

*The following prayers were drafted by **Rev. Emma Seamone** of the United Church of Canada serving Carberry United Church in Carberry, Manitoba, and administrator of the United for Mining Justice Network; **Rev. Won Hur**, Global Partnership Program Coordinator, Asia, of the United Church of Canada; **Rev. Dr. Patricia Lisson**, former minister with the United Church of Canada and Vice Chairperson of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines; and United Methodist **Deaconess Joyous Prim** serving in Hong Kong.*

Prayer Service

Call to Worship

Leader: God shines brightly everyday.

People: **God is always there for us.**

Leader: God's people are willing to listen.

People: **To the word and our neighbour's stories.**

Leader: God's people are doers in this world.

People: **We live our faith through our actions.**

Leader: Our Filipino siblings cry out for justice and peace.

People: **May we be courageous enough to heed their cries.**

Leader: God is always there for us.

People: **God shines brightly everyday.**

Opening Prayer

Source of Lights,

We thank you for the care you have for all of your creations. We ask you to open our ears so that we may hear the words spoken today, open our hearts that we may be slow to judge, open our minds so that we may speak with purpose and transform us into doers for the benefit of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

(In unison)

O God, you are the Creator and in you we live, move, and have our being. O God, we live in a complicated world with much pain and sorrow, guilt and shame, fears and hopes. So, we pray. O God, does your heart ache when we destroy the environment, displace its people, and pollute our rivers? Do you shake your head in disbelief when migrant workers, labourers and peasants are exploited? Do you shed tears of pain when innocent people are oppressed, killed, and sacrificed on the mighty altar of profit? Or, is it You who cries through our tears? You whom we feel through in our aching hearts, and You who makes us shake our head in disbelief at all the injustices in our world? O God, mend our hearts when we are unable to feel pain, heartaches,

and when we shed tears for people who are suffering. We also confess for the ways we turn our blind eye to injustices and financially benefit from exploitation. O God, forgive us and have mercy on us. Enliven us to be the doers of the word as we join with you as we work to do justice, heal the wounded, and care for the Creation. Amen.

Silent prayers.

Words of Assurance

(Worship leader)

God has created us in God's sacred image, in goodness and love. God has also gifted us with the wisdom to do what is right and the heart to speak the truth in love. In God, new life is possible because God has instilled undying hope in us. God's love fills our hearts that heals, renews and forgives. Rejoice and be glad because God has anointed us with the oil of gladness – to experience the dawning of a new day towards just peace in our world. Amen.

Notes for Meditation

This service was developed with acknowledgement that the Revised Common Lectionary prescribes the Epistle of James 1:17-27 for September 1, 2024. The National Council of Churches has called upon people of faith to pray for peace in the Philippines that same Sunday.

There are several facets to the James pericope that allow for one to preach on this topic:

- The writer speaks to the idea of listening being more important than speaking, and that one has to truly listen to avoid anger/judgment. Our hope is the stories provided allow you to create moments of listening to the experiences of those on the ground in the Philippines. With a history of colonization from various countries, and an ongoing struggle being a strategic military position for Western Powers - listening to what Filipinos want, and need for peace is more powerful than prescribing solutions from a place of ignorance. Consider taking the time to tell your people a story from a Filipino perspective.
- There is affirmation at the beginning of the pericope that all of us are treasured by God. Rather than othering the struggle for peace in the Philippines, consider making the connections between how we are all part of God's family. The writer mentions particular care should be given to the widows and orphans. At the time of the writing, these two groups were disadvantaged by societal norms and policies of the day- today the people of the Philippines are asking for our help as policy and societal norms have putten them at a disadvantage. Make clear this is about solidarity with our siblings not charity to others.
- Most poignantly, the writer speaks about the importance of living our faith in action. We need to be doers and not just listeners, one can make the connection between listening to the enclosed stories and doing something. Prayer, advocacy, or even deeper learning around this topic are all ways our faith can be lived out in response to the call for a just peace. Our siblings have called upon us to act so they can live peacefully.

- A final note that this letter is addressed to the Jewish Christian diaspora, because of ongoing economic uncertainty many Filipinos are forced to labour in foreign countries. In a North American context this Sunday will fall on labour weekend. This opens an opportunity to discuss the globalization of labour and the challenges Filipinos face as migrant labourers. Scattered as the first intended audience of this letter was.

Pastoral Prayer

Holy God of mystery and faithful love

We are filled with gratitude for stirring the spirit beyond fear

Of the Filipino human rights workers, land defenders, and all who are the truth tellers, peace seekers

And have heard the cries of those held under the heel of exploitation from cruel and unjust government institutions;

Your love enables the Filipino people to risk being open to the call for justice and actions

It is through this embedded love that we will change lives and build a society founded on justice and compassion.

We turn to you Creator with our hearts filled with impatience and exasperation.

We hear the voices and the desperations of the Filipino people, human rights defenders, political prisoners, and the hollering of the land defenders as they watch the environment being destroyed for political and economic greed

We feel the breaking hearts of families whose members have disappeared or have been shot in the streets

We hear the cry of laborers as they ask for fair wages for the work that they do.

God of peace enable us to demand that the root causes of the armed conflict be addressed creating a just peace,

Knowing we are not traveling alone on this difficult journey,

But that you are there every step of the way,

Building trust and creating a new heaven and a new earth!

Blessed are those who cry out for justice! Amen.

Offertory Prayer

(In unison)

O God, you are the Creator, from whom all goodness, blessings, and wonders flow. We give thanks for the beauty of your Creation in all their splendor. From your gifts of Creation, and your gifts to us, we bring you a portion of our fruits. Bless what we offer. May it be used to protect your sacred earth, to serve those who seek to live harmoniously, in peace and justice, in the Philippines and around the world. Amen.

Benediction

As we go forth from this worship, may God continue to open your hearts and ears to those in the margins of society whether in our local communities, our countries or around the world in the Philippines. We have heard our siblings in the Philippines cries of longing for just and lasting peace across their lands. We have answered the pleas of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines to join together in this day of prayer.

May Jesus help us to remember we are all part of God's family. May this be our first collective step forward as we continue to walk in solidarity with the widows, the orphans, and all of the everyday people in the Philippines. Through hearing their stories, learning together, and working with community groups engaged around these issues, may we turn our prayers into action to answer their pleas.

May the Holy Spirit continue to move in and through us so that even when the circumstances seem so bad and we're exhausted, that we may continue to have the energy to move forward together so that we may answer their cries until just and lasting peace is achieved.