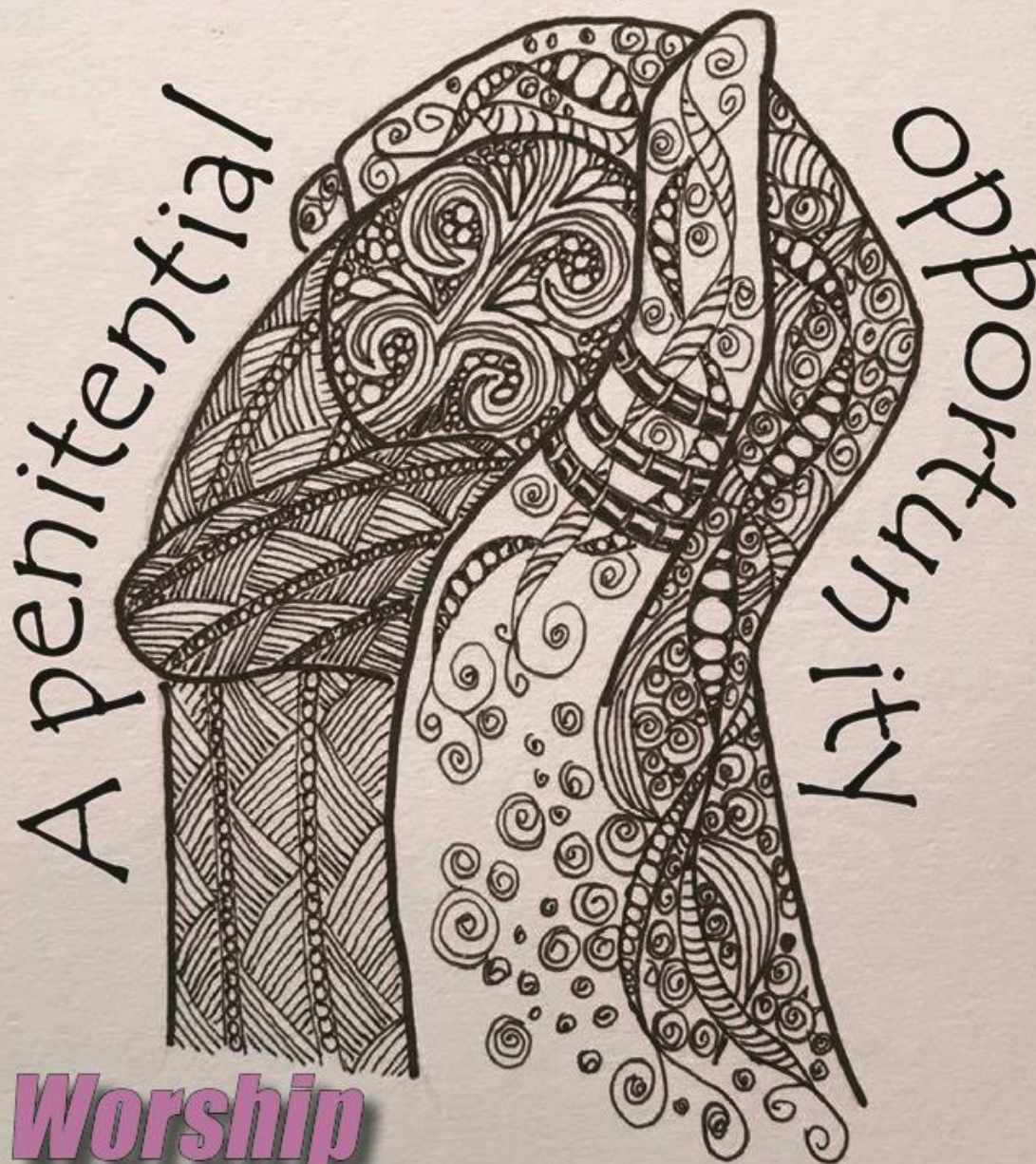


Massacre at My Lai

Vietnam
16 March 1968
50th Anniversary



**Worship
Resources**

ams2017

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Introduction to the “Penitential Opportunity” Resources

Those of us who worked on the My Lai Massacre 50th Anniversary resources share a belief that truth is found in many faith traditions. A list of relevant quotes from Islam, Judaism, and Christianity is included. What we believe we all share in common is the longing and struggle for a world characterized by mercy, in turn mediating the demands of justice and the prerequisites of peace.

Those who planned the sample liturgy are Christians, and we write from our own experience; we do not presume the ability to leap from our context to construct a service incorporating the insights from other spiritual traditions. We recognize that honest interfaith engagement does not include abandoning our own confessional expressions, though it does mean holding such convictions with humility. Among other things, humility requires listening, the most penitential posture when approaching God, who always—always—calls to us from beyond borders and boundaries.

We trust that those who gather with us from other traditions, or of no particular religious affiliation, will participate as fully as vision and conscience allow. Even more, we hope that you may find some useful material in these resources (from which you are free to borrow and edit or adapt as seems appropriate) to develop a “Penitential Opportunity” service appropriate to your own tradition.

Included in addition to the liturgy are several supplemental resources: suggestions for additional music, litanies, and other readings; a meditation on the meaning of penitence, a theme integral to many religious traditions; a brief collection of historical facts to help in understanding the context of the My Lai massacre; a collection of quotes to guide deeper reflection and seasoned conviction; and a testimony from a volunteer in My Lai.

We recognize the pastoral challenge of getting local communities of faith to devote focused attention on an episode of brutality, 50 years past, in a place thousands of miles away, where few U.S. citizens have ventured to visit. This is particularly true in a culture in which communicating God’s promise, purpose, and provision is often confused with a desire to accentuate the positive.

The writing and compiling of these liturgical resources was done in anticipation of the Christian season of Lent, when penitence is a key theme, culminating in Easter’s hopeful promise of a redemptive future. This year the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is April 4, only three days after the church’s buoyant proclamation of death’s coming annulment. We seek prayers from every quarter to assist us in knowing how to seek the Beloved Community he proclaimed, and to live animated by Resurrection’s promise, in the face of the world’s seemingly endless confidence in what theologian Walter Wink called “the myth of redemptive violence.”

#

Ken Sehested, author and editor of prayerandpolitiks.org, wrote, compiled, and edited the material in this resource on behalf of the Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee. Unless otherwise attributed, the writing is his. Angela Sudermann, a retired denominational missions coordinator now caring for her parents full-time, produced the illustration (“Resting in God’s Hand”) on the cover. Art design is by Kaki Roberts and Ken Sehested. All material is ©copyrighted, though reprint permission is granted for all non-commercial uses.

The Ties that Bind

The Integrity of Penitence, on the 50th Anniversary of the Massacre at My Lai
By Ken Sehested

Concealment makes the soul a swamp. Confession is how you drain it.

