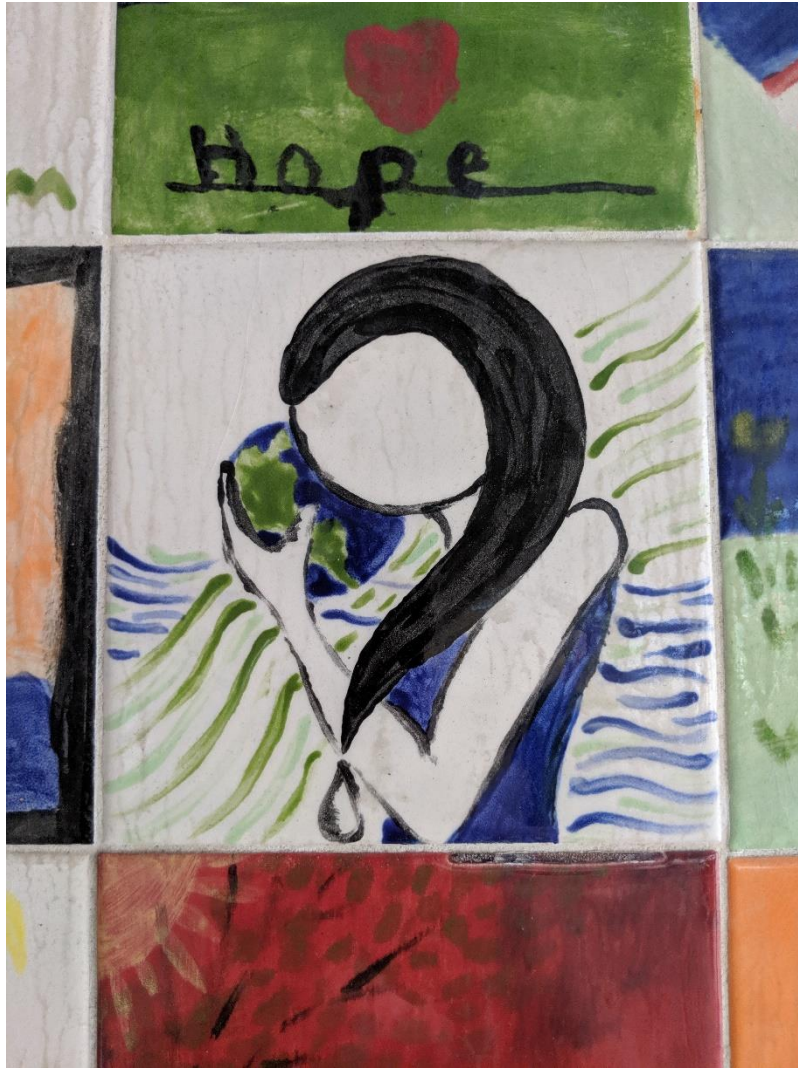


First Baptist Church in Needham

Sixth Sunday of Eastertide

Edition 61



1

Worship and Prayer Resource

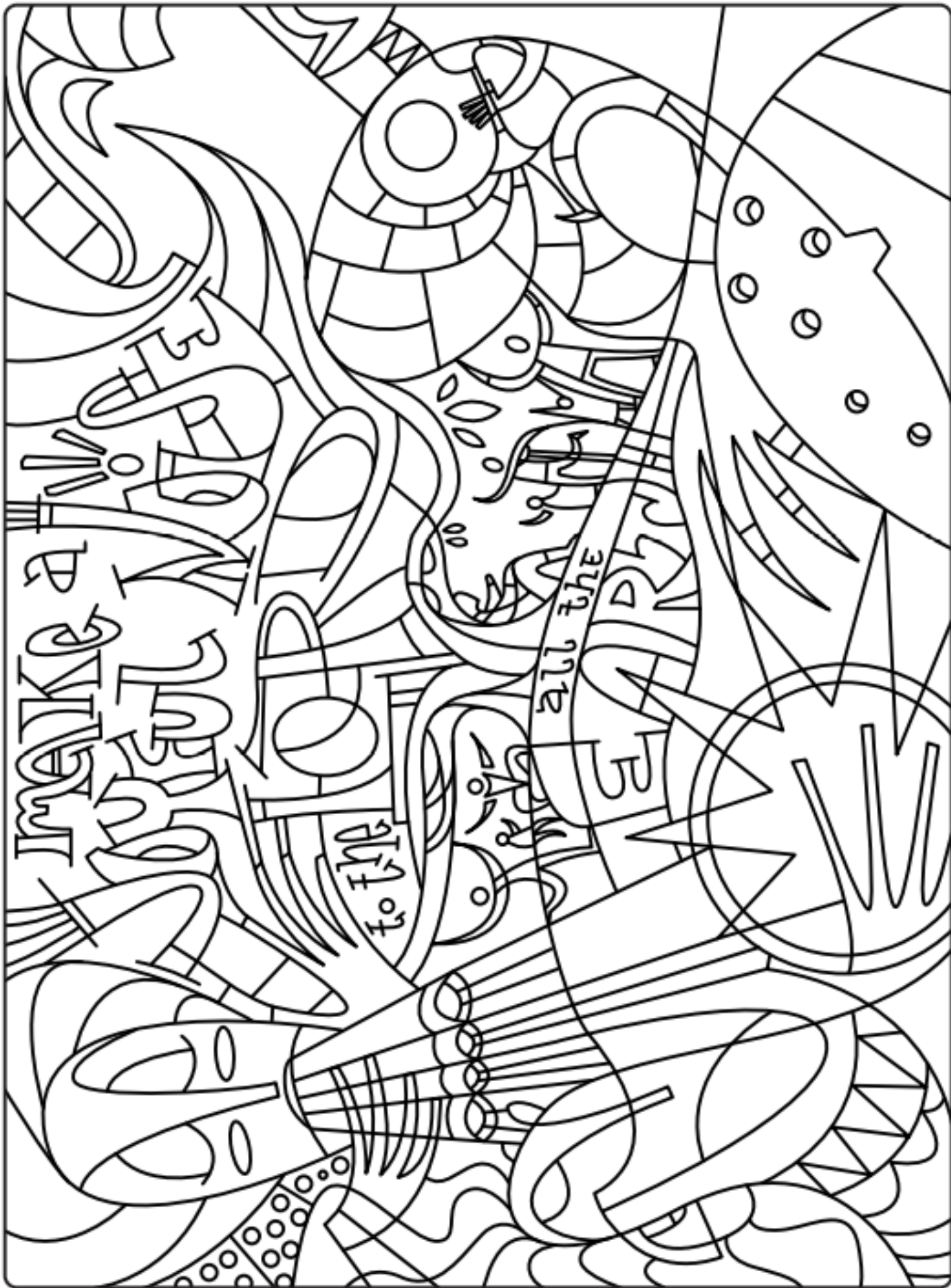
Sunday, May 9, 2021

(for whenever you are so led to pause, reflect, and pray)

858 Great Plain Avenue · Needham, MA 02492

www.fbcneedham.org

¹ "Hope for the World," Peace Wall Tiles, Providence, Rhode Island (2019). ©Holly C. Benzenhafer 2021. Use with permission.



Scripture

John 15:9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Reflection

There is no choice – to be loved, Beloved.
It simply exists.
Persists.
Insists on being.
Even when it remains unfelt.
Or the ones intended for its embodiment
Refuse, confuse, warp its sharing
And leave bodies and minds misinformed
Misdirected
Misinterpreting
The experience –
Abiding
Belovedness.

And yet.
And yet,
The distortion will not be allowed –

Not with suggestion or polite entreaty
Ineffectual wheedling
Or lukewarm "thoughts and prayers."
Rather, the call to right the wrongs
of Love conditioned,
Love withheld,
Love abused
Is commanded, mandated, and required.

