

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CONFERENCE  
DISCIPLESHIP TASK FORCE

# TIMES LIKE THESE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE



**Northern Illinois Conference**  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**TIMES  
LIKE  
THESE**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CONFERENCE  
DISCIPLESHIP TASK FORCE  
and  
NIC COMMUNICATIONS STAFF



"Times Like These" was inspired by the desire to support and encourage our conference lay and clergy to be in prayer during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We invite you to make a tax-deductible donation to UMCOR's COVID-19 Response Fund at [advance.umcmmission.org](https://advance.umcmmission.org) to provide grants that will assist vulnerable and marginalized communities most affected by COVID-19 in the U.S. and around the world.



**Continue your prayer journey with  
weekly prayers and more at [umcnic.org/prayernetwork](https://umcnic.org/prayernetwork)**

# FORWARD

Don't worry about anything? That's pretty hard to do these days! In addition to the effects of the pandemic, the economy, and whether the rising momentum against racism will produce change, we all have experienced personal concerns with family, friends, transitions and lost celebrations.

Yet it is when we pray that we are able to pour our hearts and minds out to God. The way I think about it is that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, has nowhere to go if our hearts and minds are filled with worry! We must empty ourselves in order to be filled with God's peace and we do that through prayer.


This collection of prayers is a way to pray for God's peace that surpasses all understanding. Use it as a guide to pray when you don't know how or what to pray. Use it as a prayer-starter. Use it as a way to see into the hearts of others in our annual conference. Let it open your heart and mind to God's peace!

Many thanks to Rev. Caleb Hong and Karen Bonnell, the co-chairs of the Discipleship Task Force for organizing this endeavor and then putting all these prayers together. And also, thank you to each of the contributors to this guide for prayer.

May God's blessings be upon the prayers and all you pray-ers.

*Bishop Sally Dyck*  
*Resident Bishop of Northern Illinois Conference*

**Do not worry about anything,  
but in everything by prayer and  
supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests  
be made known to God.  
And the peace of God,  
which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts  
and your minds in Christ Jesus.**  
Philippians 4:6-7 (NRSV)



As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole throng of his disciples began rejoicing. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen. They said,

“Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens.”

Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!”

He answered, “I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout.”



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction		1
O, Living God	Karen Bonnell	2
In the Midst of Uncertain & Challenging Times	Caleb Hong	3
Prayer for 'Ordinary' Life in 'Extraordinary' Times	Sally Dyck	4
In Response to Your Mercy	P. Devon Brown	5
The Lord Remains Near	Sharon Rice	6
The God of All Hope	Patricia Arne	7
Remembering our Covenant	Jeffry Bross	8
A Covenant God	Luis Felipe Reyes	9
You Are	Satya Sudhakar	10
True Light of the World	Joann Roth-Crackenberger	11
Treasures in Jars of Clay	Jeffry Bross	12
Days of Staying in Place	Brittany Isaac	13
Remind Us	Seamus Enright	14
A Prayer for those Living Out the Commandment to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself	Sally Fitzgerald Mydill	15
On This April Fools' Day	Bob Pritchard	16
Remind Us Who We Are	Martin Lee	17
You Give Us Community	Katie Voigt	18
With Refortified Faith	Jackie Wills	19
Hosanna, Loud Hosanna	Arlene Christopherson	20
Life as a Resurrection People	Rita L. Smith	21
Calm our Souls	Elisa Gatz	22
We Know that You Hear our Prayers	Diane Parrish	23
We Can Find You	Hannah Kardon	24
You Say I Am	Mark Manzi	25
Always!	David Rogula	26
We are Not Alone	Brian Gilbert	27
Peace be with You	Paul H. Lee	28
Hallelujah!	Jin Yang Kim	29
Help Us to Rejoice	Ellen Feliciano	30
The Great Comforter	Irma Clark	31
We Are Victorious	Jacques Conway	32
On This Earth Day	Joy Thorbjornsen-Coates	33
Hear a Just Cause, O Lord!	Elizabeth Gracie	34
Be With Us Now	Kathy Dickerson	35
We Praise Your Name	Fabiola Grandon-Meyer	36
A "Stay Safe" Prayer for You	Marcia Peddicord	37
Where is Your God During This Pandemic?	Hannah Hwa-Young Chong	38
Love Our Neighbor as Ourselves	Michael DeBenedetto	39
Glorious God of Wisdom and the Whisper Biographies	Darneather Murph-Heath	40 42

**Notice how the lilies grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, how much more will God do for you, you people of weak faith!**

Luke 12:27-28 (CEB)

# INTRODUCTION

The words “fluid situation” were the sanitized way to describe the hourly upgrades of new directives and the domino tumbling of cancellations that COVID-19 brought with it. The stock market plummeted as uncertainty was heightened. Schools went on early spring break, never to return to finish the school year together. Professional and college sports were canceled. Groups of 10 or more were not to gather. Stay-at-home orders were issued. Many were out of work as non-essential businesses were to close. A toilet paper shortage phenomenon occurred. Grocery store shelves were emptied. Congress passed a \$3 trillion stimulus package. “These are unprecedented times” described what we were and are presently living through.

Psalm 46:1-2 (CEB) says:

God is our refuge and strength,  
a help always near in times of great trouble.  
That’s why we won’t be afraid when the world falls apart,  
when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea

So the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church went to God in prayer. “Daily Prayer” ran on NIC social media sites from March 18 through April 30, 2020, with 39 different voices.

Since uncertain times are bound to happen again, Daily Prayers and some visual prayers in photography by Jennifer Payton were artfully assembled by NIC Communications Specialist Diane Strzelecki into this booklet. May they help you navigate your own “unprecedented times” in times like these.

*Karen Bonnell and Rev. Caleb Hong, Co-Chairs*  
*Amania Drane, Project Manager*  
*Annual Conference Shepherding Team Discipleship Task Force*



# O, LIVING GOD

O Living God,

Who my soul longs for,

Who my soul thirsts for especially in these unpredictable times,

How I long to go church and worship you with our congregation.

But even the highest heaven cannot contain you.

You have promised to never leave us or forsake us. We thank you for your steadfast love.

We pray for safety and good health, healing for the sick,

And peace for all.

Give wisdom to our leaders and knowledge to medical researchers.

Give us kind hearts and move us to help those in need.

