

## **A National Day of Mourning and Lament**

***A call to grieve and honor those who have died from COVID-19 and join together in a National Day of Mourning and Lament for the healing of our nation***

Our nation has passed a grievous point in history: 100,000 Americans have died from COVID-19. As people of faith, we cannot allow this grim number to go unnoticed. Always and everywhere, it is the duty of religious communities to remember the dead and mourn their passing. From generation to generation, we have been given this task: to speak their names and honor their lives. The deaths of 100,000 Americans shall not pass by unmarked and unlamented.

It is hard to comprehend this magnitude of deaths in so short a time. The past three months have been some of the deadliest in U.S. history. Americans have endured more death than in many of our wars, as we just memorialized last weekend. At 100,000 deaths, COVID-19 becomes the fifth most deadly event in U.S. history. The number of deceased is equivalent to whole towns and cities. The pandemic now ranks among those moments in the life of our nation marked by national remembrances, somber memorials, and moving tributes. As people of faith, we cannot let this moment pass unnoticed. The nation must be given the chance to mourn, lament, and remember the dead.

The rapid spread of the disease, the scope of its impact, and the mitigation through “social distancing” has prevented the time and space for us to grieve. It has been impossible to bury our dead as people have for thousands of years—communally and intimately with friends, family, and neighbors. As religious leaders, we are deeply connected with our nation’s pain. Both as individuals and collectively as a nation, we need time to stop, reflect, pray, mourn, and honor the dead.

To meet this need, religious communities across faiths will act with unprecedented unity, gathering together safely to mourn, memorialize, and remember their lives both in our diverse faith traditions and in our public squares. Together, we will pray for the healing of our nation.

On May 29, 30, and 31 — Friday, Saturday, and Sunday — America’s religious communities will gather for the first time following this grim 100,000 marker — many of us still virtually. Keeping with their own traditions and practices, each will mourn our American dead and pray for the healing of our nation.

On Friday, with Ramadan finished, Muslims will remember the revelation of the Quran. On Friday and Saturday, Jews will remember God’s covenant as they celebrate Shavuot and read their *yizkor* (remembrance) prayers. On Sunday, Christians will celebrate Pentecost Sunday, when the first Christians were given courage through the reception of the Holy Spirit. We will name, honor, lament, and offer our tributes to the lives and families of those who have died. The Christian prayers of mourning for the 100,000 dead will be offered across our Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American traditions and communities.

But religious communities do not act alone. We call too on political leaders — the president, senators and members of Congress, governors, and mayors—to lead a National Day of Mourning and Lament on Monday, June 1 — at noon local time — to pause to remember those who have died. It will be appropriate for flags to be lowered and to observe moments of silence, mourning, memorial, prayer, reflection, and bell ringing. We will stop. We will remember. We will mourn and honor our dead. We will pray for the healing of the nation.

In the days prior to our national weekend of remembrance, we invite Americans to use social media and other communication platforms to post prayers and laments, names, photos, and tributes to those who have died of the coronavirus in the United States, using the hashtags #Lament100k and #DayofMourning. In many civic spaces, outside places of worship and our homes, groups or individuals may place empty chairs with the names, dates, and photos as tribute to and in remembrance of those who are no longer with us.

We will ask God to help heal our land in a moment of mourning as we honor those who have died, often without their loved ones around them. We come together both to weep and to rejoice for those lives that have been lost. We shall mourn the loss of so many Americans, many known only to families and friends, coworkers and neighbors. We will mourn family members and friends whom we loved; worked and worshiped with; ate, played, and prayed with; important members of our communities, some who were on the front lines of caring for and serving others; and those we passed on the street with a smile and nod. By God's grace, we will mourn with families who have not been able to memorialize, mourn, or properly bury their dead.

Our lament will also honor hard truths we have learned during this pandemic: Our suffering has been unequal, elders have been vulnerable and alone, black and brown neighbors have borne disproportionately the brunt of sickness and death and the front lines labor of the fight against this disease. Native communities, our land's original caretakers, have been particularly hard hit — as they have been so many times in the past. Asian Americans have been targeted by hateful words and actions. Our prayers for the healing of the nation must acknowledge the brokenness of our democracy and rededicate ourselves to repair the injustices this pandemic has revealed, even as work for the healing of those who are afflicted with the virus.

This vocation of the faith community to stop, name, feel, remember, memorialize, and pray for the dead, their families and their friends unites all our traditions and transcends our politics.

This momentous and tragic 100,000 marker will not be an empty data point on death's grim graph. We will remember those whom we loved and pray for both healing and hope — for our nation and the world. As a people, we have borne this pandemic's cost in the lives of our loved ones. As a nation, we shall honor and mourn them together.

As faith leaders, we must help to lead our congregations, communities, and country in this time of grief and lament in a way that will lead us forward more united as a country to address the very real challenges we face ahead. And that we must do together.

