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Opening Prayer

God, Creator of all in your image and likeness,

We ask your blessing and your grace
   for women in our global community who toil and struggle
   to bring about a new world of justice and peace.

We also remember all the women who are constrained
   from speaking out.

Help us to work for the day they can live their lives
   in dignity and freedom.

We remember all the women who have been able
   to give voice to the call for justice – and who do so today.
Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ is a leading advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. In 1982, she became the spiritual advisor to Patrick Sonnier, the convicted killer of two teenagers who was sentenced to die in the electric chair at Louisiana’s Angola State Prison.

In her prison ministry, she has witnessed to the consequences of the death penalty on inmates, as well as to the grief that victims’ families carry. She wrote the book, Dead Man Walking, later adapted into an acclaimed film.

With actor Tim Robbins, Sr. Helen devotes considerable time to the Dead Man Walking School Theater Project, which invites young adults to consider the role of art in examining issues that touch their lives.

PRAYER: God, with Sister Helen as a compass, steer us on the path that will inspire us to work for the abolition of state-sanctioned death and to cleanse our society of its very heart of violence.

REFLECTION: How does Sister Helen’s ministry challenge your thoughts about the death penalty? What can we learn from her compassion toward death row inmates and the families of their victims?

“Allowing our government to kill citizens compromises the deepest moral values upon which this country was conceived: the inviolable dignity of human persons.”
Sophie Scholl was a young German citizen who studied at the University of Munich. Troubled by the Nazi regime’s crimes against the Jewish people and the elimination of the personal freedoms of Germany’s citizens, she joined the White Rose nonviolent student resistance group founded by her brother Hans.

After having been discovered distributing anti-war leaflets at the university, she, her brother, and four other students were arrested by the Gestapo. On Feb. 22, 1943, a People’s Court held a trial and convicted them of high treason, sentencing them to death. They were beheaded.

Sophie and the members of the White Rose have become an influential example of student resistance against repressive regimes.

“How can we expect righteousness to prevail when there is hardly anyone willing to give himself up individually to a righteous cause? … What does my death matter, if through us, thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?”

PRAYER: God, you graced Sophie Scholl with the kind of courage so needed in our hurting world. Teach us to live by her words: “Stand up for what you believe in, even if you are standing alone.”

REFLECTION: The actions of Sophie Scholl and her companions could not stop Hitler’s extermination of the Jews. Still, they refused to remain silent. What value do you see in their actions and martyrdom?
Angela Davis is a Black radical activist, scholar, educator, and writer. Angela grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. Her experiences with discrimination and the horrific 1963 church bombing that killed four young girls caused her to form an early understanding of racial injustice.

In 1969, Angela was hired by UCLA as an assistant professor, but was fired for her involvement with the Black Panther and Communist parties. During the early 1970s, she became a supporter of the Soledad Brothers, three inmates accused of killing a prison guard. After their failed escape attempt, Angela became a suspect and was placed on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list as a terrorist. Thousands of people organized a movement to secure her release from prison. After a high profile trial, she was acquitted on all charges).

Angela continues to be a vocal advocate of prison abolition and a powerful voice on the role of racism in the criminal justice system. She is a founding member of Critical Resistance, a national organization dedicated to ending the prison-industrial complex, and works with Sisters Inside, an organization based in Australia, that works with women in prison. She has written several books, delivers lectures and speeches, and served as an honorary co-chair of the 2017 Women’s March on Washington.

“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.”

PRAYER: God, Angela Davis powerfully stated, “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.” Inspire us with Angela’s courage to be conscientious citizens actively working to create a better world. We pray for the strength to demand change when necessary.

REFLECTION: How does Angela Davis’ long history of activism inspire us to fight for justice over the course of our lives? How have your opinions on social justice changed or developed over time?
March 4, 2017

Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai was a highly respected woman from Kenya who had many roles – human rights activist, environmentalist, feminist, politician, educator, and agitator. Wangari began a movement to reforest her country by paying poor women to plant trees. She became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She persistently advocated for the sustainable management and conservation of the Congo Basin forest as a world heritage and mega hotspot for biodiversity.

Known as Africa’s “tree woman,” she founded the Green Belt Movement, authored four books and was the subject of a documentary film, Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari.

“It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees.”

PRAYER: Mother God, during her time on earth, your daughter Wangari awakened the world to know that the destruction of the environment and the impoverished lives of African women and children are linked. Inspire us to keep her legacy alive as we commit to exploring ways to care for the earth and for the vulnerable around us.

