



# Reflecting on the Pandemic

A SERVICE OF LAMENT, HEALING, AND RESILIENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a difficult season of life. It has been traumatic for some, painful for many, and stressful for all. The collective stress of isolation, economic uncertainty, and the fear of illness were constant companions for over a year and as a result, many of us feel emotionally and physically worn down. For some, COVID-19 was not just stressful, but potentially traumatic. Those who experienced the sudden death or lengthy hospitalization of a loved one, along with those who worked in the medical field caring for people with COVID-19, may feel the lingering impact of trauma. Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event<sup>i</sup> and can lead to intrusive thoughts and dreams about the event as well as physical symptoms in our bodies. Even if we are not experiencing the symptoms of trauma, the pandemic has probably impacted all of us more deeply than we are aware. And yet, even in the midst of trauma, pain, and change, we are discovering that we are resilient people.

Worship can be a powerful tool in the journey of healing.<sup>ii</sup> As your congregation begins to regather in person for worship together, consider offering a service of healing and hope after a year of collective trauma, pain, and stress. Our prayer is that this time of worship provides the space necessary for us to acknowledge the tragedy of this painful season and to respond with awareness, understanding, mindfulness, and action.

This worship service was a joint project created by members of the pastoral staffs of First Baptist Church in Columbia, MO and Second Baptist Church in Little Rock, AR, for our congregations. Please feel free to make it your own. Only you know what will be the most meaningful in your congregation. You may change and adapt as is helpful for you and your church.

We hope this resource is helpful in your congregation's healing journey. May we all begin to find peace, comfort, and wholeness as we bear witness to the Great Healer who walks with us, suffers with us, and makes us whole.

Grace and Peace,

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# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

## - WELCOME AND SETTING OF INTENTION -

Use this time to welcome participants into worship. A brief explanation of trauma and the purpose of the service might help to set the stage for what is to come. Consider something like:

*This past year has been traumatic for some, painful for many, and an adjustment for us all. Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event that shapes the way an experience is stored in our brains. It can impact the way we respond to ourselves, others, and our world. It can impact our thoughts, our feelings, and our bodies. For some, trauma can be invasive to our everyday lives while others may experience it lurking in the background waiting for a reason to pounce. We are learning that the events of the past year have impacted us all more deeply than we may know. And yet, even amid trauma, pain, and change, we are discovering that we are resilient people.*

*Today, we gather to worship the Great Healer. As we come to this time of worship, we will bear witness to our experiences of grief and adjustment. We will lament together and pray together even as we find our hope in the one who makes us whole. Let us worship together.*

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## - CALL TO WORSHIP -

Sustaining God, as we come to this place\*,  
We bring with us our own unique experiences and emotions.

**May we bring our whole selves before you.**

Collectively we cry:

**Gather us in to your love, O God.\*\***

We who are weary and we who are hopeful  
**we who rejoice and we who mourn**  
we who have felt sustained by your hand  
and we who are wondering where you are  
**we who are anxious and we who are calm**  
we who are peaceful and we who are angry  
**we who feel nothing and we who feel everything**  
we who are certain and we who are filled with doubt  
**And we who are everything in between**

### Writers Note:

\*for those who are utilizing a virtual or hybrid space consider using "hour" or "moment" to better encapsulate the your experience.

\*\*or enfold us

+ or who have gathered in spirit

May we, who have gathered<sup>+</sup>, bringing all that we are and all that we have experienced, feel sustained by your love and this family of faith.

**May we honor this moment as sacred as we bring our doubts, our grief, our joys, and our hopes before you and one another in this bold act of worship. Amen.**

*The leader reads the light print and the congregation responds in unison, reading the bold.*

## - OPENING MUSIC -

Some Suggestions:

- 10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)  
Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman  
© 2011 Atlas Mountain Songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)  
sixsteps Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)  
Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)  
worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
  - Be Thou My Vision  
Mary E. Byrne | Eleanor H. Hull  
Tune: SLANE  
© Public Domain
  - Blessed Assurance  
Fanny Crosby  
Tune: ASSURANCE  
© Public Domain
  - Wonderful Merciful Savior  
Dawn Rodgers | Eric Wyse  
© 1989 Curb Dayspring Music (Admin. by Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.)  
Curb Word Music (Admin. by WC Music Corp.)
  - Worthy of Worship  
Terry York  
Tune: JUDSON  
© 1988 by Van Ness Press, Inc. and McKinney Music, Inc
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Consider songs that elicit praise of our Creator and grounds us in God's loving care. Songs that are singable and familiar tend to draw participants into worship.

