



PRAYING FOR JUSTICE

A Guide for Communal Prayer for Justice



IJM

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR JUSTICE

In Luke 18, Jesus tells his followers the parable of a persistent widow who relentlessly pursues justice to encourage them to ‘always pray and not give up’ (Luke 18:1). This widow continually pleads with a judge to rule justly in her case and to grant her the justice that she deserves. When the judge finally acts on her behalf, Jesus says to his followers, “Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?”

At International Justice Mission, we are committed to daily rhythms of prayer and crying out to God for justice in cases like Jesus described in this story. Corruption, apathy, and ignorance all stand in the way of justice for the most vulnerable people in the world. Every day, we gather for prayer at 11.00 am to ask God to intervene and bring His justice into these places.

Once a year, we gather at our IJM Global Prayer Gathering for a weekend to pray with our prayer partners, supporters and representatives from all of our field offices. We cry out to God and ask for justice in cases where we know the names of the victims and perpetrators. Over the years, we have learned to pray with **authenticity** and **specificity** and we have seen God’s justice come even where corruption and apathy thrive.

As we have developed and practiced these rhythms of prayer as an IJM Global body, we have come to see the necessity of growing a movement of prayer partners across Canada to join us in the work of praying for justice. This desire motivated us to create the Praying for Justice resource to equip and encourage the Canadian church to engage in the relentless pursuit of justice through prayer.

Praying for Justice is based on the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples – The Lord’s Prayer. Many of us have a deep familiarity with The Lord’s Prayer; it is a great unifying prayer that is often recited communally and is as old as the Christian faith. However, we seldom consider that the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples is a passionate prayer for justice. From the very first word of the prayer, Jesus lays out a powerful petition that brings us to the frontlines to confront injustice and evil in our world. The Lord’s Prayer is primarily a communal prayer that orients us outside of ourselves and towards our broken world that is desperate for God’s redeeming and restoring love.

If you desire to engage your faith community in the work of justice, or if you want to develop a broader and more robust prayer base for the justice work you’re already engaged in, Praying for Justice is a great starting point. As you embark on this journey of praying for justice, do so with expectation and joy, knowing that Our Father will bring justice for those who cry out to Him.



Mark Wollenberg, National Director of Church Mobilization
INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION CANADA

OPENING NOTES FOR LEADERS

Before we look at the Lord's Prayer, we need to establish common language around this prayer that has been prayed for thousands of years and has been translated and paraphrased countless times. For the purpose of this resource, we will use the version of the prayer below, as the language reflects the generally agreed upon intent of the prayer while also being easily understood. However, if there is another translation or paraphrase that resonates better with your faith community, please feel free to utilize that version instead.

*Our Father in heaven,
holy is your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours.
Now and forever.
Amen.*

In the following pages, you will find notes that correspond with the Praying for Justice PowerPoint resource for use in a group event setting. Scripted portions for each slide are in regular typeface while instructions are in *blue italics*.

It is our hope and prayer that this resource will provide participants with a meaningful and powerful interaction with The Lord's Prayer.

If you have any questions about this resource, please contact churches@ijm.ca.

