Pastoral Prayer/Spiritual Leader’s Prayer: Gracious Lord, we come before you in this moment and time to thank you that you are an ever present help in times of need. Our hearts are deeply sorrowful for the loss of our loved one. We know that your love far exceeds the depth of pain, suffering and loss that we feel. Our hearts are already heavy with this global pandemic and now this…we need your wisdom, strength, and love to carry us through this time. We know that we are able to call upon you at any time; and we confess that our hearts are too heavy with questions that cannot be answered; with feelings of anger and confusion of “Why this, and why now?” Lord, you hold dear our questions, you invite them, even our anger and rage over all that is taking place in our lives at this time. But we thank you that we are able to bring all of our burdens to you, our burden-bearer. On the Cross you took both our sins and our sorrows and made them your own therefore we have hope. (Isaiah 53:4) We also know that before we were formed in the womb God knew us. (Jeremiah 1:5). God knew our days, God knows our days, and God knows our deepest needs at this time of loss and sorrow. So, in faith, we reach out to you with our weeping souls knowing that you care and that your love will sustain us each moment of this day. We thank you for your love that is far greater than our pain... God, it is so important for us to know that death was not part of your perfect plan for humankind, people should not die. We know that death was swallowed up in victory by the death and resurrection of your son, Jesus Christ. And we know that the human body does wear out, gets sick and dies, but we also know that death cannot take away the spirit, the love and “who” that our, now deceased loved one, was while embodied. The spirit cannot die.

We know that there may be traumatic life events in some families such as abuse, betrayal of trust and serious relational dysfunction. We know that when an abuser dies, this may leave the grieving one in a very complicated place. We must recall that vengeance belongs to the Lord; that we must care for ourselves as God would care for us; that we should reach out to a pastoral counselor for guidance and support through this potentially complicated grief. We know that there is nothing God cannot hear or welcome, for God’s love is radically wonderful! And we know that vengeance belongs to the Lord and the Lord will bring justice. You only need to release your need for justice to God.

In the book of Lamentations, as well as in the Psalms, we read of people complaining to God. Below is a biblical format for prayers of lament. Read through the Pastoral Prayers and then pray your own prayer. Remember, there are no words, no feelings, no anger, nothing that you cannot pray to God because God already knows your pain and suffering. So be honest and
allow yourself to express your deepest feelings, even feelings of betrayal and hate. If you were abused by the person who died, you are totally invited by the Lord to speak out your deepest suffering, even feelings of abandonment by God or anger at God. You cannot hurt God. God wants to hold your pain and suffering. Naming pain is healing for it “gets it out.” There is power in speaking your pain. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Sadness, laughter, anger, crying, feelings of betrayal and isolation are just some of the feelings that others may experience. Whatever you experience is the correct way for you! Remember, God counts your tears and holds them in a bottle. (Psalms 56:8). Remember, Jesus cried when his friend Lazarus died. (John 11: 33-25).

In the following guide for biblical laments, read aloud the pastoral prayer and then pray your own prayer.

Pastoral Prayer of Petition

The pastor prays: Holy God, you know when our spirits feel broken, and life may feel useless and hopeless. We ask that you hear our pain and suffering as we, through faith, tell you how we think and feel. Oh Holy One, I have lost someone very dear to me. My sadness seems unbearable.

*Speak and name your pain; tell God just how you feel, how you hurt.*

Lord, there are those who have lost a person who was his/her abuser. There may be a sense of loss for the right to find justice and healing. Lord, if this is the situation, please let the grieving person know that God both understands and cares, that no words are too difficult to pray, even yell out loud. God is a God of justice and God cares that a wounded person finds hope and healing through prayer and with a specialized counselor who may guide this one to a place of hope and healing.

Pastoral Prayer for Motivations

God, in your mercy, you have promised in your Holy Word that you take upon yourself my suffering and pain. You must honor your covenant of love with me.

*Claim God’s promises that he will be with you regardless of the pain and suffering.*
Pastoral Prayer for Repentance

Lord God, I confess that I do not know how to help myself. Forgive me if I have sinned against you. I just need to place my spiritual hands into your healing hands.

Tell God how you feel because God understands.

Pastoral Prayer of Salvation Oracle

Lord, show us how you will act. Guide us through your Holy Word through the love of the congregation even though we cannot be physically together but only spiritually together. Take away the darkness and show your light. Make light our hearts for your honor and glory.

Ask God to remove the darkness and sadness. Know that death never has the last word as Jesus overcame death on the Cross.

Pastoral Prayer for Assurance

Oh God, we know that your love is unbounded and full even the heavens above declare your glory. Lift up our eyes to your radiant light of love. Give us comfort and peace that passeth all understanding. (John 14:27).

Recall some beautiful moment in your life, moments you spent with the loved one who has died.

Pastoral Prayer to Make a Vow

Lord, I vow to listen to you, to serve you, to be all that you desire me to be in and through your power. I know that in my weakness you are strong. Be my strength to face this moment, this hour, this day and this week. I will seek to love you with my mind, body, and spirit. I will make this vow to you today.

