HANDS UP SABBATH: A TOOLKIT REMEMBERING FERGUSON
Hands Up Sabbath: A Toolkit Remembering Ferguson

On August 9, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri a young black man named Michael Brown was shot and killed by a white police officer. While tragic and heartbreaking, this incident is not unique. Unfortunately, it seems to be a recurring issue in many of our communities. However, what happened in the ensuing days is something that seized the imagination and attention of a country and perhaps a world.

In the aftermath of Michael Brown’s shooting, young people and young adults in Ferguson and Greater St Louis refused to return to business as usual. They have demanded and are demanding systemic change to the conditions that allowed this death to occur. They have been protesting for justice. And they have caught the ire of local police from St Louis County and Ferguson. They have been harassed, intimidated, assaulted, abused and tear gassed. Yet, they continue to march and protest for justice, for Michael Brown, for a community that is fractured by race and not at all how God intended it to be. They are marching for all of us and for how the world should be.

That is the inspiration for the Weekend of Resistance October 10-13 in which congregations across our nation are encouraged to participate in Hands Up Sabbath. We want to honor the leadership of the young people and young adults who have been and are making their stand against oppression and tyranny in Ferguson. This toolkit is a collection of reflections and litanies from different faith traditions to help congregations participate in Hands Up Sabbath. It has been developed by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, PICO, Sojourners, the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Metropolitan Congregations United, Eden Theological Seminary and other faith partners. It is a testament to the courage and faith that is being demonstrated daily in Ferguson. We ask you to join us in Hands Up Sabbath October 10-13.

“I became convinced that noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good.” – Dr Martin Luther King Jr
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  Written for MCU Public Meeting
Build a Sukkat Shalom, a Shelter of Justice and Peace during Sukkot

“To act in the spirit of religion is to unite what lies apart, to remember that humanity as a whole is God’s beloved child. Racism is worse than idolatry. Few of us seem to realize how insidious, how radical, how universal and evil, racism is. Few of us realize that racism is the gravest threat to humankind.”

~ Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

A Prayer for Sukkot from the Voices of Ferguson

U-fros aleinu, Sukkat shlomeicha- Spread forth over us the Shelter of your peace: Prayer

Why spread forth? Because we are called to come out of our homes and hidden places and cross the artificial divides of age and gender and class and race and grow the booths of plenty and radical hospitality that will shelter and feed and nourish and satisfy and welcome the citizen and the stranger and all who are gathered to march for justice.

Rasheen calls out. "No justice, no peace"

For the Sukkah is like a Chuppah:
Sfat Emeth

Why the Chuppah? When we stand under the Sukkah as a marriage canopy we become family. We hear the mothers who have the ”talk" with their black and brown sons, "keep your head down, don’t run, lose the attitude." We witness the rage of young who are tired of the profiling and the violent targeting and typing of black youth. "I am a human being." Brittany calls from the street into the line of police with helmets and clubs. We become family and this becomes personal and we lift up their voices because they are us, they are our future.

The new moon of Rosh Hashanah draws something new into the world that is revealed by the full moon of Sukkot:
chassidus

What is revealed? That the present can redeem the sins of the past. Like the Israelites thunderous marching through the sea shook the knife out of Abrahams hand, the marches and protests to demand justice and accountability for the death of Michael Brown and countless other young black men will change the relationships of our youth to the legal system.

"Black lives matter," Alexis leads with her chant.

Blessed is the One that commands us to raise the Lulav. Prayer

Why is the blessing for the Lulav? Because even thought the Etrog (the citrus) is the perfect fruit with both taste and smell there can be no mitzvah without the three parts to the lulav, (the myrtle, the palm and the willow). Without the Erev Rav, (the mixed multitude,) all of us together making sure that all of the voices are heard, marching and working for justice, this moment will never become the movement for change we are
longing for. We join the multitudes of the young black, brown and white, standing firm in their protests deep into the night. We support their voices as they teach us all pointing to themselves,

"Tell me what democracy looks like, this is what democracy looks like."
For this is Z’man Simchateinu. The season of our joy.

