

Honoring Matthew: A Liturgy

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Matthew Shepard was a gay college student in Wyoming who was robbed, tortured and tied to a fence in a remote, rural area near Laramie and left to die. Discovered eighteen hours later by a cyclist and brought to the hospital, he died on Oct 12, 1998. This tragedy shocked his family, his friends and the nation as we grappled with the horror of such cruelty inflicted on someone solely because of his sexual orientation. His death was not in vain as it inspired new legislation around the country and the powerful witness of the play *The Laramie Project* that ensured his life and his death not be forgotten.

In that spirit, it is crucial that at this 10 year anniversary we not forget and that we mark this tragic event that still impacts us. Let it encourage us to continue to call for the safety and rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people everywhere. These prayers are offered in hopes that they will be an impetus to observe this anniversary in your communal and personal worship over the weekend of October 10-12th, 2008.

Litany

God of All Time, we remember the life and death of Matthew Shepard, 10 years ago. Alone, tied to the fence, he was left to die. You were with him, in his fear and suffering, always.

Although his death left us with despair, anger, and confusion, our faith reminds us too, that You are with us always.

Faithful One, renew our faith as we remember.

God of All Places, we pray that You move us from the isolation of that dark night on the Wyoming Plains to a vision of being held by You. Guide us to envision a world where healing and wholeness is attainable. May we know this hope to be true and let it live in and through us in this place.

Hopeful One, restore our hope as we pray.

God of All People, we are called to act as your children gathered. Let us be moved by Your Love to respond on this anniversary to work to end violence, violence toward any one of us, toward all of us. You created us in Love and may our lives reflect that love as we live together.

Loving One, revive our love as we act.

A Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, we pray this day for wisdom. Increase our understanding so that our memory of death may be transformed into life. We remember the death ten years ago on the plains in Wyoming and long for safety for all of us under the canopy of your steadfast love. We know that acts of violence and hate continue in our country, especially for those of us, who because of our differences, are pushed to the edges of the circle. May we be the changers and the changed as we allow ourselves to be made new in your name. Keep us vigilant. Move us toward action in our neighborhoods as well as our nation. May our actions bring healing and reconciliation. For all your children – gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and allied women and men—for all your children may there be compassion, grace and peace.