

A SERVICE OF PRAYER FOR THOSE HARMED BY THE HAITIAN EARTHQUAKE

The Western Jurisdiction Leadership Team
Monday, January 25, 2010
Phoenix, Arizona

A HYMN FOR REFLECTION AS WE GATHER

*O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.*

*Before the hills in order stood, or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God, to endless years the same.*

*Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all who breathe away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.*

*O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come;
be thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home
— Isaac Watts (The United Methodist Hymnal, 117:1, 3, 5, 6)*

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
And also with you.

CALL TO PRAYER

On Tuesday, January 12, 2010, a devastating earthquake shook the earth beneath the nation of Haiti. The poorest of the poor in the Western Hemisphere took upon their land and bodies the full brunt of the powerful lashing of the earth.

What prayer can we say at such a time,
When thousands upon thousands,
Are missing — buried under life destroying rubble?

What prayer would make a difference to those who remain?

So often we have been taught to pray to change things, to make a difference to stop a tragedy. But when the tragedy has already come, how do we pray? Perhaps "conventional wisdom" about prayer must be laid aside on this day.

GUIDANCE FOR PRAYER

Let us pray for all those affected by the earthquake;
for the children, for the young people, for the parents, grandparents and relatives.
Let us pray for those involved in the attempts to rescue, to relieve suffering, and to bring aid.
Let us pray for the global community, for the leaders of church, cities, and nations — that

together we might work for the greater good and find new levels of compassion through cooperation.

Let us read the Holy Scriptures,
finding there the stories and witness of hope
borne by those who lived through ordeals to the glory of God,
and hear the promises of the gospel
for all who mourn.

In our prayer for the victims and survivors,
let us not narrow our compassion for all who suffer, whatever their profession or creed;
let no hatred or prejudice enter our hearts for anyone.

Called by the Holy Spirit to unity with all the children of God,
let us enter into their suffering, repenting of our ignorance, refusing to be silent or passive,
ready to respond in Christian love to those in every nation where there is need.

READINGS AND PRAYER

Psalm 16

i. ***Prayer for the children, youth and adults who perished***

On this day, our prayer is one of remembrance:
We remember that those who perished in the earthquake are
More than numbers,
More than statistics,
More valuable than sparrows;
Each was a person of sacred worth created in the image of God.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)

In the aftermath of this most terrible tragedy, we are comforted by the knowledge that the same God who knows when a sparrow falls to the ground knew and loved each of those who died. Let us pray for Sam Dixon, and Clint Rabb, and their families. Their witness remains with us and inspires us. Let us pray for Jim Gulley whose life was spared and who continues to call us to faithfulness.

Sung Response Nothing Can Trouble #2054 The Faith We Sing

A time for personal prayer, silent or aloud

Unison Prayer: Loving God, We pause to remember the untold thousands of individuals who perished this month. They were people who belonged to cities and villages, communities and places of worship. With their friends and families we pause to remember that you gave them life and loved them. In our present helpless

state, we are comforted to know that you know each person by name. Lord, have mercy upon this earth and all who mourn on this day. Amen.

ii. ***Prayer for the family members who survived***

On this day we lift our prayer for all who survived, those who lost loved ones and face the terrible responsibility to keep on living in the midst of death, to keep on loving in the midst of loss, to find a way to have a funeral in the midst of chaos — when the bodies of loved ones may never be recovered.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, we find comfort in the knowledge that no child of God is unknown and that no child of God is alone, therefore we pray with confidence for those who survive, children without parents, parents without children, spouses missing, loved ones lost, families torn apart.

Sung Response Nothing Can Trouble #2054 The Faith We Sing

A time for personal prayer, silent or aloud

Unison Prayer: Loving God, We pause to remember the untold thousands of family members who grieve. With their friends and families we affirm that you gave them life and loved them. In our present helpless state, we are comforted by the fact that you know each person by name. Lord, have mercy upon all who mourn on this day — in Haiti and around the world. Amen.

iii. ***Prayer for those of us who are able to help — individuals, churches, cities, and nations.***

Today, we pray for ourselves and all those with power to help — those individuals, churches, cities and nations entrusted with the resources needed to relieve suffering, sustain life and rebuild the property that has been destroyed.

Jesus told this story to communicate an essential truth:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me . . . Then the righteous will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?' . . . And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' (Adapted from Matthew 25:34-40)

Let us pray for eyes that are open to see what Jesus sees,
ears that are open to truly hear,
hearts that are open to love as Christ loved,
and lives that respond to our neighbor
and the least of these who are members of his family.

A time for personal prayer, silent or aloud

**Unison Prayer: Loving God, We remember that we are stewards
of the manifold resources you have entrusted to us.
We are people who belong to families, churches, cities and nations
just like those who perished. With their friends and families
we pause to give thanks that you gave them life and that you loved them.
We give you thanks that in this present moment we are not entirely helpless—
we believe that prayer does make a difference.**

**Gracious God, guide our prayer, open our hearts
and empower our acts of compassion and justice
that suffering might be relieved, villages rebuilt, and lives restored.
Bless our acts of obedience that in some small way, we might be used
to restore hope, and increase faith,
and widen the pathway to peace — as we offer our prayer
in the name of your Son,
our Savior, the Prince of Peace. Amen.**

Video Presentation Haiti, We Will Rise Music by Stefan Youngblood

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

Marked with the sign of Jesus Christ in baptism
we accept the freedom and power God gives
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression,
to do good to all people, especially to the least of these — God's children.

Go forth in the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit
to live our prayer in active obedience.
Continue to pray for those who were lost,
for those who grieve,
and for those in positions to help.
Together in this human family, let us find ways to act in love toward them.

We are sent in Christ's name.

Here the leader blesses the people:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.
Amen.

Adapted from "A Service of Prayer for those Harmed by the Earthquake and Tsunamis"
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