

**ACT PALESTINE FORUM
PRAYER VIGIL FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

MARCH 2018

Every day in the month ahead, and particularly on the 24th, we continue to pray with and for our sisters and brothers in Palestine and Israel who have called for an ecumenical prayer vigil across the globe.

A special thanks to The Lutheran World Federation for authoring this month's prayers.

MARCH 2018

Prayer Focus: Water in the Gaza Strip

Since 2007, the Israeli government has imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip, severely restricting the movement of Palestinians and their access to resources, infrastructure, and public services. One area where this is increasingly dire is the availability of potable water in Gaza. According to a report published in July 2017 by the United Nations Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory, only 3.80% of water available from the public water network is safe for drinking. It is predicted that by the year 2020, the coastal aquifer that supplies the water to Gaza's public network will be irreversibly damaged and will not provide any safe drinking water. The people of Gaza must rely on water trucking for their drinking water, which is 15-20 times more expensive than water from the network. Echoing the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Water Network, APF acknowledges that water is both a gift of God and a fundamental human right and we pray and advocate for an end to the Israeli occupation and for the people of the Gaza Strip whose need for justice and clean water overlap.

SCRIPTURE:

Amos 5:23-24

Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

In this period of Lenten reflection, we pray for and work for justice and righteousness and we are drawn to the call of the prophet Amos. Amos uses the image of an ever-flowing stream — not a wadi that rushes with water for a short time and dries up. Amos uses this image in order to emphasize the nature of justice — continuous, enduring, and abundant, and the character of those who seek justice — steady, persistent, and indefatigable. Amos expresses an impatience with songs and melodies at a time when there is “darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it.” His plea is to let justice roll down like waters!

PRAYERS:

Adapted from WCC Prayers related to SDG6 Water and Sanitation, 23 September 2015

Prayer of Confession

Leader: God, the very source of life, whose spirit hovered over waters at the time of creation; God in Jesus Christ, who came as living waters to quench the thirsty; God the Holy Spirit, who waters and brings forth the fruit; we come to your presence confessing our attitudes of greed, dominance and insensitivity towards your wonderful creation, and particularly towards water.

All: Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.

Leader: We confess that we have been irresponsible in our use of water, wasting it to satisfy our comfortable lives. In many places we have commodified and privatized water, a natural resource, denying people access to it. In the name of development projects, water sources have been drained or polluted with industrial waste, causing risk to flora and fauna.

All: Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.

Leader: We acknowledge the lack of cooperation between different authorities and organizations to manage water resources fairly. We confess our failure, as faith communities, to address water justice and seek forgiveness for not speaking out for the thirsty and the dying in situations of drought.

All: Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.

Leader: We confess to being silent spectators as many vulnerable communities walk miles every day in search of water for their families. We regret our involvement in the commodification of water, which has resulted in contamination and reduction of water supplies. We come to your presence ashamed of our apathy and insincerity towards the abuse of water and other natural resources, asking you to inspire us to be challenged to conserve, preserve and use water prudently.

All: Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.

Absolution

**All: God who brought water out of the rock,
God who quenched the thirst of those dying in the wilderness,
God who in Jesus gave the living waters
so that those who taste them would never thirst,
God who in Jesus died on the Cross thirsty,
for there was none to quench his thirst,
listen to all those who truly confess
and grant us forgiveness so that we act responsibly in our use of water,
become sensitive to the desperate needs of those without water,
and gain wisdom in conserving and preserving water so that rivers roll out in justice among all nations
and all peoples.**

Amen.

ADDITIONAL WORSHIP RESOURCE(S):

Full WCC prayer service here: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/spiritual-life/prayer-for-everyone/prayers-related-to-sdg6-water-and-sanitation>

Hymn: Let Streams of Living Justice

<https://soundcloud.com/mark-mummert/let-streams-of-living-justice>

Verse 1:

Let streams of living justice flow down upon the earth;
Give freedom's light to captives, let all the poor have worth.
The hungry's hands are pleading, the workers claim their rights,
The mourners long for laughter, the blinded seek for sight.
Make liberty a beacon, strike the iron pow'r;
Abolish ancient vengeance: proclaim your people's hour.

Verse 2:

Your city's build to music; we are the stones you seek;
Your harmony is language; we are the worlds you speak.
Our faith we find in service, our hope in others' dreams,
Our love in hand of neighbor; our homeland brightly gleams.
Inscribe our hearts with justice; your way the path untried;
Your truth – the heart of stranger; your life – the Crucified.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE(S):

Read more from the UN report on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza: <https://unsco.unmissions.org/gaza-ten-years-later-report-july-2017>

Join the Ecumenical Water Network for the Seven Weeks for Water, reflections for the Lenten season on water: <https://water.oikoumene.org/en/whatwedo/seven-weeks-for-water/2018-1>

Participate in the UN World Water Day on 22 March: <http://worldwaterday.org/>