

# 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 chil-dren come, not sure where they are go - ing; some lit - tle ones have  
2. The chil-dren come in search of some-thing bet - ter; they've trav - eled here with  
3. O Christ our Lord, you wel-comed in the strang-er; you blessed the chil - dren,  
4. God, let each one know jus - tice, peace, and wel-come; and may your gift of

seen their sib-lings die. They've trav-eled north, a tide that keeps on grow-ing, a stream of  
noth-ing in their hands. On one boy's belt, a num-ber carved in leath - er leads to a  
tell - ing them to stay. Be in the des - ert, with the tired and in - jured; be at the  
mer - cy start with me. For un - to such as these be - longs your king-dom, and in each

life be - neath the des - ert sky. Their wel-come here? De - ten - tion, o - ver  
phone, a broth - er here, a plan. They come a - lone or some-times band to -  
bor - der where they are a - fraid. Be on each bus where chil-dren sense the  
child, it is your face we see. May we, your church, re - spond in truth and

flow - ing. O Lord of love, now hear your chil - dren's cry!  
geth - er; they bring a plea that we will un - der - stand.  
dan - ger, as an - gry crowds are shout - ing, "Go a - way!"  
ac - tion, 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.**



37 A/E E7(sus4) A A/C# D(sus2)  
 us and the world will say A - men.

42 E7(sus4) A A/C# D(add2) A/E Bm7  
 O-seh sha-lom bim - ro - mav Hu ya - a-seh sha lom a-lei

49 E7(sus4) A A/C# D(add2) A/E E7(sus4)  
 - nu V'-al kol Yis - ra - el V'-al kol yosh vei tei-

57 A D D/F# A A/C# C#m7  
 vel A - men A - men V' al kol yosh

64 Bm7 B7(sus4) A A/C# D(add2)  
 vei tei - vel O-seh sha-lom bim - ro - mav hu ya - a she

71 A/E E7(sus4) A D F?A A  
 sha lom a-lei nu A - men A - men

78 A/C# C#m7 Bm7 E7(sus4) A  
 A'-al kol yosh - vei tei - vel May the One who makes

84 F#/A# D(add2) A/E  
 peace in the hea vens de scend on us and the world

88 E7(sus4) A A/C# D(add2) A  
 wil say A - men

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.***

# The Rev. Raul Gutierrez - Western Hills United Methodist Church

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

1. Build a long - er ta - ble, not a high - er wall,  
2. Build a saf - er ref - uge, not a larg - er jail;  
3. Build a broad - er door - way, not a long - er fence.  
4. When we lived as ex - iles, ref - u - gees a - broad,

feed - ing those who hung - er mak - ing room for all.  
where the weak find shel - ter, mer - cy will not fail.  
Love pro - tects all peo - ple, spar - ing no ex - pense.  
Love be - comes our door - way to the reign of G-d.

Feast - ing to - geth - er, strang - er turns to friend,  
For an - y place where jus - tice is de - nied,  
When we em - brace com - pas - sion more than fear,  
So must our ta - bles wel - come those who roam.

Love breaks walls to piec - es; false di - vi - sions end.  
Love will break the jail walls, free - ing all in - side.  
Love tears down our fenc - es; all are wel - come here.  
None can be ex - clu - ded; all must find a home.

## **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.***



C7 F C/E F C Dm7

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safe - ly  
 2 Let us build a house where proph - ets speak, and words are strong and  
 3 Let us build a house where love is found in wa - ter, wine, and  
 4 Let us build a house where hands will reach be - yond the wood and  
 5 Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and vi - sions

C F Dm7 Gm C Gm7

live, a place where saints and chil - dren tell how hearts learn  
 true, where all God's chil - dren dare to seek to dream God's  
 > wheat: a ban - quet hall on ho - ly ground, where peace and  
 stone to heal and strength - en, serve and teach, and live the  
 heard and loved and trea - sured, taught and claimed as words with -

Fsus F Am7 Dm7 Gm7 C

to for - give. Built of hopes and dreams and vi - sions, rock of  
 reign a - new. Here the cross shall stand as wit - ness and as  
 > jus - tice meet. Here the love of God, through Je - sus, is re -  
 Word they've known. Here the out - cast and the stran - ger bear the  
 in the Word. Built of tears and cries and laugh - ter, prayers of

F B2 F Bb A7 Dm

faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end di - vi - sions:  
 sym - bol of God's grace; here as one we claim the faith of Je - sus:  
 > vealed in time and space, as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:  
 im - age of God's face; let us bring an end to fear and dan - ger:  
 faith and songs of grace, let this house pro - claim from floor to raf - ter:

## 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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