action by Christians against torture

As part of the U.N INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SUPPORT FOR THE VICTIMS OF TORTURE, 26th June

INTERNATIONAL PRAYER VIGIL
23rd JUNE 2012

SERVICE TO MARK OUR PRAYER FOR THE VICTIMES OF TORTURE AND THEIR FAMILIES
Annual theme:  

“**A still small voice**” 

*(1 Kings 19:12)*

**OPENING SENTENCES**

When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High, when one’s case is subverted - does not the Lord see it?  

Lamentations 3 34-36

“I came that they may have life and that they may have it abundantly”.  

John 10 v.10

**HYMN**

For the healing of the nations,  
Lord, we pray with one accord;  
For a just and equal sharing  
Of the things that earth affords  
To a life of love in action  
Help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us, Father, into freedom;  
From despair your world release,  
That, redeemed from war and hatred,  
All may come and go in peace.  
Show us how through care and goodness  
Fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living  
Let it from the earth be banned:  
Pride of status, race or schooling,  
Dogmas that obscure your plan.  
In our common quest for justice  
May we hallow life’s brief span.

You, Creator God, have written  
Your great Name on humankind;  
For our growing in your likeness  
Bring the life of Christ to mind;
That by our response and service
Earth its destiny may find
Fred Kaan

ACT OF REPENTANCE AND AFFIRMATION:

Father, you have called us to serve the cause of right;
you have chosen us to bring true justice to the nations
and to be messengers of your freedom to those not treated as your children. “
'We confess together our failure in your service and ask for your forgiveness.
for we are not worthy to be called your servants.

The good Samaritan stopped to help the stranger who needed him
If we have seen the suffering of the oppressed and have passed by on the other side,

Father,

ALL: WE ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE CALLED YOUR CHILDREN

Pontius Pilate washed his hands of the death of our Lord,
If we have washed our hands of persecution and oppression,
and left others to work for justice

Father

ALL: WE ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE CALLED YOUR CHILDREN

Saul stood by as Stephen was stoned to death.
If we have stood idly by while our brothers
and sisters in other lands have been put to death

Father.

ALL: WE ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE CALLED YOUR CHILDREN

If we have been too concerned about our own comfort to be concerned for those who suffer;
If we have made excuses why we cannot become involved;
If we have failed to recognise your Son in the faces of the oppressed.

Father,

ALL: WE ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE CALLED YOUR CHILDREN

God is the Creator of all, and we are God's children regardless of our unworthiness. In the words our Lord gave us, we pray to him for forgiveness and deliverance. May he deliver us from the selfishness which hinders our service to those in need, so that we may help to bring justice and freedom to others.

ALL: THE LORD'S PRAYER

READING: EPHESIANS 6
"Put on the whole armour of God"

PRAYERS: O Lord,
we can never fully comprehend the length, breadth, depth and height of your love: but we pray that your love may so transform us through your suffering as to make us reach out to the despairing and the desperate and work for peace and reconciliation between all people. Amen
LOOK ON HIM

Show us, Father, what we do not want to see and yet must see. Let us look upon the one they pierced.

Show us the places of execution, the torture chambers and the prisons, where skulls are crushed and minds distorted.

Show us the truth about brutality and violence, about unjust sentences and miscarriages of justice, when someone's quibble is another's death or life.

Show us the weeping and the agony of the family and the friends, the ones who, in their love can only watch.

Show us the corpses, broken and bleeding. Show us what humankind has accomplished in its fury. Let us see, so that we may know it is true. “

Show us, Father, what we do not want to see and yet must see. Let us look upon the ones they pierced.

And as we look, in terror and reproach, can we know that it is you we see, bearing the pain we dread, sharing the injustice, suffering the humiliation? For only so, could we bear to look.

(Susan & Michael Durber from URC Prayer Handbook)
Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, may we bring love.
Where there is wrong, may we bring pardon.
Where there is discord may we bring harmony
To those in prison for what they believe,
to those cut off from those they love,
to those who are tortured,
and to those awaiting their execution,
may we be instruments of your justice and your
freedom.
Where there is despair, may we bring hope.
Where there is darkness, may we bring light.
Where there is sadness, may we bring joy.
Where there is loneliness and hopelessness,
Where there is oppression and inhumanity,
May we bring your love and your presence.
Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Fill us with your Spirit of peace
that we may be peacemakers.
Make us hunger and thirst for justice,
so that we may give ourselves
in the service of those who need us,
and deliver us from evil.
    (adapted from the prayer attributed to St Francis)

HYMN (optional)

READING:  PSALM 88  A cry of despair

POEM:  FROM "IF LIFE IS POSSIBLE"
(in memory of all torture victims)
Let me not go mad
With the blood still wet
On the crushed splinters of defying bones.
Let me not go mad
With every passage of an electric current
Administered till I die of shock.
Let me not go mad
When water plays upon my nostrils
and I have nothing else to breathe.
Let me not go mad
When I am buried alive
Suffocated in a black box.
Let me not go mad
When I must confess
For I cannot stand the torture any longer.
Let me not go mad
When I can neither feel nor live
When another horror must end in murder.
(Tilak Gunawandhana)

READING: From Audacity to Believe by Sheila Cassidy

"Incredibly, in the midst of fear and loneliness, I was filled with joy, for I knew without any vestige of doubt, that God was with me, and that nothing could change that. I knew too that, in some strange way, the pain I had suffered was his gift, and that far from being a sign of his lack of care or wrath, it was an unmistakable sign of his love. in some mysterious way, I had been permitted to share in the mystery of life and death, of incarnation and the Cross.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus.
You experienced in person the sufferings and the death of a prisoner. You were plotted against, betrayed by a friend and arrested under cover of darkness by men who came with clubs and swords. You were tortured, beaten and humiliated, and sentenced to an agonising death, though you had done no wrong. Be now with prisoners through out the world. Be with them in the darkness of the dungeon, in the loneliness of separation from those they love:
be with them in their fear of what may come to them,
in the agony of their torture and in the face of execution and death.
Stretch out your hands in power to break their chains and open the gates of freedom, so that your kingdom of justice may be established among them.

