A Hunger for Justice

*A Service for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty*

*(October 17 or the nearest Sunday)*

### Prelude

# We Gather for Soul Searchingthrough Empathetic Solidarity with Those in Unjust Conditions of Poverty

### Gathering Dialogue

There is a great longing for justice making and keeping

**a hunger for justice’s waters, a thirst for righteousness’s ever-flowing streams.**

There is a spiritual poverty that accompanies all other forms of poverty

**fragmented and dislocated community, frustrated values, webs of indifference.**

We are called to be attentive,

**faithful in sharing what we can out of the resources and connections that are at hand.**

### Opening Prayer

**Holy One, there are times when charitable food, even warm suppers and timely hampers,**

**do not satisfy the deeper and wider longings for justice.**

**The emptiness in people’s bellies and pocketbooks are not the only realities.**

**As we crave the food of justice, so we feel cravings for fairness and equality.**

**Embarrass us, even trick us, into breaking cycles and systems of indifference**

**that breed cynicism and unfair distributions of power.**

**In the name of Jesus the Christ, your challenging and nourishing presence in our midst.**

**Amen.**

### Hymn Suggestions

“Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works” (*Voices United* 308)

“All Who Hunger” (*Voices United* 460)

“What Does the Lord Require of You” (*Voices United* 701)

### Lighting of the Candle of Hope for Justice:

(*Speak about the despair and sense of hopelessness that poverty brings to people and communities, and yet, the glimmers of hope that arise through justice making and keeping—such as when emergency food programs move to lobby for adequate basic income or living wage policies.*)

### Worship with All God’s Children

Share stories of people living in poverty
(see, for example, [www.cwp-csp.ca/2015/11/spotlight-on-poverty-derek-cook](http://www.cwp-csp.ca/2015/11/spotlight-on-poverty-derek-cook)).

### Declaration of Collaboration

**God of justice, we confess that we have not done enough to challenge the deadlock of inequalities and to break the cycles of poverty. We confess that we have not challenged ourselves, our communities of faith, and our governments more.**

**Give us courage to face our fears and with one another be the people of faith, to bear witness to the prophetic summons to do justice and walk humbly with you.**

**Give us the desire and the tools to summon power-sharing; to free up the resources we all need to reshape structures that oppress.**

**Give us grace to accept with serenity that which we cannot change, at least right now, but also the courage to change what we ought to.**

**We ask for the gift of sincere empathy, so that we will not be content with offering mere sympathy.**

# We Hear What the Sacred Writings Have Told Us about Justice Making

### Scripture

Deuteronomy 16:18–20; Psalm 85:8–13; Micah 6:6–8 with Jeremiah 9:23–24; Luke 4:16–21

### Hymn Suggestions

“Were You There” (*Voices United* 144)

“The Servant Song (We Are Pilgrims)” (*Voices United* 595)

### Sermon Helpmates

Our society too often depicts wealth as “success,” viewing people who live with poverty as “failures.” But if anything, we fail to appreciate the pervasive width and depth of poverty—not only on the other side of the world, but also on the other side of the street. We resort to sayings like “Pull up your bootstraps,” “You are lazy,” “You made your bed, now lie in it!” or “We are all in tough times so it has to be each for their own, while there be time.” We may patronizingly add, “Offer a hand up rather than a hand out,” assuming that “up” is the right place, or merely our place, for now.

Some of us may remember making presentations to politicians about poverty; inevitably, it seems, one will quip, “Jesus said you will always have the poor with you.” The biblical passages from Deuteronomy, the prophets, and Jesus remind us that although there indeed still is poverty, we are called to address and redress it. Prayer is an indispensable resource and animator, as it helps us to “show up.” Prayer and justice making offer a valuable check and balance.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life-long friend and biographer, Eberhard Bethge, parlayed prayer and “righteous action” (justice) into a sharp set of creative tensions. “Righteous action…among people,” Bethge wrote, “saves prayer from becoming an escape into self-satisfied piety. Prayer saves righteous action…from self-righteousness.” Similarly, action saves prayer from hypocrisy; prayer saves action from fanaticism. Action counters pessimism, while prayer counters resignation. “Action keeps prayer in the realm of reality; prayer keeps action within the realm of truth.” (Eberhard Bethge, *Prayer and Righteous Action in the Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Christian Journals, 1979), 26–27).

### Offering Prayer of Dedication

**Holy Just One, we know that money or show-and-tell splashes of charity alone cannot solve the pain and shame of poverty. We confess that there is a spiritually pervasive poverty that can only be overcome by changing people’s minds and hearts, and then, changing the web of interlocking systems that belittle and disempower so many of us, near and far. We offer our treasures and offer up the prayers of our hands and our hearts, so that all of your children may live in true dignity. In the name of Jesus, himself poor, we pray. Amen.**

# We’ll Go Out and Make a Difference

### Declaration of Re-creation

**We declare that as disciples of Jesus, we will study and work for a new economic system in which the abundance of creation is distributed and shared more equally.**

**We declare that we will no longer be merely passive in seeking the end of poverty.**

**We declare that by our witness, and as possible through our actions, we will seek to hold those in power accountable to those they claim to serve (and even live off of).**

**May we, as people identified with Jesus the Christ, be known as his servant friends. Amen.**

### Sending Forth

Here, take these offering plates/baskets and our Mission & Service offerings

**to feed hungry, homeless, and sinned-against people.**

Embrace the richness of your holy kingdom, O God, via Jesus:

**for that is where true justice and commonwealth is.**

Take care of our neighbours, as ourselves and our families:

**with love as the ground and justice as the goal, we will seek to care for all God’s peoples.**

### Closing Hymn Suggestions

“When Pain of the World” (*Voices United* 598)

“Men Go to God” (*The Hymn Book of the Anglican and United Churches*, 105) (*suggestion:* make the lyrics gender neutral, i.e., “All go to God…God comes to us”)

**For additional information on ending poverty**, see
[www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/ending-poverty](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/ending-poverty).

***Barry Morris*** *is a minister with the Longhouse Council of Native Ministry in east Vancouver, BC, and throughout the city – and a founding member of crucial networks or alliances such as Metro Vancouver Alliance, Streams of Justice, A Community Aware, and Kairos-Vancouver (without which the Longhouse would be limited to mere charity responses to the causes and conditions of inequality and indignity, and thus poverty). Acknowledgement for parts of this service and the outline to* ***Don Uhryniw****, coordinating minister at George Street United Church in Peterborough, ON.*

[**Chew on This! Campaign**](https://dignityforall.ca/chew-on-this/)

The Dignity for All campaign for a poverty-free Canada (Citizens for Public Justice/Canada Without Poverty) invite you to “help make this year’s **Chew on This!** something to remember—a call to action for the federal government to create a rights-based Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy and include designated funding for it in Budget 2018. Faith communities are invited to participate in creative ways, such as at worship, with youth, or with your social justice ministries!” Visit <https://dignityforall.ca/chew-on-this/> for more info, and sign up to organize a Chew on This! event in your community.