

Enriching Our Worship 5

Liturgies and Prayers
Related to Childbearing,
Childbirth, and Loss

Supplemental Liturgical Materials

prepared by

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music

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Rachel's Tears, Hannah's Hopes

*Liturgies and Prayers Related to Childbearing,
Childbirth, and Loss*

A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.

— Jeremiah 31:15

Hannah was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord,
and wept bitterly. . . .
“O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your
servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant,
but will give to your servant a . . . child . . . ”

— 1 Samuel 1:10-11

Introduction

This body of work provides pastoral support to those experiencing the grief, hope, uncertainty, and loss that may surround childbearing and childbirth. It is designed to promote flexibility so that pastors, liturgists, retreat leaders, and others may create occasions of prayer and opportunities for worship to meet the particular needs of the individuals seeking such resources.

Theology and Rationale

Our God is generous and generative. The gospel according to John proclaims that “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (John 1:30). We are placed in a world that God proclaimed good, teeming with living creatures that swim and fly and swarm over the earth. Each is beautiful and worthy, and all life is interconnected in ways we cannot fathom. Each species reproduces itself according to its own kind, so that the cycle of life, death, and new life may continue. Human beings share with all life this capacity to reproduce, a sharing in God’s creating love. (*Genesis 1–2*)

Reproduction transforms human lives and relationships. Throughout the history of God’s people as related in Scripture, God promises a child to a woman, often in unlikely circumstances. The angel Gabriel tells a very young, unmarried woman she will bear God’s own Son even though she is a virgin. Women past childbearing age—most notably Sarah and Elizabeth—also find themselves granted a child they had given up hoping for. Fertility is a gift, which exposes bodies and emotions to God’s mysterious power

and unfathomable purposes. But this gift can have unpredictable results. Many pregnancies are welcomed as a blessing by the family or the mother—a cause for rejoicing and new hope. However, others may precipitate crises for those involved. Sometimes individuals or couples may be faced with difficult decisions. They may well feel inadequate and overwhelmed when faced by ethical dilemmas. The Church plays a crucial role in offering spiritual guidance and support so that these challenging choices may be decided as wisely as possible, while imploring God’s guidance and healing. In situations involving fertility, individuals and couples may find themselves confronted by harsh realities that can evoke a range of negative emotions, including anger or sorrow, regret or feelings of guilt. These rites and prayers provide opportunities for those so afflicted to lift up their losses and grief to our loving God. Whether mourning for dashed hopes; regretting past decisions; giving voice to feelings of rejection and anger; grieving for a child who was never born or only lived a short time, or perhaps one who was given up for adoption; these liturgies offer occasions to try to come to terms with what has happened, to create a space where grieving people pray for the strength to go on and ultimately to recover the fullness of life.

Historical Foundations

From the earliest days, birth and death have evoked awe and fear, and the rites surrounding them reflect this. Leviticus 12 specifies that a woman should wait for a set period of time after childbirth before presenting herself and her child in the Temple where an offering of a lamb and pigeon or two turtledoves is required for “purification” from the mysterious and dangerous process she has recently undergone. Luke’s gospel relates that after forty days, Mary presents Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem, in fulfillment of this rite (Luke 2:22–38). The Church of the Middle Ages took special care to protect pregnant and nursing mothers in the first period after childbirth. Women were exempt from

the rules of fasting during this time, while men were expected to assume household chores that would normally be assigned to their wives. Beating a pregnant woman was subject to ecclesiastical punishment. By the eleventh century, a rite of welcoming the new mother back into the congregation after a set period following the birth (often forty days) became usual in both the Eastern and Western Church. It continues to be practiced in Orthodox communities to this day. Many historic Christian rites focus on the mother resuming her place in society and offering her thanksgiving to God for a safe delivery and a healthy child. The service often took place just before the celebration of the Eucharist, at which time the mother was encouraged to receive the sacrament. The thanksgiving for a safe delivery was offered even when the child had not survived. Miscarried infants or those who died soon after birth were baptized and given the rite of Christian burial. The British feminist theologian, Natalie Knödel, observes in her article on this subject [<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mikef/church.html>] that this rite in its various forms makes a theological “connection between events of natural life, like the birth of a child, and the life of the church, the parish eucharist.”

Thomas Cranmer included “The Order of the Purification of Women” in the 1549 Prayer Book, following the Sarum rite which welcomed the woman back into her congregational family after childbirth. In the 1552 revision, however, the rite was renamed “The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, Commonly Called The Churching of Women,” the title that persisted throughout Anglican prayer books, including the 1928 Book of Common Prayer according to the Episcopal Church. The 1979 Prayer Book contains “A Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child.” In the 1552 rite, the rubrics specify that the mother “shall kneel down in some convenient place, nigh unto the place where the table standeth,” indicating the sacredness of the event by her proximity to the altar. The rubric also states that she should “receyue the holy Communion” at this time. Once again, the support of the Church is offered her whether or not her child survived. Thus, rites for a woman who has endured the risks involved with the reproductive process have been present in Prayer Books throughout Anglican history.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

These rites and prayers draw significantly on the biblical tradition of lament as well as rejoicing. Scripture offers many examples of humans raging against God and against the circumstances of their lives. Often those who do so have a particularly intimate relationship with their Creator: Rachel, David, Hannah, Job, and many of the prophets—to name only a few—who love and are loved by God. Nevertheless, circumstances bring them to cry out to God in anger, misery, fear, or deep mourning. In particular, the Wisdom tradition, including the book of Job and the Psalms, invites us to voice our grief and anger, secure in the faith that a compassionate God hears our cries and will respond. The divine action may not always be what we hope for or expect; nonetheless it is important for our relationship with God to voice our honest reactions, even anxiety, grief, anger, and doubt. Throughout Scripture, we hear God’s people crying and lamenting. Too often, pastoral care givers try to resolve grief by overly quick reassurances or by telling the sufferer that “This is all for the best.” Such advice represses feelings that must be brought to the surface. It is better to assure the afflicted that God hears the cries of the despairing and is present throughout the turmoil of grief. Psalm 88 in particular offers a clear biblical precedent for such lament that does not turn too quickly to hope, from its opening:

*O Lord, my God, my Savior, **
by day and night I cry to you.

to its stark conclusion:

*My friend and my neighbor you have put away from me, **
and darkness is my only companion.

We can candidly express our feelings to our God who promises never to forsake us. Some of the foundational principles that allow for lament are:

- ◆ God created everything, and pronounced all creation good. But in the Fall, sin entered the world, bringing separation from God and death. Nonetheless, God continues to be merciful. As we say in the words of Eucharistic Prayer A: “In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.” In that reconciliation, which takes place through the sinless Christ’s death for our sins—“the righteous for the unrighteous” (*I Peter 3:18*)—God has “graciously accepted us as living members” of Jesus Christ, and made us heirs of his eternal kingdom. As children of God, we acknowledge that God knows our hearts. It is necessary to be honest with ourselves and with God to sustain this vital relationship, even when we feel “negative” emotions. No part of human experience, including our physical experience, is hidden from God.

- ◆ Jesus reached out to all people in whatever stage of joy, grief, rage, faith, unbelief, or shame he met them, in order that he might reconcile them to himself. Following his example, the Church acknowledges the full range of human emotions, working in Christ to heal what is broken and comfort what is hurting. All who come may experience God’s healing love. “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (*Romans 8:38–39*)

- ◆ Human emotions, including grief, loss, and failure, may be the impetus for transformation through deeper reconciliation with our loving God. “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might

be the firstborn within a large family.” (*Romans 8:28–29*)
Therefore we look for healing and hope to come from even the most difficult and painful experiences. This is not to diminish the pain that is felt, but in acknowledgement that Christ experienced the full measure of human suffering. Thus we may find transformation even in the deepest agonies of human existence.

- ◆ God’s love for us remains steadfast regardless of how many times we fail. Christ forgives even human complicity in his death. As he conquered sin and death for us, his forgiveness is unconditional if we but seek it. Only we can choose to reject his forgiveness. Therefore, when our actions bring sorrow or sin, we can repent, fully trusting God to redeem us in compassion, forgiveness, and mercy. In this way, we believe that through confidence in the Love that brought us into being, even our greatest tragedies or our most sinful acts cannot separate us from God. The hope of new life is always present even in our darkest hours. We are promised that in the fullness of time God will wipe away all tears. A new heaven and earth will restore all that was broken and lost in the light of the holy and undivided Trinity whose nature is Love.

About the Liturgies

In providing liturgies of lament, remembrance, and hope, the church offers opportunity for people to acknowledge their grief and receive assurance of God's presence, even in the midst of unspeakable pain.

Beginning the service in silence and darkness creates space for expressions of bereavement and loss to be voiced and acknowledged. All these liturgies have been shaped to facilitate movement from darkness to light, from silence to song, from minor key to major key, from lament to expressions of hope. Those who plan them are nevertheless cautioned not to make this transition too quickly, or to create too great a contrast. If lament is hurried over, the effect may well be to discourage and suppress deep-seated feelings of grieving and loss. Especially in the early stages of grief, or when grief has been discouraged, the bereaved will find a degree of comfort merely by being permitted a safe place to give voice to their actual feelings, rather than being urged to keep up a front or "get over it." At the same time, planners should never assume they fully understand the feelings of the bereaved or try to put words in their mouths. For this reason, the language of Scripture, especially the Psalms and Lamentation, are always appropriate, as they provide a wide range of emotions more fully expressed than any words most of us are capable of expressing. The ultimate aim of these rites is to provide assurance that God is present with us even in the darkest places of pain, even when we cannot sense that presence through our feelings. The most hopeful proclamation may not be that "everything will be fine," but that God feels the anguish of those who grieve and does not abandon us.

The liturgies that follow are intended for use with families and communities where grief remains acute, or at particular times of the year that trigger memories and emotions of profound losses of the past. Examples include religious and secular holidays, including Christmastime, All Saints' Day, Mother's and Father's Day, the expected due date, the child's birthday, or on the anniversary of the loss. For many centuries, and even today in certain cultures, observing the anniversaries of the death of beloved family members and friends permits a reminder that death does not separate us and provides catharsis for mourning and the assurance for the living that we have not forgotten those who have gone before us.

A Template for Communal Worship, Form 1

The Gathering of the People

may include

Silence

Darkness or dim lighting

A hymn, song, or anthem

Declaration of purpose

Collect/gathering prayer

The Ministry of the Word

may include

Readings from Scripture

Poetry or other readings

Silence

Music — hymns, songs, instrumental

Sermon or homily

Prayers

The Healing Action

Laying-on of hands [and anointing] with prayer

The Memorial

Sharing of memories, stories, symbolic items, photos,
or other mementos

Creating a memorial object

Silence

Lighting of candles

Increased light in the room

Placing a flower or other symbol of the loss on the altar

Song, Hymn, or Canticle, or Instrumental interlude

Affirmation of Hope and Faith

May include the celebration of Holy Eucharist

Departure

Blessing

may include

Song, hymn, or canticle, or instrumental postlude

Silent departure

A Template for Communal Worship, Form 2

This form is particularly suitable for times of deep grief, or in times of decision-making. Liturgy based on this form creates a kind of container for grief and hope, despair and trust, uncertainty and confidence all at once. It invites worshipers to enter and rest in the darkness of grief and/or uncertainty, trusting that God is present even in our darkest hours. This model emphasizes openness to the present moment. It may be compared to the Jewish tradition of “sitting Shiva” with the bereaved.

The service is organized around an interplay of psalms, singing, prayer, readings, and silence. Darkness and candlelight are essential elements. Incense may be used.