## - BEARING WITNESS TO THE EMOTIONS & EXPERIENCES OF THE LAST YEAR -

Here are three different options for what this time could look like in your context with examples and templates on the following pages:

1. Ask 2-3 people to share a brief testimony about their experience over the past year. Choose a range of experiences and guide participants to share about their emotions, experiences, and struggles during life in a pandemic. Encourage them to be true to their own story without making assumptions or judgments of others.
2. Solicit your congregation's help in writing a Litany of Bearing Witness. Give them the prompt on page 4, (labeled #2a) and ask them to submit their answers. Use their answers in the template (labeled #2b) to write a litany to be used in worship.
3. Consider using or adapting the litany included (provided on pages 4-5, labeled #3), written to try to include as many common experiences as possible.

Testimony is powerful and healing. Naming our emotions and experiences brings them to the light and dispels some of the darkness that can make them feel so overwhelming and scary. Consider a time of testimony in your worship service.

## LITANY OF BEARING WITNESS CONGREGATIONAL PROMPT (#2a)

This has been a tough season for all of us in one way or another. We've experienced shifts and griefs in our existing roles and have taken on new roles, some by choice, but many out of necessity. As you reflect on the changes that have come with the pandemic over the past year or so, complete the sentence below. You may do more than one if you choose. There are no wrong answers; God knows our deepest thoughts and there is room for all our emotions the body of Christ.

As a \_\_\_\_\_, I have felt/experienced/struggle with \_\_\_\_\_.  
(insert a specific role) (describe what it has been like in that role)

For example:

As a single person, I have struggled with loneliness and the lack of physical touch.

As a mom, I have felt like a failure as I tried to manage virtual learning and my kids' wide range of emotions, all while attempting to manage my own complex emotions as well.

As a teacher, I have experienced burn out as I try to teach both in-person and online.

As a grandfather, I have felt disconnected from my grandkids as I've watch them grow up on a screen.

As a son, I have struggled with my mom's death to COVID and the inability to celebrate her life.

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## TEMPLATE FOR WRITING A LITANY OF BEARING WITNESS (#2b)

Listening God,

This has been a tough season for all of us in one way or another.

We've experienced shifts and griefs in our existing roles and have taken on new roles,  
some by choice, but many out of necessity.

We name these experiences aloud today, O God, trusting that you hear, you see, and you love.

*Alternate between submitted responses and the following congregational refrain:*

***We hear you. We see you. We love you.***

or

***Lord, listen to your children praying.***

**For example:**

As a parent, I have felt like a failure as I tried to manage virtual learning and my kids' wide range of emotions, all while attempting to manage my own complex emotions as well.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

As a teacher, I have experienced burn out as I try to teach both in-person and online.

**Lord, listen to your children praying.**

Loving God,

We lift these experiences to you, trusting that you see each and every one of us  
—those named and those unnamed.

May we continue the journey in faith, knowing that you walk with us.

**Amen.**

*Use as many responses as is appropriate in your context.*

## A LITANY OF BEARING WITNESS (#3)

Listening God,

This has been a tough season for all of us in one way or another.

We've experienced shifts and griefs in our existing roles and have taken on new roles, some by choice, but many out of necessity.

