

Comforting the Bereaved

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A brief service of worship may be held before the funeral when family and others have gathered at the time of death, during the family visitation, or in a hospice, hospital, or other setting.

The service that follows may be adapted for use when the funeral must be postponed or when public safety prevents loved ones from gathering. Psalms, scripture readings, or prayers from the funeral service may also be used. Participants may be connected by telephone or video.

When a pastor, chaplain, or other representative of the church is not present, anyone may serve as leader for this service. Medical personnel may use one of the prayers (“Holy God ...” or “God our creator ...”) as an expression of care for the bereaved.

Key to Abbreviations:

BCW = Book of Common Worship (WJKP, 2018)

BCW-PE = Book of Common Worship—Pastoral Edition (WJKP, 2018)

GTG = Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal (WJKP, 2013)

PH = The Presbyterian Hymnal (WJKP, 1990)

OPENING SENTENCES

Sentences of scripture, such as the following, may be said by a leader or responsively:

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble. *Ps. 46:1*
- 2 The eternal God is your dwelling place,
and underneath are the everlasting arms. *Deut. 33:27*
- 3 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted. *Matt. 5:4*

PRAYER

Eternal God, our help in every time of trouble,
send your Holy Spirit to comfort and strengthen us,
that we may have hope of life eternal
and trust in your goodness and mercy,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN, PSALM, OR SPIRITUAL SONG

A hymn, psalm, or spiritual song, such as “Abide with Me” (GTG 836; PH 543), “Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound” (GTG 649; PH 280), or “For All the Saints” (GTG 326; PH 526), may be sung. For other suggestions, see BCW 811–13).

PSALM

An additional psalm, such as Ps. 23, 121, or 130, may be read or sung. For other suggestions, see BCW 809–10.

SCRIPTURE

One or more passages of scripture, such as Isa. 40:1–11, John 14:1–6, or Rom. 8:31–39, may be read. For other suggestions, see BCW 809–11.

An interpretation of the readings, and reflections on the life of the deceased, may follow. Informal conversations with or among the family may be appropriate.

PRAYER

One of the following or a similar prayer (BCW 819, BCW–PE 429) may be said:

- 1 Holy God, Lord of life and death,
you made us in your image
and hold us in your care.
We thank you for your servant N.,
for the gift of *her/his* life,
and for the love and mercy
she/he received from you and gave to us.
Especially we praise you for your love in Jesus Christ,
who died and rose from the grave
to free us from death
and give us life eternal.
Grant that when our time on earth is ended,
we may be united with all the saints
in the joy of your eternal home,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

- 2 God our creator, your Holy Spirit prays for us
even when we do not know how to pray.
Send your Spirit to comfort us in our need and loss,
and help us to commend N. to your merciful care;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord’s Prayer may be spoken:

In the shadow of the valley of death,
let us pray to the Lord of life:

**Our Father in heaven
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today
our daily bread;
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

**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 debts,
as we forgive
our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

BLESSING

The leader says this or another blessing (BCW 151–53):

The Lord bless us,
defend us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Alleluia! or Amen.**