The psalms, readings, and hymns should be chosen for their similarity to one another. They should be variations on a theme, reinforcing the unifying idea, coming at the central issue from different angles.

There may be slight movement from despair to hope, from uncertainty to decision, or from darkness to light. But planners are cautioned to not try to wrap things up too neatly. This template in particular honors the process rather than announcing the ending.

Silence should surround each element

Psalm or opening sentences

Song or hymn

Readings from Scripture

May include readings from other sources

Prayers

Ritual action

Each element may occur one or more times, weaving together in a tapestry that gathers up and holds the presenting issue. Specific suggestions for hymns, Scripture readings, and prayers are included in the appendices, beginning on page 71.

The Liturgies

For a Small Gathering

At Home, in the Hospital, or Another Private Setting

Minister The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all;
People *And also with you.*

Minister Dear friends, we are gathered here in the presence of
God, [*here the minister names the particular issue of
concern*] to offer our grief and seek healing. God is full
of compassion and mercy, ready to hear when we pray,
to comfort when we mourn, to help us bear our griefs
and sorrows, and to quiet our anxiety. The steadfast
love of our God never ceases.

People *Thanks be to God.*

Minister Let us pray.

The Collect or Gathering Prayer

*Prayers for various occasions are found on pages 54 – 70.
Extemporaneous prayer may be offered.*

A Reading from Scripture

*See appendix A, pages 71 – 78, for suggestions of passages suitable to the
particular occasion.*

A hymn or canticle may be sung. See appendix B, pages 79 – 85.

The Healing Action

If there is to be laying on of hands [and anointing], the following form is used.

The minister lays hands upon the woman [and anoints her], prays silently, then prays aloud using one of the following forms or similar words

N., I [*anoint you and*] lay my hands upon you in the name of God the holy and undivided Trinity. May Christ be present with you to comfort you, to guard and protect you, and to keep you in everlasting life. *Amen.*

or this

N., I lay my hands upon you [*and anoint you*] in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, praying you will be strengthened and filled with God's grace, that you may know the healing power of the Spirit. *Amen.*

The minister may add, in these or similar words

As you are outwardly anointed with this holy oil, so may our loving God give you the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit. Of God's bounty, may your suffering be relieved, and your spirit, mind, and body restored to grace and peace. May all of us in the frailty of our flesh know God's healing and resurrecting power. *Amen.*

Silence may follow.

The Prayers

One of the following litanies may be used.

Litany of Remembrance, page 24

Litany of Complaint, page 33

Litany of Lament, page 36

Litany of Remembrance and Lament, Healing and Hope, page 42

Litany of Healing and Hope, page 52, or another suitable litany or selections from the prayers beginning on page 54, or some other suitable prayers

Silence may follow.

The Lord's Prayer

A hymn, psalm, or canticle may be sung.

The Blessing

Minister May God's love make you whole; may the light of Christ guide your footsteps; and may the presence of the Holy Spirit fill your hearts and remain with you, this day and always. *Amen.*

After the service concludes, those gathered may wish to share memories, stories, photos, or other mementos pertaining to the loss, or create a memorial object.

For Private Devotion

Of Individuals, Couples, Families, or Small Groups

O God of peace, you have taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God. *Amen.*

From Psalm 69

- 1 Save me, O God, *
for the waters have risen up to my neck.
- 2 I am sinking in deep mire, *
and there is no firm ground for my feet.
- 3 I have come into deep waters, *
and the torrent washes over me.
- 4 I have grown weary with my crying;
my throat is inflamed; *
my eyes have failed from looking for my God.
- 15 In your great mercy, O God, *
answer me with your unfailing help.
- 16 Save me from the mire; do not let me sink; *
let me be rescued from those who hate me
and out of the deep waters.
- 17 Let not the torrent of waters wash over me,
neither let the deep swallow me up; *
do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.
- 18 Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind; *
in your great compassion, turn to me.

or this, from Psalm 46

- 1 God is our refuge and strength, *
a very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, *
and though the mountains be toppled into the depths of the sea;
- 3 Though its waters rage and foam, *
and though the mountains tremble at its tumult.
- 4 The Lord of hosts is with us; *
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.
- 5 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, *
the holy habitation of the Most High.
- 6 God is in the midst of her;
she shall not be overthrown; *
God shall help her at the break of day.
- 11 “Be still, then, and know that I am God; *
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be exalted in the earth.”
- 12 The Lord of hosts is with us; *
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

*Psalm 22:15–21 or Psalm 88:1–10 may be substituted.
See appendix A (pages 71 – 78) for additional suggestions.*

*One of the following, or some other suitable passage of Scripture
(see appendix A, pages 71 – 78) is read:*

Thus says the Lord: As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the Lord is with his servants. *Isaiah 66:12a, 13–14a*

Surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:11-14a

The Lord waits to be gracious to you; he will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." *Isaiah 30:18-21*

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. *Proverbs 3:5-6*

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling—if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as guidance. So we are always confident, even though we know while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. *2 Corinthians 5:1-9*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. *1 Peter 1:3–9*

Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! *Matthew 7:7–11*

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” *Matthew 11:25–29*

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.” *Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14*

Silence may follow the reading.

A hymn or canticle may be sung. (See appendices A, pages 71 – 78, and B, pages 79 – 85, for suggestions.)

Prayers may be offered. (See pages 54 – 70 for suggested prayers.)

The Lord’s Prayer

Concluding Collect

God of Life, you give us life and hope. Be with us in the chaos of this time. Calm our fears, be the light for our path, and strengthen our trust in your promise never to leave or forsake us. We pray through Christ, in the power of your Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Blessing of a Pregnant Woman

This blessing may be offered at any time and in any place. If the blessing is to include friends and family, the priest may begin with these or similar words:

We have gathered today to implore God's grace upon N., and to seek divine mercy for her and her expected child.

- V. God is our refuge and strength
R. A very present help in trouble.
V. She shall not be overthrown
R. God shall help her at the break of day.
V. Hear our prayer O God.
R. Let our cry come to you.
V. May God be with you.
R. And also with you.

Let us pray.

Loving God, by your grace the virgin mother of your incarnate Son visited her cousin Elizabeth in their pregnancies. May this visitation encourage N. in her pregnancy and give her confidence in your mercy and loving-kindness, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen. (After the collect for the Visitation, BCP p. 240)*

or this

Eternal God, creator of all, and source of all goodness and hope; hear the prayer of N., who bids your blessing for the preservation of the child you have given her to conceive. Continue your care for her, that by your mercy her child may come safely to birth in good time, and be whole and healthy, so that they both may come to rejoice in your loving-kindness, who holds all our souls in life and sealed the salvation of your world in the gift of the birth of Jesus Christ. *Amen. (SSJE Manual)*

Here the woman may be sprinkled with holy water and/or anointed

Then may be said one or more of the following Psalms: 67, 113, or 117

V. Let us bless the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, one God.

R. Let us praise and magnify our God for ever.

V. May God be with you.

R. And also with you.

Let us pray.

Gracious God, visit your daughter N., as she waits the birth of her child. Protect her from all that might threaten her and her child; let your holy angels be with them to preserve them in your peace, and let your blessing be ever upon them, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. *Amen*

or this

Loving God, giver of life, hear our prayer for N. and for the child she has conceived, that, by your grace, they both may come in safety to a timely and healthy birth, and rejoice in your gracious providence. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

When appropriate, any or all of the following may be added:

Blessed are you, loving God. You have blessed the union of N. and N. Amen.

Blessed are you, merciful God. May your blessing be upon N. and the child she carries. *Amen.*

Blessed are you, gracious God. May this time of pregnancy be for N. and N. a time of drawing nearer to you and to each other. *Amen.*

Blessed are you, holy God. May N. and N's. experience of birth be full of awe, wonder, and the joy of sharing in your creation. *Amen.*

or this:

The blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you and your child and bring you both through a safe and happy birth. *Amen.*

(Adapted from “The Blessing of a Pregnant Woman,” SSJE Manual, 5th ed., 1970. Note also material from The Book of Occasional Services 2003, pages 157 – 58.)

A Rite for Mourning the Loss of a Pregnancy

Concerning the Service

This liturgy is intended for use by people who have experienced the loss of a pregnancy through miscarriage. It may be adapted for other situations.

The loss of a pregnancy is often experienced as the loss of a child. The parents’ grief may be compounded by the sadness of not having seen or held the child to whom they were committed. Since the loss of a pregnancy in our culture and even in the Church is seldom acknowledged as a death, the parents have too often been left to mourn in isolation.

Grief for the loss of an unborn child should be honored. Healing may be facilitated through the ministry of the Church.

One or more objects associated with babies may be placed in the sight of the people.

The Gathering of the People

Music may be played or sung, or Scripture read, as the people gather.

The presider reads one or more of the following opening sentences (or another opening sentence from the suggestions in appendix A, pages 71 – 78).

God will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom. *Isaiah 40:11*

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. *Deuteronomy 33:27 (KJV)*

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you, says the Lord. *Isaiah 66:13a*

For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears . . . But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations. *Lamentations 1:1 6a; 5:19*

The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. *Revelation 7:17*

The presider welcomes the people, and states briefly the purpose of the gathering, using these or similar words:

Here in God's presence we gather with N. [and N.] to mourn the loss of *their* child, and to support *them* in *their* grief. Because *their* child died before birth, *their* family is diminished and *their* hope has turned to sorrow. Let us grieve with *them*, and call on God in the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior who sent his Spirit to comfort and heal.

The Collect

Let us pray.

Compassionate God, you hold us in your constant love. Comfort us as we grieve the loss of this child who never was born. Be with N. [and N.] in *their* anguish. Grant to *their* child, [N.], the joys of heaven; and to each of us, bring healing and grace. Renew our hopes for the future and our faith in your goodness. We pray through Jesus Christ, who carries all our sorrows and brings us from death to new life. *Amen.*

or this

O God, who gathered Rachel's tears over her lost children, hear now the sorrow and distress of N. [and N.] for the death of *her*

expected child. In the darkness of loss, stretch out to *her* the strength of your arm and renewed assurance of your love; through your own suffering and risen Child Jesus. *Amen.* (From *Enriching Our Worship 2*)

or this

Heavenly Father, your love for all children is strong and enduring. We were not able to know *N.* as we had hoped. Yet you knew *her* growing in *her* mother's womb, and *she* is not lost to you. In the midst of our sadness, we thank you that *N.* is with you now. *Amen.* (From *Enriching Our Worship 2*)

A Reading from Scripture

See appendix A (pages 71 – 78) for suggested readings.

Hymn, Psalm, or Canticle

The following canticle, or Canticle F "A Song of Lamentation," Canticle H "A Song of Hosea," or Canticle I "A Song of Jonah," from Enriching Our Worship 1 may be said or sung, or a suitable hymn may be sung. One of the following Psalms may be substituted: 13; 27:12–18; 38:6–11.

A Song of Christ's Goodness *Anselm of Canterbury*

Jesus, as a mother you gather your people to you; *
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
Often you weep over our sins and our pride, *
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgment.
You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, *
in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.
Jesus, by your dying, we are born to new life; *
by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; *
through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.

Your warmth gives life to the dead, *
your touch makes sinners righteous.
Lord Jesus, in your mercy, heal us; *
in your love and tenderness, remake us.
In your compassion, bring grace and forgiveness, *
for the beauty of heaven, may your love prepare us.

The following litany may be said.

Litany of Remembrance

[Adapted from the Reform Jewish Prayer Book]

Memories of *N.* will come to us, unbidden, sometimes unexpected, in all the various moments of our lives. Although memories may bring pain, they also bring comfort—for as long as we remember, *N.* is still part of us.

