

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Commentary

Prayers after a Violent Event

Service after a Violent Event

Service for Justice and Peace

Additional Texts

God sends the Church to work for justice in the world: exercising its power for the common good; dealing honestly in personal and public spheres; seeking dignity and freedom for all people; welcoming strangers in the land; promoting justice and fairness in the law; overcoming disparities between rich and poor; bearing witness against systems of violence and oppression; and redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples. God also sends the Church to seek peace: in the Church universal, within denominations, and at the congregational level; in the world, where nations and religious or ethnic groups make war against one another; and in local communities, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and homes. These acts of peacemaking and justice are established upon God's gracious act of reconciliation with us in Jesus Christ, and are a way of participating in Christ's priestly intercession or advocacy for the world.

In the Service for the Lord's Day we proclaim, receive, and enact reconciliation with God in Christ. Through the proclamation of the Word we are given the assurance of freedom and peace in Christ and are inspired to share these gifts with others. Through Baptism and the Lord's Supper we are united with Christ, made one in the Spirit, and empowered to break down the dividing walls of hostility that still separate us from one another. We confess our participation in unjust systems, pray for an end to violence and injustice, offer our gifts to support Christ's liberating work, and commit ourselves to pursue peace and justice in Jesus' name.

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Any time we gather for worship, we are called to proclaim the righteousness and justice of God, seek the peace of Jesus Christ, and pray for the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit. Yet particular events in a church, the local community, or the world may call for special times of prayer for justice, peace, and reconciliation. In the wake of acts of violence, denials

of justice, bitter debates, or contested decisions, it is fitting for us to seek the abiding presence and transforming power of the liberating Lord.

When unjust actions occur, it may be enough simply to gather—perhaps to sit in silence, to light candles, or to sing. When a more elaborate service of prayer for justice and peace is desired, one of the orders of worship provided below may help communities to practice lament, speak hard truths, name conflicts, and give voice to disappointment or anger.

The services include the reading of scripture; they may also include a brief sermon or a time of testimony. The prayers in these services call for justice as well as peace, and are voiced in a way that invites the participation of all who are gathered for worship. When Christians gather and pray with neighbors of other faiths or no faith, we are called to offer a faithful and authentic account of our hope in Christ, while being respectful of the beliefs and hospitable to the practices of others.

The following materials are provided for services of justice and reconciliation. Some are offered for use during a traumatic event or in its immediate aftermath; others are designed for use on the first evening or day after a conflict or crisis occurs:

- prayers for use with victims, first responders, and others giving support
- a Service of Prayer for Communities Affected by Violence
- a Service of Prayer for Justice and Peace
- scripture and hymn suggestions, as well as other elements of worship and prayers for various occasions