

Readings from the Prayer Vigil held in response to terror and tragedy of Tuesday, September 11

Service compiled by Don Friesen

Ottawa Mennonite Church, September 15, 2001

omc@ottawamennonite.ca

www.ottawamennonite.ca

Call to Worship (The Iona Community)

If you come
in certainty or confusion
in anger or in anguish
This time is for us.

If you come
in silent suffering or hidden sorrow
in pain or promise
This time is for us.

If you come
for your own or another's need
for a private wound or the wound of the world
This time is for us.

If you come
and do not know why,
to be here is enough
This time is for us.

Come now, Christ of the forgiving warmth.
Come now, Christ of the yearning tears.
Come now, Christ of the transforming touch.
This time is for you.

Prayer of Invocation

(John Unger, Canadian Mennonite University, special prayer chapel, September 11, 2001)

Almighty God,
Our world is shattered today.
The foundations are shaken.
Order crumbles.
Panic fills the streets.
Homes and offices and hearts are numb with fear.
How quickly our peace, our sense of security, our self-assurance
vanishes.
How easily our self-assurance and self-confidence is torn from us.
Remind us today that You are the Sovereign Lord.

With You there are no surprises,
No threats,
No panic.
Remind us that no matter what happens in the world,
To us, and those we love,
That You are sovereign, still.
And so it is natural that on this terrible day, we turn to You in prayer.
Amen

Prayers and Expressions of Lament

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 6:1-6

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger, or discipline me in your wrath. 2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. 3 My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD — how long? 4 Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love. 5 For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who can give you praise? 6 I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping.

READING: God, Give us Freedom to Lament

(Brian Wren, contemporary American)

God, give us freedom to lament
and sing an honest, aching song,
when faith is twined with discontent,
and all is empty, wrecked and wrong.
Give us the candor to complain
when pain attacks without reprieve
and evil rages unrestrained
while You are absent, or on leave.
As faith and understanding show
how love could gamble to create
by letting be and letting go,
we tremble at the risks You take.
The stakes are infinitely high,
when love, its purpose to achieve,
must leave the Word in Flesh to die,
while God is absent, or on leave.
We'll walk beside You, come what may,
to You our hopes and hearts belong,
and when we've nothing else to say,
we'll sing an honest, aching song.

READING: God, I Hate You

(Andrew Pratt, contemporary British Methodist, whose poetic prayer echoes the words of a man whose wife died suddenly in her early forties)

'God, I hate You!'
screams the anger of my stone-cold grief;

God, I need You,
in this anguished taunting misbelief.
God, I need You
cowering, failing, falling from your peace;
God, I love You,
try to love You,
help the hatred cease.
God, I love You in my anger,
dispossessed by grief;
Love me even though I hate You;
Hold me, show me peace.

READING: When Finest Aspirations Fail

(John L. Bell, Iona Community)

When finest aspirations fail
and dreams become dismay,
and all the hopes tomorrow held
lie felled by yesterday,
what can we do, where do we turn,
what shall we say?
We hurt for what has happened
and we fear for what's to come;
and easy consolations leave us
negative and numb
yet wondering whether deeper depths
are yet to plumb.
Shall they control our destiny
who, deaf to our demands,
are ruled by other values
and defer to their commands?
And are our futures safe
in these unwanted hands?
On Christ, you lost control
or so it seems, when to a tree
they nailed you and regaled you
and refused to let you free
and all because you showed
how life was meant to be?
Then must our hopes, like you,
be meant to die beyond repair,
and leave us lost and powerless,
befriended by despair
in order somehow to be saved
and sense God's care?
And shall our hopes, like you
arise from where they ceased to be?
And shall the spirit that was crushed
be transformed and set free?
If that's God's will,
then we await what's yet to be.

Prayers for Victims, Their Friends and Families

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 28:1-2

To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, do not refuse to hear me, for if you are silent to me, I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. 2 Hear the voice of my supplication, as I cry to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.

PRAYER

Almighty God, we come to You in the midst of shock and despair at the loss of so many of our brothers and sisters. We pray that their suffering was brief and that You will comfort the families of those who have died or are unaccounted for.

We pray that Your Holy Spirit will comfort and guide those who find themselves in the depths of despair and unbelief of what has occurred.

Grant to the dead, peace; to the bereaved, comfort; to the injured, healing; and to those who despair, hope; that in this time of trial they may know the consolation of Your love.

We pray for ourselves, in the realization that we are vulnerable and fearful. Heal those who are wounded, give courage to those who fear, and grant Your grace and salvation to those who have died.

In the name of Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen

Prayers for Medical and Rescue Teams

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 31:1-5

In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. 2 Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. 3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me, 4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. 5 Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

PRAYER

Almighty God, whose son, Jesus Christ, healed the sick and brought comfort to the weary; give strength and courage to the men and women of the emergency services who are responding to this tragedy. Grant to them Your love and presence in the heart of danger, sorrow, pain and anguish, that they may continue to find life and hope in the midst of destruction.

Lord, we can only imagine what the rescue and medical teams are experiencing this week. We pray for them to have strength, stamina, courage and conviction to endure what will be demanded of them.

Lift their hearts above the reality of death and destruction. Make them aware of Your powerful presence. Give them insight and wisdom to make life and death decisions. Help them focus on what they accomplish rather than on what they cannot do.

And when the rescuers have done all they can do, provide rescuers for them. Rescue them from despair and the visions of what they have seen.

Comfort them with the balm of Your Holy Spirit, and give them the peace that surpasses human understanding.

This we pray in the name of Christ, who sent us his Holy Spirit, that we may be comforted. AMEN.

Prayers for Our Political Leaders

SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

PRAYER

(Adapted, in part, from a Service of Prayer and Lamentation compiled by Susan Mark Landis, Minister of Peace and Justice for the Mennonite Church)

O Brother Jesus, you who walked among us to heal our hurts and confusion, we seek your grace for the broken people and places of our world.

We pray for our government leaders. We pray that President Bush, Secretary Powell, Secretary Rumsfeld and other leaders, including our own prime minister, will seek Your wisdom.

We pray, Almighty God, for relationships between nations — many peoples, living in one world.

We pray for persons who might be targets of reprisal because of their ethnic background or racial characteristics.

We even bring to You those who committed these tragedies: We pray for extremist groups, hate groups, and others who turn to violence as a solution.

We pray for the families of the terrorists.

We pray for the nations of the world, and their leaders.

Loving and Eternal God, whose love sets no boundaries, and whose strength is in service, grant to the leaders of the nations wisdom, courage and insight. Give to all who exercise authority a deep commitment to the principles of freedom, love and tolerance,

and clarity of vision to guide the world in the paths of justice and peace. This we ask, through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN

Prayers for Hope, Healing, and Peace

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 46:1-7, 10-11

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. 6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. ... 10 "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

READING: Community of Christ

(Shirley Erena Murray, contemporary New Zealander)

Community of Christ, who make the Cross your own,
live out your creed and risk your life for God alone:
the God who wears your face, to whom all worlds belong,
whose children are of every race and every song.
Community of Christ, through whom the word must sound'
cry out for justice and for peace the whole world round:
disarm the powers of war and all that can destroy,
turn bombs to bread, and tears of anguish into joy.
When menace melts away, so shall God's will be done,
the climate of the world be peace and Christ its Sun;
our currency be love and kindness our law,
our food and faith be shared as one forevermore.

All quotations of Scripture, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version.