



Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in celebrating the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene with us. Celebrating and lifting up Mary's true role as *Apostle of the Apostles* is one of the most important things we can do for our Church and world.

This year, recognizing that horrific violence of every kind rages around us, we turn our focus particularly to epidemic of gun violence. How does Mary Magdalene's story instruct and inspire us today as we seek to bring about change?

Through this prayer service, we will intentionally place ourselves with Mary at the foot of the cross as she witnesses Jesus' violent death and remember those who have been killed in incidents of gun violence. We then place ourselves with Mary in the uncertain time between Crucifixion and Resurrection as we hear Kimberly Rubio and X. González speak to us through their grief and trauma in the immediate aftermath of their own experiences of gun violence. Finally, we join Mary as she sets out to the tomb on that first Easter morning to discover the Risen One and consider how Christ is calling us to join Mary as bearers of the Good News in a world so desperate for it today.

We recognize that this prayer service – as timely and important as it is – may not be pastorally urgent in all communities, particularly those communities outside of the United States. We encourage you to adapt as necessary or to explore our past prayer services which you can explore and download at <https://futurechurch.org/mary-of-magdala-resource-index/>.

Thank you again for doing your part to help reclaim Mary Magdalene for our Church and world today. If we can be of any assistance to you as you plan your celebration, please reach out to russ@futurechurch.org.

We also invite you to join us as we celebrate virtually. Visit <https://futurechurch.org/events> to learn about and register for our Virtual Art Tour with Dr. Christine Axen on July 13th and our Virtual Celebration with guest preacher, Dr. Kimberly Lymore, on July 21st.

Sincerely,

Russ Petrus and Deborah Rose
Co-directors for FutureChurch

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Gathering Song:

Songs that emphasize themes of peace, justice, and/or healing are appropriate. Below are some options:

All Are Welcome (All Belong) by Jesse and Jennah Manibusan
Gather Your People by Bob Hurd
Let there Be Peace on Earth Jill Jackson and Sy Miller
The Prayer of St. Francis by Sebastian Temple

*We also recommend choosing from the **hymns composed by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette** on a number of topics, including gun violence. Visit <http://www.carolynshymns.com/index.html>.*

Sign of the Cross:

Leader: We gather in the name and in the power of
(making the Sign of the Cross)
Our God who shares divinity with us,
Our God who shares humanity with us,
And our God who gifts and guides us,
All: AMEN.

Introductory Remarks:

Leader: Dear friends, as we gather
today to celebrate the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene,
we do so in a world plagued by horrific violence of every kind
and *still* in desperate need of the Easter Good News
first proclaimed by Mary Magdalene some two thousand years ago.

Today, as we reckon with the violence raging around us,
and especially the gun violence that day after day, night after night,
claims lives, shatters families, and terrorizes communities, we
remember that Mary – along with other women – remained with
Jesus, keeping vigil as he suffered the horrific violence of the cross
and left the safety of the upper room to anoint his broken body,
and was blessed and sent forth to share the news of Resurrection.

And we pray for the same faith, strength, and courage to
bear witness, to stand vigil,
and to confront evil and violence in our midst.

That we too might become bearers of the Good News:

That light dispels the darkness, that truth exposes the lies,
That love conquers hate, that hope overcomes despair,
That death gives way to new life.

And so, now, we place ourselves with Mary at the foot of the Cross and remember all victims gun violence by naming some of those who have been killed just in the year since we last gathered for the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene.

Litany of Remembrance:

Reader: We remember the four students killed at Oxford High School in Oxford Township, Michigan on November 30, 2021.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God

All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.

(a candle may be lit)

Reader: We remember five people killed during a shooting spree in the streets of Lakewood and Denver, Colorado on December 27, 2021.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God

All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.

(a candle may be lit)

Reader: We remember the three young girls and their guardian who were killed by their father, who ultimately turned the gun on himself, at The Church in Sacramento, California on February 28, 2022.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God

All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.

