**Liturgy of Healing for the Prevention of Suicide**

(Quiet music as the people gather. Lights dim if possible, may be brightened after reading from Isaiah. To begin the service – ring a chime or bell; light candles.)

**Old Testament Reading:** Isaiah 9:2, 4

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them and the burden upon their shoulders, thou hast broken in pieces O God.”

**Call to Worship**

Leader: Jesus said, “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” And so we invite each other to this time of peaceful worship.

*All:* We come, bringing our hurts, our worries and our fears.

Leader: We come seeking relief from pain, anxiety, loneliness and despair. With the psalmist of Scriptures we say,

*All:* “O Lord, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living, Give heed to my cry, for I am low.” We come to rest in God.

**Opening Hymn** (God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale)
Opening Prayer:  Leader: God of Mercy, hear our prayer for ourselves, our friends and families who hold painful memories of loss, grief, and suicide. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of the Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow, despair and promises, death and new life.  Amen.

Old Testament Reading:  Jeremiah 8:18-22

Prayers of the People

Leader: Let us pray to the Father of Mercies: Father, we pray for the unity and mission of the holy Church of God; that it may welcome and serve all those who live with sadness, depression or thoughts of suicide. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Guide us, the citizens and leaders of this state and this city … that we may unite to provide for those who suffer in mind and spirit. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Forgive us when we knowingly or unknowingly ridicule, look in disgust, neglect or discriminate against those who struggle. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Comfort and relieve those who are deeply troubled. Bring them hope, peace and the consolation of a loving community to surround them. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Protect and defend those living with emotional, physical or spiritual anguish from all exploitation, addictions and abuse. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Walk with the homeless, runaways and missing persons, those who are destitute and all those who have no one to care for them. Forgive us for our indifference. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We commend to your mercy and defense all who are contemplating suicide. Bring someone or something to intervene at this very moment… (moment of silence)

Leader: Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.
Leader: For all families who have lost a loved one to suicide, bring them comfort in trusting that your grace accepts their loved one, despite the final desperate act that brought them into your loving arms. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Empower us to speak up for those who have no voice. Save us from complacency and from accepting the shortcomings of the systems that have failed them. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Guide those who do research for the prevention and treatment of mental illness that can lead to suicide; uphold them with your compassion. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all those who are survivors of suicide and for all those in recovery. Return them to full and rewarding lives. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: 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.

New Testament Reading: (Romans 8: 18, 35, 37-39)

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer for Those Touched by Suicide

Leader: Holy Father, we pray the words of Psalm 34:18: “The Lord is close to the broken hearted, and saves those crushed in spirit.”

All: We thank you for your steadfast and life-giving love. To this love and care we commend all those overcome by the chaos around them and the torment within them.

Leader: We pray that all those who sought relief by their own hand will know the comfort of your eternal presence, where you wipe away every tear and where there is no sorrow.
All: We ask your comfort to all those whose lives have been touched by the pain of suicide, that you would lighten their darkness and bring them out of their distress.

Leader: We ask that you touch all our hearts with your love and compassion, allowing it to overflow through us, touching the hearts of others.

All: Give us grace to care for one another: forgiving all, sharing all, and striving to always radiate your loving presence in our pain filled world.

Leader: Uphold us, enfold us, and sustain us with the joy and comfort of your never ending peace and never ceasing love.

All: We pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our salvation. Amen.

Anointing:

Leader: O God, the giver of health and salvation, we give thanks to you for the gift of oil. As your holy apostles anointed many who were sick of body and spirit, so pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on this gift, that those who in faith and repentance receive this anointed may be made whole; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Note: Those who wish to be anointed are invited to come forward. The sign of the cross will then be made on your forehead with oil. The words spoken will be, “I anoint you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Your response is “Amen.”)

Hymn During the Anointing (HY 676)

Prayer for Healing

Leader: The God of strength moves within us;

All: The God of courage hears our distress.

Leader: The God of hope reveals wholeness to us;

All: The God of healing touches us when we are broken.

Leader: When the pain overwhelms us, when the burden is too heavy,

All: We turn to our God, who is sustaining and redeeming.

Leader: When there is loneliness, when there is isolation,

All: We turn to our God, who is loving and ever present.

Leader: For God created us, redeemed us and sustains us, and we are not alone.
**All:** Lead us in your ways, O God, and bring us your healing touch.

**Leader:** Almighty God, we pray that our brothers and sisters may be comforted in their suffering and made whole. When they feel afraid, give them courage; when they feel afflicted, afford them patience; when they are lost, offer them hope; when they are alone, move us to their side. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

**Closing Prayer:** Prayer of St. Francis

**Leader:** Lord make us instruments of your peace ….

**All:** Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving, that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

**Blessing**

Priest: The Blessing, Mercy and Grace of Our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you for ever more. Amen.

**Closing Hymn** (HY 335, I Am the Bread of Life)

**References:**

*Prayers of the People* adapted from and patterned after *Prayers of the People* from the *Book of Common Prayer*, 1979.


*Blue Christmas Service*, San Carlos United Methodist Church (2009)


Mental Health Ministries: [http://mentalhealthministries.net/resources/worship_resources.html](http://mentalhealthministries.net/resources/worship_resources.html)

Mental Health Ministries: [http://mentalhealthministries.net/resources/suicide_resources.html](http://mentalhealthministries.net/resources/suicide_resources.html)