

Prayers, Poems and Blessings for Uncertain Times



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Compiled by Christine Wagner-Hecht and Lois Cole

As hospitals all over the world respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we received a book of prayers from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center created by their chaplains in response to this crisis. Their work inspired us to move ahead with one for our UIHC community. Some of the prayers are reprinted/adapted (with permission) from their work. Others have been graciously granted permission for us to use by those mentioned below:

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Our hope is that this book will bring comfort and peace to patients, families, and staff now and in the days ahead.

Pandemic

By Rev. Lynn Ungar



What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

A Parent's Prayer for a Sick Child

God, you know that right now things feel scary.

We are worried, and my child does not feel well.

But even now, we know we are not
alone. Love surrounds us like warm
blankets.

Hope is still there, even when we
cannot always see it.

Everywhere we look, there are
doctors and nurses and helpers.

May our hearts be filled with peace instead
of worry,

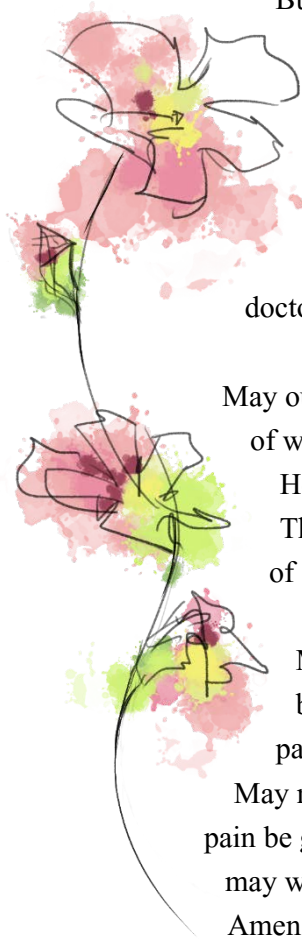
Hope instead of fear,

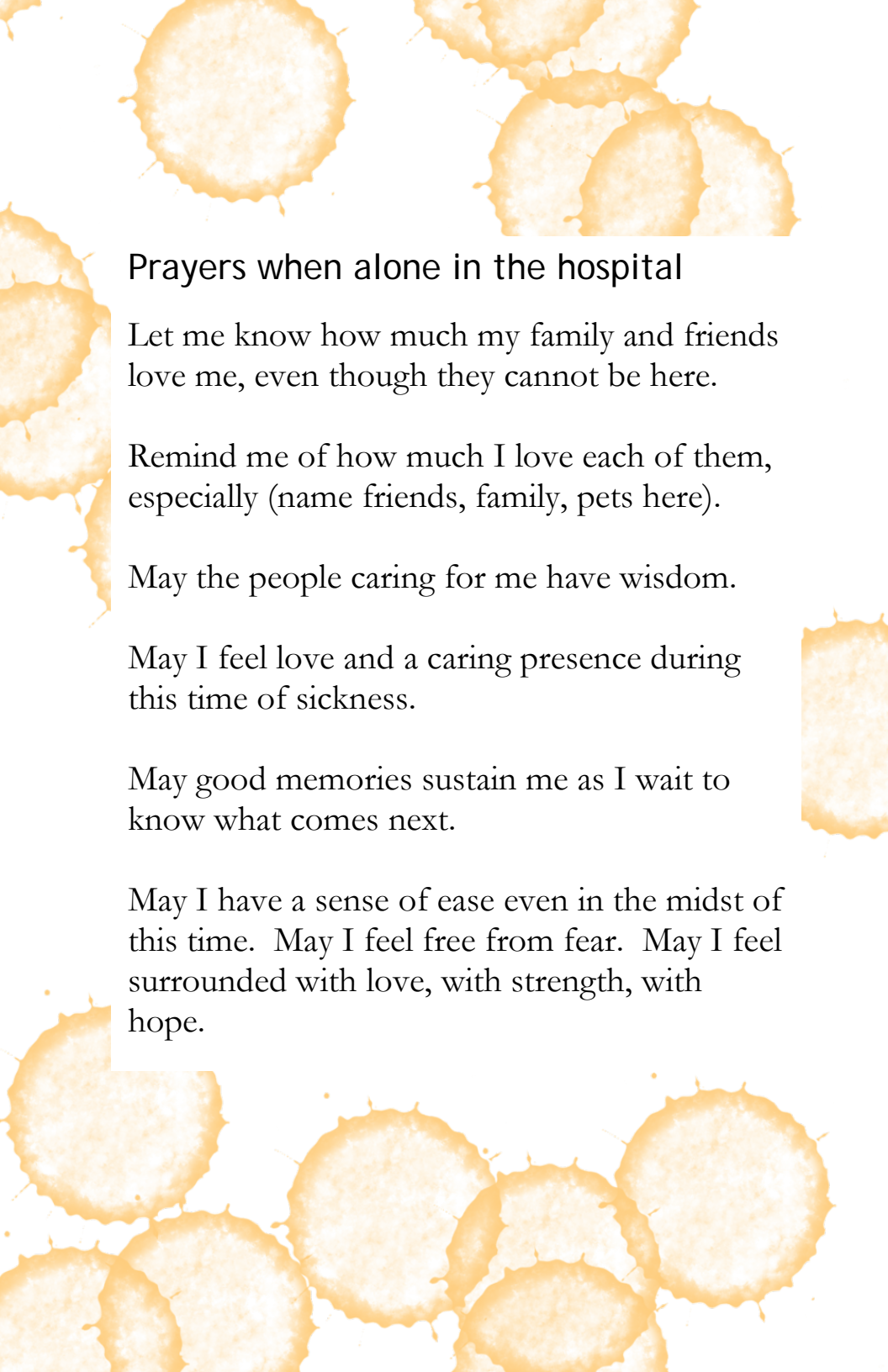
Thankfulness for all the helpers, instead
of loneliness.