**We name these experiences aloud today, O God,  
trusting that you hear, you see, and you love.**

For the single person struggling with loneliness and the lack of physical touch.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the parents who felt like failures as they tried to manage virtual learning and their kids' wide range of emotions, all while attempting to manage their own complex emotions.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the teachers hanging on by a thread, experiencing burn out as they try to teach both in-person and online.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the teenagers who have felt alone and isolated from their peers.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For those who have given birth to children without any family or friends to celebrate with them or support them.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the children who have been frustrated because they felt they didn't have any control over what was happening in their lives.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the grandparents who have felt disconnected from their grandkids, watching them grow up on a screen.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For those who are grieving the death of a loved one and are frustrated with the inability to safely mourn with friends and family.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For disciples who have wondered where God is in all this.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For those for whom their jobs have demanded a lot of new things and the fatigue is real.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the kids and adults who have felt uneasy and anxious as the world shifts rapidly around them.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the children of aging parents, who have not been able to visit or care for them.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

Consider adapting, adding, or cutting to best fit the experiences in your congregation.

You could also use "Lord, hear our prayer" or Lord, have mercy" as a congregational refrain.

For those who have lost their jobs and struggled with a sense of failure and lack of purpose.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the students who have struggled to keep up in virtual school.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

For the frontline workers with demanding, hard, and scary jobs, struggling with depression and exhaustion.

**We hear you. We see you. We love you.**

Loving God,

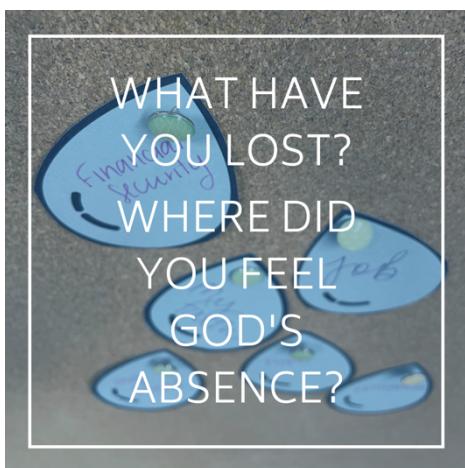
We lift these experiences to you, trusting that you see each and every one of us—those named and those not named.

**May we continue the journey in faith, knowing that you walk with us. Amen.**

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#### - A TIME FOR LAMENT -

Expressing our brokenness is part of what makes us human. Grief is a process, and our prayers of lament can help us through. Lament is our expression of pain and sorrow which with our reality and leads to a place of healing. Naming our pain before God opens us to receive comfort. Our prayers of lament are a posture of worship because they draw us to our Creator.



This is a participatory element that gives people space to write their laments from the past year on a precut teardrop symbolizing tears shed during the pandemic. Precut teardrops may be handed out when people come into the worship space or inserted into a worship guide. Invite people to write their laments about the past year answering the questions: *What have you lost? Where did you feel God's absence?*

To avoid congregating around the corkboard, and to be mindful of COVID precautions, invite the congregation to pass their teardrops toward the aisles. Enlist someone ahead of time who will be responsible for collecting the teardrops and arrange them on a corkboard. If you are still live streaming, you can have people share their lament via text message or the chat function.

#### Scripture & Song Suggestions:

- Jeremiah 8:21-9:1 followed by "There is a Balm in Gilead"  
African American spiritual  
Tune: BALM IN GILEAD  
© Public Domain
- Psalm 130, followed by "I Will Wait for You (Psalm 130)"  
Jordan Kauflin | Keith Getty | Matthew Merker | Stuart Townend  
© 2018 Getty Music Publishing (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
- Psalm 6 with "O Lord Hear My Prayer" sung intermittently  
Taizé Community  
© 1982, Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent.

This time of reflection can be preceded by the following scripture readings and musical offerings sung congregationally or by a soloist.

