

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND LISTENING

When we confess our sins, we accept God’s invitation to clear out the noise and chaos that keep us from recognizing God’s loving voice. So, as we come to confess our sin and be reconciled to God and one another, take this opportunity to let God help you declutter your heart and your mind so that you might listen and receive God’s love and guidance more clearly.

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you as our God, nor have we loved our neighbors as ourselves. Our priorities do not line up with yours, and too often we wander from your path by trying to do things our way instead of yours. **Forgive us, Lord. Your servants repent.**

Merciful God, we confess that we are too often complacent in answering your call to enact justice. You call us to enter the flow of your justice that rolls down like water, and instead, we inhibit the work of justice by choosing not to pay attention or believe the stories of suffering and need in our midst. **Forgive us, Lord. Your servants repent.**

Merciful God, we confess that sometimes we avoid you. We don’t want to hear your voice. We don’t want to receive your call. We are scared of what you might ask us to do and how letting your grace work in our lives might change us. So, we keep you at arm’s length, ready to run when you seem to ask too much of us. **Forgive us, Lord. Your servants repent.**

Merciful God, we confess that there are things that clutter our hearts and minds that we cannot say aloud or do not have words for, and so, we lift them to you now in silence.

Offer silent prayers of confession.

Reconciling God, your steadfast love surrounds us, calling us into right relationship with you, with self, with one another, and with creation. As your reconciled and forgiven people, open our hearts to receive all that you have to say to us today. **Speak, Lord, your servants are listening.**

Time of silent listening and prayer.

Loving God, you call us by name to be your people in the world, pouring your love into us in such abundance that it overflows into the world around us. Guide us, form us, and send us as your people to live out your good news wherever we go. **Call us, Lord, your servants will follow. Amen.**

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2023.

LITANY FOR THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HOLIDAY

Miriam hid a baby in the bullrushes, disobeying pharaoh’s edict to kill the male children of the Hebrew slaves. The child grew to adulthood. Called by God, he liberated his people from Pharaoh’s bondage—and Miriam sang a freedom song!

Jonah, called by God to preach repentance to his enemies in Nineveh, resisted. He fled from Nineveh in a storm-tossed ship. Rescued from the depths of the sea, he returned to the enemy city, preached, and witnessed the Ninevites’ salvation when they turned to God.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, accepted her call from God with rejoicing, saying, “God has filled the hungry with good food and sent the rich away empty.”

Paul, the apostle, journeyed over the known world founding Christian communities. Called by God, he preached reconciliation to Jew and Gentile, creating controversy among his colleagues as he pursued God’s purpose of peace among estranged people.

Women marched together, carrying banners and demanding peace and justice. They sought peace among men and women and peace based on justice between races. Called by God, they struggled seventy years to win the right to vote in the United States so that their granddaughters could take up the work they had begun.

Black and white marched together in Alabama, Mississippi, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., called by God to turn the nation around. Martin Luther King was our drum major keeping rhythm as we walked toward a new day when liberty and justice would be shared in peace by all.

The march continues as we raise our voices with all who are oppressed, violated, and rendered invisible because of gender-identity, sexual orientation, race, age, ability, or economic status. We are called to join with all creation crying out for a just peace.

Christ, our peace: we hear your call; we experience your ministry through the lives of peacemakers and justice seekers. Guide us as we follow the path of shalom. We thank you for the cloud of witnesses who have known your presence in their struggles every step of the way to peace. Your promise is sure that peace is possible when we follow in the way you lead. Amen.

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PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: Kelly

L: Open our ears, O God, that we might hear your Word speaking to us in this moment. Open our ears, O God, that we might listen for your voice calling to us through scripture. Open our ears, O God, that we might understand your promises to followers both old and young, ancient, and modern. Open our hearts, O God, that we might enter into the love you offer us. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING: (Unison) Kelly

1 Samuel 3:4-10 ~ New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

All: Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” and ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So, he went and lay down. The Lord called again, “Samuel!” Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore, Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

OFFERTORY PRAYER: (Unison) Kelly

All: God of all wisdom, how often have we been deaf to your voice speaking to our hearts, especially when we move in a world that needs it so desperately? The reading from 1 Samuel brings us the phrase, “The word of the Lord was rare in those days,” which resonates with the relevance of the evening news. As we bring our gifts to be dedicated this morning, we pray that you might open our ears, open our hearts to hear where you call us to respond with obedience, so that we might do what you need to begin healing our world. In Christ, we pray. Amen. (1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20); John 1:43-51)

SENDING FORTH: Kelly

L: Beloved disciples, go from this place ready to listen for God’s voice and to follow the Spirit’s lead as we answer the call to build God’s beloved community of justice, peace, and flourishing for all in our homes, our neighborhoods, and our world. Amen.

BENEDICTION: Pastor Clarissa

Pastor: God, you call each of us to serve you, and we answer, “Here I am!”
Jesus, you call each of us to follow you, and we answer, “Here I am!”
Holy Spirit, you call each of us to worship you this day, and we answer, “Here I am!”

And now, sisters and brothers, go from this place knowing that the God who made you also sustains you. The God who calls you also goes with you. The God who loved you before you were born still loves you today, and into all the tomorrows.