

In recent days, as COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic and countries have taken urgent measures to stem the spread of infection, I wish I could say that my first impulse has been to pray. It's probably more honest to say that I've obsessively watched local and cable news to acquire as much information as possible.

The crisis is urgent, and I feel powerless. But perhaps feeling small is the best reminder to pray. Prayer is how we actively practice believing, so simply, so confidently, that God has the whole world in his hands. It's where we "let petitions and praises shape our worries into prayers, letting God know our concerns" (Phil. 4:6–7, *The Message*). Prayer is never the last resort of God's people. It is our first point of action.

With that in mind, I've put together a list of 15 prayer petitions to pray during this pandemic. Each one addresses the specific needs of a specific community. I am fortunate to be a part of a church which continues to give so generously of their time, talent and treasure. It moves me deeply.

This list isn't comprehensive, of course, but it's a good place to start. My hope is that it can provide words for us as we pray collectively (if also virtually!) as a church body. We believe there is a God who bends his ear to listen, and so we pray:

1. For the sick and infected: God, heal and help. Sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.
2. For our vulnerable populations: God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease. Provide for the poor, especially the uninsured.
3. For the young and the strong: God, give them the necessary caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.
4. For our local, state, and federal governments: God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources for combatting this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests.
5. For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.
6. For the media, committed to providing up-to-date information: God, help them to communicate with appropriate seriousness without causing panic.
7. For all doctors, nurses, and health professionals in the hospitals, all first responders, those who perform constant care for others in nursing homes: God, help them stay safe.

8. For those with mental health challenges who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless: God, provide them every necessary support.

9. For the homeless, unable to practice the protocols of social distancing in the shelter system: Protect them from disease, and provide isolation shelters in every city.

10. For international travelers stuck in foreign countries: God, help them return home safely and quickly.

11. For Christian missionaries throughout the world, especially in areas with high rates of infection: God, provide them with words of hope, and equip them to love and serve those around them.

12. For workers in a variety of industries facing layoffs and financial hardship: God, keep them from panic, and inspire your church to generously support them.

13. For families with young children at home for the foreseeable future: God, help mothers and fathers to partner together creatively for the care and flourishing of their children. For single mothers and fathers, grow their networks of support.

14. For parents who cannot stay home from work but must find care for their children: God, present them with creative solutions.

15. For those in need of regular therapies and treatments and surgeries that must now be postponed: God, help them to stay patient and positive and give them peace of mind and body.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