## Musical Suggestions:

- I Need Thee Every Hour
  - Annie Hawks | Robert Lowery
  - Tune: NEED
  - © Public Domain
- I Want Jesus to Walk with Me
  - African American spiritual
  - Tune: WALK WITH ME
  - © Public Domain
- I Will Wait For You (Psalm 130)
  - Jordan Kauflin | Keith Getty | Matthew Merker | Stuart Townend
  - © 2018 Getty Music Publishing (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
  - Jordan Kauflin Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
  - Matthew Merker Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
  - Townend Songs (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
- Lament
  - Audrey Assad | Pete Kipley
  - © 2012 Meaux Jeaux Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
  - River Oaks Music Company (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
  - Songs From The Indigo Room (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
- O Lord Hear My Prayer
  - Taizé Community
  - © 1982, Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent.
- Prayers of the People
  - Ben Kilgore | David Gungor | Evan Wickham | Ian Cron | John Arndt
  - © 2015 Brownie Hawkeye Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (Integrity Music, David C Cook))
  - Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (Integrity Music, David C Cook))
  - Evan Wickham Music (Admin. by Moon & Musky Music)
  - Remaining portion is unaffiliated
- Precious Lord Take My Hand
  - Thomas A. Dorsey
  - Tune: PRECIOUS LORD
  - © 1938, Unichappell Music, Inc. (renewed). Assigned to Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.
- Until These Tears are Gone
  - Eric J. Marshall
  - © 2014 Scot Family Reunion Songs (Admin. by Scot Family Reunion, LLC)
- Weep with Me
  - Chris Llewellyn | Gareth Gilkeson
  - © Capitol CMG Paragon (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
  - Rend Family Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
- When Sorrow Floods the Troubled Heart (Celebrating Grace Hymnal)
  - Paul Simpson Duke | Rebecca Turner
  - © 2010 Celebrating Grace, Inc.

During the time of reflection while people are writing their laments the following musical offerings could be sung or played.

## - GROUNDING IN GOD'S LOVE AND CARE -

Invite the congregation to join you in a time of centering prayer. Lead them in the following prayer exercise:

I ask you to join me for a centering prayer and meditation: bringing yourself to a comfortable position, legs uncrossed, grounding into the seat or the earth below; gently closing the eyes or softening the gaze. Take in a deep breath and allow the shoulders to fall away from the ears as you exhale. Continuing to take in some slow breaths begin to envision a peaceful place, a place where you feel closest to God.

And once you are in this space begin noticing sounds, smells, feelings. What can you hear? Taste? As you breathe, begin to envision the love of God filling your heart, your lungs and all the space you are creating.

As you exhale, hand over all that is too heavy or holding you down. And repeat this cycle. Breathing in love, exhaling weight. [Allow time for 5-10 breaths.]

God's love is infinite. With every breath you can inhale God's grace, and every exhale will help you remove what feels heavy in your heart. Take two more slow breaths and gently bring your attention back to the seat, back to this space we share, and when you are ready begin opening your eyes and find yourself back here, and now, surrounded by God's love.

### Song Suggestions:

- Abide with Me  
Henry Francis Lyte  
Tune: EVENTINE  
© Public Domain
- Give Me Jesus  
Afro-American spiritual  
Tune: GIVE ME JESUS  
© Public Domain
- He Knows My Name (Tommy Walker)  
Tommy Walker  
© 1996 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Songs (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.)
- It is Well with My Soul  
Horatio Gates Spafford  
Tune: VILLE DU HAVRE  
© Public Domain
- Restless  
Audrey Assad | Matt Maher  
© 2010 River Oaks Music Company (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)  
Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)  
Valley Of Songs Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
- Still (Rueben Morgan)  
Reuben Morgan  
© 2002 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)

Trauma and pain reside in the body as well as the soul. Consider offering a time of centering prayer, inviting participants to breathe in the love of God as they release some of the tension and pain they have just lamented.

Consider following the centering prayer with a song of trust in our Creator.

## - A TURN TOWARD RESILIENCE -

We have been reminded we are held in God's love and care. We have expressed our lament and sorrow before God. We move forward knowing sorrow and suffering are a part of every human life, but our pain does not have the last word. Even during difficult times, the Spirit is at work weaving grace and mercy into our lives.

During this time, we invite you to reflect and answer the questions: What was gained? Where did you feel God's presence? We invite you to take the second tear drop and write your reflections.

### *Silence for reflection*

If you feel nothing was gained that is okay. You can leave the teardrop blank. At the end of the worship service, you are invited to either take the teardrop home with you and hold on to what was gained or you can turn them in as you go out the door and when you come back to worship, they will be on display as a sign of hope. (Have a basket near the door for collecting them).

