

# Praying in a time of pandemic



Resources to inform a Christian faith response to the crisis and to support care, healing and progress.

## Contents

Key themes	p.2
Prayer service	p.6
Why pray?	p.9

Orchardhill Church

Giffnock, Glasgow UK

[orchardhill.org.uk](http://orchardhill.org.uk)

Charity SC09774



# Key prayer Themes

## 1 Discovery

We pray in support of all endeavours to understand the virus better: its genetic code, its interactions with living tissue, the processes of human immune response reaction.

We pray for greater understanding of the prevalence and spread of the virus through populations: for increased insightful testing facilities and systems, and the resources to enable and interpret results clearly.

We pray for increased contact tracing, better understanding of transmission patterns and specific contacts; to ensure that those infected are isolated and treated, and the vulnerable are protected.

We pray for researchers and technologists working to develop a range of tests, treatments and particularly a vaccine against COVID-19.

## 2 COVID-19 Healthcare

We pray for all who are using their medical skill to treat infected patients across a range of professions, and who do so at no little risk to their own health in hospitals across our city and wider region.

We pray for those working in non-medical settings, particularly in care homes and other places where accommodation for vulnerable people is provided, who are also exposed to risk.

We pray for those planning, constructing, equipping and staffing temporary emergency critical care hospitals, especially the Louisa Jordan hospital in Glasgow.

We pray for those who source, distribute and provide essential personal protective equipment that front-line care staff are sufficiently protected from the presently unknown spread of the virus.

We pray for those suffering significant symptoms, that in such a distressing time they may have some sense of peace; and for families required to keep a distance from those they love at a time of critical ill-health: that ways of expressing love and presence may be found which are sufficient, if not ideal.

We pray for those who provide support to families of those seriously ill, or who have died: for counselling, funeral care, spiritual support, family, friends and neighbours all of whom must work in more distant ways than they would wish.

### 3 Maintaining society

We pray for all who endeavour to offer healthcare for the many, continuing non-COVID-19 issues which continue as normal.

We pray that all those who need medical treatment for non-COVID-19 matters, for themselves, their children, their parents and others may still and seek and receive appropriate attention.

We pray for the schooling of children and the education of those about to begin life-long careers to continue, and for creative and effective means of enabling learning and teaching to go on in difficult days.

We pray for social supports, many of which have been highly restricted or temporarily closed: places of worship for all faiths, sports clubs, activities for children and young people, meeting-places for seniors, joint endeavours for all ages which enrich lives, promote well-being, and encourage growth to fullness of living. We pray for the work of food banks and other direct endeavours to keep people fed, and housed, safe and protected in some way.

### 4 Protecting livelihoods

We pray for many who are deeply concerned for their jobs, or businesses, and who simply cannot tell what the coming weeks and months may bring for them and their dependents, their employees and society.

We pray for those upon whom greater demands have been placed, not least in food and other distribution systems, in supermarkets, providing on-line purchasing facilities.

We pray for governments in Westminster and Holyrood endeavouring to bring together a complex web of scientific information, economic plans, immediate responses to pressing needs and providing some trajectory for the long-term future.

We pray for those who provide capital and lending facilities, that in such a time as this there may be creativity in exploring possibilities, that opportunities to exploit desperate circumstances shall not be taken, that wherever possible a sense of concern may prevail against bare commercial gain.

We pray for those who administer the benefits system which has seen a surge in demand, and for those who find themselves applying for Universal Credit for the first time, that principles of dignity and humanity will be upheld.

## 5 Working Together

We give thanks for the remarkable maturity and concern for others shown in the widespread following of advice and then instruction to remain socially distanced and, wherever possible, at home.

We pray for a continued commitment to the common good particularly when this becomes more challenging as family events cannot be celebrated, better weather entices people outdoors and a sense of frustration at being confined is harder to counteract.

We pray for wisdom on the part of those making significant policy decisions, that restrictions be no greater than required but sufficient for the purpose, that they last no longer - but no shorter - than is necessary and that there is clarity of communication and integrity in demonstrating a commitment to these principles.

We pray for a continued sense of communal gratitude for the NHS and that this may extend to other essential though less well recognised services still providing essential help.

We pray for a deep sense of self-discipline as restrictions are gradually but not wholly eased, or are eased for some but not others.

## 6 Learning for the future

We pray that even in the midst of this crisis information will be collected, analysis carried out now and later and lessons learned that the world may be the better prepared to deal with similar challenges in the future.

We pray that the benefits of this period of highly restricted manufacture and economic activity for the climate might inform a global response to the climate crisis.

We pray that in a desire to redress the severe economic effects of reduced mobility there shall not be a significant increase in fossil fuel consumption, that the future climate shall not pay the price of the current pandemic.

We pray that those positive and innovative ways of working which have been widely adopted in recent weeks and which contribute to careful steward resourcing of the world's resources might not evaporate in the heat of a return to 'business as usual'.

We pray that where relationships have been strained, or broken, through a lack of communication in this time that these shall be mended, and we look forward to a time when people shall be able to get together again.

## 7 Thinking globally

As we are aware of tensions amongst nations which have been caused, or exacerbated by this crisis, we pray for a renewed effort by world leaders to engage positively with others for the good of all.

In the face of challenge to the funding of international organizations devoted to global issues, we pray for a renewed sense of commitment to common endeavour.