REFLECTION: How does climate change contribute to poverty and violence against women? With the mounting problems in our world, why would someone think that planting trees is a service to humanity? How can planting trees better the lives of women? What can we learn from Wangari’s vision of our common humanity?
Sr. Megan Rice, SHCJ works to avert the danger of nuclear war through nonviolent resistance. Sr. Megan is a member of the Plowshares Movement, a Christian peace initiative founded in 1980.

On July 28, 2012, Sr. Megan, then 82, and two other activists cut through three separate security fences at the Y-12 nuclear weapons facility in Oak Ridge, Tenn. They painted peace slogans and splattered human blood on the wall. They pulled off what The New York Times reported as “the biggest security breach in the history of the nation’s atomic complex.”

She was charged with injuring the national defense and depredation of government property. On February 18, Sr. Megan was charged to less than three years in prison for the incident.

“I learned early on that a law is only a valid law when it serves society, when it serves peoples’ human rights, when it serves one of those rights, the right to truth.”

Article: “The Prophets of Oak Ridge”

PRAYER: God of Peace, we pray with Sr. Megan that one day all nuclear weapons will finally be banished from this earth – bombs dismantled and swords beaten into plowshares.

REFLECTION: Whether or not you agree with Sr. Megan’s act of civil disobedience, reflect on one or more Gospel passages that support her actions. What do you believe in so deeply that you would risk spending time in prison? What can you learn from Sr. Megan?

March 5, 2017
International Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
Loung Ung was five when the Khmer Rouge ambushed her city of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Over four years, she witnessed one of the bloodiest genocides of the 20th century. About 2 million Cambodians (out of a population of 7 million) died. The victims included her parents, two sisters and other relatives.

At age 10, Loung escaped to Thailand, spending five months in a refugee camp before relocating to Vermont. She has written multiple memoirs about surviving the genocide, including First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers. Loung works with the International Campaign for a Landmine-Free World. In 2013, she helped write Girl Rising, a film about nine girls, the strength of the human spirit and the transformative power of education.

PRAYER: Uprooted God, we cry to you with deep pain in our hearts and souls. Our hearts ache because of genocide caused by the lust for power and cruel hatred for others. We pray for Loung and other survivors whose memories of the past refuse to be silenced.

REFLECTION: Loung witnessed how land mines bring harm and destruction to individuals, entire populations and the environment. What can we learn from Loung’s outlook on life?

“I think how the world is still somehow beautiful even when I feel no joy at being alive within it.”

Loung Ung’s Website

March 6, 2017
Amy Goodman is an American broadcast journalist, syndicated columnist, investigative reporter and author who promotes global justice with stories and a perspective that are rarely seen in the mainstream media. She is executive producer and co-host of Democracy Now, an independent, award-winning daily international TV/radio newscast.

Her career has included coverage of the East Timor independence movement, Chevron’s role in Nigeria, and U.S. veterans struggling with trauma, suicide and unemployment. Arundhati Roy, author of The God of Small Things, says, “Amy and Democracy Now! represent what journalism should be: beholden to the interests of people, not power and profit. Her work is invaluable.”

PRAYER: God of Truth, help us to remember that our Christian duty obliges us to be the checks and balances of our government. With Amy, may we have the courage to ask hard questions of our leaders.

REFLECTION: What can we learn from Amy’s resolve to build a truly public media while producing consistent, quality journalism? Why is freedom of speech such an important part of our democracy? What are some examples of how media journalism can help foster democracy?

“Independent media can go to where the silence is and break the sound barrier, doing what the corporate networks refuse to do.”

March 7, 2017
Justine Masika Bihamba made the world aware of how rape is used as a weapon of war against women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2002, she met an elderly woman who had been brutally raped. She committed to tell the world about the DRC’s rape crisis and the impunity of its perpetrators.

Rape survivors suffer social and economic exclusion. She founded Synergy of Women for Victims of Sexual Violence, a collaborative of 35 women’s groups providing victims with health, legal and psychological aid. In 2007, soldiers broke into Justine’s home, raping one of her daughters and injuring another. Her daughters fled the DRC. Justine receives frequent death threats but remains committed to ending violence and discrimination against women.

“When I see the women come to me in search of hope, I say to myself, I must continue to struggle.”

PRAYER: God, today we pray for women of all ages who are victims of sexual and domestic violence. Plant within each of us the courage of Justine, a courage that will empower us to speak out against rape as a weapon of war and all forms of violence that shatter the lives of women around the world.

REFLECTION: Why is the protection of women considered a punishable crime in countries around the world? When you think of women who endure violence, how can we reach out to them and help transform their suffering? What can we learn from Justine’s courage?
Linda Sarsour is a Palestinian-American activist from Brooklyn. Her parents immigrated to the United States from a village in the West Bank in the 1970s and settled in the heart of Arab New York City. Linda describes herself as a devout Muslim and outspoken feminist.