—Charles M. Blow

Except in a few traditional religious settings, *penitence* is a seldom-used word. While its more common synonyms—confession, apology, contrition, and repentance—are standard parts of many church liturgies, the images they convey have generally fallen out of favor. There are good reasons why this is so. The primary definition of *penance* is “voluntary self-punishment inflicted as an outward expression of repentance for having done wrong.” A web search for *penance* reveals more than a few pictures of people whipping themselves.

But we privilege confession and absolution in our liturgy not because God enjoys our humiliation. Just the opposite. By the grace of God, confession frees us from the power of our failures. Confession provides the possibility to begin again. It means we are not defined by our past. It means a different future is possible. The wreckage wrought by human behavior is real, but the future is not thereby fated.

What does attention to penitential life have to do with the 50th anniversary of the My Lai massacre? Everything—if we’re looking for root causes and not merely explanations.

On March 16, 1968, a platoon of U.S. soldiers led by Lt. William Calley committed war crimes in the small village of My Lai, Vietnam. They were expecting a military encounter that didn’t occur. Then, for reasons beyond human capacity to comprehend, they began systematically killing women, children, and elderly men—more than 500. Of the 26 officers and soldiers initially charged with crimes at My Lai, only Lt. Calley was convicted—of premeditated murder, for which he could have received the death penalty. Instead he was remanded to life in prison at hard labor. Eventually his sentence was reduced to 10 years, but he served only five months in prison and 35 months under house arrest. Though he finally made a public admission of remorse for My Lai in 2009, Calley never wavered from his trial testimony that he was simply following orders.

Fiftieth anniversaries are occasions to recognize personal transitions and public events, to reconsider their meaning and highlight their function in shaping current commitments and future outcomes. Yet it’s reasonable to ask, Why focus attention on such a horrific memory? Does that not simply embed its lasting, traumatizing impact? For those of us who weren’t there—maybe even weren’t alive—on what basis can we repent for something we didn’t do?

§ § §

Our recent national history is replete with apologies of the “mistakes were made” variety that deny responsibility and vague, scattershot “I apologize if I offended anyone” excuses for unconscionable behavior. It’s easy to understand public disdain for any sort of penitential language. If absolution comes with no resolution—to live differently, in whatever small and incremental way—confession has been emptied of all meaning, and worse: it is become religious

armor for infamy. Mercy opens a portal to repentance, characterized not so much by apologetic expression as by the hard work of repairing the damage, of reestablishing trustworthy relations.

If we are to envision anything other than a dystopian future—rule of the brutal, by the brutal, for the brutal—we must recover language for what the Greek New Testament calls *metanoia*, meaning “to turn around, to change one’s life,” usually translated as “repentance.” To get there involves several precepts.

The first precept is distinguishing between shame and guilt. Insidiously, in our culture guilt is confused with shame, a form of self-preoccupation that engenders paralysis and passivity, an escape—knowingly or not—from response-*ability*. Shame removes agency, whereas the proper function of guilt is to authorize and mobilize the work of restoration.

The second precept in the recovery of penitential language is recognition of such work as a public process, not just a private solitary event.

The third precept is comprehending the purpose of judgment as restoration, not retaliation; the reclamation of virtue, not the authorization of vengeance. This framework has ancient antecedents in the Hebrew phrase *tikkun olam* (repair of the world) from the Jewish Mishnah, the Talmud, and the mystic Kabbalah literature in speaking of the matrix of spiritual transformation.

The fourth precept is acknowledging that the process of restoration is almost always discomfiting, frightening, and strenuous. Powerful interests are invested in keeping things the way things are. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who sat next to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967 as he delivered his controversial “Beyond Vietnam” speech in New York City’s Riverside Church, wrote “God is not nice. God is not an uncle. God is an earthquake.”

The resolve to no longer be silent in the face of abuse is the fifth precept in a recovery of penitential living. Among the many memorable lines from Dr. King’s bold and dangerous speech critiquing the Vietnam War is “A time comes when silence is betrayal.”

Ending silence in the face of abuse begins with the ritual work of lament, itself a form of penitence. This sixth precept is among many things to be learned from African-American communities of faith. The articulation of grief—whether in speech or music or dance or moaning—contains in its very performance the generative power of assurance that siphons away the power of fear. Our capacity to grieve and lament is directly related to our capacity for hope, much like the circumference of a tree’s canopy is proportionate to its root system.

The last of these seven precepts, drawn from Rebecca Solnit’s amazing book *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, brings us back to where we began. Solnit writes, “Hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. Hope is an ax you break down doors with in the case of emergency. . . The future is dark, with a darkness as much of the womb as of the grave.”

The penitential life, which begins in disillusionment and grief, pushes toward clarity, which leads toward a kind of hope that is more than daydreaming. To hope for something is not a wouldn’t-it-be-nice sentiment. Hope binds us to a process designed to overcome injustice by forging equitable relations.

Conflict mediation specialist Byron Bland has written that two truths make healthy community difficult: that the past cannot be undone, and that the future cannot be controlled. However, two counterforces are available to address these: the practice of forgiveness, which has the power to change the logic of the past; and covenant-making, which creates islands of stability

and reliability in a faithless, sometimes ruthless world.

As Dr. King wrote in his anguished essay “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.” These cords neither smother nor strangle. Such covenants are essential both for human and ecological flourishing. And this is what it means to be righteous in the eyes of God.

§ § §

In what way does a commemoration of the My Lai massacre represent a penitential opportunity? The short answer: Because as a nation we have never allowed ourselves to fully acknowledge the carnage—not just in My Lai or in Vietnam more generally. Daniel Ellsberg’s release of the top-secret Pentagon Papers in 1971 revealed a long pattern of lies, cover-ups, and prevarication by the U.S. government and military commanders over the course of four presidencies and different political affiliations.

The purpose for marking March 16 on our calendars this year is not to re-litigate those charged in the massacre, or their commanding officers, or the top elected officials who created and sustained the conditions for, and covered up the results of, those killing fields. The purpose for remembering My Lai begins with the fundamental notion of citizen responsibility within democratic political systems. We are responsible for demanding truthfulness from our leaders, along with insisting on the implementation of the ideals of justice embedded in our governing documents. Remembering that we have been lied to before, on a massive scale, calls us to continuing vigilance.

For people of faith—and the theme of penitence is common to a great many religious traditions—remembering My Lai reminds us of the human capacity for brutality and for its rationalization of political corruption, military domination, and economic expansion. Public confession over My Lai has been minimal at best. Initially chastened after the war following revelations of its corrupt pursuit, the public has long since forgotten the impact of treachery when commercial pursuit, political deceit, and military aggression collude.

Considering this legacy alongside the rise in the U.S. of national chauvinism and white supremacy, in the hands of an increasingly authoritarian political culture in which truthfulness is a consumer choice, the result is an environment mobilizing against anything remotely resembling the *tikkun olam* of Judaism, Jesus’ announcement of the reign of God, or Dr. King’s vision of the Beloved Community.