We pray for places and people whose health systems are less well resourced, and whose economies are less resilient, and for whom the current spread of the virus and the longer-term effects of social distancing or illness will be felt with a greater severity.

We remember, too, those places where viral infection is yet another blow on top of war, or drought; and we particularly pray for those people and families and communities where it feels as though it is the last straw. May they know strength to endure in the face of significant and enduring trouble.

We pray that opportunities to collaborate or cooperate, and perhaps surprising bonds forged through adversity at this time will not be lightly lost, that some enduring good may come from the need to work more closely together.

We pray for economic adjustments which will need to be made to restructure the finances of nations if they are to meet the cost of caring for their populations or to recover from the economic impact of the pandemic; and we pray that those nations which are able to do so may contribute with goodwill and generosity.

We pray for the influence of global businesses who may in the past have used their international leverage for their own profit, that their reach at this time may be put to good use to help many, to offer free or at lower cost services which prove a lifeline or offer opportunities for swifter recovery.

## A prayer 'starter for ten': prayer service liturgy

This could be used by individuals or households, or be a shared prayer activity through video-conference. You may wish to use a lit candle or other item as a focus, and you may wish to display that on your screen if meeting on-line with others.

### Preparing

God's message —

to the Israelites in captivity,  
to a freed people preparing to enter a Promised Land,  
to tribes facing daunting enemies,  
to exiles fearing life in Babylon,  
to the few who returned to a destroyed Jerusalem,  
to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee  
and in the Upper Room,  
to the early church scattered across the nations

has remained the same:

'Do not be afraid.'

In these days of challenge, uncertainty and anxiety,  
the words of Isaiah the prophet are for us, too;  
for through him God says:

'So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.'

### Opening prayer

God of love and faithfulness,  
in your hands the world and all its people are held;  
in your heart the concerns of the whole earth are felt;  
in your arms those from every tribe and nation may be secure.

As I/we come to remember before you  
some of the present and pressing needs of this whole earth,  
the hopes and fears of nations and the peoples of the world,  
and my own anxieties and concerns, too:  
help me/us to remember the words of Jesus  
as he calmed the stormy sea:

'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?'

## Scripture

You may wish to pause and reflect for a moment on one of these short passages from the Bible:

**1** Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.' *Exodus 34*

**2** But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. *Psalms 22*

**3** God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. *Psalms 46*

**4** So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. *Isaiah 10*

**5** So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. *Matthew 6*

**6** Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. *Luke 12*

**7** Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. *Revelation 2*

## Prayers for others

*You may wish to use one of the Key Themes found at the start of this leaflet as your focus for prayer.*

*There are sufficient key themes to pray daily through the course of one week, or use one theme each week over seven weeks.*

## Closing prayer

God whose mercy reaches to the highest heavens  
and yet is new to us each morning,  
you saved the world you loved  
by the death and resurrection of your Son.

By faith in him, the Lord of life in whom  
nothing in all creation can separate us from your love  
may we triumph in the power of his victory;  
and so we offer our worship and all our prayers  
through this Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

*Orchardhill Church offers this prayer resource  
as one element of its ministry at this time.*

*On-line services are offered, too,  
on Sundays at 10.30 (with catch-up)  
and in a live-stream on Wednesdays at 7pm (all BST).*

*If you wish prayer for particular situations,  
email us at [quiet-time@orchardhill.org.uk](mailto:quiet-time@orchardhill.org.uk)  
and we shall pray for you.*

[orchardhill.org.uk](http://orchardhill.org.uk)



## Why pray?

We pray because we are living in the twenty-first century and we are open to the possibility of the transcendent. More than that, we are committed to living in the light of transcendence shown in Jesus Christ and in the hope of the involvement of the Divine in our world.

So we pray. If you think that only those things you can sense, measure or manipulate are real, this is probably not for you. Yet we pray as twenty-first century inhabitants of earth. If you think that God will intervene in a miraculous, almost magical way to blow away the current coronavirus difficulties and bring in a world of sweetness and light, this is probably not for you, either.

We both recognise and affirm the world of order, of governing principles which allow for the universe to continue in being and for life to flourish. We are profoundly grateful for centuries of scientific development, for skills honed and knowledge gained, for technologies developed and deployed in creative and effective ways. Science is the basis for the best way to address the present pandemic.

Science is always a human endeavour, carried on by people who need to collaborate. All of us have moments of great clarity of thought, but we also become tired; we work for the highest ideals and can also be envious; we need to be painstaking and also grasp the bigger picture - and have the wisdom to know what is right at any given moment. Being human is complicated, and all of humankind presently faces a complex challenge which will require the best in us all to be nurtured and all that is worst restrained. We pray because we consider transcendence has the potential to play an important part.

### How to use this document

The first section offers areas for prayerful focus, based on contemporary ideas about how the current crisis may be addressed. It does not seek to be party political nor biased towards or away from any particular approach, but it does endeavour to be real, and informed.

You may use these ideas to inform your own prayers, and incorporate these themes into your own regular devotional times as you wish. If possible and relevant, these themes will be updated every few weeks to reflect the changing situation.

The pages which follow offer a Starter for Ten if you're less comfortable using your own words to pray, or prefer the structure of a written prayer time, or like the idea that in different places a range of people are nonetheless thinking and praying the same sort of things using similar words.

We are trying to be both global in our scope and local in our concern. If you are using this resource out-with Glasgow or west-central Scotland, feel free to insert your own local concerns.