Like many Muslim-Americans, Linda experienced the heightened fear, growing suspicion, and even outright hatred against the Muslim community in the days following the September 11 attacks. She began to volunteer for the Arab American Association of New York and organized against discriminatory police surveillance in her community.

In the years since, Linda has blossomed as a social justice activist and organizer; she is a part of numerous multiracial coalitions and deeply involved in Black Lives Matter. Linda was also the national co-chair for the 2017 Women's March on Washington, the largest inaugural protest in United States history.

“Women are intersectional human beings who live multi-issued lives. When we are protected, when we are respected, when we are able to thrive and given the same opportunities as our male counterparts, when we are given space to lead and rise—our nation will rise.”

PRAYER: God of Peace, through Linda’s example, help us to be faithful to our daily call to be a peaceful people—to overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth, individualism with community, and hatred with love. Let Linda’s commitment to her faith inspire our own work for social justice.

REFLECTION: Linda advocates for the Muslim community but also engages with many other activist causes. What are some reasons to build solidarity between movements? How can you reach out and learn about other causes?
Shirin Ebadi was one of the first female judges in Iran until clerics ruled that women could not be judges. With five other lawyers, she founded the Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran. Ebadi has represented political prisoners, journalists, students, and women, and also works to quell violence against those who oppose reform.

In 2003, Shirin became the first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Shirin helped to establish the Nobel Women’s Initiative, and has been outspoken in her support of campaigns to end legal discrimination against women in Iranian law. In 2006, Shirin published her memoir, which was censored inside Iran but received international acclaim. Shirin frequently receives death threats and has been arrested multiple times, but continues to fight for democracy and human rights.

PRAYER: God, as a child, Shirin was taught that everyone deserves to be treated equally, regardless of gender. Empower us to work for equality and to stand up for the dignity and rights of women. We pray for the safety of women like Shirin who work for reform in institutions that refuse to allow women to partake in leadership roles.

REFLECTION: Why are women so seldom in positions of authority in governments and other institutions? Can you think of a woman, outside of the United States, who holds a position of great authority? What can you learn from Shirin Ebadi about women and equality?

“Democracy doesn't recognize east or west; democracy is simply people's will. Therefore, I do not acknowledge that there are various models of democracy; there is just democracy itself.”

My upbringing taught me all humans are equal: Shirin Ebadi
Michelle Alexander is an outspoken civil rights lawyer, advocate, and legal scholar. After attending Vanderbilt Law School, Alexander clerked for Justice Blackmun on the U.S. Supreme Court. She has since litigated numerous class action discrimination cases and spearheaded a national campaign against racial profiling by law enforcement. She served as the director the Racial Justice Project for the American Civil Liberties Union, where she became passionate about fighting against racial bias in the criminal justice system.

Michelle Alexander published her first book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, in 2010. Alexander continues to advocate for criminal justice reform and an end to the devastating policies that have lead to racialized mass incarceration.

PRAYER: God, we remember the horrific injustices of Jim Crow laws and segregation in our recent past, and acknowledge its redesign in the form of mass incarceration today. Inspire us to join Michelle Alexander in calling for criminal justice reform. We pray for healing and hope for the millions imprisoned today.

REFLECTION: How can we better understand our country’s long legacy of racial control and domination? What can we learn from Michelle’s argument against “colorblindness”? 

“The New Jim Crow

*Martin Luther King Jr. called for us to be lovestruck with each other, not colorblind toward each other. To be lovestruck is to care, to have deep compassion, and to be concerned for each and every individual, including the poor and vulnerable.*

March 11, 2017
Dr. Hawa Abdi, also known as “Mama Hawa,” is a mother, Somali medical doctor, human rights activist and force for hope. She is the founder of the Dr. Hawa Abdi Foundation and was the first woman to operate a hospital within a refugee camp during her country’s 22-year civil war. She has saved many lives.

In 2010, an Islamic militia ambushed the camp, kidnapping Hawa and several of nurses. She forced them to back down. Her courage and tenacity were reported around the world.

Hawa’s memoir, “Keeping Hope Alive: One Woman: 90,000 Lives Changed,” recounts how, amid constant threat and despair, she provided safety, medical, and educational programs to the most vulnerable who have been affected by war, rape, famine, and economic deprivation.

PRAYER: God, we thank you for the Good News that we can proclaim today and for the many signs of hope you have given us. Show us how to be visible signs of hope in our wounded world; and like Mama Hawa, may we recognize the goodness and beauty that can be found within the oppressed and their oppressors.

