Interfaith Prayer Service for the Children

A community-wide gathering in support of children separated from families seeking asylum

University Christian Church
June 21, 2018

Organized by United Fort Worth, Tarrant Churches Together, and the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth
Opening Hymn

Please stand as you are able

The Children Come

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

FINLANDIA; Jean Sibelius, 1899

1. The children come, not sure where they are going; some little ones have seen their siblings die.

2. The children come in search of something better; they've traveled north, a tide that keeps on growing, a stream of nothing in their hands.

3. O Christ our Lord, you welcomed in the stranger; On one boy's belt, a number carved in leather leads to a telling them to stay.

4. God, let each one know justice, peace, and welcome, be in the desert, with the tired and injured; Be at the mercy start with me.

For unto such as these belongs your kingdom, and in each life beneath the desert sky.

Their welcome here? Detention, over phone, a brother here, a plan.

They come alone or sometimes band together where they are afraid. Be on each bus where children sense the child, it is your face we see.

May we, your church, respond in truth and flow ing.

O Lord of love, now hear your children's cry!

gathering, they bring a plea that we will understand.
danger, as angry crowds are shouting, "Go away!"
action, and with you, Lord, say, "Let them come to me."
Welcome  The Rev. Dr. Russ Peterman, University Christian Church

Bidding Prayer
Our circle is just right.
The city has an ordered mix.
The school, the proper chemistry.
The church, politeness re-defined.
The club, propriety itself.
It’s good the way it is.
The borders should be closed.
The rules should be maintained.
The limits should be clear.
The sanctions should be plain.
Our circle is just right . . .

But God, who cares about such things,
and grieves when we usurp God’s place
has picked some crayons from a box,
and with a child-like sense of right
is drawing something new.
The Holy Artist laughs and sings,
then calls to us, “Come look at this!”
This circle brings people in;
a carousel of love and light
a place where dancing folks drop hands,
and take one joyful, giant step,
invite the stragglers in,
rejoin their hands,
and dance the night away.

Beloved people of God, let us listen, sing, and pray to hear the plight of children and the calling of our Creator. Then, justly prodded, let our hearts be moved to spend this night not for solace only, but also renewal; not for forgiveness alone, but also for strength, and send us forth into the world, to change the world.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world and especially for children who spend this night involuntarily separated from their parents.

Litany for the Children (adapted from Episcopal Migration Ministries)

Leader: O Holy One, we thank you for gracing us with your love. Teach us to pray as our hearts are heavy for the children separated from their families seeking asylum.
All:  Hear us, we pray.

For the innocent children crossing the U.S./Mexico border.  Watch over them, we pray.
For the lonely child wandering in search of love. Watch over them, we pray.
For safety from harm. Watch over them, we pray.
For compassion as they seek shelter among other children. Watch over them, we pray.
For comfort and care as they face difficulties. Watch over them, we pray.
That they may know they are loved. Bless and guide them, we pray.
Keep these children free from sickness or trouble. Watch over them, we pray.
Lighten their darkness and defend them from all perils, danger and harm.

Grant these things for the sake of Your love. Amen.

Service of the Word

Cantor Sheri Allen, Congregation Beth Shalom

Oseh Shalom

\( j = 72 \)  

Benjie Ellen Schiller
Let us Pray.
G-d of mothers and fathers,
G-d of babies and children,
Youth and teens,
The voice of agony echoes across the land,
As children are taken from their parents,
Perverting our history as a nation of immigrants,
Perverting our values,
Perverting the ways of justice and peace.

These children
Wait in misery
To be reunited with their families
So that a few may reap the political rewards
Of their suffering
By playing tough at our borders.
Source of grace,
Creator of kindness and goodness,
You call upon us to stand in the name of justice and fairness,
To witness against this abuse of power,
To battle the systematic assault on human beings,
To speak out against their suffering.