We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. *Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 84:2, I Kings 8:27, Hebrews 13:5b*



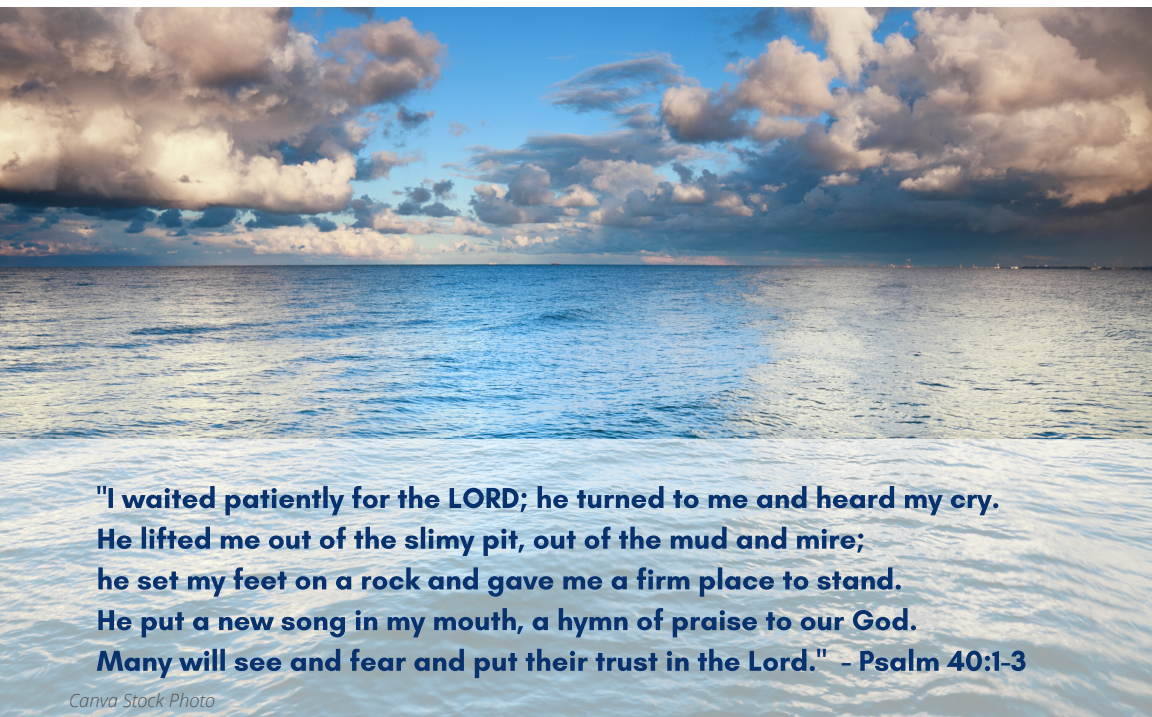
*Photo credit: Karen Bonnell*

Spring was not canceled. Daffodils pushed through and their blossoms trumpeted that Christ is alive!



Karen Bonnell, Laity  
Steward UMC  
DeKalb District  
Co-Chair, NIC Discipleship Task Force

# IN THE MIDST OF UNCERTAIN & CHALLENGING TIMES



**"I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.  
He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;  
he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.  
He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord." - Psalm 40:1-3**

*Canva Stock Photo*

Lord,

Help us to wait on You - to put our trust in You.

As You have been faithful in the past, we trust in your faithfulness this day.

In the midst of our celebrations and challenges,  
in the midst of our hopes and fears,  
help us to heed your call to love God and love our neighbors,  
to feed the hungry, care for the sick, and welcome the  
strangers.

In the midst of uncertain and challenging times, we place  
our lives, our neighbors, our world into your sure and  
certain hands.

We pray all this in Jesus' name, Amen.



Rev. Caleb Hong, Pastor  
Orland Park: Faith  
Aurora District  
Co-Chair, NIC Discipleship Task Force

## PRAYER FOR "ORDINARY" LIFE IN "EXTRAORDINARY" TIMES

Almighty and everlasting God,

We pray for all of your children across the world who are impacted by the coronavirus this day...But right now, we pray for those who are going through the challenges, suffering and also joys that life "normally" gives us.

We pray for those...

- Who were scheduled for surgery but have had it postponed, increasing pain and anxiety. Be with those in pain.
- Who were anticipating graduation from all kinds of educational institutions but now know those celebrations are postponed or cancelled. Lift up discouraged spirits!
- Who are in accidents or develop other illnesses or find themselves in need of medical care aside from the coronavirus. Tend the sick.
- Who are expecting babies in the near future but are anxious about their own health. Bless and increase their joy.
- Whose loved ones have died and now funerals and memorial services are postponed or in question. Give comfort and strength, especially for those who were unable to be with them as they died.
- Who've had to postpone or cancel other joyful events like weddings, birthday parties or anniversaries, but now cake seems to have lost its sweetness. Help all to continue to give thanks for life and health.
- Who plan our lives to the minute and now find ourselves unable to make plans for the foreseeable future. Teach us to live in the moment!
- Who are living in the midst of recent natural disasters on top of the threat of COVID-19. Give a double measure of strength!

We can't begin to imagine all the ways people struggle and want to enjoy life so we add our own prayer for "ordinary" life in "extraordinary" times...

Lord have mercy and lift up our spirits that we may continue to give thanks to you for all your many gifts.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Bishop Sally Dyck  
Northern Illinois Conference



# IN RESPONSE TO YOUR MERCY

O Lord, In the name of, and by your grace through Jesus, we humbly approach your throne of mercy. We do so in adoration of who you are. You are more beautiful than anything our eyes have seen. You are more powerful than any source of energy we know. You are more loving than the most caring parent. You are a mighty God.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.  
( 2 Chronicles 7:14)

Hear our prayers, now Lord, during this moment of confession, for we have failed to be obedient. Though we've made an effort to do your will, our self interest has often misguided our decision making. Our desire for personal comfort has often contributed to the discomfort of others. Our worship of institutions has often resembled a form of idolatry. Even the works we do have at times been motivated by our need to feel good about ourselves, rather than by your call for us to do good for others.

Despite our shortcomings, we possess great thankfulness for all you've done in our lives. We thank you for creating this vast universe and giving us an opportunity to exist in it. We glorify you for the earth's atmosphere that protects us, and for the natural resources that sustain us. We magnify your name for the honor of serving as stewards in your creation. If you never again do anything for us, you've already done enough.

Please now God, hear and respond to the content of our supplications. We, your creation – made in your image – by your words, are crying out for help. The planet you entrusted to our care, is again raising its hand against us through the spread of another harmful disease. Though our abuse of its flesh gives earth ample reason to be angry, we repent of our sin and ask you to again serve as a mediator between your planet and your people. Bring to an end the pandemic. Heal those who have been impacted by it. Just as you did through the cross and the empty tomb, remind us of your power to manipulate nature and forgive trespasses. We will respond to your mercy by caring for your planet, and by utilizing the earth's resources for the benefit of everyone within its atmosphere.

