

*Service of Grief, Remembrance and Prayer  
For victims, families and congregations*

Call to Worship

*“Day Is Done” Words by James Quinn, S. J. , Tune Ar Hyd y Nos*

Dark descends, but Light unending Shines through our night;  
You are with us, ever lending New strength to sight;  
One in love, your truth confessing, One in hope of heaven’s blessing,  
May we see, in love’s possessing, Love’s endless light!

Eyes will close, but you, unsleeping, Watch by our side;  
Death may come: in Love’s safe keeping Still we abide.  
God of love, all evil quelling, Sin forgiving, fear dispelling,  
Stay with us, our hearts indwelling, This eventide!

Invocation

Joint Prayer of Remembrance

Leader: O God, you are with us in all times, even on the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Resurrection. In our grief we are with Jesus in the tomb—someone is gone in our lives. We come here like the disciples waited on that first holy Saturday—broken, hurt, confused, aching, longing for hope. But we also come in the light of that story—we know, more than they did, that hope was on the way. Awaken our hopes tonight. Help us in our remembering also to be people of hope. We remember not out of despair, but to confess our hope that we might see them again.

People: *We thank you for those whom we love,  
we call their names, to hear them again,  
to honor their lives,  
to remember them in death,  
to thank you for them.  
As we call their names, hear us O God.*

*(the congregation will have a season of remembering, in which we will call the names of those whom we love and have lost, one by one)*

Leader: Now we pray for ourselves, for sometimes we are overtaken with sadness and loss. We keenly feel our grief and our memories bring both comfort and heaviness. Strengthen us for this time. Take away the pain and replace it with reassurance and faith. And if it is not to be taken away, then make it bearable for us.

All: God, help us in this journey. The last word has not been said, the last embrace has not been given, the last will is not final. There will be another time, a better place, a fonder embrace. But that cannot happen until I put into your hands the one who has held onto mine. God, help me to let go, and then to grow. Day by day grant me grace to do it. Amen.

Meditation

**Closing Hymn, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand."**

Thomas Dorsey

Precious Lord, take my hand  
Lead me on, help me stand;  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.  
Thru the storm, thru the night  
Lead me on to the light.  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear  
Precious Lord, linger near;  
When my life is almost gone.  
Hear my cry, hear my call,  
hold my hand lest I fall.  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

The Candle of Remembrance

*One at a time, after we say the litany together, you are invited to walk to the picture of your loved one and light the candle that has been placed there. This will be the conclusion of the service of remembrance.*

All: We light these candles as a symbol of our love. We remember that those who have lived are never extinguished from our lives. Their light and warmth are always part of us. We ask O God that you would be our way through the darkness of grief. And remind us again of the promises--promises of reunion, of resurrection, of renewal and rebirth at the last to eternal life. Amen.

Leader: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you  
And be gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you  
And give you peace. Amen.

*This service was written by Dr. Gary Furr, Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, and originally used in a service led jointly with the late Dr. John Claypool and the Amelia Center, Birmingham, Alabama, at Vestavia Hills Baptist, for families who had lost children the previous year. Readers are welcome to use any or all parts of the service freely in services of prayer and recovery for their communities as we deal with the sorrow of the tornadoes that struck Alabama on April 27, 2011.*