Do not turn, flinch, Beloved.
The work remains.
A holy, humanizing, harmonizing,
Embarrassingly generous,
Overabundant,
Tenderly hospitable,
Stubbornly courageous and boundless
Love is required to flow
Unimpeded
From your heart, Beloved,
Your voice,
Your actions,
Your presence.
Imbued with far more than you can ever withstand,

Beloved, you must each day, each night,
Ensure true Love pours upon the wounded hearts
And minds
And bodies
Harmed and rejected
Limited and silenced
Stamped down and pushed out as unholy and unclean by *good people*
Who have sat in pews and prayed
And are no more deserving of such a Love they claim
With blessed assurance that *Jesus is Mine...*
Than are the multitude of harmed ones
Turned away

Turned out
Torn asunder.

So, courage, Beloved!
The Love remains
And claims its sharing –
Even ineptly
Imperfectly –
Must eddy and swirl
Until every crevice and nook
Fills with its light and life
Infusing our Creator's Loving
Into a world suffuse with Beloveds.²

Instructions are included in pink italics throughout the prayers so you can follow along with prayer beads or the drawing of beads provided.

Prayers of the People

Prayerful Meditation

Holding or sitting with the image of your prayer beads, enter a quiet pause with this prayerful meditation:

As I held you close, I whispered in your ear,
“I loved you before I met you.
Before I held you in my arms, I sang you down from the stars.”³

² “Beloved Commanded,” Inspired by John 15:9-17. ©Holly C. Benzenhafer 2021. Use with permission.

³ Tasha Spillett-Sumner, *I Sang You Down from the Stars* (New York: Hachette Books, 2021).

We Hold in Prayer...

Many of this week's prayers are requests from members of our congregation in the past week.

If you have general or specific prayer requests - joys as well as concerns - to share please contact Holly or Daryn to pass them along.

Place your finger on the cross and begin the prayer with these words:

As a community of faith gathered in Spirit when we cannot be in person as we are accustomed, we offer our hearts and voices in prayer where we are, entrusting the Spirit's moving among us and responding far beyond our individual reach and influence...

Place your finger on the first three beads above the cross saying:

Bead 1: Creator God, hear my prayer.

Bead 2: Loving Christ, hear my prayer.

Bead 3: Abiding Spirit, hear my prayer.

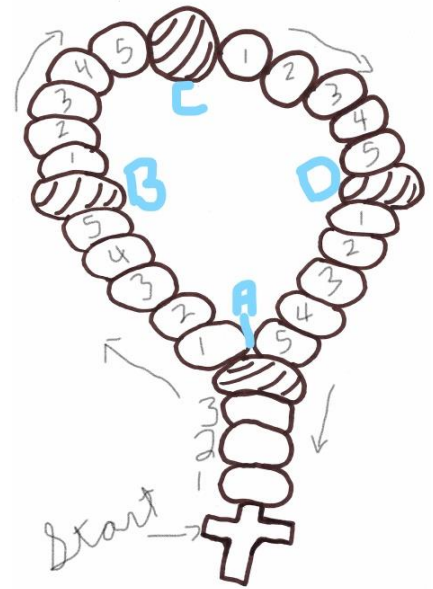
The 4 ridged beads mark off four themed sections of our Prayers of the People. Each ridged bead is followed by 5 smooth beads that represent five specific prayers from our FBC Needham community that are related to that theme.

1st Theme: Gratitude & Thanksgiving

Place your finger on the first ridged bead (A) above the original three smooth beads saying:
O God, thank you for each new day and all that it brings. You promise to provide all that I need, caring not only for me, but for all creation and so I rejoice...

Move to the first set of 5 smooth beads, and offer your prayers of gratitude & thanksgiving along with those of our community of faith:

Bead 1: With Liz celebrating Rascal turning 12 and the joy his presence and companionship gifts her life each day; and with Clif for the goodness of PJ's presence that requires him to go on walks each day.



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⁴ "Lenten Prayer Beads". Pen and ink drawing. ©Holly C. Benzenhafer 2021. Use with permission.

