scripture or other reading
5. Song
6. Reflection/Offering: This could include one of the experiences noted above using paper or stones, an individual’s offering of memories (their senior year, their hopes for the future, etc.)
7. Commissioning: Sending forth with new hopes for the future
8. Prayers of thanks
9. Song
10. Blessing

Music

- Hymn: *It is Well with My Soul* sung by TenTwoSix Music Group (an online cell phone choir in Nashville)
- Song: *How Long* from Lamentations released March 1, 2016. Words and music by Isaac Wardell.

Calm me.

Release everything that's making me anxious, especially this isolation amid COVID-19.

Fill every cell of my body with your presence.

Help me feel your love everywhere;
in my body, in my brain, in my soul.

Hold me in your arms
so I can let this tension go.

"Anxiety" from *Call on Me: A Prayer Book for Young People* (c) 2012, Church Publishing
A Group Process to Reflect on Psalm 13

Read Psalm 13 together:

1 How long, O Lord?
will you forget me for ever? *
   how long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long shall I have perplexity in my mind,
and grief in my heart, day after day? *
   how long shall my enemy triumph over me?

3 Look upon me and answer me, O Lord my God; *
give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death;

4 Lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,” *
and my foes rejoice that I have fallen.

5 But I put my trust in your mercy; *
my heart is joyful because of your saving help.

6 I will sing to the Lord, for he has dealt with me richly; *
I will praise the Name of the Lord Most High.

After reading, reflect:

   How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?
   …(What is your wail?)

   Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
   …(What is your plea?)

   I will trust in Your lovingkindness
   … (What is your assurance?)

The below psalm was created as part of this exercise in lament by a group of youth workers from the Diocese of Massachusetts during one of their Zoom gatherings and shared with the permission of The Rev. H. Mark Smith, Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.
Psalm COVID-19

A Psalm of Youth Workers

How long, dear Lord, until we can come together in your sanctuary again? Am I not worthy of being remembered?
How long O Lord will we be socially distant from one another? Will this time of quarantine last forever?
Our numbers are diminishing; our friends are departing. How long will this isolation and silence continue?
How long will I and my loved ones live in fear and be unable to comfort each other?
How long will we be separated and lonely? How long will we forget that we are never truly alone
because of how heavy this time of isolation is?
How will we go on, Oh Lord, after COVID-19 has passed? Will we have fear or love and care for one another?
Lord, you are the God of hard places—you are the God of hard times. Enliven our hearts to remember this.
Consider my loneliness. Consider my anxieties. Consider my restlessness.
Give me comfort and the Grace to be sustained during this time of trial
Preserve the lives of those we love, please Lord, we beg you.
Bring healing, Lord. Do not leave us alone.
Bring us small pieces of joy to tide us over through this long night
Plea: Consider how we can be together, O Lord. Bring us moments of connection despite the distance.
Carry us through this time, and help us to endure when members of our community have been forsaken by the powerful
I am so worried about undocumented folks, homeless folks, and all who are vulnerable
I am assured by your Rising, again and again.
I will trust that you will bring us back into one another’s arms again. That your resurrection carries with it the hope that we will once again be reunited.
You know the plans You have for us; nothing can separate us from You. You have been. You are. And you will be.
I know that you hear my prayers even if I cannot sense a response
As the sun rises tomorrow, I know you will spread your light and love
I will lean to you, oh Lord, because you have always been there for me.
We are your people and we are your God.
I will trust in your never-failing Love for us.
I know that you weep along with us and will rejoice with us again one day.
I know that one day I will praise you in your house with your beloved community again.
Prayers, Scripture, Quotes, and Statements for Use in Liturgies and Created Resources

All scripture is from the NRSV unless otherwise noted. If any other resource is used, please credit the source.

Scripture with Reflection

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair.

2 Corinthians 4:8

In despair we give up on our relationship with God. Doubt, on the other hand, is a sign that our faith is alive and kicking; it is part of the rhythm of faith itself.

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My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

Psalm 22:1

Lament is not a failure of faith, but an act of faith. We cry out directly to God because deep down we know that our relationship with God counts; it counts to us and it counts to God.