Jewish liturgy

Why joy? How can we speak of joy while we still mourn? The bandage has been torn from the wound uncovering the deep festering sore but we will not cover it up again until it is healed with love and mercy and forgiveness and truth. Truth about the modern day slavery of jobs that do not pay a living wage in industries making huge profits. Truth about the internal and external prejudices that lead to the inequitable distribution of power, respect, money, education, security and opportunity between people who are white and people who are black and brown. Truth about the suffering of every family when another child whose crime was being black suffers from police violence. On a night when the clergy showed up and the police stood down Devon said, "Thank you for coming, if I was Michael Brown, you would be here for me." "Yes, but I am here because I don’t want you to die. No more death. Only joy. Only joy."

Blessed is the source of all for commanding us to dwell in the Sukkah. prayer/ Leviticus

The Sukkah with it's fragile walls reminds us that there are no walls high enough or strong enough or far enough into the suburbs to keep us safe. Only if we spread a Sukkat shalom, a shelter of justice and peace to all, will we be able to dwell in the Sukkah, in peace.
Exodus 32:1-14
When Justice is Delayed in Coming
Rev. Dr. Laurel Koepf Taylor
Assistant Professor of Old Testament - Eden Theological Seminary

What do the people of God do when justice is delayed in coming? As we reflect on Exodus 32 and the long road to justice for Mike Brown and the residents of Ferguson, this same question rings true: what do the people of God do when justice is delayed in coming? The people of the Exodus narrative, waiting for Moses’ return from Mount Sinai with the tablets of the Law grow anxious and impatient. They call upon their leaders to do something now. The text describes Aaron making a rash decision under pressure. He caves to the community’s anxiety, their fear that Moses’ delay means that he is not coming, nor is the word from God they await. His rash decision is to cave to the temptation to create a false substitute for God, something bright and shiny and new, something that looks strong, and most importantly something you can see and touch and know is there with you right now.

The problem is that there is not and cannot be a substitute for God any more than there can be a substitute for justice. God, like the justice we seek, may be intangible, but is irreplaceable. The golden calf of Exodus 32 may calm God’s people in their anxiety, may bring Aaron peace from their impatient words of complaint, but it is not a peace that can last. No golden calf can speak to and inspire God’s people, and no quick fix can bring true justice.

What can the people of God do when justice is delayed in coming? They can give in to their own anxiety and settle for a quick fix, an easy peace. But we know from our scripture and our experience alike that this would be a bright and shiny distraction from the work that needs to be done, easing our minds when they should stay unsettled. The people of God have a choice: they can choose ease or they can choose faith. They can resist the urge to make a golden calf and instead stay in their discomfort, not knowing when Moses will return from the mountain, not knowing how long justice will be in coming, but letting their faith drive them to continue working toward the true justice that is a long time coming, but for which there can be no substitute.
Reflections on Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 (and Psalm 23)
MCU/Ferguson October Weekend of Resistance Reflection
Clint McCann - Evangelical Professor of Biblical Interpretation
Eden Theological Seminary - Webster Groves, MO

Although Psalm 106 consists largely of a rehearsal of Israel’s disobedience (represented by vv. 19-23 in the lection), it begins with praise (v. 1) and ends with the possibility of renewed praise (v. 47). What Psalm 106 seems to invite, therefore, is future faithfulness and obedience that will truly honor God and offer praise to God. This is most clearly the case in vv. 2-3, where the question about praise in v. 2 is answered in v. 3 – that is, God will be genuinely praised by “those who observe justice” and “do righteousness at all times.”

