**Section 1: Resources for the Spiritual Preparation of the Officiant**

**Quotes for Reflection**

**Henri Nouwen**
from *Befriend Your Pain*

"I want to say to you that most of our brokenness cannot be simply taken away. It’s there. And the deepest pain that you and I suffer is often the pain that stays with us all our lives. It cannot be simply solved, fixed, done away with. . . .

…What are we then told to do with that pain, with that brokenness, that anguish, that agony that continually rises up in our heart? We are called to embrace it, to befriend it. To not just push it away . . . to walk right over it, to ignore it. No, to embrace it, to befriend it, and say that is my pain and I claim my pain as the way God is willing to show me his love."

from *The Wounded Healer*

"When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilize them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope."

**C.S. Lewis**

from *A Grief Observed*

**"**I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow.

Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process.”

**Mary Oliver**
from *The Uses of Sorrow*

“Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.

It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift.”

*Praying*

“It doesn’t have to be the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don’t try
to make them elaborate, this isn’t
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.”

from *In Blackwater Woods*

“to live in this world you must be able to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.”

**Julian of Norwich**

“God is closer to us than our own soul, for God is the foundation on which the soul stands.

Our soul sits in God and in true rest, and our soul stands in God in sure strength,

and our soul is naturally rooted in God’s endless love.”

**Section 2: Prayers for Use in Funerals**

*In addition to our traditional liturgy (see The United Methodist Hymnal pp. 870-875 or* [*https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/book-of-worship/a-service-of-death-and-resurrection*](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/book-of-worship/a-service-of-death-and-resurrection)*),*

*you may want to use/adapt any of the following resources:*

**Prayers:**

* Almighty God, we come to you filled to the brim with sorrow. We need your holy presence with us, connecting us to one another, supporting us, giving us hope. Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_, whose life was a gift. Thank you that [he/she/they] loved deeply, and was deeply loved. Be with us in our tears, in our aching hearts, and in the quiet smiles that memories bring as we grieve and remember \_\_\_\_\_. You who have conquered the mystery of death, be with us now.  Amen.
* We give you thanks for the nurses and doctors, the attendants and all who served as channels of your love for \_\_\_\_\_ across these recent days. Your love was made visible through their tender care; your touch was in their hands. As we stood vigil from afar, remind us that love is not constrained by distance, and that even across the miles our love was known. Amen.
* We feel helpless and small before the circumstances and timing of death, seeing that there are many things which remain beyond our control. Yet even in these days of loss we sense deep within that we are surrounded by your love. With sorrow we wait for the opportunity to gather with loved ones and tell the full story of this precious life. For now we hold within our hearts the beauty, the depth, the joy of this loved one’s journey, knowing that [his/her/their] story is alive within us, even now. Amen.
* Lord God, we are grateful that at every hour you are so near. When we lie awake in the middle of the night, yours are the arms that enfold us. When the tears well up in our eyes and trickle down our cheeks, your hands are the ones that catch them. When our minds grab hold of marvelous memories of life with \_\_\_\_\_, your eyes sparkle with ours. When the phone rings and we hear the soothing, comforting love of a familiar voice, we sense that your voice is speaking as well. Hold all of us in this hour. Make us especially aware that you are capable of holding us in grief: let us know that we can bring to you the aching of our hearts, our weariness, our questions. Amen.
* We come to you seeking comfort, seeking courage, seeking peace. We need to know that we are not alone, even in this moment. We shall not hold back our questions or our confusion, and we entrust them to your loving care, even as we entrust \_\_\_\_\_ to your gentle embrace. We had no time to say all that we held in our hearts, but we trust that \_\_\_\_\_knows our deepest gratitude for all that has been, \_\_\_\_\_knows our profound love for [him/her/them]. \_\_\_\_\_knows our need to offer and receive forgiveness, and we trust that you, Lord God know our humble trust in your promise of new life. Amen.
* *Prayer (adapted) by Marjorie Dobson in “Saying Goodbye” p. 121 (Wild Goose Publications)*

“This is the place where death meets life,

where sorrow is present,

where hard questions are asked and not always answered…

This is the place where we ask ‘Why?’

where we cry ‘What now?’