The fact that this year on April 4, less than three weeks after the My Lai anniversary, we also mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King is especially instructive. King was not murdered because he was a dreamer, nor even for insisting on integrated water fountains, bus seating arrangements, and voting rights. He was murdered because he dared to identify a more persistent and deep-seated flaw in our national character which gave (and continues to give) rise both to domestic oppression and international aggression.

This flaw is stuck in our craw. The penitential opportunity, with this year’s coincidence of golden anniversaries, remains open to us all.

*Things are not getting worse. They are getting uncovered.
We must hold each other tight and continue to pull back the veil.*

—adrienne maree brown

#

Vietnam, My Lai, and U.S. Involvement

Historical Notes

§ On March 16, 1968, Lt. William Calley led his platoon into the hamlet of My Lai in the Quang Ngai Province of Vietnam. They raped women and girls and shot indiscriminately at civilians as they ran from their huts. Survivors were rounded up and executed in a ditch. Over several hours, more than 500 civilians were massacred. Only Lt. Calley was found guilty of any crime. Convicted of premeditated murder, he was sentenced to life in prison at hard labor but was pardoned by President Richard Nixon after serving five months in prison and 35 months under house arrest.

§ “I was ordered to go in there and destroy the enemy. That was my job that day. That was the mission I was given. I did not sit down and think in terms of men, women, and children. They were all classified as the same, and that’s the classification that we dealt with over there, just as the enemy. I felt then and I still do that I acted as I was directed, and I carried out the order that I was given and I do not feel wrong in doing so.” —*Lt. William Calley*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Calley

§ At Calley’s trial, one defense witness testified that he remembered Captain Ernest Medina ordering the soldiers to destroy everything in the village that was “walking, crawling or growing”. <http://crimescenedb.com/my-lai-massacre/>

§ “Hugh Thompson was the helicopter pilot who tried to halt the My Lai massacre....[H]e rescued 15 defenseless civilians while training his machine guns on US infantrymen...threatening to shoot if they did not stop the slaughter.” — “[Hugh Thompson: US pilot who tried to stop the My Lai massacre of civilians in the Vietnam war](#),” *The Guardian*

See also “[Helicopter Pilot Who Stopped My Lai Massacre Was Called A Traitor In America & Almost Court-Martialed](#),” Sharon Russell, War History Online.

§ Due to immense pressure to produce significant “body counts” as evidence of U.S. success in Vietnam, during the war the policy effectively became “If it’s dead and Vietnamese, it’s VC [Viet Cong].” In the aftermath, an entry on the Pentagon’s official Vietnam War Commemoration website for My Lai, which describes the massacre as an “incident,” initially underreported the casualties as 200, not 500, and now says simply “hundreds.” A whistle-blower contacted U.S. Army Chief of Staff William Westmoreland, pleading for an investigation of civilian casualties. The resulting study revealed that the body count was equivalent to “a My Lai each month.” —*Nick Turse*, “[Was My Lai just one of many massacres in Vietnam war?](#)” *BBC News*

§ It took 19 months for the truth of what happened at My Lai to be exposed, by independent investigative journalist [Seymour Hersh](#), on November 12, 1969, on the Associated Press wire service. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Lai_Massacre

§ “We intend to tell who it was that gave us those orders; that created that policy; that set that standard of war bordering on full and final genocide. We intend to demonstrate that My Lai was no unusual occurrence, other than, perhaps, the number of victims killed all in one place, all at

one time, all by one platoon of us. We intend to show that the policies of Americal Division, which inevitably resulted in My Lai, were the policies of other Army and Marine divisions as well. We intend to show that war crimes in Vietnam did not start in March 1968, or in the village of Son My or with one Lieutenant William Calley. We intend to indict those really responsible for My Lai, for Vietnam, for attempted genocide.” —*1st Lt. William Crandell, 199th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, at the 1971 Winter Soldier Investigation organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War*—https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Calley

§ “Many in the United States were outraged by Calley’s sentence....After the conviction, the White House received over 5,000 telegrams; the ratio was 100 to 1 in favor of leniency. In a telephone survey of the American public, 79 percent disagreed with the verdict, 81 percent believed that the life sentence Calley had received was too stern, and 69 percent believed Calley had been made a scapegoat.” —https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Calley

§ “On August 19, 2009, while speaking to the Kiwanis Club of Greater Columbus, Calley issued an apology for his role in the My Lai massacre: ‘There is not a day that goes by that I do not feel remorse for what happened that day in My Lai. I feel remorse for the Vietnamese who were killed, for their families, for the American soldiers involved and their families. I am very sorry....If you are asking why I did not stand up to them when I was given the orders, I will have to say that I was a 2nd Lieutenant getting orders from my commander and I followed them—foolishly, I guess.’” —https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Calley

§ “In war, these sorts of horrible things happen every now and again” —Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, speaking in 2004 of the time that he, as an Army major in Vietnam, was assigned the task of investigating reports of the My Lai massacre. His report concluded “relations between [U.S. troops] and the Vietnamese people are excellent.” —https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Lai_Massacre

§ The *Pentagon Papers*, a top-secret study of the history of U.S. involvement in Indochina commissioned in 1967 by then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and leaked in 1971 by Marine veteran and Pentagon defense analyst Daniel Ellsberg, contains a Defense Department memo under the Johnson Administration listing three pro-rated reasons for continuing prosecution of the war in Vietnam:

- 70% – To avoid a humiliating defeat.
- 20% – To keep South Vietnam and the adjacent territory from Chinese hands.
- 10% – To permit the people of South Vietnam to enjoy a better, freer way of life.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentagon_Papers

§ Because of the Vietnam War, “The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism.” —*Martin Luther King Jr., “Beyond Vietnam” speech, April 4, 1967*

§ For more about U.S. involvement and deception regarding Vietnam, see the PBS documentary *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers* (<http://www.mostdangerousman.org/>). *The Post*, a 2018 commercial film, is a riveting portrayal of *The Washington Post*’s conflicted decision to print a portion of “The Pentagon Papers.”

