

ECUMENICAL CENTRE CHAPEL

Prayers –16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence.



Poem seen at a bus stop in Geneva: 'She cries – He laughs – She dies – He lives'. Photo: Hannelore Schmid

(Stand as you are able.)

Opening Responses

Leader: Glory to you, our God, glory to you.

Prayer for Deliverance *(adapted from Psalms 35)*

Leader: I lament for orphans, daughters, and wives; I cry for partners, sisters, and mothers,

**All: Bowed down and discouraged;
Bowed down in sadness and mourning.**

Leader: But at our troubles, they gathered in glee, they gather together to ridicule us;

**All: Without cause, they trivialise our roles;
Without cause, they undermine our lives.**

Leader: How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue us from their ravages and insults.

**All: Wake up! Rise up to our defence,
Rise up for our cause, our God and our Lord!**

♪ **How long must we cry out?**
(Words and music © 2001 Robin Mann, Australia. www.robinmann.com.au)

(Please be seated.)

Leader: Let them who destroy our life and dignity be put to shame.
Let them who devise evil against us be turned back and be confounded.

**All: Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the Lord pursue them.**

Leader: All girls and women shall say,
"O Lord, who is like you?"

**All: You deliver the vulnerable,
From those who dominate and exploit us.**

Leader: Then our souls shall rejoice in the Lord,
Exulting in our deliverance.

Isaiah 58: 1- 3, 6-11

Leader 1: Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Leader 2: *Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.*

Leader 1: Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.

Leader 2: *“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers...*

Leader 1: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Leader 2: *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*

Leader 1: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Leader 2: *Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.
If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,*

Leader 1: if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

Leader 2: *The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.*

♪ **Alleluia**

♩=68 First time: Solo/Cantor
Second time: Chorus

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

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Option 1

Epistle Reading: Romans 8: 31- 39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

*"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."*

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Reading: John 10:10

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Option 2

Numbers 27: 1-7

Then the daughters of Zelophehad came forward. Zelophehad was son of Hopher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph, a member of the Manassite clans. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and they said, "Our father died in the wilderness; he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin; and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers."

Moses brought their case before the Lord. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: The daughters of Zelophehad are right in what they are saying; you shall indeed let them possess an inheritance among their father's brothers and pass the inheritance of their father on to them.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 19: 13. 14

Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Option 3

2 Samuel 12 (1-7,9)

And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?"

Option 4

Conversations based on events recounted in 2 Samuel 11 & 12

David to Bathsheba: "You do not have a choice. If you refuse to submit to my wishes, I have power to destroy you and your family."

David to Joab: "Uriah is a very stubborn fool. I could not force him to sleep with his wife. He is bent on destroying my credibility. Find a way to get rid of him."

Bathsheba to God: "O Lord God, why do you abandon me? The King raped me, and I became pregnant with his child. To save his name, the King betrayed you and my family and murdered my husband in the battle field. Now you take away my child, as a price for the sins of the King?"

Nathan to David: "Woe to you! You are that man! The man how treats woman like a property. A man who will use his power to quench his greed and lust. A man who does not care for the dignity of a woman and her being as a child of God. A mother, a child, a sister, a teacher, a partner and a friend."

David to God: "Forgive me, God, for I am a sinner. I know that I cannot undo the horrible things I have done. I cannot give back the life I took. I cannot take the hurtful words I have spoken. I cannot give back the innocence that I have robbed. I have betrayed my promise to you."

God to David: "My child, in love, I have forgiven your sins; but in justice, you will have to face the consequences of your actions."

Option 5

Genesis 21: 8-10, 14- 19

Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac."

So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

♪ **Alleluia**

(Stand as you are able.)

Prayer of Confession *(said together)*

**We confess our sins, O God of grace, for the wrongs that we have done;
the harm that we have not prevented;
the hurtful words that we have said;
and the disparaging thoughts that have crossed our minds;
both as individuals and as a society.**

**We have continued to hurt the beauty of your creation, hampering girls and women.
Both deliberately and inadvertently,
the sins that we continue to commit against others and ourselves,
forgive us Lord.**

**All these sins are the signs of our brokenness, and all, committed against you.
Forgive us Lord, and help us to accept your forgiveness.
Help us to live in the freedom it gives.
Help us to use this freedom to continue to transform ourselves and the society.
Help us to bring justice, equity, and freedom to girls, and women; boys and men,
Amen.**

♪ **Lord, have mercy** *(sung 3 times)*

(Please be seated.)

