

# Liturgy at the time of dying

for those who are physically  
separated from the dying



**Transforming  
Worship**



Uniting Church in Australia  
ASSEMBLY

## **Ministry at the Time of Dying:**

*for those who are physically separated from the dying person*

This liturgy has been designed as a resource for those who are physically separated from their loved one at the time of death due to the need for isolation and physical distancing, particularly in the context of infectious virus and disease such as COVID-19.

The minister, family and friends of the patient gather, perhaps at the window outside the bedside or out the front of the care facility or hospital, or in another location if that is not possible.

This liturgy can also take place online (via Zoom) with family members 'virtually' present and the iPad held by a staff member. This type of scenario would allow the dying person to hear the words of the Blessing and Farewell as well as listen to any sharing of love from their community. It would also offer an insight for the family and Minister to see the physical space of their loved one and also acknowledge their appreciation for those who are able to physically care for and be present with the patient.



**The Minister says:**

## **GATHERING**

We gather on this day  
and in this way  
as friends and family of NN  
to begin  
to say goodbye

Whether we live or die we belong to God and we hear the words of Jesus  
when he says:

*Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest; (Matthew 11.28)*

and we hear the words of faith:

*God will wipe every tear from our eyes  
and there will be no more death  
no more mourning or crying or terrible pain,  
for the old order of things will pass away...*

Christians believe that while death is the end of mortal life, it  
marks the beginning of a new relationship with God.

**Gentle Music can be played live or via technology to give space for folk to reflect.**

***This is followed by two prayers to be read by the minister and/or others.  
The purpose of these prayers is to open space to reflect on the pain of  
being physically separated from the one they love at the time of dying***

## **Prayers of Love**

**to be prayed by the Family and the Minister**

*(Prayers adapted with thanks from work of Julie Perrin)*

Jesus of the Sorrows.

who knows the solitary space of loss,  
be our companion as we gather in our heartbreak.

We cannot be there physically as NN enters on this great and final  
journey.

This is a devastation.



Breathe your gentle presence into us.  
We fear the deep abyss,  
We grieve the terrible aloneness of this journey  
We weep that we cannot be there, in our bodies, to comfort and hold

Eternal One, we know that you walk with NN  
Even as (he/she/they) NN walks  
through the darkest valley  
We will fear no evil,  
for you are with us all;  
and your rod and your staff,  
they comfort us.

We know that You prepare a table before NN  
And that NN will dwell forever in the house of the Lord

May we know your invisible holding,  
Your love joining ours and surrounding NN  
Lover of all,  
Who watches through the night,  
draw close to NN  
and to we who mourn.

Calm our fear of abandonment.  
Let us hold faith with one another  
that love reaches beyond death.

God who weeps,  
Comfort NN, who is dying  
May they die without fear.  
And while they are yet living,  
give us the courage to tell our love  
and to trust in yours.

***A time of silence or gentle music***

## **The Sharing of the Life**

***An invitation for those gathered to briefly share a thanksgiving for what is precious to them about NN.***



## **Prayer of the dying**

*The following prayer may be prayed by the dying person, or on their behalf. If it is not possible to conduct the service via Zoom a recording of this prayer can be made and played to the dying person.*

God of the present moment,  
God who in Jesus, stills the storm  
and soothes the frantic heart;  
O help me (NN) to trust you, help me (NN) to know that you are with me/them  
Help me (NN) to believe that nothing can separate me/them  
from your love revealed in Jesus the Christ.  
And carry me (NN) in your arms  
as I (they) depart,  
rock me (NN) now,  
be my (their) boat,  
to carry me (them) safe over this sea of fear.

## **Anointing/Signing**

*The dying person may be signed on the forehead with the cross, or anointed with oil. If this signing is to take place appropriate PPE equipment must be used (see document) and all Hospital or Hospice restrictions must be adhered to.*

*If it is not possible (due to restrictions) to be physically present with the dying person then those gathered may wish to enact this signing/anointing together.*

*If this service is taking place online all participants may be invited to prepare a small bowl of oil or water to use for self anointing at this point, as a symbol of the anointing of their loved one.*

*There can also be an invitation for gathered community to hold up their hand in a symbol of blessing in the direction of where their loved one is residing.*



## Words for the Anointing

*Nothing can separate you from the love of God, neither death nor life, nor angel nor principalities nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ*

**(Romans 8:38,39)**

And so...NN I anoint you now with the sign of the cross,

remember in this moment

that you are a child of God,

beloved and precious in God's eyes.