Silence may be kept. The name(s) of lost children may be spoken aloud.

In the rising of the sun and its going down,
we remember her.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of Winter,
we remember her.

At the opening of buds and in the rebirth of Spring,
we remember her.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of Summer,
we remember her.

At the rustling of leaves and the beauty of Autumn,
we remember her.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember her.

When we are weary and in need of strength,
we remember her.

When we are lost and sick at heart,
we remember her.

When we have joys we yearn to share,
we remember her.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make,
we remember her.

After a period of silence, the presider may say

Merciful God, look with pity upon the sorrows of this family for whom we pray. Remember them in your mercy; nourish them with patience; comfort them with a sense of your goodness; lift up your countenance upon them; and give them peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

This anthem or some other suitable anthem, or a hymn may be sung or said

Give rest, O Christ, to your child with your saints
*where sorrow and pain are no more,
neither sighing, but life everlasting.*

The Commendation

We commend to your mercy, O God, our child *N.*, that death may be for *her* the gate of life and peace with you. At your heavenly banquet, may we rejoice with *her* and all your children to see you face to face, one holy and undivided Trinity in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

Give rest, O Christ, to your child with your saints
where sorrow and pain are no more,
neither sighing, but life everlasting.

The following anthem may be added.

Into paradise may the angels lead you. At your coming may the martyrs receive you and bring you into the holy city, Jerusalem.

The Dismissal

Let us go forth in the name of Christ. Alleluia. Alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.

A Rite of Repentance and Reconciliation for an Abortion

Introduction

Sometimes people feel themselves carrying unresolved guilt over an abortion, or mishaps of pregnancy and infertility. Relationships can also be damaged in these processes. We recognize that all of these situations have a tragic dimension and call for great pastoral sensitivity to the needs of the woman and others involved. The Episcopal Church recognizes “all abortion as having a tragic dimension, calling for the concern and compassion of all the Christian community.” While affirming the legal right to have an abortion, nevertheless, Resolution A054 of the 1994 General Convention of the Episcopal Church goes on to say, “as Christians we believe strongly that if that right is exercised, it should be used only in extreme situations” (see appendix E for Resolution A054). The Episcopal Church recognizes a range of opinion among its members that allows individuals to examine their own consciences, preferably “with the advice and counsel of members of the Christian community.” All options should be explored and “it is the responsibility of members of this Church, especially the clergy, to become aware of local agencies and resources which will assist those faced with problem pregnancies.”

A woman who repents an abortion is to be received like any other penitent. Her sense of loss and remorse should be honored. It is the church’s role to assure her of God’s redeeming love and forgiveness, to promise her that her burden is removed because she has asked for God’s mercy, and that grace and newness of life will be hers. (See appendix E, Resolution D083.)

Christ has given his Church power to absolve sins. If a formal confession is to be made, and absolution granted, this must be done by a priest. Another Christian may be asked to hear the confession, but it must be made clear to the penitent that absolution will not be pronounced; instead, a declaration of forgiveness is provided. Either of the two forms of The Reconciliation of a Penitent (pages 447 and 449 of the Book of Common Prayer) or else the following rite is appropriate.

Should a couple wish to participate in this rite together, the presider should adapt the words to include the man as well as the woman. If a man wishes to repent of a decision he made regarding an abortion, the rite may be adapted for that purpose as well.

The service may also be adapted for corporate use, as seems appropriate to the circumstance: for instance, a ministry for counseling women who have had abortions might change this to accommodate a group rather than an individual.

A Rite of Repentance and Reconciliation

The priest says

My sister, what do you seek?

The penitent answers

My past actions weigh heavily upon me. I seek God's forgiveness and renewal in my life.

If the woman desires to address directly what burdens her, she may do so here.

The priest may then say

Listen to the words of Christ Jesus from the Gospel according to Luke:

“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” *Luke 15:3b-7*

My sister, God rejoices that you have come seeking God's merciful forgiveness. Let us say this psalm together.

Priest and penitent together

- 1 Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, *
and whose sin is put away!
- 2 Happy are they to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, *
and in whose spirit there is no guile!
- 3 While I held my tongue, my bones withered away, *
because of my groaning all day long.

- 4 For your hand was heavy on me day and night; *
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.
- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you, *
and did not conceal my guilt.
- 6 I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." *
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.
- 7 Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you
in time of trouble; *
when the great waters flow, they shall not reach them.
- 8 You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble; *
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- 9 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; *
I will guide you with my eye." *Psalm 32:1-9*

The penitent may tell her story, using the form below or similar words. If she has already talked about her experience in counseling before the rite, she may briefly restate the cause of pain for which she seeks reconciliation.

I confess my transgressions to the Lord. Here, in the presence of Almighty God, the Church, and you, I acknowledge my faults, especially_____. I mourn the life that was within me that I let go. I am haunted by what might have been. I humbly beg forgiveness of God and of Christ's Church.

Here the priest may offer words of comfort and counsel.

The priest then pronounces absolution using one of the following forms

May God who knows the depths of our hearts and yet abounds in mercy grant you forgiveness and healing, and the strength and comfort of the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Jesus Christ our Advocate. *Amen.*

or

May God forgive you all your sins, that you may enter into the new and everlasting life promised you through Christ our great High Priest, enlivened by God's Holy Spirit dwelling in you now and for ever. *Amen.*

If the officiant is a deacon or lay person, the following declaration of forgiveness is used.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us, forgives your sins by the grace of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

The officiant may conclude with the following

Now there is rejoicing in heaven; for you were lost, and are found; you were dead, and are now alive in Christ Jesus our Lord. God's arms are open for you and for your child, for Christ offered himself to be sacrificed for our sins, which are washed away in repentance. Go in peace to love and serve God all your days. And pray for me, a sinner. *Amen.*

A candle may be lighted, as a sign of God's promise of new life.

A Liturgy of Lament and Remembrance

For Loss of Children through Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Abortion, Placing for Adoption, or Inability to Conceive

This service follows Form 1, described on page 8.

Concerning the Service

Lament is the heart's expression of grief, an essential element in our conversation with God. Throughout Scripture, men and women pour out their grief and loss to God who hears and comforts them in their loss. Jesus wept for the death of his friend, Lazarus, and we should feel confident that when we pour out our sorrow, Christ knows our pain and is present in our suffering, ready to walk with us through the long process of bereavement and to bring healing in the fullness of time. The loss of an anticipated child plunges us from joyful expectation of new life to bereavement. We must mourn a loss before we can continue our journey towards new life.

This Liturgy of Lament provides a reminder to the participants that God understands our feelings of sorrow or anger, and can be trusted to hold us in love and heal us in the fullness of time, restoring our hope and trust. The rite provides worshipers opportunities for tears, for times of speaking and times of silence. The space chosen should accommodate enough freedom of movement so that those gathered may sit, stand, kneel, or even lie down. Pauses may be made in the litany when people are overcome by emotion. This service should be planned with pastoral sensitivity that respects the depth of grief, and gently points to a new confidence in God's healing love.

The Gathering of the People

The ministers enter in silence.

One or more of the following is read (or some other opening sentences; see appendix A, page 71)

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for
her children, because they are no more. *Jeremiah 31:15*

2 Have pity on me, Lord, for I am weak; *
heal me, Lord, for my bones are racked.

3 My spirit shakes with terror; *
how long, O Lord, how long?

4 Turn, O Lord, and deliver me; *
save me for your mercy's sake.

6 I grow weary because of my groaning; *
every night I drench my bed
and flood my couch with tears.

7 My eyes are wasted with grief. *
Psalm 6:2-4, 6-7a

1 O Lord, my God, my Savior, *
by day and night I cry to you.

2 Let my prayer enter into your presence; *
incline your ear to my lamentation.

3 For I am full of trouble; *
my life is at the brink of the grave.

4 I am counted among those who go down to the Pit; *
I have become like one who has no strength;

5 Lost among the dead, *
like the slain who lie in the grave,

6 Whom you remember no more, *
for they are cut off from your hand.

Psalm 88:1-6

Then follows the Litany of Complaint, or some other suitable litany or prayer.

Litany of Complaint

Each worshiper should adopt the posture most helpful to the full expression of his or her grief.

Leader Hear the cries of your people, O God.
People We will lament and not hold back.
We will refuse to be comforted
until we have made known to you our sorrow.
We are bereft.

Leader Our souls cleave to the dust.
People Our eyes are wasted with grief.
We are drenched with tears.
Our hearts melt like wax.

Leader Our souls melt away for sorrow.
People We are poured out like water.
Our bodies are racked.

Leader Our eyes have failed for watching for your promise.
People When will you comfort us?
Leader We open our mouths and pant in pain.
People Why do you stand so far off, O Lord,
and hide yourself in time of trouble?

Leader Our eyes shed streams of tears.
People Our indignation consumes us.
Leader We cry out to you.
People We grow weary with our groaning.
Leader Early in the morning we call to you.
People Let our cry come before you, O Lord.
Deliver us according to your promise of mercy.

A brief silence is kept.

Leader O Lord, we wait for you.
People More than sentries wait for the morning,
our souls wait for you alone.

A hymn or song of lament may be sung.

Silence may be kept.

Leader Let us pray.

Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: Let the cry of those in misery and need come to you, that we may find your mercy present with us in all our afflictions; give us strength for the sake of him who suffered for us, your son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Ministry of the Word

The people are seated.

The readings should include at least one from Scripture. If Eucharist is to be celebrated, the readings must include one from the Gospel. A psalm, hymn, or silent reflection follows each lesson. See appendix A beginning on page 71 for suggested Scripture readings. Suggested hymns are in appendix B, pages 79 – 85.

A homily may be preached.

The Healing Action

If there is to be laying on of hands [and anointing], the following form is used.

If oil for anointing is to be blessed, the priest says

Blessed are you, O God, source of life and health. In Jesus you became flesh and came to know the depth of human suffering. You sent the disciples to heal those who were sick. Sanctify this oil that all who are anointed with it may be healed, strengthened, and renewed, by the power of your Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

The minister may introduce the laying on of hands [and anointing] with these or similar words

The ministry of Jesus invites us to new life in God and with each other. In the laying on of hands [*and anointing*] we proclaim the Good News that God promises to restore us to wholeness in Christ. You are invited to offer yourself and ask for healing in the name of the holy and undivided Trinity.

The minister may invite each person to be anointed to give her or his name and any particular request for prayer. The minister then lays hands upon each person [and anoints the person], prays silently, then prays aloud using one of the following forms or similar words

N., I [anoint you and] lay my hands upon you in the name of God the holy and undivided Trinity. May Christ be present with you to comfort you, to guard and protect you, and to keep you in everlasting life. *Amen.*

or this

N., I lay my hands upon you [and anoint you] in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, praying you will be strengthened and filled with God's grace, that you may know the healing power of the Spirit. *Amen.*

The minister may add, in these or similar words

As you are outwardly anointed with this holy oil, so may our loving God give you the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit. Of God's bounty, may your suffering be relieved, and your spirit, mind, and body restored to grace and peace. May all of us in the frailty of our flesh know God's healing and resurrecting power. *Amen.*

The Memorial

Mourners may be given time to tell of their loss, grief, or memories.

Symbols of loss and grief may be spoken of or placed on an altar.

There may be silence, journal writing, or the creation of memorial objects.

The Prayers of the People

Litany of Lament

In place of the Litany of Lament, the Litany of Remembrance and Lament, Healing and Hope on page 42, or another litany, may be used.

Leader God, hear our prayer,
People And let our cry come to you.

Leader Merciful God, we come to you in sorrow.
Help us to grieve; let our tears flow; and look upon
our broken hearts.

