

Words of Introduction for Service of Healing Prayer Stations

Jeremiah 8:18-22; Mark 1:29-24 – Rev. Rebecca Littlejohn
Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – July 28, 2024

Holy God, as we move into this time of prayer, we ask that your healing Spirit might be present in our midst, that our hearts might be revived and our souls restored. In Jesus' name, we pray,

Amen.

This Service of Healing is the last installment of our Incarnation Worship Series. All month, we have centered our worship on the wondrous idea at the center of our faith: the idea that God took on human flesh and lived a human life alongside us. Today, we focus on how that shows us not only how deeply God cares for our human lives, but how thoroughly God understands the pain and difficulty that can come from going through life with a body and emotions and weaknesses. God has lived our pain from the inside out.

We have heard the human cries for healing from the prophet Jeremiah, who saw so much suffering and demanded to know why God hadn't mended it yet. We have had those moments. We have heard just a brief snippet of the stories of the healing Jesus brought to those around him, from Simon's mother-in-law who saw her healing as an invitation to service, to the leper who trusted that Jesus could bring him healing and couldn't keep himself from sharing his joy once it had happened. We have even seen how Jesus sustained the spiritual energy required to bring this healing to others by stepping away when he could and devoting himself to prayer.

We are not promising miracles today. As Disciples, we likely have many different interpretations and understandings of the stories of Jesus healing people. But what we do know is that healing rarely happens in isolation. Healing rarely happens before we admit our need for it. Healing rarely happens if we pretend everything is fine and we can solve our problems on our own. A big part of healing is admitting that we need help. In a community of faith like Vista La Mesa Christian Church, we discover that our burdens become lighter when we share them with one another. We come to understand that our grief is not something that was done to us, but rather the echoes of the love we were blessed with. We learn that the resentments and grudges that have accumulated in our hearts can be dissolved if we drop them into the wells of God's mercy.

The prayer stations we have prepared today offer you a variety of ways to engage in prayer that can help you loosen your grip on the things within you that need healing. If you pull out the insert in your bulletin, you'll find an explanation of each one. If moving around the room is difficult for you, you can work with the "Fill-in-the-Blank Prayer" on the back of that insert. If you raise your hand once we start, John can bring you a pen if you need one. You can also ask him to let me know you'd like individual prayer, and I can come to you. If you can come up front, I can pray with you up here by the pulpit. Marianna will also be available here, in the front row, for prayers of release. She will be offering a little hand massage with lotion, as an alternative to foot washing, to help release you from whatever has accumulated on your journey. In the back of the sanctuary, there are three stations. If you'd like to pray without words, I invite you to go

to the table where you can color in new “Peace of Christ” signs. You can also pray for peace, or for loved ones or places that are far away, by lighting a candle at the table with the globe on it. There is also a notebook there if you’d like to write a prayer down. The other table at the back offers you the chance to write down a prayer about anything you need washed away from your life. Once you’ve written your prayer, you can drop the paper into the bowl of water, swish it around and watch it dissolve. Steve is there to assist you and freshen the water as needed.

Finally, if you have prayers that you would like shared on our prayer list this afternoon, I invite you to come up and write them on the clipboard here by the lectern, so we can include them.

For those of you on Zoom, Tesa is available to offer an individual prayer for you. Just send her a message in the chat box about what you need prayer for, and she will send a prayer your way. Karen will also copy the Fill-in-the-Blank Prayer into the chat box, so you can pray it yourself. If you have a prayer request for this afternoon’s prayer list, you can put that into the chat box as well.

We believe that God desires wholeness and flourishing for us and for our world. We believe that God understands our pain and our grief and weeps alongside us in our suffering. We come this day to confess our need for healing, to open our hearts to the soothing balm of the Great Physician, to offer the brokenness of our souls to Jesus, that we might be made new. May the Holy Spirit be present with us now. Hallelujah and Amen.