

PRAYER GROUP

June 3, 2020

A TIME FOR A CHECK-IN

GREETING

Leader: Jesus said,
“Where two or three are gathered in my name,
there am I, in the midst of them.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE

Leader: We light this candle as a reminder that Jesus,
who is for us the light of the world,
will be with us always,
even until the end of the age.

OPENING SENTENCES

Leader: One thing I have asked of God
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of God
all the days of my life;
to behold the beauty of God
and to seek God in God’s temple.

Who is it that you seek?

We seek God, the Holy One.

Do you seek God with all your heart?

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek God with all your soul?
Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek God with all your mind?
Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek God with all your strength?
Amen. Christ, have mercy.

DECLARATION OF FAITH

Leader: To whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life,
and we have believed and have come to know
that You are the Holy One of God.

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.

PRAYER

Reader: Christ, as a light illumine and guide us.
Christ, as a shield overshadow us.

All: **Christ under us; Christ over us;
Christ beside us on our left and our right.**

Reader: This day be within and without us,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Reader: Be in the heart of each to whom we speak;
in the mouth of each who speaks unto us.

Reader: This day be within and without us,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

All: **Christ as a light; Christ as a shield;
Christ beside us on our left and our right.**

AN INVITATION INTO STILLNESS

Let us now take a moment to settle into the silence.

Hear and feel the quiet of this place
and this community of people.

Hear and feel your quiet breathing.

Inhale the good gifts that God provides,
and exhale all of the things
that you need to release.

Breathe in strength. *(Pause for breath...)*
Exhale exhaustion. *(Pause for breath...)*

Breathe in freedom. *(Pause for breath...)*
Exhale all that holds you back. *(Pause for breath...)*

Breathe in a new sense of direction. *(Pause for breath...)*
Exhale the paths you no longer want to use.
(Pause for breath...)

Breathe in hope. *(Pause for breath...)*
Exhale self-doubt. *(Pause for breath...)*

Breathe in unconditional love. *(Pause for breath...)*
Exhale distrust and hate. *(Pause for breath...)*

In this time of prayer,
may our minds be open to new truth,
and our hearts be receptive to love.

Let us open ourselves to the Spirit of Christ
in our midst.

PRAYER *Jennifer Wakely*

Come down, Holy Spirit, come in wind and flame.
Shining in our darkness, blow away our shame.
Lend us your strength and light us on our way,
Till our night of weeping turns into joyful day.

Come down, Holy Spirit with a gentle word.
In this world of conflict let your voice be heard.
Hope for the weak and warnings for the strong,
till the noise of battle fades into prayer and song.

Come down, Holy Spirit, hover like a dove.
Seek the lost and lonely, fill them with your love.
Fly to our souls where doubts and questions dwell,
Till by faith and hope we know that all shall be well.

READINGS Psalm 83 (NRSVA)

- ¹ O God, do not keep silence;
do not hold your peace or be still, O God!
- ² Even now your enemies are in tumult;
those who hate you have raised their heads.
- ³ They lay crafty plans against your people;
they consult together against those you protect.
- ⁴ They say, 'Come, let us wipe them out as a nation;
let the name of Israel be remembered no more.'

- ⁵ They conspire with one accord;
against you they make a covenant—
- ¹³ O my God, make them like whirling dust,^[a]
like chaff before the wind.
- ¹⁴ As fire consumes the forest,
as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,
- ¹⁵ so pursue them with your tempest
and terrify them with your hurricane.
- ¹⁶ Fill their faces with shame,
so that they may seek your name, O LORD.
- ¹⁷ Let them be put to shame and dismayed for ever;
let them perish in disgrace.
- ¹⁸ Let them know that you alone,
whose name is the LORD,
are the Most High over all the earth.

READING Psalm 102 (NRSVA)

- ¹ Hear my prayer, O LORD;
let my cry come to you.
- ² Do not hide your face from me
on the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily on the day when I call.
- ³ For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
- ⁴ My heart is stricken and withered like grass;
I am too wasted to eat my bread.
- ⁵ Because of my loud groaning
my bones cling to my skin.

- ⁶ I am like an owl of the wilderness,
like a little owl of the waste places.
- ⁷ I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
- ⁸ All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who deride me use my name for a curse.
- ⁹ For I eat ashes like bread,
and mingle tears with my drink,
¹⁰ because of your indignation and anger;
for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.
- ¹¹ My days are like an evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.
- ¹² But you, O LORD, are enthroned for ever;
your name endures to all generations.
- ¹³ You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to favour it;
the appointed time has come.
- ¹⁴ For your servants hold its stones dear,
and have pity on its dust.
- ¹⁵ The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
- ¹⁶ For the LORD will build up Zion;
he will appear in his glory.

