



*Praying for*  
**PEACE**



PEACE SUNDAY PACKET 2017

# PRAYING FOR PEACE

## *Peace Sunday Packet 2017*

*Peace Sunday is an occasion to preach, teach, reflect upon and witness to the gospel of peace as revealed in Jesus Christ. Mennonite Central Committee Canada encourages Anabaptist congregations across Canada to observe Peace Sunday on November 12, 2017.*

We hope you will use this resource to help mark Peace Sunday.

*For more information and additional resources:*

**Visit our website:** [mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday](http://mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday)

**Like our Facebook page:** Peace Sunday Canada

**Contact us by email:** [peace@mcccanada.ca](mailto:peace@mcccanada.ca)

After Peace Sunday, let us know if and how you used this material.

Send a note to [peace@mcccanada.ca](mailto:peace@mcccanada.ca).

## CONTENTS

3

### Introduction

3

### About the prayers

4

### Suggestions for using the prayers

5

### Prayers for Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Zimbabwe

7

### Prayers for Asia

Myanmar (Burma), North Korea and South Korea, Vietnam

9

### Prayers for Europe and the Middle East

Iraq, Palestine and Israel, Syria, Ukraine

12

### Prayers for Latin America and the Caribbean

Bolivia, Mexico, Nicaragua

14

### Prayers for Canada and the U.S.

*This packet includes only a sampling of the full collection of prayers available for Peace Sunday.*

*The entire collection is available here: [mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday](http://mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday)*

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## INTRODUCTION

*To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.*  
– Karl Barth (1886-1968)

The above quotation from Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth provides the inspiration for this year's Peace Sunday Packet.

For years MCC Canada has provided a Peace Sunday Packet to Anabaptist congregations across the country, to assist them in planning an annual Peace Sunday worship service and related educational and public witness activities around Remembrance Day.

This year's resource consists very simply of a collection of prayers from around the world, and in particular from contexts where MCC works. In light of the chaos, disorder and violence in our wider world, it is right to clasp our hands, hearts and voices in prayer for peace.

We pray for peace in our world:

- to remind ourselves that God is the source of peace,
- to seek the peace of Christ that enables us to be people of peace and reconciliation,
- to pay attention to what God is already doing to bring peace into the world,
- to root and centre ourselves spiritually when our tendency is to swift action,
- to connect ourselves with neighbours near and far,

- to hold particular people and places in the light of Christ,
- to cry out against violence, injustice and oppression,
- to offer comfort and solidarity, advocacy and accompaniment to those who suffer.

The prayers in this collection have been provided by MCC workers and partner organizations. They express the deep longings of people for peace, and the profound conviction that the God of peace hears these prayers. See "About the prayers" for more information.

We invite you to use these prayers in your congregational worship, in small group or Bible study gatherings, and at home in personal, family or household prayer times. See "Suggestions for using the prayers" for ideas on praying these prayers in different settings.

May the peace of Christ be with you.

Jessica Stoltzfus Buller, Peace Education  
Coordinator, MCC U.S.

Esther Epp-Tiessen, Public Engagement  
Coordinator, Ottawa Office, MCC Canada

## ABOUT THE PRAYERS

This packet includes only a sampling of the full collection of prayers available for Peace Sunday. The entire collection is available *here*.

All the prayers have been provided by MCC workers and partner organizations. They come from over 20 countries around the world, with participation from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, as well as Canada and the United States.

While all the prayers express deep longings for peace, and the profound conviction that the God of peace hears these prayers, they also represent the diversity present among MCC's partners, constituents and contexts of work. Some prayers are written in English; some are written in other languages and have been translated, in which case both the original language and English are present. Some express the perspective of a person within a specific context; and some express the

the different contexts and each prayer also provides a short paragraph to help us understand the context in which it is written. A number of these prayers include visuals or audio to supplement the written prayer.

This collection includes a rich and full picture of the ways God's people are calling for peace all around the world.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE PRAYERS

### *In your congregation's worship service:*

- Build your worship service around the theme of Praying for Peace. Choose appropriate scripture passages (see below) and hymns/songs from your tradition. Forego the normal sermon time in exchange for a time of extended prayer. Choose a variety of prayers that can be prayed by individuals or by the congregation as a whole. Feel free to adapt the prayers so that they may be prayed responsively or antiphonally. Before each prayer, take time to explain something of the context for each prayer, using the material provided. After each prayer, light a candle for that particular place. Include moments of silence as appropriate. You may wish to project images from each place on the wall during the prayers.
- Instead of building an entire whole worship service around the prayers for peace, use the prayers over several weeks of worship services. For example, devote a portion of five Sundays to offer prayers for Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, Latin America, the U.S. and Canada, respectively.