May we hold tight to each other,
believing that even when it is hard and
painful, it will get better.

May my child's body heal, and may their
pain be gone. May angels watch over us, and
may we rest in peace and hope.

Amen.





Prayers when alone in the hospital

Let me know how much my family and friends love me, even though they cannot be here.

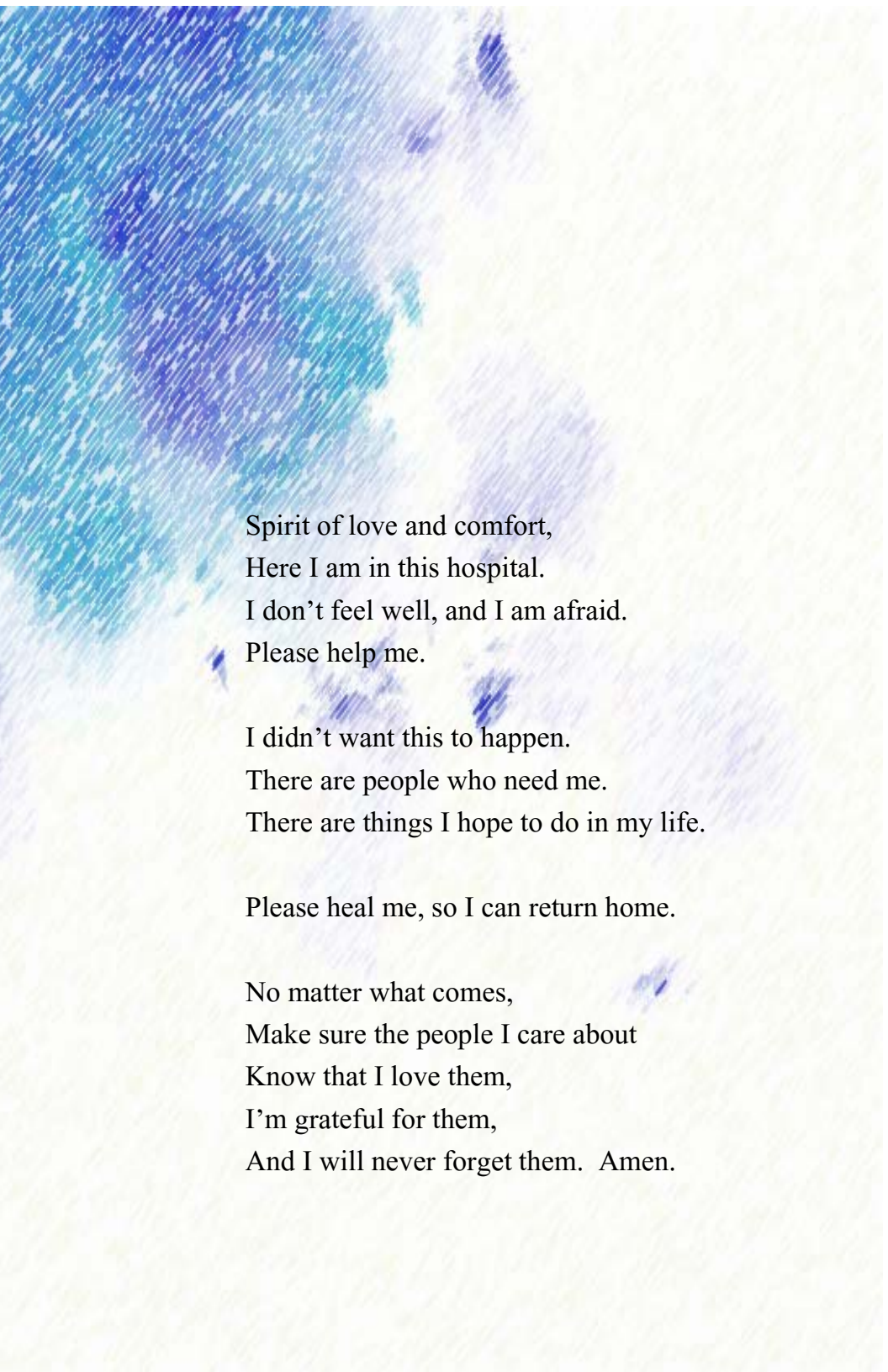
Remind me of how much I love each of them, especially (name friends, family, pets here).

