

# TITLE: LITURGY IN RESPONSE TO MASS SHOOTINGS

*RESOLVED, THAT THE 80<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CONVENTION DIRECT THE STANDING COMMISSION ON LITURGY AND MUSIC TO MAKE AVAILABLE A LITURGY TO ASSIST CONGREGATIONS AND COMMUNITIES IN RESPONDING PASTORALLY TO THE MASS SHOOTINGS WHICH ARE OCCURRING AT AN ALARMING RATE THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.*

## GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

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GATHERING HYMN/SONG:

WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER

*Leader* Lord, make us instruments of your peace;

*All* ***Where there is hatred, let us sow love;***

*Leader* Where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith;

*All* ***Where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.***

*Leader* O Divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

*All* ***to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.***

LIGHTING OF THE FLAME OF PEACE

*Leader* Dear Friends, we gather this day/afternoon/evening to call to mind those who have lost their lives, their loved ones and their livelihood through the scourge of gun violence [in this community]. We gather from different backgrounds, understandings and cultures to stand together, to dream together, to pray together, and to act together. We are angry. Angry at the seeming powerlessness of our leaders and communities to prevent violence. We are tired. Tired of inaction, easy answers and superficial acts of compassion. We are sad. Sad for those who suffer in needless pain the loss of all that they cherish. However, we are hopeful. Hopeful that by our prayers, our presence and our persistence, that change will one day come. We gather in vigil and in prayer with thousands across the nation and across the world to stand as bearers of the light of hope and the flame of peace. *The leader, or one appointed, lights the flame of peace.*

*Leader* We kindle this flame as a symbol of hope and peace. May it burn not only in this place but also in our hearts. May its light dispel the shadow from before our path that we may see clearly the road that is ahead. May it be a reminder that hope is a flame that can never be extinguished.

*All* ***We stand together in hope. We stand together in faith. We stand together in love. We stand individually as ambassadors of hope, vessels of faith, and sentinels of love. We stand as a community committed to making no peace with gun violence. We pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to inflame and enkindle our lives, our churches, our communities, our cities, and our nation with a passion for lasting peace; through Jesus Christ the Author of Peace. Amen.***

HYMN/SONG

*All are seated.*

WE HEAR THE SACRED STORIES

*One or more of the Scripture passages may be read.*

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH 2:1-4A

*In days to come the mountain of the God's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that the Holy One may teach us divine ways and that we may walk in God's paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Yahweh shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

*At the end of the reading the Reader says:*

*Reader* Here ends the reading.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH 25:6-9

*On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

*At the end of the reading the Reader says:*

*Reader* Here ends the reading.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH 31:15-17

*Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for there is a reward for your work, says the Lord: they shall come back from the land of the enemy; there is hope for your future, says the Lord: your children shall come back to their own country.*

*At the end of the reading the Reader says:*

*Reader* Here ends the reading.

A SELECTION FROM THE PSALMS

*Psalms 130,*

*Psalms 121,*

*Psalms 23,*

*Psalms 46*

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS 8:31-39

*What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

At the end of the reading the Reader says:

Reader Here ends the reading.

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 1:20-25

*Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.*

At the end of the reading the Reader says:

Reader Here ends the reading.

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN 21:15-17,19B

*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. After this, he said to him, "Follow me."*

At the end of the reading the Reader says:

Reader Here ends the reading.

*Additional readings may be added.*

*Here a reflection, homily, or sermon may be preached.*

[REFLECTION]

FOR VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle as we call to mind the many victims of gun violence, those who have lost their lives, those who have lost their livelihood, and those who have lost life's passion. We pray especially for those who have been killed [here in City or State] and we hold their stories and their memories dear. May their loss not be in vain, and may we shape a new story of hope from the broken pieces of grief. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

FOR FRIENDS & FAMILY OF GUN VIOLENCE VICTIMS

*Leader* We light this candle to stand with those who have been left behind, the families, friends, and loves ones of those taken by gun violence. We pray that in this time of heartbreak, grief, and loss that they might find comfort and hope to face the days ahead, and that their tears may be turned into songs of joy. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

[REFLECTION]