LEADER'S SCRIPT & POWERPOINT OUTLINE

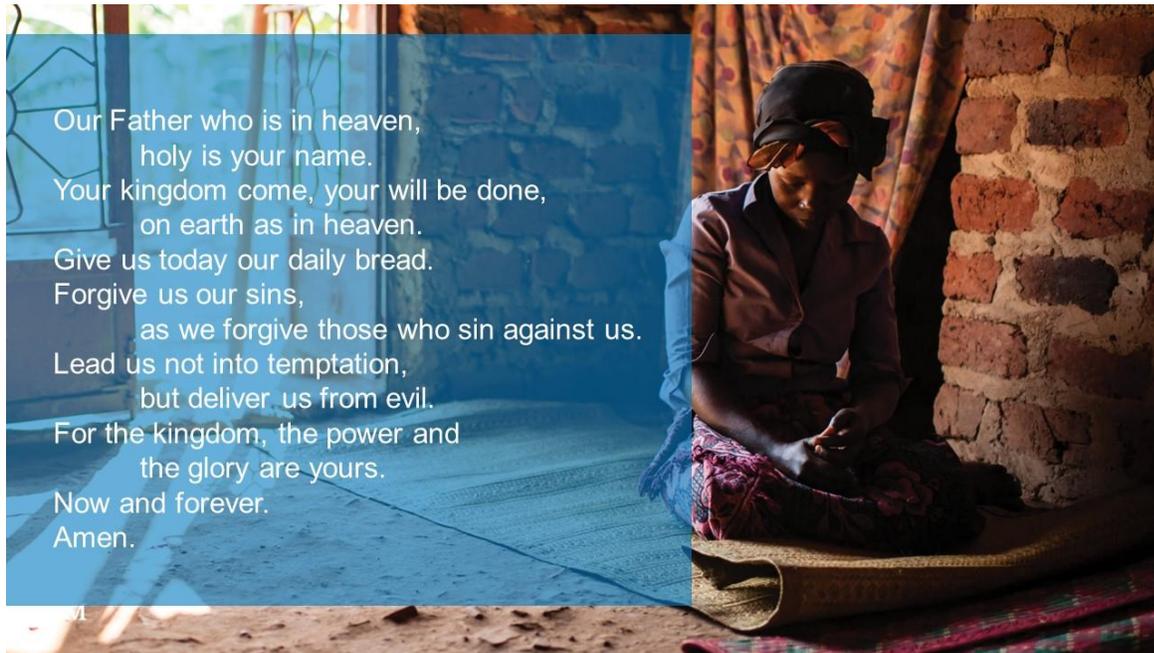


Thank you for joining us in this time of praying for justice! Prayer – that is the ongoing awareness and interaction with the God of the universe – is a vital part of the life of every follower of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures tell us to pray continually (1Thessalonians 5:17) and with all kinds of prayers (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer matters to God and it should matter to us.

While we can pray individually, something unique happens when we pray in community. We are told in Scripture that where “two or three gather in my name,” Jesus is present with us (Matthew 18:20). Prayer is a communal practice.

Today, as we come together to pray for justice, we can expect the presence of Christ to be with us, especially as we use the prayer that He taught his disciples when they were just learning how to pray. The Lord’s Prayer is familiar to most of us, but as with most familiar things, we occasionally need to view it with fresh eyes in order to remind ourselves of its original powerful intent.

During this time of prayer for justice, we will pray for the things that Jesus prescribed to his original followers to pray for by dividing the prayer into five parts – Orientation, Desperation, Confession, Deliverance, and Declaration.