People God, hear our prayer,
And let our cry come to you.

Leader We have lost children. We have lost hope. We have
lost our way.

Consider our losses.
God, hear our prayer,
People And let our cry come to you.

Leader Our faith has been shaken.
We are haunted by memories and weighed down
with guilt.

We are sick with sadness, weak with despair.
Help us know your presence.

People God, hear our prayer,
And let our cry come to you.

Leader In our suffering, we turn away from those who
suffer also.

Our bonds have been strained, one with another.
Show us your compassion and help us forgive others
and feel their sorrows.

People God, hear our prayer,
And let our cry come to you.

Leader We longed for [this child], but our bodies betrayed
our hopes.
Help us surrender them, and trust in your faithfulness.
God, hear our prayer,
People And let our cry come to you.

Leader Help us envision a future filled with promise,
even if we cannot know what lies in store for us.
Help us have confidence in your love as we take
each new step.
God, hear our prayer,
People And let our cry come to you.

The leader or presiding minister concludes with this collect:

Lord of all mercies: abide with us when the darkness deepens and we suffer loss, pain, and grief. Help us to know and understand you are with us even when we cannot feel your presence. Let your saving help shine through the shadows as you hold your cross before our eyes, reminding us that you share our sufferings and have overcome death so that we might rise again with you. Let morning break upon our sorrowing hearts; abide with us in life and in death, Lord, so that we may live in your peace and rejoice in your love. *Amen.*

The following psalm of deliverance may be said by all. Or another psalm may be said; see suggestions on page 77.

- 1 In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; *
let me never be ashamed.
- 2 In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free; *
incline your ear to me and save me.
- 3 Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe; *
you are my crag and my stronghold.
- 4 Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, *
from the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

5 For you are my hope, O Lord God, *
my confidence since I was young.

6 I have been sustained by you ever since I was born;
from my mother's womb you have been my strength; *
my praise shall be always of you.

12 O God, be not far from me; *
come quickly to help me, O my God.

Psalm 71:1-6, 12

The Eucharist

If the Eucharist is not to be celebrated, the Lord's Prayer may be said here. If the Eucharist is to be celebrated, the service continues with the Peace.

The Blessing

This or another blessing may be offered at the end of the service:

May God, our Creator, fill you with peace. *Amen.*

May Christ, our Savior, redeem all your sorrows. *Amen.*

May the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, heal and restore you. *Amen.*

The service may end in silence, or with the singing of a hymn.

Worshippers may be invited to remain in the worship space for as long as they wish, in prayer and reflection. Pastoral caregivers should be available for those who experience intense grief, having perhaps expressed their lament aloud for the first time.

A Liturgy of Remembrance and Lament

For Reproductive Loss

This service follows Form 2, described on page 9.

This may be adapted for other community crises such as the murder of a child, a school shooting, or the death of teenagers in a car accident when the community at large is affected.

The service begins in darkness; the Paschal Candle may be lit before the people gather, or as the service begins. A small candle or other light is provided for the reader.

Out of the silent darkness, the first psalm is read.

Psalm 69:1-4, 15-18

- 1 Save me, O God, *
for the waters have risen up to my neck.

- 2 I am sinking in deep mire, *
and there is no firm ground for my feet.

- 3 I have come into deep waters, *
and the torrent washes over me.

- 4 I have grown weary with my crying;
my throat is inflamed; *
my eyes have failed from looking for my God.

- 15 In your great mercy, O God, *
answer me with your unfailing help.

- 16 Save me from the mire; do not let me sink; *
let me be rescued from those who hate me
and out of the deep waters.

17 Let not the torrent of waters wash over me,
neither let the deep swallow me up; *
do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.

18 Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind; *
in your great compassion, turn to me.

Silence

Candles may be lit from the Paschal Candle. A few lights may be turned on.

Song or Hymn

Suggested: Within our darkest night (Taizé)
Commit thou all that grieves thee (*The Hymnal* 1982)
Abide with me (*The Hymnal* 1982)
Stay with me (Taizé)

The people may sit or kneel.

During the singing, pictures and other symbols of grief and loss may be brought forward and placed on the altar.

Silence

Psalm 130 *may be read in unison*

- 1 Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice; *
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.
- 2 If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss, *
O Lord, who could stand?
- 3 For there is forgiveness with you; *
therefore you shall be feared.

- 4 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; *
in his word is my hope.
- 5 My soul waits for the Lord,
more than watchmen for the morning, *
more than watchmen for the morning.
- 6 O Israel, wait for the Lord, *
for with the Lord there is mercy;
- 7 With him there is plenteous redemption, *
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

Silence

One to three readings are read, including at least one from Scripture.

Silence follows each reading; a song or hymn may be sung following each reading.

A homily may be preached.

The following litany, or another litany or prayers, may be said.

Litany of Remembrance and Lament, Healing and Hope

The prayers are arranged so that different intercessors may lead the various sections, each of which addresses a particular pastoral need. The liturgist or leader may choose to omit some petitions or entire sections. Usually, parts I and V should be included.

The prayers gather up the corporate lament of a community. Individuals may not share all the feelings voiced by the prayers, yet in praying together the community gives voice to all of its members.

The prayers are introduced with these words:

Compassionate God, Father of our Savior Jesus Christ, you know our deepest pain and sorrow. Behold the anguish of our broken dreams, and let our cry come to you.

I

Leader We are crushed, afraid, and overwhelmed by what
we cannot understand.

People Living God, be with us in our pain.

Leader We are weary of weeping, sick with despair, aching
with emptiness.

People Living God, be with us in our pain.

Leader We are confused and angry, but you do not answer.

People Living God, be with us in our pain.

Leader Our bodies cannot rise or rest, our hearts are
like stones.

People Living God, be with us in our pain.

II

Leader We have lost our way and are isolated in our sorrow.
People Loving God, stay with us.

Leader Our bonds are strained; our relationships suffer;
shallow answers and hollow comfort increase our
sadness.

People Loving God, stay with us.

Leader Some forsake us, others avoid us, compounding
our grief.

People Loving God, stay with us.

Leader Friends and family are afflicted by our loss;
they grieve in their own way while their pain
deepens ours.

People Loving God, stay with us.

III

Leader In our grief we have turned against you and against
one another.

People Merciful God, heal us.

Leader We are jealous of those whose children live.

People Merciful God, heal us.

Leader We speak unjustly against others; we blame unfairly;
we withdraw or lash out.

People Merciful God, heal us.

Leader We torment ourselves and one another for past
choices;

we blame ourselves for what has gone wrong.

People Merciful God, heal us.

Leader Shame and guilt weigh us down; our courage fails;
we are bitter and anxious, fearful of the future.
People Merciful God, heal us.

IV

Leader For those among us who could not raise children
and gave them up for adoption,
People Redeeming God, give your people peace.

Leader For those unable to welcome a child, who terminated
a pregnancy,
People Redeeming God, give your people peace.

Leader For those whose choices brought harm to their child,
People Redeeming God, give your people peace.

Leader For those unable to find reconciliation,
who bear their wounds in secrecy and loneliness,
People Redeeming God, give your people peace.

Leader For those unable to conceive a child, who languish in
longing and despair,
People Redeeming God, give your people peace.

V

Leader Send your Holy Spirit to renew our broken hearts.
People Lord of Love, save us and help us.

Leader Forgive our despair, fill us with hope,
and teach us to trust in your goodness.
People Lord of Love, save us and help us.

Leader Grant us patience with you, ourselves, and one another.
People Lord of Love, save us and help us.

Leader Help us to know your never-failing care.
People Lord of Love, save us and help us.

Leader Deliver us from past hurts, and help us understand
your will for us.
People Lord of Love, save us and help us.

Leader Turn our grief into compassion for others and for
ourselves.
People Lord of Love, save us and help us.

Leader Release us from fear, renew us in love, rekindle
our hopes.
People Lord of Love, save us and help us.

Leader In all things, renew us by your Holy Spirit,
that we may live as children of God.
People Amen.

Silence may follow.

Words of assurance may be read.

The following psalm may be read or sung, by one voice or by the assembly.

Psalm 116

- 1 I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of
my supplication, *
because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called
upon him.
- 2 The cords of death entangled me; the grip of the grave took
hold of me; *
I came to grief and sorrow.
- 3 Then I called upon the Name of the Lord: *
“O Lord, I pray you, save my life.”

- 4 Gracious is the Lord and righteous; *
our God is full of compassion.
- 5 The Lord watches over the innocent; *
I was brought very low, and he helped me.
- 6 Turn again to your rest, O my soul, *
for the Lord has treated you well.
- 7 For you have rescued my life from death, *
my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling.
- 8 I will walk in the presence of the Lord *
in the land of the living.
- 9 I believed, even when I said,
“I have been brought very low.” *
In my distress I said, “No one can be trusted.”
- 10 How shall I repay the Lord *
for all the good things he has done for me?
- 11 I will lift up the cup of salvation *
and call upon the Name of the Lord.
- 15 I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving *
and call upon the Name of the Lord.
- 16 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord *
in the presence of all his people.

Song or Hymn

Suggested O God, our help in ages past (*The Hymnal 1982*)
You shall walk the barren desert (*Wonder, Love, and Praise*)
Precious Lord, take my hand (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*)
Bless the Lord, my soul (*Taizé*)
Healer of our every ill (*Gather, The Faith We Sing*)
Great is thy faithfulness (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*)

Dismissal

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.

Amen. Ephesians 3:20, 21

or this

Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, as you hung upon the cross in agony, remember our suffering and sorrow, our sin and loss. Heal and restore us, merciful Savior, and bring us to everlasting glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in your land where there is no sorrow and sighing, but the fullness of life for ever more. *Amen.*

The people depart in silence.

A Liturgy of Healing and Hope

Officiant Bless the Lord, all angels, all hosts of heaven, all ministers of God's will.

People Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all within me bless God's holy name.

A song or canticle of God's healing love may be sung.

These canticles from Enriching Our Worship I are especially appropriate:

A Song of Jerusalem Our Mother

Isaiah 66:10-14

Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her *
all you who love her,

Rejoice, rejoice with her, *

all you who mourn over her,

That you may drink deeply with delight *
from her comforting breast.

For thus says our God, *

“I will extend peace to her like a river,
the wealth of nations like an overflowing stream.

“You shall nurse and be carried on her arm,
and you shall nestle in her lap.

“As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; *
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

“You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, *
you shall flourish like the grass of the fields.”

A Song of Christ's Goodness

Anselm of Canterbury

Jesus, as a mother you gather your people to you; *
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.

Often you weep over our sins and our pride, *
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgment.
You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, *
in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.
Jesus, by your dying, we are born to new life; *
by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; *
through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.
Your warmth gives life to the dead, *
your touch makes sinners righteous.
Lord Jesus, in your mercy, heal us; *
in your love and tenderness, remake us.
In your compassion, bring grace and forgiveness, *
for the beauty of heaven, may your love prepare us.

A Song of True Motherhood

Julian of Norwich

God chose to be our mother in all things *
and so made the foundation of his work,
most humbly and most pure, in the Virgin's womb.
God, the perfect wisdom of all, *
arrayed himself in this humble place.
Christ came in our poor flesh *
to share a mother's care.
Our mothers bear us for pain and for death; *
our true mother, Jesus, bears us for joy and endless life.
Christ carried us within him in love and travail, *
until the full time of his passion.
And when all was completed and he had carried us so for joy, *
still all this could not satisfy the power of his wonderful love.
All that we owe is redeemed in truly loving God, *
for the love of Christ works in us;
Christ is the one whom we love.

The Collect

Presider God be with you.

People And also with you.