### *In your small group, prayer meeting or Bible study session:*

- In advance of your gathering, choose the prayers that you wish to offer. At your meeting, gather around a table upon which you have placed a world map or a globe. Have members of your group take turns explaining the context of a particular place, and then sharing the prayer for that place. Light a candle for each spoken prayer. If you have a map on your table, place the candle on the appropriate place on the map. Include moments of silence. Close your prayer time with the Lord's Prayer.

### *In your personal or family devotion time:*

- Set aside a time each day for one week or two weeks to offer up prayers for peace for the world. Choose one context for each day. If you have time, learn more about that context. Pray the prayer several times, putting yourself in the place of the person who wrote it. Sit in silence for a time. Close with the Lord's Prayer.

### *Possible scripture texts:*

- **Psalm 46:1-11**, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ... He makes wars cease to the end of the earth."
- **Psalm 72: 12-14**, "From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight."
- **Psalm 122:7**, "Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers."
- **Jeremiah 29:7**, "But seek the peace of the city where I have sent you into exile ..."
- **Matthew 6: 9-13**, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
- **John 14: 27**, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."
- **Romans 14:19**, "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."
- **Colossians 3:15**, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body."
- **Ephesians 2:14-18**, "For he is our peace ..."
- **Ephesians 6:15**, "As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace."
- **1 Peter 3:11**, "... Let them seek peace and pursue it."

## PRAYERS FOR AFRICA

*For additional prayers for Africa—Angola and East Africa—visit [mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday](http://mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday)*

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### *The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo)*

**CONTEXT:** In the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), decades-long violence continues to uproot communities and leave thousands of people suffering. In the past year, a new wave of violent conflict has erupted in the Kasai region in central and western DR Congo after the killing of Paramount Chief Kamuina Nsapu. It is estimated that about 1.4 million people have been displaced and this number is increasing as the conflict spreads. There are many Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren families within Kasai and Kwilu provinces. These families are both among the displaced and among those who are hosting the displaced.

**AUTHOR/COMPILER:** Mulanda Jimmy Juma, MCC representative in DR Congo.

#### **PRAYER:**

God of love and peace,

We pray for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We pray for those in the eastern region, where decades-long violence continues to uproot communities and leave thousands suffering with the trauma of war and poverty. May the violence and the killing end.

We pray for MCC partners who are working in these eastern communities to provide food, shelter, education and trauma healing. Give them strength, courage and hope for each day. We pray for MCC staff and volunteers as they serve in these difficult circumstances. Grant them the resources they need to be ministers of your love and compassion.

We pray also for the people of the Kasai region of central Congo where recent violence has displaced more than a million people. May those fleeing their homes find food and shelter, safety and comfort. May the violence and killing end so that they may return to their homes.

We remember in a special way our Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren brothers and sisters in the Kasai region. They are among the displaced and also those who are offering shelter. May they experience your abiding love during this deeply troubling time. May they be strengthened through prayers of solidarity.

God of love and peace, grant your peace on the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Amen.

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### *South Sudan*

**CONTEXT:** The growing economic and food security crisis in South Sudan has worsened this year, with some areas having declared that food insecurity has reached famine levels. However, most South Sudanese have been living with food insecurity for years. In 2011, when South Sudan gained its independence, the country was brimming with hope and joy. Now, six years later, despair and fear stalk its people. A protracted civil war has cost the lives of tens of thousands of people and displaced more than 3.5 million civilians.

**AUTHOR:** Candacia Greeman is a MCC worker in South Sudan, working as a teacher mentor at the Loreto Schools in Rumbek. She writes, “We offer a prayer of hope through the voices of women and children supported by MCC projects focused on education, peacebuilding, school feeding and agricultural development.” Below are quotes from various students at the Loreto schools about the impacts of the conflict, intermingled with prayers from Candacia.

#### **PRAYER:**

*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

– Micah 6:8 (New International Version)

“In 2016, there was fighting in Juba which erupted on 9th of July. This greatly affected us in a way that many lives were lost, homes looted, women raped, many people [internally displaced], to date many have been rendered homeless and the economy of

the country is worsening every other day. Everything is very expensive in the market because of the insecurity. This made people bitter including myself. However, attending peace club activities has made me to be able to forgive and stop desiring to revenge and hope that all people desire peace and work around peaceful techniques of solving conflicts.”