Laments in Scripture

See, O Lord, how distressed I am;
    my stomach churns,
my heart is wrung within me. - Lamentations 1:20a

My eyes are spent with weeping;
    my stomach churns;
my bile is poured out on the ground
    because of the destruction of my people,
because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city. - Lamentations 2:11

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. - Psalm 130:1
Why is my pain unceasing,
My wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?
Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,
Like waters that fail. - Jeremiah 15:18

Turn, O Lord, save my life;
Deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love. - Psalm 6:4

How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? - Psalm 13:2

Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? - Psalm 10:1

Prayers of Consolation in Scripture

The Lord has heard my supplication;
The Lord accepts my prayer.
All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck with terror;
They shall turn back, and in a moment be put to shame. - Psalm 6:9-10

You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
Stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
For he did not despise or abhor
The affliction of the afflicted;
He did not hide his face from me,
But heard when I cried to him. - Psalm 22:23-24

See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away. - Revelation 21:4
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. - Lamentations 3:22-23

DISAPPOINTMENT

Endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. - Romans 5:4-5

Sadness, frustration, emptiness. My heart is breaking. What I hoped isn't going to happen. Nothing turned out the way I wished it would. I feel so alone and let down. What a waste, what a disappointment. Help me move on. Fill my heart so I can smile again.

"Disappointment" adapted from Call on Me: A Prayer Book for Young People by Jenifer Gamber & Sharon Ely Pearson (c) 2012 Church Publishing
Prayers

O God, the same yesterday, today, and for ever, though we sense your absence in a bleak despairing time, focus our minds and hearts on memories of grace surprising us, that faith may be kept alive and hope rekindled.

by Jim Cotter


May you remember that God is above you, watching over you as a good shepherd,
That God is below you, ready to lift you up in your weakest moments,
That God is behind you to give you encouragement when you want to give up and turn back.
God is in front of you, calling you forward in faith, even when you can’t see how it’s going to work out.
God is beside you holding your hand no matter what you are going through.
But most of all, God is within you, as close as every breath you take.
And that’s, my brothers and sisters, what makes all the difference.

by The Rev. Malcolm Marler
Senior Director of Pastoral Care at UAB Medicine, Birmingham Alabama

A Prayer for Today

For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the Lord.
-Jeremiah 30:17a

Our world is ravaged by disease. Give strength to doctors, nurses, and all who take care of the sick. Provide energy and determination to all who are looking for cures for this Coronavirus and ways to make the afflicted well. Open the minds of all your people to learn new ways that will help all of us stay healthy and safe. Amen.

"World disease" adapted from "Call on Me: A Prayer Book for Young People" by Jennifer Gamber & Sharon Ely Pearson (c) 2012 Church Publishing.
Blessed Are You, Lord our God, Who Watches Over Us in Times of Trial and Danger

Thanksgiving fills our hearts,
    as we rejoice in You,
    our Lord and Holy Protector.
We who live in the midst of storms and sickness,
    of war and danger,
    who are daily exposed to evil of every sort,
    rejoice in Your constant
    and parental love for us.
Surrounded by darkness and the shadow of fear,
    we do not falter,
    for we trust that Your constant care
    cradles us
    and keeps us safe.

With angelic attention,
    You watch over our home
    and each of our bodily temples.
Your holy spirits surround us
    and, in winged wonder,
    call us to prayer
    and to confidence.

Guard us in this time of danger,
    as Your Holy Presence
    fills the darkness of this moment
    with the splendor of Your shelter.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
    who watches over us in times of trial and danger.

Amen+

Excerpted from Prayers for the Domestic Church by Edward Hays. Copyright 1979 by Ave Maria Press, P.O. Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556. Used with permission of the publisher.
Anger

_Deuteronomy 32:22a_

Anger burns inside of me.
   The heat rises within me.
It is hard to hold my temper.
   Words fly out of my mouth.

I’m so angry toward ____ I can’t stand it.
   It’s consuming me.
I am so mad at ___
   I can’t see beyond my rage.

Lord, O know it’s okay to be angry.
   You get angry too.
Help me take this fire within me,
   and use it to do what’s right not for revenge.

Disappointment

_Romans 5:4-5_

Sadness, frustration, emptiness.
My heart is breaking.
What I hoped for didn’t happen.
Nothing turned out the way I wished it would.
I feel so alone and let down.
What a waste, what a disappointment.
Help me move on.
Fill my heart so I can smile again.

