

Liturgy for the Families of Incarcerated People

By the National Benevolent Association

[Prison & Jail Ministries Peer Group](#)

June 2020 #DOCJustSummer



National
Benevolent
Association
CALLED TOGETHER | CALLED TO CARE

“Staying Power (Wherever You Go, I Will Go)”

CONFESSION OF SIN

By Rev. John Harrison

P&JM 2018-2020 Peer Group member

O Lord and Shepherd of lost sheep,
Who gives rain to wicked and righteous alike,
Have mercy on us.
We have punished children for the sins of their parents
And parents for the sins of their children.
We have washed our hands and walked away from the least among us,
And we have incarcerated millions for being too poor to pay bail.
What we do not do directly, others do in our name.
When we send our neighbors to prison
We force their families to bear their shame.
We have chosen to forsake others
Instead of celebrating the precious gift of your cross
And the human family you have set free.
Set us free, O Lord our God,
To share in your heavenly banquet
As lambs of your own flock and sinners of your own redeeming.
Amen.

PRAYER

By Ciearra 'Cie-Cie' Price-Haynes

P&JM 2018-2020 Peer Group member

To our gracious and sovereign Father, we humbly come to you in prayer seeking your covering and guidance. We lift up our brother and sisters that are incarcerated and

being held in detention centers, and not only them, but their loved one's as well as we pray for healing, hope, freedom, and resources.

We ask Lord that you not only free them in a physical sense but free them from the bondage of their minds as well. Remove the real shackles and the invisible one's and restore their lives to a place of peace. Surround them with people that will help them and not hinder them. Restore unto them the joy of your salvation. Let them know Lord that they will never be left nor forgotten because you said so in your Word. Be with each and every one of us that has the heart and the mindset to help those in need and that are struggling and touch the hearts of those who have not yet discovered their need to serve.

We're praying that you strengthen us, bless, guide, and protect us. Allow your will to be done in our lives O'Lord. We thank you Father for your love and magnificent power and ask that you continue to keep all of your children covered with the blood of your darling Son Jesus. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP *modified #362 of Chalice Worship*

LEADER: Be merciful, Gracious God, to all those in need:

PEOPLE: those who are exhausted,

LEADER: those who are deep in sorrow,

PEOPLE: those whose feel their lives are ebbing away,

LEADER: those who are without friends,

PEOPLE: those who are forgotten by the world,

LEADER: Ever loving God, we entrust them to your care.

ALL: In Jesus' name. Amen.

SONG

Chalice Hymnal 461. Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service by Albert F. Bayly

Lord, whose love though humble service bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken, offered mercy's perfect deed;
we, your servants, bring the worship not of voice alone, but heart,
consecrating to your purpose every gift that you impart.

Still your children wander homeless; still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom; still in grief we mourn our dead.

As, O Lord, your deep compassion healed the sick and freed the soul,
use the love your Spirit kindles still to save and make us whole.

As we worship, grant us vision, till your love's revealing light
in the height and depth of greatness dawn upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to tireless striving your abundant life to share.

Called to worship to your service, forth in your dear name we go
to the child, the youth, the aged, love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, good will and comfort, counsel, aid, and peace to give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom may your mercy know, and live.

SONG

Chalice Hymnal 467. Fill the World with Love by David L. Edwards

With the vision in our minds of how the world could be,
and the fullness of our hearts from the suffering we see;
when we make all that we are and have part of God's destiny,
we can fill the world with love, we can fill the world with love.

All the people in this world living lives in pain and fear,
crying out into the night, wondering when someone will hear;
while there are so many others having so much they can share,
can we fill the world with love, can we fill the world with love.

We whose spirits long to share, long to comfort and to heal,
know that when we act alone, hope is difficult to feel,
but together as we labor God's compassion to reveal
we will fill the world with love, we will fill the world with love.

POEM

Chalice Hymnal 508. For One Who Suffers by Howard Thurman

I know I cannot enter all you feel
Nor bear with you the burden of your pain
I can but offer what my love does give -

The strength of caring
The warmth of one who seeks to understand
This I do in quiet ways -
That on your lonely path you may not walk alone.

TESTIMONY

By Rev. Carol Wieger

Mission Behind Bars and Beyond, Inc (MB3)

P&JM 2018-2020 Peer Group member

My son was arrested shortly after he became a legal adult. As a result, he was incarcerated for almost one year. That had to be one of the hardest years of my life. In the beginning, I was tempted to pay the \$500 to have him released, but I didn't. Because of mistakes he made before this particular arrest, I felt that he needed to learn from the consequences of his actions and serve the time. I've struggled with that decision for over 15 years.

When he was first placed in custody, I was reluctant to tell my friends at my new church where he was and the circumstances of his stay. I was embarrassed that they would feel that I was a horrible mother and had done a terrible job raising my son. I felt they would turn their backs on me. But ultimately, the love that I continued to feel for my son gave me the strength to share our story. It was through their support that I was able to make it through that year. They didn't judge me or my son; they only offered hope and strength in our time of need.

Luckily, I was able to visit with my son every week and write him letters every day. In some ways we grew much closer during that time than we had been for several years leading up to that point. I'd share with him how things were going with the family and how much I missed him. I'd always try to keep things positive.

Almost one year into his stay, my son's paternal grandfather passed away. I decided to call our previous pastor - one that he was more comfortable around - and have him accompany me to the jail to notify my son. Once again, I was nervous to bring more people into our circle of confidence, but, the pastor accepted our situation and graciously went and comforted my son in our time of need. It was at that point that I paid the \$500 to have him released from jail so that he would be able to attend his grandfather's funeral.

Looking back at that situation, I would have handled things much differently regarding the timing of the payment of the bail and the resulting year of incarceration. I wasn't as informed then as I am now about the prison and jail systems and different opportunities available to young people.

I'd like to say that my son hasn't made any other mistakes since that time, but I can't. However, what I have learned over that last 15 years is the importance of being available to the incarcerated, returning citizens, and families of the incarcerated. I'm grateful to everyone that has been available to me and my son, especially our church families during the difficult times of our lives.

SERMON TEXT: RUTH 1 (NRSV)

Elimelech's Family Goes to Moab

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. **2** The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. **3** But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Naomi and Her Moabite Daughters-in-Law

6 Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. **7** So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. **8** But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. **9** The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. **10** They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." **11** But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? **12** Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, **13** would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying?"

No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me." **14** Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." **16** But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

17 Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.

May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,

if even death parts me from you!"

18 When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

SERMON CONNECTION

Through difficult times Ruth and Naomi stayed connected and supported each other. They continued to live as a family when quite possibly it would have been easier to just walk away and only take care of themselves. When someone we love is incarcerated, sometimes we believe it would just be easier to walk away. But, true strength lies in standing strong in support.

BENEDICTION: HEB. 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete with everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.