#

Readings from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Scripture & Tradition

The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. . . . [God] raises up the poor from the dust [and] lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with the rulers and inherit a seat of honor. —*1 Samuel 2:4-5, 8a*

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also. . . . You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say unto you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. —*Matthew 5:38-39, 43-44*

By three things the world is preserved, by [restorative] justice, by truth, and by peace, and these three are one: if [restorative] justice has been accomplished, so has truth, and so has peace. —*JT Ta'anit 4:2*

A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save. —*Psalms 33:16-17*

Repay no one evil for evil. . . . Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. . . . If your enemies are hungry, feed them. . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. —*Romans 12:17-21*

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . . And I heard a loud voice saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. [God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” —*Revelation 21:1-4*

Seek peace and pursue it. —*Psalms 34:15*

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said: When God created the creation, he inscribed upon the Throne, “My Mercy overpowers My wrath.” —*Bukhari and Muslim*

Because you have trusted in your power, and in the multitude of your warriors; therefore the tumult of war shall rise among your people. —*Hosea 10:13b-14*

The recompense of an ill deed is the like thereof. But whosoever pardons and amends, his reward is due from God, who does not love tyrants. —*Qur'an, Surah Shura, 40*

Do not do unto others that which is hateful to you. That is the entire Torah. Now go study. —*Hillel*

Acquire the spirit of peace and a thousand souls around you will be saved. —*St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833)*

What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. —*James 4:1-2*

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said: That man whose neighbor is not safe from harassment has no faith. —*Bukhari and Muslim*

Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace. —*Isaiah 32:16-17*

May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses and our garments and [judge] whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions. —*John Woolman (1720-1772)*

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said: The best jihad is to speak a word of truth to an unjust ruler. —*Abu Dawud*

Contrary to the rest of men enlist yourself in an army without weapons, without war, without bloodshed, without wrath, without stain. . . . If the loud trumpet summons soldiers to war, shall not Christ with a strain of peace to the ends of the earth gather up his soldiers of peace? A bloodless army he has assembled by blood and by the word, to give them the Kingdom of Heaven. —*Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215)*

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Help your fellow Muslim whether oppressor or oppressed.” “We know how to help the oppressed, but how are we to help the oppressor?” “Your help to him is to prevent him from oppressing.” —*Bukhari*

Imagine the vanity of thinking that your enemy can do you more damage than your enmity. —*St. Augustine (354-430)*

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said: God has mercy upon those who are merciful to others. —*Bukari*

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said: There are people among the servants of God who are neither prophets nor martyrs; the prophets and martyrs will envy them on the Day of Resurrection for their rank before God, the Most High.” People asked: “Tell us, Messenger of God, who are they?” He replied: “They are people who love one another for the spirit of God, without any mutual kinship or exchange of property. I swear by God, their faces will glow and they will stand in light. They will have no fear when the people will fear, and they will not grieve when the people will grieve.” He then recited the Qur’anic verse: “Behold! Verily for the friends of God there is no fear, nor shall they grieve.” —*Abu Dawud*

The above quotes are selected from Peace Primer II: Quotes from Jewish, Christian & Islamic Scripture and Tradition,” edited by Lynn Gottlieb, Rabia Terri Harris and Ken Sehested (Wipf & Stock, 2017).

#

A Village Named My Lai

A Post-war Reflection

By Earl Martin

I sit by the ditch.

The slight breeze murmurs through the tropical pines at the ditch's edge. Sugar cane sparrows and swallows fill the air with their own chirps and warbles. Roosters crow at distant farmsteads, and conical-hatted farmers scratch the sandy ground with broad-bladed hoes. A sleek iridescent lizard makes her way down the ditch's side toward a few inches of water at the bottom. She looks casually for some insects to make her a mid-morning snack.

Despite the rustles, all is quiet at My Lai this morning.

Still, the ditch must remember. On March 16, 1968, this ditch became the scene of pleas and cries, rifle shots and grenade explosions. This ditch became the killing field for 170 women, men, elders and children of this village. Here, the logic of war went totally berserk.

The angry, frightened American unit sent into My Lai under the command of Lt. William Calley on that morning of March 16, 1968, suspected wrongly—based on confusion of a village name on the military maps—that the village was heavily defended by Viet Cong. Their fear apparently led to the senseless slaughter, as they herded the farmers into the ditch and shot them down.

Today, a young boy with eager eyes under a purple baseball cap suddenly appears and slides down the ditch opposite me. His smaller sidekick in goldenrod shirt climbs in bare feet up one of the pines. When the smaller tyke shakes a branch, a huge, black beetle drops loose and buzzes down into the ditch. An older lanky girl nearby—is she a sister?—in conical hat swoops down and with one swat captures the big bug in her hand. A new pet for the day.

The innocent play of children surrounds My Lai today.

I walk past the memorial wall tiles reminiscent of Picasso's "Guernica" with all creation crying to the heavens for life and justice. I move among the low graves stones marking the memories of some of the reported 504 persons who were slain in different sites around the village that morning. I encounter a woman sitting quietly under a coconut tree with her two children. When I greet her in Vietnamese, her reticence softens. I introduce myself, and she tells me her name is Nguyen thi Nhung, a native of My Lai.

I ask Mrs. Nhung where she, as a young girl, had been on that fated morning. "Our house used to be over there," she points. They rounded us all up, drove us into the ditch."

The shy mother stops for a moment, swallows, and continues. "The rest were killed, but I was underneath the others in the ditch. They didn't see me. If they had seen me, I'd be dead, too."

Nhung says she lost her mother, her father, and three younger siblings that morning. Her tone of voice surprises me. Clearly this woman carries deep sadness from the memories. But I can discern not a trace of bitterness toward me or toward any Americans.

As I sit there with Mrs. Nhung, I think of Lt. Calley himself and wonder whether even he could ever return to visit My Lai. Here, as on other occasions in Vietnam, I marvel at the apparent lack of bitterness. Do Asians love life less than we in the West, as stereotypes sometimes suggest? I sense not.

Rather, it seems there is an acceptance of destiny. *Số mệnh*. Fate. I want to live. I want my children to live. But if I die, if my child dies, I must come to terms with reality. To deny that reality, to hold prolonged bitterness about that reality, would only mean your spirit would begin to devour your body. Better to accept the past as past.

Later, March 16, 1993, I return to My Lai. Perhaps a thousand local farmers and students have gathered for the 25-year commemoration of that tragic morning. When I arrive, the organizers of the memorial service ask if I, apparently the only American present, would like to speak as part of the ceremony. I hesitate. I certainly have prepared nothing. But as I ponder the invitation, I recall the healing I had witnessed in previous years when Japanese church persons, during visits to the Philippines and Indonesia, expressed sorrow for the actions of their countrymen during World War II. So when I am asked a second time, I agree to speak.

In the ceremony, community representatives present large floral wreaths in front of a great My Lai memorial statue. Then a local official gives a speech recounting the brutal events of that morning 25 years ago. While he is vivid in his description of the massacre, his is not a vengeful or angry speech. He does not pronounce blanket condemnations on Americans. Nor, I note without surprise, does he speak about any of the Viet Cong terrors that had also been part of the war's reality. Instead, as most officials in this era, he goes to great pains to say that the war was a thing of the past . . . that Vietnam now seeks friendly ties with all countries, including the United States. A second official then rises to give a boilerplate speech about the economic development plans of the district.

Then I am beckoned to the rostrum. Placed last in the short ceremony, I speak in simple Vietnamese. The crowd hushes. Probably because they have never heard their language spoken in a such a strange, foreign accent! But they remain attentive, sometimes craning necks to get a better view. Occasionally they look at each other and nod in assent. As the end, they applaud their appreciation for the simple expressions of sadness, of longing for forgiveness and peace.

