



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

## A Service of Healing for a Hurting World

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No one can read the newspaper or watch the evening news and not see the brokenness and bleeding of our world in many places. The following service for healing and wholeness is one response to this hurting world and to our own pain as we try to live faithfully within it.

### ***Background***

The Genesis stories tell us not only that Creation is “very good” (Genesis 1:31), but also that God intended to provide humankind with everything necessary for a healthy, wholesome life. Further, God's valuing the well-being of humankind is demonstrated graphically in the person of Jesus Christ who healed the diseased, mended the broken, helped the helpless and fed the hungry. God's intention for health and wholeness, though, is often frustrated. Our task, if we are faithful to Jesus Christ, is to affirm and cooperate with this intentional will of God for wholeness and harmonious functioning of the world. Thus, it is very appropriate for members of the Body of Christ to meet together to prayerfully lift up to God's healing both our own need to be healed of despair and apathy, whatever prevents us personally from affirming and participating in God's will for wholeness, and also specific social ills, such as hunger, that we recognize as frustrating God's intention for our world. In our obedience as part of the Body of Christ, we become living channels for his healing and saving touch in our world. For many, a healing service can provide the setting to open those channels.

Although this service can be used anytime during the year, Advent can be a particularly appropriate time; for during Advent we examine ourselves and our world in light of God's intent of salvation – wholeness – for all people.

Eucharist or Holy Communion may be observed within the healing service. To participate in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup is to participate in the Incarnation, Atonement, Redemption and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. To become “at one” with him always promotes health and wholeness and, within this service, prepares worshipers to be God's channels for healing in our world.

This service also suggests including the ritual of anointing with oil. This ritual may be outside the normal traditions of many churches, but the practice is rooted deeply in Scripture. In Jesus' time, oil (usually olive oil) was universally considered a medicine. Anointing the sick with healing oil, such as in the Good Samaritan story, was common practice. So the physical symbol of anointing with oil that which is hurt and broken can be a powerful and dramatic communicator of God's love and healing at work in the world.

This worship experience is best done as the culmination of a study that relates the Gospel to our hurting and hungry world. Again, the four Sundays in Advent lend themselves very well to this purpose. Whether the service is held within the context of a study or a single worship experience, participants will need to be given some background to the idea of a 'healing service' beforehand.

## **The Healing Service**

### ***Silent Meditation***

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from this time forth and forevermore.

*Psalm 125:2)*

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

(Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 1:7)

### ***Responsive Praise***

Leader: How manifold are your works, o Lord!

Men: In wisdom you have wrought them all – the earth is full of your creatures.

Women: The sea also, great and wide, schools without number, living things both small and great.

Leader: God looked at all Creation, and found it very good.

All: May the glory of the Lord endure forever.

(Genesis 1:31; Psalm 104:24-25)

### ***Hymn (Select a hymn of creation and praise)***

### ***Prophetic Challenge***

Leader: Listen, people of Israel, to this funeral song which I sing over you; Virgin Israel has fallen, never to rise again! She lies abandoned on the ground, and no one helps her up.

Men: You people hate anyone who challenges injustice and speaks the whole truth in court.

Women: You have oppressed the poor and robbed them of their gain.

Men: And so you will not live in the fine stone houses you build or drink wine from the vineyards you plant.

Leader: I know how terrible your sins are and how many crimes you have committed. You persecute good people, take bribes and prevent the poor from getting justice in the courts.

Men: The Sovereign Lord says, “A city in Israel sends out a thousand soldiers,

Women: but only a hundred return;

Men: Another city sends out a hundred,

Women: but only ten come back.”

All: The Lord says to the people of Israel, “Come to me and you will live.”  
(Amos 5:1-4, 10-12)

### ***Dialogue***

*Begin by having eight to ten worshipers stand one at a time to read a current news headline. These headlines should identify suffering in the world in need of God’s healing. Ask all to reflect on these headlines and similar ones they themselves have read. Encourage worshipers to write on a 3x5 index card provided for them one or two sentences that reflect their thoughts and concerns. Allow time for participants to share aloud what they have written.*

### ***Corporate Confession***

Lord, we listen to your prophets’ words, knowing they are for us. We have misused your world, so perfect at Creation. Land meant to provide for all, provides for only a few. Young men dream of plows and corn, but find instead guns and warplanes. Women, who want homes for their children and soup for their pots, instead pitch refugee tents and boil grass for dinner. Babies born with your promise, die from disease and starvation. In your world of plenty, millions face impossible choices - food or heat, shoes or a coat; electricity or rent.

Lord of Creation, move us from hardness to compassion, from guilt to forgiveness, from apathy to action, from complicity to justice. Heal our brokenness and the wounds of your creation. Amen.

### ***Words of Assurance and Forgiveness***

“Comfort my people,” says our God. “Comfort them! Tell them they have suffered long enough and their sins are now forgiven. Come to me and you will live,”  
(Isaiah 40:1-2; Amos 5:2)

### ***Homily or Sermon***

### ***Eucharist, Holy Communion, Lord's Supper***

After partaking of the bread and cup according to your tradition, invite worshipers to the altar for special prayers of intercession and healing for our world.

### ***Period of Intercession***

*(Gathered at the altar)*

Leader: We are together here as members of the Body of Christ, called to do his healing work on earth. Let us claim his healing power and know with certainty that that power will flow through us, his channels, to those in need. Let us be assured, too, of the promise made to all intercessors: “...whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will.”  
(Mark 11:24)

### ***Anointing with Oil and Laying-on-of-Hands***

*The rituals of anointing with oil and laying-on-of-hands should be incorporated according to your own religious tradition or as you feel appropriate. The following format is but one alternative.*

*As a part of the period of intercession, have a bowl of olive oil available. Those who wish may kneel, prayerfully lifting up both the concern written on their cards and their own personal requests for healing that in their lives ~which prevents them from being fully open channels for God's healing power. The pastor or a team of clergy and lay persons can move from worshiper to worshiper for laying-on-of-hands and anointing with oil. Some worshipers may wish to verbalize their petitions for healing while hands are laid on their heads and the oil is touched to their foreheads. But whether or not petitions are verbalized, repeat together these words for each individual:*

*“Lord of Creation, Lord of Mercy, bring your healing touch.”*

### ***The Good News of Deliverance***

*(Read in unison)*

All: The Sovereign Lord has filled me with the spirit.  
God has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor,  
To heal the broken-hearted,  
To announce release to captives  
And freedom to those in prison.  
God has sent me to proclaim  
That the time has come  
When the Lord will save all people,  
And defeat their enemies.  
God has sent me to comfort all who mourn.  
To give to those who mourn in Zion  
Joy and gladness instead of grief,  
A song of praise instead of sorrow.  
They will be like trees  
That the Lord has planted.  
They will do what is right,  
And God will be praised for what is done.  
They will rebuild cities that have long been in ruins.  
*(Isaiah 61:1-4)*

### ***Hymn of Praise and Victory***

#### ***Benediction***