Praying for PEACE

PEACE PRAYERS PACKET 2017
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For more information and additional resources:
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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

This quotation from Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) provides the inspiration for this year’s Peace Prayers Packet.

This year, Mennonite Central Committee is providing a Peace Prayers Packet to Anabaptist congregations across the country with the goal of assisting them in incorporating prayers for peace into their worship services. This packet includes 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, this is a reminder 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 center ourselves spiritually when our tendency is to swift action,
• to connect ourselves with neighbors 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 our partner organizations around the world. They come from more than 20 countries around the world—Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, Canada and the U.S.—with participation from each of the regions in which MCC works. 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, supporters, 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 native language and English are present. Each one offers us a unique way to understand the dynamics of conflict, war, and violence in 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.

We invite you to join us in lifting your voices in prayer for peace as well. Feel free 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, or in other ways.
SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE PRAYERS

1. 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.

2. 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 as appropriate. Close your prayer time with the Lord’s Prayer.

3. In your personal or family devotion time:
   - Set aside a time each day for one 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 am 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.”

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
ANGOLA

CONTEXT: Angola is situated in southern Africa with the Atlantic Ocean providing its western boundary. It gained independence from Portuguese colonial rule in 1975, but subsequently plunged into a long civil war. Currently the situation in Angola is calm and, at the time of writing, people are awaiting the elections with much anticipation. The churches in Angola are promoting seminars on peacebuilding, civic education and voting information. The Inter-Mennonite Conference of Angola (CIMA) was formed in 2003 through the initiative of three Mennonite churches in Angola (the Mennonite Community Church in Angola [ICMA], the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Angola [IEMA] and the Evangelical Church of the Mennonite Brethren [IEIMA]) in collaboration with MCC and MB Mission.

AUTHOR: Pastor Garcia Domingos is the Legal Representative of ICMA in Angola, and is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Council of Christian Churches in Angola (CICA). He serves with Mennonite World Conference (MWC) as a member of the General Council and the Peace Commission. He writes, “In light of peace as expressed by the Hebrew shalom, which does not only mean the absence of war, enmity, and fighting, but also includes tranquility, security, health, prosperity and wellbeing for everyone that is both material and spiritual, we can pray in the following way.”

PRAYER:

Lord God, our Creator and Father,  
We recognize true peace which is beyond all human understanding,  
Which is not limited to merely silencing weapons in the midst of war,  
Is not only the ending of conflicts and hostility,  
Not only harmony when there are fights.  
The peace which our Father gives to His children is beyond all of this.  
This peace is a blessing and brings tranquility, security, health, prosperity and material and spiritual well-being for all.  
Yes, Father, it is this peace which your people need most, in these days, when many of us have lost trust to live in harmony with others.

Hatred has been the weapon of Satan to separate brothers and sisters of the same church, family, country, and continent, creating situations which lead to division and enmity.  
We know Father that the solution to all of this is true peace which the world desires so much, even though we seek it in ways that are often mistaken.  
Yes, Father, we your children, come to you in this day in which we celebrate the day of peace, that you might give to us that peace which we desire so much, because this peace overcomes hatred and hostility, and teaches us to love our enemies, so that we can build families, churches, societies, nations, and a world that is more and more pleasing to your eyes.  
Amen.

AUTHOR: Gomes João de Miranda is Administrative Secretary of Inter-Mennonite Conference in Angola (CIMA) and is Director of Education Department of Mennonite Community Church in Angola and a faculty of the Higher Institute of Social Service.

PRAYER:

Oh eternal God: Omnipotent! Omniscient! Omnipresent!  
Oh the Most High, Father of all the universe and of all that there exists,  
Your great purpose in the creation of the world:  
“Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.”  
Your image and your likeness reflect love that is infinite, indelible and inimitable.  
But the world lacks love!  
Be present in anguish and tribulations: wars, hunger, pain and disasters,  
So that the cruelty of humans might not affect the innocent.  
Pour out your glory on all the nations,  
That the pain of one be the pain of another.  
Intercede for the ignorance of those who cause war, that your love might transform them.  
Embrace humanity and receive those in need, that they might celebrate PEACE,  
The PEACE that the world does not give, but that the Lord gives.  
May peace be with all, today and forever.  
Amen.
Author: Rev. Domingos Macoxi Panda is Professor of Pastoral Ethics in the Mennonite Higher Institute of Angola. He is also Luanda Regional Secretary of the IEIMA and Assistant General Secretary of CIMA.

