



Eradication of Poverty Prayer Service

Except for the leader, each reader is encouraged to stand up and read from within the body of worshippers, if he or she is able to speak loudly enough to be heard. The readings may be apportioned among any convenient number of readers. If possible, two or more readers who speak a language other than English should be recruited to repeat, in different languages, the last two verses of the parable of the good Samaritan.

CALL TO PRAYER:

Maker and Savior of humanity, as we gather to pray about poverty in this country and the world, grant us discernment and will to follow you in your love for those in poverty.

Reader: “the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to [Christ]. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” (Luke 4:17-18)

All: Lord, fill us with your spirit, and give us grace to follow you in every way. Amen.
[Here, a song may be sung or silence kept].

GOD’S WORDS ABOUT THE POOR

Reader: Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. (Psalm 82:3)

All: We pray for the marginalized, the forgotten, those without power. Not mercy alone, but justice also, demands that we defend the least among us.

Reader: He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy, honors God. (Proverbs 14:31)

All: We praise you for creating all humans, rich and poor, in your own holy image. Teach us to heal the structural injustices that rob your children of dignity and life.

Reader: “Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.” (Micah 4:4)

All: God, give us wisdom and will to work out your vision for the world, in which all people have enough for their daily needs.

Reader: “A poor man’s field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away.” (Proverbs 13:23)

All: We pray for those who, because of economic oppression, face hunger and destitution despite their hard labor.

[Here, a song may be sung or silence kept].

Reader: CONFESSION AND SUPPLICATION

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you,

and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.” (Isaiah 58: 6-8)

Reader: “I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.” (Deuteronomy 15:11).

All: We are able to reduce poverty in the world. We pray for the resolve and vision to do so.

[a chime or bell may be sounded, or a brief Kyrie sung]

All: We are able to send every child in this world to primary school. We pray for the care to educate the little ones, who are the planet’s future.

[a chime or bell may be sounded, or a brief Kyrie sung]

All: We are able to empower women, acknowledging in our societies the fullness of their being as people made in your image. We pray for the courage to end prejudice and degradation.

[a chime or bell may be sounded, or a brief Kyrie sung]

All: We are able to reduce the number of children’s deaths caused by preventable diseases and the number of mothers’ deaths caused by neglect of women’s reproductive health. We pray for the will to save our own flesh and blood, everywhere in the world, from needless death.

[a chime or bell may be sounded, or a brief Kyrie sung]

All: We are able to reverse the spread of AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. We pray for the will to pay for the medicines and wisdom you have given us to fight these deadly plagues.

[a chime or bell may be sounded, or a brief Kyrie sung]

GOSPEL: WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR

Reader: “On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” However, he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply, Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers.

They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a

Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

(Luke 10: 25-37)

[The last two verses may be repeated in different languages, if readers are available].

Reader: Over a billion people in this world live on less than one dollar a day, facing grinding poverty.

All: They are our neighbors.

Reader: One billion people in this world do not have access to safe, clean drinking water. They live at the mercy of water-borne diseases.

All: They are our neighbors.

Reader: Over sixteen thousand children each day die of hunger-related causes.

All: They are our neighbors.

Leader: Lord, let us keep and treasure the charge you have given us.

All: Creator God, we thank you and praise you for giving us the ability and the responsibility to seek justice and do rightly in our world. Give us also the will to seek justice with all our hearts, minds, and abilities. Then our light will break forth like the dawn, and our healing will quickly appear; then righteousness will go before us, and we will be near to the glory of God. Amen.

[Here, a song may be sung or silence kept].