Presider Let us pray

Most holy God, as a father has compassion on his children, so do you have mercy on us. As a mother carries and feeds her children, so do you carry us in our afflictions, heal us, and nurture us. Holy One, hear our cry and renew us in your love, through Christ who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, in whom all things are redeemed for eternal life. *Amen.*

The Ministry of the Word

The readings should include at least one from Scripture. If the Eucharist is to be celebrated, a reading from the Gospel must be included. A psalm, hymn, or silent reflection follows each lesson. See appendix A, pages 71 – 78 for suggested Scripture readings. See appendix B, pages 79 – 85, for suggested hymns.

A homily may be preached.

The Healing Action

If there is to be laying on of hands [and anointing], the following form is used.

If oil for anointing is to be blessed, the priest says

Blessed are you, O God, source of life and health. In Jesus you became flesh and came to know the depth of human suffering. You sent the disciples to heal those who were sick. Sanctify this oil that all who are anointed with it may be healed, strengthened, and renewed, by the power of your Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

The minister may introduce the laying on of hands [and anointing] with these or similar words

The ministry of Jesus invites us to new life in God and with each other. In the laying on of hands [*and anointing*] we proclaim

the Good News that God promises to restore us to wholeness in Christ. You are invited to offer yourself and ask for healing in the name of the holy and undivided Trinity.

The minister may invite each person to be anointed to give her or his name and any particular request for prayer. The minister then lays hands upon each person [and anoints the person], prays silently, then prays aloud using one of the following forms or similar words

N., I [*anoint you and*] lay my hands upon you in the name of God the holy and undivided Trinity. May Christ be present with you to comfort you, to guard and protect you, and to keep you in everlasting life. *Amen.*

or this

N., I lay my hands upon you [*and anoint you*] in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, praying you will be strengthened and filled with God's grace, that you may know the healing power of the Spirit. *Amen.*

The minister may add, in these or similar words

As you are outwardly anointed with this holy oil, so may our loving God give you the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit. Of God's bounty, may your suffering be relieved, and your spirit, mind, and body restored to grace and peace. May all of us in the frailty of our flesh know God's healing and resurrecting power. *Amen.*

The Memorial

Mourners may be given time to talk about their loss, grief, and healing.

Symbols of loss, grief, and hope may be placed on an altar. Prayers, poems, or other writings may be read.

There may be silence, journal writing, or creation of memorial objects.

Litany of Healing and Hope

In place of this litany, another litany or other prayers may be used.

Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes with the morning.

For the losses we have endured,

Hear our cry, O God.

For miscarried babies and unborn hopes,

Hear our cry, O God.

For those children we will never know,

Hear our cries, O God.

For broken hearts and broken lives,

Hear our cries, O God.

For wounded innocence and shattered dreams,

Hear our cries, O God.

During a brief silence, particular griefs may be named.

When we are weary or lost,

O Christ, lead us home.

When we are hopeless and sad

O Christ, lead us home.

When we are angry and tears become our food

O Christ, lead us home.

When we are faithless and fearful

O Christ, lead us home.

When we grieve and despair

O Christ, lead us home.

Because you have been our companion in sorrow,

Holy Spirit, give us peace.

Because every child you have made lives forever,

Holy Spirit, give us peace.

Because suffering can make us kinder and more courageous,

Holy Spirit, give us peace.

Because nothing can separate us from your goodness,

Holy Spirit, give us peace.

Because you pray within us ceaselessly,
Holy Spirit, give us peace.

Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes with the morning;
Holy God, we bless your name.

You remove our mourning clothes and dress us in gladness;
Mighty God, we bless your name.

You will turn our lament into dancing;
Loving God, we bless your name.

You forgive all our sins and heal our infirmities;
Immortal God, we bless your name.

You renew us in your loving-kindness;
We are your people and you are our God.

Hear our cries, O God. Heal and restore us. Fill us with your peace. In all things remind us of your love, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

A hymn may be sung.

If the service continues with the Eucharist, the Peace is now exchanged.

If the Eucharist is not to be celebrated, the service concludes with the Lord's Prayer, a blessing, and a dismissal.

The Prayers

Some of these prayers are to be prayed for those named. Others are to be prayed by the specified individual or couple. They may also be adapted for pastoral use, as needed.

Prayers Surrounding Difficult Decisions

1. For Guidance in Decision-Making
2. Following a Difficult Decision

Prayers Surrounding Unexpected or Unwanted Pregnancy

3. For Help in Accepting an Unplanned Pregnancy
4. For the Parent(s) of a Pregnant Child [*to be prayed by them*]
5. For the Parent(s) of a Boy Who Has Fathered a Child [*to be prayed by them*]
6. For an Unexpected Pregnancy [*for the woman/or for her and her partner*]
7. For Discernment Regarding an Unexpected Pregnancy [*for an individual or couple*]

Prayers Surrounding the Loss of a Child

8. Following a Miscarriage
9. Following a Stillbirth, or Death Shortly after Birth
10. For Use by a Woman Whose Child Has Died in the Womb [*for the woman*]
11. When Releasing a Child for Adoption

Prayers Surrounding the Termination of Pregnancy

- 12. For Guidance in Decision-Making
- 13. Following an Abortion
- 14. For Unresolved Grief or Guilt, or on the Anniversary of an Abortion [*for the woman or couple*]

Prayers Surrounding Infertility or Sterilization

- 15. For Help in Deciding Whether to Have a Child
- 16. For Help to Conceive or to Accept Infertility [*for the couple*]
- 17. For Those Trying to Conceive a Child in Mature Years [*for the couple*]
- 18. For Letting Go the Hope of Childbearing [*for the couple*]
- 19. When the Decision Has Been Made Not to Bear Children [*for the woman or couple*]
- 20. When Surgeries Will Prevent a Desired Conception [*for the woman*]
- 21. After a Hysterectomy [*for the woman*]

Prayers Surrounding Adoption

- 22. For the Child Being Released for Adoption [*for the mother*]
- 23. For the Birth Parents [*to be prayed for the biological parents by the adopting parents*]
- 24. A Birth Mother's Prayer [*to be prayed by her*]
- 25. For Help in Selecting Adoptive Parents [*for the mother*]
- 26. Saying Good-Bye to a Child [*for the birth mother*]
- 27. For Help in Deciding Whether to Adopt [*for the couple*]
- 28. When the Decision Has Been Made to Adopt [*for the couple*]
- 29. Of Children or Birth Parents Seeking the Other [*for the individual*]

Prayers Surrounding Other Losses

- 30. After Mastectomy [*for the woman*]
- 31. In a Difficult Pregnancy
- 32. After a Traumatic Birth
- 33. When a Child Has Been Born with Special Needs
- 34. Confession and Assurance of Pardon

The Prayers

Some of these prayers are to be prayed for those named. Others are to be prayed by the specified individual or couple. They may also be adapted for pastoral use, as needed.

Prayers Surrounding Difficult Decisions

I. For Guidance in Decision-Making

Compassionate God: you have blessed your people with the capacity for discernment. Fill our hearts and minds with your peace as you come to *N.* [*and N.*] now in *their* time of need. Cleanse the thoughts of *their* hearts that *they* might perfectly love you in this moment. Grant *them* wisdom, grace, and courage as *they* listen for your voice. Fill *their hearts* with calm and strengthen them in the assurance of your never-failing love. Help *them* decide wisely. We ask this through Christ our Savior who, with you and the Comforter, abides with us always. *Amen.*

2. Following a Difficult Decision

Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever: help *N.* [and *N.*] accept with courage and grace the consequences of *her* choice. Grant *her* acceptance of your forgiveness, and sure confidence in your mercy. Stay with *her* now to uphold and guide *her* along the path ahead, for your tender mercy's sake. *Amen.*

Gracious God, *we* thank you for the love that sustained *us* through the difficult choice *we* have made. *We* bless your name for granting *us* courage, peace, and strength. Give *us* grace in the days ahead to recognize your boundless mercy. Strengthen *our* faith and support *us* with your love that your goodness and mercy may follow *us* all the days of *our* lives, through Christ, our Good Shepherd. *Amen.*

Prayers Surrounding Unexpected or Unwanted Pregnancy

3. For Help in Accepting an Unplanned Pregnancy

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. *Jeremiah 29:11*

O God of heavenly powers, your providence offers each of us a future beyond anything we could dream or imagine. When our own plans fail, you strengthen us to face new challenges so that our faith may be strengthened and that we might become the people you created us to be. Help us see others with the mind of Christ and love them with your never-failing love. Especially, comfort *N.* [and *N.*] *who have* conceived a child *they* had not expected. Give *them* grace to welcome this little one with hope in your future and to trust in your eternal goodness; through Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

4. For the Parent(s) of a Pregnant Child

Merciful God, throughout the changes and chances of our lives your faithfulness is everlasting. Be with *us* now in the midst of the turmoil that surrounds *us*. *Our* child has conceived a child, and *we* cannot see the way before *us*. Help *us* entrust our daughter to you. Grant her wisdom in her choices and the courage to do what is best. Fill *us* with your Holy Spirit that *we* may believe in your never-failing goodness; through Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

5. For the Parent(s) of a Boy Who Has Fathered a Child

Your grace, O God, surpasses anything *we* can imagine. Surround and sustain *our* son with your love as he *and N.* discern how best to care for the child they have conceived. *We* pray for the mother, *N.*, and for her family. Grant all of us wisdom, strength, and courage for the living of this hour. Of your mercy, give *us* grace to see *our* son through the eyes of your unconditional love. Amen.

6. For an Unexpected Pregnancy

Come to *me*, loving Jesus, in *my* confusion. Calm *my* fears and give *me* the wisdom of the Holy Spirit so that *I* may discern what is best for *me*, [for *my* family,] and for the child I carry. Come to *me*, *my* Savior, and help *me*, for the sake of your love. Amen.

7. For Discernment Regarding an Unexpected Pregnancy

Holy Immortal One, your grace is never-ending and your love unailing. *We* have conceived a child *we* feel unable to welcome or provide for. Fill *us* with the comfort of your Holy Spirit. [*Make us faithful and tender to each other in this difficult time, and*] grant *us* knowledge of what you would have *us* do; through your Son Jesus Christ in whom all things are healed, restored, and redeemed. Amen.

Prayers Surrounding the Loss of a Child

8. Following a Miscarriage

Heavenly God, the Rock of Ages, you sustain the universe with the power of your love and hold us in the tenderness of your unfailing care. Support *N.* [*and N.*] who mourn the loss of *their* child. Comfort them in *their* pain and heal *them* in your grace. Hold *their* little one in your everlasting arms. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows from death to eternal life. *Amen.*

O God, who gathered Rachel's tears over her lost children: Hear now the sorrow and distress of *N.* [*and N.*] for the death of the child *they* longed for; in the darkness of loss, stretch out to *them* the strength of your arm and renewed assurance of your love; through your own suffering and risen Child Jesus. *Amen.*

(From Enriching Our Worship 2)

9. Following a Stillbirth, or Death Shortly after Birth

Heavenly Father, your love for all children is strong and enduring. We were not able to know *N.* as we had hoped. Yet you knew *her* growing in *her* mother's womb, and *she* is not lost to you. In the midst of our sadness, we thank you that *N.* is with you now. *Amen.* *(From Enriching Our Worship 2)*

Loving God, we thank you that in your mercy you brought your daughter *N.* through childbirth in safety. We pray that *N.* [*and N.*] will know your support in this time of trouble and enjoy your protection always; through Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.* *(From Enriching Our Worship 2)*

10. For Use by a Woman Whose Child Has Died in the Womb

God, I cry out in anguish for this child of my body whose death has robbed me of hope and my joy. With your strong arm, uphold me in the sorrow of my labor to come. Do not leave me comfortless, but help me to trust that my beloved whom you have known in my womb now sees your face. As my child slides from my arms, hold *her/him* secure in your everlasting arms in that place of reunion and love, that dear, dear country of the blessed where your Child Jesus Christ reigns in eternal light. Amen.