**In the matchless name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.**



Rev. P. Devon Brown, Senior Pastor  
Chicago: St. Mark's UMC  
Chicago Southern District

# THE LORD REMAINS NEAR

Holy and loving God, we are living in anxious times.

We wake up uncertain of what the news will say. We are on edge when a press briefing is announced. We are fearful about health and finances. We look out the window and wonder, "when will life go back to 'normal'?" We struggle with trying to find anything to "rejoice."

And yet, is this not Sunday?

The Day of Resurrection has come around again--rejoice! We are a Resurrection People--rejoice! We serve and follow a Resurrected Savior--rejoice!

For after every solemn Thursday, after every gloomy Friday, after every impatient Saturday, comes a joyous Sunday.

And even when our Sundays are disrupted from "normal," the Lord has not gone away! The Lord is and remains near! The Lord is in our homes, in our work places, at our kitchen tables, by our computers, on radio and podcast airwaves, across phone lines, in letters mailed, in our care facilities and all points in between, including church buildings...the Lord is there. Emmanuel, God is with us.

So in these anxious times, let us turn our hearts, minds, and faces to the Lord. Let us lift our voices in praise and prayer for God's holy presence! The Lord is near and asks that we give ourselves to God, give all supplications including the burdens that weigh our hearts and spirits down. Give them to God, for God can bear their weight. Give them to the Lord and take the offering of Peace through the love and grace of Jesus Christ...and share that gift with everyone we speak to.

Today is the Day of Resurrection--rejoice! This present tomb we find ourselves in will not and cannot hold us; we will rise with our Lord and proclaim the Gospel--REJOICE!

Rejoice, and be at peace. For the Lord is near. AMEN.

"Rejoice in the Lord always;  
again I will say, Rejoice!

Let your gentleness  
be known to everyone.

The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything,  
but in everything by prayer  
and supplication with thanksgiving

let your requests

be made known to God.

And the peace of God,  
which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts  
and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)



Deacon Sharon Rice  
Belvidere: First  
Rockford District

# THE GOD OF ALL HOPE

O Holy God of Hope, who reminds us in scripture that You are the God of ALL HOPE – help us to trust in You with all that we are experiencing now. To trust You to such an extent that our fears are solidly relieved and we can turn our hearts to You and be at peace and full of hope.

Help us to so experience Your presence in the Holy Spirit, that we are renewed in love for You, for others, for ourselves.

Thank You that you are such a God! We love You!

In the name of Your Son, Jesus.

Amen.

May the God of all hope fill you with all peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Romans 15:13 NIV*



Patricia Arne, Laity  
Steward UMC, Steward, IL  
Local United Methodist Women President  
DeKalb District



# REMEMBERING OUR COVENANT



In time of trial and difficulty, it is a blessing to know that we are not alone that it is not about us or up to us. We indeed belong and are lifted by our Creator! Let us remember our covenant this day!

"A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition" (Contemporary Version)

I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,

Praised for you or criticized for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.

And now, O wonderful and holy God,

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,

you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it also be made in heaven. Amen.



Rev. Jeffrey Bross  
District Superintendent  
Aurora District

# A COVENANT GOD

Gracious and loving God,

We give you thanks for your “mercies are new every morning.” Help us to remember that you are a Covenant God, constantly present, journeying along with us.

Help today even more to embrace the words of the psalmist: “make me lie down in green pastures, who lead me beside still waters, who restores my soul...”

God, so we ask for your grace and strength so that we can witness that as we walk throughout these difficult days, we do it without fear.

In Christ’s name we pray.

Amen.



Rev. Luis Felipe Reyes, Pastor  
Lombard: First  
Aurora District



# YOU ARE



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Almighty all powerful and omnipotent God,

We praise your name for who You are. Your grace is sufficient to carry us through the challenges of life.

You are our shepherd we follow your voice for guidance.

You are our refuge we seek strength and help in trouble.

You are our God help us to be still to trust in you and know that You are in control.

Merciful Lord, continue to have mercy on us your creation and come to rescue us, heal us, deliver us and restore us to the joy of new life.

I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazareth.

Amen



Rev. Satya Sudhakar  
Ashton: UMC and Franklin Grove: UMC  
DeKalb District

# TRUE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Lord,

even though we cannot grasp all that is going on in the world now, we know that you give us patience and peace.

Help us to persevere and remember you are the true Light in the world and will sustain us.

Help us look beyond the walls of our church buildings and respond to the needs of others.

Amen.

But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Luke 18:15-17 (NIV)



Joann Roth-Crackenberger, Laity  
Freeport: First  
Rockford District



## TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12



*Canva Stock Photo*

Speak to us God for we are praying...we are praying for your comfort in our time of distress.

Speak to us God for we are listening...we are listening for your direction to be the church in our time of crisis.

Hear us God for we are speaking...we are speaking of your glory even when things seem most dire.

See us God for we are seeing...seeing your work in the lives of your disciples as they bring comfort and love to a world in need.

Touch us God for we are feeling...we are feeling the care of those we know and those we do not know who are sacrificing for others.

In all that we do, in all that we are let it be that we see, touch, feel, hear, see and love you completely even when things seem difficult, lonely or even lost. We have faith that you are a great God who loves and we are not forsaken.

Amen.



Rev. Jeffrey Bross  
District Superintendent  
Aurora District

# DAYS OF STAYING IN PLACE

*Photo credit: Brittany Isaac*

Oh God,  
 There are times that you speak to us out of a  
 Whirlwind.  
 Other times you speak to us in sound of  
 sheer  
 Silence.  
 As the whirlwind of activity in the world has  
 Slowed,  
 as the days of staying in place  
 Grow,  
 we come to you with hearts that are still  
 Restless.  
 In this time, we feel even more acutely  
 Anxiety  
 that has always hummed in the background  
 but is now  
 Blaring.  
 Take our restless hearts and fill them with  
 Peace,  
 so that when this is all over, we will emerge  
 Changed.  
 We pray in the name of the  
 One  
 Who offers us  
 Peace  
 That surpasses all  
 Understanding.  
 Amen.



**Be still and know...**

Psalm 46:10a

Rev. Brittany Isaac, District Superintendent  
 Chicago Northwestern District

## REMINDE US



*Photo credit: Seamus Enright*

God of Infinite Mystery and unfathomable Love,  
We cry out to you in the midst of uncertainty.  
In the midst of grief, and change, and loss,  
In this time of anxiety and struggle,  
Remind us.  
Still us.  
Breathe into us.  
Unite us.  
Restore our strength, grant us courage, calm our hearts  
and minds  
With the peace that surpasses all understanding.  
That we may reflect your grace, embody your presence,  
Declare your salvation, and prove your love  
In everything that we do and say in these days.  
To the glory of your name and the comfort of your  
creation, Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.



