



ECV @ Home

A LITURGY FOR MARCH 29, 2020

A Call to Worship

Azariah, a faithful man who trusted God in difficult moments, cries out in Daniel 3:26, “Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and worthy of praise; and glorious is your name for ever!” God has set us free to enjoy worship at any time, under any circumstance. Today, as we worship God through music, let us remind ourselves of God’s past faithfulness and give glory to God’s love and goodness. As we begin worshipping, play as many of these songs as you would like.

[1. The Lord is Gracious and Compassionate](#)

[2. Sweetly Broken](#)

[3. Kyrie Eleison](#)

[4. Jesus at the Center](#)

Opening Prayer

God of the universe, you have known us from the beginning and you will love us to the end. There is nothing we can face that is greater than your purposes for us. Abide with us now, so that we might drink of your presence and be filled, that we may have joy again at the sight of your face. Turn our hearts to gratitude and praise. Make us warm to mercy and compassion. Lead us by your word, Holy Spirit.

Just when we become tempted to believe that Lent is really a matter of effort, that we are advancing in faith through hard work and discipline, God reminds us all over again that we will be saved by grace and not by self-purification. Often, that reminder comes to us through our failures to be as disciplined as we had hoped. Even after that, we still find ourselves openly and warmly invited to witness God’s joy in us. We are reminded again that God’s love has always preceded us. When we begin to think that things will fall apart without our effort and we worry that we won’t have enough strength to save the world, God reminds us to abide. God is God, and we are not. We can still rest, dwelling in the truth of God’s expansive hopes, of God’s gentle strength that holds together all his plans, from the smallest details to the biggest stories. To help us abide again in God, we will spend time this week — **this week** — **as has been our custom** — using two ancient Christian practices: a form of prayer called **the examen**, and a way or reading Scripture called **lectio divina**.

The examen is a form of prayer that Christians can use at regular intervals to reflect back on what God has been teaching them. Last week’s reflection on Luke 18:9-17 reminded us to humbly confess the hardness of our hearts. In light of that reminder, try the following steps for this week’s **examen** prayer:

1. **Slow down**, become aware of God's presence, and invite the Holy Spirit to fill your mind.
2. **Review the last week**, asking yourself where you have been tempted to believe the lie that you can't be vulnerable.
3. **Ask God if there are things you need to repent of**, and places where you need to reaffirm the truth of God's grace and sufficiency.
4. **Choose one particular moment or lesson that stands out**, and pray about it.
5. **Close by giving thanks to God for graciously directing your attention.**

Lectio divina encourages us to read Scripture while expecting that God is going to say something particular to us while we read. This week, we'll be reading together John 15:1-11, our original scripture for this Sunday's message. Here is an example of what it might look like to read John's gospel in this way.

1. **Pray**, inviting the Holy Spirit to shine a light on the text through your own thoughts and experiences.
2. **Read through John 15:1-11 slowly**, pausing to note any words or images that seem to particularly catch your attention.
3. **Take a few minutes in silence to listen to God** with the text fresh in your mind.
4. **Read through John 15:1-11 a second time**, slowly, and as you do, ask yourself where you see God's truth at work in this passage.
5. **Spend a few minutes praying** that God would give you wisdom and insight about the words or images that have stuck with you.

Intercessory Prayer

The third chapter of the book of Daniel tells us the story of Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, three men persecuted for their faith in God. When the king ordered that they be thrown into a furnace as punishment for their prayers, they believed that God could rescue them. Daniel 3 tells us about how they sang hymns and offered prayers to God even while they were among the flames. One of their prayers was for deliverance, not only for themselves, but for their people living in exile: "Deliver us in accordance with your marvellous works, and bring glory to your name, O Lord." When we pray for deliverance, we are turning to the God who has been gracious to us in the past. We are asking again that God would save us even in the midst of hardship and that God would show this same grace to the world around us. We will use the prayer of Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael to prompt our own prayers of intercession today. Feel free to add your own prayers to these prompts.

For the glory of your name, Lord, deliver those who are suffering from illness, from fear, and from isolation . . .

For the glory of your name, Lord, deliver the poor in our midst from worry, hopelessness, and deprivation . . .

For the glory of your name, Lord, deliver those fighting against COVID-19 from despair, exhaustion, and exposure to this illness . . .

Commit to Action

As we near the end of the liturgy, here are a few prompts for action.

- *Think about the resources God has given you and the needs that you might be facing, whether emotional, spiritual, or material. If you find yourself with time or energy to bless the ECV community, or if you need any kind of help or prayer, let us know by filling out this [short form](#).*
- *Ask God for wisdom about the ways he might be leading you to serve the New Haven community from your own home or even out in the community. Take time to discern your own limitations, to take stock of your health and your risk factors, and to consider what it would look like to love and protect your family and the community. We are currently compiling information and ideas about ways our church might serve the city with wisdom and discretion. In the meantime, [this list of requests for volunteers around New Haven](#) would be a good place to begin your discernment. Pray over this list and see whether the Spirit is leading you to serve in these ways or some other.*
- *Neighbor well! Reach out to your physical neighbors by e-mail, text, letter drop-off, or in-person (at a responsible distance) and ask if you can serve them in any way. Keep an eye out for those in our city who may be particularly vulnerable: folks over 60 years of age, those with chronic illnesses, those with insecure employment, those with children at home, etc.*

Closing Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, and give us hearts free from falseness and captive to truth. Give us confidence in love and courage in obedience. Give us more of you, that we might love as you love. Amen.

From the middle of a terrible furnace, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael still longed to follow God: “with all our heart we follow you; we fear you and seek your presence.” Let us enter this week longing to follow Jesus and seek the Spirit’s presence with all our hearts!

Note: For the foreseeable future, we will be publishing home liturgies regardless of the status of our Sunday gatherings. If you would like to offer suggestions, have original contributions (songs, poems, prayers) or would like to be part of crafting these liturgies in other ways, please e-mail patrick@elmcityvineyard.org. This week, ECV will share more ways for us to be together - to be the Church - in this time.



Elm City Vineyard Church
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