Such behavior also promises true happiness to God’s people. Not coincidentally, it seems, the concluding psalms of Books I-IV of the Psalter all mention happiness (see 41:1-2; 72:17; 89:15; 106:3). “Happy” is also the very first word in the Psalter (1:1), and Ps 1:2 suggests that true happiness derives from constant attention to God’s ‘Instruction’ (CEB; “law” in NRSV and most translations) or God’s will. The rest of the Psalter – including Psalms 41, 72, 89, and 106 (along with Psalms 82, 96-99, and others) – makes it clear that God’s will is summarized precisely by the words “justice” and “righteousness.” And the Psalms make it clear too that justice and righteousness have a very particular content – namely, consideration of the poor (41:1), which means providing for, protecting, and empowering the weak and the needy (72:12-14; 82:3-4). Indeed, because it is a psalm that outlines the duties of the king – that is, the government – Psalm 72 suggests that the fundamental biblical criterion for assessing the legitimacy of a government is how well it attends to the most vulnerable of its citizens.

God will not be praised nor will people be truly happy when governments fail to provide for, protect, and empower all of their citizens, especially the most vulnerable. At this point, the connection of Ps 106:2-3 (and related psalms) to Ferguson is evident. In Ferguson, the governing authorities displayed wanton disregard for human life in the killing of Michael Brown; and this tragic episode has brought to light a long history of systemic racism and white privilege in St. Louis County that has benefitted predominantly white police forces and municipal governments at the expense of African-Americans.

The priority of justice and righteousness in the Psalms is reinforced by the prophets. Of particular significance for the situation in Ferguson is the prophet Amos, who criticized “the gate” – that is, the legal system – for impoverishing rather than empowering major segments of the Israelite population (see Amos 5:10, 12). Amos’s famous call for reform (5:24), echoed frequently by Martin Luther King, Jr., employs the key terms in Ps 106:2-3:

But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The alternate psalm for the day, Psalm 23, might seem totally unrelated to the message above; but it’s not. Unlike the situation in the U. S., Psalm 23 functions in some parts of the world, especially in Africa, as a “political tract” that is used to protest unjust rulers and systems. In short, victims of brutal regimes indict tyrants by saying to them, “The LORD is my shepherd, and you’re NOT.” The title “shepherd” was a designation for kings in the ancient Near East (see above on Psalm 72); and Psalm 23 depicts what a good shepherd/king/government should do – that is, provide the basic necessities of food, drink, and shelter/security for all its citizens, as God does for God’s people.
Sample Prayers of Intercession
A Catholic Litany for the Weekend of Resistance
October 10-13, 2014

INTRODUCTION: Rev David Gerth
Sisters and brothers, we gather to celebrate the mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Let us ask God to open for all the world the gift of life and blessing.

INTERCESSIONS LED BY THE DEACON OR OTHER MINISTER

A. For our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who asks us to share with him the joy of the Gospel, that we may reflect to all in the world the light of justice, we pray to the Lord.
RESPONSE: Lord hear our prayer.

B. For peace among nations that God may rid the world of violence, and that we may serve God in freedom, we pray to the Lord.

C. For the Church in Ferguson and for religious congregations throughout the St. Louis Metropolitan area that we may continue to grapple with values of mercy and compassion, we pray to the Lord.

D. For all in our nation whose human rights are daily put at risk, may God be their defender, let us pray to the Lord.

E. For all who reside in our metropolitan area, and especially for those of Ferguson who find themselves in material or spiritual need, let us pray to the Lord.

F. For first responders: police officers, fire fighters or emergency medical personnel, that God watch over them in the midst of duty and protect their families when they are gone, let us pray to the Lord.

CONCLUDING PRAYER BY THE PRIEST
O God, hear the prayers of your Church this day. In your love, make up for what is lacking in our faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Lifted Hands
An AME Litany
Rev Dr Cassandra Gould

**Leader:** The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice. (Eze. 22:29)

**People:** GOD has been concerned with and on the side of the oppressed since the beginning of time. When the oppressors put their feet on the necks of the Israelites GOD lifted his hands against those that caused oppression.

**Leader:** When Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and the others felt oppression even in the midst of worship they lifted their hands, not in submission but in determination.