(from Let My People Go)

SONG: KUM BA YAH

ALL: Someone's praying Lord, kum ba yah
Someone's praying Lord, kun, ba yah
Someone's praying Lord, kum ba yah
O Lord, kum ba yah.

READER: Someone's praying, Lord,
A priest prays for those who torture and imprison him.
A bishop prays for courage to stand against those who threaten him.
A congregation prays to be kept safe from attack by the army
A mother prays for her son who has disappeared.

ALL: Someone's crying, Lord, kum ba yah

READER: Someone's crying, Lord,
Someone's crying because the pain of torture is too great to bear,
Someone's crying because he has confessed to things he did not do,
Someone's crying because he has betrayed his friends and loved ones.
Someone's crying but there is no one to bring comfort.

ALL: Someone's dying, Lord, kum ba yah
READER: Someone's dying, Lord, because those in power are afraid of what he thinks and says,
Someone's dying, Lord, gunned down in the street,
Someone's dying, his body left by the roadside.
Someone's dying all alone in a dark, squalid, bare cell.

ALL: Someone's fighting, Lord, kum ba yah

READER: Someone's fighting for justice, dignity and freedom,
Someone's fighting for human rights
Someone's fighting for the least of our brothers and sisters.
Someone's fighting though it may cost him his life.

ALL: Someone's singing, Lord

READER: Someone's singing with joy because prison doors have opened.
A family is singing because their loved one is free.
Someone is singing, Lord, but his joy is marred by the pain of past memories.
Someone's singing for hands held out in love.

PRAYERS FOR JUSTICE AND LIGHTING OF CANDLES

Heavenly Father, we are here to celebrate joy in the midst of pain,
hope in the midst of despair,
life in the midst of death.
You, whose liberating power is seen in history, come and set us free from Injustice and oppression,
And awaken your people to the coming of a new kingdom.

Lord, lead us to your kingdom.
The way of the world is the way of violence and the abuse of power.
We are witnesses to governments who crush people's spirits and deny human rights, who cling to authority by force and refuse the path of transformation.
We come to affirm that to you, Lord, belongs all power and glory.
Your way is the way of the cross that teaches us the power of suffering love, and you call us to be servants of the least.
We resist the violence that tramples on people and stand in solidarity with the victims.

ALL: May the light of hope shine in the darkness
Candle is lit

Lord, lead us to your kingdom.
We pray for all who are tortured.
whose bodies and spirits are broken, in order to gain information or create fear or inflict punishment on their families and friends.
We cry to you, O Lord.

We pray for the torturers and executioners, who have lost sight of the human face in their victims and who have been poisoned by the society in which they live.
Deliver them from their blindness and cruelty.
We cry to you, O Lord

ALL: May the light of hope shine in the darkness
Candle is lit
Lord, lead us to your kingdom.
We pray for people everywhere who are working for a world free from torture. We thank you for those with a vision of a time when there will be peace, freedom and justice for all and for all organisations seeking to translate dreams into reality. We pray for the church throughout the world in its witness to the values of the new kingdom that is dawning but is yet to come. We remember especially the work of ACAT in this country and the work of FIACAT.

ALL: May the light of hope shine in the darkness Candle is lit

ALL: We come to affirm our commitment to the gospel and to dedicate ourselves anew to the struggle for the oppressed. Give us your spirit of truth, that the word of love and grace may burn within us and the world be led from death to life.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND SITUATIONS

AS THE CANDLES ARE LIT THE RESPONSE IS:

“MAY THE LIGHT OF HOPE SHINE IN THE DARKNESS”

HYMN: BROTHER, SISTER, LET ME SERVE YOU

Brother, sister, let me serve you, Let me be as Christ to you; Pray that I may have the grace To let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey. And companions on the road; We are here to help each other Walk the mile and bear the load.
I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant too.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father,
We bring to you all the deaths we cannot understand,
and not only the deaths, but also the pain.
We lay down all these deaths at your feet,
so that you can keep them for us,
since we are unable to understand them.
We cannot unravel by ourselves the tangled threads of pain and anger and sadness in the world.
But we ask that you would help who are afflicted to know that suffering can never claim the victory.
Help us to know that you are at the centre and at all the boundaries,
and that you seek with all compassion,
the hurt, the maimed, the wandering and the lost.
And in the midst of sorrow and suffering,
help us to enter into the mystery of your cross where you suffered our fears and losses,
where you moved from life to death,
so that we might know how unbounded your love is for us. Amen

ALL

O Lord, stretch forth your wounded hands in blessing over your people to heal and restore, and to draw them to yourself and to one another in love. Amen

ALL:

Let us go forth in peace to take up our cross and follow Christ. Amen

HYMN:

Thy kingdom come, O God,  
Thy rule, O Christ begin;  
Break with thine iron rod  
The tyrannies of sin.

When comes the promised time  
That war shall be no more -  
Oppression, lust and crime  
Shall flee thy face before?

Where is thy reign of peace  
And purity and love?  
When shall all hatred cease,  
As in the realm above.

We pray thee, Lord, arise,  
And come in thy great might;  
Revive our longing eyes,  
that languish for thy sight.

O'er lands both near and far  
Thick darkness broodeth yet  
Arise, O morning star,  
Arise and never set.