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The Second Sunday of the Epiphany, 2010

Dear People of God,

The trembling has subsided. The cries continue. The world is focused on our common bonds of humanity in reaching out in prayer to the people of Haiti following the devastating earthquake of Tuesday, January 12th. This is now the fourth time I have written this type of letter along with a listing of resources to assist congregations and families in the wake of tragedy. The first was after September 11, 2001, followed by the United States entering the War in Iraq, and then the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007. As John Donne is often quoted, *"All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated . . . As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so this bell calls us all: but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness . . . No man is an island, entire of itself . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."* (Meditation XVII)

Whenever such tragic events occur it is natural to ask, "Why?" In recent years we have recognized the vulnerability of our lives and how our country participates within the world community. We are especially concerned for those we know and love. We are closely connected to our brothers and sisters all over the world, including Haiti. And as Jesus continues to remind us that he comes for the "least of these," we are called to minister to the homeless, sick and needy. Certainly this past week's events call upon us to be Christ in the world.

In today's world, our families and children are much more aware of events taking place in our communities, nation and the world – more than any other generation before. Communication can be instantaneous through the Internet and 24 – 7 news broadcasts. We are often inundated with sensory overload, and our children need our help to filter out the harmful overexposure that can so easily happen. How can we support our children in their questions, concerns, and awareness of the violence and uncertainty that permeates our world?

Be available for conversation with your children. Provide a safe and quiet space for them to talk and express their concerns. Important faith values that are understood by children include the personal and protective love of God. Stories of Jesus' love for others and His parables of care are especially helpful. Allow children to offer their own prayers and reflections through art, song, story, and poem. Older children can look for other Scripture stories and prayers from the Book of Common Prayer or other denominational worship books that can offer thoughts of God's power and love. Action can be taken by writing letters and prayers for community worship. Light a special "peace" candle each evening for family devotions or meal times. Speak of the Light of

Christ and how God's love will never go away.

No matter the events or circumstances, it is important to remember the One who leads us all, the One who calls us to live and respect the dignity of every human being. The Good Shepherd leads us to safe pastures but will continue to walk with us in the dark places. We will not be alone. As we continue to celebrate the manifestation of Christ to the world during this season of Epiphany, there will be times of sorrow and times of joy. We can remind ourselves that Christ came into this world to proclaim the Good News, and as Paul reminds us in 1st Corinthians, we are given a variety of gifts for the common good – together we can make a difference, each according to what we are able to do. Above all, we can proclaim, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (I Peter 1:3)

Holy God, we are powerless in so many ways. Help those whom we cannot reach. Bring comfort to those who seem beyond consoling. Bring calm to those in fear. Give strength to those who bring rescue, healing, care and hope to the afflicted. Show us the courage to trust and to release ourselves to your unfailing love. Amen.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon".

Sharon Ely Pearson
Christian Formation Specialist
Church Publishing / Morehouse Education Resources

Worship Resources for Remembering the People of Haiti

Praying for Haiti in the Aftermath of the Earthquake

In grateful memory of Lisa Mbele-Mbong, Port-au-Prince, January 12, 2010

Reading Mark 4: 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them: "Let us go across to the other side.".... They took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. Jesus said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Litany (after each section of the litany the leader says the response in Creole **or** English and then the people repeat it)

For the faith of the people of Haiti, singing their hymns even as their hearts are breaking:
Beni swa l'Eternel / Blessed be the Eternal One (repeated by all present)

For their selfless efforts to rescue loved ones and neighbors from the rubble:

Response

For the assurance that the many who have died are not lost for ever but rest in the Lord:

Response

For the God-given capacity to share the sufferings of others and to respond to their needs:

Response

For the nations of the world putting aside their differences to unite in offering assistance:

Response

For doctors and nurses, soldiers and relief workers, bringing help and hope to the needy:

Response

For Episcopal and other relief agencies, gathering contributions and putting them to work:

Response

For the healing and hope offered to all by Jesus Christ the Light of the World:

Response

For "the love of God from which neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us":

Response

Free Prayer (either spoken or silent)

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, Savior in times of storm, when the waters of the deep are broken up and all the landmarks crumble before our eyes, come to our aid and hold us up. Support the people of Haiti at this time lest they sink in hopelessness and despair. Empower those who are responding to their need; uphold the bereaved in their grief; and let your light shine in the present darkness to lead us all to the city securely built on your love; In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

“Our Father...”