Rev. Seamus Enright, Pastor  
Ashton: Reynolds UMC  
DeKalb District

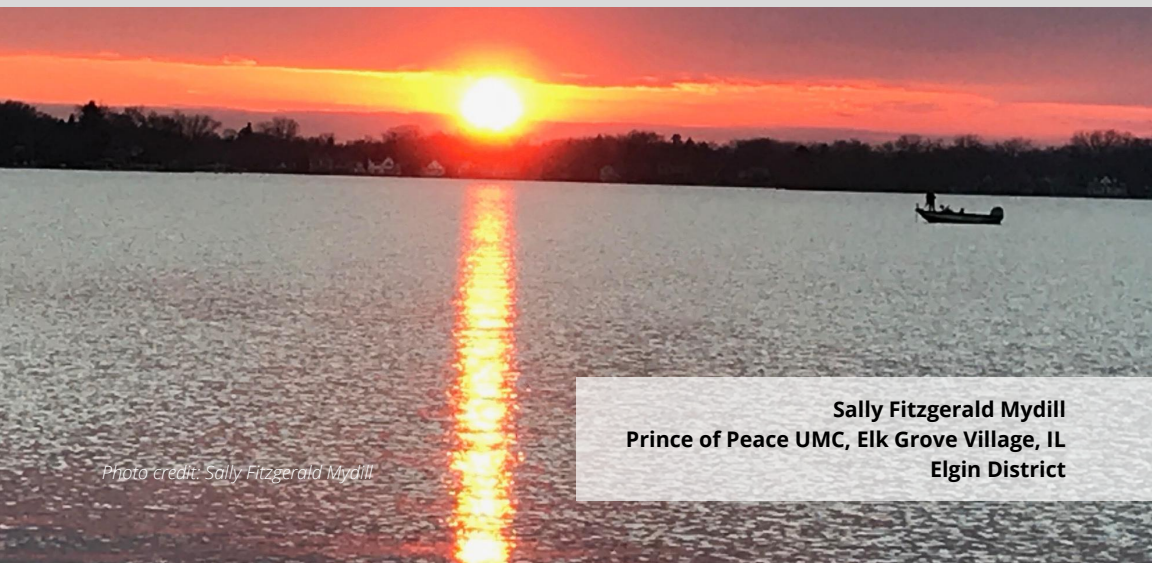
# A PRAYER FOR THOSE LIVING OUT THE COMMANDMENT TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

Dear God,

We reel at the illness and death that is spreading, the loss of jobs and disruptions of all the routines of life. As we despair at the news that each day brings, let us also marvel at and give thanks for the people of many faiths who are living out the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

First responders, nurses and other caregivers risk their own health to save the life of a neighbor, frontline service and grocery personnel stay out while others shelter in so that neighbors can be fed, and others stay in essential jobs, taking risks for their neighbors. Lord we pray that people who follow your call by loving and serving their neighbor are themselves protected from harm.

God, help us to be a neighbor to the very vulnerable in this crisis. Help us to tolerate the restrictions that are required to slow the spread of the virus and protect healthcare workers from being overwhelmed. As we separate from the crowds and the rush hour commute let us notice our surroundings, the sunshine as well as the shadow, and let us be still and know that you are God. Amen.



*Photo credit: Sally Fitzgerald Mydill*

**Sally Fitzgerald Mydill**  
**Prince of Peace UMC, Elk Grove Village, IL**  
**Elgin District**



# ON THIS APRIL FOOLS' DAY



*Photo credit: Bob Pritchard*

Heavenly Father,

On this April Fools' Day, forgive us for our foolish actions; for not trusting that you care for each of us and forgetting your promise to provide for our needs as you do the birds and flowers.

Thank you for the spring flowers pushing through the cold soil to remind us of your love, the beauty of your creation and the resurrection of your son.

We ask for your blessing on all those caring for the ill and elderly, wisdom for those developing policies that affect our God given freedoms, and courage to share your love and good news of salvation.

In the name above all names—Jesus our Lord—we pray.

Amen



Bob Pritchard, Laity  
Hinckley United Methodist Church  
DeKalb District

# REMINDE US WHO WE ARE

God of Grace,

Aid our discernment.

We wish to see your will for us clearly in a world filled with the fog of fear and confusion.

Show us your way.

Show leaders who stand out to help us see how we should worship, how we should care for our most at risk friends, how we should maintain and even build community as your body the Church. We want to see your way to remaining healthy--body, mind and soul.

Most of all, we want to hear your voice, your word for us. Even separated in our own homes, this world generates so much noise and distraction. We are seeking to isolate your voice within the din.

Remind us who we are.

Tell us who we can be.

Speak the words of Creation that made your will come alive in action so that we, your disciples, can realize our dream of serving you. Amen.



*Jennifer Payton Photography*



Rev. J. Martin Lee, Director  
Congregational Development and Redevelopment  
Northern Illinois Conference

# YOU GIVE US COMMUNITY



But you need to remain well established and rooted in faith and not shift away from the hope given in the good news that you heard. This message has been preached throughout all creation under heaven. And I, Paul, became a servant of this good news.  
Colossians 1:23 (CEB)

*Jennifer Payton Photography*

Holy God who is steadfast and assured,

We ask you to be with us in a time of unknowns and variations. We are settling into new routines, we are hoping for a return to the ways of life that we know, but every day the information changes and we just wait.

You, however, have given us good news.

We know that you walk with us through all things, that promise to never abandon us, and you call us to remain “well established and rooted in faith” especially during difficult times.

You give us hope on bad days, you give us joy even in the midst of our fear, and you give us community – even if they are farther apart right now – in which to share our lives. Help us to not shift from the hope we have in your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.



Rev. Katie Voigt, Pastor  
Antioch United Methodist Church  
Elgin District



# WITH REFORTIIFIED FAITH

Creator God,

It is to you we lift our spirits in this time of fear and uncertainty. We pray, Holy One, that you continue to create and recreate within each of us strength for the day, courage for the week ahead, and compassion for neighbor.

Create within us the wisdom to know when we should act and when we should not. Rekindle our yearning to find safe ways to support first responders and medical persons who are sacrificing so much for us right now. Create anew a desire within us to be relentless in our efforts to connect with others. Banish our doubts and replace them with refortified faith.

Remind us, O God, to spend time in prayer each day, praying for those who are sick, dying, lonely, frightened. Help us to be the disciples you have called us to be in this place we find ourselves in. Give us to have faith the size of a mustard seed that others will see and believe that one day soon this pandemic will pass.