– Sarah Abui, female high school student in Rumbek, South Sudan

“My home was recently burnt, and in my community houses were demolished and we were told to burn down our own homes. Things we cultivated were destroyed. If you keep all the bad things that happen to you in your mind you will run mad and you will die. I learned to put things in my mind that will cause me to have hope.”

– Amer Ghor, female gardener in Rumbek, South Sudan

Let us pray: Our Prince of Peace, we pray for changed hearts that seek peace and work for justice for all South Sudanese. We give you thanks for those who are already working for peace in their communities.

“There are 13 at home in my family now. Gingera (beans) is my favorite because it gives me blood [energy]. There are no beans at home and things are not good there now. I have only little food at home now, and when I am coming to school I am eating here. When you have not eaten you are not happy, but when you have you can do what you want — you can learn.”

– Simon Matur, primary school student in Rumbek, South Sudan

“For the small children the food is very important, and they can’t be getting [fed] at home now because there are too many. If the small children are not being at school then they aren’t getting [food] at home. If they are coming to school and eating, then they will read and understand, and something will go into their head.”

– Martha Anhiak Madut, primary school student in Rumbek, South Sudan

Let us pray: Our Provider and Comforter, we pray for food, shelter and medicine for those displaced and those fleeing conflict in their home communities. We pray that those who go to bed hungry will be fed and that those who are suffering will be comforted and made whole. Amen.



Participants in a peacebuilding and trauma healing workshop in Rumbek, South Sudan. Photo courtesy of Candacia Greeman.



Primary school children enjoying a school meal in Rumbek, South Sudan. Photo courtesy of Candacia Greeman.

## Zimbabwe

**CONTEXT:** Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in central southern Africa, which gained independence from Britain in 1980. Formerly known as Rhodesia, Zimbabwe lives with the legacy of colonialism and a class system resulting from many years of dominance by white settler leaders. Its struggles are compounded by bad governance, bad economic management and corruption. The major challenges today are land redistribution and a fair distribution of resources. More than 300 Brethren in Christ

(BIC) congregations exist in Zimbabwe.

**AUTHORS:** Monica and Gopar Tapkida are MCC representatives in Zimbabwe.

**PRAYER:**

- **Economic recovery for Zimbabwe:**

The Zimbabwean economy has been struggling for the last 2 decades. This has forced a lot of people into poverty, unemployment and over 4 million Zimbabweans to leave the country in search for greener pastures. We pray for the recovery of the economy.

- **Good rains:**

Zimbabwe received a fair amount of rainfall during the most recent rainy season after years of drought. The persistent droughts over the years had affected many communities as people were mainly relying on food aid. We pray for good rains so that people are able to harvest for survival.

- **BIC Church in Zimbabwe:**

The BIC Church in Zimbabwe has continued to witness significant deaths these past few months. The causes for the deaths are numerous – ranging from natural causes, illnesses and accidents. This

has weakened and demoralized the church. We pray for strength, comfort and grace for the leadership as they go through such difficult times.

- **MCC Staff in Zimbabwe:**

Currently MCC staff in Zimbabwe is made up personnel from Canada, the U.S., Nigeria, Lesotho, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, and YAMENers (participants in the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network) from Bangladesh and Cambodia. Most of the staff are young people with lots of energy. We continue to pray for team unity and good health, and for all of us to remain committed to MCC's vision and program in Zimbabwe, even as we work with MCC partners in the country.

- **2018 Elections:**

There will be elections in Zimbabwe in 2018 and, as a result, the situation in the country is tense. The past elections have witnessed significant violent activities that have caused many injuries and deaths. We pray for peaceful elections and for God-fearing leaders.

Amen.

## PRAYERS FOR ASIA

*For additional prayers for Asia –Bangladesh, Cambodia and India – visit [mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday](http://mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday)*

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### *Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea) and Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea)*

**CONTEXT:** The 70-year division in Korea is tragic. The 1950-1953 war remains unresolved between DPRK/North Korea on the one hand, and the U.S. and ROK/South Korea on the other. A peace agreement has never been reached, and tensions today remain high due to concerns for human rights abuses and nuclear weapons development. Anabaptist churches in DPRK and ROK, in partnership with MCC, are working toward peacebuilding and reconciliation by serving the vulnerable, responding to need and offering spaces of reconciliatory dialogue.

**AUTHOR:** Donna Rice is representative for MCC Northeast Asia.

**PRAYER:**

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

In this region of hostility, send your Spirit to establish peace between nations. We bring before you the disunity of Northeast Asia, its history of injustice and oppression, the fear of the unknown, and, now, threats of nuclear war. May your church be a voice of reason, reaching across divides to speak peace to a region that has endured 70 years of hostility and division.