**People:** Their acts of courage created change, opportunity and birthed the A.M.E. Church. We stand today as people who carry on the legacy of courage and faith by lifting our hands and our voices against injustice across the world.

**Leader:** The Biblical narrative tells of the bloodshed of the innocent at the hands of the wicked. Today, the blood of Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Rekiya Boyd, Marvin Booker and countless others is crying from the ground, like the blood of Able. (Gen. 4:10).

**People:** Unlike Cain we acknowledge that we are our brothers’ and our sisters’ keepers. We lift our hands as we stand in solidarity with young people in Ferguson and across this nation who in the words of Fannie Lou Hamer are “sick and tired of being sick and tired.”

**Leader:** Historically A.M.E.’s like Rosa Parks, Charlotte Maxeke, Rev. Dr. JamesCone, Bishop H. Hartford Brookins and Rev. Dr. Timothy Tyler have sat down, sit in, stood up, spoken up, lifted their hands and voices for the cause of Christ, which is justice.

**ALL:** We raise our hands to the GOD of justice, we seek His guidance as we work to restore the dignity of our children, dignity that has been marred by blood running in the street. In the spirit of the prophet Amos and of our fore parents, we declare, Let justice roll like a mighty river and righteousness like a failing stream. “Hands up, don’t shoot!” Don’t shoot our dreams, don’t shoot our future. Don’t shoot our children! “Hands up!” (Amos 5:24) future. Don’t shoot our children! “Hands up!” (Amos 5:24)
The Power of Youth
An Evangelical Reflection and Litany
Dr. Troy Jackson

“Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.” –1 Timothy 4:12 (The Message)

We seem to have a recurring problem making room for young people to lead and have a voice in strategy and vision. King Saul, instead of including and benefitting from David’s wisdom, felt threatened and attempted to kill the young leader. When we read between the lines, we can imagine leaders in the early church working to undercut Timothy’s leadership due to his age.

Paul responds by imploring Timothy to lead, and to set an example through his life and character. Countless people have read this letter to Timothy over the past two thousand years, a constant reminder to older leaders to make room for the energy and passion and vision of youth.

During the Civil Rights Movement, it was young people, and particularly young people of color, who formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, led the sit-in movement, and provided most of the participants for the Freedom Rides. And the white evangelical church did not make room for the voices and leadership of these young leaders, remaining either on the sidelines or working tirelessly to undergird legalized segregation and white supremacy.

Since the tragic death of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, the authentic leadership of the moment has emerged from young people of color. The question is, will we make room to hear their cries and make room for their direction.

Over the past few months, as I’ve wrestled with the plague of high-profile shootings of unarmed people of color by police, and reckoned with the racialization of poverty in our nation, I’ve arrived at a troubling conclusion:

There are fewer opportunities for education, quality jobs, and abundant life for people of color today than there have been since the days of Jim Crow.

The church must take seriously the leadership and despair of young people of color if we are going to be relevant and be on the side of justice over the coming decades.

My challenge is simple:
• **Listen** intently to the cries and challenges of young people of color
• **Pray** for justice in the streets of Ferguson and throughout our nation
• **Act** by getting involved in the local struggle for racial justice in your community

**Call and Response Prayer**

**Young People:** We are your children, your sisters, your brothers, your friends and your leaders who have been leading the effort to bring justice for Michael Brown and other young people of color.

**Adults:** Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach us with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.

**Young People:** You have trained us and we have taken that training to very real life situations. We cannot be silent any longer and we cannot sit idly by while the pain of our community cries out to us.
**Adults:** Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach us with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.

**Young People:** Much like David, we have wisdom to share with you. Do not feel threatened by us, but seek to include us.

**Adults:** Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach us with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.

**Young People:** Make room for our leadership, do not keep us on the sidelines or try and step in to protect us. Work with us. We experience the tumult of racial injustice and systemic violence and we have to be part of the solution.