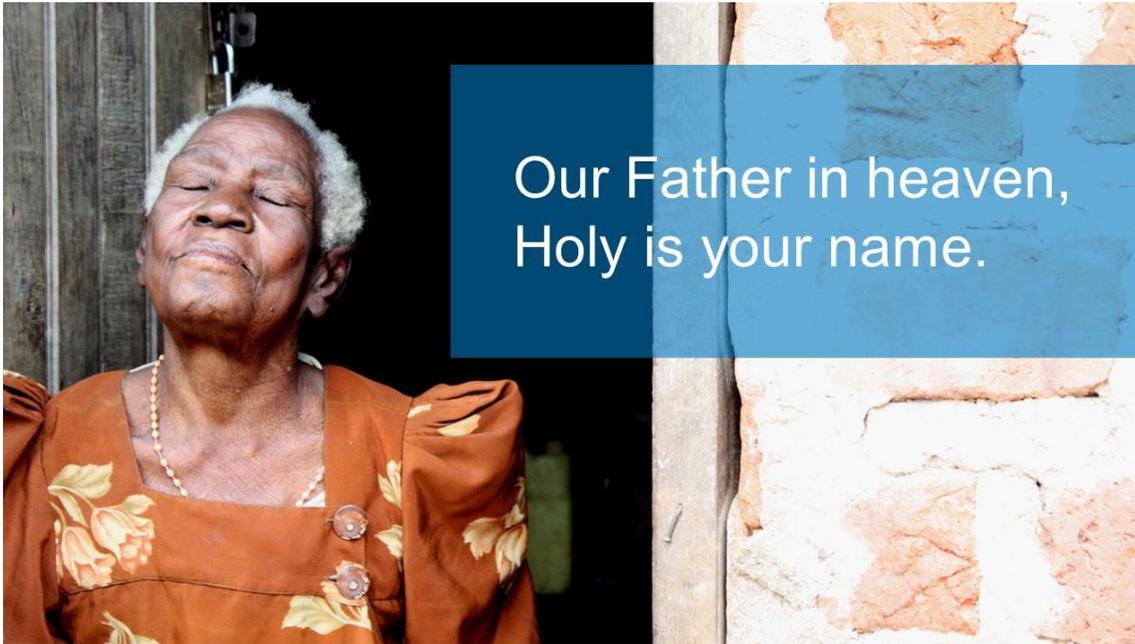


Let us begin by standing and praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Invite participants to stand together and read The Lord's Prayer in unison.



To begin our time, we need to orient ourselves toward the central point of this prayer. The very first word of this prayer, “our,” moves us from a focus on the singular “me” and my needs, to focus on the collective “we,” and the needs and concerns of our world.



Nowhere in this prayer do we encounter the words “me” or “mine”. Yet often when we utter the opening words “Our Father,” we speak from an individualized perspective of what is important or urgent in our personal lives. However, Jesus calls us to orient ourselves to a far larger view of this world; a perspective that goes beyond what is happening to me, or that which is close to me. When we adopt this worldview, we see that God is the Father of the entire world and we are just one of the billions of people that He has created in His image. We are called to think beyond our own race, culture, country, and socio-economic status to consider all those who are equally loved by our Father in heaven.

To help us orient ourselves to an expanded worldview, I’ll begin with a short prayer followed by three minutes of silent contemplation for you to ask God to help orient your thinking and attitude towards others. Release to Him your personal needs – knowing that as we pray for others, He also sees and cares deeply for each of us.

Read the prayer below aloud.

Our Holy Father

In your presence and in the company of your good saints,
we offer you our praise and thanksgiving,
for life and for calling,
for joys of friendship,
and for the burden of faith.

As we sit in the midst of your many mercies,
we are mindful of so many of our brothers and sisters
who dwell in places short of mercy,
absent of justice,
defaulted of the gifts of life.

We can recite the grocery list of needful people
and violent places,
but you know them all.
As you know them and we know them,
we pledge in this company
to take these needful people in these violent places as our call from you.

Amen.

(“Prayer of Orientation” taken from *Prayers for a Privileged People* by Walter Brueggemann)

Invite listeners into silent contemplation following the prayer (3 min).



Jesus invites us to pray for the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God on this earth. The Kingdom of God refers to the complete and perfect rule of God that we will experience when Jesus returns to finally remove all sin and death, and establish His Kingdom rule of *shalom* for all eternity. While we eagerly await that future fulfillment, we ask for that future Kingdom to break into this waiting world right now.

Take some time to contemplate what the future and complete Kingdom of God will look like and choose a word that would describe the coming rule of Christ.



Ask participants to reflect on the words written above or to write a short list of their own descriptions of what the Kingdom of God looks like in heaven (1 min). Then, ask participants to find one other person to pray with and together ask God to break into our world with these kingdom markers (5-7 min). Conclude this time with a short prayer asking God to help us to continue to remember our brothers and sisters and hope of the Kingdom of God.



While most of us live with abundance and excess in Canada, this part of the Lord's Prayer calls us to remember those who desperately need daily provision. These are the poor, the marginalized, the homeless, the refugee, and the widow and orphan.



These are children, women, and men, who do not have any assurance that they will eat a meal today or tomorrow. These are the ones who are not guaranteed that they will be able to drink clean, uncontaminated water. These are the ones who, if they get sick, will not be able to see a doctor or buy medicine to combat their illness. These are the truly desperate people in our world.