After the talks, young students distribute joss sticks. We walk silently from grave to grave, passing in reverence for the villagers who lost their lives. I pray in silence by the irrigation ditch where Mrs. Nhung's parents and siblings had been shot exactly 25 years earlier. Curious children gather around and press close on every side. Their presence reassures me deeply. Through blurred eyes I see in their gentle, smiling faces hope for the future of My Lai and the future of this scarred land.

As I leave the hamlet, Mrs. Nhung appears again from the coconut trees. She is wearing for the occasion what may be her only silky, embroidered dress, or *ao dai*, holding her conical hat. As we pass, we pause and bow slightly toward each other in simple respect.

Earl Martin was among a handful of U.S. citizens in Vietnam that stayed on after the North Vietnamese rout of the South Vietnamese army and the departure of U.S. troops. He and his wife, Pat Hostetter Martin, who were married the day before the My Lai massacre, spent five years in war-torn Vietnam as Mennonite Central Committee workers. As of this writing, they are back in Vietnam with their children, celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Earl is the author of Reaching the Other Side, published in 1978.

#

Poems

An Outline for a Service Acknowledging War Crimes

“Has the United States ever apologized? Or are we too big to apologize?”

—Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, helicopter pilot, U.S. Army

The Chaplains Handbook has no prayer or rite,
Nor Book of Common Prayer nor missalette,
For scrutinies that beg forgiveness from

The mutilated dead. We come contrite
For reports of helicopter gunships.
The Chaplains Handbook has no prayer or rite

For bodies observed in a ditch; the undress
Of a girl who covered only her eyes—
A scrutiny that begs her forgiveness—

Noncombatant gang rape, with bayonette.
Old age we robbed from them, our years condemn.
The Chaplains Handbook has no prayer or rite.

We confess to you, brothers and sisters,
Our Agnus Dei mocked your mutilation,
Lacked sufficient scrutiny to beg you.

“Kill anything that moves,” bloodlust, U.S.
Five hundred and four in My Lai, Son My.
The Chaplains Handbook has no prayer or rite
For scrutinies of war crimes. We beg. Forgive.

Old age we robbed from them, our own years condemn.
We confess to you, brothers and sisters,
We will remember them.

—By Rose Marie Berger, written for the 50th anniversary of the My Lai Massacre. Hugh Thompson was the helicopter pilot who tried to halt the massacre, rescuing civilians while training his machine gun on U.S. soldiers, threatening to shoot if they did not stop the slaughter.

#

Sorry, sorry, sorry: *The political meaning of “collateral damage” repentance*

We kill and bomb
Murder and maim
Target and terrorize mostly
 (for high-tech armies)
from great distance
the better not to see actual faces
or severed limbs, or intestines oozing through
holes where belly buttons used to testify
to being a mother-born child

But then we apologize
 Sorry
 So sorry
 Deeply regret
 Such a tragedy!
 Sorry, sorry, sorry

We do everything we can to limit civilian casualties
“This isn’t Sunday school”
 (one politician’s actual words)
Didn’t have those children in our sights
Impossible to see, at 10,000 feet,
 whether Kalashnikovs are present
Smart bombs aren’t flawless
Flawed intelligence
 (as if a test score were at stake)
Military necessity
Rules of engagement need refining
S**t happens
We gave them advance warning
War is hell

The unintended consequences and inevitable
eventualities in hostile force-reduction and
counter-insurgency strategic operations
 *(See s**t happens)*
Freedom isn’t free
Do unto others before they do unto you
Asymmetrical warfare
 (“Why don’t they come out and fight like men!”)
No independent verification of claims of civilian massacre
 (aka, no one left standing)
“This is no My Lai” *(Vietnam, where as many as 504—*

*the Pentagon says only 347—unarmed women,
children and old men were killed by U.S. troops, no
weapons recovered, for which one soldier was
convicted, spending 4 months in prison.)*

We fight them there so we don't have to fight them here
*(which is why the U.S. needs 1,000 or so military
bases outside its borders, dozens with golf courses)*

Won't happen again, unless it does, then
Sorry, Sorry, Sorry
Video, and sentiments, at the top of the hour
They left us no option
Forced into this corner
Them or us
Hearings to be convened
We'll get to the bottom of this
We need to wait 'til all the facts are in

But only eyes, no heads, will roll:
foreign-born blood being cheap as it is
If war is the answer
the question must be really stupid

*—By Ken Sehested, written after hearing one too many public officials rationalize “collateral damage”
against innocent victims of military strikes.*

#

The Bullet

I tried to domesticate the bullet,
To take her with me to school,
To teach her the alphabet
And have her speak.
But she is made of black clay
And stuffed with canned blood.

I tried to domesticate the bullet,
To take her to the water spring,
To the fields of dew.
But she has consumptive lips
That love to kiss the lips of death,
To rummage our wreck
And blow ashes in our eyes.

I tried to domesticate the bullet,
To lead her to the truth,
To wash her copper with perfumes
And replace her gun powder with sweets.
But she refused to be unlocked,
And remained dripping pus,
With poison in her breath.

—by an unidentified Iraqi soldier following the 1991 Gulf War

#

We

In a museum of the city
once called Saigon, are snapshots. One's
been blown up so we can all see
it clearly. An American,

a young foot soldier, stands on battle
pocked land, his helmet at a jaunty
tilt, posed for buddies as the Model
Grunt. In his left hand he is dangling,

like Perseus, a head by its hair.
Though not Medusa's, it's his charm
for turning fear to stone. Its stare
will quiet, awhile, his throbbing chest.

The tattered flesh that once dressed collar
bones hangs rags from this Vietnamese
neck, captured with the soldier's scar
of grin by a friend's camera.

Is it enough to see it clearly?
We all know what to think. The whitewashed
walls of a second room show nearly
as many black-and-white shots of

Cambodian atrocities
against Vietnamese. No room's hung
with what was done to enemies
of Vietnam, just as there's no

American museum built
to show off snapshots of My Lai.
One pronoun keeps at bay our guilt —
they they they they they they

—by Karen Swenson

Penitential Opportunity

A Liturgy of Grief and Resolve over the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam

Prelude

“Symphony of Sorrowful Songs” (Henryk Gorecki, Symphony No. 3, first movement, part two; Zofia Kilanowicz, soprano, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, directed by Antoni Wit) [10 minutes. Begin playing 5 minutes before the service’s starting time. Recording available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKk-w_0SpSw]

*Opening Song – “Come, Ye Disconsolate”

Cantor: Come, ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.

Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;

All: Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Cantor: Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure!
Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,

All: “Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot cure.”

{Lyrics: Thomas Moore; music: “Consoator,” Samuel Webbe, Sr., arranged by Thomas Hastings}

The Occasion

[introduction to the service, read aloud by one person]

On March 16th, 1968, US Army Lt. William Calley, platoon leader in Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Brigade, 23rd Division, led his men into the hamlet of My Lai in the Quang Ngai Province of the coastal lowlands of Vietnam. Expecting a military encounter, they found only women, children, and old men.