- Bead 2:** With Barbara for the ability of Wingate residents to begin returning to social and group activities and the hope of seeing her children and going outside soon.
- Bead 3:** With Clif, Andrew, and Harry in the pleasure of gardening, going for walks in springtime, and growing warmth of the sun.
- Bead 4:** With Ernie who sends his love to everyone.
- Bead 5:** With Louise, Barbara, Harry, and Clif in gratitude for the weekly calls from Pastor Daryn and Pastor Holly and the Worship Resource.
- Praise God, from whom all blessing flow....*

2nd Theme: Personal & FBC Needham Concerns

Place your finger on the second ridged bead (B) saying:

Faithful God, you know me inside and out, all my hopes and dreams, fears and failures. Guide and support the FBC Needham community and me as we seek to follow Jesus's teachings and life's ministry while sharing the concerns of our hearts as I pray...

Move to the second set of 5 smooth beads, and offer your prayers of concern along with those shared within our community of faith:

- Bead 1:** With Peggy for traveling mercies to see family in Colorado, and Andrew traveling to see Wren and Carmen in Oklahoma.
- Bead 2:** With Harry in dealing with issues with hearing and hearing aids.
- Bead 3:** With Bev for Marty's continued recovery at home.
- Bead 4:** With Clif in concern that he be able to build stamina and energy before it gets too hot.
- Bead 5:** With Liz, Pastor Daryn and Pastor Holly for the congregation's intentional decisions with *Creative Callings*.
- Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

3rd Theme: Healing, Solace, & Courage

Place your finger on the third ridged bead (C) saying:

God of mercy and peace, your people cry out to you for healing and comfort, courage and strength. Surround your children known and unknown to me with your watch care and abiding presence, as I pray...

Move to the third set of 5 smooth beads, and offer your prayers for Spirit's comfort, healing, and peace saying:

- Bead 1:** With Andrew for Wren's wellbeing.
- Bead 2:** With Ernie as his energy has flagged while waiting to return to treatment that his rest be restorative and his heart and mind find solace in the continued prayers of his beloved family and friends and Spirit's abiding peace.
- Bead 3:** For the millions of people emerging from a year of COVID isolation who have not had time off to address the trauma of this experience, who live with unemployment and financial stability, and who cannot stop to address their fear, anxieties, and pain.
- Bead 4:** For college students graduating into a different world with unfamiliar expectations and limited opportunities from when they started courses.
- Bead 5:** With Pastor Holly for people for whom Mother's Day is a source of grief, pain, or deep conflict that they know they are seen, loved, and held in compassionate community. And for people who find the day sweet and joyous that the work of mothering spread gracious lovingkindness in each encounter.
- Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer....*

4th Theme: Community, Nation, & World

Place your finger on the fourth ridged bead (D) saying:

God of compassion and justice, there is so much in the news that is painful, from natural disasters to governmental actions to hunger, poverty, and violence. And there are so many instances of lovingkindness, beauty, and hope. Move among your creation and your children, as I pray...

Move to the fourth set of 5 smooth beads, and offer your prayers for Spirit's moving:

- Bead 1:** With Clif and Anthony for the people of the Philippines as COVID continues to threaten safety, health, wellbeing; and especially Anthony's family members who must continue to work in person and remain at risk.
- Bead 2:** With Bev and Clif for the people of India and throughout the world who are ravaged by COVID and experiencing horrors of the pandemic to degrees we cannot imagine.
- Bead 3:** With Liz for people in Needham and other communities who are struggling in so many ways that they know God's moving with them through the unknowns of life.

Bead 4: With Louise in celebrating the blessings of holding and being held in prayer by dear friends and family each day – that the practice of prayer connects us deeply to one another and the Source of All Life.

Bead 5: With Pastor Holly for the people and places we have yet to encounter this year.

For the moving of your Spirit in hope and healing throughout our world, praise God, from whom all blessings flow ... And for your enduring presence, justice, and mercy in our brokenness, Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer....

Concluding the Prayer

Return to the first ridged bead (A) saying:

For the prayers of my heart that you, Holy One, know even when words cannot hold them...*Hear my prayer, O Lord...*

You may wish to use the original 3 beads to offer your own prayers.

Bead 1:

Bead 2:

Bead 3:

Hear my prayer, O Lord...as I pray the prayer your son taught us saying:

Holding the cross, end with The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen.