### **Isaiah 43 (NRSV)**

*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*

*<sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

*<sup>3</sup>For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia<sup>[a]</sup> and Seba in exchange for you.*

*<sup>4</sup>Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.*

*<sup>5</sup>Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you;*

*<sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—*

*<sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

The themes of Isaiah 43 and the lyrics of this hymn reflect strength, deliverance, and perseverance. By listening to the Word spoken and responding with singing we are grounded in God's promises and character.

### Sing "How Firm a Foundation" - verse 1 (possible alternate tune: My Jesus I Love Thee)

*<sup>8</sup>Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!*

*<sup>9</sup>Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble. Who among them declared this, and foretold to us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to justify them, and let them hear and say, "It is true."*

*<sup>10</sup>You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.*

*<sup>11</sup>I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.*

*<sup>12</sup>I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, says the Lord.*

*<sup>13</sup>I am God, and also henceforth I am He; there is no one who can deliver from my hand; I work and who can hinder it?*

### Sing "How Firm a Foundation" - verse 2

- 14** Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I will send to Babylon and break down all the bars, and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentation.
- 15** I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.
- 16** Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
- 18** Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
- 19** I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
- 20** The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, **21**the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

### Sing "How Firm a Foundation" - verse 3

- 22** Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel!
- 23** You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense.
- 24** You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities.
- 25** I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.
- 26** Accuse me, let us go to trial; set forth your case, so that you may be proved right.
- 27** Your first ancestor sinned, and your interpreters transgressed against me.
- 28** Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary, I delivered Jacob to utter destruction, and Israel to reviling.

### Sing "How Firm a Foundation" - verse 4 & Tag with "It Is Well" - chorus only

- How Firm a Foundation  
George Keith  
Tune: ADESTE FIDELES or GORDON  
© Public Domain

### - HOMILY -

As Christians, one of our primary symbols is baptism. Those who participate in this ritual are marked as God's beloved and identified as followers of Christ, soaked in grace. Water is the perfect medium for this ritual because of its life-giving power. We cannot live without water. In addition, throughout history, water has been used for cleansing and purification both in everyday life as we bathe and wash dishes, and in religious rituals. Our Jewish siblings used water to purify themselves before entering the temple for worship. Undoubtedly building on this symbolism of purification, the gospels tell us John invited his fellow Israelites to repent and prepare their hearts for the coming of the kin-dom of God by being baptized in the Jordan. Later Jesus institutes baptism, as an identifier of his followers. Christians came to see the water as a physical sign of God's grace being poured out on us, through Christ, a ritual cleansing if you will. Water is perfect for cleansing and purification, the outpouring of grace, which is taking place as we come to know and commit ourselves to Christ. Water leaves us feeling fresh and clean, ready for the new day ahead.

Our congregations chose not to do a homily, but instead a brief word about renewal.

Romans 6:3-4 says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." When we are immersed into the baptismal waters, the minister proclaims over us, "You are buried with Christ in baptism and death and raised to walk in newness of life." Our baptism symbolizes our participation in the death of Jesus, as well as his resurrection to new life. After the impact of 2020 and beyond, we need the opportunity to be walk in this newness of life, again, to be cleansed and restored.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a very difficult season of life. It has been traumatic for some, painful for many, and stressful for everyone. Yet, for over a year, we have adapted, changed, and navigated through adversity. In other words, we have discovered that we are resilient people. With God's help and the support of our community, we can move forward and find new life.

In a moment, we will have the opportunity to participate in a ritual to remember our baptisms and reclaim this newness of life for today. You will be invited to walk to one of the stations and have water poured over your hands. After the pain, trauma, and stress of the pandemic, we need the opportunity to be cleansed and renewed, to remember our baptism and feel a sense of God's grace washing over us again.