REFLECTION: How does one keep hope alive when there is no obvious reason to hope – when there is violence everywhere? What can we learn from Hawa’s refusal to become a victim of despair?

“When I look back at what happened to me, I think I made the right decision. Happiness is not only protecting your life. It comes when someone needs you and you can save their life and God helps you. And God is still helping me now.”

March 12, 2017
March 13, 2017

British actress, humanitarian, and Brown University graduate Emma Watson is best known for playing Hermione Granger in the famed Harry Potter series. She is also a committed activist concerned with girls’ education and women’s rights.

Emma was involved in promoting girls’ education for several years, and visited Bangladesh and Zambia as part of her humanitarian efforts. She served as an ambassador for Camfed International, an organization that focuses on educating girls in developing and rural areas in Africa, and has also worked to promote fair trade and organic clothing.

In July 2014, Emma was appointed a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador. Later that year, she helped launch the UN Women campaign, HeForShe, which invites men to embrace feminism and become more vocal advocates for gender equality across the globe.

PRAYER: God, we mourn for the women and girls throughout the world who have been denied an education or have faced other forms of gender discrimination. Inspire us to continue fighting for a more just world with equal opportunity for all. Help us to build an inclusive feminist movement in solidarity with men and women.

REFLECTION: Emma Watson has said of her women’s rights activism, “I don’t want to preach to the choir. I want to try to talk to people who might not encounter feminism and talk to them.” Why is this task often so difficult? What can we learn from Emma’s openness and willingness to engage those with whom she might disagree?

“Don’t let anyone tell you what you can and can’t do or achieve. Do what you want to do and be who you want to be. Just encourage and include each other, don’t ostracize the gender in front of you.”

HeForShe Speech 2014
Audre Lorde was a Caribbean-American Black poet, writer, feminist, and civil rights activist. Her work is famous for giving voice to issues of race, gender, identity, and female sexuality.

Audre attended Hunter College and earned her masters at Columbia University. Around this time, she became open about her identity as both a lesbian and a Black woman. Lorde believed that language was a powerful form of resistance and often touched on themes of power and oppression in her writing (one of her most famous essays is titled, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”). She was also politically active in civil rights, anti-war, and feminist movements.

Her work has had a significant impact on the theory of intersectionality — the idea that people have many overlapping and intersecting social identities, and thus experience oppression and discrimination in complex ways — as well as on contemporary feminism and queer theory.

PRAYER: God, we thank you for blessing poets like Audre Lorde with the gift to speak truth to power through art and language. Help us to recognize the potential for art to stir our conscience and promote structural change and resistance against oppression.

REFLECTION: Audre Lorde wrote extensively the many intersections of her identity — her queerness, her Blackness, and her womanhood. What different identities do you have? How does each impact your life and understanding in different ways?

“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.”
Tegla Loroupe is known as the roadrunner for peace. The Kenyan distance runner uses her triumphs to promote nonviolent coexistence among people in the Green Horn region of Africa.

She launched the Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation, which builds peace and resilience of poor people affected by war and conflict. Tegla promotes sports as a way to unite warring communities, reinforce a common humanity, and promote health and wellness education and conflict resolution.

“The world has become greedy. There is poverty everywhere,” she says “There are some people who have so much and they don’t want to part with any of it for others... I want to create an atmosphere where people treat others like human beings... We need peace in this world.”

PRAYER: God, your daughter Tegla uses her athletic skills as an innovative tool to improve peace building and resilience of poor people affected by war and conflict. Empower us to use our talents to better the lives of our neighbors here in the United States and abroad. We unite our voices with Tegla and say, “We need peace in this world.”

REFLECTION: How can sports be used as a platform to confront injustice in our society? Besides Tegla, can you think of another famous athlete who has used his/her athletic abilities to promote peace?
On March 16, 2003, American peace activist Rachel Corrie received a call from an International Solidarity Movement colleague, “The Israelis are back… Get over here right away.”

Rachel rushed to the Hai as-Salam neighborhood. Wearing a fluorescent jacket and carrying a megaphone, she stood in the path of an Israeli bulldozer poised to destroy a Palestinian’s home. Its operator didn’t stop, and Rachel, 23, was crushed to death.

Instantly, blame was shifted to Rachel. Some said she chose the wrong side and paid tragically. Others ridiculed her; one website depicted her as “road kill.” Many feel she died doing what she believed in – promoting justice and human dignity. In 2012, an Israeli court ruled that Israel bore no blame for her murder.

“We should be inspired by people… who show that human beings can be kind, brave, generous, beautiful, strong—even in the most difficult circumstances.”