Option 1

Intercessions

Leader: Lord, we honour, remember, and acknowledge women's movements and their leadership in the 16 Days of Against Gender-Based Violence and in preventing and ending violence against women and girls. We remember our mothers from thousands of years ago, from the time of Moses, such as the daughters of Zelophehad. When God honoured their right to their father's inheritance, bringing them equal to men in God's and people's sight (*Numbers 27: 6,7*). Today we also pray for the strengthening and flourishing of the officers, desks, projects, and programmes in churches, Christian denominations and communions, and councils of churches which strive for the welfare of women and girls throughout the world.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: Lord, in the principle of 'Leave No One Behind,' help us to focus attention on the most underserved and disadvantaged groups of women and girls in efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Help us to acknowledge the agency and the presence of God almighty in the most vulnerable and marginalized communities of women. Like young Mary, may their soul magnify the Lord, and may they be called blessed! (*Luke 1:46-48*). May our service to those who are in need, be part of our worshipping you.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: O Lord, help us to acknowledge that each victim and survivor of abuse is a precious child of God, who is entitled to the unconditional love and dignity that God assures one and all. Help us as churches and congregations, to be 'Survivor-centred' in all our efforts to assist, to ensure that safety, dignity, and confidentiality of those who survive abuse are upheld. Help us also to be respectful in telling and retelling of the stories of survivors, only with their permission and under conditions in which they have agreed.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song!" (*Judges 5:12*)

O Lord, we know that only a society that works across different disciplines and sectors to ensure education, security, equal legal status, and dignity can ensure that many a Deborah- prophets, Judges, and leaders can rise in each generation. Help us to be that society, which consistently works at ending violence against women and girls.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Option 2

Intercessions

Leader: We pray that we and our societies will care for and protect all our children. Give us the strength and make us accountable, that our communities are able to provide girls the same care and attention, as boys, be it in providing food, accessing health care, providing protection, or in giving opportunities for studies and in gaining experiences to widen their horizons.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: We pray that our societies are able to provide a caring, safe and enabling environment for all children, especially in schools and the playground, providing them with holistic education. We pray that our societies are able to teach the children comprehensive life skills, including comprehensive sexual

education. Help the young people to know and respect their own bodies and others. Help them to be able to respectfully relate with each other, to promote a caring and loving environment. We also pray that the adults who are responsible to care and mentor the young are enabled to be held accountable in the highest standards.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Option 3

Intercessions

Leader:

We pray for girls and women all over the world, where in the current context, at least one in three women (35%) will experience some form of violence during their lifetime. Help us also to focus attention and protection on the most under-served and disadvantaged groups of women and girls who are even more vulnerable to be victimized. Help us to acknowledge the agency and the presence of God almighty in the most vulnerable and marginalized communities of women. Like young Mary, may their soul magnify the Lord, and may they be called blessed! (Luke 1:46-48). May, our service to those who are in need, be part of our worshipping you.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: We pray that boys, men, and mothers may imbibe, reflect, and experience positive masculinities. We pray for the transformation of societies, to one which confers equal privileges and value to both women and men. O Lord, give us, as faith communities, the strength and transparency to hold our boys and men accountable for their actions and to promote a culture of respect, dignity, and love.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: Lord we pray for the protection of women and children from the intrusion of their privacy and violations that many faces today in a world where technological advances are being perverted. The intentional abuse of powerful surveillance systems for voyeurism and blackmail and the distribution of sexually explicit images or videos of individuals without their permission are causing a lot of pain, death, and suffering. We pray for a society that is continuously being transformed to pursue justice and prevent acts that disturb and destroys dignity and respect of the other.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Option 4

Leader: O Lord, we pray for women who are dispossessed, abused, and abandoned by their spouses, families, and communities. We pray that women are upheld by churches' communities, with social protection and with facilities such as safe houses, in case of emergencies, and impending violence. Give us the grace and perseverance to ensure that men and authorities are held accountable for the care and protection of every woman in need.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: O Lord, we pray for peace and solidarity in a context where more than 70 million people are forcibly displaced from their homes, the highest number in human history. Women and children are

especially vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, and to be trafficked in such situations. We pray that our eyes are opened to this injustice and exploitation, and give us the grace and commitment to respond consistently with all our means, to respond to communities in need, in providing them protection, care, and accompaniment.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

Leader: O Lord, in the context of extensive migrations due to climate change and economic hardships, women are increasingly being left alone in rural areas, taking care of children, elders, and farms. It is estimated that women are responsible for 70% of agriculture. However, few have legal rights to land and property and have poor access to resources. We pray for justice and commitment from nations and policymakers, to ensure that funds are made available to cope with climate change and economic challenges and to ensure that women can realize their rights and entitlements.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer!

(Stand as we are able.)

The Lord's prayer *(in one's own language)*

Concluding Prayer: A TIME AND ALL THE TIMEⁱ *(Based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)*

L: To many things there are seasons.
A time for many a purpose under heaven.
A time to be born, a time to die.
A time to plant, a time to reap.

**All: A time to break down, a time to build up.
A time to hold on, a time to change.
A time to mourn, a time to dance.
A time to keep silent, a time to make statements.**

L: To many things there are no seasons.
To be experienced, all the time.
Overcoming neglect and insensitivity, all the time.

**All: Sharing resources and power, all the time.
Caring for each other, all the time.
Resisting disrespect and violence, all the time.**

L: Listening, all the time.
Responding to the needs of people, all the time.
Respecting the inherent humanity of each person, all the time.

**All: May God grant us a vision for a better world.
May God grant us grace to make our world a safe and sacred space.
May God grant us friends to accompany us on this journey.**

Share the sign of Peace

ⁱ Manoj Kurian, Christian Conference of Asia, 2011- adapted

Prayers prepared by Dr. Manoj Kurian & Ms. Hannelore Schmid