

REMEMBERING and BLESSING, TOGETHER

LEADER: We gather today as a dispersed community to remember and to name some of the losses of the last seven weeks. We remember concerts, recitals and dramas not performed. We remember academic presentations not shared, and sporting events not played. We remember an empty Cafeteria, Den, and Common Grounds, and a spectacular campus full of blossoms with no one on the front lawn to appreciate them. We remember our empty dorm rooms and apartments, our classrooms and library. We remember semester's abroad that ended abruptly and clinicals and internships radically transformed. We remember what it was like to laugh together and to sing together. We remember EMU as we knew her, and we acknowledge that we miss her. We are saddened by the swift and chaotic end to our time together as we knew it.

All: But we do not grieve alone. Together we bring our losses before you, oh Lord, and seek your comfort.

LEADER: We especially mourn the losses of celebration and closure for seniors. The loss of the rituals of baccalaureate and commencement is painful. Seniors, the time to reflect on how you've grown and changed over four years, the time to treasure the friendships you've formed while being a part of EMU, the time to enjoy all the final memories that you had hoped to create, the time to share appreciation and goodbyes in person with friends, faculty, and staff was ripped away from you. We are sorry for these losses and disappointments, which are very real.

All: But we do not grieve alone. Together we bring our losses before you, oh Lord, and seek your comfort.

LEADER: Yet with the Psalmist we also proclaim that we are grateful. For all the good that we did get to share, the good that will live on far beyond these challenging days, we give you thanks. For the creativity and resiliency of faculty, administrators, and staff who have worked tirelessly to help EMU adapt to these challenges, we give you thanks. For students who have adapted graciously and persevered to learn, sometimes in the face of inadequate technology or all kinds of challenges, we give you thanks. For the tremendous way this senior class has touched the lives of our campus community and beyond, we give you thanks.

All: We are not grateful alone. Together we bring our gratitude before you, oh Lord, and give you thanks.

LEADER: Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. And so, as we close this tumultuous academic year, we ask you Lord for your blessing. Please grant a special blessing for all those in the class of 2020, those who are graduating at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Bless them with comfort, bless them with courage, and bless them with wisdom as they discern next steps. May they be launched into this fragile world with your grace and mercy. The world needs their gifts and education now more than ever.

All: We are not alone. Together we pray for your blessing, oh Lord, on these, your children.

LEADER: Bless all those students who hope to return in the fall. Bless them with calm and courageous spirits during this time that is filled with so much uncertainty. Bless them with a spirit of trust, ground them in your love. And bless those who aren't graduating, but whom for other reasons will not be back at EMU. May they know that they are cared for and that we will miss them. Bless too our faculty, staff, and administrators as they face difficult decisions and uncertainty while they juggle the demands of working from home and learning to teach online.

All: We are not alone. Together we pray for your blessing, oh Lord, on these, your children.

LEADER: Bless any in our EMU community, both here and beyond, both current students and alumni as well their family members, who are on the front lines providing health care in this crisis, or who are serving the community in essential roles. Bless all of them with protection, stamina, patience, and wisdom. Bless those in our EMU community who have lost jobs and who face economic difficulty. Comfort them and carry them in their times of fear and uncertainty. Bless those who lead governments at local, state, national, and international levels as they make difficult decisions and work to protect us all. And bless those places near at hand and around the world that have far fewer resources than we do to fight the virus. Bless us all with generous hearts so that even as we live with anxiety and fear we might not forget those who have less than we do.

All: We are not alone. Together we pray for your blessing, oh Lord, on these, your children.

LEADER: And now may the God who made you bless you, protect you, comfort you, and sustain you, reminding you that no matter whether you go or whether you stay, God will be with you. You are not alone. God is with each of you. God is with all of us. Together. **Amen.**

Written for Eastern Mennonite University's closing Convocation service, 4/29/20,
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