Lord, as your people, we pray for the power to be gentle; the strength to be forgiving; the patience to be understanding; the grace to be compassionate

towards our enemies; the endurance to accept the consequences of holding to what we believe to be right.

Lord, strengthen the will of all those who work for reconciliation and peace, renew your church, and give us the peace which the world cannot give.  
Amen.

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### *Myanmar (Burma)*

**CONTEXT:** Located in Southeast Asia, near both India and China, Myanmar's (Burma's) modern history is marked by violence and colonialism. Myanmar gained independence in 1947, but colonization left the many ethnic groups and hill tribes within the country at odds with each other and the government, resulting in considerable ethnic tension which has fuelled protests and separatist rebellions. The MCC program in Myanmar focuses specifically on peacebuilding and trauma awareness through three local partner organizations who concentrate on grass roots peacebuilding initiatives.

**AUTHORS/COMPILERS:** Monica Scheifele, program assistant in the MCC Ottawa Office, wrote this prayer based on a prayer request list from Maung Maung Yin. Yin is the Director of the Peace Studies Center at the Myanmar Institute of Theology, which has been an MCC partner since 2009. Director Yin worried his list of prayer requests was too long, but stated he was "greedy when it comes to peace." He also used the phrase "in this very moment," evoking a deep sense of longing and urgency.

#### **PRAYER:**

In this very moment  
We share Myanmar's "greediness" for peace with "too long lists" requiring a multitude of prayers.

In this very moment  
When the people of Myanmar deeply desire peace,  
We pray with them for the lasting peace they seek.

In this very moment  
May they find genuine forgiveness among diverse religious and ethnic groups,  
Leading to reconciliation between ethnic armed groups and the state military.  
In this very moment

May there be peace and healing for those who have suffered 50 years of civil war,  
In addition to the devastation of annual floods, fires, landslides and droughts.

In this very moment  
We echo Myanmar's prayers for their government, and the determined efforts of those working for a nation-wide ceasefire agreement.

In this very moment  
We pray for strength and wisdom for the continuing work of the Peace Studies Center within Myanmar, and for all efforts for peace in the world.

In this very moment  
We pray for peace.  
Amen.

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### *Vietnam*

**CONTEXT:** Vietnam is a small but densely populated country in Southeast Asia. Its history is dominated by a long list of foreign invaders – Chinese, Khmers, Chams, Mongols, French and the U.S. The U.S. waged war against communist-led North Vietnam beginning in 1964, finally withdrawing in defeat in 1973. One of the ongoing legacies of the "American War," as the Vietnamese call it, is the long lasting health complications resulting from the use of the highly toxic herbicide Agent Orange by U.S. forces to clear foliage and expose North Vietnamese fighters during the war. After many years, a U.S. embargo against Vietnam was finally lifted in 1994.

**AUTHORS:** Major and Karen Treadway are MCC representatives in Vietnam.

#### **PRAYER:**

God of hope and life,

We trust in your redemptive power to bring about peace in places and between groups once believed to be unimaginable. We trust in this power because we see the seeds that have been sown and nurtured among the people who were terrorized during the U.S. war in Vietnam – soldiers, civilians, children.

Though seeds have been sown, there is much work left to do. Though no shots have been fired nor bombs dropped in the name of that war in over



four decades, there continue to be new casualties. Farmers continue to find unexploded mines and bombs. Children continue to be born with genetic mutations as a result of their parents' and/or grandparents' exposure to Agent Orange. Families continue to live on different continents, separated by complexities of allegiance, politics, and identity that we will never fully understand.

And so we look at these seeds of peace and we wonder. What do you have in store for the people of Vietnam? We look into their eyes and we see that, like all people, they are created in your image. How might they know and experience your peace? What does your peace look like among the people of Vietnam?

We pray where there is despair, you would bring hope. We pray where there is pain, you would bring

someone to give comfort. We pray where there is loss, you would bring community.

Additionally, we pray that you would embolden those with freedom and power to speak to governments to remind the decision makers that the cost of war is too high and unpredictable. Unborn children and grandchildren should not have to bear the burden of warring nations.

We lift this prayer with the hope and assurance that, even in our lack of understanding, your peace is possible. May it be ever more pervasive than the war that was fought in Vietnam more than 40 years ago.

Amen.

## PRAYERS FOR EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

*For additional prayers for Europe and the Middle East – Egypt and Ukraine – visit [mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday](http://mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday)*

### *Iraq*

**CONTEXT:** Iraq has undergone war almost continuously for nearly 40 years. Recent conflicts have disproportionately affected minority groups within the country. Iraq's Christian minority has experienced persecution at the hands of extremist groups—as well as the broader effects of the conflict which affect all Iraqis—and many Christians have left the country. Still, various historic Christian churches, including the Chaldean Catholic Church, are committed to maintaining a Christian presence in Iraq. MCC supports these efforts in various ways, including English teaching at St. Peter's Seminary.