May all that we do now bring honor and glory to you forever and ever.

Amen



*Jennifer Payton Photography*

Rev. Jackie Wills  
Herbert: Davis UMC and Kingston UMC, Kingston, IL  
DeKalb District



# HOSANNA, LOUD HOSANNA

*Jennifer Payton Photography*



Lord God of our Lenten journey,

You call us to be your disciples and promise to walk alongside us. Today we hear the echoes of Hosanna ringing down through the ages as we join with the ancient crowds in proclaiming our adoration.

We close our eyes and see the gatherings of previous Palm Sundays; children waving their branches, choirs singing magnificent cantatas, banners adorned with symbols of celebration. In the still and quiet of our stay at home world, as we envision past celebrations, we pray for the healing of our present world, in confidence that we are still part of the Palm Sunday parade.

We still raise our voices in Hosanna as our faith sustains us and our discipleship strengthens through a season of wilderness travel. Grant us courage as we journey through this Holy Week knowing that you are ever present.

Hosanna, loud hosanna.

Amen.



Rev Arlene Christopherson  
Assistant to the Bishop  
Director of Connectional Ministries  
Northern Illinois Conference

# LIFE AS RESURRECTION PEOPLE

Creator God;

Magnificent One. I come to you thanking you for all you have done, what you are doing now, and what is yet to come.

You are the ultimate healer, sustainer and miracle worker.

As we navigate this Holy Week on our Lenten journey, we need and seek your guidance as counselor, granting wisdom to our leaders. We ask to continue to gift the health care workers, custodians, grocery store workers and truck drivers, as we experience this new normal. The first teachers to the children and the educators through social distancing. Gift us to minister to the marginalized, as we are deployed from the church building. We ask for your favor and compassion for the named and unnamed.

We have come through many times when we felt helpless, disappointed, grief stricken, lost, lonely, fearful and unloved. Becoming homeless, addicted, abused, financial stressed, are among the many hardships, that become our everyday disruptions. Yet, through these trials and tribulations called, "storms of life" we made it through. Yes, we have a testimony.

You have brought light into the darkness because you are the God of love, peace and justice. This uncertain time, this too shall pass.

We ask for your continued grace and mercy as we continue faithfully on our journey of life as Resurrection people.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



Rita L. Smith, Laity  
Resurrection UMC, Chicago Northwest District  
Delegate to GC & NCJ  
UMW North Central Jurisdiction President

## CALM OUR SOULS

Faithful and loving Creator,

We are living through a time like no other that we have ever experienced. We feel so helpless as we see the numbers rise of those infected and deaths from COVID-19. We shelter in place and follow guidelines, but it seems like so little in the face of this global pandemic.



*Photo credit: Elisa Gatz*

Calm our souls God.

Help us to take a breath.

We know we are your hands, feet, hugs, and help in times of need. When we take care of ourselves, we in turn are taking care of others.

May we use this time to find new ways of being in service and connecting with others.

In your name we pray.



Elisa Gatz, Co-Leader, Board of Laity  
Wesley United Methodist Church, Sterling, IL  
DeKalb District



# WE KNOW THAT YOU HEAR OUR PRAYERS

Almighty God,

We admit that in moments, we are overwhelmed by the situation in the world. We feel helpless in the face of the needs of those suffering. There are so many losses. We feel acutely the shortages that face us.

We are lonely with the isolation. We are uncertain how we will cope with the changes in our lives. Many of us find almost every aspect of our life reformed into something unfamiliar. We find simple things bring us to tears and grief. This storm, both inside and outside of us, is swallowing us in its deluge. Yet we are assured that you will never leave us.

We know that you hear our cries. We are thankful for your presence in this time of crisis. We need your power to calm this storm. We need your peace for coping with this turbulent time of uncertainty. We need your hope through the ability to see you at work in the midst of this storm. Give us your strength to reach each out to others in love to lighten the darkness around us.

We thank you for your peace that surpasses all understanding.