**Adults:** Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach us with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.

**Young People:** It is our sisters and brothers in Ferguson (Michael Brown), Beaver Creek (John Crawford) and Oakland (Oscar Grant) who have risked themselves to demonstrate that young people of color are bearing the brunt of police violence. While this is not indicative of all police there is a pattern of systemic violence that affects us. **Adults:** Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach us with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.

**Young People:** We stand with those who protest this cycle of brutality and we commit ourselves to raising the issue in public, to demand our faith speak meaningfully about it and to act so that this is no longer a reality in our communities.

**Adults:** Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach us with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.

**All:** Let us set our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe, old and young, one family of believers committed to love and justice in the world.
Matthew 22:1-14 – Ferguson and the Fire Next Time
Deborah Krause
Academic Dean and Professor of New Testament
Eden Theological Seminary

Why would anyone choose to preach on Matthew’s version of the Great Banquet parable? Luke 14: 16-24 and GThomas 64 offer versions of the story that reflect themes of open invitation, and the subversion of social hierarchies in building the reign of God. Matthew’s version of the parable, on the other hand, seems to reflect a later allegorization of the banquet scene away from a vision of inclusive community and toward a representation of salvation history around a “wedding banquet” for the King’s son. Moreover, Matthew’s version adds elements that highlight judgment (the demand for vigilance about how one is dressed at the “banquet” coupled with the specter of condemnation, weeping, and gnashing of teeth). And do not forget the seizing, the humiliation, and the killing, and the burning of the city all thrown in for good measure (Matthew 22:7). It is as if Matthew’s version of the story got taken hostage in the Jewish War with Rome and was held in a cell with the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-46). All the joy is wrung out of the party, and in its place Matthew builds in anger, violence, destruction, dread, and eternal damnation. Matthew’s story seems to bear the trauma of Matthew’s context – a devastated, colonially occupied, religiously chauvinistic people (e.g., the distinctive vitriol toward the Pharisees, Matthew 23) who are trying to figure out what is next.

But for such a time as this – in the midst of an apocalypse\(^1\) of racism and white supremacy and their legacies within our cities and communities (such as Ferguson, MO) – Matthew’s text may be completely appropriate. Far from offering a utopian vision of an egalitarian banquet, perhaps the gospel comes to us this week via the lectionary bearing language, structures, legacies, and wounds we are challenged to face as we work for justice and seek the presence and purpose of God.

Last week I read an interview in Medium.com with my former teacher, the revered Hebrew Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann. In that interview, a Medium editor, Micky Jones, asked Brueggemann to ponder how the language of the prophets spoke to and in a context like Ferguson. Brueggemann argued that prophetic speech has an honesty that can challenge contemporary North American interpreters out of their “bourgeois cocoon of niceness.”\(^2\) I would argue that in much the same way, Matthew’s parable holds up a mirror to our structurally violent, dominating, white supremacist culture and demands that we account for it. How does Matthew’s language of hierarchy, slavery, violence, devastation and rage challenge us to examine how our communities are built, and at what human cost we have ordered our economy, our security, our sense of “home,” and “belonging?”

How can one imagine “the Good News” in a text like Matthew 22:1-14? It certainly does not come in the form of a slogan of inclusivity and abundance such as “still there is room,” as is in Luke 14:22. Instead the language of Matthew’s text might call us out of such a “cocoon of niceness” and into something of a difficult recounting of a history of slaves, murders, and war and an honest accounting of the costs (human and otherwise). Such a history and accounting would demand a loss of innocence of the Reign of God as a table that is passively set for us, and might challenge us to be about the work of dismantling and rebuilding communities in which we demand structural justice and well being for all. This kind of challenge to innocence and call to honesty evokes for me the apocalyptic call at the conclusion of James Baldwin’s 1963 essay on the legacies and traumas of white supremacy for black people in white America.

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\(^1\) I use the term “apocalypse” here in its double-edged sense of both “unveiling,” and judgment.