### PRAYER #1

**AUTHOR:** Milan Sabah, a seminarian studying to be a priest at St. Peter's Chaldean Catholic Seminary in Ankawa, Erbil, Iraq. Milan is from Ankawa. His prayer appears in English as well as the original Arabic.

يارب أنر عقولنا و ارشدنا كي نحب جميع الناس بمحبة خالصة و اجعلنا ان نكون آداة السلامك و أزرع فينا بذرة السلام حتى نشارك بها الآخرين... آمين

Oh Lord, enlighten our minds and guide us so that we love all people with pure love. Make us to be tools for your peace. Plant in us the seed of peace, that we might share it with all.  
Amen.

### PRAYER #2

**AUTHOR:** Nathan Hershberger recently completed a term of service with MCC in Ankawa, Erbil, Iraq, where he taught at St. Peter's Seminary.

Lord, teach us to pray so that our cries for healing reach your ears and fall back like rain on this cracked and riven earth. Bind up the wounded, comfort the sorrowful, house the displaced, and restrain those who commit wicked acts. Bring peace to our tired earth, your garden, and form us into a people worthy of living within it.  
Amen.

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## *Palestine and Israel*

**CONTEXT:** 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, a written statement made by British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour near the end of World War I. The statement indicated that Britain would support the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Palestinian Arabs were not consulted about this plan, and were justifiably concerned when Jewish immigration began to dramatically change their home. 2017 also marks the 50th anniversary of the occupation of Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, by Israel after the Six-Day War.

**AUTHOR:** Esther Epp-Tiessen is public engagement coordinator for MCC Canada's Ottawa Office.

### **PRAYER:**

"Then justice will dwell in the land and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever." — Isaiah 32:16–17

O God of life and love and peace,  
We witness the violence and injustice in your Holy Land  
And our hearts break.

Our hearts break for all Palestinians—  
For the victims of violent attacks from Israelis  
For those who have endured decades of occupation and oppression  
For those whose homes and olive orchards have been demolished  
For those who languish in Israeli prisons and in the "open air prison" of Gaza  
For those without nearly enough water and electricity and medical care  
For those who are refugees, long displaced from their homes.

Our hearts break for the Jewish people of Israel—  
For the victims of violent attacks from Palestinians  
For those who live with fear and insecurity  
For those who re-live the trauma of the Holocaust over and over.

Our hearts break for the wider world—  
For those who are indifferent to the pain and suffering in your Holy Land

For those who distort or turn their eyes from truth  
For those who fail to see the humanity of all your children.

Heal us all, O God.  
Heal the broken and comfort the sorrowful.  
Give hope to the hopeless and courage to the fearful.  
Strengthen the peacemakers and reconcilers.  
Confront those who practice injustice and commit violence.

We especially pray—  
That weapons of war be laid down  
That walls of separation and the machinery of occupation be dismantled  
That prisoners be released  
That demonizing of "the other" cease  
That political leaders seek the good of all people in Palestine and Israel.

We pray also for ourselves—  
That our eyes will be opened to the ways in which our beliefs and actions have contributed to injustice and to violence.

O God, whose heart breaks for the world,  
May your justice dwell in the land  
May your righteousness abide in fruitful fields  
May the effect of righteousness be quietness and trust forever  
May the effect of justice be peace – enduring peace.  
Amen

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## *Syria*

**CONTEXT:** War has been raging in Syria since 2011. Over 13.5 million people are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance, with 6.3 million internally displaced. Additionally, 5.5 million Syrian refugees have fled the country for safety in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Indiscriminate violence and airstrikes have killed thousands of civilians, with an estimated 400,000 people killed since the start of the conflict. MCC has been providing food assistance, blankets, hygiene and relief kits, cash vouchers and training for social cohesion and inter-faith dialogue to local Syrian partners throughout the war.

**AUTHOR:** This prayer, shared with MCC in 2015, is from the Middle East Council of Churches

(MECC). Founded in 1974, MECC is a fellowship of Evangelical/Protestant, Oriental Orthodox, Greek Orthodox and Catholic Church families. MCC has partnered with MECC in Syria for many years.

