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FRIENDS OF THE CONGO AND PEOPLE WORLDWIDE

BREAKING THE SILENCE

CONGO WEEK

WORSHIP RESOURCE

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Introduction

Dear Friends,

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the most mineral resource rich country in Africa; yet, 80% of the population survives on \$.30 a day and 75% of the population is undernourished according to the UN. Further, there are an estimated 1.3 million displaced Congolese, and estimated 1.1 million are living with HIV/AIDS, and close to two-thirds of the population cannot afford conventional health care. The Congolese live in these dire conditions because DRC is entangled in war over a natural resource, coltan, which has resulted in the death of over 5.4 million to date.

This war has been described as the deadliest since Adolf Hitler's armies marched across Europe and has been dismissed as an internal African implosion. In reality it is a battle for coltan, diamonds, cassiterite and gold, destined for sale in London, New York, Antwerp and Paris - the metals that make our technological society vibrate, ring and bling. The war has led to the use of child soldiers, child slavery in mines, a rise in HIV/AIDS, the mass displacement of peoples, and the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war. In one province alone, the United Nations has estimated that 45,000 women were raped in the last year.

May 18 to May 28, 2008 Global Ministries Africa executive, Rev. Sandra Gourdet led an Indiana delegation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Congo. Among the participants were the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins. Upon returning the group gave a presentation on their experience in the Congo and of the vibrant spirit of the people despite the hardships they currently experience. In that presentation, Dr. Sharon Watkins posed the question, "Have we forgotten the Congo or do we just not care?" We dare to say that most around the world are not aware of the human rights violations that are occurring in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 12:26, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." The Body of Christ suffers today because of injustice and exploitation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is our calling as members of the Body of Christ to break the silence, stop the pillaging, promote justice, defend women and children, protect the environment and support the people of the Congo. Through this worship resource we seek to honor the millions who have lost their lives, those who struggle to survive and the many displaced Congolese. As we gather to raise our voice to God, we pray that God will use our voices to address the root causes of suffering in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We pray that this resource will aid your congregation in beginning the talks about the atrocities being committed in the Congo. Use it during the Break the Silence Congo Week to speak a word of hope to what appears to be a hopeless situation and speak prophetically to leaders around the world to make a real difference in their policies concerning the Congo.

In addition to using this resource for your congregation, visit www.globalministries.org, www.congoweeek.org, and www.friendsofthecongo.org, to learn more ways we can strengthen our collective voice in raising awareness, creating accountability and ensuring a peaceful future for the DRC.

In Peace,

Friends of the Congo
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and
The United Church of Christ

Suggested Scriptures

Isaiah 1:15-17
Proverbs 31:8-9
Amos 5:21-24
Matthew 12:15-21
James 2:1-19

Call to Worship

In the midst of a world where people hunger and thirst . . .

Come worship a God who feeds the hungry.

In the midst of a world where people are abused and oppressed . . .

Come worship a God who calls for compassion and justice.

In the midst of a world filled with wars and rumor of war . . .

Come worship a God who desires nothing less than peace for the world.

In the midst of a world of spiritual emptiness . . .

Come worship a God who gives life meaning.

In the midst of a world of animosity and hate.

Come worship a God whose grace and love know no end.

—Taken from Sacraments and Seasons: Peacemaking
Through Worship
From Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.

Confession:

Merciful and forgiving God,

We have reclined comfortable with our laptops in hand, cell phones on waist and DVDs playing endlessly. We have silently ignored the suffering of your people, especially those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have neglected the estimated 1.3 million displaced Congolese, 1.1 million living with HIV/AIDS and we have dismissed the nearly six million deaths that are a result of war over natural resources as unfortunate tragedies. We have exploited our sisters and brothers, robbing them of their dignity, minerals and goods. We have denied their humanity.... their spark of divinity. Forgive us, O God. Forgive us for being detached, dispirited and indifferent. Grant us the courage to speak up, naming injustices one by one and the determination to right wrongs in the Congo and around the world. This is our prayer, in Jesus' name. AMEN

Assurance of Pardon.

God is faithful, slow to anger and quick to forgive. God hears our confessions, forgives our sins, and gives us a new beginning. May we live in the assurance that we are God's forgiven people and empowered to break our deafening silence, speaking justice and defending those who are helpless and have no hope. Hear the Good News: you are forgiven, in Jesus' name.

Thanks be to God!

Confessional Litany

Reader 1: “Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not take notice?”

“Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.” (Isaiah 58:3, NRSV)

Reader 2: Lord, we are experts in serving our own interests. We know how to make sure we do all right. We have helped set up and keep going a whole world trading system to serve us. No wonder our worship rings hollow in your ears.

Silence

Lord, we’re sorry for all our selfishness and greed. Give us the will to change ourselves. And help us to start changing the world.

Reader 1: Lord of all the world,

All: Listen to our prayer this day.

Reader 1: “Is this not the fast that I choose? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?” (Isaiah 58:6-7, NRSV)

Reader 2: Lord, too many of your people are hungry and homeless. Too many live in dire poverty. Too many die before they should. And in the rich countries of the world, we have done too little to change this. In fact, our governments have been leaders in forcing poor countries into free trade, making things worse rather than better.

Silence

Lord, make our campaigning more effective. Challenge the hearts of those in positions of power. Change the policies that keep people poor. And give food to the hungry and hope to the despairing.

Reader 1: Lord of all the world,

All: Listen to our prayer this day.

Reader 1: “If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom shall be like the noonday.” (Isaiah 58:10 NRSV)

Reader 2: Lord, this year you have given us an opportunity and a challenge. This year could be the beginning of the end of injustice and exploitation. Yet there is so much to do to make it happen.