Amen



## WE CAN FIND YOU

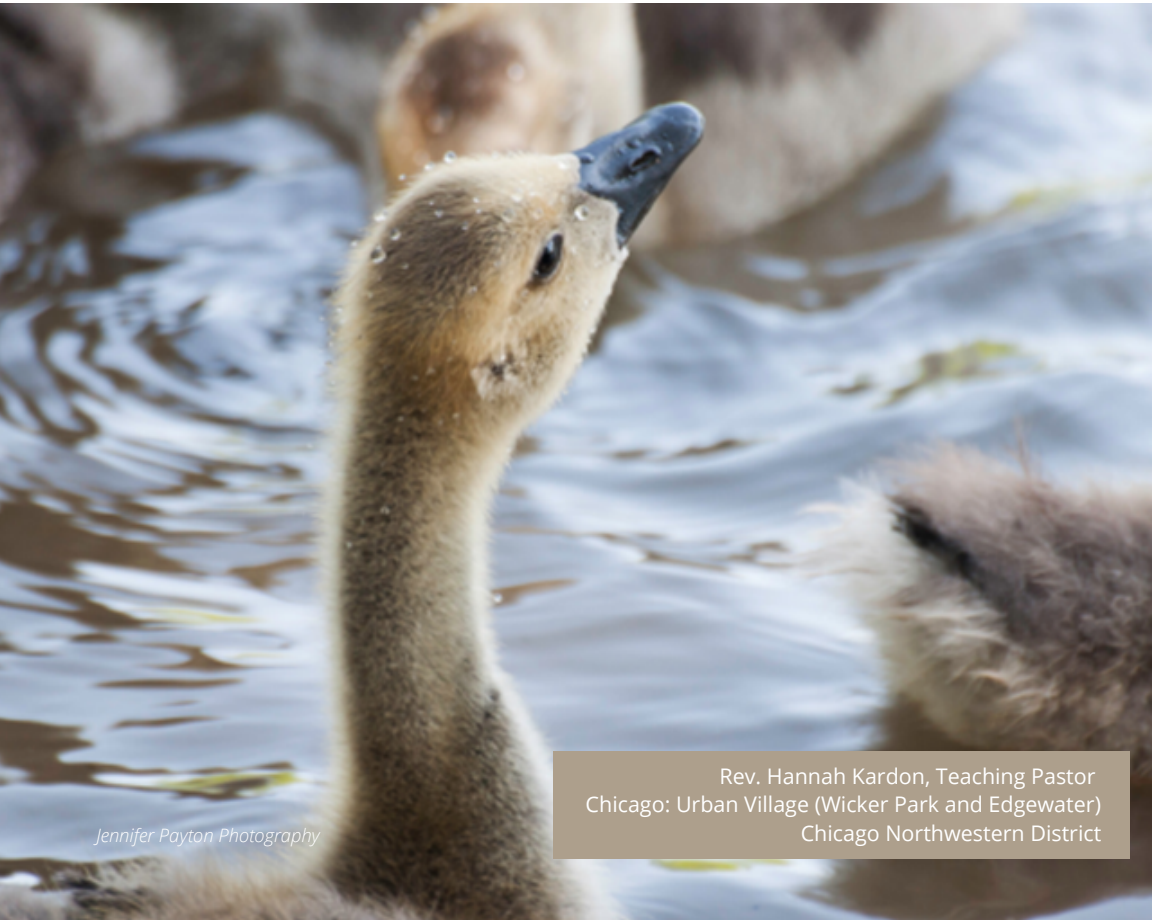
God of grace, power, and might,

Long ago, when you knew what was coming, you commanded us to wash one another's feet that we might all know how deeply we are loved, and how the truest form of power rests in service.

Today, help us to wash our hands with that same love and conviction. Help us to know that in every thing - in every hurt, every pain, and every joy too - we can find you, and find the hands that have cared for us so faithfully at every turn.

Help us to offer ourselves and others that same care.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



# YOU SAY I AM



*Adobe Stock Photo*

Lord,  
We cry out Why?  
You say I am here.  
We cry out Why?  
You say I am with you.  
We cry out Why?  
You say together we will find the way.  
In this challenging time, let us listen for God's call.  
Let us listen to each other.  
Together with your guiding spirit, oh God, we will  
Come through this time changed and ready to  
strengthen your Kindom.

Amen



Mark Manzi, Co-Leader, Board of Laity  
St. Andrew United Methodist Church, Carol Stream  
Aurora District

# ALWAYS!

**My prayer for us all not just during 'Shelter-in-Place' but always!!**

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)



**Rev. David Rogula, Pastor  
Esmond UMC  
DeKalb District**



# WE ARE NOT ALONE

27

Holy God,

We pray for those who are sheltering alone, those who feel isolated. Send Your Spirit to comfort them in this, their time of need. May Your Spirit guide and encourage us to intentionally reach out and keep in contact with another while we practice social distancing. So that, through our phone calls and communications, people may be reminded that we are not alone. That, not only are we surrounded by Your Presence and a great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, but we are also connected to one another by your Holy Spirit.

Bless us God, with a deeper and greater sense of community, so that we may serve one another and love one another as you taught us through your Son, Jesus the Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

"This is a painting of Bethel United Methodist Church. I grew up in this church and it was painted by one of the matriarchs of the congregation, Mary Taylor. It hangs in my office reminding me that while I live in Illinois, friends and family in Tennessee still pray for me and that we are all connected together through the Holy Spirit."

*Artwork provided by Brian Gilbert*



Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert  
District Superintendent, DeKalb District

# PEACE BE WITH YOU

God,

You are the God who sets your people free from bondage, pain, injustice, and fear. And you lead them to a place where your justice and peace reign.

God, we just celebrated Easter, which reminds us of your triumph over death, darkness, evil and injustice. Yet, we are still grounding in the same place with fear and anxiety in this pandemic era.

We are crying out to you, God.

Listen to your people suffering from the illness, and strengthen their immune system. Remember and provide the people the safety and protection who are fighting the virus to save your precious children and who are running our community with the essential businesses.

Bring comfort and peace to all of your children, O Lord, which only you may provide. May your word "Peace be with you" speaks to our heart that we may have comfort and hope. Make it a season for us to reorient our heart toward your love and redirect our mind toward your will, so that we may individually and collectively become disciples of Jesus Christ our Lord. And we may become the church, the living body of Jesus Christ, to one another, our local community, and the world.

In this unprecedented season, be the light of our hearts and lead us by your will.

In Jesus' precious and matchless name, we pray.

Amen.



*Canva stock photo*



Rev. Paul (Hyerncherl) Lee, Pastor  
Sterling: Wesley  
DeKalb District

# HALLELUJAH!

based on Matthew 6:33

God of life,  
 In the midst of trials,  
 we have failed to live in unity  
 with each other and with you;  
 making selfish wishes and  
 false values.  
 Fill us with the beauty of your  
 creation in Christ and all gifts  
 of healing, forgiveness,  
 reconciliation, and restoration.  
 Hallelujah!



This historic picture captured the singing of "Hallelujah" and "Nearer My God to Thee" of Christians between South Korea and North Korea in Chateau de Bossey, Switzerland.  
*Photo taken by Albin Hillert, WCC.*

God of peace,  
 In the midst of uncertain  
 times,  
 we have often denied your  
 lordship;  
 trusting in our own knowledge and power.  
 Instill within us your peace when we are filled  
 with worries, anxieties, fear, prejudice, misunderstandings, and fear.  
 Hallelujah!

God of justice,  
 In the dark despair and all deep distress,  
 we have failed in our calling to be your holy people;  
 setting up barriers that separate people into racial or other ethnic groups,  
 barriers that divide rich from poor  
 barriers that split men and women, young and old.  
 Make us strangers no longer, but pilgrims together on the way to your  
 kingdom,  
 and strengthen us together in mission to your world,  
 through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hallelujah!

Rev. Dr. Jin Yang Kim  
 Global Missionary serving in Geneva, Switzerland  
 General Board of Global Ministries  
 Northern Illinois Conference



## HELP US TO REJOICE



Creator God, who formed this world and everything in it out of the void, we are reminded of your might work as the earth bursts into bloom around us. In this time of fear and uncertainty, we ask that you be with us. The world seems to have been upended overnight. Many are living in isolation, struggling with loss of income and without the structure of the too-busy lives that we have lived.

Others are going into the heart of the pandemic every day, offering their gifts to serve others. In this time, it would be easy to let fear and doubt overtake us. Surround us with your spirit. Help us, each in our own way, to care for all your children. Help us to rejoice in the glory of your creation and be reminded, once again, that your steadfast love for all that you have created never ceases and that your mercies are new every morning.

We pray this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Ellen Feliciano  
Chicago Northwestern District Co-Lay Leader  
Urban Village Church

# THE GREAT COMFORTER

**Gracious and Loving God,**

**When we are burdened with the stress of this world, help us to realize that you are the great comforter. Help us to be humble servants for your kingdom always trusting in you.**

**We pray for all who suffer from deadly diseases; be with us as we pass through the valley of deepest darkness. Enable us to lean on you and find rest.**

**We give you thanks for the blessings you provide for us, and we pray for those who are facing difficult times.**

**Help us to stay faithful to you. In your precious name we pray.**

**Amen**



Irma Clark, Certified Lay Servant  
Chicago: Hartzell  
Chicago Southern District



# WE ARE VICTORIOUS



*Jennifer Payton Photography*

To our God, our strength when we are weak. Our compass when we lack direction. Our healer when we are sick and our Savior when we were separated from God because of our sins.