While we are able to give thanks for the provision that we have for our daily need we are called to pray to our Father for the daily life giving provision needed by our brothers and sisters.

For Those Who Are Hungry

God our Father,
in the name of him who gave bread
to the hungry,
we remember all who through our
human ignorance,
folly and sin are condemned to live
in want.



Invite participants to join you in praying this prayer in unison.

Show us, who have so much,
what we can do to help those
who have so little.



Pray in unison.

And bless the efforts of those who
work to overcome poverty and hunger,
that sufficient food, water, and
medical care may be found for all;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Pray in unison.

(“For Those Who Are Hungry” taken from the *Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland*, St. Andrew’s Press)

Invite participants find a prayer group of 3-5 people and ask them to make a short list of those they know who desperately need provision for today. Offer some suggestions – they can think of a region in the world where a natural disaster has occurred, a region where drought and famine exist, a nation that has chronic poverty or local needs and expressions of poverty and injustice. Tell them to trust the Holy Spirit to show them places, regions, and individuals for which they can pray for daily provision (10 min).



Conclude this time by reading the above prayer from Mother Teresa.



Because of the fallen state of our world, we acknowledge that our sin affects the lives of others.



Forgive us
our sins,
as we forgive
those who sin
against us.

Our own brokenness results in broken relationships, deep hurt and pain in others, and at times, hatred and anger. Because sin damages not only the individual committing the sin, but those who have been sinned against, we need release from the consequences of all sin. We also know that justice is only accomplished when we acknowledge our sin through confession. While personal confession of our sin is prescribed in scripture, Jesus calls us in this prayer to identify and confess our collective or 'corporate' sin. While we may not have participated in a particular act, we can as a group, church, or even citizens of a country, confess the sins that have caused division, anger, and pain.

Please join me in this prayer of confession.

In the days that have been, O God, we
have walked along crooked paths
strewn with our selfishness and greed,
our prejudice, and our apathy.



Pray in unison.

We confess that we have hidden from
the light, from the light which exposes
everything; the love and the hate, the
good deeds and the harmful ones.



Pray in unison.

On this day, we admit to you our
failings, where we have wandered,
when we have not listened.
We confess to you our sin.



Pray in unison.

(“Prayer of Confession” by Beth Merrill Neel (<https://holdfasttowhatisgood.com/liturgy/prayer-of-confession>))



This next step will require some preparation before the prayer event. Find two or three people who can identify a specific corporate sin to confess in a prayer. This could include, but isn't limited to sins of racism; past and present sins committed against Indigenous people in Canada; sins of greed and the love of money; hatred or ambivalence towards a particular group of people in your city who are marginalized or difficult to love. This will require some thinking and preparation as the prayer will need to represent honestly the realities we may not want to face. The more specific these confessions are to the local region or area, or to a current situation in the world, the more powerful the words of confession will be. (Each person prays for 2-3 minutes; 6-9 minutes total). At the end of this section read the statement below:

Friends, this Good News is for the entire world: Christ was born, lived and died, and rose again that we are free from sin and death. Know that you are indeed forgiven, and be at peace.

In Matthew 5:44 Jesus tells his disciples to "Love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you." In the next 3 minutes gather together with one other person and ask for forgiveness for those who hate and are persecuting our brothers and sisters.

Small group prayer (3 minutes). Close this time with the words below:

Take comfort in these words of Jesus from Matthew 6:14, "For if you forgive people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."



Jesus warned his followers that there is one who opposes His coming Kingdom.



Even though Satan knows that he is defeated, he is determined to resist and destroy all that our Father loves...especially his children. We are asked to pray for the rescue and deliverance of those who are victims of the evil plans of our enemy. But, to do this effectively we need to resist all distractions and selfish pursuits.