### **PRAYER:**

God of life,  
Who cares for all creation and calls us to justice and peace,  
May our security not come from arms, but from respect.  
May our force not be of violence, but of love.  
May our wealth not be in money, but in sharing.  
May our path not be of ambition, but of justice.  
May our victory not be from vengeance, but in forgiveness.  
May our unity not be in the quest of power, but in vulnerable witness to do your will.  
Open and confident, may we defend the dignity of all creation, sharing today and forever the bread of solidarity, justice and peace.  
This we ask in the name of Jesus, your holy Son, our brother, who, as a victim of our violence, even from the heights of the cross, gave forgiveness to us all.  
Amen.

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## *Ukraine*

**CONTEXT:** For the past three years, eastern Ukraine has experienced continuous armed conflict. Approximately 60,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from these eastern regions have fled to Zaporizhzhia, a major centre some 200 kilometres west, where MCC's office is located. Soldiers dealing with significant trauma and struggling to re-integrate into society also make their way from the war zone to Zaporizhzhia. In the meantime, eastern Ukraine has been controlled by non-government forces sympathetic to Russia. Ongoing conflict near the frontlines continues, with regular shooting and shelling impacting what is left of the civilian population. The economy and infrastructure are weak, and it is a difficult and arduous process to cross the front line into Ukrainian-controlled territory. Many of the remaining civilians are elderly or sick and have been unable to leave. Others simply cannot imagine leaving the land that has always been their home.

**AUTHOR:** Iryna Dmitriv lives in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, where she is director of MCC partner "Hram." Hram works with veterans and their families to provide psychosocial support. Their project also aims to introduce the idea of peacebuilding to society as a whole. In 2016, Iryna travelled with MCC to Sarajevo, Bosnia as part of a peacebuilding exchange. At this exchange she got to know a pastor from the "other side" of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. While their views are not completely the same, they became friends and began to support one another. For instance, Iryna helped the pastor work on a grant proposal for a project providing large-scale rest and support to families with children who remained in the conflict zone. Iryna's prayer was translated by Katie Geddert, MCC representative in Ukraine.

### **PRAYER:**

Our loving God,

As you look down on your children in Ukraine, we ask that you bring this military conflict to an end as quickly as possible. Change the hearts of those who cling to evil and aggression. Help us to realize that violence cannot solve our problems.

Heal the hearts of those who have lost loved ones. Be merciful to veterans of this conflict. Help their families and society as a whole understand and accept them.

Please build up the broken economy of our country. Build it up so that stability can be an instrument for peace in society.

Above all, help us build bridges of mutual understanding, regardless of political, religious, social and cultural differences. Help us learn to stop condemning and comparing, and to turn to understanding and forgiveness. Raise up your church to do the work of peacebuilding. Bring about your reconciliation.

Lord, grant that people in Ukraine seek you and know you.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## PRAYERS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

*For additional prayers for Latin America and the Caribbean – Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Mesoamerica<sup>1</sup> – visit [mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday](http://mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday)*

### *Bolivia*

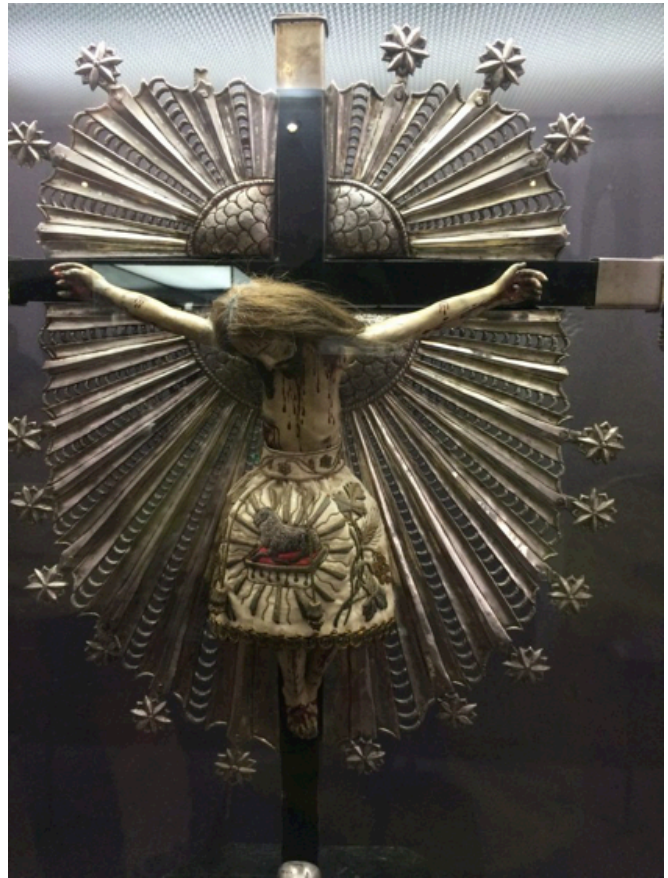
**CONTEXT:** Bolivia is a landlocked country in west-central South America. Prior to colonization by the Spanish in the 16th century, Bolivia was part of the Inca Empire. Spain built its own empire in large part from the silver extracted from Bolivia's mines, primarily at Potosi. Indigenous people, as well as African slaves, were forced to work in the mines where many died as a result of accidents, brutal treatment or mercury poisoning (used in the extraction process). Gaining independence in 1825, Bolivia elected its first Indigenous president in 2005.