May the people caring for me have wisdom.

May I feel love and a caring presence during this time of sickness.

May good memories sustain me as I wait to know what comes next.

May I have a sense of ease even in the midst of this time. May I feel free from fear. May I feel surrounded with love, with strength, with hope.



Spirit of love and comfort,
Here I am in this hospital.
I don't feel well, and I am afraid.
Please help me.

I didn't want this to happen.
There are people who need me.
There are things I hope to do in my life.

Please heal me, so I can return home.

No matter what comes,
Make sure the people I care about
Know that I love them,
I'm grateful for them,
And I will never forget them. Amen.



for beloveds
who are critically ill

from *enfleshed*

Divine Companion,
when loved ones, strangers, and kin are tucked away in isolation,
fighting for their breath and yearning for home,
the chasm between us feels impossible to bear.

Will you, Sacred One,
whisper to them the words of comfort we long to speak?
Will you wrap your embrace around them as if our arms?
Let their hands feel our gentle squeeze.

Their cheek, our kiss.

Upon their chest, a calming hand,
a promise of our care through the rising and falling,
in every reach for life...

Assure them of your love, and ours.

Call for a holy cloud of witnesses to surround -
draw close every saint who knew and loved them.

You do not abandon anyone to suffer alone.

Wherever there is pain, fear, or distress,

You are already there,

willingly sharing with us in our hardest hours.

If death comes,

welcome them gently into the fold of eternal love
where peace and rest await.

In life and in death,

we take refuge in your Presence that stretches across time and space,
a Sacred meeting place where we find each other
even when we are apart.

May it be so.

For Hospital Staff

Prayer for the Care Team

Holy One, be present with us as we labor here, in all that we do—

In times when we feel weak, connect us to our strength
In times when we feel afraid, connect us to our courage
In times when we feel lost, connect us to your presence
In times when we feel overwhelmed, help us to do the
next needful thing.

Reveal to us each day the beauty that comes from our work

The healing that comes from our hands

The comfort that comes from our presence

The hope that comes from our connectedness

And when this day's work is done, give us rest, and peace, and
ease

And keep us safe in your care. Amen.

Mantra for the Care Team

In all that we do today, through every encounter,
With patients, with family members, with hospital staff,
with each other, and with ourselves,
May we be guided by wisdom and compassion,
May we be given strength and grace.

Blessing for the Care Team

"Friends, we know that life is short
And we have too little time to gladden the hearts of those
who travel with us. So be swift to love and make haste to
be kind."

(Henri-Frederic Amiel)

May the blessing of God or all that sustains you,
Keep you and fill you with all that you need, just for
today.