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

By Bishop Jeffery Rowthorn January 15, 2010 <http://www.e4gr.org/haitiprayers.html> *Note from Bp Rowthorn:* These are prayers for Haiti that I wrote this morning [January 15, 2010] at the request of the Board of Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation. They are dedicated to the daughter of Helena Mbele-Mbong of Emmanuel Church in Geneva, Switzerland. Lisa was a human rights worker with the UN and was in the UN building when it collapsed with no way of escaping. Mercifully, Lisa's ten-year-old son Nady survived and is safe.

In Haiti, There is Anguish

The new words are set to the tune of *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*.

In Haiti, there is anguish that seems too much to bear;
A land so used to sorrow now knows even more despair.
From city streets, the cries of grief rise up to hills above;
In all the sorrow, pain and death, where are you, God of love?

A woman sifts through rubble, a man has lost his home,
A hungry, orphaned toddler sobs, for she is now alone.
Where are you, Lord, when thousands die—the rich, the poorest poor?
Were you the very first to cry for all that is no more?

O God, you love your children; you hear each lifted prayer!
May all who suffer in that land know you are present there.
In moments of compassion shown, in simple acts of grace,
May those in pain find healing balm, and know your love's embrace.

Where are you in the anguish? Lord, may we hear anew
That anywhere your world cries out, you're there— and suffering, too.
And may we see, in others' pain, the cross we're called to bear;
Send out your church in Jesus' name to pray, to serve, to share.

Tune: Frederick Charles Maker, 1881 *Text:* Copyright © 2010 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved. Permission is given for use by those who support Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

An American Presbyterian pastor, Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, is co-pastor at Limestone Presbyterian in Wilmington, Delaware. She went on a mission trip to Haiti as a college student, and has penned many hymns about issues being addressed by Church World Service, a U.S.-based charity, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the PC(USA)'s relief and development branch.

Litany in Response to the Earthquake in Haiti

Holy God, Creator of heaven and earth,
Have mercy upon us.
Holy and Mighty, redeemer of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

Holy Immortal One, Sanctifier of the faithful,
Have mercy upon us.

Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, One God,
Have mercy upon us.

Remember not, Lord Christ our offenses, neither reward us according to our sins. Spare us, good Lord, spare your people, whom you have redeemed by your cross and passion, and by your mercy preserve us forever.
Spare us, good Lord.

From all natural disasters, from hurricanes, fires, tornados earthquakes, blizzards and floods,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From all disease and sickness, from famine and violence,
Good Lord, deliver us.

In all times of sorrow, in all times of joy; in the hour of death and at the day of judgment,
Good Lord, deliver us.

Hear our prayers, O Christ our God,
O Christ, hear us.

For the repose of the souls of those who have died in this disaster that your holy angels may welcome them into Paradise.
O Christ, hear us.

Console all who grieve: those whose loved ones have died, whose families are torn; whose homes have been destroyed, whose possessions have been ruined, who are now unemployed.
O Christ, hear us.

Heal those who suffer from injury and illness, emotional and spiritual distress. Give them hope and encouragement to meet the days ahead.

O Christ, hear us.

Give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty.

O Christ, hear us.

Give rest to weary and peace to the restless.

O Christ, hear us.

Give strength to the government of Haiti, to the World Community and all others in authority and leadership; grant them wisdom and power to act in accordance with your will.

O Christ, hear us.

Bless the bishops, clergy and people of the Haiti who strive to do your service in the midst of their own grief and pain. Give them fortitude to serve as you would serve.

O Christ, hear us.