Bless those who rise up against this horror.
Give them courage and determination.
Bless those who plead on behalf of the oppressed and the subjugated
Before the seats of power.
May the work of their hands never falter
Nor despair deter them from this holy calling.
Bless those now in bondage at the hand of the U.S. government.
Grant them shelter and solace,
Comfort and consolation,
Blessing and renewal.
Release them. Free them. Heal them from trauma.
Reunite them with their families.
Hasten the day of their reunion.
Blessed are You, G-d of All Being,
Who summons us to oppose violence, oppression, slavery and injustice.
This is our prayer. Amen.

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The Rev. Dr. Melvin Wilson- Baker Chapel A. M. E.

Let us pray.
Giver of Life, in your infinite compassion, we seek your divine protection for refugee children who
are often alone and afraid. Provide solace to those who have been witnesses to violence and destruction, who
have lost parents, family, friends, home, and all they cherish due to war or persecution. Comfort them in their
sorrow, and bring help in their time of need. This is our prayer. Amen.
Let us pray.
Most Gracious G-d, show mercy to unaccompanied migrant children. Reunite them with their families and loved ones. Guide those children who are strangers in a foreign land to a place of peace and safety. Comfort them in their sorrow, and bring help in their time of need. This is our prayer. Amen.

Build a Longer Table

Noel Nouvelet

Mrs. Dina Malki, Daughters of Abraham

Let us pray.
G-d of Witness, through the power of your spirit, use our senators to cause justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. As children are being separated from their parents, remind us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to protect the most vulnerable in our world. This is our prayer. Amen.

(adapted from The Rev’d Barry Black, Chaplain to the United States Senate)

The Rev. Irma Bañales, First Sagrada Familia Lutheran Church

Let us pray.
Exalted G-d, you call us to hunger and thirst for righteousness — a righteousness that leads to compassion for the poor and a renewing of minds. Lead us to this kind of faith that works to make a better world for all Your children. This is our prayer. Amen.
All are Welcome

Marty Haugen

1. Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely
2. Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and
3. Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine, and
4. Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and
5. Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions

live, a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn
true, where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's
wheat: a banquet hall on holy ground, where peace and
stone to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the
heard and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words with-

to forgive. Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of
reign anew. Here the cross shall stand as witness and as
justice meet. Here the love of God, through Jesus, is re-
Word they've known. Here the outcast and the stranger bear the
in the Word. Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of

faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end di-
symbol of God's grace; here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
vealed in time and space, as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
image of God's face; let us bring an end to fear and danger:
faith and songs of grace, let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
Lighting of the Candles

Please make your way to a candle station and light several candles each representing a separated child.

The New Colossus
Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

(Emma Lazarus, 1883)

A Place Called Home
A place called home with comfort for the weary;
a place called home of our nourishment and rest;
a place called home that welcomes in the stranger,
where one unknown becomes a welcome guest,
where love can find a human habitation;
God grant us all this grace: a place called home.

A place called home where tenderness can flourish;
a place called home a haven from all harm;
a place called home where children sleep in safety,
where hurts are healed, a shelter from the storm,
where peace can find a human habitation;
God grant us all this grace: a place called home.

A place called home, a promise for tomorrow;
a place called home, a vision handed down;
a place called home for all God’s sons and daughters,
where love prevails and peace is ever found,
where hope can find a human habitation;  
God grant us all this grace: a place called home.

A place called home for every human being;  
a place called home where arms are open wide;  
a place called home where all extend the welcome,  
where none are lost, alone or cast aside,  
but members of a single human family;  
God grant us grace to build a place called home.

(Michael Jones, 2016)

Silence
Closing Prayer, spoken in unison

Reconciling G-d, your word tells us that it is a sin to do nothing when it’s in our power to help someone in need. Help us to speak out against crimes against children. Prod us to act whenever we suspect that a child is in danger. Don’t stop prompting us until we do the right thing. Amen.

Blessing and Dismissal

May God bless you with a restless discomfort about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you really can make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

Now let us go forth in peace to love and serve the children of the Lord. Amen.

Thank you to all those who helped with this service


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