FOR COMMUNITIES TORN BY GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle to tell the story of homes, communities, neighborhoods, cities and town shattered by gun violence. We call the time the sacred ground around our nation that has been watered with the blood of loss and the tears of grief. [We especially remember *specific cities and towns may be named here.*] Grant that we may work

tirelessly towards a vision where all may sit under their own vine and fig tree in safety and security. And so we pray,

*All     **God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

#### FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

*Leader* We light this candle to stand with first responders, those who live with the horror of gun violence in service to the common good. We stand with them and their families as they heal from bearing witness to the aftermath of lives ended in violence. Grant that we, with them, may create a world where all are protected, all are honored and all are seen, valued and beloved. And so we pray,

*All     **God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

[REFLECTION]

#### FOR SUICIDE & ACCIDENTS

*Leader* We light this candle to remember those who ended their lives at their own hands with a gun, those who lost their lives by accident, and those children whose promise of life was cut short. We pray that we may be strength to those in despair, hope in those in desolation, and comfort to those in misery. And so we pray,

*All     **God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

#### FOR THOSE WHO FEEL HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle in solidarity with those who feel helpless, dejected, or powerless in the face of the gun violence epidemic. We know that gun violence touches all cultures, classes, genders, races, tribes, and nations. We pray that we may not be overwhelmed by gun violence but that we may overwhelm the world with the violence of love. And so we pray,

*All     **God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

[REFLECTION]

#### FOR THE PERPETRATORS OF GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle for perpetrators of gun violence. We pray for their families, their friends, and those who love them. We pray for those who see no other way than violence. We pray for those who suffer from mental illness, social isolation, loneliness, and debilitating fear. Grant that we may reach out in love and transform ferocity into friendship and fear into faith. And so we pray,

*All     **God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

[REFLECTION]

#### FOR OURSELVES & FOR OTHERS

*Leader* We light this candle to pray for ourselves and others in our lives who have been touched by gun violence. During the silent pause, we invite you to offer their names either silently or aloud. *Silence is kept for a time.* Together we pray.

*All     **God of the Weary, God of the Hopeful, mend that which is wounded, bind up that which is broken, soothe that which is shattered. Enliven us with courage, passion, and strength to renew and recreate our world in the likeness of lasting peace; through the One who comes with healing and hope; Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.***

HYMN/SONG:

ACT OF REMEMBRANCE & THE PASSING OF THE LIGHT

*All remain standing.*

**Leader** A single water drop has the power to shape even the hardest stone. A single act of hope has the power to inspire a world to be transformed. A single light has the power to dispel even the deepest gloom. Together we embody the power to transform our world into a place where gun violence is no more, because as Dr. Martin Luther King reminded us, *"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy, instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence, you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence, you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."* -The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Leader** As we share the light from this single flame, may these candles be a symbol of our burning hope and our shining light. That we may act out of hope and compassion to remove the disease of gun violence from our midst. Let your light shine!

*The light from the Peace Flame is shared in silence to all present. When all candles have been lit the community sings together.*

HYMN/SONG:

#### THE GREAT SILENCE

*The community stands together in silence. The Leader invokes the silence. The silence is begun and ended with a bell.*

**Leader** I invite you to the observance of two minutes of silence, in prayer and reflection let us call to mind those who have been lost, those who have been persecuted especially those persecuted because of race, religion, ethnicity, orientation, and gender expression. Pray that we may live into the truth of "from many one."

#### THE BLESSING

*The Presider offers this or another blessing.*

May God bless you with hope, that your life and actions may re-kindle the flame of possibility in all you meet.

May God bless you with dreams, that your vision may be a fire that transforms the world.

May God bless you with courage, so that your faith may boldly proclaim the reign of the Prince of Peace.

And may the blessing....

CLOSING SONG:

#### THE SENDING

**Leader** Go into the world. Be of Good Cheer. Hold fast that which is good. Render to no one evil for evil. Support the weak. Honor everyone. Respect the dignity of every human being. Go into the world that together we can be advocates of hope and agents of peace. God in peace. Go in hope. Go in love.

**People** ***Thanks be to God.***