Anxiety, adapted

_1 Peter 5:7_

Calm me.
Release everything that’s making me anxious,
   especially this isolation amid Covid-19.
Fill every cell of my body with your presence.
Help me feel your love everywhere:
   in my body, in my brain, and in my soul.
Hold me in your arms.
so I can let this tension go.

**Depression**  
*Psalm 22:2*

I’m tired.  
I don’t feel like doing anything.  
I’ve got no energy.  
I want to go to sleep.  
I’m sad.  
I feel like crying all the time.

Wake me up.  
Be with me.  
I need help.  
Give me strength  
to tell someone  
I need help.

**World disease, adapted**  
*Jeremiah 30:17a*

Our world is ravaged by disease.  
Give strength to doctors, nurses, and all  
who take care of the sick.  
Provide energy and determination to all who are looking  
for cures of this coronavirus and ways to make the afflicted well.  
Open the minds of all your people to learn new ways  
that will help all of us stay healthy and safe.

Help our countries to work together to eradicate all diseases  
so that all children will know their parents  
and all parents can watch their children grow up.

The above prayers in this section are from *Call on Me: A Prayer Book for Young People* by Jenifer Gamber and Sharon Ely Pearson (Morehouse, 2012). Used with permission.

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Graduating from High School

In every beginning is an ending, O Lord, and in every end something begins. Our sibling, N., has graduated from high school, and is ready now for new learning and experiences. Grant that childhood’s innocence and hope may remain alive in them, bringing joy as they mature. Grant that they may hear your still small voice in their heart saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” Help them preserve old friendships while creating new ones. Grant that we who love them may help them find their own voice, their own words and their own work in Christ’s true way, who knows the person they were created to be; we pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Going to College

Gracious God, your Holy Spirit instructs our hearts in the ways of life. In going to college, your child N., has set aside a time of learning and preparation for their life’s work. Through all the years ahead, make them hungry for wisdom tempered with love. Help them discern truth in all that they learn, in the people they meet, and in the choices they must face each day. Keep their mind alert for the rigors of study and exams. Keep their body safe and well. Give them a heart bold to question, yet alive to your wonders. And assure them always of your love and ours; through Christ, your Wisdom made flesh. Amen.

From Changes: Prayers and Services Honoring Rites of Passage (Church Publishing, 2007)
A Liturgy for Those Who Weep Without Knowing Why

There is so much lost in this world, O Lord, so much that aches and groans and shivers for want of redemption, so much that seems dislocated, upended, desecrated, unhinged—even in our own hearts.

Even in our own hearts we bear the mark of all that is broken. What is best in this world has been bashed and battered and trodden down. What was meant to be the substance has become the brittle shell, haunted by the ghosts of a glory so long crumbled that only its rubble is remembered now.

Is it any wonder we should weep sometimes, without knowing why? It might be anything. And then again, it might be everything.

For we feel this. We who are your children feel this empty space where some lost thing should have rested in its perfection, and we pine for those nameless glories, and we pine for all the wasted stories in our world, and we pine for these present wounds. We pine for our children and for their children too, knowing each will have to prove how this universal pain is also personal. We pine for all children born into these days of desolation—whose regal robes were torn to tatters before they were even swaddled in them.

O Lord, how can we not weep, when waking each day in this vale of tears? How can we not feel those pangs, when we, wounded by others, so soon learn to wound as well, and in the end wound even ourselves?
We grieve what we cannot heal and
we grieve our half-belief,
having made uneasy peace with disillusion,
aligning ourselves with a self-protective lie
that would have us kill our best hopes
just to keep our disappointments half-confined.

We feel ourselves wounded by what is wretched,
foul, and fell,
but we are sometimes wounded by the beauty as well,
for when it whispers,
it whispers of the world
that might have been our birthright,
now banished,
now withdrawn,
as unreachable to our wounded hearts
as ancient seas receding down
some endless dark.

We weep, O Lord,
for those things that,
though nameless, are still lost.
We weep for the cost of our rebellions,
for the mocking and hollowing of holy things,
for the inward curve of our souls,
for the evidences of death outworked in
every field and tree and blade of grass,
crept up in every creature, alert in every
longing, infecting all fabrics of life.

