

Prayers

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge and truth.

1 Timothy 2: 1-4

To pray you need to have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

Prayer is dangerous! If we expect God to change things without changing us, we will be disappointed... In praying, we open ourselves up, as individuals and churches, to God. The spiritual discipline of prayer will enable us to live lives as individuals and congregations that promote reconciliation and peace. This will also involve changing our ways of relating to others – forgiving and being forgiven. Prayer is a powerful means of being in solidarity with the victims of violence.

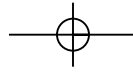
Diana Mavunduse & Simon Oxley (2002) *Why Violence? Why Not Peace?; Decade to Overcome Violence Study Guide* [Geneva: WCC] 23, available at www.overcomingviolence.org

Prayer allows us to communicate directly with God and for him to communicate with us – it is a two way process and thus involves both speaking and listening. Prayer is also a stimulus for action. Not responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit means another lost opportunity to serve our Lord and our neighbour. Examples of prayers spanning almost three millennia that you might wish to use as written or adapt to suit your own circumstances, are given below.

- Praise the Lord. We shall praise you all our lives: singing praises as long as we live. Let us not put our trust in the world's rulers, in mortal men and women, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that day their plans come to nothing. Blessed are those whose help comes from God, whose hope is in the Lord our God, the maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them – the Lord who remains faithful for ever.
Lord, you uphold the cause of the oppressed and give food to the hungry. You set the prisoners free,

give sight to the blind, lift up those who are bowed down and love the righteous. You watch over the refugee and sustain the fatherless and the widow, but frustrate the ways of the wicked. The Lord reigns for ever, for all generations. *Adapted from Psalm 146 (NIV) by Alun Morinan*

- God, you have entrusted us with the care of each other.
Forgive us that we profit from the oppression and injury of our brothers and sisters.
Forgive us that we develop so readily the means of destruction at the expense of the things that create community.
Forgive us that when we are asked for bread we sell bombs, and that we have made the livelihood of so many dependent upon trading in death.
Enable the victims of the arms trade to forgive us.
Enable us to give ourselves in commitment to the eradication of this evil.
Enable us to help those with power to work for justice and peace.
Lord, you have given us all we need;
So now make us ready to forfeit all the hurtful things that are not needed.
God, who is against the arms trade and for the people, give us your love.
Taken from a prayer vigil outside BAE Systems arms factory, Warton, Lancs. and reproduced, with permission, from Paynter N, Boothroyd H (2005); Holy Ground [Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications] 178
- Leader (L): God of the poor and marginalised, God of the victims of oppression and of war, we cry to you for peace in our world.
All (A): *Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, help us to act for peace.*
L: We pray for all victims of the arms trade worldwide. People in... *[insert here current examples of conflict zones and poor countries which give priority to arms spending]*... and many other places where conflict has been prolonged and exacerbated by the flow of arms, or where money spent on arms is depriving people of their basic needs. We hold before God all those who have lost loved ones, lost limbs, lost sanity, lost homes, lost livelihoods, lost hope as a result of the trade in arms.
A: *Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, help us to act for peace.*
L: We pray for leaders and decision-makers, that policies may be redirected towards peace and human rights, rather than the continuation of war and oppression.
A: *Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, help us to act for peace.*
L: We pray for all who are involved in the arms trade, that they may realise the real consequences of their actions. We pray for the conversion of hearts and minds; and for the conversion of the arms industry towards productive purposes.



A: *Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, help us to act for peace.*

L: We pray for ourselves. Give us the courage to speak out against the export of death. Give us the strength to work for an end to the arms trade. Give us the resolve to withdraw our financial support, even at a cost to ourselves. We offer these prayers in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace.

A: *Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, help us to act for peace.*

From Helen Boothroyd 'Arming the War Machine' a liturgy of penitence for the arms trade, Iona Abbey 1988 and reproduced, with permission, from Paynter N, Boothroyd H (2005) *Holy Ground* [Glasgow: Wild Goose] 174

- Leader (L): God of peace, for choosing to put our trust in weapons of war:
All (A): *We come before you in sorrow and confession.*
L: God of life, for our silent complicity with the industry of death:
A: *We come before you in sorrow and confession.*
L: God of generosity, for supporting the arms trade through our work or our taxes, or for profiting from it through our shares and investments:
A: *We come before you in sorrow and confession.*
L: God of hope, for our doubt and despair in the face of evil:
A: *We come before you in sorrow and confession.*
L: God of courage, for our fear to speak out or to take bold action:
A: *We come before you in sorrow and confession.*
From Helen Boothroyd 'Arming the War Machine' a liturgy of penitence for the arms trade, Iona Abbey 1988 and reproduced, with permission, from Paynter N, Boothroyd H (2005) *Holy Ground* [Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications] 172
- In the midst of hunger and war,
we celebrate the promise of plenty and peace.
In the midst of oppression and tyranny,
we celebrate the promise of service and freedom.
In the midst of doubt and despair,
we celebrate the promise of faith and hope.
In the midst of fear and betrayal,
we celebrate the promise of joy and loyalty.
In the midst of hatred and death,
we celebrate the promise of love and life.
In the midst of sin and decay,
we celebrate the promise of salvation and renewal.
In the midst of death on every side,
we celebrate the promise of the living Christ.

For peace in your country,
For the victims of violence everywhere,
For those struggling for peace and justice,
For churches in conflict situations,
For a world without war and violence.

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust,
Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace,
Let peace fill our beings, our world and our universe.

Adapted from prayers at the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, 1983 by Diana Mavunduse & Simon Oxley (2002); *Why Violence? Why Not Peace? Decade to Overcome Violence Study Guide* [Geneva: WCC] available at www.overcomingviolence.org

- We pray for an end to our government's policy that promotes the export of arms;
to countries where the huge sums of money wasted on British weapons would be better spent on education, health and social welfare, creating employment and increasing access to safe clean drinking water;
to countries with abysmal human rights records where discrimination on the grounds of political views, religious faith, gender and sexual orientation are widespread and imprisonment without trial, torture and judicial and non-judicial executions occur on a wide scale; and
to countries engaged in civil and regional conflicts. We pray for a change of heart that will lead our government to make a firm commitment to support peace and reconciliation in countries torn apart by internal strife and where oppression of the people is widespread. May we soon see a situation where we can be proud of our political leaders, rather than deeply ashamed by their actions and our complicity in them.
We remember the victims of violence in so many countries throughout the world, the majority of whom are civilians, the very young and the elderly. We pray:
for those who are the direct victims of violence;
for those who suffer indirectly through loss of homes and livelihood and are plunged deeper into poverty and despair.
for those who become refugees within their own lands or those forced to flee to other countries where they may be regarded with suspicion and hate.
We lift up those who work tirelessly for peace, here and abroad, often suffering marginalisation, insults, imprisonment and even death.
Protect those who are engaged in costly peacemaking, may we continue to support them in their work through prayer, financial support and standing alongside them. Help us to campaign within our churches and fellowships, encouraging our brothers and sisters to be faithful disciples of Jesus, to be gentle and patient with those who may oppose us.

A revision of the prayer of intercession originally written by Alun Morinan for CAAT Christian Network 'Arms Trade Day of Prayer', 11th June 2006

Compiled by Alun Morinan

