1. Title: “In Crisis We Pray: Religiosity and the COVID-19 Pandemic”

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3. Abstract
In times of crisis, humans have a tendency to turn to religion for comfort and explanation. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. Daily data on Google searches for 95 countries demonstrates that the COVID-19 crisis has increased Google searches for prayer (relative to all Google searches) to the highest level ever recorded. The rise amounts to a quarter of the fall in Google searches for flights, which fell dramatically due to the closure of most international air transport. Prayer searches rise at all levels of economic status, inequality, and insecurity, but not for the 20% least religious countries. The increase is not merely a substitute for services in the physical churches that closed down to limit the spread of the virus. Instead, the rise is due to an intensified demand for religion: We pray to cope with adversity.

4. Data description
The data consists of four types of databases:
1) A database on Google searches for topics related to prayer as a share of total Google searches for the 95 countries in the world with enough internet users was assembled. These searches include all topics related to prayer, including alternative spellings and searches for prayer in other languages. Two series of data were constructed: Daily data for all 95 countries for the period February 1 to April 1 2020 and global weekly data from 2016 to 2020.
2) A second database identifies what people are searching for when searching for the topic prayer.
3) The third database consists of daily data on registered cases and deaths by COVID-19 for each country. These numbers depend on the amount of testing in each country and thus are neither comparable across countries nor across time. Therefore, the main analysis will not depend on these measures. Instead, the main analysis depends on the point in time when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic; March 11.
4) To identify the characteristics of those who search more for prayer, the database with Google searches for prayer was combined with data on various characteristics of the countries, such as the fraction of their populations reporting higher levels of previous religiosity, the share of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, and various socio-economic characteristics.

5. JEL codes for the project: Z12, D91, I15, O57, Q54

6. Key-words: Religion, disease, coping