

## WORSHIP RESOURCES FOLLOWING PUBLIC VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN CITIES

From the Ministries of Compassion, Peace and Justice,  
Presbyterian Mission Agency  
July 8, 2016

### A lament following violence in St. Paul, Baton Rouge, and Dallas

July 8, 2016

God of our weary years and our silent tears,  
We are shattered by the deaths of Alton Sterling and Philandro Castile  
Devastated by the loss of five Dallas police officers and the wounding of seven more,  
    gunned down while protecting a citizens' peaceful protest  
We are horrified, angry, despairing  
We struggle with a yearning for justice and judgment--  
    a knowledge that our prayers alone are not enough  
    a hurt that is beyond speech  
    a fear that we do not know a way forward that will help  
    an emptiness: we have been here before, too many times,  
    and we know we will walk this bloodied path again.

What can we do, with such fear and anger and longing,  
    that can bind us together, rather than further tear apart the fabric of our common life?  
We are failing one another, and we are failing You:  
    our Maker, our Mercy, our Justice, our Peace.

We pray for our neighbors in St. Paul, in Baton Rouge, in Dallas  
    and for our whole broken and heartbroken nation  
    in this hard season of violence, death and distrust  
    each one lost is a child made in Your image.  
    each survivor is beloved to You  
    each afflicted community is part of your commonwealth.

We lift our prayers for each life lost, each family bereaved,  
each neighborhood whose fabric has been violently torn asunder by bullets and hatred and  
fear.

We pray for ourselves, that this hurt, this outrage, this yearning for justice  
will not fade from our minds before our hearts are broken open  
    by Your passion for mercy, justice, and love.

Restore our hope, our heart,

our sense of the possibility of holiness and wholeness in your creation.  
Tend the fires of our rage so that they burn for justice and warm hearts that have grown cold.  
Make the waters of our tears nourish the river that flows through the city of God,  
and the tree of life that is for the healing of the nations.

In the name of Jesus, we pray.  
Amen.

*(prayer by the Rev. Dr. Laurie A. Kraus, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance)*

### **LITANY FOR PEACE**

Holy God, we cry out to you as we grieve the brokenness of our world. We place our trust in you, that you will hear our prayers, with mercy and tenderness. Take our fear, our anger, our frustration and our weary souls. Embolden us as your disciples to share love of Jesus Christ in these days.. It is in the bold confidence of this love that:

#### **We pray for peace-**

*Not with easy words that make no demands, but the peace of the cross,  
Where we bear agony in love, overcoming divisions,  
Being we the bridges of love in Christ.  
Where enmity and fear give place to forgiveness.*

#### **We pray for hope-**

*A hope that springs from resurrection, not founded on human solutions,  
But the hope that is in the One who has and will come again.*

#### **We pray for power-**

*The power to endure the long night of waiting, that we may be faithful to the end,  
The power to be unmoved when evil appears triumphant and the battle for truth seems lost,  
The power to love when hate explodes into violence and we are tempted to see violence as the only way,  
The power to start building again when all we trusted in is crashing around us,*

#### **We pray for courage-**

*The courage to be a pilgrim people traveling into the unknown in the confidence that the way is known to God,  
The courage to be the body of Christ, so that all who have sorrow may know the love of Christ through us.*

**Amen.**

(Adapted by Sara Lisherness  
from the Presbyterian Church of Ireland - found in *Who Do You Say that I Am?*  
World Alliance of Reformed Churches)

## **BELHAR CONFSSION: LITURGICAL FORM**

The Executive Commission of the UPCSA in 2011 gave thanks to God for “the Belhar Confession and the historic role it has played in the history and witness of the Church in southern Africa”, approved “all the contents” of the Confession and embraced “all its sentiments and values”. The following is the official liturgical summary of the Belhar Confession. The Executive Commission in 2015 officially approved and commended the summary for use in services as a liturgical declaration of faith, and the Belhar Confession was officially added to the PCUSA Book of Confessions at the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly last month.)

L: We believe in one God, Father Son and Holy Spirit,  
who gathers, protects and nourishes the Church  
from the beginning of the world to the end.

**C: The Church is holy; the Church is universal;  
it is the fellowship of God’s children,  
called together from the whole of humanity  
to proclaim God’s wonderful deeds.**

L: We believe that the reconciling work of Christ  
gives birth to a uniting Church,  
because Church unity is a gift from God  
and a goal we need to strive for.

**C: The unity of the Church must become visible  
so that the people around us can see  
how separation and hatred are overcome in Christ.**

L: We believe that genuine faith in Jesus Christ  
is the only condition for membership in this Christian Church.

**C: We praise God that race, class, gender, or culture  
does not determine who belongs to this Church.**

L: We believe that God has entrusted to the Church the message of reconciliation;  
and that the Church is called to proclaim and embody this reconciliation;  
to be peacemakers;  
and to believe and to witness that God conquers all powers  
of sin and death, of hate, bitterness and enmity,  
through his life-giving Word and Spirit.

**C: We praise God that the gospel does not separate people on the basis of race, gender, class, or culture, but is the power of reconciliation in Christ.**

L: We believe that God wants to bring about true justice and lasting peace on earth;  
we believe that God is, in a special sense,  
the God of the suffering, the poor and the downtrodden.