11. When Releasing a Child for Adoption

See also Prayers Surrounding Adoption, pages 65 – 67.

Gracious God, send your healing love to sustain *N.* [*and N.*] as *they* place *their* child with the parents who will raise *him*. Your strength carried *N.* through pregnancy and childbirth; surround her [*and N.*] now and in the days to come. Confirm in *them* the conviction that *their* courageous act of love comes in response to your love for *them* and for all your children. Help *them* know that *they*, together with this child and the parents who adopt *him* are all part of your family whom you love unceasingly. We pray in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Prayers Surrounding the Termination of Pregnancy

The termination of a pregnancy is always a grave matter. Even when protecting the physical or emotional health of the mother, the decision to terminate should be entered into prayerfully, with a contrite heart and the support of the church community in addition to other caregivers. (See appendix E.)

Before and after an abortion, the Prayers Surrounding Difficult Decisions (pages 56 – 57) may be helpful.

12. For Guidance in Decision-Making

Compassionate God, source of all life, be present now with N. [and N.] as *they* face this painful decision. Give *them* grace to choose wisely and fill *them* with the assurance of your love for *them* and for all life. Help *them* rest in the certain knowledge that you are near to guide *them* and that nothing can separate us from your steadfast love. *Amen.*

13. Following an Abortion

Holy and life-giving God, we thank you for being with N. [and N.] through this difficult time. Help *her* to accept that you love *her* as you love the young life who is now held in Christ's arms. Fill *her* heart with your mercy. Heal *her* in body and mind that *she* may trust in your goodness. Guide *her* in the days to come, that *she* may know *herself* to be your beloved child. We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Compassionate God, I have ended the life briefly held in my body. This action has brought sorrow to others and grief to me. Forgive my sins and cleanse me with your abundant mercy. Uphold me by your grace that I may know the healing power of your love; for the sake of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer. *Amen.*

14. For Unresolved Grief or Guilt, or on the Anniversary of an Abortion

Merciful God, hear *my* cry to you. Relieve the sorrow of *my* heart. *I* regret *my* decision [*to end my pregnancy*]. Yet you are a merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and quick to forgive the penitent. Of your loving-kindness, forgive *me*. Heal *my* broken heart. Bring *me* the joy of your saving help again, and renew a right spirit within *me*, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Gracious God, you forgive our sins and heal our sorrows. The abortion *N.* underwent has left scars of regret, pain, and loss. Fill her with the certain knowledge that all who live, however briefly, are redeemed by your mercy, and that your love and grace are eternal. Heal and forgive her, Lord God, that she may know the joy of your salvation; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. *Amen.*

Prayers Surrounding Infertility or Sterilization

15. For Help in Deciding Whether to Have a Child

See also #27, For Help in Deciding Whether to Adopt, page 67.

Holy God, you have searched *me* out and known *me*. Help *me* make a wise decision, according to your will. You know *my* doubts about rearing a child. Free *me* from the anxiety of disappointing you, others, and *myself*. Teach *me* to understand *my* nature and purpose, fill *me* with your wisdom, and guide *me* to act according to your will. *I* pray in the name of Jesus, *my* Savior. Amen.

You have made us in your image, O God, and blessed us through one another. You make our home holy with your presence. Grant us your understanding as we consider whether to have a [*another*] child. Fill our hearts with humility and increase our trust in your goodness, that we may live fully this life you have given us. Amen.

God of all wisdom, bless *N. and N.* as they pray whether to conceive a [*another*] child. Help them understand their own capacities and discern your will for them, through Jesus Christ in the grace of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

16. For Help to Conceive or to Accept Infertility

Merciful Creator, every day you bring new life into this world. We long to share in this generation by bearing a child. Yet our attempts have brought grief, frustration, and fear. Now we feel spent and our hope fades. Give us grace to surrender our longing to you. Hold our hearts' desire in your heart, helping us trust that our lives unfold according to your unfailing love, through Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

17. For Those Trying to Conceive a Child in Mature Years

God, our unfailing hope and strength; you heard the pleas of our ancestors in Scripture that they might bear children, even as their expectation faded; hear also our great desire and longing for a child. Help us to welcome that future you bring to us according to your will and to make our lives fruitful and joyful beyond what we may expect or imagine; we pray in the name of your child Jesus and through the Holy Spirit that prays in us with groans too deep for words. Amen.

18. For Letting Go the Hope of Childbearing

Holy God, you offer abundance of life and fullness of joy to your children. We have longed to bear children of our own. As we grieve the loss of this dream, turn our sorrow to hope for a different future than the one we had imagined. Transform the desires of our hearts into grace that we may bear your love to others in all we do and say, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

19. When the Decision Has Been Made Not to Bear Children

God who has searched us out and known us: We have sought your guidance in discerning our readiness to be parents and your will for our lives; be with us now in our decision not to bear children, that in this and in all our actions we may give you honor, praise, and service; through Jesus Christ our Savior and your Holy Spirit, who dwell with you in glory everlasting. Amen.

20. When Surgery Will Prevent a Desired Conception

God our strong Defender, stand with me in this surgery. Guide the hands of my doctors and nurses; keep me in the awareness of your presence; and raise me up to health and fresh hopes and joys beyond what I can now imagine or ask for, through the love of Christ and the life-giving of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

21. After a Hysterectomy

God of all wisdom, you knew me from my mother's womb. I thank you for making me a woman [*and for the children born of my body*]. I grieve the loss of part of me. Holy One, you made me in your image. Help me to realize that I remain the person you created. Bring to birth in me gifts of new fruitfulness in reaching out to others. Heal and restore my body, and in the years ahead, grant me fullness of joy; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers Surrounding Adoption

22. For the Child Being Released for Adoption

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.
Jeremiah 29:11

Life-giving God, you have given *me* the gift of this child. Before *she* was conceived in the womb, you knew *her*. *She* is surrounded by your love, and for love's sake *we* entrust *her* to those who will raise *her*. Guide and protect *her* all the days of *her* life. May *she* live and grow in grace as your beloved; *we* pray in the name of your Child Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

23. For the Birth Parents

Gracious God, may your mercy uphold *N.* as she sends this child born of her body to new parents who will nurture and raise *him*. As our love goes with *him*, surround *N.* also with your love. May she have your peace in her heart. May her spirit find rest in your unchanging presence. In Jesus' holy name we pray. *Amen.*

Holy God, send your blessing upon the birth parents of *our* child. Give them an abiding awareness of your love. Lead them into a future bright with promise. May they always rest in the certainty of your loving care for them, and for the child they have entrusted to *us*. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

24. A Birth Mother's Prayer

Heal my heart, dear God. I send forth my *daughter*, born of my body, to the family who will love and raise *her*. A part of *her* will always remain with me. Give me grace to live each day knowing you uphold *her* and me in strength, guidance, and mercy. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer. Amen.

25. For Help in Selecting Adoptive Parents

Loving God, our Creator, you knew this child when *he* was formed in the womb, and have numbered the hairs on *his* head. Help us discern a family in which *he* will thrive, growing up as the person you created *him* to be. Even now, prepare the hearts and home of *his* future parents, granting that their lives will be blessed with goodness and peace; through Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

26. Saying Good-Bye to a Child

N., my child, go in the light and love of God.
May you live in abundance of joy, free from harm. *Amen.*
May you find true and trusted friends. *Amen.*
May you find purposeful work and the meaning of Sabbath. *Amen.*
May you learn justice, kindness, and humility; and live them. *Amen.*
May you experience the gift of love. *Amen.*
May you come to know the risen Christ. *Amen*
May you encounter the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. *Amen.*
May you have a full life, and come at length to rest in your heavenly home. *Amen.*

God who watches every moment of our days; *I* commend this child N. to your care. Before *she* was *mine*, *she* is yours. You gave *her* life. Be *her* protector, companion, and guide. Grant that *her* adoptive parents may love *her* as their own. May *she* flourish in their care as *she* grows in your wisdom. Keep *her* safe and well; make *her* strong and true. Lead *her* to walk in your ways in love and joy. *I* pray this in the name of Jesus, who blessed the children in his arms, in whose arms *I* now place *her*. *Amen.*

27. For Help in Deciding Whether to Adopt

O God, as a loving parent you have made *us* your own *children* through adoption into Christ. Guide *us* as *we* decide whether to adopt, to share the love you have given *us* with a child. Give *us* humility to make this decision wisely, for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Child, in the grace of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

28. When the Decision Has Been Made to Adopt

Heavenly Father, all the peoples of the earth are one family in you: bless *our* decision to adopt. Help *us* freely and gladly share *our* lives, *our* love, and *our* home with a child who needs *us*. Remind *our* family in times of doubt or frustration that every moment is filled with your grace. Surround this decision and those to come with your steadfast love; through Christ who took little children to himself. Amen.

29. Of Children or Birth Parents Seeking the Other

Holy God, in *my heart* there is a place of longing and questions about the *child/parents* I never knew. My eyes have not seen *her/them*, my arms have not held *her/them*, yet we are related. Give *me* your guidance, God, and grant that *my* search will unfold according to your will. I thank you for the *parents/spouse/children* with whom I share my life, and pray that *they* will always know how precious they are to *me* and to you. I ask the grace of your Holy Spirit in this and all *my* actions, through *my* Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers Surrounding Other Losses

30. After Mastectomy

Christ came in our poor flesh to share a mother's care.
Our mothers bear us for pain and for death;
our true mother, Jesus, bears us for joy and endless life.
From "A Song of True Motherhood," Julian of Norwich

God of tender mercy, hear my prayer. I grieve the loss of my breast(s), a change to my body and to my sense of self as a woman. Help me to remember that you made me in your image and that in you I am made whole, despite all wounds. Give me confidence and fill me with hope in all that lies ahead. I pray through Christ who, like a mother, bears us for joy and endless life. Amen.

31. In a Difficult Pregnancy

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep. *Isaiah 40:11*

Good shepherd of the flock, tender Jesus, carry *N.* [and *N.*] through the perils of this pregnancy. Strengthen *their* trust that you are at work in this and every circumstance, and encourage *them* with your grace. Keep alive the flame of hope that you are present with *them* and with this child you knit together in the womb. Fill *them* with confidence in God the Creator and comfort in the Holy Spirit, for your tender mercy's sake. *Amen.*

See also the "Blessing of a Pregnant Woman" page 19.