Prayer:

I thank you God, the Giver of Life, for the peace that you have given to my country and others. I ask that you be with those who do not enjoy peace, because they suffer from war, hunger and other atrocities. Bless all people who make such notable efforts, day after day, to promote and maintain peace. Particularly MCC which lends all types of support to people in all the world, without discriminating on the basis of nation or religion. Train all the humanitarian agencies to cooperate with the local authorities to prevent situations that lead to humanitarian crises and to respond in extreme circumstances of lack of food, clothing and medicines. Train also the churches of all the world, so that they not be indifferent to actions that lead to peace, tolerance and love.

I thank you God, the Giver of Life, for the peace that you have given my country and all other countries. I hope that you will touch the hearts of those who are belligerent moral authors of armed conflicts, so that they might respect human life.

Bless the persons who individually and as a group have a notable effort, day after day, to promote and maintain peace.

Amen.

Author: Nlandu João Baptista is a pastor within the IEIMA.

Prayer:

God Almighty, Prince of Peace, Creator of the heavens and the earth—

Lord, you created the world with the objective that all might live in harmony and peace. Today, however, we live the opposite. The world has become so turbulent that shalom has lost its meaning and place in the midst of our societies.

O dear Father, we implore your grace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ so that you restore all things, the minds and the understanding of human beings, as your Father understands. For this reason we end our prayer asking that your will be done here on earth as in the heavens. Amen.

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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 escalates. 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 is 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 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.

**East Africa**

**CONTEXT:** Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and South Sudan are all located in eastern Africa. Each country has its unique needs for peace, justice and healing.

**AUTHOR:** Ken and Laura Litwiller are the MCC Area Directors for East Africa.

**PRAYER:**

O LORD,
For Ethiopia, may all peoples find their voice and express it in peace.
For Kenya, may elections serve all peoples and lead to peace.
For South Sudan, may peoplehood and peace emerge and prevail.
For Tanzania, may persons with albinism find safety, well-being and peace.
For Uganda, may hospitality for refugees be blessed and the needs of Ugandans also be met in peace.
O LORD,
Bind us together in peace.
Amen.

**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 an 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.

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**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 two decades. This has forced a lot of people into poverty, unemployment and over four 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 assistance. 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 of personnel from Canada, the U.S., Nigeria, Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe. It also includes 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.

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**PRAYERS FOR ASIA**

**Bangladesh**

**CONTEXT:** Bangladesh, located in central Asia, is one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world, with a total population of almost 160 million. It became a nation in 1971 after a liberation war from Pakistan. Its population is predominantly Muslim, with Christians numbering less than 1 percent. MCC has worked in Bangladesh since the early 1970s, with a focus on community development projects.

**AUTHOR/CONTRIBUTOR:** Mary Lou Klassen is an interim peace advisor for MCC. She writes: “Our MCC office in Dhaka gathers each morning for a brief check-in and morning prayers. . . . I invited staff to write down their prayers for peace over a couple of days. Some wrote in English, some in Bangla which we have translated.”

**PRAYER:**

সারা বিশ্বের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন।
*Pray for the world.*

প্রতটা মানুষের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন
*Pray for every human.*

We pray for the war-affected people in the world, especially for the children in different countries around the world.

We pray for the Marawi people in the Philippines who are caught in the middle of a war between their government and ISIS-related parties.

We pray for the world. Pray for every human.

Peace in Palestine is inevitable. The question is, how do we make it happen today?

Amen.

দ্বিতীয় প্রার্থনা বাংলা ভাষায়

বাংলাদেশের শান্তির জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন এবং সব পরিবারের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন
*Pray for the peace of Bangladesh. Pray for all of our family.*

Road accidents are one of the great problems of Bangladesh. Every day, an average of eight people are killed and more than double this number are seriously wounded. We pray for the families and departed souls, and that accidents would be reduced.

Please pray for our MCC offices in Bogra, Dhaka and Mimensingh. May our work together in food security, education, public health training, and peacebuilding bring more resilient communities. We pray for the well-being of MCC national staff, service workers and our families.

Amen.

আমাদের সবার পরিবারের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন।
*Please pray for all of our family.*

We pray for those suffering from political violence. During general elections, people are impacted by the political party’s conflicts. In Bangladesh, elections will happen in 2019, but the politicking has already begun.

We pray for our people who are suffering from climate change, especially poor people.

Amen.
Cambodia

CONTEXT: Cambodia is a small country of 15 million people located in the southern portion of the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. Cambodia lives with the legacy of French colonialism, the Vietnam War, the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge and political intervention by Vietnam. Respect for the rule of law is poor and violence at election time is very common. Cambodians and Vietnamese continue to harbor hatred and resentment toward each other. A deep and true peace evades the country.