Prayer for People in Medical Professions

By Maren Tirabassi



O God of many names, who calls us all to healing,
we pray for those in medical professions
in this season of personal danger —

for staff in assisted living facilities,
nursing homes, memory care units
knowing what will happen if the virus
becomes a new resident,

for home health aides and visiting nurses,
giving hands-on assistance
and trying to avoid handing-on contagion
from one home to another,

for those in medical offices,
caring for ongoing illness and new ones —
the chronic and the acute,

for those in hospice care,
explaining the limitations on visitors,
or dental care, turning away all but greatest need,
or veterinary care, meeting pet owners
in parking lots with a new leash,
to taking animals inside alone,

for those in physical therapy,
re-scheduling again and again
and worrying about the damage from waiting,
for schedulers — absorbing the anger
at appointments and procedures delayed,

for those in mental health —
offering insight and assessment and therapy
in new online formats,
worrying about suicidal thoughts,
absorbing new clients for whom quarantine
ripped fragile webs around fear or loss,
or tipped chemical imbalance.

We pray for those in direct risk,
and a daily overload of patients and problems,

for emergency responders
doing what is needed without regard to danger
for staff in emergency rooms,
day after day — assessing, deciding,

and for those who work in units
dedicated to Covid-19,
caring for patients' breathing and fearing,

short on knowledge and equipment,
short on answers to families,
short on masks other protective gear
and just plain sleep,
missing their own families,
knowing that even a flattened curve
will include so many people,
and may include them.

Companion all of these, O God,
Give them strength, hope, assistance,
and so much patience,
as they become the perimeter of safety
around a worldwide circle of love.

Prayer for Chaplains

By Maren Tirabassi

We give thanks for chaplains
who carry a house of prayer
around inside of them --
when the whole world
has been tipped upside down.

We give thanks
for all the ordinary times,
whether it is sorting out dietary needs,
rug or rosary or rabbi's number,
of many different faithful
who face incarceration,

or waiting in the emergency room
until a family member comes,
touching base after surgery
or test results or chemo,

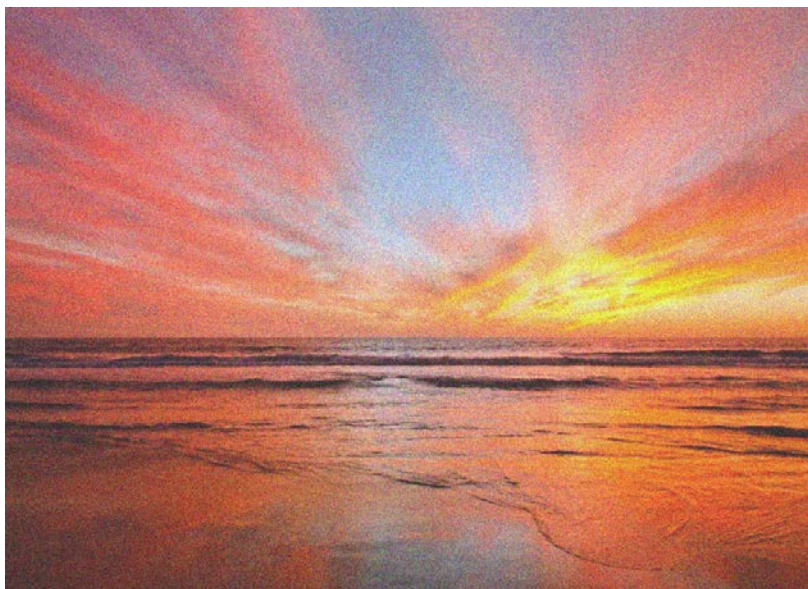
or being holiness with a face
in a house with hospice or a hospice
house.

And we give thanks
in this season of pandemic,
for chaplains who must become
both spiritual friend and surrogate
family
when safety closes out
spouse and partner, sibling and friend
child and parent and pastor,
who must help families understand
waiting for a funeral,



or use gesture-language eloquently
when the right translator
can't access a detention center,
pray deeply meaningful words
on a screen,

who must ease the fear of medical staff
that they will bring home the virus,
figure out how to anoint without
touching,
remember everything,
exude calm,
step over the pigeon cages
and make everyone believe
that everywhere is a house of prayer.



In the Evening

*Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work,
or watch, or weep this night, and give your
angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the
sick...give rest to the weary, bless the dying,
soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield
the joyous; and all for your love' sake.*

Amen.

Interfaith



Mi Shebeirachi, One who Blessed Our Ancestors

May the one who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless and heal those who are ill. May the Blessed Holy One be filled with compassion for their health to be restored and their strength to be revived. May God swiftly send them a complete renewal of body and spirit, and let us say, "Amen."