Soothe your soul with the knowledge that God is under a Covenant of Love in and for you. Remember, it is impossible for God to lie! (Hebrews 6:18).
**Pastoral Prayer of Doxology**

Lord, I give you praise today because I may have the awesome honor of coming before your loving care and you have heard my prayer. I am so thankful that I have this time and place, these moments in time to be whom I need to be without judgment. You love me as I am. I have nothing to bring to you, but you promise to give all to me. I want to praise you at this moment in time with thanksgiving and adoration. *Praise the Lord because God hears your prayer.*

**Celebration of Holy Communion-Holy Eucharist**

Celebrate with God the broken body and the blood of Christ knowing that God’s love participates in your communion and you are never alone. If you live alone, you may want to call a friend and ask that friend to commune with you over the telephone or on Facetime.

*Make Your Own Unleavened Communion Bread (Optional)*

The ingredients in this communion bread are symbolic to the teachings of Christ and the purpose of His Death on the cross.

As you prepare to make and bake this bread, try to very mindful of the ingredients, see some of the wheat blowing in the wind in the field; the oil from Israel, the salt from salt mines, and crystal clear mountain-fed waters springing up out of the ground; be mindful of God’s creation and provision.

Take a moment, before making the bread, to read the texts below for the ingredients of the bread so that you will be mindful of the sacredness of the Communion Bread.

*The Wheat Kernels:* “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and die it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24).

*The Water:* “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7:37)."

*The Salt:* “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matthew 5:13).

*The Oil:* “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity. It is like precious oil poured on the head…running down the bread.” (Psalm 133.2). “You anoint my head with oil. Mu cup overflows. ‘(Psalms 23)."
The Recipe for Communion Bread (Makes 7 Loaves)

**Mix all of the ingredients minus the wheat flour in a mixer.**
Slowly add the flour until the dough wipes clean off the side of the bowl. Mix for 5 to 7 minutes.

**Divide the recipe into six to seven equal balls**
One at a time, take the dough ball and pat into a ¼ inch thick circle. Take a fork and pierce the dough with stripes and a cross.
*(Do not skip the piercing step or the bread will ruin-air needs to escape during baking process)*

Bake at 400 degrees for 14-20 minutes. Watch carefully as to NOT overbake. Cool on a rack. Wrap well and freeze until needed. And be mindful of how the dough felt in your hands, that you created Communion Bread and savor the scent as it comes out of the oven.

The bread will be slightly chewy. If you desire crispy communion bread, roll out very thin and bake longer.¹

**Setting**

Find a place of comfort, maybe a favorite chair. Lay a cloth on a surface; place a goblet and small dish on that surface. Put the wine/grape juice in the goblet and place a broken cracker or piece of bread on the plate. *If you baked your own Communion Bread, try to visualize stocks of wheat blowing in an open field. Visualize a spring-fed fountain bubbling up with crystal clear water. Think of the olive oil from the Holy Land, and the power of salt to savor your food. See all of the elements has sacred and provided by God the Creator.* Light a candle and seek to be still knowing that the Lord is always present with you. Before you receive the elements, be still and feel the sacredness of God being present with you. Breathe slowly as you seek to be still within.

**Receiving Communion**

*Then pray:* Lord, you invited your disciples, your followers to the Table of the Lord. You said that we, who believe in Jesus Christ and have confessed our sins, are welcome to the Table of the Lord.

*Read aloud the following Words of Institution for Communion*

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that was broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant of my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink of this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. And be ye thankful. (1 Corinthians 11:23).

¹ http://www.communionbread.org
Now, take and the bread “This is the body of Christ, broken for you.”
Now, take the juice “This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.”

Now just be still knowing that you have, symbolically, taken into your body the elements of Holy Communion; feel the bread and juice course through every cell in your body bringing hope and healing to your wounded soul. You may wish to end communion with the Lord’s Prayer.

_Sacred Rituals Invite the Holy One’s Presence_

Rituals are a way of life; you get up in the morning, eat breakfast, and shower and on and on… Sacred rituals invite the Holy Presence of the Lord into your actions/rituals.

_Optional Rituals: Please select the rituals that you feel drawn to do or create your own rituals._

After you have prayed your prayer of lament and have received Holy Communion, write on a piece of paper your lingering thoughts and feelings about how you feel over the loss of your loved one. Remember, as in the prayers of lament, no words are too difficult to name. Your feelings are _critically important to write_. Then, in your fireplace or in a yard fire pit, light a fire. Watch as the flames drift upward. Now take your written paper and toss it into the fire. Imagine seeing the flames and smoke lifting heavenward as a sweet incense to God. Know that the Lord heals the broken-hearted.