PRAYER:

Dear God,
Please be with Cambodia and its people—so much in need of peace.
We pray for healing from the burdens of colonialism, war and genocide, and an end to the violence which is so ever-present.
We pray that hatred and animosity and division can be overcome. We pray especially for forgiveness between Cambodian and Vietnamese people.
We pray for the elections in 2017 and 2018. May the elections this year and next be free and fair. May there be no violence. May people who are just and righteous be elected.
We pray that the children of Cambodia can live with the hope of peace.
We pray for peace for Cambodia.
Amen.

India

CONTEXT: MCC in India is the oldest, continuous MCC program. In 1943, MCC became involved with the provision of food and clothing to victims of the Bengal famine. Today, among other things, MCC in India works with the Gilgal Mission Trust (GMT) on the project “Peace and Justice.” GMT works in an area where there is significant conflict between high caste and Dalits (members of lower castes), which results in a “peace-less” community. Apart from the violence, other major problems in the area are illiteracy, underdevelopment, distance from government, joblessness and more. The violence committed against Dalits by other castes and religions—including killing—is increasing in an alarming manner, especially in Tamil Nadu state.

AUTHOR: Mrs. Suja Phinehas is a speaker and teacher of women’s Bible study. She has organized and led the peace program for women. She is now president of All India Mennonite Women Conference (AIMWC).

PRAYER:

The Gilgal Mission Trust asks prayer for:
• GMT and peace projects in Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu;
• Peace for families and communities experiencing conflicts;
• Strengthening of those working in the local communities;
• Social and economic development for the oppressed Dalits;
• Cooperation between and support from the government with the community;
• Women and children who are violated.

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 North Korea/DPRK on the one hand, and the U.S. and South Korea/ROK 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 MCC representative for 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 toward 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.

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 fueled protests and separatist rebellions. The MCC program in Myanmar focuses specifically on peacebuilding and trauma awareness through three local partner organizations who concentrate on grassroots 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 Centre 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 nationwide ceasefire agreement.

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

In this very moment
We pray for peace.
Amen.

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 every more pervasive than the war that was fought in Vietnam more than 40 years ago.

Amen.

PRAYERS FOR EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Egypt

CONTEXT: Coptic Orthodox Christians make up about 15 percent of Egypt’s population of 91 million. They base their theology on the teachings of the apostle Mark, who introduced Christianity to Egypt. In recent years, Egypt’s Christians have come under attack from the Islamic State group and are increasingly vulnerable. During Holy Week 2017, attacks on two churches left 45 people dead.

CONTRIBUTORS: The prayers below are drawn from the Coptic Orthodox Liturgy and are provided by MCC national staff in Egypt who are Coptic Orthodox Christians.

PRAYER #1

O King of peace,
Give us your peace, establish your peace, and forgive us our sins.

Emmanuel our God is now in our midst, with His Father’s glory, and the Holy Spirit.
To bless us all, purify our hearts and heal the illnesses of our souls and bodies.
We worship you, O Christ, with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit,
For You have come and saved us.
Amen.

PRAYER #2

From the Liturgy of St. Cyril: The Prayer of Peace

Priest: We ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of Mankind. Remember, O Lord, the peace of Your one holy, catholic and apostolic church.
Deacon: Pray for the peace of the one holy, catholic and apostolic Orthodox church and for God’s salvation among the people, and order in every place, and for the forgiveness of our sins.
**Congregation:** Lord have mercy.
**Priest:** That which exists from one end of the world to the other.

**PRAYER #3**

*From the 3rd hour Coptic Orthodox book prayer*

Just as You were with Your disciples, O Savior, and gave them peace, graciously come also and be with us, and grant us Your peace, and save us, and deliver our souls.

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**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.

**AUTHOR:** Milan Sabah is 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.

**PRAYER:**

يا رب أنر عقولنا و ارشدنا كي نحبّ جميع الناس بمحبّة خالصة و اجعلنا إن تكون آدّة السلامك و أزرع فيما بدرة 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.

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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 the First World War. 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.

**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.

**AUTHOR:** Nathan Hershberger recently completed a term of service with MCC in Ankawa, Erbil, Iraq, where he taught at St. Peter’s Seminary.
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 suf-
fering 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 oc-
cupation 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 injus-
tice 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.

Syria

CONTEXT: War has been raging in Syria for
seven years. Over 13.5 million people are in des-
perate 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 interfaith 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 forgive-
ness to us all.
Amen.

