

A Ritual for the Burning of Prayer Requests **Spiritual Support Group for People with a Mental Illness**

PREPARATION: *This is always done outside in a location away from combustible material. A container (metal or suitable pottery) is used. The fire is started before the rite begins. Fire starter sticks, which can be purchased in the camping equipment sections of stores, can be used to start the fire. The prayer slips should be bound together with a metal tie or wire. Always have a container of water nearby to put the fire out at the end of the rite or in the event of a problem during the rite)*

OPENING PRAYER

Presider: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

The Peace of the Lord with you.

Assembly: And with your spirit.

Presider: We come together today to raise these prayers up to you Lord. On these prayer slips are written words of hopes, words of fear, words of praise and words of thankfulness. As the Psalmist prayed so long ago we pray to you today: May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice. May the smoke of these prayers of God's people rise up before You.

(The presider then places the prayer slips in the metal container. After the slips begin burning the Word of God is proclaimed)

SCRIPTURE READING (Psalm 139:1-12)

Reader: A reading from the Book of Psalms

LORD, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. You sift through my travels and my rest; with all my ways you are familiar.

Even before a word is on my tongue, LORD, you know it all. Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, far too lofty for me to reach.

Where can I go from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? If I ascend to the heavens, you are there; if I lie down in Sheol, there you are. If I take the wings of dawn and dwell beyond the sea, Even there your hand guides me, your right hand holds me fast.

If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be my light" — Darkness is not dark for you, and night shines as the day. Darkness and light are but one.

The Word of the Lord.

Assembly: Thanks be to God.

SHORT HOMILY/REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Presider: The way we talk about people and their illnesses affects the people themselves and how we treat the illness. In the case of mental illness there is so much fear, ignorance and hurtful attitudes that the people who suffer from mental illness needlessly suffer further. We ask God that the fear be turned to love, the ignorance be turned to wisdom and the hurtful attitudes be turned to compassion. Let us pray.

Reader: So often people who have a mental illness are known as their illness; People say that "she is bipolar" or "he is schizophrenic". When we talk about people who have a mental illness we should not use that phrase. People who have cancer are not cancer; those with diabetes are not diabetes. People with a mental illness are not the illness – they are beautiful creations of God. We ask God to help everyone to see them for their goodness, their strength and their beauty – we pray to the Lord: **"Lord hear our prayer"**.

Reader: Everyone who has a mental illness has a right to the best therapy and medical care available. We ask God that those with a mental illness be encouraged and supported in their efforts to be healthy and manage their illness - we pray to the Lord: **"Lord hear our prayer"**.

Reader: All too often the medical care that is available is not enough and far too many people suffer. Our society does not provide the resources that are needed to adequately understand and treat mental illness. We ask God to change our society and to give wisdom to our leaders so that every single person suffering from mental illness will receive all the care they need – we pray to the Lord: **"Lord hear our prayer"**.

Reader: We believe that someday – someday - cures will be found, but until then, we ask God to help us support and be compassionate to those with mental illness, every bit as much as we support those who suffer from cancer, heart disease or any other illness – we pray to the Lord: **"Lord hear our prayer"**.

Reader: All too often our loved ones who had a mental illness died from suicide. They were sweet, wonderful people who loved life, the people around them- and had faith in you. Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and may perpetual light shine upon them – we pray to the Lord: **"Lord hear our prayer"**.

Presider: Heavenly Father, Giver of life and health, we trust that in your time and way, you will dispel all darkness with your light, all confusion with your order, all fear with your peace. Through Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Presider: Lord, we come before you today giving our prayers to you. In you all things are possible. Hold our hearts within yours, and renew us mind, body, and soul. You gave us life, and you also give us the gift of infinite joy. Give us the strength to move forward on the path you've laid out for us. Help us to let Christ's light be seen in our actions and attitudes each day. **AMEN**

Deacon or Priest: May almighty God bless you - the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

(A lay minister who is not a priest or deacon makes the sign of the cross on them self while saying:
May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. **AMEN**)