Interview with Rachel Corrie

PRAYER: We grieve the brutal death of a true peacemaker. May the Rachels of this world remind us of our gospel responsibility to ensure that American tax dollars are not used to contribute to conflict in countries like Israel and Palestine.

REFLECTION: If you could talk with Rachel, what would you say to her about her sacrifice? Besides Rachel, can you think of other women who have had their credibility called into question? Why do so many women who work for peace undergo character assassination? What can you learn from Rachel’s courage?
Mairead Maguire is a peace activist from Northern Ireland. In 1976, a getaway car driven by an IRA member crashed, killing her sister’s three children. Betty Williams witnessed the tragedy and started a petition to end hostilities in Northern Ireland. Mairead saw Betty read the petition on TV and invited her to the children’s funeral. They organized a protest march of 10,000 women to the graves, then created Community of Peace People to end the conflict between Catholics and Protestants. A year later, they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Mairead since has worked for peace around the world. In 2006, Mairead helped found the Nobel Women’s Initiative, promoting the work of women in advancing nonviolence, peace, justice and equality.

PRAYER: Compassionate God, the unjustified and tragic deaths of innocent children often motivate adults to see the world around them with different eyes. Grace us with the gift of fearlessness so that we may imitate the nonviolent courage of women like Mairead who pledge their lives to ensuring a world of peace and equality for present and future generations.

REFLECTION: Mairead is a true believer in nonviolence. Reflect on a gospel passage that supports her position on pacifism. What are your thoughts on the efficacy of nonviolence? What can you learn from Mairead’s commitment to nonviolence?

“I have come to believe, with Gandhi, that through our own personal conversion, our own inner peace, we are sensitized to care for God, for ourselves, for each other, for the poor, and for the earth, and then we can become true servants of peace in our world. Herein lies the power of nonviolence.”
Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores was a Honduran environmental activist and indigenous leader. In 1993, she co-founded the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH).

In 2015, Berta was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for her opposition to one of Central America’s biggest hydroelectric projects, the Agua Zarca dam, which would be built along the sacred Gualcarque River on indigenous territory.

Berta was assassinated in her home in early 2016 for her vocal resistance after years of threats against her life. Another Goldman prize winner, Isidro Baldenegro López, was also recently assassinated only months after Berta’s death. Honduras remains the most dangerous place in the world for environmentalists, with 116 environmental activists murdered in 2014 (almost half of them indigenous). Berta’s death sparked shock and international outrage, with hundreds of interfaith, environmental, and human rights groups worldwide calling on the Honduran government to conduct a full investigation into her assassination.

PRAYER: God, we give gratitude for martyrs like Berta Cáceres who refuse to stay silent in the face of injustice. May we learn from Berta’s bravery and sacrifice in her struggle for indigenous rights, water protection, and environmental justice.

REFLECTION: How can we honor Berta Cáceres legacy, and the memory of the countless other Honduran activists, who have been murdered for their work? How can we challenge a culture of impunity and encourage states to recommit themselves to protecting human rights?

“...I cannot freely walk on my territory or swim in the sacred river and I am separated from my children because of the threats. I cannot live in peace, I am always thinking about being killed or kidnapped. But I refuse to go into exile. I am a human rights fighter and I will not give up this fight.”
Helen Mack Chang is a Guatemalan businesswoman and human rights activist. The Guatemalan military assassinated her sister, anthropologist Myrna Mack Chang, on Sept. 11, 1990, sparking Helen’s outspoken advocacy.

She created and leads the Myrna Mack Foundation, an organization dedicated to ending impunity and promoting the rule of law in Guatemala. In her quest for justice for her sister’s murder, Helen obtained the conviction of one of the soldiers accused of committing the crime and, several years later, the conviction of one of the three officers accused of orchestrating it.

Helen’s courage and triumph in bringing human rights violators to justice is cause for celebration in Guatemala and around the world.

“I understood that justice doesn’t have any ideology. Justice is justice. It doesn’t matter if you’re right- or left-wing. Justice is justice. And what you want is punishment for those who have violated the law.”

PRAYER: Waiting God, it took Helen about 14 years to bring to justice for her sister. She epitomizes perseverance at its best. Inspire us through Helen’s example of persevering when our faith wavers and when we question whether our efforts to work for justice are in vain. Keep us moving forward in the face of such struggles.

REFLECTION: Is the long road to ending impunity in brutal governments worth the effort, or should we simply let the dead bury the dead? What can you learn from Helen’s perseverance?
Spokane tribal member Charlene Teters challenges portrayals of Native Americans as objects, mascots and stereotypes. She opposes dehumanization of native people in pop culture, media and sports.

