



Standing in Support of Puerto Rico

June 1-3, 2018

Eight months after Hurricane Maria, thousands of families in Puerto Rico continue to be without power. Many communities still do not have drinking water. Approximately 500,000 Puerto Ricans left the island after losing their homes and jobs. On June 1, a new hurricane season begins. The people of Puerto Rico are living an incessant Good Friday reality. The systemic oppression of an ecological devastation, an unaudited debt of over 72 billion dollars and the Jones Act are just a few of the obstacles that are afflicting Puerto Ricans. We are calling on congregations to stand in solidarity with the American citizens in Puerto Rico and commemorate June 1st as a day resembling Good Friday. We ask that you consider draping a blue tarp—essential tool for those working on disaster recovery--over a cross (or over a communion table) on Friday, June 1st. On Sunday, June 3rd as a symbol of the resurrection and new life for the Puerto Rican people, remove the tarp and, if possible, send it to Puerto Rico. (More information on UCC Puerto Rico disaster relief here: http://www.ucc.org/ucc_hurricane_maria_irma_recovery_puerto_rico)

Congregations may opt to make Sunday their day of commemoration by displaying the blue tarp. Please feel free to adapt the liturgy.

Romans 12:15

Luke 18:7-8

PRAYER OF SOLIDARITY, FRIDAY, JUNE 1

Loving God, on this first day of hurricane season,
our hearts are filled with sorrow
as we realize that the people of Puerto Rico
are living an interminable Good Friday experience.

We confess that we do not see them,
and our hearts do not feel their pain.

As a nation, we are challenged by our declarations of exceptionalism—
while our own citizens have been abandoned to suffer,
and we have failed to advocate for their relief.

As they take their last breath, we watch from a distance.
We watch the elderly suffer, schools being closed,
the sick dying prematurely,
the young leaving their families behind.
We have turned our backs on them.
Forgive us, O God.

Give us the courage to find our place at the foot of the cross,
and feel the pain of the Puerto Rican people:

The pain of an ecological devastation
The pain of homelessness
The pain of unemployment
The pain of lack of access to quality and sustainable health care
The pain of a mental illness crisis
The pain of invisibility
The pain of marginalization

As we drape this tarp over this cross,
we stand in solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico
and we ask, O God, that resurrection may come.

The cross is the way of the lost
 The cross is the staff of the lame
 The cross is the strength of the weak
 The cross is the hope of the hopeless
 The cross is the freedom of the slave
 The cross is the water of the seeds
 The cross is the source
 for folk seeking water
 The cross is the cloth of the naked¹ AMEN

PRAYER OF SOLIDARITY, SUNDAY JUNE 3rd.

This prayer may be said while removing the tarp from the cross or while displaying the tarp in the sanctuary.

¹ 10th Century African Hymn

God of Easter and Pentecost,
God of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday,
we thank you for the resurrecting power of your Spirit.
We pray for the people of Puerto Rico
who have been living a Good Friday experience.

They have prayed and waited through the darkest nights.
They have wondered, how long?
"How long, O God, do we pray and you do not hear us?"

Come, O Christ, appear to your people again.
Remind them that they have not been forgotten.

Appear to us, now,
and open our eyes and hearts to the suffering of your people.
Give us courage to raise our voices
for economic justice, health care, and quality education.

May the symbol of this tarp remind us that the kin-dom of God on earth
is predicated on our
 love of neighbor,
 love of children and
 love of creation.

As we touch this tarp, may you touch those
who are fearfully awaiting a hurricane season.
Envelop their hearts with the hope for a new day—
filled with new life and possibilities.
May they feel your presence and know they are not alone.

Inspire us and confront us here,
so that we may continue to work for a "Just World For ALL." **AMEN.**

*Prayers written by Rev. Dr. Damaris Whittaker, Senior Minister of
Fort Washington Collegiate Church, UCC in New York City*

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