Grant your people grace to witness to your word, to open their hearts in love, and to give generously from their abundance, that they may bring forth the fruits of your Spirit.

O Christ, hear us.

Forgive us Lord, for all negligence and hardheartedness, for inequities and injustice that have resulted in bitterness and strife, in injury and death.

O Christ, hear us.

In the midst of incomprehensible loss, grant us eyes that see, ears that hear and hands that work so that we may discern how you would have us respond.

O Christ, hear us.

We give you thanks, Lord God for all agencies and individuals who assist in relief efforts; continue in them the good work you have begun, through them your presence is made known.

We thank you O, Lord.

V. You are our refuge and strength

R. Our very present help in trouble

V. In you Lord is our Hope

R. And we shall never hope in vain

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever. Amen

A Prayer for the Victims of the Earthquake in Haiti

Holy God, source of life, lover of souls, out of the depths we call to you; in the face of incomprehensible anguish and sorrow, we lift the cries of our distress and implore you to show mercy upon those who are suffering from the destruction of the earthquake in Haiti. We pray for those who have died and for their loved ones who grieve, asking you to hold them in the arms of

your love; we pray for those who have been injured in body, mind or spirit and ask you to heal them; we pray for those who are homeless and wandering, for families torn asunder and ask you to shelter them. Strengthen the hands and hearts of those who assist in relief efforts and grant us all firm resolve to stand with our neighbors who are in need, to love them and to offer our generous support of them in this their time of trouble; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Adapted by the Reverend William (Chip) Stokes, Delray Beach, Florida

<http://chipstokesblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/litany-in-response-to-earthquake-in.html>

After Natural Disaster

Almighty and merciful God – our world has suffered a disaster of incomprehensible proportion. As we struggle to imagine its scope and envision the suffering so that we may be your agents in relief, we lift our voices to you in prayer:

For all those who have lost their lives, that you have received them into your arms of mercy and love;

For all those who grieve, having lost children, parents, family, friends, neighbors and community, and for all those who are still searching, that they may sense the solace of your presence;

For all those who are sick, injured or suffering, and for those have lost their homes and belongings, that they may find healing and the strength to continue, and the resources to rebuild their lives;

For all those who go to provide food, shelter, sanitation, medical care and other aid, serving as your hands to comfort, heal and help, that they may be strengthened to do difficult work in devastating conditions;

For all those around the globe who look on in shock and anguish, that you may fill our hearts with compassion for those in need, showing us how you wish us to pray and reach out in the face of such suffering, and not turn from its enormity;

For all of your people, that such events on this earth should not shake our faith. Help us to recognize that our suffering is your suffering, and that your love can be found even in the darkest places. Allow us to see how all of humanity is bound inextricably together, even as we seek your truth in different languages, faiths, cultures and traditions. Help us to accept the healing and strength that you offer, and to remember that ultimately the pain and cares of this world will yield to the peace of everlasting life in you. All of these prayers we make to you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All these prayers we make to you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

By Wendie Wheeler, Long Meadow, Massachusetts

Resources for Talking with Children Following Tragic Events

Davis, Katie. *Scared Stiff* (Harcourt, 2000). A girl learns to cope with everyday fears. This book is not about "violence/tolerance" per se, but rather one of the resulting emotions. Ages 4-up.

Demi. *Gandhi* (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2001). An inspiring picture book about the tireless crusader for peace through nonviolence. Ages 7-10.

Harris, Robie. *Goodbye Mousie* (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2001). The story of a little boy who wakes up to discover that his pet mouse has died. After expressing anger and disbelief, the boy learns that sadness and memories are part of saying goodbye. Ages 4-8.

Holmes, Margaret M. *A Terrible Thing Happened* (Magination Press, 2000). A biblio-therapy style look at the symptoms that can plague children who've witnessed something traumatic and how such children might work through/communicate about them. A springboard for discussion. Ages 4-up.

Howe, James, editor. *The Color of Absence: 12 Stories about Loss and Hope* (Atheneum, 2001). A collection of short stories for teens. Contributors include Avi, C. B.