Ukraine

CONTEXT: For the past three years, eastern
Ukraine has experienced continuous armed conflict.
Approximately 60,000 internally displaced per-
sons (IDPs) from these eastern regions have fled to
Zaporizhzhia, a major center some 125 miles 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 sympa-
thetic to Russia. Ongoing conflict near the front-
lines 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 frontline
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 traveled 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 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.

**AUTHOR:** Pavel (his last name withheld for security reasons) is a pastor who lives in eastern Ukraine. Although many people have fled the region, Pavel and others continue to stay because they feel a calling for God’s church to keep doing God’s work, even in difficult circumstances. Translation provided by Katie Geddert, MCC representative in Ukraine.

**PRAYER:**

O Lord our God, Holy and Righteous, great misfortune befell us. A bloody war has come to our land. Gracious and merciful Lord, give us tears to mourn over our sins and our people. We know that you have allowed this war as a result of our many sins. It’s not right for your pure eyes to look on our evil deeds.

We are greatly guilty before you. Corruption, lies, laziness, hatred and drunkenness abound. We call ourselves a Christian nation, but are far from you. Your churches are empty, on Sundays our people fill the bazaars and supermarkets. Our women have killed unborn children, our girls have sold their bodies and souls in other countries. Many men have left their country and their families to work elsewhere. Our dignity, morality and sense of right and wrong are destroyed. People who consider themselves Christians kill each other in war. Our children are orphans. Our politicians think more about their own gain than about ordinary people. We prefer money to faith and to the church of your Holy One.

We repent before you, Holy God, we confess our many sins before You.

But if possible, Lord, by your great mercy, stop this war, this slaughter, blood, ruin, violence, murder. Say only the word you promised in your Word. You can, for the sake of the elect, shorten these days. For our very own sake, send peace to our torn earth; people are so tired of shelling, pain, destruction, despair and poverty.

We pray for our presidents and rulers. Give them wisdom to agree to stop this fratricidal, despicable, ruthless war. Do not be angry with us forever, God, and have mercy on us by your great mercy. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who loved us so much that he died on the cross for us.
But if it is not so, if the war continues, if the shells will explode and death will destroy people, if even the missiles hit our homes and the places where your children gather, if even the blood and violence continue, we will still believe in you, love you, worship you. Through pain, through the hurt and the tears, we will sing praises to you, God. Because you are our God and there is no other.

Because we believe in the kingdom that is coming, where there will be no war, no death, no pain and no sin. There will be joy, peace and calm for those who love you and believe in your redemption.

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

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**PRAYERS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**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 photo 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 that is what I was feeling 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 I 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 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 injustice 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.
AUTHOR: Leah Amstutz lived and worked in Bolivia in 2016–17 as a participant in MCC’s SALT (Serving and Learning Together) program. She worked in Montero at two community centers for children, their parents and other local women, called the Saint Joseph Parish Social Centre. She says, “The children we serve come from a variety of situations, but most come from poorer families and many come from single parent or caregiver households. The teenage pregnancy rate is high in Bolivia and so it is common for children to be raised by single mothers or perhaps by a grandmother or other relative. Domestic violence and the culture of machismo is also a problem in the community, and in Bolivia as a whole.”

PRAYER:

Mothering and fathering God, we lift to you our suffering children.

We pray for the children whose parent or parents have moved away to work, abandoned them, or died. May they receive love and care, knowing they are special and valuable.

We pray for the many single parents doing the hard job of parenting alone, for the grandmothers, aunts, and other people raising children not directly their own. Give them strength and patience to raise these children in love and health.

We pray for the children whose parents are present, but who experience the violence of neglect, for the children and families plagued by violence, be it physical, sexual, mental or emotional.

Lord, we reach to you for peace and reconciliation, for hope and strength in difficult situations.

God, touch the lives of your children, that they might know comfort, caring responsibility, and love.

Amen.

Ecuador

CONTEXT: Ecuador lies just south of Colombia, a country that has been affected by armed conflict for over 50 years. This close distance has made it a popular refuge for Colombian refugees and displaced peoples fleeing the violence. The Mennonite church in Quito, Ecuador, began receiving Colombian refugees soon after the church was planted by Colombian missionaries in 2003, as families began coming to their door for help. Soon, MCC joined the work and today, under leadership from Daniela Sanchez, the project supports 450 people a year, providing emergency food assistance, bedding, cooking supplies, psychosocial support, and a community where they can find mooring in their situation of displacement and flight. While the majority of refugees in Quito are still coming from Colombia, the project serves people of any nationality—and many are arriving.

