

the Practice



Welcome to the table.

Holy things can happen when friends and family gather around the table for a meal.

May this short liturgy help create space this Lent for our pain and frustration to be shared and vocalized in loving community; for us to remind each other of the hope we have in Christ, the redeemer and restorer of all things; and for us to connect with God and each other in new ways.

[If you are the host, please provide an unlit candle for each person at your table (or one for the group to share), and as you move through the liturgy, you will be guided through a practice of lighting, extinguishing, and lighting again each candle.]



Gathering Prayer

LEADER:

We gather together in the name of Jesus and in the holy and loving presence of our God in whom we live and move and have our being. Together we remember God's goodness and active redemption and restoration of us and of the world throughout history. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we pray these words from Psalm 107.

*Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west,
from north and south.*

*Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city
where they could settle.*

*They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.*

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress

ALL:

**God led them by a straight way
to a city where they could settle.**

[Person 1 can now light his/her candle]



**When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not
set you ablaze.**

**For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your stead.
Since you are precious and
honored in my sight,
and because I love you.**

(Isaiah 43:1–4)

[After reading this assurance, invite each person to light his/her candle again as a symbol of hope.]



Closing Prayer

Leader:

Thank you, Lord, that we can gather together and voice our pain and frustrations in your presence. Thank you for all that is good and beautiful in our lives and in this world. Give us eyes to see glimpses of your kingdom, and in the places we feel broken and bruised, restore us and make your face shine upon us. Our hope is in you.

Amen.

The Practice of Lament

Invite each person at the table to share his/her lament or whatever he/she is lamenting, whether personally or in the world. After each lament, and as a way to symbolize their lament, invite the person who shared to blow out his/her candle. Then, in solidarity and faith, invite the group to pray the following together:

Hear us, Lord. How long must we wait? Listen to our cries. Save [insert person's name] from his/her distress.



Assurance

ALL:

But now, this is what the Lord says—the One who created you, Jacob, the One who formed you, Israel:

**Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name;
you are mine.**

**When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.**

LEADER:

*Some sat in darkness,
in utter darkness,
prisoners suffering in iron chains,
because they rebelled against
God's commands
and despised the plans
of the Most High.*

*Then they cried to the Lord
in their trouble,
and he saved them
from their darkness.*

ALL:

**God brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness,
and broke away their chains.**

[Person 2 can now light his/her candle]

LEADER:

*Some became fools through
their rebellious ways and suffered
affliction because of their iniquities.*

*They loathed all food and drew near
the gates of death.*

*Then they cried to the Lord in their
trouble, and he saved them from
their distress.*

ALL:

**God sent out his word
and healed them,
rescuing them from the grave
and stilling the storm
to a whisper;**

**God turned the desert into
pools of water
and the parched ground into
flowing springs;**

God blessed them, lifting the needy out of their affliction; and

God gave his one and only Son so that everyone who believes may have eternal life.

[The remaining participants can now light their candles; or if you have one, you can light it now.]

(Ps 107:2-7, 10-11, 13-14, 17-20, 29, 33, 35, 38, 41; John 3:16)



A Prayer for the World

LEADER:

We cry out to you, God, on behalf of our broken, hurting world. Children wake up hungry and go to sleep having found no relief. Mothers and fathers mourn the loss of their sons and daughters caused by disease, war, and natural disasters. Millions of souls wander without homes, families, or communities. Depression and mental illness rob men, women, and children of life. Anger and lust turn friends against each other. Systemic injustice breaks apart families, demoralizes entire races and ethnicities, and diminishes all of your children.

Let's take a moment of silence.

[After silence] **ALL:**

We cry out to you, Lord. We are in trouble. Our world is in trouble. Save us from our distress. Amen.



A Prayer for Our Table

LEADER:

Before we begin our meal together, let's pray. Join me by reading the bold text.

Thank you, God our Provider, for hearing our cries. Thank you for food in a hungry world. Remind us that every good and perfect gift, comes from your hand.



Meal

Questions to discuss during the meal:

What is one thing in your life that you are most grateful for today?

How did it feel to write out your lament?

What resistance or release did you feel?