

Service of Mourning and Hope: **Marking 2 Years of Covid-19 Pandemic**

March 20, 2022

Orlando, FL

We are led in worship today by:

The music department of Minnehaha Academy Upper School from
Minneapolis, MN

Audubon Park Covenant Church- Pastor Sarah Robinson

City Beautiful Church- Pastor Ryan Adams

Emmanuel Episcopal Church- Warden Mike Ball

Welcome

1. Invocation

In March of 2020 reports started coming about a devastating disease that was sweeping through nursing homes, and then quickly through cities and beyond throughout the world.

The world shut down.

And despite many of our best efforts, in the last 2 years we have lost over 970,000 people in the United States, and more than 6 million people in the world.

People of all ages whose lives have been cut short. Grandmothers and grandfathers, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, daughters and sons.

This moment is an opportunity to pause.

An opportunity to reflect.

An opportunity to remember and realize.

And it is an opportunity to move forward together.

To begin again, anew.

So we begin today, in the name of God our Creator, Jesus the Redeemer, and our Holy Spirit Sustainer. AMEN

Recognition of Indigenous Lands of Central Florida

We acknowledge this afternoon that we are on this historical lands of the Ais, Apalachee, Calusa, Timucua and Tocobago tribes. Here in the central part of the state, the Timucua and Tocobago people roamed the land. It is estimated that about 50,000 Timucua lived in Florida at the time that European explorers arrived.

During the 1700s, the native tribes throughout the Southeastern United States were severely oppressed by white settlers. Many were forced into slavery, their land was taken away and their homes destroyed. To escape, some fled south, landing in Central Florida. Once there, tribes merged into what became known as Seminoles. The name Seminole comes from the Spanish word cimarron, which means "runaway." We honor and remember these tribes and peoples today.

Welcome Song: Ngothando **words and music by Mbuso Ndlovu**

(Sung in IsiZulu)

*Through love, only,
Will we conquer everything,
All situations,
Cannot swallow (devour) us.*

*Let us open our hearts,
And let us fear nothing,
Through love...*

Movement 1: Grief /Lament

2. Quote: from the World Council of Churches document "Voices of Lament, Hope, and Courage"

https://kirken.no/globalassets/bispedommer/more/dokument%202021/voices_oflament.pdf

“Fatigued.

That is one word that best describes where many people find themselves now as we mark two years since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our faith in Christ has not immunized us against being infected and impacted by COVID-19. We have prayed for the healing and full recovery of our sisters and brothers. We have mourned as we had to bury our dead while not being able to participate fully in our traditional liturgical and cultural rites. We have struggled for survival as lockdowns have negatively impacted our local economies. Our spiritual, mental, and psycho-social states have been in turmoil as our normal weekly gatherings for worship and fellowship have been curtailed by social distancing protocols.

The sense of being fatigued goes beyond the physical. There is also related spiritual fatigue, even for people of faith. A good way to describe that is lament. The writer of Psalm 6 has voiced the sentiments which many faithful Christian believers have uttered over these past two years:

We are languishing! We are mourning! We are shaken with terror!
We are weeping! We are grieving! We are weary and worn!

The ability to recognize and relate to these myriad emotions is not antithetical to our Christian faith. To express feeling abandoned by God does not mean a loss of faith in the ultimate sovereignty of God. Even Jesus on the cross cried out, lamenting, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). Prayers of lament are important in our faith pilgrimage because they allow us to face our grief. Lament allows others to come alongside us and either remove or lessen our fear as we face our loss and grief.

Even as we call out to God in lament, drawing attention not only to our own suffering but to the suffering of others, we are reminded not to lose our

faith and to trust in God's providential care. We can therefore affirm: God has heard our prayers of lament and will answer. We begin with lament. We continue in faith. We end with hope and even joy."

3. Scripture: Psalm 23 (New King James Version)

The Lord the Shepherd of His People (A Psalm of David.)

1 The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Instruction:

During the Candle Lighting, you are encouraged to come a few at a time and write the name of someone you knew who passed away in the last two years on the sleeve of a candle. Then light the candle and place it in the sand.

Candle Lighting Dona Nobis Pacem

English translation: Grant us peace

4. Prayer of Lament:

Instructions: As you hear "Lord in your mercy," I invite you to respond with "**Hear our prayer.**" There will be an opportunity toward the end of this prayer to lift up out loud the names of people we have lost in the last 2 years.

With all our hearts and minds, let us pray to the Lord believing God hears our prayers
and sees our tears.