Let's pray together (Unison Prayer)

**"Lord, as I feel the water in my hands, I will remember my baptism. Begin to cleanse me of the pain, stress, and trauma of this last year. Fill me, a new, with your Holy Spirit. Restore my soul and remind me that I am resilient. Help me to walk in newness of life today."**

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#### - SONG OF RESPONSE -

- All Who Are Thirsty  
Brenton Brown | Glenn Robertson  
© 1998 Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire) (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (Integrity Music, David C Cook))
- Baptized in Water  
Michael Saward  
Tune: BUNESSAN  
© 1982, Jubilate Hymns, Ltd. (admin. by Hope Publishing Co.)
- Come Just as You Are  
Joseph Sabolick  
© 1993 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.)
- Living Waters  
Ed Cash | Kristyn Getty  
© 2016 Capitol CMG Paragon (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)  
Getty Music Publishing (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
- Oceans (Where Feet May Fall)  
Joel Houston | Matt Crocker | Salomon Ligthelm  
© 2012 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
- The River (Meredith Andrews)  
Meredith Andrews  
© 2007 Curb Songs (Admin. by Curb Music Publishing)  
Mesmerized Music (Admin. by Curb Music Publishing)

## - RITUAL OF STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY -

As resilient people, we celebrate that we can find our strength in God and through community. During this part of worship, we encourage you to engage in a practice that is meaningful for your congregation. For example, First Baptist Church of Columbia has a rich history of reciting their church covenant together and will say their covenant together at this time. Other common rituals include communion or singing a favorite hymn, such as *Blest Be the Tie That Binds*.

## - SENDING -

As we prepare to send our congregation back out into the world, offer a word of hope and a reminder of the God who is constantly at work making all things new. Consider offering a blessing and then sending your congregation back out into the world with cleansing ritual. At each exit, have someone with a bowl of water, a pitcher, and towels. Instruct participants to cup their hands together and place them above the bowl as the leader pours water over their hands saying something like: "*Beloved, remember you have been raised to the newness of life.*"

### BENEDICTION BLESSING:

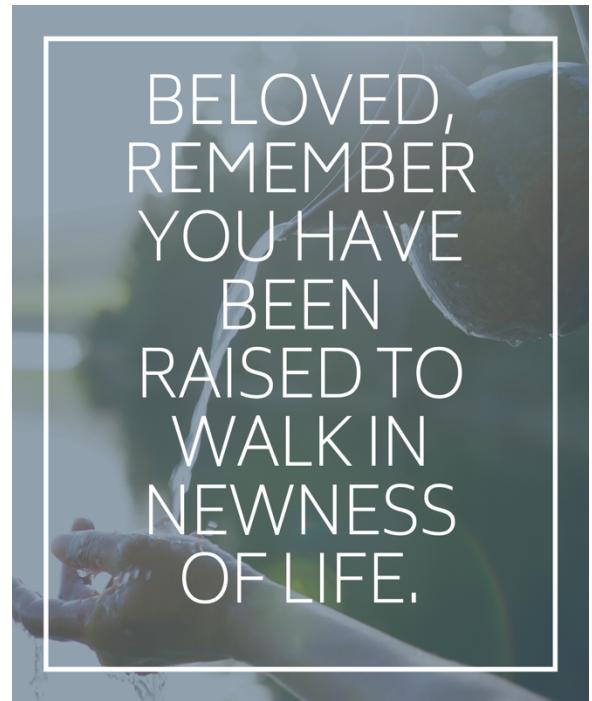
*Blessing the Fragments* by Jan Richardson<sup>iii</sup>

Cup your hands together,  
and you will see the shape  
this blessing wants to take.

Basket, bowl, vessel:  
it cannot help but  
hold itself open  
to welcome  
what comes.

This blessing  
knows the secret  
of the fragments  
that find their way  
into its keeping,  
the wholeness  
that may hide  
in what has been  
left behind,  
the persistence of plenty  
where there seemed  
only lack.

Look into the hallows  
of your hands  
and ask  
what wants to be  
gathered there,  
what abundance awaits  
among the scraps  
that come to you,  
what feast  
will offer itself  
from the pieces  
that remain.



<sup>i</sup> As defined by the American Psychosocial Association, <https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma>

<sup>ii</sup> Worship can assist in healing but is not meant as a substitute for seeking help from a doctor or therapist.

<sup>iii</sup> Richardson, Jan. *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*, 161.