**AUTHOR:** Steve Plenert is MCC representative in Bolivia. He visited Potosi at Eastertime in 2017 and was led to write this prayer and snap the accompanying photos at a museum. He writes, "Around Easter there can be a strong urge to look past the crucifixion and jump to the resurrection. At least I was feeling that this year. During the tour I took these pictures of Christ crucified on a cross of silver. I was reminded how it was the empire of the time that crucified Jesus and was struck how the Indigenous and African people were 'crucified' by the lust for silver of another empire."

### **PRAYER:**

Lord God,  
We come to you as people seeking to be faithful and those who wish to follow the way of the cross of our Lord. The crucifixion of Christ is ever a reminder to us of the brutality of sin. We pray that we would have the courage to face our own complicity with Empire. That we would seek to not participate in any further oppression of Indigenous peoples anywhere in the world. We thank you that

<sup>1</sup> Mesoamerica is a region that includes most of Mexico and Central America (down through the northern part of Costa Rica). It was defined as a regional and cultural area due to the Indigenous roots and civilizations that controlled it until the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. The term is still commonly used as a reference to the area with Indigenous historical roots and ongoing presence of Indigenous cultures. It also defines the more specific area than Central America to refer to the region from which massive migration is occurring.



the Crucified One died for all sins of all times. May we live as people of forgiven-ness and forgiveness. Thank you that the Spirit of Christ empowers us to face the challenges of this world and to engage in justice in the world and to seek its transformation. As we think of the silver of Bolivia, may we also understand how our desire for certain things may be part of the oppression of others; may we seek to change our ways. We are eternally grateful for the sacrifice of Christ who died to show us the way to newness of life.

Amen.

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## Mexico

**CONTEXT:** Chiapas is a region of Mexico which many migrants pass through from Central and South America on their way north to the U.S. But many people from Chiapas also feel the need to migrate due to economic circumstances, violence in their communities, and political pressures. In both Central America and Mexico, there are numerous cases of people, especially from *campesino* and Indigenous communities, who have been displaced from their lands by mining projects, hydroelectric dams, and other initiatives from foreign, transnational businesses.

**AUTHOR:** Chris Fretz is a MCC worker in the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. He is serving with the MCC partner organization, Voces Mesoamericanas, Acción con Pueblos Migrantes, and lives in San Cristóbal with his wife, Lindsey Frye, and two daughters. He is from Landisville, PA and is a member at Laurel Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster City.

### PRAYER:

O God of justice,  
We pray for safety, wisdom, and peace of mind for migrants who are fleeing from intimidation, threats, and violence in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

O God of abundance,  
We pray for creativity, resourcefulness, and opportunity for migrants who are leaving their homes in Mexico because their lands and traditional ways of life can no longer sustain them.

O God of the least of these,  
We pray for a new life and a way forward for displaced migrants throughout Mesoamerica who are being displaced from their homes, whether it is by gangs, drug cartels, corrupt politicians, or transnational businesses.

O God of hospitality  
Give us the willingness to accompany our brothers and sisters, walking with them in their joys and struggles, and committing ourselves to share your love, justice, and shalom with all those we encounter.  
Amen.

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## Nicaragua

**CONTEXT:** Nicaragua is known as the second poorest country in the western hemisphere (after Haiti). It was originally colonized by the Spanish and British who fought over the various resources which they viewed as theirs for the taking. Beginning in the 19th century the United States began to play a tremendous role in the political and economic life of the nation. Nicaragua is still struggling to move forward politically and socially from the U.S.'s involvement in setting up three Somoza presidents (a powerful and pro-U.S. dynasty that ruled from 1936 to 1979) and eventually fighting against a Nicaraguan popular movement which sought social reform.

**AUTHOR:** Derrick Charles is representative for MCC Nicaragua. His prayer is in the form of a song (see audio link) and is part of a collection of songs that he has written out of times of personal reflection since he and his family arrived in Nicaragua in 2016. He writes, "In these songs, the image of dust invites us to consider our common humanity, our responsibility to care for creation, and the red flags around climate change that threaten especially the most vulnerable people on the planet."

