



The Future of Faith: A Consideration of Religion after Covid May 11, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

Our bi-monthly resources will appear in your inbox on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page -- [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these twice-monthly resources will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our [regular programs.](#)

Today's resource speaks to life, faith and church after Covid. **If you are doing this resource with a small group, be sure to send out this [link](#) to an article discussed in this resource and invite members of your group to read the article before you come together.**

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#) Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around the article(s) you read, before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer. In advance, assign two readers to read aloud the following prayer:

Journey Prayer

Another day comes to us.
We wake up into a question.

For many weeks and months, life has pressed on in a world
Of fear, illness, death and separation.

We have masked in fear, masked in bewilderment,
Missing smiles, kisses, hugs, touch and nearness.

We have lost family or our friends have lost family,
Mourning from a distance, never to hold those lost again.

Somehow, in the turmoil of it all,
We survived or, that is to say, life persisted in us.
Grace's urging kept most of us alive, kept us wanting to be alive.

So, we did what we could to lean hard into hope.
What else could we do, for the sun rises and people have to eat.

In God's mercy, knowledge and care gave way to a vaccine,
And it seemed like this drama would have a happy ending.

Grandmas and Grandpas held babies again.
People gathered cautiously, as a taste of healing and reconnection.
Relief. At last.



And, yet, in so many places, people continue to sicken and die.
We hear the worries of mutations and variants.
Our sisters and brothers resist in suspicion and fear.

So the mystery remains: where are we?
Is this the closing chapter of this global calamity
Or only the first chapter of ten?
We do not know.

Another day.
We wake up into a question.
What will our lives become?

Life presses forward into an unknown.
Just like it always has.

Faith beckons to hold fast to hope and kindness.
Just like it always has.

The sun will rise and we will press on.
We will pray for answers,
Just like we always have.

Be with us, O God.
Restore your people and your creation.
We live in hope.

Amen.

Jack Jezreel

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is



being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).

- What is something you're struggling with this week?
- Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?

Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (25 minutes or so)

Members of your group should have read this article:

"Religion After Pandemic"

https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/religion-after-pandemic?r=2rmds&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email&utm_source=copy

Invite responses to these questions.

1. The author describes four "dislocations." Which of these speak to you most? Why?
2. Religion, says Butler Bass, comes from a root word meaning "mending what has been broken." What, in your view, is most in need of mending?
3. The author writes, "We don't need to return to the old ways, we need to be relocated." What old ways need to be abandoned?
4. How has the process of "relocation" already begun to happen in your life?

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- This resource touches on the world of spirituality and gives just a taste of a much larger exploration that is possible. For a more robust experience, consider one of our Engaging Spirituality programs, found [here](#); scroll down to the square labeled "Spirituality."
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice," in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer insights tips for taking



action. Join us on Thursday, May 20, at 7:00 p.m. EDT as Susie Tierney, Executive Director of JFM, gives a Zoom presentation on "Grounding the Work of Social Mission." Description: What are the key components of effective advocacy for people of faith? How do you "do what is yours to do" (St. Francis)? Susie will share her list of "top ten components of effective action," drawing on her many years of experience leading parish/congregation-based church social ministry, as well as her Franciscan worldview.

- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice or care for the environment.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Then say: **Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.**

Pause for 30 seconds. Then share this prayer:

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.



Therefore will I trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton from [Thoughts in Solitude](#)

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.