32. After a Traumatic Birth

Life-giving Christ, be our faithful and loving companion in every moment of our lives. Visit *N.* with your healing grace. Heal the pain and trauma she has undergone through this birth. As you labored in agony on the cross so she suffered in labor. Now bring her the joy of new life that nothing can take away. Let your angels watch over this mother and child as they heal and rest. In the days to come, help *N.* know your promise that weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. So may this mother and child rise to give you thanks tomorrow and always, secure in you, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, reign throughout all ages. *Amen.*

33. When a Child Has Been Born with Special Needs

God of creation, you made all peoples of the earth one family; we thank you for *N.*, a child created in your love and a precious gift to *his* family. Bring *N.* fullness of joy. Make *him* a witness to your compassion for all your creation and a blessing to those who know *him*. Sustain *his* family and all those who care for *him* in their anxieties and questions. Give them grace to love this child with your love and increase their faith and knowledge of you. Enable us who love them to provide support and comfort, through the power of your holy and life-giving Spirit, through Christ who loves all children. *Amen.*

God the creator of us all, *we* give you thanks for the life of *this child*. Grant *us* accepting and understanding hearts, and the gifts of courage and patience to face the challenge of caring for *her*. Let your love for *us* be seen in *our* lives, that *we* may create an atmosphere in which *she* will live a life of dignity and worth. *We* ask this in the name of Jesus, the compassionate. *Amen.* (From A New Zealand Prayer Book, page 756)

34. Confession and Assurance of Pardon

This form may be used by a lay or ordained confessor with a penitent or at other times when an entire liturgical rite is not needed.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty: I confess that in my sinfulness I have wounded the body of Christ, and both brought grief and injury to others and to myself, [*especially, I confess _____*]. Holy Immortal One, lift the weight of this burden from my shoulders; forgive, cleanse, and renew me; and put a new and right spirit within me, according to your mercy and loving-kindness; through the grace of Jesus Christ my Savior. *Amen.*

Confessor's words of pardon

N., beloved child of God; through Jesus Christ the grace of God flows to you conferring forgiveness and absolution of all your sin, and raises you to renewed life by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you more than you dare ask for or imagine. Abide in peace; through Christ your faith has made you whole.

Appendices

Appendix A Suggested Readings from Scripture

Opening Sentences (or Short Readings)

Lament

Have pity on me, Lord, for I am weak; save me for your mercy's sake. I grow weary because of my groaning; every night I drench my bed and flood my couch with tears. My eyes are wasted with grief. *Psalm 6:2a, 4b, 6-7a*

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from my cry and from the words of my distress? *Psalm 22:1*

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with sorrow for my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed. *Psalm 31:9-10*

My tears have been my food day and night. *Psalm 42:3*

Hear my cry, O God, and listen to my prayer. I call upon you from the ends of the earth with heaviness in my heart. *Psalm 61:1-2*

Save me, O God, for the waters have risen up to my neck. I am sinking in deep mire, and there is no firm ground for my feet. I have grown weary with my crying; my throat is inflamed; my eyes have failed from looking for my God. In your great mercy, O God,

answer me with your unfailing help. Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind; in your great compassion, turn to me. *Psalms 69:1-2, 4, 15, 18*

In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my hands were stretched out by night and did not tire; I refused to be comforted. Will the Lord cast me off for ever? Has his loving-kindness come to an end for ever? *Psalms 77:2, 7a, 8a*

O Lord, I cry to you for help; in the morning my prayer comes before you. Lord, why have you rejected me? Why have you hidden your face from me? Darkness is my only companion. *Psalms 88:14-15, 19b*

My days drift away like smoke, and my bones are hot as burning coals. My heart is smitten like grass and withered, so that I forget to eat my bread. Because of the voice of my groaning I am but skin and bones. I have eaten ashes for bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. *Psalms 102:3-5, 9*

Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. *Psalms 130:1*

My spirit faints within me; my heart within me is desolate. O Lord, make haste to answer me; my spirit fails me. *Psalms 143:4, 7a*

For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears, for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my courage. *Lamentations 1:16*

I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin and have laid my strength in the dust. My face is red with weeping and deep darkness is on my eyelids. *Job 16:15-16*

Hope

O Lord, my God, I cried out to you, and you restored me to health. Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning. *Psalm 30:2, 6*

I have trusted in you, O Lord; I have said, “You are my God. Make your face to shine upon your servant; and in your loving-kindness save me.” *Psalm 31:14, 16*

Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord. *Psalm 31:24*

The righteous cry, and the Lord hears them, and delivers them from all their troubles. *Psalm 34:17*

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and will save those whose spirits are crushed. *Psalm 34:18*

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again, and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. *Psalm 51:11–13*

For God alone my soul in silence waits; from him comes my salvation. *Psalm 62:1*

You shall not be afraid of any terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day. For he shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. *Psalm 91:5, 11*

The cords of death entangled me; the grip of the grave took hold of me; I came to grief and sorrow. [But] you have rescued my life from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling. *Psalm 116:2, 7*

I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. *Psalm 121:1–2*

Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy. *Psalm*
126:6

I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; in his word is my hope.
My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning. *Psalm* 130:4-5

O Lord, I call to you; come to me quickly; hear my voice when I
cry to you. Let my prayer be set forth in your sight as incense, the
lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. *Psalm* 141:1-2

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment
will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish, they seem to
have died, and their departure was thought to be disaster and
their going from us to be their destruction, but they are at peace.
Wisdom 3:1-3

Those who trust in God will understand truth, and the faithful will
abide with God in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy
ones and God watches over his elect. *Wisdom* 3:9

Readings from the Old Testament

Genesis 32:24-30	<i>Jacob wrestles with God</i>
1 Samuel 1:1-18	<i>Hannah prays for a child</i>
1 Kings 19:4-9a	<i>In his despair, Elijah is fed and strengthened for the journey</i>
1 Kings 19:9b-13	<i>The Lord speaks to Elijah in the sound of sheer silence</i>
Job 3:1-4, 11-13	<i>Job curses the day of his birth</i>
Job 3:20-26	<i>Why is light given to one in misery?</i>
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 14-15	<i>For everything there is a season</i>
Ecclesiastes 7:1-4, 8-14	<i>Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad.</i>
Isaiah 25:6-9	<i>He will swallow up death for ever</i>

Isaiah 30:18-21	<i>Your ears shall hear . . . "This is the way, walk in it."</i>
Isaiah 43:1-4a	<i>Can a woman forget her nursing child. . . ?</i>
Isaiah 66:10-14a	<i>As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you</i>
Jeremiah 29:11-14	<i>I know the plans I have for you</i>
Jeremiah 31:15-17, 23-24	<i>Rachel weeping for her children</i>
Lamentations 3:22-26	<i>The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases</i>
Ezekiel 36:24-28	<i>A new heart I will give you</i>
Ezekiel 37:1-14	<i>The valley of dry bones</i>

Readings from the New Testament

Romans 8:31-39	<i>If God is for us, who is against us?</i>
I Thessalonians 4:13-18	<i>We do not want you to be uninformed about those who have died.</i>
I John 3:1-2	<i>See what love the Father has given us</i>
Revelation 7:13-17	<i>These are they who have come out of the great Ordeal; and God will wipe away every tear</i>
Revelation 21:1-5	<i>A new heaven and a new earth; death will be no more</i>

Readings from the Gospels

Matthew 5:1-10	<i>Blessed are those who mourn</i>
Matthew 7:7-11	<i>Ask, and it will be given you . . .</i> <i>[See also Luke 11:9-13]</i>
John 6:37-39	<i>Everything that the Father gives me will come to me</i>
John 10:11-16	<i>I am the good shepherd</i>
John 11:32-37	<i>Jesus weeps for Lazarus</i>
John 11:38-44	<i>Jesus raises Lazarus</i>

Assurance of God's Help in Decision - Making

Psalm 37:4-9	<i>Take delight in the Lord, and he shall give you your heart's desire</i>
Psalm 73:23-26	<i>You will guide me by your counsel</i>
Psalm 119:169-76	<i>Give me understanding according to your word</i>
Proverbs 2:1-11	<i>The Lord gives wisdom</i>
Proverbs 3:1-8	<i>Trust in the Lord with all your heart</i>
Proverbs 8:1-21	<i>Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?</i>
James 1:5-8	<i>If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God</i>
James 5:13-18	<i>The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective</i>

Psalms of Lament

Psalm 6:1-7	<i>I grow weary because of my groaning</i>
Psalm 13	<i>How long, O Lord? will you forget me for ever?</i>
Psalm 22	<i>My God, my God, why have your forsaken me?</i>
Psalm 31:9-16	<i>My eye is consumed with sorrow</i>
Psalm 42:1-8a	<i>My tears have been my food day and night</i>
Psalm 51	<i>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness</i>
Psalm 61:1-4	<i>Hear my cry, O God. . . I will take refuge under the cover of your wings</i>
Psalm 69:1-4, 15-18	<i>Save me, O God, for the waters have risen up to my neck</i>
Psalm 77:1-10	<i>I will cry aloud to God. . . In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord</i>
Psalm 86	<i>Bow down your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and in misery</i>

Psalm 88 *O Lord, my God, my Savior, by day
and night I cry to you*

Psalm 102 *Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry
come before you*

Psalm 142 *I cry to the Lord with my voice; to the
Lord I make loud supplication*

Psalm 143 *Lord, hear my prayer, and in your
faithfulness heed my supplication*

Psalms of Deliverance from Distress

Psalm 18:1-7, 17, 20 *I called upon the Lord in my distress . . .
He heard my voice from his heavenly
dwelling*

Psalm 30:1-7, 11-13 *You have turned my wailing into dancing*

Psalm 34:3-8, 18 *Taste and see that the Lord is good*

Psalm 40 *I waited patiently upon the Lord; he
stooped to me and heard my cry*

Psalm 46 *God is our refuge and strength, a very
present help in trouble*

Psalm 57 *Be merciful to me, O God; . . . in the
shadow of your wings will I take refuge*

Psalm 71 *In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge*

Psalm 90 *Lord, you have been our refuge from
one generation to another*

Psalm 91 *You are my refuge and my stronghold*

Psalm 92:1-5 *For you have made me glad by your
acts, O Lord*

Psalm 103 *Bless the Lord, O my soul*

Psalm 116 *I love the Lord, because he has heard
the voice of my supplication*

Psalms of Hope and Assurance

Psalm 20	<i>May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble</i>
Psalm 23	<i>The Lord is my shepherd</i>
Psalm 27	<i>The Lord is my light and my salvation</i>
Psalm 121	<i>I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?</i>

Canticles

The Song of Hannah	<i>Canticle C</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>
A Song of the Wilderness	<i>Canticle D</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>
A Song of Jerusalem Our Mother	<i>Canticle E</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>
A Song of Lamentation	<i>Canticle F</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>
A Song of Jonah	<i>Canticle I</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>
A Song of Our Adoption	<i>Canticle K</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>
A Song of Christ's Goodness	<i>Canticle Q</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>
A Song of True Motherhood	<i>Canticle R</i>	<i>Enriching Our Worship I</i>

Appendix B

Suggested Songs and Hymns

From Episcopal Church Publications

The Hymnal 1982

- 687/688 A mighty fortress is our God (based on Psalm 46)
662 Abide with me
665 All my hope on God is founded
671 Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
658 As longs the deer for cooling streams (paraphrase of
Psalm 42:1-7)
488 Be thou my vision
301 Bread of the world, in mercy broken (Look on the
heart by sorrow broken)
508 Breathe on me, breath of God
516 Come down, O Love divine
487 Come, my way, my truth, my life
686 Come, thou fount of every blessing
669 Commit thou all that grieves thee
654 Day by day
339 Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness, leave the gloomy
haunts of sadness
712 Dona nobis pacem
465/466 Eternal light, shine in my heart
151 From deepest woe I cry to thee
694 God be in my head, and in my understanding
677 God moves in a mysterious way
690 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah
318 Here, O my Lord, I see thee face to face (Here would I
lay aside each earthly load)
515 Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness
472 Hope of the world, thou Christ of great compassion
636/637 How firm a foundation
517 How lovely is thy dwelling place (paraphrase of Psalm 84)
692 I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest"