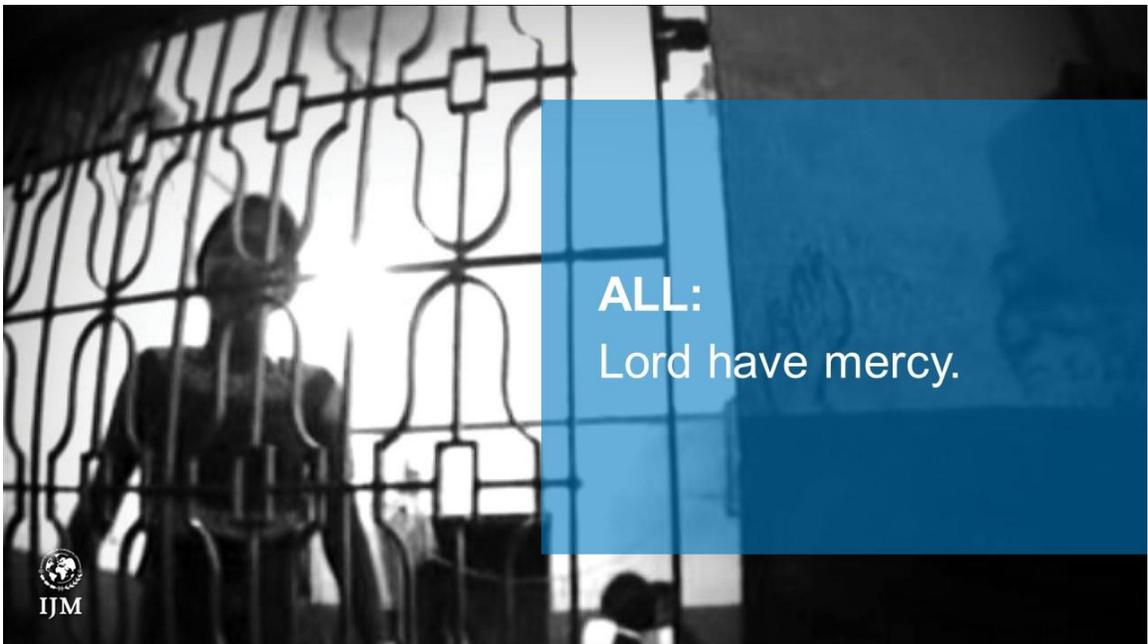
Join me in the following responsive reading, allowing time for silent contemplation.



LEADER:

In a world where there
is so much injustice,
You ask us to care for
the poor and rejected.

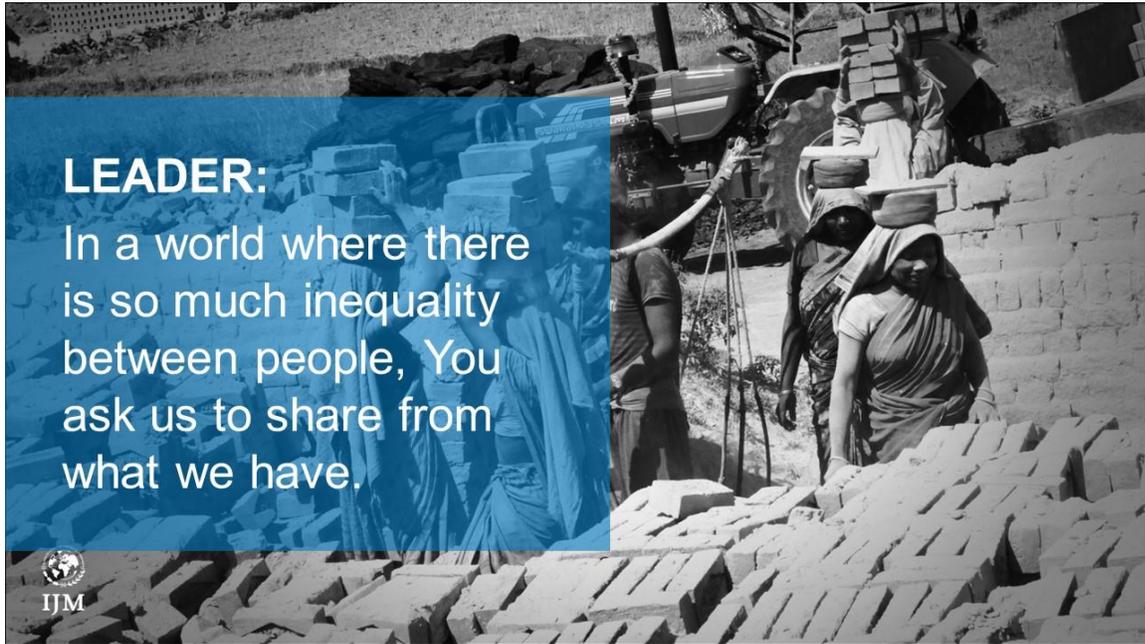
Read aloud.



