

Gather a candle to light.

We are gathered in the name God who is our Creator, Savior, and Sustainer. We gather to remember and to celebrate life. We gather to continue to entrust loved ones to God's care.

In this time of covid it has often not been possible to have funeral or a formal way to say goodbye when someone dies. And if there was a funeral it was often difficult to attend.

I would like to offer a memorial service so that you can, in your own time, say goodbye and entrust your loved one to God's care. This is a time of prayer and readings and meditation. At times I will pause so that you can name the one you are remembering. If you have a candle to light let's do that now.

*[light pascal candle]*

Let us pray. O God of grace and glory, we remember before you today your beloved child: \_\_\_\_\_. We thank you for the gift of their life. We thank you for the time we shared together in life. In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Shine your light on us, so we may see in death the gate to eternal life, so that we may continue our course on earth in confidence until the time when you call us home and we are reunited with those who have gone on before us; we ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.

We are here in this moment of time for a reason: you have experienced a death ... a loss. I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to you for your loss. In the time ahead there are many thoughts and questions that pop up. Things like: “I wish I’d said,” “I wished I’d asked that question”, “I wish we’d had more time.” Wanting more time to hear life stories, advice. Wanting time to make things right: time for apology and forgiveness. Wanting time to say thank you.

And in that time I think there are two fears that often come up: fear of being forgotten ourselves – because the one who died is often the keeper of our stories ... the one who knows us and remember our stories.

And then there is the fear that we ourselves will forget .... Days when we forget to grieve .... Does that mean we are forgetting the one we loved. Though sometimes it is a blessing to let go of some of the things that come up in relationships, but we do want to keep hold of the memories that bring joy, the memories that are part of who we are and how we got to be the people we are.

Grief is a strange thing – it seems to fade away, but then something triggers a memory and there it is back again .... Sometimes a fresh rush of grief just as intense as it ever was – or sometimes a gentle reminder.

Good-byes are never easy. Even when we have entrusted someone to God’s care -- and that is a good & safe place for them to be. Knowing that they

are not lost but are in God's capable hands, makes it somewhat easier. But they are lost to us in the day to day / regular contact that we had with them. Things are not the same and they will not be the same again.

One of the challenges to grieving is to let go and accept those changes. But that is much easier to say than to do. And it can be a scary thing to do .... A deep fear that if we allow our sadness to lessen ... if we accept those changes we might also forget the one that we have lost and that would be even worse. Then our loved one would truly be lost.

I would like to suggest a different (?) way through grief/loss from someone who experienced deep grief and sorrow a very long time ago: Job.

Job's words reassure us:

*Job 14:7-9*

'For there is hope for a tree,  
 if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,  
 and that its shoots will not cease.  
 Though its root grows old in the earth,  
 and its stump dies in the ground,  
 yet at the scent of water it will bud  
 and put forth branches like a young plant.

I know there is truth in that passage from Job. Literally because of our neighbour's tree that was pushing the fence over ... and so he chopped it down .... And lo and behold "at the scent of water it budded and put forth branches like a young plant" in our yard. Again too close to the fence ... and now we are the ones who have to get rid of it!

But there is truth and hope in that passage because it reminds us that those we love are not lost to us, they are not gone from our lives.

Grief begins with loss ..... but it can (it really can) end with regaining that loss

Admittedly in a new and different way. The healing of grief is not forgetfulness the healing of grief is memory. To come to know our loved ones in a new way .. to have them in our lives in a different way.

Some of the more obvious ways that a loved one stays with us is

- In the gifts and abilities that have been passed down ... the mannerisms we see in others that remind us ... the tilt of a head that is familiar .... The laugh that is just the same.

But there are other ways to keep someone in our lives:

Speak their name ... to remember .... To become reacquainted in a new way. That is like watering a stump ... and at the scent of water something new will grow.

... become a gardener: Water the stump : ask questions, get to know your lost one again, remember what was good, forgive what needs to be forgiven,

To entrust them to God's care as many times as you need to.

Knowing they are in God's care just as you yourself are in God's care.

Grief a disconnection ... death severs the connection ... but the work of grief is to rebuild that relationship in a different way.

Work of grief is a hard job

As we said goodbye to loved ones we count on God's enduring love and care for them ... we entrusted them to that care, we continue to entrust them to God. We ourselves are entrusted to that love and care today.

May the painful memories fade and the memories that bring you joy and life and strength grow and flower in your lives. You are not alone ... may God's grace and life give you both that joy and strength. Amen.

Prayers:

Let us turn our hearts to God in prayer: I will end each prayer with the words Lord, in your mercy and you can make it your prayer also by responding "hear our prayer"

God of grace, you have made us in your image to reflect your truth and light: We give you thanks for the gift given in our loved one: \_\_\_\_\_, for all that was good in their life, for the memories we treasure today. Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

God of strength your power brings joy out of grief and life out of death. Look in mercy on all who mourn. Give us patient faith in times of sorrow. Strengthen us with the knowledge of your love. Grant to all who mourn a sure confidence in your loving care, that, casting all their sorrow on you, they may know the comfort and assurance of your love. Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

God of love, give us the gift of faith so that we may believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Creator of all, by your mighty power you give life. We entrust our loved one: \_\_\_\_\_ to your care, trusting in your mercy. Help us to remember the joy they brought to us, and help us to honour their memory in our lives. Make us certain that because Christ Jesus lives we shall live also, and that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, will be able to separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

I invite you to pray with me in the words that Jesus gave his disciples:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

#### Commendation

O loving God, you are gracious and tender-hearted. You have created all people, and you love all whom you have made. Have mercy on our loved one: \_\_\_\_\_, and take them into your arms of grace. Grant to family and friends light in this time of darkness, and comfort in this time of sadness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Into your hands, O merciful savior, we commend our loved one: \_\_\_\_\_. Acknowledge, we pray, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive them into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. AMEN.

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. AMEN  
Go now in peace to love and service the Lord.