AUTHOR: Daniela Sanchez. Translated by Jes Stoltzfus Buller, Peace Education Coordinator for MCC U.S.

PRAYER (in Spanish and English):

Te pedimos que abras nuestros corazones, para responder a las necesidades de todos los hermanos y hermanas refugiadas de Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, Haití, Nigeria, Egipto, Sri Lanka, Afganistán, Siria, Irak, Gambia, Congo y Angola que llegan a Ecuador, huyendo de la violencia, del miedo, de la angustia y soledad.

Señor Jesús, bendice toda nuestra tierra. Ayúdanos a ser constructores de justicia y paz, a extender nuestras manos y nuestros corazones hacia las personas con tanta necesidad, que tu Espíritu nos siga impulsando y animando a sembrar semillas de alegría, de paz y de amor, para hacer de este nuestro mundo, un lugar en el que todas las personas vivan juntas en armonía.
We ask that you open our hearts to respond to the needs of all our refugee brothers and sisters from Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, Nigeria, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Gambia, Congo and Angola that arrive in Ecuador, fleeing violence, fear, angst and solitude.

Lord Jesus, bless all of our earth. Help us to be builders of justice and peace, to extend our hands and our hearts toward people with so much need. May your Spirit continue pushing and encouraging us to sow seeds of joy, peace and love, to make this world a place in which all people can live together in harmony.

Where there is resentment, teach us forgiveness and reconciliation, exchange our hate for love and our indifference for an attitude of service. This we ask in Christ our Lord. Amen.

We pray for drought and pollution in Bolivia, which are of great concern, especially for rural communities, as they experience the negative impacts among children, youth, grazing animals and crops diversity.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. —Isaiah 12:3
We pray for all the Colombian communities that, despite the peace accords, continue to experience violence. We pray that the churches will be spaces of reconciliation and peace, providing an example of peacebuilding.

*With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* —Ephesians 4:2–3

We pray for Guatemala and the struggle of Indigenous communities. We give thanks for the young people of the Ixil region who have come together to work the land and learn about ancestral knowledge, instead of deciding to migrate to the city or another country.

*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* —Galatians 3:28

We pray for Haiti and for justice for the victims of cholera, introduced into the country by United Nations peacekeeping troops. We pray for the organizations and civil society groups that are working for a response that includes reparations.

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* —1 Peter 2:9

José Favian Mamani leaves an OBADES meeting in Colquechaca, Bolivia, with his son Jose David Arrollo Fuentes. OBADES, the social development program of the Bolivian Baptist Church and an MCC partner, provides training and support to help farmers grow maca in addition to their traditional potato crop. Maca grows well at high altitudes, important in the Andean community of Colquechaca, and can be sold for eight times as much profit as potatoes. (2013 MCC photo/Nina Linton)

A woman selling wares walks past the main plaza in Guatemala City. Photo by Anna Vogt

Boats line a beach on Colombia’s Caribbean coast. Photo by Anna Vogt.

In the small Hatian farming community of Kabay, farmers engage in reforestation to combat erosion and water loss. Photo by Anna Vogt.
We pray for Honduras, currently the most dangerous country in which to defend the environment in the world. We pray for the men and women who continue to denounce the activities of multinational companies and say no to corruption. We pray for the Anabaptist churches that live in the midst of challenging contexts and are an example of non-violence.

Those who walk righteously and speak uprightly, who despise the gain of oppression, who wave away a bribe instead of accepting it, who stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed and shut their eyes from looking on evil, they will live on the heights; their refuge will be the fortresses of rocks; their food will be supplied, their water assured. —Isaiah 33:15–16

We pray for Mexico and for all the migrants who pass through the country, often facing situations of violence and extortion. We pray that the churches will be spaces of refuge and hospitality.

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. —Leviticus 19:33–34

We pray for food security in Nicaragua, especially as the impacts of climate change are being seen in the forms of droughts and flooding. We pray that people would be able to cultivate their land and have access to food.

It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. —2 Timothy 2:6
Oramos por Bolivia, la sequía y la contaminación que son una gran preocupación en el país principalmente para las comunidades rurales al ver afectada la salud de niños-as y jóvenes, animales de pastoreo y diversidad de cultivos.

Con alegría sacarán ustedes agua de las fuentes de la salvación. —Isaías 12:3

Oremos por Colombia y las comunidades que a pesar del acuerdo de paz, siguen experimentando violencia. Que las iglesias sean lugares de reconciliación y de paz en medio del conflicto, dando el ejemplo de la construcción de paz.