She campaigned against her alma mater, the University of Illinois, for its mascot, Chief Illiniwek. The mascot, dressed in feathers and war paint, danced to a drumbeat at football games. In 2007, the university abandoned the mascot after the NCAA determined it was hostile and abusive to native people.

Charlene was the subject of “In Whose Honor,” a documentary raising awareness of issues facing native peoples. Charlene helped found the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media and is a faculty member at the Institute of American Arts Studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

PRAYER: God of all Ethnicities, you chose Charlene as a vessel to bring to light the racism toward native peoples in pop culture, the media and sports. With Charlene, may we have the courage to speak out whenever we see or hear another ethnic group being dishonored.

REFLECTION: What do you think of sports team names such as Washington Redskins, Cleveland Indians, and Atlanta Braves? Why do you think these names might offend Native Americans? What can you learn from Charlene’s campaign to end racial discrimination against native people?
Malala Yousafzai is a young activist from Mingora, Pakistan fighting for women’s right to education. In 2009, she began writing an anonymous blog for the BBC about her views on education as the Taliban took over her city. As the Taliban took control, they issued that denied women’s right to education.

Malala and her father, an education advocate himself, began receiving threats for their outspoken views and Malala’s growing international profile. She was shot in the head at close range by a Taliban gunman on her way home from school, but miraculously survived.

Since the assassination attempt, Malala has continued to speak out on the importance of girls’ education around the world. Malala received the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2014.

PRAYER: God, help us to recognize the profound inequalities that continue to exist in our world today. Awaken us from our sleep of indifference so that we may join freedom fighters like Malala in their struggle. May we foster global peace through “not only educating our minds, but our hearts and our souls.”

REFLECTION: How can books and pens be more powerful than weapons? What do you think she means in the above quote? How is society held back when women and girls are denied the right to education?

“Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.”

Trailer: He Named Me Malala

March 21, 2017

"Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.”

Back to Calendar
Sr. Larraine Lauter, OSU helps provide safe water to women and children in vulnerable communities around our world.

In 2012, Larraine launched the Water With Blessings initiative, which helps mothers and missioners partner to get safe water. WWB uses the PointONE filter, which borrows kidney dialysis technology. It is small, inexpensive and only requires a bucket. The filter removes bacteria, parasites and other contaminants and lasts for decades.

WWB’s ministry model requires recipients to share water purification capacity with at least two households for six months. Prior to receiving filters, recipients are invited to a training that integrates Gospel spirituality, a culture of service, understanding of parasitic contamination and health issues, and maintenance, concluding with a blessing and contractual commitment.

“Our solution to the water crisis is simple: an inexpensive, home-based filtration system, a willing community, and you.”

PRAYER: God, unclean water, poor sanitation and unsafe hygiene practices continue to claim more lives than anything else. Let us support the small acts of love by women like Larraine, who seek to empower vulnerable communities to break the cycle of poverty by providing them with access to clean water.

REFLECTION: What does it mean that water is a human right? What can you do to support Larraine’s effort to enhance safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities? What can we learn from Larraine’s effort about using water to build community?
Le Ly Hayslip is a survivor of the Vietnam War. In 1988, she founded **East Meets West Foundation**, which provides relief to the people of her war-torn homeland and comfort to American veterans.

Many Americans who fought in Vietnam carry haunting memories and guilt. Le Ly helps them make peace by returning to Vietnam to give back to the country. Many have helped build schools and medical facilities for children, women and the disabled.

She later established the **Global Village Foundation**, which helps developing communities in rural southeast Asia with education and training. Le Ly lectures around the world and has played a pivotal role in restoring her motherland and opening the dialogue between Vietnam and the United States.

**PRAYER:** Healing God, so many communities have been left in ruins as a result of the destruction of war. We pray for the healing and rebuilding of communities torn apart by war and violence. May we learn from Le Ly’s example to draw the strength of compassion, not the weakness of bitterness. We pray for the courage to forgive those who have wronged us and to thank them for the lessons that they have taught us.

**REFLECTION:** After the Vietnam War, Le Ly embraced forgiveness as a way of life. Can you think of someone else who has done the same? How should justice relate to forgiveness in your opinion? What can we learn from Le Ly’s practice of reconciliation between former enemies?

“The past, for everyone, is full of missed chances, surviving to understand them, if not set them straight, is one of the things that makes the next breath worth taking.”
Dr. Maria Julia Hernández was a human rights advocate who supported victims of El Salvador’s civil war. Archbishop Oscar Romero recruited her to support his human rights work.

After Romero’s assassination, Maria was commissioned to establish Tutela Legal (Legal Guardian), which she led for more than two decades. Tutela Legal investigated crimes committed by paramilitary death squads. This included interviewing witnesses, visiting massacre sites, and photographing mutilated corpses dumped beside the road.

