A Pandemic Prayer Litany for Police Officers & First Responders

Now is the time for people of faith to support with prayer those first responders who serve in our cities and towns to keep us safe. You’re invited to pray this prayer each day, alone or with others in your household. If you are praying this with others, one person says the petitions (or take turns saying them), and the response of others is in bold type. Insert the name of your local police department (or fire department) where indicated, and the names of any first responder you wish to lift before God in prayer. Words from scripture are inspired by the NRSV translation.

You’re invited to share this prayer litany widely, and together let’s build a network of prayer that surrounds and upholds the police and first responders who are risking their lives to assure we might live in safety. If you publish this prayer, please credit: St John’s Episcopal Church, Boulder, CO. You can find a copy of this prayer litany (and also one for healthcare workers) for your use on our website: www.stjohnsboulder.org

**Background:** A friend of mine is a police officer in a Colorado community that is under a shelter-in-place order due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The petitions in this prayer come from a long conversation with her. I am grateful to her for being vulnerable, for being willing to share what’s on her heart and the hearts of some of her colleagues.

–The Rev. Susan W. Springer

Gracious God, during the pandemic, I/We pray this day for police officers and first responders at [name of police or fire department]; for patrol officers, dispatchers, detectives, firefighters, and mountain rescuers. In particular, I/We lift before you these beloved ones: [names of particular police or first responders for whom you wish to pray].

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**

God who calls all humanity to serve, you called police officers and first responders to their professions to protect and to save. You gifted them so that they might bring their best training and experience to bear. Receive the anxiety they feel as they sense and respond to the heightened anxiety in our communities. You are the God who said, “Do not fear, for I am with you; I am your God.” [Isaiah 41:10] Strengthen, help, and uphold them now in this time of need.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**
God of comfort, God of all mercy, as citizens act out their pain and fear in ways detrimental to their own wellbeing, it also threatens the wellbeing of those who respond to calls for help. You promised to be near to the brokenhearted, and to save the crushed in spirit. [Psalm 34:18] Be with your people now in their distress, and protect those who respond to their calls for help.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**

God whose peace surpasses all understanding, be with those people for whom home does not offer a sanctuary. Obliged to shelter at home, victims of domestic violence are now at heightened risk, and those who respond to their calls for help are likewise endangered. Let all in danger find a ready sanctuary in you [Exodus 25:8] and let those who love violence know your very soul despises them. [Psalm 11:5]

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**

God, you give all people not a spirit of fear but a spirit of power and of love and of self-control [2 Timothy 1:7]. In these times when social distancing is essential to prevent the spread of the virus, send that Spirit to those fearful citizens who feel they must lash out at officers with spitting and hitting. Calm them and let your self-control replace their wrath, so that those officers who respond to calls for service are not placed at risk.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**

God, the source of all gratefulness, we join police officers and first responders in giving thanks for those who comply by staying at home in these times. Those who do right silence the ignorance of the foolish. [1 Peter 2:15] And we pray for the foolish who do not comply: for criminals, drug dealers, and those citizens who believe themselves immortal. Fill them with your wisdom so that they may come to know they only put themselves—and others—at risk, including those who respond to their calls for help. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**

God, the Lord of all that was and is and is to come, the visible and the invisible. We lift before you these officers and first responders as they contend with the invisible enemy: the Covid-19 virus. Assure them by your almighty and unshakable power that you shall prevail against the cosmic powers of this present darkness [Ephesians 6:12].

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**

God, you assemble the peoples of the earth into one family, one body of Christ. Guide, uphold, and assist police officers and first responders as they strive to keep citizens safe and healthy, knowing that with every shooting victim taken to the hospital, there is one less bed for a Covid-19 patient; one more medical team stretched beyond its capacity; and knowing that every officer who falls ill diminishes the team. If one member of our human family suffers, all suffer with them [1 Corinthians 12:26]. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our/my prayer.**
God, your angel told Elizabeth and Mary that with you nothing will be impossible [Luke 1:37]. Your power is limitless despite human limitations. Look now upon officers and first responders, dispatchers and detectives, who cannot meet face-to-face and must find new ways to coordinate their work. They must do more with less, even as the invisible enemy continues to grow. Send your mighty power upon them.

Lord, in your mercy, Hear our/my prayer.

God from whose love we can never be separated, be with the most vulnerable among us—those who live without shelter. Officers meet them face-to-face every day, and witness their struggles to “shelter in place”. They witness their struggles to social distance, when doing so can bring despair and the death of their fragile spirit. Let all the vulnerable among us know that neither 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 [Romans 8:39] and give police officers the grace to serve and protect them.

Lord, in your mercy, Hear our/my prayer.

God the generous giver of wisdom [James 1:5] who makes our paths straight [Proverbs 3:6], come to the aid of those who live without shelter. Their resources are diminishing, even as the stress of life on the streets increases. Guide their decision making, that it may be done from a place of your wisdom and not from emotion. Be with those who respond to their calls for service, and give them your words to comfort and assist. Stir the hearts of the housed to help in new and generous ways.

Lord, in your mercy, Hear our/my prayer.

O God from whose sight no creature is hidden [Hebrews 4:13] and who sees everything under the heavens [Job 28:24], let not the toil of the support staff be forgotten. Bless and sanctify the work of administrators, records staff, and custodians. Keep us ever mindful of the risks they too assume and the stresses they bear for serving in these times.

Lord, in your mercy, Hear our/my prayer.

Lord God, for the abiding love with which you receive these and all the prayers we offer—those spoken and those unspoken—we give you thanks. Amen.