(a candle may be lit)

Reader: We remember the six people – three women and three men – who were killed when a fight broke out in downtown Sacramento, California in the early morning hours of April 2, 2022.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God

All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.

(a candle may be lit)

Reader: We remember the ten people – all of them Black – who were killed at a Tops supermarket in Buffalo, New York, which was targeted because of the neighborhood’s high concentration of Black residents on May 14, 2022.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God
All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.
(a candle may be lit)

Reader: We remember the 19 young elementary school students and 2 teachers killed at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas on May 24, 2022 before police shot and killed the 18-year-old gunman.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God
All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.
(a candle may be lit)

Reader: We remember the surgeon and three others shot and killed by a patient who turned the gun on himself at St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 1, 2022.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God
All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.
(a candle may be lit)

Reader: We remember all those who have died in any incident of gun violence.

(a moment of silence or a bell is rung)

Grant them eternal rest, O God
All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.
(a candle may be lit)

Adapted from “Litany in the Wake of a Mass Shooting” by Bishops Against Gun Violence.
https://bishopsagainstgunviolence.org/liturgical_resource/litany-in-the-wake-of-a-mass-shooting/

Hymn:
Taizé

Within Our Darkest Night

Jacques Berthier,

*Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away, that never dies away.
Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away, that never dies away.*

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Prayer:

Leader: Loving God, who desires peace and flourishing for all people,
look with compassion upon all involved in shootings in our
country and violence around the world.

Bring those who have died into the arms of your everlasting love;
let your face shine upon them.

Draw close to those who mourn
that they may find solace in your comforting presence.

Comfort those who are traumatized by these horrific events;
Bring healing to their hearts and minds.

Strengthen, protect, and give good judgment to those first
responders who risk their lives to protect us and to the medical
personnel who minister to the wounded.

Bring the gunmen to repentance and redemption,
And deal tenderly with their confused family and friends.

Hear our cries of lament and then help us to rise up,
to work for change, to help bring about your reign of justice, love,
and peace.

We make this prayer through Christ Jesus,
victim of violence on a cross, our liberator.

All: AMEN.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Leader: Let us place ourselves with Mary Magdalene on that first Easter Saturday – the uncertain time between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection – as we hear the voices of two people who spoke out through their trauma and grief in the immediate aftermath of their own experience of gun violence.

First Reading: [Kimberly Rubio's Testimony to House Oversight Committee](#)

A reading from the testimony of Kimberly Rubio, whose daughter Lexi was killed in Ulvade, Texas

We do not want you to think of Lexi as just a number. She was intelligent, compassionate, and athletic. She was quiet. Shy, unless she had a point to make. When she knew she was right, as she so often was, she stood her ground. She was firm, direct, voice unwavering.

So, today, we stand for Lexi, and, as her voice, we demand action. We seek a ban on assault rifles and high-capacity magazines. We understand that for some reason, to some people, to people with money, to people who fund political campaigns, that guns are more important than children, so at this moment we ask for progress. We seek to raise the age to purchase these weapons from 18 to 21 years of age. We seek red flag laws, stronger background checks. We also want to repeal gun manufacturers liability immunity.

You have all seen glimpses of who Lexi was, but I also want to tell you a little about who she would have been. If given the opportunity, Lexi would have made a positive change in this world. She wanted to attend St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, on a softball scholarship. She wanted to major in math and go on to attend law school. That opportunity was taken from her. She was taken from us.

I'm a reporter, a student, a mom, a runner. I've read to my children since they were in the womb. My husband is a law enforcement officer, an Iraq War veteran. He loves fishing, and our babies. Somewhere out there, a mom is hearing our testimony and thinking to herself, "I can't even imagine their pain," not knowing that our reality will one day be hers, unless we act now.

The Word of God, in the voice of a grieving mother,

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Psalm Response:

The assigned psalm for the day – Psalm 63 – is suitable. Other psalms to consider include: Psalm 23 (Shepherd Imagery), Psalm 27 (Light and Salvation), Psalm 85 (Show us Your Kindness)

Second Reading: [X. González's "We Call B.S." Address for Gun Control](#)

A reading from X. González, survivor of the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida

Since the time of the Founding Fathers and since they added the Second Amendment to the Constitution, our guns have developed at a rate that Leaves me dizzy. The guns have changed and the laws have not.