668 I to the hills will lift mine eyes (paraphrase of Psalm 121)
 490 I want to walk as a child of the light
 635 If thou but trust in God to guide thee
 699 Jesus, Lover of my soul
 693 Just as I am
 641 Lord Jesus think on me
 482 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy
 593 Lord, make us servants of your peace (Prayer of St. Francis)
 702 Lord, thou hast searched me and dost know
 (paraphrase of Psalm 139:1-11)
 247 Lully, lullay, thou little tiny child
 585 Morning glory, starlit sky (hidden is love's agony, love's
 endeavor, love's expense)
 691 My faith looks up to thee
 664 My Shepherd will supply my need (paraphrase of
 Psalm 23)
 333 Now
 308 O Food to pilgrims given (vv. 1 & 2)
 680 O God our help in ages past (paraphrase of Psalm 90:1-5)
 700 O love that casts out fear
 681 Our God, to whom we turn
 666 Out of the depths I call (paraphrase of Psalm 130)
 685 Rock of ages, cleft for me
 708 Savior, like a shepherd lead us
 711 Seek ye first the kingdom of God
 509 Spirit divine, attend our prayers
 678/679 Surely it is God who saves me (paraphrase of The First
 Song of Isaiah)
 707 Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee
 645/646 The King of love my shepherd is (paraphrase of Psalm 23)
 663 The Lord my God my shepherd is (paraphrase of
 Psalm 23)
 676 There is a balm in Gilead
 469/470 There's a wideness in God's mercy
 554 'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
 640 Watchman, tell us of the night
 715 When Jesus wept

Lift Every Voice and Sing II

- 181 Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
183 Be not dismayed whate'er betide
 (God will take care of you)
111 Come, Thou fount of every blessing
147 Come, ye disconsolate
91 Give me Jesus
189 Great is thy faithfulness
217 He's got the whole world in His hand
191 His eye is on the sparrow
192 I need thee every hour
70 I want Jesus to walk with me
193 I will trust in the Lord
71 In times like these
188 It is well with my soul
79 Jesus, lover of my soul
218 Jesus loves me
72 Just a closer walk with thee
137 Just as I am
82 Just when I need Him, Jesus is near
104 The Lord is my Shepherd (paraphrase of Psalm 23)
88 My faith looks up to thee
99 My hope is built (On Christ the solid Rock)
118 Oh, let the Son of God enfold you (Spirit Song)
106 Precious Lord, take my hand
115 Spirit of the Living God
118 Spirit Song
177 Standin' in the need of prayer
103 Steal away
203 There is a balm in Gilead
207 We'll understand it better by and by
109 What a friend we have in Jesus
188 When peace, like a river, attendeth my way (It is well
 with my soul)
191 Why should I feel discouraged (His eye is on the sparrow)

Wonder, Love, and Praise

- 799 Abide with me: fast falls the eventide
727 As panting deer desire the waterbrooks (paraphrase of
Psalm 42)
811 Be not afraid (You shall cross the barren desert)
825 Bless the Lord my soul (Taizé)
819 Guide my feet, Lord
773 Heal me, hands of Jesus
805 I want Jesus to walk with me
797 It's me O Lord (Standin' in the need of prayer)
798 Lord Jesus, think on me
772 O Christ, the healer
770/771 O God of gentle strength
827 O Lord hear my pray'r (Taizé)
810 On eagle's wings
791 Peace before us
800 Precious Lord, take my hand
750 So the day dawn for me
826 Stay with me (Taizé)
804 Steal away
758 Tu has venido a la orilla (You have come down to the
lakeshore)
811 You shall walk the barren desert (Be not afraid)
810 You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord (On Eagles'
Wings)
813 Way way way

Voices Found

- 92 Be still and know that I am God
142 Bless now, O God, the journey
60 Come and seek the ways of Wisdom
21 God of the women
91 Heal me, Lord
96 Healing river of the Spirit
94 In boldness, look to God
97 In deepest night, in darkest days

82/83/84 Just as I am, without one plea
 145 Lo, the winter's past
 131 Lord of all hopefulness
 71/72 Mothering God, you gave me birth
 146 Nothing distress you
 132/133 Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee
 24 When, like the woman at the well, I lived with broken
 dreams

My Heart Sings Out

146 God to enfold you
 86 In the bulb there is a flower
 55 May the Lord, mighty God
 142 Mothering God, you gave me birth (Norwich)
 46 Take, O take me as I am

Other Sources for Songs and Hymns

Knowledge of Peace by Eric H. F. Law

5 A new heart I'll give to you

Songs & Prayers from Taizé

9 Bless the Lord, my soul
 28 Come and fill (Confitemini Domino)
 19 In God alone (Mon ame se repose)
 29 Nothing can trouble (Nada te turbe)
 20 O Lord, hear my prayer
 14 Our darkness is never darkness in your sight (La tenebre)
 21 Stay with us (Bleib mit deiner Gnade)
 12 Wait for the Lord
 25 When the night becomes dark
 37 Within our darkest night (Dans nos obscurites)

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELCA)

- 656 Blest be the tie that binds
781 Children of the heavenly Father
185 Create in me a clean heart (Psalm 51:10-12)
186 Create in me a clean heart (Psalm 51:10-12)
187 Create in me a clean heart (Psalm 51:10-12)
188 Create in me a clean heart (Psalm 51:10-12)
737 He comes to us as one unknown
612 Healer of our every ill
698 How long, O God?
769 If you but trust in God to guide you
699 In Deepest Night
616 Jesus, remember me (Taizé)
735 Mothering God, you gave me birth (Lady Chapel Singers)
778 The Lord's my shepherd (Brother James Air)

Gather Comprehensive (RC)

- 647 Come to me, come when you are weary
650 Come to me (Ask, and you shall receive)
637 Come to me, O weary traveler
882 Healer of our every ill
875 Jesus, heal us
589 May the Lord, mighty God
652 Our God is rich in love
877 Out of the depths, O God, we call to you
641 Shepherd of my heart (paraphrase of Psalm 23)
575 We cannot measure how you heal
654 With a shepherd's care, God leads us
649 You are mine (Do not be afraid, I am with you)

African American Heritage Hymnal

- 438 Come by here, my Lord
354 Come to Jesus
361 I will arise and go to Jesus
437 Kum Ba Yah
470 People need the Lord
442 Sweet hour of prayer
418 We'll understand it better by and by

The Faith We Sing (United Methodist)

- 2155 Blest are they (based on the Beatitudes)
2217 By the Babylonian rivers (Latvian melody) (Psalm 137)
2166 Christ beside me (St. Patrick's Breastplate)
2213 Healer of our every ill
2136 Out of the depths, O God, we call to you
2218 You are Mine (I will come to you in the silence)

The Presbyterian Hymnal

- 246 By the Babylonian rivers (Latvian melody) (Psalm 137)
245 By the Waters of Babylon (Billings) (Psalm 137)
275 God of our Life

Bring the Feast

- 5 Braided rugs (Braided lives)
8 By the waters of Babylon (Billings)
12 En medio de la vida (You are the God within life)
23 Like a mother who has borne us
26 Mothering God, you gave me birth (Mother round)
27 My mother's life I celebrate this day
36 Seeking healing on our journey
42 We are women at the well
45 When like the woman at the well (Craven)
47 Womb of life, and source of being

Appendix C

Anthems

- “Out of the Depths,” Alan Hovahness, Peters Edition
“There Is a Balm in Gilead,” William Dawson, Kjos Publishing
“Don’t Give Up,” Richard Smallwood, Bridge-Building Music
“I Love the Lord,” Richard Smallwood, Rich-Wood Music &
Bridge-Building Music
“He Won’t Leave You,” Richard Smallwood, Rich-Wood Music &
Bridge-Building Music
“O God, Beyond All Praising,” Richard Proulx, GIA Music
“We Fall Down,” Kyle Matthews, Careers-BGM Music
Publishing, Inc. & Final Four Music
“Search Me, Lord,” Thomas A, Dorsey, Martin & Morris Music
“God Is Love” & “We Are Redeemed in the Lord,” E Mass,
Church Publishing, Inc.

The following are available online:

- “Bridge Over Troubled Water”
“Come Unto Him”
“Be Still, My Soul”
Selections from Handel’s “Messiah”
“Finlandia” Theme from Jean Sibelius

Appendix D

Other Sources for Prayers, Liturgies, and Music

- Human Rites*, by Hannah Ward and Jennifer Wild. Mowbray
Publishing, 1995.
Women’s Uncommon Prayers. Church Publishing Incorporated,
2000.
Lifting Women’s Voices. Church Publishing Incorporated, 2009.

Mother Songs, edited by Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gerbar, and Diana O’Hehir. W. W. Norton and Co., 1995.
A Wee Worship Book from Wild Goose Worship Group. GIA Publications, Inc., 1999.
A New Zealand Prayer Book
The St. Helena Psalter, personal edition. Church Publishing Incorporated, 2005.
Bring the Feast: Songs from the Re-imagining Community. The Pilgrim Press, 1998.

Appendix E

General Convention Statements on Childbirth and Abortion

Resolution Number: 1994-A054

Title: Reaffirm General Convention Statement on Childbirth and Abortion

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted and Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That this 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church reaffirms resolution C047 from the 69th General Convention, which states: All human life is sacred from its inception until death. The Church takes seriously its obligation to help form the consciences of its members concerning this sacredness. Human life, therefore, should be initiated only advisedly and in full accord with this understanding of the power to conceive and give birth which is bestowed by God. It is the responsibility of our congregations to assist their members in becoming informed concerning the spiritual and physiological aspects of sex and sexuality.

The Book of Common Prayer affirms that “the birth of a child is a joyous and solemn occasion in the life of a family. It is also an

occasion for rejoicing in the Christian community” (p. 440). As Christians we also affirm responsible family planning. We regard all abortion as having a tragic dimension, calling for the concern and compassion of all the Christian community.

While we acknowledge that in this country it is the legal right of every woman to have a medically safe abortion, as Christians we believe strongly that if this right is exercised, it should be used only in extreme situations. We emphatically oppose abortion as a means of birth control, family planning, sex selection, or any reason of mere convenience.

In those cases where an abortion is being considered, members of this Church are urged to seek the dictates of their conscience in prayer, to seek the advice and counsel of members of the Christian community and where appropriate, the sacramental life of this Church.

Whenever members of this Church are consulted with regard to a problem pregnancy, they are to explore, with grave seriousness, with the person or persons seeking advice and counsel, as alternatives to abortion, other positive courses of action, including, but not limited to, the following possibilities: the parents raising the child; another family member raising the child; making the child available for adoption.

It is the responsibility of members of this Church, especially the clergy, to become aware of local agencies and resources which will assist those faced with problem pregnancies. We believe that legislation concerning abortions will not address the root of the problem. We therefore express our deep conviction that any proposed legislation on the part of national or state governments regarding abortions must take special care to see that the individual conscience is respected, and that the responsibility of individuals to reach informed decisions in this matter is acknowledged and honored as the position of this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church express its unequivocal opposition to any legislative, executive, or judicial action on the part of local, state, or national governments that abridges the right of a woman to reach an informed decision about the termination of pregnancy or that would limit the access of a woman to safe means of acting on her decision.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of . . . The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), pp. 323–25.

Resolution Number: 2000 D083-
Express Concern for and Support Ministry to Those Suffering from Postabortion Stress

Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention of the Episcopal Church acknowledge that some men and women suffer from post-abortion stress; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention of the Episcopal Church call for the Church to embrace and minister to men and women who have participated in an abortion and who may feel the need for pastoral and sacramental ministries of this church; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention of the Episcopal Church urge parishes to become safe communities for women and men to talk about their abortion experience and to receive pastoral care directed at the healing process; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention of the Episcopal Church encourage its clergy to become informed about the symptoms and behaviors associated with postabortion stress; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention of the Episcopal Church direct parishes to make available contact information for

counseling agencies that offer programs to address postabortion stress for all seeking help.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of . . . The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 654f.

