

Introduction by Bishop Stephen P. Bouman

The events of September 11 drove us all to prayer. We had watched in horror from our 16th floor office windows as both towers lit up, then fell into a cloud of smoke and ash. At noon we gathered to pray in the chapel of the Interchurch Center, the site of our Manhattan office. Filling the chapel are hundreds of people not knowing the fate of loved ones. I asked people to name the folks on their hearts and in their concern in prayer before God. The chapel rang out with the precious names of loved ones, spoken through clenched teeth, strained and breaking voices, of workers in Lower Manhattan, students, fire and police personnel, children, visiting friends. We have been praying for one another, with one another, without ceasing since last September. It is fitting that we join in the solidarity of prayer and the Spirit's tether as we remember the one year anniversary of these tragic events in Pennsylvania, Washington and New York. The litanies provided were first prayed in the churches, streets and public places of New York. As we pray them together as one Lutheran community across the nation, may they help you to remember and to call on the name of the dying and rising Christ who loves us and walks with us in remembrance and renewal. Included with the litanies are suggestions for scripture reading, passages which have given us particular comfort in the past year.

Confession:

Leader: The World Council of Churches sent an eight person delegation to the United States in November of 2001. They met with New York religious leaders on November 8 and shared a Service of Prayer at the Episcopal Church Center. This confession was prayed at the service.

Silence

Leader: Two churches, one in Coventry, England, and one in Berlin, Germany, were bombed in World War II. In a remarkable gesture of reconciliation, the people of Germany helped rebuild Coventry Cathedral and to this day a prayer is said in both churches each Friday at noon. Please join in this prayer by responding, "Father, forgive."

For the hatred which divides nation from nation, ethnic group from ethnic group, class from class,

Father, forgive.

For the covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own.

Father, forgive.

For the greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,

Father, forgive.

For our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,

Father, forgive.

For our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugees,
Father, forgive.

For the lust which dishonors the bodies of men, women and children,
Father, forgive.

Leader: Declaration of forgiveness
Hear the good news.
Christ is our peace.
He has united those who were separated.
He has broken down the wall of hostility.
Through his death he has reconciled us with God in one body.
He has proclaimed peace to those who were far away,
And to those who were near. (Eph. 2:14-17)
Amen.

Remembering Our Losses

Leader: On September 25, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Long Island City, Queens, near LaGuardia Airport, a Service of Remembrance was held for the crews of the American and United Flights which crashed in Pennsylvania, Washington D.C. and New York. Hundreds of employees and staff of United and American attended. These prayers from that liturgy lead us to remember all who lost their lives in these events.

Scripture Reading: Lamentations 1:1&7

“How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become...Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her affliction and wandering, all the precious things that were hers in the days of old.

Leader: Brothers and sisters, we come to share our laments, listen to each other's hearts, hear words of remembrance, encouragement, faith and love. Let us now pray together to the God of our faith, in thanksgiving for lives shared and care given, and in hope for our future and our nation.

For the lives of those we mourn and for sharing them with us but a little while,
We give thanks to you, O God.

For the valiant efforts of the men and women who gave their lives for the sake of others, and for those who continue to assist in so many exhaustive ways,
We give thanks to you, O God.

For great buildings that have inspired and for those that will inspire again,
We give thanks to you, O God.

For the miraculous and the untold, for the common and the good, and for all these things that keep us going in this time,
We give thanks to you, O God.

Build us up again, O God. Heal our hearts, comfort our sorrows, rebuild our cities, and guide us in faith.
Build us up, O God.

Give us strength to address the days and weeks ahead. Give us wisdom and patience as we plan for the future. Give us knowledge and insight as we seek to protect ourselves and others. Give us courage as we seek justice and peace.
Build us up, O God.

Fill our hearts with love and peace, O God. Let no hatred or bitterness divide us from the world in which we live. Turn our darkness into the light of day and bless us.
Build us up, O God.

Above all things, make us confident in the hope that is in you, O God. For you are the power, and the glory, and the wisdom, and the strength of all who turn to you. Build us up and give us hope. And let the people say,
Amen!

Reading: Romans 8: 31-39

Refuge:

Leader: On October 28, 2001 the Metropolitan New York Synod gathered at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Floral Park, Queens, to bless and begin the outreach to South Asians known as "Ashirwad-Divine Blessing Lutheran Ministry." (Ashirwad means "divine blessing" in Sanskrit.) Many immigrants died in the attacks and were remembered at the liturgy. They sought, and we continue to seek refuge in God, our mighty fortress. "Saranam" means "refuge" in Punjabi.

