

A Prayer in a Time of Anger, Unrest and Injustice

Holy One, whose Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, whose children you empower to prophesy, whose youth see visions and whose elders dream dreams, we cry out to you with a loud “Hosanna!” Where else shall we go, O Savior? All else has failed us. You alone have the words of eternal life.

You came that we might have life more abundantly, but that abundance eludes too many of us, O God, and hate and bigotry are ever present. Our news cycles are filled with despair. Our hearts ache as we wade through a global pandemic, reaching grim milestone after grim milestone. But even as we navigate a new threat, old ones still linger. Communities of color bear the uneven weight of a new disease, yet we see that racialized violence and the systemic injustice undergirding it have by no means given way to the demands of a pandemic. We speak some of the most recent names: Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Tony McDade. We add them to the litany already in our macabre collection: Aiyana and Emmett, Eric and Sandra, Jordan and Rekia, Trayvon, Atatiana and Tamir, and the myriad others in far too long a list. This great cloud has witnessed persistent injustice and our perseverance in the face of it. Yet, how can they rest when so many keep joining their ranks?

We are slow to confront our complicity and investment in white supremacy and dominance. We live in a world in which Indigenous, Black and Brown siblings are expected and compelled to offer forgiveness at a discount. Far too often, life continues as if nothing has happened while our gaping wounds are still open. When the cheeks are turned, they are met with another hand to the face, gun to the head — or knee to the throat. Forgiveness is too infrequently met with repentance. This, O God, we name as sin. It is *our* sin. Many of us lament and strive against that sin. Help and empower us to continue that work with diligence and faith. Too many of us still waver and are unconvinced that there is a problem. Remove our hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh that are softened toward our siblings. Help us to reckon not only with our personal failings, but also with our institutional history and the ways the church has helped to create systems of inequity. By your Spirit, help us to corporately live into our creeds and confessions and provide sanctuary for all God’s children. When we say that “that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged”ⁱ and that “the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination,”ⁱⁱ help us to truly mean it.

We humble ourselves and cry out to you in the hope that you will hear us and heal us. We lift the communities of Louisville, Minneapolis, Georgia’s Glynn County and all where racialized violence has occurred and unrest has been stirred. Holy God, we recall the words of our ancestor Dr. King, who reminded us that “a riot is the language of the unheard.” Open our hearts, minds and understanding to your movement in the margins, so that when your people speak, they are indeed heard, and when they tell the truth about your deeds of power, they are not dismissed as something other than sober and of a clear mind. In this way, let the fires of uprising give way to the fires of your Spirit, where your people hear the Good News of your kin-dom, hear it with joy, and make haste to take part in it. Let us release our attachment to our current world order and walk bravely into the world you’ve intended for us, even and especially when it costs us something. We are mindful that, as the Rev. Dr. Cornel West states, “Justice is what love looks like in public.”

Your kin-dom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus is still Lord. To the one and only God, our Divine Parent, Jesus, our Gracious Sibling and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

A Hymn by Slats Toole

Meter: 7.6.8.6.8.6.8.6

Suggested tunes: KINGSFOLD; WILTON SQUARE

How can we cry for justice
when our swords stained the ground
with blood that cries from lands we stole
but then claimed to have found?
These swords have morphed to guns and bombs
that we will not let go.
We don't deserve forgiveness, God;
have mercy even so.

How can we march for freedom
when our hands built the wall
that greets the stranger with a cage
instead of love for all?
We willfully ignore the tale
of Christ as refugee.
We don't deserve your kindness, God;
but Savior, hear our plea.

How can we seek God's kin-dom
when our words stoke the flame
that animates our acts of hate,
our systems, sins and shame?
Our doctrines justify our need
to conquer, cage, and kill.
We don't deserve your mercy, God;
have mercy even still.

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Worship in Action (resources to help with further engagement and study):

[Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community \(Churchwide Antiracism Policy and Study Guides\)](#)

[Advocacy and Social Justice](#)

['We are accountable to the commitments we have made' Two advocacy committees call on the PC\(USA\) to recommit to the struggle for racial justice](#)

[6 Ways White People Can Dismantle White Supremacy](#) – Justice Unbound

ⁱ The Confession of Belhar.

https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/belhar.pdf

ⁱⁱ The Confession of 1967.

https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/confess67.pdf