We certainly do not understand why it should be harder to make plans with friends on weekends than to buy an automatic or semi-automatic weapon.

The people in the government who were voted into power are lying to us. And us kids seem to be the only ones who notice and our parents to call BS.

Companies trying to make caricatures of the teenagers now days, saying that all we are self-involved and trend-obsessed and they hush us into submission when our message doesn't reach the ears of the nation, we are prepared to call BS.

Politicians who sit in their gilded House and Senate seats funded by the NRA telling us nothing could have been done to prevent this, we call BS.

They say tougher guns laws do not decrease gun violence. We call BS.

They say a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun. We call BS.

They say guns are just tools like knives and are as dangerous as cars. We call BS.

They say no laws could have prevented the hundreds of senseless tragedies. We call BS.

That us kids don't know what we're talking about, that we're too young to understand how the government works. We call BS.

If you agree, register to vote. Contact your local congresspeople. Give them a piece of your mind.

The Word of God, in the righteous outrage of a survivor,

ALL: Thanks be to God.

(allow for a moment of silence to reflect on these witnesses)

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia! Raise the Gospel

B. Farrell

*Alleluia! Alleluia! Raise the Gospel over the Earth!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Peace and justice bringing to birth!*

*Verse Two: Blessed, those who work for justice,
Blessed, those who answer the call.
Blessed, those who dare to dream of lasting peace for all! Refrain*

Gospel: John 20:1-18

Leader: We now journey with Mary to the empty tomb and consider how Christ is calling us to proclaim the Good News of hope -- of the possibility of new life free from violence -- in our own time and place.

A reading from the Gospel According to John:

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple and told them, "They have taken the Rabbi from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him."

So Peter and the other disciple went out toward to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in.

When Simon Peter arrived after, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered Jesus' head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.

Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned home.

But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been.

And they said to her, "Why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken my Rabbi, and I don't know where they laid him."

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"

She thought it was the gardener and said, "Please, if you carried Jesus away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!," which means my Teacher.

Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to God. But go to the sisters and brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Abba God and your Abba God.'"

Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Teacher," and what the savior told her.

The Good News of Our Salvation
ALL: Praise to you, O Christ.

Preaching Suggestions:

- Offer a reflection that follows Mary Magdalene from the Cross to the Resurrection – considering her what emotions, her reactions might have been... How can we follow the same path to a more non-violent society today? How are X. González and Kimberly Rubio models for us?
- It took tremendous bravery for Mary to leave the safety of hiding to be with Jesus at the cross and to set out to anoint his body. How can we show that same courage today? How do our first two readings inspire such action? What do we need to leave behind to find new life – without the threat of gun violence.
- Create a space for shared reflection: What in our readings challenged you? What in our readings inspired you?
- Invite a member of your local faith-based gun control advocacy group to be with you and share the Christ-like, Mary-like efforts that attendees can engage with.

Prayers of Petition

Leader: The Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus healed Mary of seven demons. To a first century audience, who attributed illness to the work of evil spirits, this only meant that Mary suffered some chronic or severe illness.

We cannot know what illness or ailment afflicted her. But looking at our own time and situation, we know all too well what illnesses infect our society, contributing to the epidemic of gun violence.