This is the place where God says ‘I am here,’

where God sheds a tear with us…”

* *Prayer (adapted) by Glendon Macaulay in “Dirt, Mess, and Danger” p. 210 (Wild Goose Publications)*

“Since the beginning, you have always remained with and beside your people:

healing their hurts, holding their hands, drying their tears.

When they have acknowledged their brokenness

and the fragility of their humanity,

you have smiled, and warmly welcomed.

When they have told you about their regrets,

and shared their fears and disappointments,

you have cuddled and affirmed and reassured.

And even in their worst times,

when apprehension about the future

disrupts the contentment and peace of the presence,

you have said ‘Be still. Know that I am your God.

I love you, and I love you more than you can ever know.’

And so, in the silence of this place now, speak, and we will listen.

Let us hear your gentle, kindly voice.

Meet our needs, answer our questions,

respond to our worries and concerns.

Great God, talk us each one here intimately, secretly, personally… Amen.

* *Prayer (adapted) by Ruth Burgess in “Saying Goodbye” p. 42 (Wild Goose Publications)*

“In quiet and in sadness we wait.

With questions and anger we wait.

With friends and family, we wait.

We wait and we cry ‘How long?’…

In the morning and the evening we wait.

As the world goes on around us we wait.

With an emptiness inside us we wait.

We wait and we cry ‘How long?’…”

* *Prayers by Joyce Rupp in “May I Walk You Home?” pp. 141f and 115f (Ave Maria Press)*

“Beloved God, you have embraced us

with a love that endures all things.

The power of your unending love

will see us through the times when we feel empty and bereft.

When the days are long and desolate, draw us to your heart,

strengthen us, and comfort us.

Reassure us that the love we share with one another will go on into eternity.

Beloved God, thank you for love that is stronger than death.”

“Comforting, consoling God, thank you for those people

who have eased the burdens of this difficult time of our lives.

Thank you for those who have understood the pain and the many struggles of my loved one and myself. Thank you for each on who has been patient and kind,

for each who has tried to ease the hurt and be there for us.

Thank you for being with us in your many human disguises.”

* *Carol Penner provides materials for a committal service:*

<https://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship/funeral/>

**Section 3: Seeds for Homilies**

1. Luke 24:1-12

Consider the exhaustion of the women who gathered at the tomb of Jesus:

worn by the long days and the sudden ending of Jesus' life.

 So *we* bring the tired numbness that is a result of long days of loving hope and patient courage.

Our weariness will not easily be resolved.

We grieve the tomorrows we have lost, and we bring a sense of frustration for the dreams and plans that illness has taken from us. We are stunned by the frailty of the human condition.

Finally, we come carrying gratitude—for the life [he/she/they] lived and the ways in which [his/her/their] life blessed this world.

1. Matthew 4:35-41

Consider the fear of the vulnerable disciples in their tiny boat in the midst of a terrible storm.

We too have felt ill-equipped for the turmoil around us; may we remember that Jesus accompanies us throughout the storm, hears our cries, and brings peace.

1. Isaiah 40:1-11

“The grass withers and the flowers fade…”

The old Methodist Protestant funeral ritual referenced the “shortness and uncertainty of life.”

 It is that very truth that has gathered us, shaken to the core.

We come together: numb, in shock, hurting, mourning a loss that goes beyond words.

We come seeking the God’s gentle arms around us.

As the prophet Isaiah suggests, God gathers the lambs tenderly, offering comfort;

so today we are in desperate need of God’s protective embrace.

We need God’s arms wrapped around us, so that we might be steadied in our time of sorrow.

Isaiah names the delicate nature of our human condition,

the prophet acknowledges our vulnerability and our fear,

and responds with an amazing promise:

God does not let the brokenness of this world have the final word.

**Suggested Scriptures:**

Psalm 139:1-12

Psalm 13

Isaiah 43:1-7

Isaiah 40:27-31

Isaiah 30:15

Isaiah 49:13-16