Rev. Eddy Alemán, General Secretary, Reformed Church in America

Dr. Claude Alexander, Pastor, The Park Church

Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief

Rev. Cornelius Atkinson, Pastor/State Chairman, Church of God Ministries – Anderson, IN

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Archbishop, Legate and Executive Director of Ecumenical Office of the Armenian Orthodox Church, Armenian Orthodox Church

Dr. Nicole Baker Fulgham, President, The Expectations Project

Bishop Carroll Baltimore, Bishop, Global Alliance Interfaith Networks

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, Co-chair, Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

Sr. Bridget Bearss, Executive Director, Stuart Center

Rev. David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World

Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister, United Church of Christ  
Rev. Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie, President, Boddie and Soul Ministries  
Carol Bremer-Bennett, Executive Director, US, World Renew  
Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, Dean, Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary  
Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Professor, Columbia Theological Seminary  
John Carr, Director, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University  
Rev. Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference  
Rev. Eugene Cho, President-Elect, Bread for the World  
Shane Claiborne, co-founder, Red Letter Christians  
Rev. Paula Clayton Dempsey, Director of Partnership Relations, Alliance of Baptists  
The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church  
Kaitlin Curtice, Author and Speaker  
Marie Dennis, Senior Advisor, Pax Christi International  
Sister Karen Donahue, RSM, Justice Team Member, Sisters of Mercy  
Reverend Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Rev. Dr. Bob Ekblad, Pastor and Co-founder, Tierra Nueva  
Rev. Dr. Claude Forehand, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Kannapolis  
Rev. Dr. Robert M. Franklin, President Emeritus, Morehouse College  
Rev. Donnie Garris, Moderator, United Missionary Baptist Association  
Rev. Joel Gibson, Executive Director, The Micah Interfaith Clergy Table of New York City  
The Rt. Rev. J. Christian Giesler, Bishop, The Moravian Church  
Rev. Dr. Aaron Graham, Lead Pastor, The District Church  
Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America  
Susan Gunn, Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Dr. Mimi Haddad, President, CBE International  
Reverend Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Society  
Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, Senior Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church (DOC)  
Rev. Adam Hamilton, Pastor, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection  
Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, Retired General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Lisa Sharon Harper, President and Founder, Freedom Road, LLC  
Rev. Fred Harrell, Founder and Sr. Pastor, City Church San Francisco  
Rev. Jimmie R. Hawkins, Director of the PCUSA Office of Public Witness, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Rev. Joey Haynes, University Chaplain, Queens University of Charlotte  
Rev. Dr. Peter Heltzel, Associate Professor of Theology, New York Theological Seminary  
Rev. Dr. Suzanne Watts Henderson, Dean of Belk Chapel and Professor of Religion, Queens University  
Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, General Minister & President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Rev. Dr. Joel Hunter, Chairman, Community Resource Network  
Hyepin Im, President and CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment  
Rev. Dr. Cassandra Aline Jones, Professor, Rockbridge Theological Seminary  
Kathy Khang, Board vice-chair, Evangelicals for Social Action  
Rev. Dr. Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals  
Sr. Janet Korn, Sister, Sisters of Mercy.  
Dr Mark Labberton, President, Fuller Theological Seminary  
Kim Lamberty, Director, Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation, Stuart Center  
Dr. Paul Leeland, Bishop, The United Methodist Church Charlotte Area  
Rev. Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador and General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church  
Rev. Carlos L Malave, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together  
Rev. Michael Mata, Pastor, Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene

Dr. Walter McCray, President, National Black Evangelical Association  
Sister Patricia McDermott, RSM, President, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Leadership Team  
Brian McLaren, Pastor and Author, Vote Common Good  
Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)  
Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller, President, Moravian Church Northern Province  
Rev. Dr. Otis Moss Jr., Pastor Emeritus, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church  
Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, Senior Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ  
David Neff, Director of Music, Church of the Nativity & Holy Comforter, Baltimore  
Dr. Mary Nelson, Interim President & CEO, Christian Community Development Association  
Dr. Ruth Padilla DeBorst, President, Community of Interdisciplinary Theological Studies (CETI)  
Rev Doug Pagitt, Executive Director, Vote Common Good  
Rev. Adam Phillips, Co-founder, Faith 2020  
Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, Professor, North Park Theological Seminary  
Elaina Ramsey, Executive Director, Red Letter Christians  
Diane Randall, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Senior Bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rev. Dr. Katharine Rhodes Henderson, President, Auburn Seminary  
Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera, Bishop Designate, Latino Pastoral Action Center & Sanctuary Church  
The Rev. Dr. C.K. Robertson, Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Ministry Beyond the Church, The Episcopal Church  
Dr. J. Elvin Sadler, General Secretary-Auditor, The A.M.E. Zion Church  
Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition  
Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra, Assistant Professor of Integral Mission and Transformational Development, Fuller Theological Seminary  
Rev. Dr. Rob Schenck, President, The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute  
Dr. Stephen Schneck, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network  
Micky ScottBey Jones, Director of Healing and Resilience Initiatives, Faith Matters Network  
Ronald J. Sider, President emeritus, Evangelicals for Social Action  
Rev. Gail Song Bantum, Lead Pastor, Quest Church  
Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director, National Religious Campaign Against Torture  
Rev. Richard Tafel, Pastor, Church of the Holy City, Swedenborgian Church  
Rev. Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Sojourners  
Bishop Efraim Tendero, Secretary General, World Evangelical Alliance  
Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Associate General Minister, United Church of Christ  
Nikki Toyama-Szeto, Executive Director, Evangelicals for Social Action  
Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners  
Pastor Colin Watson, Sr., Executive Director (acting), Christian Reformed Church in North America  
Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network  
Rev. Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Director, School for Conversion  
Mr. James Winkler, President, National Council of Churches  
Sister Carol Zinn, Executive Director, Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Mr. Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director, Pax Christi USA