

Blessing a Home Lost in Fire – For Families

Missy Morain served as the director of program ministry at St. Matthew's, Pacific Palisades for 15 years. In September 2024, she began her service as the Diocesan Missioner for Christian Formation in the the Episcopal Dioceses of Los Angeles. When the fires began in the Pacific Palisades in January 2025, the community she had loved and served for so long was deeply impacted. Seeking ways to help parishioners who had lost their homes, not just from St. Matthew's but from other area churches she was now serving, she adapted an existing liturgy for use by families seeking solace and relief. We are grateful to share it here, with her permission.¹

If you have pictures of your former home, you could display them on the table or altar or pass them around.

A Blessing

A breath prayer is a short meditation that focuses on breathing as a way to connect with God. Choose a comfortable position where you can focus on your breath. As you inhale, say or think the first part of the prayer; as you exhale, say or think the second part.

OPENING BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: You hold

Exhale: All my tears.²

(Repeat three times)

COLLECT

Loving God, our strength in times of despair, in our grief, grant us your comfort. In our confusion and worry, grant us your peace. Amen.

Psalm 23 *(said in unison or responsively)*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;

For you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;

You have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

¹ Adapted from "Blessing A Home Lost in Fires" written by Kay Sylvester for the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles Bishop's Commission on Liturgy and Music

² Craig, K. "Every Season Sacred: Reflections, Prayers and Invitations to Nourish Your Soul and Nurture Your Family throughout the Year." Tyndale House Ministries. 2022.

PRAYERS

Leader: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived. We remember the entryway where friends and family were welcomed, and through which we entered into each new day.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the rooms where we gathered with family and friends, and we give thanks for every welcomed visitor.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember our table, where we ate together, planned together, prayed together. We are grateful that Jesus was always our guest.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the kitchen. We thank you for every meal prepared, for cookies baked, for holiday meals prepared, for school lunches made and for our favorite meals.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the bedrooms, where we rested, slept and played, where we felt safe and loved.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Invite each family member to share their favorite room and a favorite memory of that space.

Leader: What room has a favorite memory for you?

After all have shared

Leader: We remember all the rooms where we gathered, laughed, cried, celebrated and lived together.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember our neighborhood, our parks, our time shared with our neighbors, our farmer's markets, our walks and bike rides, our July Fourth parades and our community celebrations.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the places we loved to go together: our favorite restaurants, ice cream and yogurt shops, churches and schools.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Invite each family member to share their favorite memory of the community you lived in together.

Leader: What are your favorite memories of our community?

After all have shared

Leader: We remember our home where we gathered, laughed, cried, celebrated and lived together.

All: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

A moment of silence

The Lord's Prayer (said in unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Leader: God, help us remember that the gifts of every celebration, holiday and regular day are still with us. Bless the ending of this season when this was our home, and grant us strength as we turn toward what is next. *Amen.*