ALL:

Lord have mercy.

20 seconds for silent contemplation before moving to the next slide.



Read aloud.



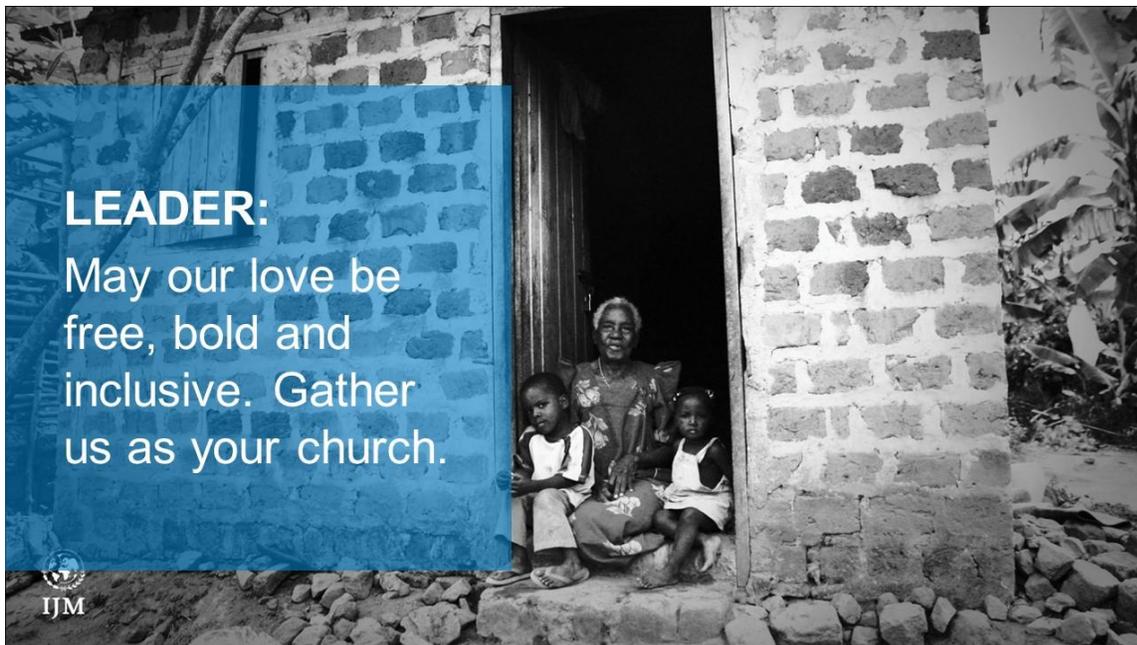
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LEADER:

Creator God,
each one of us is
made in your
image. Open our
eyes, our hearts
and our hands;