For all that we have lost. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all the ways we have not cared for each other and the most vulnerable during this pandemic. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all who have lost family and friends, whose loss is still with them. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all continuing to struggle with the economic impact of the pandemic. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For those who are caught in cycles of abuse and violence. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all who are struggling with their mental health. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For the loss of relationships and connection and all experiencing continued isolation. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For the environmental impact of the pandemic. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For those even now who are battling with Covid and/or its continued effects. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For our healthcare workers and frontline workers who have continued to show up in crisis. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For those who have experienced injustice and violence in this time because of ignorance and racial prejudice. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all those who are suffering hunger daily. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For those in Ukraine fighting for their freedom, and the loss of life. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For those in Japan who are dealing with a new crisis following the Earthquake. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

For teachers and school staff, students and parents as they continue to play catch up. *(pause)*

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

We list before you now, people we have lost in the last 2 years:

(Long pause for people to have a good long chance to share names)

Lord in your Mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

Prayer by the National Council of Churches USA Jim Winkler, General Secretary

God of all people and all nations hear us as we pray. We hear the news that more than 6 million people have died from this terrible pandemic, more than 970,000 in our nation alone, and we confess to becoming numb to the sorrow and pain. Help us to remember that these are not mere statistics on a chart or a graph. Remind us that each one was a human being with a family and friends, each is one of your beloved children. Do not allow us to move too quickly from our grief and become reckless in our desire to return to "normal."

Give wisdom to our political and religious leaders, give strength to our public health officials. Provide comfort and rest for our first responders, nurses, doctors, and caregivers. Give us patience and perseverance for the days and months ahead so that we could continue on the path to healing

and help us to unite in the common goal of defeating this awful virus. This we pray in Christ's holy name. **AMEN**

Movement 2: Resilience/Thanksgiving

5. Scripture Romans 8:31-39 (New Living Translation)

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? 33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34 Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

...

37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Song: Earth Song words and music by Frank Ticheli

Sing, Be, Live, See...

This dark stormy hour,

*The wind, it sobs.
The scorched earth
Cries out in vain:*

*O war and power,
You blind and blur.
The torn heart
Cries out in pain.*

*But music and singing
Have been my refuge,
And music and singing
Shall be my light.*

*A light of song
Shining strong: Alleluia!
Through darkness, pain and strife, I'll
Sing, Be, Live, See...
Peace.*

6. Quote: Kristi Nelson, author of "Wake Up Grateful"

"Let's change our rituals and deepen the way we gather because we've seen up close how fragile life is. There's no better way to honor those people we've lost to the pandemic than to ask ourselves: How would they live if they could come back for one day? Can we learn from that, and start living that way now?"

Communion

Let Us Break Bread Together

Played in background during Words of Institution & Receiving of Communion

7. Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, we echo these words of praise before you today as we declare:

“Bless the Lord, my soul; bless the Lord and do not forget all of God’s benefit.”

We recall with thanksgiving the many times and ways in which you have come to our aid.

We give thanks that in our moments of sickness and weakness, we have experienced your healing.

We give thanks for hands that have ministered your healing touch to our bodies, for lips that have uttered comforting words bringing calm to our troubled minds, feet that have carried us when we were too weak to bear our own weight, communities that have supported us, renewing our faith in you and each other.

Through life’s changing scenes and seasons, we have known you to be the God who heals.

Help us to believe once again that in this season and at this time, you will grant your children healing.

We pray this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen

Movement 3: Hope

8. Scripture-Revelation 21:1-6 (New Revised Standard Version)

The New Heaven and the New Earth

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a

bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Song: Hope Lingers On
By Lissa Schneckenburger
Arr. Andrea Ramsey

*My mother, when love is gone,
in our darkest hour, hope lingers on
My Father, when peace is gone,
in our darkest hour, hope lingers on*

I will not hate and I will not fear

*My sister when equality's gone
My brother, with tolerance gone
My love, when honor is gone
My country, when justice is gone*

in our darkest hour, hope lingers on

I will not hate and I will not fear

9. Quote: Glennon Doyle

“Keep going.
That’s all you have to do, ever.
You really don’t have to be amazing,
Or fierce or beautiful
Or successful or good.
Just keep going, please.
Slowly is fine.
Crawling is fine.
No feeling is final.
Except hope.”