Everything now, we must assume, is in our hands; we have no right to assume otherwise. If we- and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on or create, the consciousness of others – do not falter in our duty now we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: “God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time.”

One might rightly wonder more than 50 years after Baldwin’s challenge if the window of “now daring everything” has passed, but Matthew’s parable with it’s long view of history and its promise of the outer darkness for those who are passive and unengaged seems to suggest that conscious collaboration for justice remains the only viable choice. Granted this is not the utopian open table, but rather a calling to join the struggle. The good news this Sunday may be that we can hear the call and work to “achieve our country.”

deray McKesson: @deray : Why protest? Because we can imagine an America that is better than this. Because blackness is not a weapon or a crime. # Ferguson

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Philippians 4:2-9 – “Be of the Same Mind” in Ferguson
Deborah Krause
Academic Dean and Professor of New Testament
Eden Theological Seminary

The letter to the church at Philippi is widely known as a part of Paul’s prison correspondence. This letter was written while Paul was imprisoned (likely in a home) under the auspices of Roman imperial authority in the coastal city of Ephesus in Asia Minor. This context of Roman colonial occupation and Paul’s particular location within it as against the law provides a striking location for his teaching in Philippians 4:1-9. Early in the letter Paul outlines how his imprisonment is “for Christ,” (1:13), and “for defense of the gospel,” (1:16). The implications of his leadership are clear – proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ the crucified and risen one is an activity that stands boldly in the face of the domination systems of Roman imperial power. While the boldness of his witness inspires faith and courage in many (including those among the imperial guard, 1:13), the threat to his life is palpable. In his arrest the caprice and violence of Roman colonial power is mediated through a network of Ephesian officials and Roman guards. The dynamics are complex and mercurial. What Paul seems to experience as favor one day, may well result in condemnation the next. It all depends. Without rights he is subject to any official’s whim. To remind ourselves of his vulnerability in this letter, all we need to remember is that his next imprisonment in Rome (likely under similar circumstances) resulted in his execution.

The admonition to Euodia and Syntyche that they “be of one mind,” (4:2) comes toward the conclusion of the letter after Paul has offered the Philippian Hymn in the body of the letter as a call to “be of the mind” of Christ (2:5) in contrast to the mind of Rome. In this teaching Paul maps out the power of the gospel as that which is conformed to love rather than violence. To have the mind of Christ is to choose God’s power of love over Rome’s power of domination. It is to this way of living that he summons two women of the church, Euodia and Syntyche in Phil 4:2.

The text does not offer detail as to what presently divides the women, or why they need this particular encouragement. That Paul calls them to “be of one mind,” and suggests they need the “help” of his companion (perhaps Timothy or Ephaphroditus), may indicate that they are in a conflict. Whatever the case, the fact that Paul names two women and claims them as “those who have struggled in the gospel” with him as “co-workers,” indicates their importance in the movement. Paul’s authority from the context of his own imprisonment is as one who has chosen the way of the “mind” of Christ. In this his encouragement to “rejoice in the Lord always,” (4:4) is far from a Pollyannan cheerfulness, it is a bold and courageous testimony to the power of Christ’s way – the way that pours itself out in love and thereby transforms the world (2:5-11). It is in the spirit of this testimony, and all that is at stake within it that Paul calls the Philippian church to “think about” (to choose to align one’s mind) with all that is just, pure, pleasing, excellent, and worthy of praise (4:9). To align oneself this way is to align oneself with Paul’s example and ultimately to align oneself with Christ.