In 1992, Maria exposed the 1981 massacre of nearly 1,000 civilians at El Mozote. Although the Truth Commission granted amnesty to those involved in killings during the civil war, Maria never stopped seeking justice. After her death, she was buried in the crypt of cathedral where Romero is buried.

“After a war, the silencing of arms is not enough. Peace means respecting all rights. You can’t respect one of them and violate the others. When a society doesn’t respect the rights of its citizens, it undermines peace and leads it back to war.”

PRAYER: God, our day is bright with the memory of Maria, a woman who devoted her life to the cause of justice. The assassination of her friend and confidante, Archbishop Romero, inspired her to choose life over death and love over fear. Like Maria, may we muster the courage to walk side by side with the oppressed and to be a voice for the voiceless.

REFLECTION: What do you think was the chief value of Maria’s ministry? What can we learn from Maria’s unwavering commitment to accompany the victims and their families?
Maria Hinojosa interviews Dolores Huerta

Dolores Huerta is a legendary labor and civil rights leader. In the 1950s, Dolores began teaching in a farmworker community, where she witnessed the extreme poverty of her students. She began to confront its root causes and created the Agricultural Workers Association in 1960. She demanded that politicians respect migrant workers’ rights. In 1966, she co-founded a union with César Chávez that became the United Farm Workers. Chávez was a dynamic leader and speaker and Dolores was an organizer skilled in nonviolent tactics and a tough negotiator. Dolores was instrumental in the union's successes, including the boycott of California table grapes. In 2003, she established the Dolores Huerta Foundation for grassroots community organizing. She received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011.

PRAYER: God of the Marginalized, your daughter Dolores showed us by her example that nonviolent action can result in change. Through Dolores’ example, show us how to become advocates for sustainable policies and systemic change.

REFLECTION: Why was it necessary for farmer workers to join a union? What might we learn from Dolores about planning for one career and ending up in another?
Harriet Tubman was a leader of the Underground Railroad, an elaborate network that guided slaves to freedom in the 1800s.

Born in Maryland to slaves, she became a maidservant, then toiled in the fields. As a teen, she suffered a blow to the head. She reported having visions in which God called her, like Moses, to free her people. In 1849, she married a free man. Afraid she would be sold, she escaped. She eventually reached Pennsylvania. A year later, she returned to Maryland and led family members to freedom.

As a “conductor,” she helped free hundreds. After the Civil War, Tubman retired to Auburn, N.Y. She was worn out and penniless but devoted herself to sheltering and caring for poor blacks.

PRAYER: God of Exodus, the dream of Harriet Tubman to abolish the world of slavery has yet to be fulfilled. May we have the courage to not only speak out against slavery in all its forms but to act to end this practice. With Harriet, may we have the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

REFLECTION: How has it affected the American heritage that we are a nation that embraced slavery? Was Harriet Tubman a lawbreaker? Who are today’s lawbreakers for justice? What can we learn from Harriet about the importance of freedom?

“I had reasoned this out in my mind, there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other.”
Tawakkol Karman is an outspoken Yemeni journalist, human rights activist, a politician, and member of the Al-Islah political party. She has been called the “Iron Woman” and “Mother of the Revolution.”

She is the co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the youngest person, the first Arab woman, and the second Muslim to receive this award. Tawakkol was recognized for her work in reporting on peacebuilding efforts of women in Yemen and promoting their safety.

In 2005, she co-founded the Women Journalists Without Chains, an organization advocating for press freedoms. She is a prominent voice for women's rights and democracy in Yemen. Tawakkol continues to stage weekly sit-ins calling for the release of political prisoners. She also reports on government corruption and injustice.

“Don't worry about Yemen. Yemen started in peace and it will end its revolution in peace, and it will start its new civil state with peace.”

PRAYER: God of Truth, we hold in prayer Tawakkol and all journalists who face danger, persecution and death as they expose injustices in our troubled times. Through their witnesses, we are made aware of the power of words in promoting peace. Help each of us to be a voice that brings the peace of the Gospel to a divided world.

REFLECTION: In many countries, why is it becoming so dangerous to be a journalist? What is a journalist’s responsibility to the public? What can we learn from Tawakkol about speaking truth to power?
Liberian peace activist Leymah Roberta Gbowee is a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize for helping to end Liberia's civil war and for working to promote peace, democracy and women's rights in Africa.

She organized widespread nonviolent protests in 2003 that helped end Liberia's 14 years of civil war. Leymah led a "sex strike," urging Liberian women to refuse relations until the war stopped, and forced a meeting with then-president Charles Taylor.