Jesus, Savior, Lord, Lo to thee I fly;
Saranam, Saranam, Saranam
Thou the Rock, my refuge that's higher than I:
Saranam, Saranam, Saranam

In the midst of foes I cry to thee
From the ends of earth wherever I may be;
My strength in helplessness, O answer me:
Saranam, Saranam, Saranam

In thy tent give me a dwelling place,
And beneath thy wings may I find sheltering grace;
O lift on me the sunshine of thy face;

Saranam, Saranam, Saranam

Yesterday, today, forever the same,
Lo, the heritage of all who bear thy name;
To ransom them from sin the Savior came:

Saranam, Saranam, Saranam (Words: Trad. India\Pakistani; translated by D.T.Niles)

Reading: Isaiah 62: A City Not Forsaken

Light, Comfort, Solidarity

Leader: On September 21, 2001 Bishop Anderson of the ELCA, Bishop Bouman of the Metropolitan New York Synod, President Kieschneck of the LCMS, and President Benke of the Atlantic District went to Ground Zero to pray together. Then pastors and leaders from the tri state metropolis of New York gathered with their local bishops for comfort and renewal. These prayers were from the Sept. 21 liturgies at Holy Trinity in Manhattan. They remind us of our continual unity of Spirit and purpose as we continue in solidarity with one another to lift up the cross of Christ in a world changed by the events of September 11.

The people who walk in darkness shall see a great light.
Those who dwell in a land of suffering shall be freed.

On that day, the Lord God shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and death and mourning shall never be again.
Come, Lord Jesus.

Let us pray for all whose lives are touched by fear and grief: Savior of all people, may your blessing again light the way of your people that we may walk in safety.
Give us your love to cast away the works of darkness and put on the garment of light.

We pray for ourselves, our nation and our world.
Give us faith that we might stand in witness to the light of Christ Jesus, who comes to set us free.

Give us the courage of hope that our lives may be witness to the Gospel and the power of life that is yours alone.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Reading: II Corinthians 4:8-10: Struck down, not destroyed.

Let us pray for the people of God and for all those in need of God's help and comfort: Holy and mighty God, you sent your Holy spirit blowing across the dark waters of chaos and brought forth light, dry land, and life. We pray for those who need the gift of your Spirit in the face of unimagined chaos. God of hopefulness,
Comfort your people.

Loving God, your children are hurt by the unexpected acts of evil around them. Comfort those who mourn; heal those who have been hurt and wounded; make safe those who have been betrayed and lost trust in people and the world around them. God of hopefulness,

Comfort your people.

We pray for our leadership, President Bush, the Congress, and all those who serve our country, that they may be guided by your wisdom and mercy. God of hopefulness:

Comfort your people.

We pray for those who work to save the lives of the injured and recover those who died. We pray for the safety of those who work in fire and rescue and law enforcement, even as we give thanks to you for their courage and ask that you continue to uphold them. God of hopefulness,

Comfort your people.

We pray for those who work to heal the injured and comfort the dying. We pray for all of the nurses, doctors, EMT's, and personnel and ask that you give them endurance, strength, and healing compassion. God of hopefulness,

Comfort your people.

We pray for those who have died and commend them into your hands, O God. Hold them in your mercy and receive them into Christ's peace. Comfort their families. Give them courage and strength in the long days ahead of waiting and grief. God of hopefulness,

Comfort your people.

We pray for all those who serve and work to care for people affected by disaster. Give them the gifts of compassion and hopeful hearts as they minister in hard and difficult places. Sustain them as visible signs of your love. God of hopefulness,

Comfort your people.

We pray that you would use us in your service: our time and talents, our prayers and support, and the possessions you have lent us. Help us to be generous that our hands and feet may be the hands and feet of Christ to those in need. God of hopefulness,

Comfort your people.

Give us courage and strength to stand against all sin; conviction of hope in the face of evil; and help us to pursue peace. God of all hopefulness,

Comfort your people.

We put these needs and all others into your hands, O God, trusting in your grace and mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

“Oh, we’re stronger now than we were an hour ago. And you know my sisters and brothers, we’re not nearly as strong as we’re going to be. And the strength we have is the power of love. And the power of love you have received is from God, for God is love. So take the hand of one next to you now and join me on this field of dreams turned into God’s house of prayer.” (David Benke, Yankee Stadium Sept. 23, 2001)