We weep for the leers our daughters will endure,
as if to be made in reflection of your beauty
were a fault for which they must pay.
We weep for our sons,
sabotaged by profiteers who seek to warp their dreams
before they even come of age.

We weep for all the twisted alchemies of our times
that would turn what might have been gold
into crowns of cheap tin
and then toss them into refuse bins
as if love could ever be
a castoff thing one might simply be done with.
We weep for the wretched expressions of all things
that were first built of goodness and glory
but are now their own shadow twins.
We have wept so often.
And we will weep again.

And yet, there is somewhere in our tears
a hope still kept.

We feel it in this darkness,
like a tiny flame,
when we are told

Jesus also wept.

You wept.

So moved by the pain of this crushed creation,
you, O Lord, heaved with the grief of it,
drinking the anguish like water
and sweating it out of your skin like blood.

Is it possible that you—in your sadness
over Lazarus, in your grieving for
Jerusalem, in your sorrow in the garden—
is it possible that you have sanctified
our weeping too?

For the grief of God is no small thing,
and the weeping of God is not without effect.
The tears of Jesus preceded
a resurrection of the dead.

O Spirit of God,
is it then possible
that our tears might also be
a kind of intercession?
That we, your children, in our groaning with the sadness of creation, could be joining in some burdened work of coming restoration? Is it possible that when we weep and don’t know why, it is because the curse has ranged so far, so wide? That we weep at that which breaks your heart, because it has also broken ours—sometimes so deeply that we cannot explain our weeping, even to ourselves?

If that is true, then let such weeping be received, O Lord, as an intercession newly forged of holy sorrow.

Then let our tears anoint these broken things, and let our grief be as their consecration—a preparation for their promised redemption, our sorrow sealing them for that day when you will take the ache of all creation, and turn it inside-out, like the shedding of an old gardener’s glove.

O Lord, if it please you, when your children weep and don’t know why, yet use our tears to baptize what you love.

Amen.

Whenever this liturgy is used, we request that credit be given to Douglas Kaine McKelvey, author of Every Moment Holy, and if possible, provide a link to www.EveryMomentHoly.com. Copyright © 2017 Douglas McKelvey. For more information about this liturgy, visit: www.everymomentholy.com
In Time of Misfortune or Hardship

Opening Prayer
You know us, Lord, so we turn to you at this time of pandemic and testing, praying in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture
So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. - 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Petitions
We ask you to help us in the time of need, especially _______________, we pray.
Response: Be with us, Lord.
Help us to walk by faith, knowing that you will bring good out of every difficulty, we pray.
We thank you for the many gifts you have give to us through this difficult time, and we pray,
*Add your own petitions.*

Collect
Lord Jesus, as you lived on this earth you showed us how to deal with trials and hardships. Be with us now. Teach us how to trust you.

The Lord's Prayer

Resources

Online

*Every Moment Holy* is a site of prayers and liturgies. Whenever any liturgy is used from this site, it has been requested that credit be given to Douglas Kaine McKelvey, author of *Every Moment Holy*, and if possible, provide a link to www.EveryMomentHoly.com.

*A Prayer Compilation from National Association of Episcopal Schools* (NAES)

*A Prayer Compilation from the Church of England* (prayers, litanies, etc.)

*Inside Out: Christian Resources for Outdoor Ministries* has offered prayers and activities for *Senior Rites of Passage*.

Print


*Before the Amen: Creative Resources for Worship* edited by Maren C. Tirabassi and Maria I. Tirabassi (The Pilgrim Press, 2007)

*Call on Me: A Prayer Book for Young People* by Jenifer Gamber and Sharon Ely Pearson (Morehouse, 2012)

*Changes: Prayers and Services Honoring Rites of Passage* (Church Publishing, 2007)

*Comforting Children in Crisis* (Group Publishing, 2008)

*Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle* by Ted Loder (Innisfree Press, 1984)

*Holy Ground: liturgies and worship resources for an engaged spirituality* by Neil Paynter and Helen Boothroyd (Wild Goose Publications, 2005)

*Psalms for a Pilgrim People* by Jim Cotter (Morehouse, 1993)