Instructions: At this time people are invited to come forward to write on one of the lanterns **hopes, dreams, and/or prayers for the future**

Song: Peace Within Us

During lantern writing

10. Prayer of Hope

Prayers for a Better World (Chantal Morales McKinney)

We lift our hearts at this time, that our collective voices, hopes, prayers, and actions will dissolve hate, racism, and violence in our community, our nation, and our world.

We lift our hearts for love in our homes. That our homes may be a beacon of joy, laughter, kindness, forgiveness, love, and tranquility. Guide us towards healthy relationships so that, with joyful hearts, we can spread the love from our homes to our neighborhoods and communities.

We lift our hearts towards a spirit of peace, safety, and kinship in our neighborhoods. Help us to see one another as brothers and sisters Guide us towards right action, right communication, and right relationships. Encourage us to see ourselves as healing agents, as keepers of the Light. Encourage us to see ourselves as people who can heal our neighborhoods and be agents of positive change.

We lift our hearts towards a spirit of peace in Orlando and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Bridge our cities' divisions. Heal our hearts. Help us to deeply listen to one another's hurts. Move us towards a place where all people are accepted as they are, trusted, loved, and listened to. Give those who have power in our cities the hearts of a servant.

We lift our hearts towards a spirit of peace in the United States. Help us to stay grounded amidst the news headlines. Help us to remember that much good is happening everywhere on the ground, and quietly. Orient our hearts towards doing good deeds, random acts, and blessing others.

Keep us from a spirit of complacency. Keep us from a spirit of apathy. Keep our hearts rooted in hope, action, love, encouragement, and peace. Guide us towards others that seek to heal this hurting world. Keep us always in a spirit of hope. Remind us of the great prophets that go before us in calling a people to a higher way of being.

In loving hope we pray, AMEN

Lantern Release *Reprise of **Peace Within Us***

Movement 4: Joy/Celebration

11. Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-2, 18-21 (New International Version)

1 But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, Jacob,

he who formed you, Israel:
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

...

18 "Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
19 See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.
20 The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,
21 the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.

Song: 10,000 Reasons- Praise Band & Congregation

CCLI Song # 6016351 Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman

Chorus

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul

Worship His holy name

Sing like never before O my soul

I'll worship Your holy name

Verse 1

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

Verse 2

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Verse 3

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

12. Quote: Amanda Gorman, Call Us What We Carry

"Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew
That even as we hurt, we hoped
That even as we tired, we tried"

Song: Yonder Come Day

Traditional, arr. Rudoï

*Oh day, Yonder come day.
Day done broke inna my soul, Yonder come day.
Good mornin' day, Yonder come day.
A brand new day, Yonder come day.*

*Oh come on child,
Hush, hush, somebody's callin' my name.
Oh my Lord, oh my Lord what shall I do?*

Oh day, Yonder come day.

I was on my knees, Yonder come day.

When I heard him say, Yonder come day.

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home.

Day done broke inna my soul, Yonder come day.

13. Prayer of Joy

Instructions: During this prayer when I say: "And so we come to You and ask:" please respond "**Yes, make all things new.**"

Prayer by the Chairperson of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Bishop of Bavaria

© Bishop Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

Window into Eternity (Rev. 21)

L: God of hope and life,

You have promised: there will be no more death and no more mourning,
no cry of lament and no pain.

You have promised to wipe every tear from our eyes.

You have said, I make all things new.

And so we come to You and ask:

C: Yes, make all things new.

L: In this pandemic we have experienced how the old
has crumbled away,

how our entire sense of being alive has begun to totter.

We have learned how vulnerable we are.

That we are not in control of everything

That we cannot solve all problems with our material and technological
capabilities.

You have said: I make all things new.

And so we come to You and ask:

C: Yes, make all things new.

L: We long to be comforted,
we long for the wounds to heal,
we long for something new to open up.
You have said: I make all things new.
And so we come to You and ask:

C: Yes, make all things new.

L: These words are already coming true.
In the consolation we give to each other.
In the kind words we say to each other that strengthen us.
In the peace and tranquility of the soul we feel when we speak to You in prayer.

We trust that You, God, can create something new in the midst of the impossible.

We rely on You, God, to give us strength when we need it.

We are certain that You, God, are with us.

You have said: I make all things new.

And so we come to You and ask:

C: Yes, make all things new.

L: Let all God's people say:

C: AMEN!

Benediction Song: The Lord Bless You and Keep You

The Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord lift his countenance upon you
And give you peace
And give you peace
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
And be gracious unto you
The Lord be gracious unto you
Amen.