Christiansen, James Howe, Angela Johnson, Annette Curtis Klause, Chris Lynch, Norma Fox Mazer, Walter Dean Myers, Naomi Shihab Nye, Michael J. Rosen, Roderick Townley, Virginia Euwer Wolff, and Jacqueline Woodson. Ages 12-up.

Viorst, Judith. *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* (Atheneum, 1999). A young boy copes with the death of his cat, Barney. Ages 4-8.

Your role as a parent

- ✦ *Offer reassurance and help your child feel secure.* When children are exposed to violent or traumatic events - even through the news or media - they need to hear that "scary" things are not likely to happen to them. Let them know that school and home are safe places to be, and that incidents like the September 11 tragedies are rare. Your child may need to be in more physical contact with you or rely on favorite stuffed toys or blankets.
- ✦ *Be a role model.* Children pick up clues from adults, especially when they have difficulty knowing what to do with their own emotions like anger or fear. Showing composure can provide a great sense of security to a child. Make sure comments or actions at home model how you would like your child to behave. Be especially aware of conversations with other adults in cars, on the phone, or in other places where your child may overhear you.
- ✦ *Limit exposure to TV and other media.* This is especially important for younger children, for whom the violence in the media can be particularly frightening. If you have an older school-age child, you may want to watch the news together and talk about what you're seeing.
- ✦ *Acknowledge your child's feelings.* Instead of saying, "Don't feel sad," you might say, "It seems like you feel sad. I feel that way, too." Reassure your child that what is happening is

- scary and confusing, and validate your child's many feelings.
- ✦ *If possible, spend more time with your child.* Younger children often react to stressful or fearful situations by being more clingy or needy than usual.
 - ✦ *Maintain routines.* Trying to maintain normal family routines and schedules can be comforting to a child.
 - ✦ *Increase quiet time.* Add quiet time for the family in the evenings or make reading and quiet time before bed longer.
 - ✦ *Watch for changes in your child's behavior.* Your child may be more aggressive in school, wake up frequently in the middle of the night, be more clingy at home, or cry more often. These are all signs that your child is experiencing stress. Your child may need extra reassurance and support from you.
 - ✦ *Monitor your child's activities and play.* Your child may begin to act out much of what he is absorbing from other sources.
 - ✦ *If your child seems to be having trouble coping, seek professional help.* Ask your pediatrician, school guidance counselor, clergy person, or employee assistance program (EAP) for names of counselors who specialize in working with young children in your area.

Internet Resources

- ✦ *When Someone Dies* – <http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/somedie.html> and *Being Afraid* <http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/afraid.html> a site for children from the KidsHealth arena of The Nemours Foundation Center for Children's Health Media:
- ✦ *The Family Pledge of Non-Violence* - <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/Pledge%20of%20Nonviolence.html>
- ✦ *Talking with kids about the News* – ten tips on how to watch television with your children and talk about the events seen involving violence in the world. <http://www.talkingwithkids.org/television/twk-news.html>
- ✦ *PBS Parents Guide to Talking with Kids about the News* – Strategies for Talking, Listening and Caring by learning how to answering children's challenging questions by seeing the world through their eyes at <http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/news/>
- ✦ *Parenting for Tolerance* <http://www.tolerance.org/> offers resources and ideas for parents and teachers to instill a sense of tolerance and justice in children and youth
- ✦ *The Bank Street College of Education Library* has numerous links and educational resources for helping children cope with fear, terrorism, violence and war, including lesson plans, children's books and activism ideas. <http://streetcat.bnkst.edu/html/resources.html>
- ✦ National Association for the Education of Young Children's *Crisis Communication Guide & Toolkit* – <http://www.nea.org/crisis/index.html> to help communities face a crisis and move toward hope, healing and renewal. Includes resources for response to the earthquake in Haiti, H1N1, the environment and other natural disasters.
- ✦ *Helping Children Cope with Nature Gone Wild*, a review of picture books about natural disasters. <http://eden.rutgers.edu/~ahrendts/547/index.html>)