

On this, our **National Day of Observance for COVID-19**, we as a community of faithful Christians at St. Stephen's, gather our thoughts and cares, lay open our collective unattended grief and suffering, and seek healing and hope for ourselves and for our nation in this global pandemic.

We begin our devotions by praying for those who have died and have been in isolation during the pandemic.

Almighty God,
you know our hearts and share our sorrows.
We are hurt by our parting from those whom we loved:
when we are angry at the loss we have sustained,
when we long for words of comfort,
yet find them hard to hear,
turn our grief to truer living,
our affliction to firmer hope
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.ⁱ

We continue our prayers with a reconciling prayer to find peace in the midst of the tragedy of the pandemic. We understand the stressors resulting from lost employment. We acknowledge the pain generated by failed marriages. We recognize the confusion in our young people created by erratic education. We ask for forgiveness for the moral injuries we have caused. We take responsibility for the depravity of our long-term health care facilities. We see the lack of regard for frontline workers whether they be health care workers or cashiers, stock persons or factory workers, truck drivers or taxi drivers, all those who are essential workers required for our existence. We realize that the pandemic has not impacted us, all and each, in equal measure – we hold space for this hard truth of inequity.

As one family, we reflect today on the horrors of the pandemic that continue to haunt humanity and darken our world.

Lord, where pain still overwhelms, bring healing.
Where hearts are still breaking, bring comfort.
Where people are still oppressed, bring liberation.
Where communities are still victimised, bring justice.
Where children are still ill-treated, bring compassion.
Where lives are still crushed, bring hope.
Where evil is perpetrated, bring repentance.
Where the pandemic still devastates, bring peace.
But most of all,
wherever a single voice cries out in the darkness,
bring us to one another,
in the name of the love you bear in your heart for all people,
all nations and all creation.
Amen.ⁱⁱ

The pandemic has endured for what seems like an infinite time with increasing restrictions eroding our hope for an end. With mass vaccination on the horizon, we are called to overcome our hopelessness and trust that this tragic time of suffering will soon end.

We entrust to you, eternal God,
those times when we can see only shadows
and lose sight of the hope to come;
the times when suffering seems so senseless,
life so fragile, infection so unstoppable and death so permanent.
Bless us with the assurance that you are in all things,
the tragic and the beautiful,
the nightmare and the dream,
the light and the darkness.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ
the peace and hope of the world, today, tomorrow and forever.
Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

Psalm 121 *Levavi oculos*^{iv}

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills; *
from where is my help to come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord, *
the maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 The Lord will not let your foot be moved *
and the One who watches over you will not fall asleep.
- 4 Behold, the One who keeps watch over Israel *
shall neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The Lord, the Lord, watches over you; *
the Lord is your shade at your side,
- 6 so that the sun shall not strike you by day, *
nor the moon by night.
- 7 The Lord shall preserve you from all evil *
and shall keep you safe.
- 8 The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, *
from this time forth for evermore.

While we pause to observe and remember the suffering, death, and loss experienced in the pandemic, we remember and pray for those who are still in hospital or at home recovering from a COVID-19 infection. We offer our prayers for healing.

Almighty God whose blessed son laid his hands upon the sick and healed them. We ask that you give refreshment of the spirit to those who are sick and ask that you restore them to health of body and mind through your son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We conclude our devotions on this National Day of Observance for COVID-19 with a prayer for hope.

Almighty God, by the suffering of your Son you have brought hope to the whole world. Help us in our trials and be the strength of our human weakness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.^v

ⁱ Source: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers/prayers-remembrance>

ⁱⁱ Source : <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/seasons-and-festivals/festivals/remembrance/resources-for-marking-remembrance-sunday-and-other-times-of-commemoration/prayers/remembrance-sunday-prayers>

ⁱⁱⁱ Source : <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/seasons-and-festivals/festivals/remembrance/resources-for-marking-remembrance-sunday-and-other-times-of-commemoration/prayers/remembrance-sunday-prayers>

^{iv} Source: <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/GS2016-Liturgical-Psalter-2016-05-04.pdf>

^v Source: <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/BAS.pdf>