Frustrated by earlier casualties in their ranks due to snipers and land mines, the soldiers took out their anger on the villagers, indiscriminately shooting people as they ran from their huts, rounding up the survivors and leading them to a nearby ditch where they were executed. Some women and girls were raped before they were killed. The killing went on for several hours. Thus was carried out a systematic massacre of more than 500 Vietnamese civilians. No U.S. soldiers were threatened, fired upon, injured, or killed.

In the end, only Lt. Calley was found guilty of any crime. Convicted of premeditated murder, he was sentenced to life in prison at hard labor. That sentence was eventually reduced to 10 years, though President Richard Nixon pardoned Calley after he served only three-and-a-half years under house arrest.

Although this episode is unparalleled in scope, it was not unique. A whistle-blower in the division wrote to U.S. Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland, pleading for an investigation of murders of Vietnamese civilians. He reported that there was the equivalent of “a My Lai each month.”

The purpose of this service is not to renew judgment on any of the soldiers at My Lai, or their commanding officers, or even the US presidents (from both parties) who engaged in a decades-long pattern of withholding truth or outright lying. Our purpose in this service is to

acknowledge and face these crimes done in our name, to grieve and make penitential commitments, and to ask how this pattern of behavior continues to afflict our longing for what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the Beloved Community.

Call to Worship

One: We gather to remember a story of war that haunts us to this day, to remember a wrong that must be made right.

All: We gather to reckon with the sorrow that still pains the souls of many—to reckon with the brokenness that remains within the living who cannot forget the dead.

One: We gather to reflect upon the prospects for meaningful justice and the compelling call for healing and reconciliation.

All: We gather to resolve not to leave this place unchanged or unwilling to transform this haunting memory into something good. In the words of Rabbi Abraham Yitzak Kook, “We don’t speak because we have the power to speak; we speak because we don’t have the power to remain silent.”

{Paul C. Hayes}

§ § §

Observing Silence

“To speak about God and remain silent on Vietnam is blasphemous.”

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

§ § §

Opening Prayer

Holy Light, we stand somewhere in the shadows, in between the battlefield of our struggles and the sanctuary of our souls. Shed a little light on our way. Keep your lighted sanctuary within us portable, able to see clearly, to walk courageously, to withstand the forces that corrupt the truth of our belonging to your one worldwide family.

Keep our madmen world leaders away from buttons of annihilation. Keep them clearly out of range from pushing our buttons toward hopelessness and helplessness. Don’t give them security clearness to our spirits. Keep us ever secure in You. Shed a little light on our way.

Shed your light of healing on all who struggle with illness of body, mind and spirit. Shed your light of grace on all who stumble with regrets and shame too tender to touch. Shed your light of mercy on all who fear for their lives, who are caught in the crucible of suffering. Here, now, once again...shed a little light on us all. Amen.

{Nancy Hastings Sehested}

***Singing** —“Come, Ye Disconsolate”

Cantor: Here see the Bread of Life, see waters flowing

Forth from the throne of God, pure from above.

Come to the feast of love; come, ever knowing

All: Earth has no sorrow but heaven can remove.

Cantor: Shame's power remanding, war's brutal rending,
Who can unbind us from memory's remorse?
Come now, O Gentle One, with fierce love contending

All: For earth's days of splendor, in mercy endorse.

{Lyrics: Thomas Moore v. 1; Ken Sehested v. 2}

§ § §

Observing Silence

"There are things that can be seen only with eyes that have cried."

—Roman Catholic Archbishop Christophe Munzihirwa,
martyred in 2001 in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo

§ § §

Words of Praise and Adoration

One: Jump for joy, oh people! For amid the screaming commercials and blithering campaign ads, the Redeemer has heard our aching voice.

All: God hears! God knows! Therefore we will praise that Unspeakable Name forever.

One: When misery and madness encompassed me, when anguish threatened to undo me, when heartache split my soul, I uttered my cry to any who would hear.

All: God hears! God knows! Therefore we will praise that Unspeakable Name forever.

***Singing** – "Abide With Me"

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; God, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, God, abide with me.

{Lyrics: Henry Francis Lyte; "Eventide" tune by William Henry Monk}

§ § §

Observing Silence

*Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent.*

—Book of Common Prayer, prayer for Ash Wednesday

§ § §

Confession and Absolution

One: The One who extends Presence into the most desolate region—even to the place of utter abandonment—is mighty in mercy, strong in tenderness, powerful in pardoning.

All: God hears! God knows! Therefore we will praise that Unspeakable Name forever.

One: Relax, oh my soul, in the arms of the One who dries tears, who swaddles our fretful limbs, whose light in the night scatters dragons, and whose promise is bounty and abundance.

All: God hears! God knows! This is our assurance against the ravages of fear. Therefore we will praise that Unspeakable Name forever.

***Singing – “Abide With Me”**

Open thy hand to every living thing
Hill, meadow, forest, raise your voice and sing!
And in due season grant thy Jubilee
'Til then stir confidence, abide with me.

As empires rage, unbounded truth disdained
My soul grows weary, hope's approach restrained
When fears encroach and eyes no longer see
Blessed and Gracious One, abide with me.

{Lyrics by Ken Sehested}

§ § §

Observing Silence

“If all we feel is shame after reviewing of the carnage of racism, materialism and militarism, we miss the point—and, in fact, yet again we’ve made the conversation about ourselves. The awareness is indeed painful, but the pain’s purpose is not punishment but a penitence that generates the resolve to engage the difficult work of reconciliation.”

—Ken Sehested

§ § §

Words of Assurance

One: Be assured that the God who shakes heaven and earth, whom death could not contain, who lives to disturb us and heal us, blesses us with the power of the Spirit to redeem and to restore with justice and in love.

{Adapted from Janet Morley’s All Desires Known}

Professing Our Faith

One: For what do we hope?

All: We hope for the Beloved's promise to overtake the world's broken-hearted threat.

One: For what do we long?

All: We long for the moist goodness of God to outlast the parched climate of despair.

One: For what do we lack?

All: We lack for nothing—save the need for hearts enlarged by the assurance that every hostage will be freed.

One: For what do we strive?

All: We strive for lives marked by goodness, purified of deceit and malice, and hands made gentle by the tender caress of Wisdom's approach.

One: For what do we struggle?

All: We struggle for the fate of every child whose sighs and cries are muffled by the market's disdain.

One: In what do we rejoice?

All: We rejoice in rebellious acts of abundance in the face of every stingy arrangement.

One: For what prize do our eyes arise?

All: Our eyes arise for the Beloved Community's embrace of earth's abode and Heaven's favor.

One: Peace be with you!

All: And also with you!