The threat of arrest and the palpable presence of violence and domination at the hands of the police is an enduring reality for the Ferguson protesters. They chant “A-1 from Day 1” as a marker of their enduring commitment to the witness against the “mind” of Empire that executed Mike Brown and left him in the street for four and a half hours on August 9. They cry “Arrest one, Arrest us all” to claim the courage and solidarity they feel in their bold witness to stand nightly in the face of police brutality, violence, and threats. This is not a “death

1 These dynamics are reminiscent of the experience many in North County of St. Louis have shared about their experience within the system of municipal courts. See the excellent research paper of the Arch City Defenders on this subject: http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/1279541/archcity-defenders-report-on-st-louis-county.pdf
wish,” but a conformation of mind, a choice to stand in and for a power alternative to the power of domination. To be clear, the Ferguson protesters are not making an explicitly Christian, or faith based witness, but their choice to stand against empire and for justice hearkens to what I understand Paul calls having “the mind of Christ.”

I read a Facebook post last week from someone who had attended the protests for the first time. The post offered impressions and was processing the experience—one of which read: “this movement is not organized, the protesters are arguing amongst themselves, they need to be disciplined and more efficient.” This is a familiar chide. When I set Philippians 4:2-9 and this sentiment alongside one another I hear Paul’s call to “be of the same mind” not as a command for a false unity, but rather as a reminder that Euodia and Syntyche are on the same side. As such he calls them to engage with one another against the power of Rome with the mind of Christ. Additionally, let us notice how Paul makes that plea. First, he makes it from the context of imprisonment where he is authorized by his own experience to challenge them. Second, he follows his summons to the women to have “the same mind in Christ,” with remembrance of their ongoing struggle and important witness in the movement. He acknowledges that they are in the struggle -- they are on the street -- and that the street is hard.

To be on the street is to be bathed in the mechanics, optics, and rhetoric of domination and violence. It is in this reality that Paul makes the call to “guard your hearts minds” with the peace of God (Phil 4:6-7). Such guarding is in and of itself an act of resistance – one that chooses in the face domination and dehumanization to see the presence of a more enduring power in that which is true, honorable, just, pure, beautiful, and excellent. Joining the struggle – no matter when or from whence we come -- means joining in the hard work of daily seeing this way in the face of all that seeks to separate, divide, and destroy who we are as God’s people.
Liturgical Resources for the Weekend of Resistance

The liturgy (1-3) below incorporates portions of the Confession of Belhar, which grew out of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The prayers (7-10) are from Prayer Encircling the World, Westminster/John Knox Press. The prayer (6) was written for the MCU public meeting.

1. The Opening Sentences adapted from the Belhar Confession

We gather to worship
believing that God has been revealed
as One who wishes to bring about justice and true
peace among people.

In our worship we are strengthened
so that we can do what is good and seek what is right.

2. The Opening Sentences adapted from the Belhar Confession

We gather together, as the church of Jesus Christ, to confirm
the words of the Belhar Confession:

“God has entrusted the church
with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ: God has called
the church to be the salt of the earth
and the light of the world.”

“The credibility of this message is seriously affected and its
beneficial work obstructed
when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian,
but in which the... separation of people on a racial (or economic) basis
promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity.”

In our worship may we experience the reconciling love of God
which prepares us to participate in Christ’s work of reconciliation
in the Saint Louis Community and beyond.
3. The Prayer of Confession

We confess

that in a world full of injustice and enmity,
we have not proclaimed enough that God is, in a special way, the God of the
destitute, the poor, and the wronged;
that God brings justice to the oppressed and
gives bread to the hungry;
that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that God
supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and
widows.

We confess

that we have not prayed enough that the church
would stand by people in any form of suffering or need, which implies,
among other things, that the church
must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice
may roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

We confess

that we have not celebrated enough
the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist so as to
learn that, as the church of God we must stand
where God stands,
namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in
following Christ the church must witness against all the
powerful and privileged
who selfishly seek their own interests and
thus control and harm others.

We confess

God have mercy and hear our cry to you. Amen.
4. The Prayer of Confession

Our prayer is from the text of hymn #759, “O God, We Bear the Imprint of Your Face” which views racism not as a societal problem but as a theological problem. When we distance ourselves from other people because of the color of skin, we fail to honor their God-likeness and see Christ’s image in them. After we pray the words as a litany, we will sing the words together.

