

Worship Resources for Witness against Torture

Episcopal Peace Fellowship - Western New York



Contents

1. Prayers that could be used within any service
2. A special *Prayers of the People* (or litany) for use within any service
3. A special evening worship service for community or ecumenical use
(This could be used as part of an educational event.)
4. Hymns

Section 1: Prayers for Use During Any Worship Service

An intercession that might be added permanently to a parish's *Prayers of the People*

Let us love our enemies, never torture them: grant your warring children healing peace and gentle love.

A Prayer for Our Nation

Gracious God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we give thanks for your presence made known to us in the words, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

God of all truth, by whom all nations are judged and from whom nothing is hidden, we pray for the courage to face what we have done as a nation and who we have become as a people. *Amen.*

God of grace, grant repentance and forgiveness to leaders whose decisions have made victims of guards, interrogators and prisoners through torture and cruelty. *Amen.*

God of love, grant healing and restoration to all those who suffer the scars of pain, hatred, guilt, shame and self-recrimination. *Amen.*

God of peace, in whose outstretched arms we all find welcome, kindle within us the desire to love our enemies and to find ways to bring this about. *Amen.*

God of hope, heal our cynicism. Deliver us from adopting the terrorist ethic that the end justifies the means. May we not do what we say we condemn. *Amen.*

So may we do justice and love mercy, and walk humbly with You, our God, our Strength and our Redeemer. *Amen.*

— The Rev. Kermit D. Johnson, chaplain and Major General in the U.S. Army (retired)

A Prayer for Those Affected by Torture

God who is the source of all life, we pray for our sisters and brothers.

... for those affected by torture, whether physical or mental.

... for those who suffer brutal violence.

... for those who are mocked and humiliated and disempowered.

... for those who are shown no mercy.

... for those who are forced to exist in a state of perpetual terror, and who experience life-long trauma.

... for those whose precious humanity is taken away.

... for those who are not give the chance to live the gift of life, but instead fear for that life every moment.

Provide signs of your presence. Grant strength and courage and all that is needed for the living of these days. Guide the nations and peoples of the world to turn from policies and practices that violate one another. Move us to act in that cause. We pray in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

— Katie J. Anderson; Young Adult Intern, Racial Ethnic Young Women Together and National Network of Presbyterian College Women

A Prayer Related to Torture

God for all the world,
We pray for our brothers and sisters
Throughout your world
Who endure torture
Physically,
Spiritually,
Emotionally.
In their pain
May they experience your presence and care
Binding their wounds
Supporting them.
We pray for our brothers and sisters
Throughout your world
Who inflict torture
Physically,
Spiritually,
Emotionally.
May they experience your presence and care
Binding the wounds they bear
Wounds they receive as they wound others.
Open them to see the dignity of each person.
Strengthen them to seek ways
To break free from violence.
We pray for our brothers and sisters

Throughout your world
Who authorize torture
Physically,
Spiritually,
Emotionally.
Break the hold of fear and anger upon them.
Inspire them to seek other ways to advance
their causes.
We pray for ourselves
Confessing our responsibility for acts of
torture
Which violate our sisters and brothers
And degrade us and our values.
Guide us to pray and study,
Dialogue and speak,
Come together and advocate
For an end to torture.
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ,
Whose life, death and resurrection
Reveals that God's love
Is indeed stronger than torture and fear.
Amen.

—The Rev. W. Mark Koenig
Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

Section 2: A Special *Prayers of the People* or Litany

O God, from every corner of creation, you brought together people of every tribe and language and culture and nation, and made them one in your Spirit; breathe your Word into us, enflame us with a passion for peace, and enliven our gifts that we may ever work for the common good and the coming of your Kingdom.

For the world, that it may be transformed from a valley of dry bones into a mountain where nations dwell as one in peace, let us pray,

Spirit of life, give us your peace.

For our community, that it may become an abundant garden with fruit for all humanity, let us pray,

Spirit of justice, give us your peace.

For the Church, that it may be life-giving bread for the world, let us pray,

Spirit of wisdom, give us your peace.

For those tormented by oppression, illness, or aimlessness, that they may be transformed by healing and hope, let us pray,

Spirit of fire, give us your peace.

For those tortured in body, mind, or spirit, that they may be transformed by the soothing balm of love, let us pray,

Spirit of hope, give us your peace.

For us, that our half-seeing eyes and our half-hearted faith may be transformed into clear vision and single-minded action, let us pray,

Spirit of power, give us your peace.

For those who have died, that by your Spirit they may be transformed by your forgiveness and purified in holiness, let us pray,

Spirit of life, give them your peace.

O God, without your spirit our power ebbs away, without love our gifts are nothing; start a fire within us that cannot be quenched or contained, a flame that halts the fiery arrows of evil, and turns the world bright with hope. *Amen.*

— *Adapted from a text by The Rev. Gary Commins*

Section 3: A Service Suggestion for Community Ecumenical Evening Worship

This could be used in conjunction with an educational event, or separately. Please adapt as appropriate for the traditions of participants.

Call to worship: one of the following

L Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;

P we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

L Therefore I say unto you, Love your enemies,

P bless them that curse you,

L do good to them that hate you,

P and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

All Amen

L It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High.

P It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, O Most High.

L For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;

P At the works of your hands I sing for joy.

Opening hymn or song (see Section 4 for suggestions)

The short video, "Ending U.S.-Sponsored Torture Forever," could be shown here.

Prayer of Confession (said in unison)

Gracious and loving God, we have failed to live as your resurrection people. We have spoken when we should have listened; we have been silent when we should have raised our voices. We have strayed from hope and grown weary in the struggle for justice. If any acts of injustice have been undertaken in our name — this day we especially remember acts of torture — forgive us for our silence and acquiescence. Give us courage and wisdom to remedy and prevent injustice as we try to live the way of our faith.

Silence

(Leader) Almighty and merciful God, restore us to your wholeness. As you have forgiven us, may we have the strength to forgive ourselves and others. Continually open our hearts to your call in our lives, through the grace of Christ. *Amen.*

Or, General Confession and Absolution from The Book of Common Prayer

Intercessory Prayer

Let us pray for the tortured and the torturers, that both may be healed by God's love.

Any prayers from The Book of Common Prayer, or from the prayers in this document, could be used.

Closing hymn or song

Benediction

May the grace of Christ who spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well — the stranger — strengthen you for acts of mercy and justice. *Amen.*

May the love of God who creates us each in God's own holy image guide your interactions with fellow humanity and all of creation. *Amen.*

And may the comfort of the Holy Spirit who does not abandon one who is suffering bring you hope in each new day. *Amen.*

Section 4: Appropriate hymns when witnessing against torture

Hymnal 1982

571 All who love and serve your city
527 Singing songs of expectation
530 Spread, O spread thou mighty word
569 God the Omnipotent
574 Before thy throne, O God, we kneel
577 Ubi caritas

Wonder, Love, and Praise

721 Signs of endings all around us
757 Will you come and follow me
811 You shall cross the barren desert
827 O Lord, hear my pray'r
831 Ubi caritas

**Contact information for the WNY chapter of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship:
Stephen Hart • sahartny@gmail.com • 716.837.7461**