***Singing** – “Come, Ye Disconsolate”

Cantor: Hark, to the mending work, penitence demands it,

Kneel in confessional, sprint to repair

All sorely wounded, each debt acquitted

All: Heaven's sure deliv'rance and earth's pain forbear.

Cantor: Though death e're be prowling, sorrow confounding

Enter the halls of praise—weep, shout and sing.

Here lay your fears aside, here hope's amending

All: Rejoice! all you creatures, O Death, where art thy sting?

{Lyrics by Ken Sehested}

§ § §

Observing Silence

“Repentance for silence is better than repentance for speaking.”

—Moorish proverb

§ § §

[Options for special music]

- Have a choral group learn and perform “For All the Sufferings of the World,” by Rodolfo Gaede Neto {Here is a recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yllWm9x2kqg> Here is the sheet music: www.umcmission.org/ArticleDocuments/224/Pelasdoresdestemundo.pdf.aspx}

- Play a recording of “Study War,” by Moby:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYW5vHLvDXI>

- Play a recording of “Why do we build the wall,” written by Anaïs Mitchell, sung by Greg Brown: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtdLI05UcRU>

- Congregation singing “This Is My Song, O God of All the Nations”

[More musical options are in the “Additional Worship Resources” section of this resource.]

***Benediction**

One: Among the memory prods in every tragedy’s aftermath is this reminder of the Spirit’s directives—

All: About whose presence we must foster,

One: About which whereabouts we must locate,

All: Whether the season calls for laughter or lament,

One: Whether patience or militance is called for, caressing hand or shaking fist.

All: Only after this interrogation can our speaking and silence, our moving and stillness, put us in the position to see and know what is to be done,

One: With whom it is to be done, in what place and time it is to be done,

All: And by what authority we proceed.

One: In and through our penitence, grant the bounty of grace and the risk of resolve.

All: Resolve to break the silence; to remember afresh; to hope that is stronger than fear; to persevere beyond fatigue.

One: You shall know the truth, beloveds, and the truth will make you odd!

All: So may it be, from henceforth and evermore.

***Recessional**

[Congregation recesses, starting with the front row, then row after row until all are exited. Cantor leads in continued singing of this refrain throughout, exiting with the final row.]

Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around,
turn me around, turn me around,
Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around,
Keep on a-walkin’, keep on a-talkin’
Headed up to freedom land.

{African-American Civil Rights song}

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

This liturgy was created by Ken Sehested, a founding co-pastor of Circle of Mercy in Asheville, North Carolina, and the creator of prayer&politiks (www.prayerandpolitiks.org). Unless otherwise noted, the writing is his.

Additional Worship Resources

A Litany of Reflection and Resolve

In Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the My Lai Massacre

By Paul C. Hayes

Moral shame and injustice bear long legacies. Fifty years after the horrific massacre of Vietnamese villagers by U.S. soldiers this egregious crime of war has not faded from the memories of the living or the dead. The blood of the innocent still cries out from their graves, and the surviving generations of victims and offenders alike carry the burden of this loss. In the words of Kim Phuc, whose anguished escape as a child from a napalm attack was captured in a photograph and seen around the world, “I will always remember that day when we ran from life to death.”

Thus says YHWH: “A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and bitter weeping. Rachel, weeping for her children, refuses to be comforted, for her children are no more.”

(Jeremiah 31:15)

To name the pain is the beginning of accountability, and to sense remorse for the harm done is the genesis of forgiveness. Remembering the sorrow awakens the heart to re-engage in the search for justice.

You who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to Allah, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives...Refrain from following your own desire, so that you can act justly—if you distort or neglect justice, Allah is fully aware of what you do.

(Qur'an 4:135)

The distance of time and circumstance mitigate the call for retribution. But the hope of justice can yet be fulfilled restoratively through forgiveness and peacebuilding. “Forgiving is not forgetting,” as Desmond Tutu has said. “It’s actually remembering—remembering and not using your right to hit back. It’s a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important, especially if you don’t want to repeat what happened.”

God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor; to heal broken hearts...to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve...to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of tears, a cloak of praise instead of despair.

(Isaiah 61:1-3)

As Howard Zehr has written, “Justice will not be served if we maintain our exclusive focus on the questions that drive our current justice systems: What laws have been broken? Who did it? What do they deserve? True justice requires, instead, that we ask questions such as these: Who has been hurt? What do they need? Whose obligations and responsibilities are these? Who has a stake in this situation? What is the process that can involve the stakeholders in finding a solution?”

Don't refuse a kindness to those who deserve it when it is in your power to do it. Don't say to your neighbor, "Go away, I will give to you tomorrow," if you can give today.

(Proverbs 3:27-28)

"Retributive theory believes that pain will vindicate," as Zehr explains, "but in practice that is often counterproductive for both victim and offender. Restorative justice theory, on the other hand, argues that what truly vindicates is acknowledgement of victims' harms and needs, combined with an active effort to encourage offenders to take responsibility, make right the wrongs, and address the causes of their behavior. By addressing this need for vindication in a positive way, restorative justice has the potential to affirm both victim and offender and to help them transform their own lives."

(Howard Zehr, The Little Book of Restorative Justice)

It is in the nature of things that joy arises in a person free from remorse. *(The Buddha)*

The time has come to examine ways to heal the wounds of this terrible act of evil. It is time to hear the accounts of the living and the stories of the dead. It is time to speak truth to the generations who rise up from these shallow graves to address the harm that has been done and prevent it from being forgotten. It is time to embrace the call for justice to allow the hope for reconciliation to be realized.

Blessed are those who are poor in spirit: the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who are mourning: they will be consoled.

Blessed are those who are gentle: they will inherit the land.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they will have their fill.

Blessed are those who show mercy to others: they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are those whose hearts are clean: they will see God.

Blessed are those who work for peace: they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice:

The kingdom of heaven is theirs. *(Matthew 5:3-10)*

#

Worship Resources for Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the My Lai Massacre

By Thien Phuoc Quang Tran

I prepare this document to be a standard Chapel Service program. The first part of it is to acknowledge the horrid reality of the Vietnam war and the massacre in particular, and the second part is to renew our commitment to fight for justice and peace amongst nations.

*What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether
the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism
or in the holy name of liberty or democracy?*

—Mahatma Gandhi

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom.
—Martin Luther King Jr.

Scripture: Psalm 146

Stories/Witness about the My Lai massacre

(See Earl Martin's story "A Village Named My Lai," included in this resource.)

Time of Confession

Prayers

Responsive Reading:

For a world where lies are accepted at face value;

hear our prayer, God of truth.

For a world where racism in high places is tolerated;

hear our prayer, God of the oppressed.

For a world where people with disabilities are mocked;

hear our prayer, God of the disadvantaged.

For a world where the rich hold the reins of power;

hear our prayer, God of the poor.

For a world where men violate women with impunity;

hear our prayer, God of the downtrodden.

For a world where the earth is ignored and neglected;

hear our prayer, God of the voiceless.