Hear the prayers of your children. Heal the sick, grant mercy to the guilty and restore your children to their rightful place.

Our trust is only in You, our God. We love you but we know you love us more. And anything that is not of you, we trust you will make it pass. And no matter the condition, we are victors.

In Jesus' name, I believe and I declare.

Amen. Amen.



Rev. Dr. Jacques Conway  
District Superintendent  
Chicago Southern District



# ON THIS EARTH DAY

Creator God, designer of our earth -

We give you thanks this day for the home you have given us. We give you praise for the beauty and strength that you have placed here. We honor you for the myriad of resources that you have placed before us.

We confess to you that we have not held the gift as we should, that we have not been good stewards of your gift. We confess we have too often ignored the beauty and the moments of awe. We repent of our wasteful ways and our disregard for your creation and our neighbors.

We ask that on this Earth Day and every day, we be mindful that our earth is a home created by you for all of your children. We ask that you renew within us the care and responsibility we should carry close to our hearts.

We commit our actions to your glory and to the sustaining of a healthy and thriving earth for the generations of your children yet to come.

Be with us as we work and may your answers be better than our asking.

In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, AMEN.



*Photo credit: Joy Thorbjornsen-Coates*

Joy Thorbjornsen-Coates, Certified Lay Servant  
Chicago: Berry Memorial  
Chicago Northwestern District

## HEAR A JUST CAUSE, O LORD!

We are fearful for both our lives and our livelihoods. We are frustrated, even desperate, as we stay at home, forced to choose between them and unable to fully pursue either. We crave a return to “normal.”

O Lord, speed all that is necessary for us to contain and control the pandemic so that we might begin to resume our lives and restore our economy. But, Lord, do not allow us to lapse into our old ways.

This healthcare and economic crisis has laid bare the sins of our prior “normal.” We must confess that we have engaged in, rationalized, accepted and/or ignored:

Systemic racism and discrimination on other bases;  
 Inadequacies and inequities in healthcare and education;  
 Income inequality;  
 Mass incarceration and cruel and unusual treatment in jails, prisons and immigrant detention centers;

Emission of carbon from our cars and other behaviors that are destroying your creation;

Mental illness, domestic abuse, food insecurity, homelessness . . .

Lord, forgive us. Help us to repent. Use this crisis as a crucible to melt away our impurities and refine in us love, compassion, self-sacrifice, community spirit. Create a new “normal” in which we seek first to bring about your kingdom on earth.



Elizabeth Gracie, Lay Co-Chair of Annual Conference Shepherding Team  
 Oak Park: First  
 Chicago Northwestern District

Amen

# BE WITH US NOW

## IN MEMORIAM

*Kathy was anxious to re-open the doors of our NIC churches and get back to worship, and she said so! Before protocols would allow, on June 25, 2020, Kathy entered the worship that is going on day and night without ceasing in heaven. (Revelation 4:8)*

*Holy, holy, holy,  
the Lord God the Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come...  
You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created.  
Revelation 4:6b, 11*

O God, our help in ages past be with us now as we need your help more than ever! Please heal all those who have the coronavirus and take that virus and make it dissolve and disappear from the whole world forever. We believe in Jesus' power to heal. He is with us always.

Help us to use this time to bring us all closer together in love and respect for each other and our life in Christ.

We praise Him, we thank Him and we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.



**Kathy Dickerson, Lay Leader  
Hebron United Methodist Church  
Hebron, IL  
Elgin District**



## WE PRAISE YOUR NAME

Loving and merciful God,

We praise your name, and we adore you as our God, our King, and our Redeemer. We come before you in prayer with our hearts full of joy, for your presence in our lives, for your love and care. Thank you for the gift of life, family, friends, neighbors, church, and our community, and thank you for all your blessings that are new every morning.

We are facing challenging times in our world and our country, and we recognize that there are people who are hurting and struggling with hopelessness. Lord Jesus, touch the hurting, heal the wounded, and assure us that we are not alone, you are with us, and you will continue with us always.

O Lord help us to be instruments of peace, hope, and love and help us to be sensitive to the needs of others, especially with those people and countries with fewer resources to face this pandemic. Nourish us, renew our strength, calm our anxieties, and help us to be still and know that you are our God who reigns forever and ever.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.



Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer  
District Superintendent  
Rockford District

# A "STAY SAFE" PRAYER FOR YOU

Savior, wrap your arms 'round me, I'm  
Tired of standing on my own.  
And let me lean on your saving grace.  
Yea Lord, don't leave me alone.

Savior, give me courage now, to  
Accept this new reality.  
Forgive my impatience and calm my fears as  
Ever close I draw to thee.

AMEN.



Marcia Peddicord, Certified Lay Minister  
Princeton: First  
DeKalb District

# WHERE IS YOUR GOD DURING THIS PANDEMIC?

Gracious and Loving God,

It's been over a month since we started observing the shelter-in-place order. We confess to you that it's been difficult. During this period, some of us have lost our loved ones. Some did not have a chance to say goodbye in person or over the phone to those we've lost. Some of our friends, family members, and co-workers have lost their jobs. Some of us feel that our energy is running out.

Yet we also are grateful for your presence. Thank you for showing up in the hard work of those who are on the front-line of the pandemic: doctors, nurses, fire fighters, police officers, first responders, grocery workers, delivery workers, and others.

Thank you for showing up in the intimacy and friendship of those dear to us: family, friends, partners, neighbors, and co-workers. Thank you for showing up in our ministry of faith communities that include online worship services, Zoom meetings, phone calls, care cards, and prayer chains. Some have asked, "Where is God during this pandemic?" We know that the answer still is clear: You are with us every minute of our days!

Lead us to continue spreading your love in the midst of uncertainty and fear. Guide us to trust that we are not alone, but with you and with one another. Help us to know that we are stronger and more resilient facing this together.

May we be nourished and strengthened by your presence. May we be enabled by your Spirit to turn our lament into hope. May we walk with Jesus to wipe the tears of all who grieve.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



Rev. Lynn Pries, President of Naperville Interfaith Leaders Association (NILA) at a car prayer parade NILA organized for Edward Hospital in Naperville.

Representatives from different faith traditions gathered and a police car led us through different entrances of the hospital campus as we offered our prayers for the hospital workers and patients.