And remember too, that though you walk in the valley of the shadow

You do not walk alone

And that God is with you

To carry you home

## COMMENDATION

(responses are in dark font)

Compassionate God,

We commend to you your child NN

Now that she/he/they are passing from this mortal life

We know that you will gather her/him/they to you

And hold her/him/they as a mother holds her child

May NN know the light of your presence

and may she/he they be set free from all that binds her/him/them down

Give us faith

that in this time of darkness and shadow

we may, without fear entrust those who are dear to us

to your never failing love, in this life and the life to come

through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen**

Into the freedom of wind and sunshine...**We will let you go.**

Into the dance of the stars and the planets...**We will let you go**

Into the wind's breath and the hands of the star maker...**We will let you go**

Into the arms of God's waiting embrace... **We will let you go**



# BLESSING

May you who mourn be comforted  
though your loss be great  
and may the God of the high heavens  
the Christ of the deep earth  
and the Spirit of the flowing waters  
surround you always in love.

*They may be sung, or played as recorded music.*

## Music Suggestions

Kyrie Eleison  
In Our Darkness (Taize)  
Come And Fill Our Hearts (Taize)  
Jesus Remember Me  
Nothing Is Lost On The Breath Of God  
I Heard The Voice Of Jesus Say  
Prayer for Peace (David Haas)  
Amazing Grace  
Be Still And Know  
10000 Reasons  
Be Not Afraid  
Going Home  
Thuma Mina  
In God Alone My Soul (Taize)





# Practical Steps

If you are called to provide care for somebody who is affected by COVID-19 in a hospital or home setting there are some precautions that you need to take in order that you might keep the person, yourself, your family and the community safe.

## **Is there an alternative?**

Can you call the person/video call the person?

Is there a family member who can visit whom you can communicate through on the phone or through video?

Is there a carer (pastoral or otherwise) who is available and able to provide this care?

## **Call ahead**

Are you allowed to visit? Or are there visiting times? Is this an urgent call?

Does the home, ward, or facility have enough resource for your visit?

Speak with the Nurse Unit Manager (NUM) or the carer for this person. Book a time and stick to that time.

Be patient and aware of all procedures that need to be followed.

Communicate if this is your first experience working in an infectious environment.

## **Research**

For visiting a person with COVID-19 you will need to don (in donning sequence):

1. Fluid resistant long-sleeved gown
2. Surgical mask or (P2/N95) mask
3. Protective eye wear or face shield
4. Disposable non-sterile gloves. (Hand hygiene must be performed before donning gloves and after taking them off).

You can find further information : [http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/575362/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-and-Control-Advice-for-Health-Workers-V2.pdf](http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/575362/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-and-Control-Advice-for-Health-Workers-V2.pdf)

## Resources

Please consider what resources you will be taking with you, will you be anointing, or praying, or leaving a hand cross?

The safest option will be to print out prayers and not rely on your phone or other electronic device (this will be safest kept in your pocket or bag).

If you leave a hand cross think about wiping it down with a disinfectant wipe before taking it in. If you are anointing, it would be better to bring it in a disposable vessel and bring non-used cotton buds where you will not touch the patient (even with gloves on) directly. All of your resources could be put into a snap lock bag, that you can have ready before going into the room.

## Exit

Leave behind any chance of taking the disease with you. If you have said prayers, or anointed the person, put your resources in the waste bin, before you leave the room. Follow the instructions to doff (remove) your PPE;

1. Gloves
2. Fluid resistant long sleeved gown
3. Protective eye wear or face shield
4. Surgical mask or p2/N95 mask

Hand hygiene must be performed after glove removal and between steps if there is a risk of contamination. Avoid touching the face at all times.

## Follow instructions

In this setting, look at the walls and door of the room that you are visiting. There are clear instructions with the above information about the responsibilities that you have in visiting this person.

Listen to any care professionals and ask them for help if you are not sure including when donning and doffing (putting on and taking off) your PPE.

Let the staff know when you are coming and when you are going, in most cases you will need to be let in and out of the facility, home or ward.

If you then have any signs of illness after visiting, follow all precautionary measures as designated by your health regulatory body.