...les ruego que vivan de una manera digna del llamamiento que han recibido, siempre humildes y amables, pacientes, tolerantes unos con otros en amor. Esfuercese por mantener la unidad del Espíritu mediante el vínculo de la paz. —Efesios 4:2–3

Oremos por Guatemala y la lucha de los pueblos indígenas. Damos gracias por los y las jóvenes de la región Ixil, quienes han formado un grupo para trabajar la tierra y aprender sobre los conocimientos ancestrales, en vez de migrar del país o a la ciudad. Ya no hay judío ni griego, esclavo ni libre, hombre ni mujer, sino que todos ustedes son uno solo en Cristo Jesús. —Gálatas 3:28

Oremos por Haití, para que haya justicia para las víctimas del cólera, introducido al país por unos militares de la Organización de Naciones Unidas después del terremoto. Organizaciones y grupos de la sociedad civil están trabajando para buscar una respuesta, con reparaciones para las víctimas.

Pero ustedes son linaje escogido, real sacerdocio, nación santa, pueblo que pertenece a Dios, para que proclamen las obras maravillosas de aquel que los llamó de las tinieblas a su luz admirable.

—1 Pedro 2:9

Oremos por Honduras, actualmente es el país más peligroso para defender al medio ambiente. Estamos en oración por los hombres y las mujeres quienes siguen denunciando las actividades de las empresas multinacionales y diciendo no a la corrupción. Las iglesias menonitas viven en medio de estos contextos difíciles, donde son ejemplos de la no-violencia.

Solo el que procede con justicia y habla con rectitud, el que rechaza la ganancia de la extorsión y se sacude las manos para no aceptar soborno, el que no presta oído a las conjuras de asesinato y cierra los ojos para no contemplar el mal. Ese tal morará en las alturas; tendrá como refugio una fortaleza de rocas, se le proveerá de pan, y no le faltará el agua.

—Isaías 33:15–16

Oremos por México, muchos migrantes de Centroamérica pasan por México, donde enfrentan situaciones difíciles de violencia y extorsión. Oremos para que las iglesias sean lugares de hospitalidad y refugio para los migrantes.

Cuando algún extranjero se establezca en el país de ustedes, no lo traten mal. Al contrario, tratenlo como si fuera uno de ustedes. Ámenlo como a ustedes mismos, porque también ustedes fueron extranjeros en Egipto. Yo soy el Señor y Dios de Israel. —Levítico 19:33–34

Oremos por Nicaragua y la seguridad alimentaria. Ya hay muchas manifestaciones del cambio climático, en forma de sequías y fuertes inundaciones. Oremos para las familias y organizaciones quienes están buscando diferentes maneras de cultivar y tener comida.

El labrador que trabaja duro tiene derecho a recibir primero parte de la cosecha. —2 Timoteo 2:6

### Mexico

**CONTEXT:** Chiapas, Mexico, is a region 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 an MCC worker serving 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 Mesoamericanas1, Acción con Pueblos Migrantes, and

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1 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 a more specific area than Central America to refer to the region from which massive migration is occurring.
serves 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.

CONTEXT: One of MCC’s focus areas in Latin America is migration, working at advocacy, education and direct services along the U.S.-Mexico border. This prayer was shared during an encounter of Anabaptist leaders in March 2017. The encounter, facilitated by MCC, focused on themes of migration, deportation and the biblical response of the church toward migrants.

AUTHOR: Dan Gonzalez, Director of the Theological Community of Mexico. Translated by Erica VanEssendelft, Connecting Peoples Coordinator and Program Assistant for MCC Mexico.

PRAYER (in Spanish and English):

Padre nuestro
que pareces estar en el extranjero,
nacionalizado sea tu nombre.
Venga a nosotros tu asilo político,
Hágase tu voluntad así en mi tierra, y todos nuestros países periféricos, como en el extranjero . . . los países centrales o del norte a donde buscamos luego mejores oportunidades.

El pan nuestro de cada día . . .
. . . esa fue la motivación que hizo a la matriarca Noemí repatriarse: la esperanza de que “Dios había visitado a su Pueblo con pan”2 y volvió haciendo de su antes-nuera-ahora-amiga, Rut, una “bracera espalda mojada” en el campo, recolectora de espigas de trigo

CONTEXT: This is a prayer that Miguel Paz, the General Coordinator of the MCC partner organization, Voces Mesoamericanas, Acción con Pueblos Migrantes, has taped above his desk in his office. According to the documentary film, Who is Dayani Cristal?, this short prayer was found in the pocket of a Central American migrant who died in the desert while attempting to cross into the U.S. Marc Silver, the film’s director, has made the prayer available to the public.