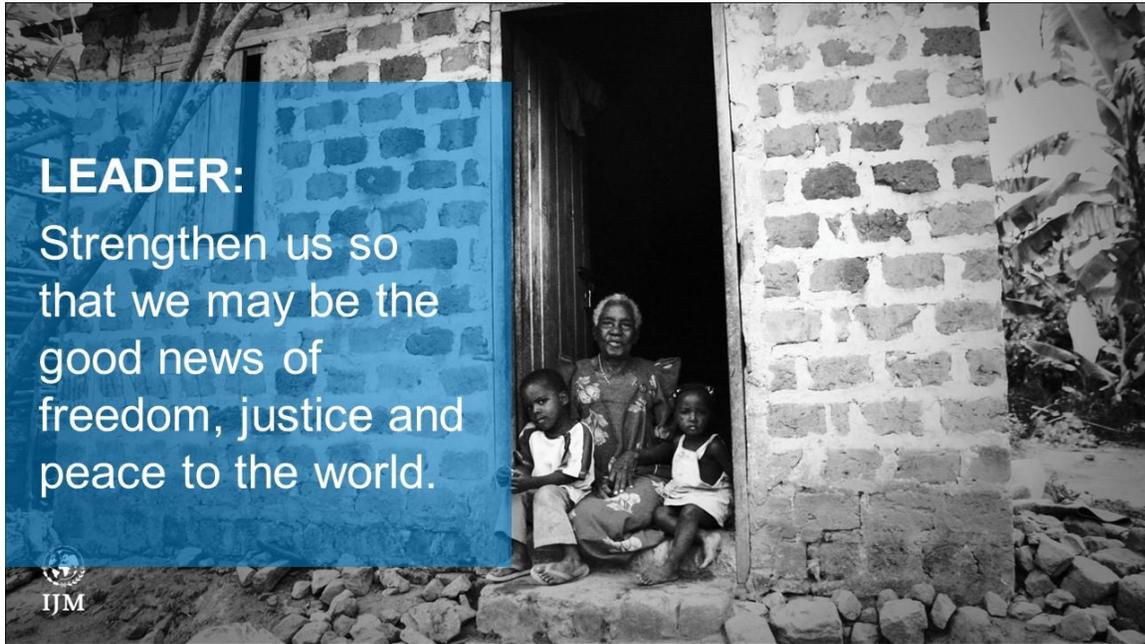
Read aloud.



LEADER:

May our love be
free, bold and
inclusive. Gather
us as your church.

Read aloud.



LEADER:

Strengthen us so
that we may be the
good news of
freedom, justice and
peace to the world.

Read aloud.

20 seconds for silent contemplation before moving to the next slide.



ALL:

Amen.

Read aloud.



Most of us live relatively safe and secure lives. We do not live in the terror and evil of the everyday violence that affects almost 4 billion people today who live outside of the protection of the rule of law. There are an estimated **45.8 million** slaves in the world today who live under the brutal and violent control of their owners. Women and children are trafficked into the sex trade, and are desperately waiting for rescue.

From our place of safety, we must pray for the deliverance of these brothers and sisters from an evil that most of us cannot even imagine.

IJM has been praying for the complete abolition of slavery in this living generation. For the next 10-12 minutes, we will spend time praying for the end of slavery and, in particular, for the country of India to end the illegal practice of indentured slavery. Following this short video about slavery, get in groups of 3-5 to pray for the end of slavery and for the rescue of those who are longing for freedom.

Show the IJM video "What is Slavery?" After the video concludes, encourage participants to get into groups and pray for the end of slavery.



Have small groups pray for the end of slavery for 10 minutes. Once the 10 minutes are up, conclude the time with the prayer on the following slide.



Read aloud.



Having prayed through the Lord's Prayer with our hearts and minds directed toward addressing the injustice in the world we must also declare the truth about our hope.



For the kingdom, the
power and
the glory are yours.
Now and forever.
Amen.

As we pray for the justice of the coming Kingdom, we do so from a place of confidence and hope and despair. As broken and unjust as this world may be, we declare with a strong faith that justice and goodness will be established now and forevermore. Worship is also prayer. When we worship the Living King who brings His rule and reign to this world, we are reminded that even in the face of great challenges, Jesus is victorious over sin and evil.

Choose a worship song that declares the truth about the endurance of the king and his kingdom. Hymns like, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," or a more contemporary song like "The Revelation Song".

