

*a service of contemplation and prayer
for the support of the people of Syria
september, 2015*

gathering in sorrow and hope

TIME OF SILENCE

WELCOMING THE LIGHT

CALL TO PRAYER

And then all that has divided us will merge
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
And then all will nourish the young
And then all will cherish life's creatures
And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again

- Judy Chicago

SONG *Ubi Caritas/Live in Charity*

Taize

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION *unison*

God of mercy
We can no longer pretend to be distant from the heartbreak afflicting your children

who have fled Syria in fear of their lives,
stopped at the borders of countries too overwhelmed to welcome
held in trains, awaiting a word of hope,
huddled in camps and overcrowded shelters
with nowhere to turn and no way to turn back.

We can no longer pretend that that small pair of black tennis shoes ,
washed up on the shore,
could not be the shoes of one of our own sons or daughters.

We know the truth: all of these children are our sons and daughters; and
their parents are our brothers and sisters, and we owe them a room in the inn,
a place of safety, a chance to live and thrive.

We ask your forgiveness for our short attention spans and our limited
imagination.

We pray that you will help us to do better.

We pray for those who live in Syria still,
for the many whose faith in You has made them a target of hate
For those trying to hold life together, always watching and waiting
for the ominous movement of troops on the road into town
for the whistle of incoming shells,
for a cry from a desperate neighbor or a shout of warning
wondering, *is it safe to remain? Shall I send my family away?*

We pray for neighbors in Lebanon, in Jordan, in Turkey,
who have already welcomed so many,
whose resources are strained under the burden of hospitality
but who are still willing to do more.

We pray for those of us in the West, in Europe, the United States and
Canada

whose time for generosity is upon us.

May we reach deeply, give generously, and welcome extravagantly.
May we lift our voices in a strong and unified advocacy so that governments
will act now to save lives and to protect the peoples of Syria.

Jesus, who said, *let the children come to me,*
receive our sorrow and the gift of our broken spirits,
for we have so much yet to do to welcome even a few of *the least of these*
to save your broken children, to strengthen and support their communities

to call the world to accountability, to generosity, and to peace.
Help us find courage, compassion and hope, for we need your grace. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE *singing together to #363*

*I want Jesus to walk with me
I want Jesus to walk with me
All along my pilgrim journey, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.*

*In my trials, Lord, walk with me...
In my trials, Lord, walk with me...
When my heart is almost breaking, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with
me*

listening with open hearts

PSALM *in one voice*

Psalm 46:1-7

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
Though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains tremble with its tumult
God is in the midst of us, we shall not be moved;
God will help us when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
God utters, the earth melts.
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

STILLNESS

READING

Matthew 2:13-18

The holy family flees as refugees into Egypt.

¹³Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

¹⁶When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: ^{18a}"A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION ON THE TEXT

SONG *God of the Sparrow*

INTERCESSIONS

*For the people of Syria
For the United Nations,
our own nation, and the fellowship of nations
For refugees, and those in harm's way
For peacemakers, relief workers, and policy makers
For the voices of peoples of faith, that we may have courage,
grace, integrity and the strength to listen and to speak.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER (alternative version)

"our father who is in heaven, between gulls and warplanes, we want you to return before you forget how to get to this earth, so you can dance in a ring, not play hide-and-seek. Our mother, who is in the fields, help us when we carry water and we can't go on. Mother of so many orphans, of

beggars for food and shelter, of us who work when we should be playing and coming home from school as so many others do. Our father who watches street children grow by the thousands in my city, see how we play on the street corners and ask for money so our parents won't beat us. Our mother, who is in the cold night, it seems you hardly ever remember my kids, hear our prayer mixed with crying. May your kingdom simply come, your Kingdom where I dream freely and receive love, where I have friends and we learn to live, this Kingdom you said was for the little ones, the humble and the boys, the girls..."

(Hugo Venegas, Ecuador)

sending: we go out as practitioners of peace

HYMN *This is My Song, O God of All the Nations*

BENEDICTION

BLESSING ONE ANOTHER WITH PEACE

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RESOURCES USED IN THIS SERVICE

*"And then.... " Judy Chicago, quoted in Life Prayers, p 17.
Ed. Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon*

*Prayer for Syrian Refugees in Crisis, by the Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus,
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.*

"Ubi Caritas: Songs from Taize

*"This is My Song, O God of All the Nations" Tune: Finlandia
text by Lloyd Stone, from New Century Hymnal, UCC, #591*

*God of the Sparrow by Marty Haugen Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda
1995, GIA Publications, Inc.*

"Our father who is in heaven, between gulls and warplanes,"

from "Gifts of Many Cultures, Tirabassi and Eddy, p. 49.

Service written by the Rev. Dr. Laurie A Kraus,
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