Silence

Lord, we want to make injustice and unfair policies history. Give us the courage to speak to our friends and neighbors. Give us the resolve to advocate on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Congo and suffering people everywhere. And take our efforts and multiply them into change.

Reader 1: Lord of all the world,

All: Listen to our prayer this day

Adapted from Christian Aid by Sojourners
www.christianaid.co.uk

Prayers of Intercession

God of abundance, compassion and justice... It's with heart filled gratitude that we turn to you remembering the words of Jesus... "Blessed are the poor..." We pray for the children, women and men in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who struggle each day to survive, pitted against economic conditions beyond their control. Give them strength to meet each day and hope for a different future. Empower us O God to partner with them to speak against injustices whenever and wherever it rears itself reminded that Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." We pray for the people and groups of people campaigning to change harmful economic policies. May the call for just trade, an end to debt and more and better aid echo across the Congo and the world.

Jesus also said, "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." We pray for the leaders and politicians with the power to change things. We pray especially for decision makers around the world who struggle to end exploitation in the Congo and chart a fair and just future in that land. Help them to take the side of the poor and powerless, to resist the voices of self-interest and compliancy, and to make bold choices for the good of all people.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and friend of the least of these.
Amen

Adapted from Christian Aid
www.christianaid.co.uk

OR

We pray for the Church that we may demonstrate to the world a living, vibrant faith, which seeks to include and share, and speaks out against the scandal of exploitation. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for world leaders, that they may listen to the voices of those who live in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and begin to use their power generously for the good of all. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves, that through our choices, actions and words we may live out our faith in our everyday lives, growing more compassionate and generous each day. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the work of Congo advocates around the world that we may work to improve the quality of life of the many, and together seek the common good. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

- Adapted from CAFOD
www.cafod.org.uk

OR.

We bring you, O Lord, the troubles and perils of people and nations: the sighing of prisoners and captives, the sorrows of the bereaved, the necessities of strangers, the helplessness of the weak, the despondency of the weary, the failing powers of the aged. O Lord, draw near to each, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

-St Anselm (1033-1109)
From Christian Aid
www.christianaid.org.uk

A Christian Aid Affirmation

(This may be read responsively by two groups)

- A: We believe that God hopes and works for a world where all shall be included in the feast of life, and that in Christ we see how costly it is to bring that world about.
- B: We believe that God's strategy for a new world is to put the poorest first, and that nothing is more important for God's people than to bring the poor good news.**
- A: We believe that rich and poor alike can be generous, wise and creative because all are made in God's image, and that all are made poorer when they are left out.
- B: We confess that we use our strength to protect ourselves and order the world to benefit the rich and not the poor, and that none of us can be trusted with too much power over others.**
- A: We believe that loving our neighbors means working for justice, so that all have a say in what happens to them.
- B: We believe that God made the good earth to sustain and delight us, and that we are called to take care of it and enjoy it.**
- A: We believe that the God of all the earth is at work beyond the churches as well as within them, making common cause with all who want the poor to be included.
- B: We long for the time when the meek shall inherit the earth and all who hunger and thirst after justice shall be satisfied, and we believe that, despite the persistence of evil, now is always the time when more good can be done and we can make a difference.**

- Iona Abbey Worship Book
Wild Goose Publications (2002)
www.ionabook.com

Benediction

(English translation)

God bless Africa.
Guard her children.
Guide her rulers,
And give her peace for Jesus Christ's sake

(Lingala translation)

Nzambe Pambola Congo
Batela bana na ye,
Lakisa bakonzi na ye nzela,
Pesa ye kimya, na kombo ya Yezu Kristu.

-Written by Trevor Huddleston in
An African Prayer Book
Image and Doubleday
New York, NY (1995)
Edited by Desmond Tutu
Lingala adaptation by Kambale Musavuli

May the Spirit make us wise, guide us, renew us and strengthen us
So that we will be
Strong in faith,
Discerning in proclamation,
Courageous in witness,
Persistent in good deeds. AMEN

-Adapted from the Church of the Province of the West Indies
An African Prayer Book
Image and Doubleday
New York, NY (1995)
Edited by Desmond Tutu

Hymn Suggestions

Opening Hymn:

“Restless Weaver”
Can be found in *Chalice Hymnal*
Chalice Press
St. Louis, MO
OR.
“The Voice of God Is Calling”
Can be found in *Chalice Hymnal*
Chalice Press
St. Louis, MO

Hymn of the Day:

“If I Can Help Somebody”
Can be found at www.lyricsmania.com
OR.
“When Will People Cease Their Fighting”
Can be found in *Chalice Hymnal*
Chalice Press
St. Louis, MO
OR.
“I Need You to Survive” by Kirk Franklin
Can be found at www.lyricskeeper.com
OR.
“There Is a Balm in Gilead”
Can be found in *The New Century Hymnal*
The Pilgrim Press
Cleveland, OH

Prayer Hymn

“Lead Me, Guide Me”
Can be found in *African American Heritage Hymnal*
GIA Publications, Inc.
Chicago, IL
OR
“For the Healing of the Nations”
Can be found in *The New Century Hymnal*
The Pilgrim Press
Cleveland, OH

Sending Hymn

“Let There Be Peace On Earth”
Can be found in the *African American Heritage Hymnal*
GIA Publications, Inc.
Chicago, IL
OR
“Go Now in Peace”
Can be found in the *Chalice Hymnal*
Chalice Press
St. Louis, MO
OR
“Spirit of Jesus, If I Love My Neighbor”
Can be found in *The New Century Hymnal*
The Pilgrim Press
Cleveland, OH