**Heaviness, Healing & Hope:**

A 3 part Ritual of Remembrance for those who mourn the loss of a child

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*This ritual may be adapted for use by an individual as a private devotion, by a couple, family, or small group of friends, or by a faith community. It is appropriate to repeat this ritual as often as desired. The ritual was created for use by people who are mourning the loss of a child, but may be adapted for people suffering another form of bereavement. A video meditation version of this ritual can be found on Youtube.*

**Gathering**

*Take ample time to gather in silence or with soothing music, such as “The 23rd Psalm” by Bobby McFerrin. You may wish to prepare objects to incorporate into your ritual, including: a bowl of stones, a pitcher of water, and a candle with matches. When you are ready, begin with the opening prayer.*

**Opening Prayer**

God, as a father has compassion on his children in their sorrows, have mercy on us. As a mother carries her children through the darkness, carry us. God, the source of all healing: hear our cry, renew us with your love, and give us peace. Amen.

**Part 1: Heaviness (***Optional Song: O Lord Hear My Prayer; Taize)*

*Jesus says, 'Come to me all you who are weary from carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.'*

*The loss of a loved one is a hard burden to carry. As you listen to the words of Psalm 6, allow yourself to remember your loss and the weight of that burden.*

*You may wish to hold a heavy stone in your hands.*

**Reading #1: Psalm 6: 1-10**

Stop rebuking me, Lord, hold back your rage. Have pity, for I am spent;

Heal me, hurt to the bone, wracked to the limit. Lord, how long? How long?

Repent, Lord, save me. You promised; keep faith!

In death, who remembers you? In Sheol, who gives you thanks?

Night after night I lie exhausted, hollow-eyed with grief,

my pillow soaked with tears

The Lord has known my tears.

God hears my pleading and will answer my prayer.

**Prayer #1:**

God, help me carry the weight of this burden. Amen.

**Part 2: Healing (***Optional Song: Wait for the Lord; Taize)*

*Jesus says, “Let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.”*

*God's healing love flows over and under, around and within the hardest and heaviest places in our lives.*

*As you listen to the words of Psalm 42, remember the healing you have experienced and the healing for which you still thirst.*

*You may wish to pour water from a pitcher into a bowl.*

**Reading #2: Psalm 42: 1-6a**

As a deer craves running water, I thirst for you, my God;

I thirst for God, the living God.

When will I see your face? Tears are my steady diet.

Day and night I hear, “Where is your God?”

I cry my heart out, I remember better days:

when I entered the house of God,

I was caught in the joyful sound

of pilgrims giving thanks.

Why are you sad, my heart? Why do you grieve?

Wait for the Lord. I will yet praise God my savior.

My heart is sad. Even from Jordan and Hermon,

from the peak of Mizar, I remember you.

Here the deep roars to deep; your torrents crash over me.

The love God summoned by day

sustained my praise by night, my prayer to the living God.

I complain to God, who I thought was rock:

Why have you forgotten me? Why am I bent double?

The insults of my enemies grind me to dust.

Why are you sad, my heart? Why do you grieve?

Wait for the Lord. I will yet praise God my savior.

**Prayer #2**

God, continue to pour out your healing love. Amen.

**Part 3: Hope (***Optional Song: Within our darkest night; Taize)*

*The Gospel of John says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.”*

*The light of God shines even in the darkest night and is never extinguished. All souls reflect this radiance. They shine, eternally illuminated by the divine light.*

*As you listen to the reading from Isaiah, remember the one you have lost, and imagine that one cradled in the light of God.*

*You may wish to light a candle.*

**Reading #3: Isaiah 60:1-5**

Arise, shine; for your light has come,

and the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth,

and thick darkness the peoples;

but the Lord will arise on you,

and his glory will appear over you.

Nations shall stream to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around;

they all gather together, they come to you;

your sons shall come from far away,

and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses’ arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant;

your heart shall thrill and rejoice.

**Prayer #3:**

God, hold us in the light of your love. Amen.

**Closing**

*Remain in silence for as long as you wish.*

*You may wish to conclude with a prayer that is familiar to you, such as the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary, or the 23rd Psalm.*