She has spoken at the United Nations, earned a graduate degree in Conflict Transformation, and was featured in the documentary "Pray the Devil Back to Hell." Leymah is executive director of the Women Peace and Security Network Africa, which promotes women’s strategic participation and leadership in African peace building efforts.

PRAYER: Peaceful God, we come to you from the midst of a broken world where nations raise weapons against nations and mothers and children are the innocent victims of violence. We cry out for peace! With Leymah, may we work to still the guns of war.

REFLECTION: What are thoughts on the nonviolent tactics that Leymah used to promote peace in her homeland? Can you think of other tactics that can be used to promote peace?
For nearly 100 years, The War Resisters League has been a leading voice in the peace movement. Its members challenge military recruitment and war profiteering. They organize nonviolent direct action.

Among its members is Frida Berrigan, daughter of Plowshares activists Elizabeth McAlister and Phil Berrigan. Frida is a member of the Campaign for a Nuclear Free World and Witness Against Torture, a faith-based organization committed to closing Guantanamo. Frida is a contributing editor for In These Times and a columnist for Foreign Policy in Focus and Waging NonViolence: People-Powered News & Analysis.

Today, Frida balances her activism with her role of stay-at-home mom, reminding us that peace begins at home. The gospel wisdom imparted by her parents inspires her own peaceable parenting.

PRAYER: God of Nonviolence, through the example of Frida Berrigan, make us more aware that all war is a crime against your people. Grant us courage to resist any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive nonviolently for the removal of all causes of war, including racism, and sexism.

REFLECTION: What do you think the difficulties might be in combining activism and motherhood? Can you think of someone, other than Frida, who has combined these two successfully?
Mud Creek Medicine: The Life of Eula Hall and the Fight for Appalachia

PRAYER: God, move us into action to protect our brothers and sisters from environmental destruction, exploitation, and abandonment by the government and from powerful corporations concerned only with profit.

REFLECTION: Eula Hall, despite her lack of formal education, bravely stood up to politicians and the powerful to fight for the needs she saw in her community. What can we learn from her tenacity and dedication to the poor? Why is fostering community such an important aspect of advocacy and service work?

Eula Hall grew up in Greasy Creek, a small Eastern Kentucky town in Appalachia. Her parents were tenant farmers and much of her early life was characterized by abject poverty, the impacts of the Great Depression, death, and disease. Eula was unable to continue her education after the eighth grade and left to work in a World War II canning factory at the age of 14. She was arrested and charged with "inciting a labor riot" against the miserable working conditions, and returned to Kentucky vowing to fight against injustice.

Eula has been called “an angel, dynamite, a force to be reckoned with, and a living legend." She rose to prominence as an activist in her Mud Creek community, fighting for healthcare access, workers’ rights, school lunch programs, black lung compensation, clean drinking water, and an end to mountaintop removal.

In response to the failed War on Poverty health program in Floyd County, she established the Mud Creek Clinic in 1973 to provide medical care for the poor and uninsured. The clinic began as a converted trailer-home but quickly became a success, with people coming from as far as Ohio and West Virginia for affordable care. When the clinic burned down in 1982 at the hands of an arsonist, Eula and the community raised over $120,000 over two days to reopen its doors. The clinic — whose sign reads “for the people” — continues to operate today, seeing thousands of patients annually and turning no one away.

“It has to be the people that shows the medical folks and politicians that something can be done.”

March 30, 2017

Mud Creek Medicine: The Life of Eula Hall and the Fight for Appalachia

Appalachian Voices
In addition to being one of Chile’s venerated composers and singers, Violeta Parra, was an artist, poet, painter, and one of the greatest researchers into Chilean folklore. She has been dubbed the “Mother of the New Chilean Song Movement.” Violenta resurrected traditional folklore and reintegrated it into Chilean culture. She wrote more than 3,000 songs, several of which addressed issues of injustice. Through her music, plays and writings, Violeta criticized the social inequality within her nation. She served as an inspiration for artists throughout Latin America, including Chilean singer, activist, and martyr, Victor Jara. In her most celebrated song, “Gracias a la Vida” Violeta gives thanks to life for giving her so much.

PRAYER: Good and gracious God, so often we forget to thank you for the gift life of that you have given to each of us. We join Violeta in thanking you for eyes that allow us to see the beauty and ugliness of our world; for ears to hear the tender voice of our loved ones; for words that allow us to communicate and think; for tired feet that keep us walking the path of peace, and for laughter and tears that distinguish pain and joy. Thank you, God, for giving us so much.

REFLECTION: In what ways does music serve as cultural and political expression? What can we learn from Violeta about the richness of culture?