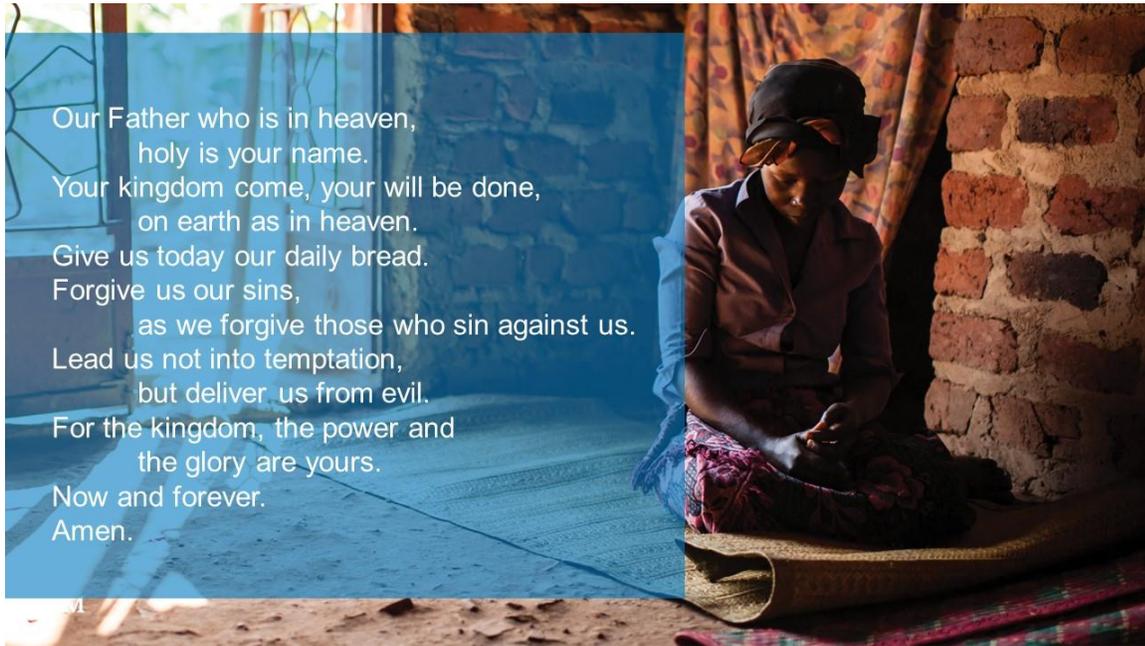


After singing a worship song, read the prayer of declaration found below:

Lord our God, you have revealed yourself
as One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
In a world that looks away from injustice,
You cast your eyes on the destitute, the poor, and the wronged;
You have called us to follow you,
to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release for the captives and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed
and to proclaim the time of your blessing.
Be present with your church, Lord, as we respond to your call.
Open our eyes to the downtrodden.
Fill us with compassion for the plight of the alien, the refugee, and the immigrant.
Lead us into ministries that help orphans and widows.
Give us courage to block the paths of the ungodly who exploit the poor.
Set us free from pious exercises that prevent us from the true worship you choose:
Sharing bread with the hungry,
Sharing homes with the homeless,
Sharing clothes with the naked,
Sharing hearts with our own kin.
So may your justice roll down like waters, your righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
Lead our footsteps to stand with the poor, that we might stand with you.
Have mercy, O God:
Scatter the proud,
Put down the mighty,
Lift up the lowly,
Fill up the hungry,
And send the rich away empty-handed.

("A Prayer for Justice" by Paul Janssen based on the Belhar Confession (<https://www.rca.org/resources/creeds-confessions-worship-prayer/prayers-unity-reconciliation-and-justice>))

And so we pray together again.



Our Father who is in heaven,
holy is your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and
the glory are yours.
Now and forever.
Amen.

Invite participants to join in the reading of The Lord's Prayer in unison.



Franciscan Benediction

May God bless us with **discomfort** at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with **anger** at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

End your time by asking participants to stand and hold out their hands to receive God's blessing and the closing benediction.



May God bless us with **tears** to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough **foolishness** to believe that we can make a difference in the world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done, to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

End your time by asking participants to stand and hold out their hands to receive God's blessing and the closing benediction.



OUR VISION:

Rescue thousands, protect millions and prove that justice
for the poor is possible.



IJM

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION CANADA

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