### PRAYER:

Remember us, O Lord

**AUDIO LINK:** [goodcharlesfamily.blogspot.ca/2016/12/considering-dust-considering-us.html](http://goodcharlesfamily.blogspot.ca/2016/12/considering-dust-considering-us.html)

remember us, O Lord, as we remember you  
forgive us, O Lord, as we forgive  
save, O Lord, save us  
mercy, O Lord, have mercy on us

a broken body in the street  
among skid marks and broken glass  
outlined in chalk and then carried away  
helpless, the onlookers pass

far from the city, a hungry child  
the rains fail the fields  
his father leaves the country, his mother's at the  
factory  
earning something for the next meal

remember us, O Lord ...

warmer and wilder  
an angry creation  
the poor suffer under climate's revolt  
against the rich world's industrial revolution

quietly, mysteriously  
disease overcomes  
communities are crippled, is there hope in the  
womb?  
wondering, we are left numb

remember us, O Lord ...

gates and gangs, investing in tanks  
looking for violence to save  
living and dying by the sword  
will we choose another way?

we organize religion  
for assurance that we're forgiven  
while so much brokenness around us  
is bound to how we're living

remember us, O Lord ...

## PRAYERS FOR CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

*For additional prayers for Canada and the United States, visit [mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday](https://mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday)*

*View a special video prayer prepared by MCC Ontario at <https://vimeo.com/229874775>*

### *Canada*

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**CONTEXT:** In Canada between the 1870s and 1996 some 150,000 Indigenous children and youth were taken from their families and communities and placed in residential schools run by churches on behalf of the federal government. Far from home and from loved ones, children in the schools were forbidden from speaking their languages, practicing their ceremonies, expressing their culture, and living their way of life. Many were physically and sexually abused by the teachers and many died while at these schools. In the early 2000s, a lawsuit by survivors of the residential schools led to – among other things – a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which gathered stories and testimonies of survivors. The TRC completed its work in 2015 with 94 Calls to Action to address the harms committed by the residential schools and the system of colonization of which they were a part. The TRC insisted that the journey of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples was Canada's greatest task going forward.

**AUTHOR:** Dianne Climenhage, together with her husband Marty, are MCC workers in Happy Valley/Goose Bay, Labrador. They offer this prayer for settler people.

### **PRAYER:**

Creator God,  
We look at your world and praise you for the diversity all around us.  
Thank you for the gift of relationships; our connection with people, animals and the land.  
Help us, Lord, to see differences and diversity as strengths.  
Help us to listen and understand; to meet one another with wonder and anticipation.  
Help us to love as you love, without expectation.  
Reveal to us your way of reconciliation and guide us into right relationships with all living things.  
Lead us to understand how Indigenous Peoples have been and continue to be profoundly harmed by settler people and institutions.  
Lead us to repent when we as settlers deny Indigenous peoples respect, dignity and fullness of life.  
Help us to listen compassionately, to speak humbly and to act justly.  
Help us to seek the peace, justice and reconciliation you desire among all your children.  
Thank-you for your mercy and grace.  
Amen.

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### *United States*

**CONTEXT:** The Trail of Death traces the route of the 1838 forced removal of 859 Potawatomi people by the U.S. military from their ancestral homeland in northern Indiana to present-day Kansas. This violent displacement of people was rooted in a legal document, called the Doctrine of Discovery, which presented a theological basis for the forced removal

and non-recognition of any non-Christian people groups. Many churches in the U.S. are now working to decolonize this theology that has shaped the church for centuries.

**AUTHOR:** Katerina Friesen is a Mennonite pastor and educator whose work focuses on inviting the church to reparative justice for the ongoing harms of colonialism and racism.

**PRAYER:** Trail of Death Litany of Remembrance

Standing where you walked,  
**we remember you.**

Exile under gunpoint,  
loss of sacred land,

**We remember you.**

Bruised feet and weary bodies,  
choked by dust and heat,  
sickness stalking young and old,

**We remember you.**

**We lament this Trail of Death.**

Trail of Broken Promises,  
theft of homelands for white man's profit.

**We lament this Trail of Death.**

We lament that our ancestors  
did not dwell in peace.

**Creator of all, we long for new vision today.**

Open our eyes and give us sight  
to seek the things that make for peace,  
to see the Image of God in all peoples,  
especially those persecuted and oppressed.

Make a new way for us together.

**Guide our feet, O Lord, on a Trail of Life.**

Amen.