PRAYER (in English and Spanish):

The journey towards you Lord, is life.
To set off, is to die a little.
To arrive is never to arrive, until one is at rest with you.
You, Lord, experienced migration.
You brought it upon all men who know what it is to live;
and who want to arrive safely at the gate of life.
You took Abraham, father of all believers, out of his land.
You remembered which are the paths leading to you, by the prophets and the apostles.
You yourself became a migrant from heaven to earth.

Viajar hacia Ti Señor, eso es vivir.
Partir es un poco morir.
Llegar nunca es llegar definitivo hasta descansar en Ti.
Tú, Señor, conociste la migrancia, y la hiciste presente a todo hombre que comprende qué es vivir, y quiere llegar seguro al puerto de la vida.
Tú sacaste de su tierra a Abraham, padre de todos los creyentes.
Tú recordaste cuáles eran los caminos para llegar a Ti, por los profetas y los apóstoles.
Tú mismo te hiciste Migrante del cielo a la tierra.

2 Rut 1:6
para preparar su propio pan... ¡pan de extranjera! Porque: “no sólo de pan viven las personas.”
¡Pero también de pan!
Al punto: el dream nuestro de cada día, dánoslo hoy.
Perdona nuestras deudas, no hagas como nuestros acreedores que a razón de seguir cobrando nos obligan a dejar casa, tierra y familia para buscar la manera de pagarles. Hasta las empresas de envió de dinero nos cobran fortunas por las remesas y con un tipo de cambio chapucero que les hace ganar “en minutos” lo que nosotros ganamos en días de trabajo y a nuestras familias en el sur les da de comer y para vivir por meses.
Como nosotros perdonamos... ¿perdónanos? La mayoría de las veces no sabemos perdonar, cuando alguien, por necesidad, nos debe una parte de las remesas que nuestros hijos e hijas mandan del norte. O cuando hermanas guatemaltecas, salvadoreñas, hondureñas, africanas o asiáticas llegan como migrantes a México para buscar su propio pan.
No nos metas en la tentación de olvidar la esperanza y buscar, como apátridas, nuevas ciudadanías, nuevos pasaportes y otros derechos de residencia que no encontremos en nuestra propia nación. Y no nos dejes caer en el programa DACA porque dejaremos de ser dreamers para convertirnos en bad hombres localizables para deportación. Y libranos de los muros y decretos contra refugiados o, de los millones de deportaciones y, de los malos, esos a los que llaman “polleros” y nos dejan a mitad del camino en el desierto rumbo al norte.
Libranos de los traficantes de mujeres o redes de prostitución que roban a las niñas para hacerlas adictas y luego servirse de ellas a través de sus cuerpos.
Libranos del desplazamiento obligado a causa del odio étnico, religioso y homicida.
Libranos de ser balseros, arrojándonos al mar a merced de tormentas, tiburones y deshidratación, sólo para cerrar los ojos y querer creer que la esperanza está sólo en la otra punta del mar.
Porque tuya es la ciudadanía, la oficina de migraciones y las fronteras.
Por todos los exilios y las diásporas.
Amén.

3 Mateo 4:4
4 La Acción Diferida para los Llegados en la Niñez (DACA) es un procedimiento administrativo dentro de los Estados Unidos de América para proteger de la deportación a jóvenes inmigrantes elegibles que ingresaron al país cuando eran niños.

Our Father who art in the foreign, nationalized be thy name.
Thy political asylum come,
Thy will be done in my land, and all of our peripheral countries,
as it is in the foreign land... the central or northern countries where we look for better opportunities.
Our daily bread...
... was the motivation that made the matriarch Naomi repatriate; the hope that God had visited her community with bread and returned making what was her daughter-in-law, now friend, Ruth, a “wetback” farm laborer in the field, gatherer of ears of wheat to prepare her own bread... foreign bread! Because: “people do not live by bread alone.”
But by bread as well!
The point:
give us this day our daily dream.
Forgive us our debts, don’t be like our creditors who continue to charge us, forcing us to leave home, land and family to find a way to pay them.
Even the money-transferring companies charge us fortunes for the remittances and with a shoddy exchange rate that allows them to earn in minutes what we earn working for days, which provides our families in the South enough to eat and live for months.
As we forgive... forgive? The majority of the time we don’t know how to forgive.
When someone, out of necessity, owes us a part of the remittances that our sons and daughters send from the North. Or when Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Honduran, African or Asian brothers and sisters arrive as migrants to Mexico to look for their own bread.
And lead us not into temptation, temptation to forget to hope for, or look for, the stateless persons.
New citizenships, new passports and other rights of residence that we do not find in our nation.
And let us not fall into the DACA program because we will stop being dreamers, converted into bad men locatable for deportation.
Deliver us from walls and decrees and three million deportations, and the bad guys... those who are called “chicken” and leave us in the middle of the journey, in the desert heading North.

