

Covid Musings March 25, 2020 North Star Mennonite Church Dan Graber

By now you have probably settled into some kind of routine. And I hope you haven't become too bored – that's for next week! And if you have a computer you probably have seen more advice and spiritual helps than you can handle during this time of uncertainty. But I hope these "musings" are helpful to you.

Thanks to the two persons who offered ideas for North Star Mennonite congregation. And I received one great story to share – at some point in the future. And a descriptive email of one couple's Sunday service. More ideas, stories and reflections are welcomed.

One idea was about getting hard copies of sermons and musings to people without computers. I will work at that – possibly leaving hard copies – handled with gloves for people. Others can be mailed, but if a relative or friend regularly checks in with you regularly, they can download these on their computer, and deliver a hard copy to you – that would be easier and safer. Fewer hands touching the papers.

Humor is important for us at a time like this! Some comments I've seen.

Honestly, I had not planned on giving up so much for Lent!

While everything is getting shut down, maybe they should pave the roads!

I'm getting tired of baby sitting my mother's grand children!

And I suggest we spend more time in prayer. **One idea** I received was to set a regular time for prayer for all of us – like a specific time. I'm aware that this could be difficult. But why can't we all, **right after our breakfast, take time to pray? And we all could do it again – right before supper or bedtime!** At least choose a time or two each day!

If all of us did this twice a day – developing our own prayer lists, a North Star list, as well as use the list below, it would help us be less bored and be a wise use of our time. It's also a great common activity that can be done individually, as couples or as households.

The list below can be used in a number of ways, like pray half in the morning and half in the late afternoon, or break it up even more – like five of the points each day. And you can name family members and friends who are in each category listed. Sorry for the long list, but I like it's detailedness. Any of us could have written a list, but when someone offers you something that is done well – why not use it?

We will try to get prayer concerns into the weekly bulletin, so please let us know what and who is on your mind for us to pray for. And we will continue to pass on conference, denominational and mission requests for prayer.

So please read this article and use this list to help us focus our prayers. As you can read from this list – notice - this virus is affecting a lot of people, in all kinds of ways. So let's increase our prayer time. Please scroll down to get the list on the next two pages.

May you continue to find strength and hope in your prayer times. Blessings, Dan

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20 Prayers to Pray During This Pandemic

As COVID-19 sends the globe into crisis, it also sends us to our knees.

JEN POLLOCK MICHEL MARCH 18, 2020 CHRISTIANITY TODAY

In recent days, as COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic and countries have taken urgent measures to stem the spread of infection, I wish I could say that my first impulse has been to pray. It's probably more honest to say that I've obsessively refreshed my feeds.

The crisis is urgent, and I feel powerless. But perhaps feeling small is the best reminder to pray. Prayer is how we actively practice believing, so simply, so confidently, that God has the whole world in his hands. It's where we "let petitions and praises shape our worries into prayers, letting God know our concerns" (Phil. 4:6–7, The Message). **Prayer is never the last resort of God's people. It is our first point of action.**

With that in mind, I've put together a list of 20 prayers to pray during this pandemic. Each one addresses the specific needs of a specific community. I'm fortunate to be a part of a church with many medical professionals, some of whom gave me advice on how best to pray for them at this time. I've included their responses here. I've also tried to think broadly about how the rest of us are impacted by the current crisis.

This list isn't comprehensive, of course, but it's a good place to start. My hope is that it can provide words for us as we pray collectively (if also virtually!) as a church body. We believe there is a God who bends his ear to listen, and so we pray:

1. For the sick and infected: God, heal and help. Sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.
2. For our vulnerable populations: God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease. Provide for the poor, especially the uninsured.
3. For the young and the strong: God, give them the necessary caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.
4. For our local, state, and federal governments: God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources for combatting this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests.
5. For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.
6. For the media, committed to providing up-to-date information: God, help them to communicate with appropriate seriousness without causing panic.
7. For consumers of media, looking to be well-informed: God, help us find the most helpful local information to equip us to be good neighbors. Keep us from anxiety and panic, and enable us to implement the recommended strategies, even at a cost to ourselves.
8. For those with mental health challenges who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless: God, provide them every necessary support.

9. For the homeless, unable to practice the protocols of social distancing in the shelter system: Protect them from disease, and provide isolation shelters in every city.
10. For international travelers stuck in foreign countries: God, help them return home safely and quickly.
11. For Christian missionaries throughout the world, especially in areas with high rates of infection: God, provide them with words of hope, and equip them to love and serve those around them.
12. For workers in a variety of industries facing layoffs and financial hardship: God, keep them from panic, and inspire your church to generously support them.
13. For families with young children at home for the foreseeable future: God, help mothers and fathers to partner together creatively for the care and flourishing of their children. For single mothers and fathers, grow their networks of support.
14. For parents who cannot stay home from work but must find care for their children: God, present them with creative solutions.
15. For those in need of regular therapies and treatments that must now be postponed: God, help them to stay patient and positive.
16. For business leaders making difficult decisions that affect the lives of their employees: God, give these women and men wisdom, and help them to lead self-sacrificially.
17. For pastors and church leaders faced with the challenges of social distancing: God, help them to creatively imagine how to pastor their congregants and love their cities well.
18. For college and university students, whose courses of study are changing, whose placements are cancelled, whose graduation is uncertain: God, show them that while life is uncertain, their trust is in you.
19. For Christians in every neighborhood, community, and city: May your Holy Spirit inspire us to pray, to give, to love, to serve, and to proclaim the gospel, that the name of Jesus Christ might be glorified around the world.
20. For frontline health care workers, we thank you for their vocational call to serve us. We also pray:
 - God, keep them safe and healthy. Keep their families safe and healthy.
 - God, help them to be knowledgeable about the diagnosis and treatment of this disease, as well as the changing protocols.
 - God, help them to stay clear-minded in the midst of the surrounding panic.
 - God, deliver them from anxiety for their own loved ones (aging parents, children, spouses, roommates).
 - God, give them compassion for every patient in their care.
 - God, provide for them financially, especially if they fall ill and are unable to work.
 - God, help Christians in health care to exhibit extraordinary peace, so that that many would ask about the reason for their hope. Give them opportunities to proclaim the gospel.
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God, we trust that you are good and do good. Teach us to be your faithful people in this time of global crisis. Help us to follow in the footsteps of our faithful shepherd, Jesus, who laid down his life for the sake of love. Glorify his name as you equip us with everything needed for doing your will. Amen.