**C: We praise God who gives justice to the oppressed and bread to the hungry;  
who sets captives free and makes the blind to see;  
who protects strangers, orphans and widows.  
and obstructs the plans of the wicked.**

L: We believe that the Church belongs to God  
and that it should stand where God stands:  
against injustice and with those who are wronged

**C: We commit ourselves to reject all forms of injustice in ourselves and amongst us;  
and to struggle against all forms of injustice  
and every teaching that allows injustices to flourish.**

L: We are called to confess and to do all this  
in obedience to Jesus Christ, our only Lord,  
even if authorities or laws oppose this,  
even if punishment and suffering may be the consequence.

**C: Jesus is Lord! We will follow Him!  
To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be honour and glory for ever and ever.**

**VESPER SERVICE FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION**  
**AFTER PUBLIC VIOLENCE**

*gathering*

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *responsively*

**from PSALM 23**

One: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want

***ALL: God makes us lie down in green pastures, God leads us beside still waters.***

God restores my soul.

***God leads us in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.***

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

***We walk through the valley of the shadow of death...***

I will fear no evil.

***We will fear no evil.***

For you are with me.

***You are with us.***

***You are with us.***

“When despair for the world grows in me  
And I wake in the night at the least sound  
In fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world and am free.”

***We are free. Let us worship God.***

**OPENING HYMN #785 GTG** *In Deepest Night*

**ROSE MARY**

**CALL TO CONFESSION***from the Confession of 1967*

To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as God's reconciling community. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares God's labor of healing the enmities which separate people from God and from each other. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His human life involves the church in the common life of all people. His service to men and women commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all human suffering so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on the inhumanity that marks human relations, and the awful consequences of the church's own complicity in injustice. In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human life in society and of God's victory over all wrong.

Confession of 1967 9.31-32

**CONFESSION OF BROKENNESS AND SIN** *unison*

*Merciful and compassionate God, we come to you broken and weary by the violence that surrounds us and the violence and fear that dwells within us.*

*We come to you, confessing that we perpetuate violence by denying its very presence in our own lives and refusing to hold accountable the institutions that live and move by violent means.*

*We come to you seeking mercy and forgiveness. Help us to name and claim all that separates us from you, from one another, and from the most vulnerable of your creation.*

*We come to you, praying for guidance and wisdom, that we might see your way, delight in your will, live as Jesus did, loving neighbors as ourselves, and be your presence for healing and justice in this world. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, our Way, our Truth, and our Life, amen.*

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS*****Psalm 131***

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,  
My eyes are not raised too high  
I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me  
But I have calmed and quieted my soul  
Like a weaned child with its mother

My soul is like the weaned child that is with me  
O people of God, hope in the Lord from this time on and forevermore.

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

***In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.***

**RESPONSE #775 GTG** *I Want Jesus to Walk With Me*

**\*THE TIME OF PEACE**

**Please share the peace of God with your neighbors.**

*listening*

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

*The real prayers are not the words, but the attention that comes first.  
(Mary Oliver)*

**THE PSALM**

**Psalm 82**

**THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**Luke 10:25-37**

*The parable of the good Samaritan.*

**HOLY CONVERSATION**

*What does it mean to be a neighbor? What is our witness to the innkeepers who open their doors to the wounded and bystanders who are working together for healing and restoration? How do we move beyond fear or apathy to engage in healing the world?*

**\*PROFESSION OF FAITH** *responsively*

*from the Confession of Belhar*

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**C: We praise God that the gospel does not separate people on the basis of race, gender, class, or culture, but is the power of reconciliation in Christ.**

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**C: We praise God who gives justice to the oppressed and bread to the hungry; who sets captives free and makes the blind to see; who protects strangers, orphans and widows. and obstructs the plans of the wicked.**

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in ourselves and amongst us;  
and to struggle against all forms of injustice  
and every teaching that allows injustices to flourish.**

L: We are called to confess and to do all this  
in obedience to Jesus Christ, our only Lord,  
even if authorities or laws oppose this,  
even if punishment and suffering may be the consequence.

**C: Jesus is Lord! We will follow Him!  
To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be honour and glory for ever and ever.**

***being Christ's agents of justice and peace***

#### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Gracious God, we come yearning for peace in a broken world. We come searching for new relationships: with God, with one another, with a broken world....

*prayers may be spoken aloud.*

We come struggling to claim the violence within us. We come celebrating your redemptive love, for truly You alone bring restoration and healing...

*prayers may be spoken aloud.*

Bestow your healing touch upon all who hurt this day,  
that our lives may be transformed by your presence.  
Guide us as we look to the light beyond the valley of the shadow of death....

*prayers for healing, justice and courage may be spoken aloud.*

Be with us and bless us as we are renewed by your spirit to find new alternatives to violence, especially in our roles as Christian peacemakers. May we be changed forever by your vision of peace..hrough Christ, the Prince of Peace we pray, Amen.

**RESPONSE TO PRAYER**

**PSALM 133**

**THE OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND TITHES**

**OFFERTORY**

**\*THE DOXOLOGY**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise God our Life, and in love grow,  
Praise God whose grace has set us free  
For faith, for love, for unity. Amen.*

**\*THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**\*HYMN #74 GTG**     *When God Restored Our Common Life*     **RESIGNATION**

**\*THE CHARGE** *unison*

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

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**

**\*please rise in body or spirit**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Sources:**

The prayer of invocation "When despair for the world..." is by Wendell Berry. The charge is by Judy Chicago.  
Other resources in this service by Laurie Kraus and Sara Lisherness,  
Ministry of Compassion, Peace and Justice, PCUSA.