5 Ruth 1:6
6 Matthew 4:4
7 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is an administrative procedure within the United States of America to protect eligible immigrant youth who entered the country as children from deportation.
Deliver us from the traffickers or networks of prostitution that steal girls to make them addicted and then use them through their bodies.
Deliver us from forced displacement because of ethnic, religious and homicidal hatred.
Deliver us from being boat people, thrown to the sea at the mercy of storms, sharks and dehydration, only to close our eyes and want to believe that hope is just on the other side of the water. For thine is citizenship, the migration offices and the borders.
For all the exiles and diasporas.
Amen.

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 that they viewed as theirs for the taking. Beginning in the 19th century, the U.S. 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 MCC representative for 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.”

AUDIO LINK: http://goodcharlesfamily.blogspot.ca/2016/12/considering-dust-considering-us.html

PRAYER: Remember us, O Lord
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 . . .
Canada

CONTEXT: Between the 1870s and 1996, some 150,000 Indigenous children and youth in Canada 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 loved ones, children in the schools could not speak their language, practice their ceremonies, express their culture and live their way of life. Many were physically and sexually abused by the teachers. Many died. 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, as well as other institutions and practices. The TRC insisted that the journey of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples was Canada’s greatest task.

AUTHOR: Dianne Climenhage and her husband Marty are MCC workers in Happy Valley/Goose Bay, Labrador. She writes this prayer especially 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.

AUTHOR: Jennifer Henry is Executive Director of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, a coalition of Christian churches and church organizations, working ecumenically to address Indigenous rights and ecological justice. MCC Canada is a member of KAIROS.

PRAYER:

Gracious and loving God,
Forgive us for what we have done and what we have left undone in our country’s journey with Indigenous peoples. Our failure to live up to the treaties, to live up to the dignity of all peoples, to live up to your dreams of justice have created a rupture in our nation and a deep wound in our hearts. Bring us a change of heart, a restored will, and a deepened resolve for a renewed and hopeful future. With your enabling and empowering love, help us to begin to live in honor and mutual respect. Write this covenant of right relations on each of our hearts, and through the power of your Spirit, make it an enduring bond of love and justice. In the name of the One who loved every person, every creature, into being, we pray.
Amen.

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,
thief 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.

CONTEXT: This prayer was written in the context of the Iraq War, globally, and the plight of undocumented immigrants, domestically. It was a precursor to what exists today—political polarization along with the mistrust that fuels attitudes of “my way or the highway.” The author and at-the-time pastor of Salem Mennonite Church was receiving regular calls from immigrants seeking help contacting friends or relatives who were in transit. Many of the missing people ended up dead in the deserts of southern Arizona and Texas.

AUTHOR: Jack Knox, from Douglas, Arizona, where he and his wife support MCC Mexico workers in Agua Prieta, Sonora, was pastor of Salem Mennonite Church (Salem, Ore.) for numerous years.

PRAYER: A Peacemaker’s Prayer

Gracious Lord, we dream of a world free of poverty and oppression, and we yearn for a world free of vengeance and violence. And we pray for your peace.

When our hearts ache for the victims of war and oppression, help us remember that you healed people simply by touching them. Give us faith in our ability to comfort and heal bodies and minds and spirits that have been broken by violence.

When the injustice of this world seems too much for us to handle, help us remember that you fed five thousand people with only five loaves of bread and two fish. Give us hope that what we have to offer will turn out to be enough, too.

When fear of the power and opinions of others tempts us not to speak up for the least among us, help us remember that you dared to turn over the tables of money changers. Give us the courage to risk following you without counting the cost.

When we feel ourselves fill with anger at those who are violent and oppressive, help us remember that you prayed for those who killed you. Give us compassion for our enemies, too.

When we tell ourselves that we have given all we can to bring peace to this world, help us remember your sacrifice. Give us the miracle of losing a little more of ourselves in serving you and our neighbors.

Walk with us, Lord, as we answer your call to be peacemakers. Increase our compassion, our generosity and our hospitality for the least of your children. Give us the courage, the patience, the serenity, the self-honesty and the gentleness of spirit that are needed in a world filled with turmoil and terror.
Amen.