¹⁷ He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and will not despise their prayer.

¹⁸ Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet unborn may praise the LORD:

¹⁹ that he looked down from his holy height,
from heaven the LORD looked at the earth,

²⁰ to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die;

²¹ so that the name of the LORD may be declared in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem,

²² when peoples gather together,
and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.

²³ He has broken my strength in mid-course;
he has shortened my days.

²⁴ 'O my God,' I say, 'do not take me away
at the mid-point of my life,
you whose years endure
throughout all generations.'

²⁵ Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

²⁶ They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a garment.

You change them like clothing, and they pass away;
²⁷ but you are the same, and your years have no end.

²⁸ The children of your servants shall live secure;
their offspring shall be established in your presence.

A REFLECTION *from Rev. Michael Blair*

Friends, I have been wrestling about what to say about the events of this past week, but not only this week - the violence that has shaken many of us to the core. There is a desire to know what to do, how to respond. Grateful for many who have reached out to see how I am doing. Its appreciated.

Yet, I need you to know that George Floyd's cry: "I can't breathe," is a daily reality for many of us black folks. It is important, yes to be angry at the physical violence of a knee to the neck. And know that your silence at the systemic and unending racism that black folks experience daily, is in itself a act of the knee to the neck...

I can't breathe, when you leave it to me to name the racism that is in your face yet you keep silent...

When you take the system as a given, and don't question assumptions or the way things are, and are silent...you leave me gasping and fighting for air...

I can't breathe when you want me to represent and you do not ask why there are so few people like me around...and you keep silent

I can't breathe when you dismiss me, by not seeing colour...your silence is a knee to the neck

I can't breathe when you see pictures of the institutions you are a part of that only show white people...and you stay silent and don't ask why...

I can't breathe when you tell me we all have red blood, and diminish my experience

If you are serious about taking steps to name anti-black racism and racial violence (not just the physical) then your starting point is a commitment to stay silent no more...

REFLECTION *Jim Wallis, Sojourners*

“Our churches meet in buildings on land that authoritarian leaders can take over, but the people of God will continue to exercise their faith. Political power may attempt to co-opt our sacred texts and hold them aloft for partisan purposes, but we will continue to follow what our scriptures say and obey the word of God. Since the president’s act of blasphemy at a church, the Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and the Episcopal Bishop of Washington, D.C., Mariann Budde have both reiterated their commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the way our Lord calls us to live and act nonviolently for justice and peace. The president can violate our sacred spaces and Holy Bible, but he cannot take away our faith and our obedience to Christ. We, in our many faith traditions, will stand with these Episcopal bishops against the president’s religious offense.”

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens.

Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world...

May it be Your will, Holy One, that you watch over everyone who is putting their body on the line for justice.

May you give them strength in the face of unspeakable evil.

May you help them to find resilience and power in one another.

May you help them find the best paths for caring for another,
and show those who are less vulnerable
how to protect those who are at greater risk.

May you give them the courage
to move forward when they can,
and the wisdom to know when to move to safety.

May you help them find their strength together,
their power together, the way to justice together.

May you keep them safe.

May you keep them healthy.

May you help them to lift their songs and chants high enough
that the whole country may hear them.

May you help them energize one another,
keep each other full of hope,
to know that their presence offers hope—
that it helps to lift up a country full of fear and despair.

May You help them know that they are doing sacred work,
the work of demanding a world that understands
that every single human life is created in Your image.

Is holy.

Is a whole, profound, incalculable universe.

May you help them to see how their footsteps on the streets hallow the memories of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Ahmaud Arbery. Of Mike Brown. Sandra Bland. Eric Garner. Laquan McDonald. Tamir Rice. Walter Scott. Freddie Gray. Alton Sterling. And so many more.

May their actions help to inspire an entire country to fight for profound systemic change.

To transform every industry, every area of society, to uproot racism in every way that is possible.

May their work move the US to an honest grappling with the horrors & atrocities, harms & suffering of the last 500 years and of this moment today.

May it move our country towards the real work of repentance and amends, even if some of what has been broken can never be healed.

May every single person in this country find their place in the long work of fighting for justice.

May we all take care of one another.

May we all protect each other.

May we all see the holy in one another.

May we create systems that lift up every last one of us.

May you help us all find our way forward—
in hope, in truth, in justice, in compassion, in courage,
and in joy.

May we do the work and care for one another.

Blessed are You, God, who hears prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

WORDS OF BLESSING

Leader: The strength of the rising sun,
the strength of the swelling sea,
the strength of the high mountains,
the strength of the fertile plains,
the strength of the everlasting river
flowing in us and through us this day,
the strength of the river of God
flowing in us and through us this day.