Traditional Jewish prayer for the sick

In the name of Allah, for Allah, O Allah, the Lord of this sacred, helpful earth, the Lord of the light which is in it, the Lord of the body which is resting in it, the Lord of the guardian angels, let it cure (my) disease. O Allah let this pure earth be a source of abundant means of livelihood, useful knowledge and a remedy for all (my) pains and ailments.

Muslim prayer -- Imam Jafar bin Muhammad

Beloved Lord, Almighty God,
Through the Rays of the Sun,
Through the Waves of the Air,
Through the All Pervading Life in Space;
Purify and Revivify Us
And we pray, heal our bodies, hearts, and souls. Amen

Sufi prayer - Pir-o-murshid Inayat Khan

Thy name is my healing, O my God,
and remembrance of Thee is my remedy.
Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion.
Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succor
in both this world and the world to come.
Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful,
the All-Knowing,
the All-Wise

Bha'i prayer -- Bahá'u'lláh

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

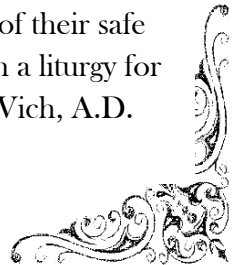
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Jewish and Christian scripture (KJV)

Be for them, Lord, a defense in emergency, a harbor in shipwreck, a refuge in the journey, shade in the heat, light in the darkness, as staff on the slippery slope, joy amidst suffering, consolation in sadness, safety in adversity, caution in prosperity, so that these your servants, under your leadership, may arrive unharmed, and the church which laments their absence may experience the joy of their safe and prosperous return...(Christian prayer from a liturgy for those setting off on pilgrimage, The Missal of Vich, A.D. 1038)



Creator hear us, for we are your children . . .

We thank you for the lessons that you have taught us and
for the life that you have allowed us to lead . . .

We thank you for the white light that surrounds us, and for
that same white light which transmutes all negativity
into love and healing.

We thank you for the healing of our souls,
the healing of the Earth and for the healing of all humanity.

We call upon the power of the universe, to
allow us happiness, prosperity, healing and love.

We call upon the power of the universe for
good relationship to all things . . .

We honor you Creator, as we honor all things seen and unseen.

We honor you Creator, as we honor our ancestors,
as we honor ourselves.

AHO

Native American -- Grant Redhawk-Two feathers



O Creator, lead us from the unreal to the real.

O Creator, lead us from darkness to light.

O Creator, lead us from death to immortality.

Shanti, Shanti, Shanti, Om

Hindu scripture -- Brhadaranyaka Upanishad

When my heart is dry and parched,
come with a merciful shower.

When grace has departed from life,
come with a burst of song.

Excerpt from *Gitanjali* by Rabindranath Tagore

Metta Prayer

May I dwell in safety.

May I be happy and healthy.

May I be free from afflictions.

May I be at peace.

May my loved ones dwell in safety.

May they be happy and healthy.

May they be free from afflictions.

May they be at peace.

May others (staff/strangers/enemies/those in need/ all beings)
dwell in safety.

May they be happy and healthy.

May they be free from afflictions.

May they be at peace.

Buddhist Lovingkindness Meditation

May the long time sun

Shine upon you,

All love surround you,

And the pure light within you

Guide your way on.

Kundalini Yoga farewell blessing



Blessing for Waiting

by Jan Richardson

Who wait
for the night
to end

bless them.

Who wait
for the night
to begin

bless them.

Who wait
in the hospital room
who wait
in the cell
who wait
in prayer

bless them.

Who wait
for news
who wait
for the phone call
who wait
for a word

who wait
for a job
a house
a child

bless them.

Who wait
for one who
will come home

who wait
for one who
will not come home

bless them.

Who wait with fear
who wait with joy
who wait with peace
who wait with rage

who wait for the end
who wait for the
beginning
who wait alone
who wait together

bless them.

Who wait
without knowing
what they wait for
or why

bless them.

Who wait
when they
should not wait
who wait
when they should be
in motion
who wait
when they need
to rise
who wait
when they need
to set out

bless them.

Who wait
for the end
of waiting
who wait
for the fullness
of time
who wait
emptied and
open and
ready

who wait
for you,

o bless.

Lockdown

By Brother Richard Hendrick

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her number

through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours

in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality



To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.