

A Liturgical Appeal from Bishop Hirschfeld in the Wake of the Orlando Massacre

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In response to the massacre in Orlando, I encourage each of our congregations to find a way to open the doors of our churches and chapels this week for public prayer and vigil. Please explore opportunities to conduct prayer vigils with your ecumenical and interfaith communities (for instance, I invite the Central Convocation to suspend its scheduled meeting this week in order that we may join the Interfaith Vigil being planned for Tuesday evening in Concord, at a location and time to be announced). If you are participating in, or hosting, prayerful gatherings, could you please share those details with Laura Simoes? Her email is lsimoes@nhepiscopal.org.

In addition, I urge our congregations to open the celebration of Holy Eucharist in the coming weeks with The Supplication, a form of prayer found on page 154 in *The Book of Common Prayer* designed for use “especially in times of war, or of national anxiety, or of disaster.” Given the gravity of the events in Florida, our ongoing state of war in the Middle East, and the growing acrimonious divisions within our society, this form of prayer is warranted. The Supplication can be adapted as the following:

The Supplication

O Lord, arise, help us;
And deliver us for your Name's sake.

O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers and mothers have declared unto us, the noble works that you have done done in their days, and in the time before them.

O Lord, arise, help us;
and deliver us for your Name's sake.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

O Lord, arise, help us;
and deliver us for your Name's sake.

- V. From our enemies defend us, O Christ;
- R. Graciously behold our afflictions.
- V. With compassion behold the sorrows of our hearts;
- R. Mercifully forgive the sins of your people.
- V. Favorably with mercy hear our prayers;
- R. O Son of David, have mercy upon us.

V. Both now and evermore we humbly pray you to hear us, O Christ;
R. Graciously hear us, O Christ; graciously hear us, O Lord
Christ.

The Officiant concludes

Let us pray.

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen. (For the Human Family, BCP, p. 815)*

The Supplication may replace the opening acclamation of our Sunday worship, taking the place of all that precedes the Collect of the Day. Alternatively, it can conclude the Prayers of the People, as the Celebrant deems appropriate.

I urge the clergy of New Hampshire in charge of our principal work, conducting corporate worship, to employ this form of prayer intended for use in just such times as these.

The choice to employ the Supplication speaks to the distress of so many of our people who come to worship in our churches to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. By introducing our liturgy in this way, we express a solidarity with all those who refuse to accept the violence we have witnessed as the “new normal,” and a condition to which God desires us to get used to or accommodate. Instead, in our prayers together, we can find the motivation, clarity, and courage to take the necessary action God calls upon us to work for peace and justice within our hearts, within our own local communities, and in the wider society.

Please know of my deepest prayers and support as you enjoin our people to counter the rage and violence of our times by recommitting themselves to the movement of love in Jesus. It is the Risen Christ, whose power, stronger than all violence and death, that will save and strengthen us.

Live without fear. Your Creator has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you with a power and a presence that is stronger than death. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be among us, now and forever.

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