And so, in faith and hope, we turn to our loving God and seek the same healing today. Our response is **“Heal us, O God; hear our prayer”**

Reader: Free us, O God, from the divisive partisan politics that infect our society and entrench our leaders in their prejudged positions. Purge the outsized influence and wealth of the pro-gun lobby that causes some politicians to listen to them instead of their constituents. And help us to come together to enact common-sense measures that will lead to a safer, more life-giving society for all:
We pray: **Heal us, O God; hear our prayer.**

Free us, O God, from a gun culture and toxic masculinity that arms a civilian population with weapons of war, that idolizes and glorifies violence, and promotes the lie that “a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun.” And help us to transform our own hearts and to seek peaceful ways of resolving our differences in our relationships and communities large and small.
We pray: **Heal us, O God; hear our prayer.**

Free us, O God, from the misogyny, homophobia and transphobia; the racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia; and all forms of hatred that grow and fester violence in too many hearts and minds. And help us to reverence your divine presence in every person and to honor their inherent dignity as your beloved children.
We pray: **Heal us, O God; hear our prayer.**

Free us, O God, from the stigmatization and scapegoating of persons with mental illness, which makes them more likely to be victims – not perpetrators – of violence and less likely to seek out treatment. And help us to reach out to those in our families and communities who suffer from mental illness through words and actions of kindness, love, and support.

We pray: **Heal us, O God; hear our prayer.**

Free us, O God, from a sense of hopelessness or despair, which paralyzes us into silence and inaction. And give us the strength, courage, and perseverance to speak, to write, and witness so that together we can accomplish what others say cannot be done.

We pray: **Heal us, O God; hear our prayer.**

Free us, O God, from the numbness that comes from the constant news of another shooting, another death. Break our hardened hearts. And help us to stand vigil and witness – to always remember those who have died, to tell the stories of who they might have become. And to be present to those who remain: traumatized, maimed and disfigured, those left alone and grieving, and those who struggle to get through one more day.

We pray: **Heal us, O God; hear our prayer.**

Free us, O God, to be the Church – the people – you call us to be. Make us more strident in our solidarity with the most vulnerable among us. And help us to be witnesses and bearers of your dream of peace and justice, love and flourishing for all people.

We pray: **Heal us, O God; hear our prayer.**

Leader: We come to you, O God our hope, in our time of need.
Cast your loving, compassionate gaze upon us.
Heal us. Strengthen us. Be with us.
We make this prayer through Christ, our healing and our strength.
Amen.

Optional Anointing Ritual

If you are gathering in person – and it would be safe to do so – a ritual anointing may follow the prayers of petition. While one or a few members of the community may anoint the others, it may be safer to invite each congregant to a station with a small bowl of olive oil to anoint themselves one at a time – either on their hands or their head.

Leader: God of Justice and Peace,
In every generation, in every land,
You call and anoint servants, healers, and prophets
And send them out on a mission.

As we bless ourselves with this oil, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us,
That our hearts and hands may be strengthened for our part in the work
that lies ahead. **AMEN.**

Song Suggestion: *Prayer of Saint Francis* by S. Temple
Instrumental music may also be played.

CONCLUDING RITES

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray,

**All: Christ Jesus,
our world is so very far from the Kingdom you preached.
Our hearts break
at the senseless violence and loss of life.
As once you did for Mary Magdalene,
Meet us in our grief; reveal yourself to us.
Call us by name
and send us forth with your Easter Good News
that light dispels the darkness,
that truth exposes the lies,
that love conquers hate,
that hope overcomes despair,
That death gives way to new life.
AMEN.**

Blessing

Leader: And may God fill us with hope,
May the peace of Christ abound in our hearts and minds,
and may the Holy Spirit gift and guide us
(making Sign of the Cross) now and forever, **AMEN.**

Dismissal:

Leader: Our liturgy – our work - continues,
As we go forth to keep vigil, to stand witness,
and spread the good news and give glory to God
by living lives of justice and peace.

All: Thanks be to God.

Closing Song:

Songs that emphasize themes of peace, justice, and/or healing are appropriate. Below are some options:

Let Justice Roll Like a River by Marty Haugen
Christ be our Light by Bernadette Farrell
Let there Be Peace on Earth by Jill Jackson and Sy Miller
The Prayer of St. Francis by Sebastian Temple

*We also recommend choosing from the **hymns composed by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette** on a number of topics, including gun violence. Visit <http://www.carolynshymns.com/index.html>.*

You may also go forth without a closing song.