



Church of the Brethren

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”
- Leo Tolstoy

The great mystery of the Christian faith is that the transformation of the world begins with one person. In our confession of faith we name Jesus Christ as that one person. At the same time, the transformation begun in Christ continues in each one who takes his name.

In the wake of violent tragedies, the natural response is to find blame, both for the deed itself and the culture that supported it. Yet, for Christians the life and death of Jesus calls us to humbly take the blame that is ours. In times such as these the appropriate Christian response is not one of righteous indignation but of humble prayers of confession. As we gather as the Church of the Brethren in our various communities may we be one people, a people of humility, a people of prayer, and a people of Christ. Whether your individual prayers contain words of mourning, confession, or petitions for answers, we offer these scriptures and resources to gather our prayers as a community of Christ.

Suggested scriptures

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:21-22, NRSV)

“You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill.” (Matthew 5:21-22, *The Message*)

James 4:1-12

“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?” (James 4:11-12, NRSV)

Suggested Resources

Confessing

Leader: O Prince of Peace,
from peace that is no peace,
from the grip of all that is evil,
from a violent righteousness...

People: deliver us.

Leader: From paralysis of will,

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

from lies and misnaming,
 from terror of truth...
People: **deliver us.**
 Leader: From hardness of heart,
 from trading in slaughter,
 from the worship of death...
People: **deliver us.**
 Leader: By the folly of your gospel,
 by your choosing our flesh,
 by your nakedness and pain...
People **heal us.**
 Leader: By your weeping over the city,
 by your refusal of the sword,
 by your facing of horror...
People: **heal us.**
 Leader: By your bursting from the tomb,
 by your coming in judgment,
 by your longing for peace...
People: **heal us.**
 ALL: *Grant us peace. AMEN*

Assurance of Forgiveness

There is therefore now no condemnation
 for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus
 has set us free from the law of sin and death.

Prayers for Peace (Hymnal Supplement #1093)

One: We seek your wisdom in the life we share, holy God.
 Tutor us in being quick to listen
 beyond words,
 without building silent arguments,
 across barriers of language and style,
 with a will to understand.
All: Teach us to be slow to speak.
 One: Inhibit us in using words that
 make impetuous judgments,
 spring forth in self-defense,
 speak truth without love,
 mask truth with caricatures of love.
All: Transform us, that we may be slow to anger.
 One: Temper us.
 Let our anger no explode in stoked bitterness.
 Let it not erupt in fearful denial or irritation.
All: But let it propel us toward greater integrity, care, and justice.

Grant us your spirit as guide, we pray. Amen

Prayers of the People

Leader: God of ages past, you have watched through time as those created in your image seek self destruction. In these days of mourning heal us of our desire for violent solutions. Transform us into people of your peace, seeking the wholeness and welfare of all people with our actions and speaking your love with our words. For those places in your creation, both near and far, where violent words and deeds define the times:

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God of an uncertain present, you watch as we seek security in so many things yet fail to look for you in the changes and people around us. Open our hearts and our minds to the new ways you are at work around us, and quicken our feet to join in your mission. As we seek after your presence we hold before you a hurting world, struck by natural disasters and those of our own willing. For us as your people and the needs of this world:

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God of the coming Kingdom, you draw us into the vision of the lion sleeping next to the lamb. May we, as your Kingdom's seeds on earth, bear the fruit of that vision. May our words be full of your truth and our deeds bathed in your love, for in our witness the world catches glimpses of you and your Peaceable Kingdom. For those moments today and to come, when we are blessed to embody your vision:

People: Hear our prayer.

All: God of all life, it is in you that we live, move, and have our being. For this gift we give you thanks, knowing that our words and deeds reveal you to the world around us. May we, your people, be witnesses to the humbled and risen Christ now and in the days to come. Amen.

Credits

Litany of Confession- *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (Brethren Press, 1992), 697.

Assurance of Forgiveness- *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (Brethren Press, 1992), 709.

Prayers for Peace- Kim McDowell, *Hymnal Supplement* no. 7 (Brethren Press, 2003), 1093.
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Prayers of the People- Joshua Brockway, Director of Spiritual Life and Discipleship for the Church of the Brethren.