For a world where nations interfere in enemies' elections;

hear our prayer, God of the disenfranchised.

For a world where the church is charmed by false gods;

hear our prayer, God of the lost.

For a world where free speech is threatened;

hear our prayer, God of the silenced.

For a world where hatred is growing by leaps and bounds;

hear our prayer, God of the vulnerable.

For a world where dissent is dangerous and necessary,

hear our prayer, God of those who suffer for righteousness' sake.

God of hope, we turn to you for vision and courage

as we strive to be faithful in word and deed,

followers of Christ in times like these.

{from Carol Penner's [LeadingWorship](#) blog}

Affirmation

As we listen to the world's concerns, hear the cry of the oppressed, and learn of new discoveries, give us knowledge, teach us to respond with maturity, and give us courage to act with integrity.

As citizens, we acknowledge the Spirit's work in human government for the welfare of the people, for justice among the poor, for mercy toward the prisoner, against inhuman oppression of humanity. Help us to obey you above all rulers; fill us with the patience of Christ as we wait upon the Spirit.

We pray for the fruit of the Spirit of Christ who works for peace on earth, commands us to love our enemies, and calls for patience among the nations. We give thanks for your work among governments, seeking to resolve disputes by means other than war, placing human kindness above national pride, replacing the curse of war with international self-control.

We hear the Spirit's call to love one another, opposing discrimination of race or sex, inviting us to accept one another, and to share at every level in work and play, in church and state, in marriage and family, and so to fulfill the love of Christ.

Enable us to accept that call and be agents of renewal in our work through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

{from The Worship Sourcebook, © 2004 Faith Alive Christian Resources, 4.5.4.}

#

Music

{Note: Many of the hymns noted below can be found in multiple hymnals.}

From the *Celebrating Grace* hymnal

- 691 Neto, "For the Troubles and the Sufferings of the World" (Spanish and English)
- 692 Medema, "Let Truth and Mercy Find Here"
- 694 Herklots, "Forgive our Sins as We Forgive"
- 695 Vajda, "How Lovely and How Pleasant" (based on Psalm 133)
- 696 Schultz, "I'm Coming to Gather All Peoples on Earth" (suitable for interfaith)

From *The New Century Hymnal*

- 544 Sosa, "If I Have Been the Source of Pain" (Spanish and English)
- 581 Haugen, "Lead Us from Death to Life"
- 585 Murray, "O God, We Bear the Imprint of Your Face"
- 554 Duck, "Out of the Depths"
- 576 Kaan, "For the Healing of the Nations"
- 581 Kumar & Haugen, "Lead Us from Death to Life (based on the "World Peace Prayer")
- 583 Bechtel, "Like a Mother Who Has Borne Us"
- 588 Huber, "Let Justice Flow Like Streams"
- 591 Stone, "This Is My Song"

From *For the Living of These Days* hymnal

- 30 Adams, “Psalm 51”
- 32 Rauschebusch, “Prayer against War”

From the *Community of Christ Sings* hymnal

- 41 Daw, “O Risen Christ, Still Wounded”
 - 199 Tice, “What Comfort Can our Worship Bring”
 - 214 Moon, “The Weight of Past and Fruitless Guilt”
 - 221 Damon, “Spirit of Christ, Remember Me”
 - 222 Murray, “Gentle God, When We Are Driven”
 - 224 Maples, “O May Your Church Build Bridges”
 - 228 Duck, “Out of the Depths, O God, We Call”
 - 229 Keithan, “When We Are Called to Sing”
 - 305 Downing, “We Are the Ones the World Awaits”
 - 342 Troeger, “Too often, God, Your Name Is Used” (with alternate words for interfaith use)
 - 343 Bringle, “Listen for the Call of God”
- (This hymnal has a splendid section titled “Interfaith Respect.”)

From the *Glory to God* hymnal

- 749 Haas, “We Are Called”
- 756 Reid, “O God of Every Nation”
- 765 Schutmaat, “Song of Hope”

From the Taizé Community

- “Come and Fill”
- “Give Peace”

From *Rise Up Singing*

- “Vine and Fig Tree”

Others

- “We Shall Overcome”
- Geonong Lee, “Come, Now, O Prince of Peace”
- “Let Us Work Together,” (from a quote by Lilla Watson, music by Don Schlosser:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MmBSTYZOXQoOvJf7h8x_1uSmlQy-82nx/view)
- “So Much Wrong,” (Palestinian traditional, translated and arranged by John L. Bell, Wild Goose Resource Group)
- Brian Wren, “The Horrors of our History”
- Shirley Murray, “For Everyone Born a Place at the Table”
- Greta Vosper, “Keep Wide Your Heart”

Hymnal readings

- “For the wrong we have done to our neighbors, / for silence in the face of war, / for neglect of charity and failure in justice, / for forgetfulness of others’ pain, / and for advantage taken of another’s weakness.” —from a “*Litany of Repentance*” (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, p. 691)
- “O God, / for too long the world / has called us to war, / and our dead lie sprawled / across the centuries. / But you / break the bow and shatter the spear, / calling us to sow the seeds of peace / in the midst of despair. / In tenderness, / may we take the tiniest sprouts / and plant them / where they can safely grow / into blossoms of hope. Amen.” © 1988 Lenea Reimer Geiser, from a “*Litany of Repentance*” (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, p. 756)
- God of all creation, we stand in awe before You, impelled by visions of human harmony. We are children of many traditions – inheritors of shared wisdom and tragic misunderstandings, of proud hopes and humble successes. Now it is time for us to meet – in memory and truth, in courage and trust, in love and promise. In that we share, let us see the common prayer of humanity; in that in which we differ, let us wonder at human freedom; in our unity and our differences, let us know the uniqueness that is God. May our courage match our convictions, and our integrity match our hope. May our faith in You bring us closer to each other. May our meeting with past and present bring blessing for the future.” —*Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship, Volume 1*
- The 2013 Presbyterian hymnal *Glory to God* contains a section of “Lamentation and Healing” readings (pp. 775-800).

#

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- Brett Younger, pastor, Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, New York

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VIGIL TO COMMEMORATE MY LAI MASSACRE 50TH ANNIVERSARY



Lafayette Square across from the White House
Friday, March 16, 2018
12 Noon to 1 PM

The My Lai Massacre on March 16, 1968, was among the most painful of all the tragedies and disgraceful actions by the US military during the Vietnam War. US soldiers slaughtered 504 innocent women and children, and our government tried to cover it up.

Join us to acknowledge our war crimes and express penitence for our nation's inhumanity. Stand with us as we call for an end to all military strategies that target civilians, such as drone strikes. Speak up for demanding that the US government provide resources to clean up Agent Orange, dioxides, defoliation and military mines and other weapons still buried in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Support our call to acquire all official military documents that contain evidence of other massacres and war crimes committed by the United States in Indochina and elsewhere.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee
www.vietnampeace.org • 202-686-7483