Take another piece of paper and write down your most loving thoughts and remembrances of your loved one. Take that writing and toss it into the fire and imagine the flames and smoke lifting heavenward in celebration of the loved one’s life. The power of naming and writing will help you to get them out of your aching heart. See the flames and smoke lifting as a sweet incense to God, see them drifting heavenward. See them being received into the loving heart of your Lord.

Write a letter to yourself from your loved one who has died. Imagine the loving thoughts that he or she would have to say to you. You may, also, lovingly toss that letter it into the fire and see it drift heavenward through the flames and smoke as a sweet incense to the Lord.

Light a candle. If possible listen to your favorite church hymn, seek to be still within as you hear the music and words.

Bake or cook a recipe that your loved one enjoyed. If possible, share it with another and remember that you are nourishing both your body and soul with sustenance that you once shared with your loved one. Celebrate that your loved one would be happy to see you caring for yourself through the eating of that special food.

Be creative, make two masks (or more) for Covid-19 safety; one, for yourself in honor of your decision to protect yourself and to let your lost loved one know that you are doing this in
honor of him/her. Give the second mask to another person as a way of celebrating that life goes on.

Write a loving message to caregivers who are on the frontlines of Covid-19. In this way, you are continuing to honor the gift of life but also honoring the memory of your lost loved one.

Or you may wish to look at pictures and celebrate enjoyable times; remember, laughter is also a form of important emotional expression. The Psalms call us to, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.” (Psalms 98:4).

Sacred Ritual of Four Bowls

In the first bowl place water with a little salt and say: “Like the tears of the Israelites in slavery, we cry under the burden of our loss.” Dip your fingers into the salted water and taste the bitterness.

In the second bowl place some leaves and say: “The grass withers, the flowers fade. All flesh is a grass, but the Word of our God stands forever.”

In the third bowl place pebbles from the beach or stones from outside and say: “From Earth we come and to Earth return, we know our days are short, but rooted in the Earth and life will bloom once more.”

In the fourth bowl place seeds and say: “May the souls of our lost ones burn bright, may their bodies be seeds for growth, may their deeds be a source of nourishment for those left behind.”

Then pray the prayer of St. Francis:

My God and My All

You are holy, Lord, the only God.
And your deeds are wonderful.
You are strong.
You are great.
You are the Most High
You are Almighty.
You, Holy Father are King of heaven and earth.
You are Three and One, Lord God, all Good.
You are Good, all Good, supreme Good.
Lord God, living and true.
You are love. You are wisdom.
You are humility. You are endurance.
You are rest. You are peace.
You are joy and gladness.
You are justice and moderation.
You are all our riches, and You suffice for us.
You are beauty.
You are gentleness.
You are our protector.
You are our guardian and defender.
You are our courage. You are our haven and our hope.
You are our faith, our great consolation.
You are our eternal life, Great and Wonderful Lord.
God Almighty, Merciful Savior.

To End Sacred Ritual of Bowl

Write the name of the Lord upon a piece of paper. Touch each bowl with the paper then take a match and light the paper as a way to send it all to God, once again as a sweet incense lifting heavenward to God.

Write a Haiku Poem

A Haiku Poem (hi Koo) is an unrhymed verse form of Japanese origin. Any words that express feeling are the right words. Haiku Poems are written in three lines, then five lines, then seven lines and then five lines to end the poem.

As you create your Haiku Poem, try to move from feelings of grief to feelings of hope through faith in the Lord. Feel the words that you write. Use colorful paper to write your poem on or use colorful pens and pencils. Try to use words that express your deepest feelings of loss, to hope, and eventually joy as you recall you loved one who has died. Also, by faith, seek to write words that will, in time, express your healing from loss. Invite the Lord to guide your writing.

An Example of a Haiku Poem for Grief to Hope

Grief

Dark clouds
Heavy thoughts
Loneliness and isolation

Growing Hope

God hears
God will help
I need radical love
God sends refreshing rain.

^2 https://www.daily-prayers.org/angels-and--saints/prayers-of-saint-francis-of-asissi/
Clouds move away

_Healing_

Grass grows
Flowers break through the sod
Rain subsides
Sunshine almost out.
Breathing is easier
A restful yawn refreshes
Sweet naps refresh.

_Praises to God_

A peace seems to comfort me.
Wind and rain refresh my soul
Warm puppy noses
Playful kittens.
Hope is birthing!

_Sensory Healing: Create a Prayer Cloth_

Take a cloth or scarf and splash a little lavender essential oil on it or on your bed pillow or on your clothes, sense the loveliness of nature.

Create something from your giftedness such as crafts, quilting, cooking, or baking, woodworking, painting, writing, knitting, and building, repairing cars, use your creative gifts to celebrate life and to celebrate the one that you loved knowing that he/she is spiritually alive. Know that your loved will see that you are celebrating life in your own special way.

Whatever you do, do it unto the Lord and in thankful memory of your loved one as well as a way to care for yourself. And ask the Lord to bless the works of your hands.

And you may create your own liturgy/service in celebration of the person whom you lost.

_Have hope: He is Risen!_