O God, we bear the imprint of your face:
the colors of our skin are your design,
and what we have of beauty in our race as man or woman, you alone define,
who stretched a living fabric on our frame and gave to each a language and a name.

Where we are torn and pulled apart by hate because of race, our skin is not the same,
while we are judged unequal by the state
and victims made because we own our name, humanity reduced to little worth,
dishonored is your living face on earth.

O God, we share the image of the One
whose flesh and blood are ours, whatever skin;
in Christ’s humanity we find our own,
and in his family our proper kin: Christ is the brother we still crucify,
his love the language we must learn, or die. Amen.
5. The Affirmation of Faith

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family.
In God’s reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between brothers and sisters and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic differences, real or imaginary.
The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life:
in employment, housing, education, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights.
Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it.
Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their brothers or sister in Christ, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

6. A Litany for Troubled Hearts

Holy God, we remember Jesus’ words to his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”
We recall, with deep gratitude, how these powerful words have sustained and comforted your people in many seasons and situations.

And yet, we believe that there are times when we need to live with hearts that are troubled over the pain and injustice that we have embedded in your good creation.
In fact, there are times when, in the midst of deep sin, you trouble the waters and cause a heaviness to take up rent in our hearts—
a heaviness that will not be assuaged by soothing platitudes or easy promises, a heaviness that will only move out when justice and peace move in.
Listen, in mercy, to those things that trouble us most this day:
(concerns of the community are included in the litany)

We are troubled, O God,...........

Trouble our hearts, O God,
until we become your Beloved Community.

We are troubled, O God........

Trouble our hearts, O God,
until we become your Beloved Community.

May the trouble we feel in our hearts this day
cause us to go forward with determined minds and resolute spirits. Save us from
cowardice and complacency
that we might speak to the hearts
of all who are troubled and afraid in this community with the
promise that can only be fully received
in a community that believes peace and justice to be possible:
“Let not your hearts be troubled.” May it be so! Amen.

Rev. Mary Gene Boteler


7. A Prayer
Lord, in these times when we are about to lose hope and our
efforts seem futile,
grant that we may perceive in our hearts and minds the image of
your resurrection
which remains our only source of courage and strength,
so that we may continue to face the challenges, and
struggle against hardship and oppression
born of injustice.

Unidentified, Philippines from Prayers Encircling the World
8. A Prayer Patterned after the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in this our land, may your name be blessed in our incessant search for justice and peace.

May your kingdom come for those who have for centuries awaited a life with dignity.

May our will be done on earth and in heaven and in the church in the United States that we might be a church on the side of the poor and oppressed.

Give us today our daily bread that we might have the strength to build a new society.

Forgive us our sins; do not let us fall into the temptation of believing ourselves already new people.

And deliver us from the evil of forgetting that our lives and the life of this country are in your hands. Amen.

Nicaragua - Adapted, from Prayers Encircling the

9. A Prayer

O God, may your Church discover, then identify its life with groups of people who suffer injustice and remain unheard. May your church be the Church of the voiceless. Let your Church struggle with all who struggle and so find the way of your cross, and the way to true responsibility. Amen.

Emilio Castro, Uruguay from Prayers Encircling the World

10. A Litany

We are here, O God, because we believe. It is your gift and our struggle to free ourselves from all that enslaves us. Holy One, set us free.

We are here, O God, because we believe in justice. It is your gift and our struggle
to world for justice in our own lives and
in our nation and in the world.
  God of justice, set us free.

We are here, O God, because we believe in unity. It is your
gift and our struggle.
Help us to build bridges and reach out
in solidarity—in brotherhood and sisterhood.
  God of all, make us one.

We are here, O God, because we believe in peace. It is your
gift and our struggle.
Help us change the injustices and inequalities
that destroy true peace.
  God of peace, lead us on.

Australia

from an Action for World Development
service held in
Brisbane,