*Photo credit: Rev Hannah Hwa-Young Chong*



Rev. Hannah Hwa-Young Chong  
Community United Methodist Church  
Naperville, IL, Aurora District



# LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELF

Heavenly Father, we come to you with a grateful yet heavy heart. We are grateful for the blessings we've received through your grace and unconditional love. Our hearts are heavy with the reality of human lives suffering and dying from something so difficult to fathom. We are a scared people. While this dire situation is something none of us have ever experienced, pandemics have plagued the earth before. Just as you have delivered us from our human susceptibilities in the past, this too will be overcome.

We thank you for the science and technology that is necessary to combat this. We are especially thankful for the knowledge and inspiration you've instilled in the researchers, infectious disease experts, the doctors and nurses, and all hospital and hospice caregivers. It is through their efforts and commitment that we get some hope.

You are the God of hope. The gravity of all that has been lost and all that will be lost, is what scares us. Thank you for the hope you give us and hope we get from:

- those who, at risk to themselves, continue to administer care to others;
- those who call family and friends to check upon them and stay in contact;
- those who, when seeing a need, find innovating ways to help others.
- those continuing to patronize restaurants for delivery or curbside pick-up;

Our religion, race, ethnicity, sexuality preferences, or social status, doesn't differentiate us during such a crisis. All your children are affected. Mankind coming together in such a global extent is encouraging. Help us, we pray, that through this unprecedented altruism, we don't forget that we truly can and must, love our neighbors as our self.

We pray for the millions out of work who are having difficulty providing basic necessities for themselves and their families. Forgive us that we sometimes forget that unconditional love does overcome and that our trust in you will see us to the other side of this.

We ask for your continued blessing for all the ministries and ministers that, by whatever technology is available, bring messages of comfort and inspiration to all of us.

By your grace and in the name of the one whom you have sent, we pray,  
Amen.

Michael DeBenedetto, Certified Lay Servant  
United Methodist Church of Antioch, Antioch, IL, Elgin District

# GLORIOUS GOD OF WISDOM AND THE WHISPER

Glorious God of Wisdom and the Whisper,

We, like Solomon ask for your wisdom on this last day of another month of sheltering in place.

Wisdom to lead your people as we worship in new ways.

Wisdom to continue to seek your face, and to heed to your voice.

Wisdom to heed the voices of the doctors, researchers and scientists to whom you have given knowledge to discern the right course during this pandemic. Let them discover a cure.

Wisdom to know right from wrong as we continue to be your beloved community in the midst of uncertainty.

Wisdom to remember those who are on the front lines, giving their best.

Wisdom to care for the lost, the lonely, and the least.

Wisdom to answer the questions of the fearful, and the faithful.

Wisdom to care for others and ourselves by sheltering in place.

God, whisper comfort to your people for they need to hear your calming voice.

Whisper hope to our hearts for we need your steadiness.

Whisper assurance to our lives for we need your strength now and for the days ahead.

Whisper love that will surround us and flow through us.

We offer this prayer in the name of the Resurrected Savior! Amen.


At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? 1st Kings 3: 5, 9



Rev . Darneather Murph-Heath  
District Superintendent  
Elgin District





**Don't you know? Haven't you heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the creator of the ends of the earth.  
He doesn't grow tired or weary.  
His understanding is beyond human reach**

**Isaiah 40:28 (CEB)**



## BIOGRAPHIES

The Co-chairs of the Discipleship Task Force are **Rev. Caleb Hong** and **Karen Bonnell**. **Caleb Hong** is the lead pastor of Faith United Methodist Church of Orland Park. He's also served churches in Oregon, IL, Atlanta, GA, and Hockessin, DE. Caleb is a father of two and husband in a dual pastor household. His dream is to dunk a basketball one day in heaven. **Karen Bonnell** is a retired postal clerk and officer-in-charge who grew up in the United Methodist Church. Her family lived the faith with the disciplines of Bible reading, memorization, prayer, and actions. Active in her community, she realizes the importance of taking her faith outside the church doors listening, offering prayer or support through her church's Good Neighbor Fund even while watering Village flowers or planting trees. This wife, mother of two adult daughters, and grandmother of two growing grandsons is a Lay Leader for her church and DeKalb District.

Many of the photos in this book were contributed by **Jennifer Payton**, a lifelong member of Creston UMC, where she plays the piano and serves on multiple committees. Jennifer has traveled internationally, visiting Scotland twice and the Netherlands once. She is a freelance photographer who loves nature and landscape photography so much because there is no place she feels closer to God than in the midst of His magnificent Creation. There is always something to marvel at, and she loves to revel in the miracle of all He has created.

*Jennifer Payton Photography*



## ABOUT "TIMES LIKE THESE"

It is amazing the gifts God gives us to share with one another. This book of prayers is one of those amazing gifts. Thank you all for helping us find the words to speak with God during these challenging times.

**Rev. Bonnie Campbell (Retired)**

**Minister of Spiritual Formation, First: Lombard**

We are wholly holy creatures, formed with heart, soul, mind, and strength. These prayers call the Body of Christ to be mindful of our souls while we attend to our physical body as individuals and in our connected community.

**Rev. Eric Doolittle, North Central College Chaplain**

We all have times in our life when we may be feeling like the words of a title from the African American spiritual, "And I couldn't hear nobody pray." This is when one feels most acutely that their prayers are not being answered or heard. Or perhaps we think that we alone are the only one praying. Even though these prayers correspond with the early days of the COVID-19 global pandemic, I highly commend this resource to you. It is the needed priming to escape any present feelings of spiritual impotence so that our own prayers can begin to flow.

**Rev. Dr. Myron F. McCoy, Senior Pastor**

**First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple**

**Co-Chair of Annual Conference Shepherding Team**

There is wisdom in Paul's admonition to 'pray without ceasing,' for when we tend to our relationship with God, we are strengthened in the promise we are not alone whatever may come. In "Times Like These" we find prayers of intercession, hope, repentance, the steadfastness of God and more. During seasons of great uncertainty, this booklet will be a very welcome companion.

**Dr. Lallene Rector, President**

**Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary**

It can be easy to get lost in worldly things and stray away from God—especially during a pandemic and the current political climate. The prayers in "Times Like These" have helped me restore my faith in Jesus, find comfort during turbulent times and re-establish connections with my fellow Christians who walk by faith and not by sight. Each prayer presents its own unique passage to God that shows that we, as a body of Christ, are more than our race, age, sexual orientation and economic status. I highly recommend this beautiful book to anyone looking for a way to get closer to God and seek comfort in God's word.

**Jaelyn Pirtle, Homewood-Flossmoor High School**

**NIC Plumblin Tours 2018 & 2019**

**JULY 2020**