Offering

*During this time of offering, consider going right now to <https://www.fbcneedham.org> (Take Action) to complete your offering or continue to support the ongoing ministry of the church by writing your check to the church office and preparing it to mail to: **First Baptist Church in Needham, 858 Great Plain Avenue, Needham MA 02492**. Please indicate it is your offering or pledge on the check. Let this act be a spiritual practice woven in within your worship.*

Announcements

Our **church office** is open for our Office Manager, Robin Bevilacqua. We are encouraging limited visits to the church building, and all who visit are required to mask, sign-in, and socially distance. **If you need to speak with Robin, please call ahead if you can.** Pastoral and other church staff are working from home. Office voicemail and email are being checked regularly.

If you have a pastoral concern, contact Pastor Daryn or Pastor Holly by email, phone, or text.

Worship Resource and Calls of Caring are Provided Each Week

You are encouraged to make use of the Worship Resources and to find other meaningful opportunities for worship and reflection, Zoom services, or other spiritually enriching means of communing with God and community during this time of social distancing. Contact Pastor Daryn or Pastor Holly if you need help finding links to join other online services.

Worship on the Lawn

(weather permitting)

Sundays May 2 – June 6, 2021

10:00 a.m.

COVID protocols – masks and physical distancing – remain in place.

As we are moving through *Creative Callings* congregational decision-making and prepare for individual vocational discernment and exploration, join us on the Warren Street side lawn of our building for worship on Sundays. Contact Pastor Daryn with any questions.

Planning to Attend? Pre-register at: www.fbcneedham.org/worship-ministries

Services are also recorded and posted on our website for later viewing at:

www.fbcneedham.org/outdoor-worship

You're Invited!

**Celebration on the Lawn & Car Parade
for First Baptist Church Nursery School**

Saturday, June 5, 2021

Time *tbd*



We will gather in celebration of the Nursery School's years as a ministry at FBC Needham and their transition and future as part of Needham Children's Center. Our celebration will include a ceremony of remembrance, a blessing, and sending forth followed by a car parade!

Creative Callings

Collaboration, Innovation, and Prophetic Witness



Boston University School of Theology
Center for Practical Theology

***Creative Callings* Year 2, Session 2:**
COLLECTIVE & INDIVIDUAL VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT
Intentional Decisions – Faithfully Stepping Forward
Continues on Thursdays, at 6:30pm on Zoom!

April – May – *Honing Our Congregational Call/Recognizing New Life*: intentional conversation and reflection as a community

June – July – *One on Ones*: individual vocational discernment conversations

Previous videos are available on the *Creative Callings* link on the church website. If you have questions about *Creative Callings*, or how you can best support First Baptist in our participation, please contact Pastor Daryn, pastordaryn@fbcneedham.org, or Pastor Holly, pastorholly@fbcneedham.org.

India COVID Crisis Donation Appeal

through International Ministries of ABCUSA

International Ministries continues to work with partner conventions and mission hospitals in India to respond to the need of the current COVID crisis. We are raising funds to help mission hospitals to purchase life-saving equipment like ventilators and oxygen concentrators, and PEE for doctors, nurses, and hospital workers.

The Board of the Vellore Foundation has approved \$250,000 to help the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India, to respond to the current COVID crisis. International Ministries of ABCUSA has provided a first gift of \$10,000. In addition, International Ministries has provided \$14,500 to the hospitals of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India to assist their work in this crisis. Follow the link to learn more about the COVID response of the Vellore Foundation: <https://vellorecmc.org/>.

Make checks payable to “International Ministries”

Note on the check “India COVID”.

Send checks to:

International Ministries,
1003 W. 9th Ave., Ste. A.,
King of Prussia, PA 19406-1210

Give online at:

<https://portal.internationalministries.org/disaster-relief>

Click link “I would like to support”

Choose “OGHS Covid Response: International”

Check the box “Dedicate my donation in honor or in memory of someone”, and add (India COVID)

Thank you for your prayer and support in this global crisis.

