

POVERTY

Love your neighbour as yourself



A liturgy for marking October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Opening Prayer (unison)

Creator of all, Essence of all, Lover of all, Holy Trinity, God; we sit in awe of the mystery of you, and the mystery of life.

Just as we use words to describe you and understand you better, we use words to describe others. We use words like poor, homeless, unemployed, mentally ill, disabled, needy, drug dealer and addict.

The words we use for you do not come close to the complexity of you, and the words we use for others do not come close to describing the complexity of each man and woman, whom you have created.

We all live in the mystery of your abundant love.

We confess that our actions do not always reflect your abundant love for all people. Many who live among us are vulnerable. They live in fear, and with very little support. We do not understand their hardships. We confess that we do not show every man and woman the same level of respect. We reject some members of our society.

Your grace calls us to live as one community, with dignity, respect and love. Too often we fall short of this vision.

Help us to reflect in our thoughts, words and deeds, your abundant love for every person. Open our ears so we hear the cries of your children rejected in your world. Soften our hearts, so we may empathize with their experiences. Guide our hands and feet, so we may walk with our brothers and sisters, in their struggle for respect and dignity.

As you are a companion to each of us, help us to be companions, struggling together, so no one feels as though they struggle alone.

Help us to loosen the bonds of injustice, and undo the thongs of the yoke. We faithfully proclaim your good news for vulnerable people and we work to build your kingdom. Poverty can be reduced.

Be with us as we praise your name. Be with us as we receive your word. We pray in the name of your suffering son, Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Suggested Hymns (from The Book of Praise)

787—The kingdom of God is justice and joy
769—Lord of light, whose name means splendour
740—Make me a channel of your peace
472—We are God's People

Statement of Faith (adapted from Living Faith, sections 9.1 and 9.3)

For some today “God” is an empty word. They have no knowledge of a relationship with God. They do not feel the Spirit of God in the world. Many find it hard to believe in a loving God in a world where so many suffer. Many live with despair. The bible witnesses to God in Christ, entering deeply into human suffering. As we behold our saviour on the cross, we are convinced of God’s love for us. God is our suffering companion. God is with us in our anguish. When we experience God we are compelled to speak of God moving powerfully in life. Our faith is a response to the searching presence of God. Our belief brings new meaning into our lives. We are here to proclaim Christ in word and deed, to honour Jesus as Lord, and to permeate all of live with the compassion of God.

Suggested Scripture Readings

Isaiah 58:6-11
Psalms 22:1-11
Matthew 20:22-34

Scripture Questions

What does it mean to "drink the cup"?

How do you feel when you meet someone who has more money and/or power than you? How do you feel when you meet someone who has less money and/or power than you? In Matthew, what does Jesus say about the relationships among the disciples?

Why does Jesus want us to interact with vulnerable or poor people? How can we grow in our faith to respond to vulnerable people in our community? How can we encourage our governments (municipal, provincial and national) to respond to vulnerable people in Canada?

How can you “loose the bonds of injustice” and “undo the thongs of the yoke”? What might this mean for your congregation?

Prayer of the People (responsive)

God of forgiveness, reconcile our broken relationship with you, and with each member of our community.

God of love, be with those who feel invisible.

God of power, give voices to those who are silenced.

God of rest, renew those who have weary and burdened hearts.

God of peace, grant serenity to those in turmoil.

God who abides in all of us, open our eyes to watch you abide in all.

God who brings us such wealth, help us see this wealth in the poor.

In you God, we find our home, help us see you in the homeless.

In you God, we have abundance, help us see this abundance in people who have mental and physical challenges.

God of unconditional love, we ask you to help us to seek your Spirit in people who struggle with addiction, or who make harmful choices.

God of courage, give us the audacity to advocate for stronger social programs, safe and affordable housing and adequate living wages.

Gracious God, open our hearts to be transformed by those who are vulnerable.

We come together as your faithful disciples and pray as your son taught us to pray:

Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction



Go forth thirsting to drink from God's cup.

Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters.

See the invisible members of our communities.

Feel deeply, the Spirit of God moving powerfully in every part of life, and in every human being.

Walk with those who struggle and falter, knowing that God is walking with each of us as well.

Audaciously proclaim that God's good news is for all people.

Advocate with conviction for change that will make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people.

Be transformed by God's abundant love as it is reflected in vulnerable people.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Members and adherents of The Presbyterian Church in Canada may photocopy and distribute this resource.

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