



**South Sudan:
Responding to famine, violence, and suffering
Worship Resources from IMA World Health
Written by Rev. Amy Gopp**

Call to Worship

Leader: As we gather to worship, in peace, on this day,

People: we think of those in South Sudan who cannot gather in peace.

Leader: As we gather to worship, well fed, on this day,

People: we think of those in South Sudan who are starving and without food.

Leader: As we gather as sisters and brothers,

People: we remember that we are all the children of God.

Leader: Come, for we have claimed to be followers of Jesus.

People: We are disciples of Christ, witnesses to the power of the living gospel.

Leader: We celebrate the common roots that bind us together as the family of God.

People: Let us join as one voice to cry out for a just and lasting peace in South Sudan,

Leader: and let us bring about God's vision of a world where all are fed and nourished.

All: Let us hold onto the hope of Christ that is good news for all.

A Liturgy based on Isaiah 6:1-13

Call to Worship

Leader: You have come. You have come as you are. Yet you have not come alone. You have come as one who goes before and one who comes after, accompanied by ancestors and by those who will call you ancestor. You have come as a child of the living God, faithful to the claim God has on your life, open to hear and answer the call. You have come as fresh seeds in the roots of old stumps.

All: We are here, Lord, as seeds in a stump, ready to respond to the needs of our South Sudanese sisters and brothers; ready to claim the promise of new life in Christ.

Opening Prayer

God of peace, who empowers us to beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks, embolden us anew as we focus our minds and hearts on those suffering in South Sudan. In the midst of violence, oppression, and now famine, we lift up our South Sudanese sisters and brothers to you. They are hungry; many on the brink of starvation. Children are dying of preventable diseases. Famine has been declared. Yet, like Isaiah when he was commissioned a prophet, the South Sudanese people have also asked, "Lord, how long?" How long will the suffering last? How long will our minds be dulled, our ears shut, and our eyes closed? How long will we listen but not comprehend, look but not understand? How long, O Lord? For even in the smallest stump that has been chopped down or burnt to the ground there lies a seed – a holy seed, to be



sure – one that will assure that life goes on, even in the midst of death. A holy seed that will assure that the community will persevere, even in the midst of division. A holy seed that will assure that the love of God vitalizes even us old stumps, transforming us into sacred seeds that will bear witness to new life. May we be the soil in which these seeds will take root. May we be the water these seeds will drink in. May we be the sunshine from which these seeds will be nourished. May we, as a community of faith and hope, respond to you, O God, by proclaiming to our suffering South Sudanese sisters and brothers, “Here we are!” Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Leader: Lord God, we are tired and worn. We so often cannot make sense of what is happening around us or inside of us. Long have we listened, Lord, but we do not comprehend. Long have we looked, Lord, but we do not understand. It is as though our minds are dull, our ears closed, and our eyes shut. Our cities lie in waste and our land is utterly desolate. Our temples are empty and our community is fragmented.

All: We are, indeed, tired and worn, dearest Lord. But our hearts are longing. Forgive us for not continuing to listen and look. Forgive us for our lack of faith in answering your call when we know that it is your voice we hear. Forgive us for merely watching the plight of those seemingly far away instead of taking action, for we know the plight of one affects us all.

Words of Assurance

Leader: Remind us, Patient and Persistent God, that we are your sacred seeds. Convince us that it is us you are calling to grow and rise up out of old stumps into new life. Promise us your living water when we forget to nurture ourselves. Promise us your divine light when we do not feel enough sunshine. Remind us that when we honor even one who suffers we honor all of your creation. Assure us, holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts, that even old dead stumps contain the seeds of new life.

All: For in you, Lord God, we find holy seeds. In you, we find hope. In you, we are forgiven. Amen.

Invitation to Communion 1

It is said in South Sudan that “Reconciliation is deeper in eating together.” When we come to the Lord’s Table to eat together, we do so having been invited by Christ the Reconciler. We gather around an open table that has been set for all – for those with bread to eat, for those without, for those fighting over bread, for those desperate to reconcile and eat together in peace. No matter how we come or where we come from, we all come broken. As we approach this table now, we can’t help but think of our sisters and brothers in South Sudan who would weep to join us around this table. In the broken body of Christ we are about to partake, we see the brokenness of South Sudan. In the consecrated body of Christ we are about to eat, we envision the wholeness that emerges when we share our brokenness. Come now, believing with your whole heart that the peace of Christ is found in the sharing and breaking of bread.



Invitation to Communion 2

How *do* we become agents of God's compassion in a world literally starving for not only compassion but also daily bread? How do we commune with those whose every day existence is one of instability and hunger? We begin by accepting Christ's invitation to this table, this meal, this communion feast. It is precisely here that we are able to meet, through the shared body of Jesus Christ our Lord, those whom we may never meet in person. It is here we claim unity and healing for our own lives and for the world. We come broken and leave whole. This is one of the greatest mysteries of our faith, that only broken bread can be shared. Only out of division can wholeness emerge. It is said in South Sudan that "reconciliation is deeper in eating together." And so we approach this table today thinking of our sisters and brothers who are now facing famine, starvation and malnutrition. Come now, believing with your whole heart that the peace of Christ and the peace of all creation is found in the breaking and sharing of bread.

Communion Prayer

Gracious and Loving God, we have tasted that you are, indeed, the Bread of Life! We thank you for this meal we have just shared not only with one another here but also with our South Sudanese sisters and brothers desperate to be fed the good news of your love and peace. We thank you, God of healing and wholeness, for receiving us just as we are, sharing our own brokenness as well as the brokenness of other members of our human family. Bless that which we have just partaken so that it may encourage us to serve you by serving others, and strengthen us for the journey. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: God of all that is new, we bow before you in thanksgiving and praise. We recognize all those who have come before us and all those who will follow after, ancestors and offspring in your circle of life, and think especially of our brothers and sisters in South Sudan. To you and you alone be the glory for planting seeds in dead stumps. To you be the glory, for you are life in the midst of death!

All: As with an old oak whose trunk remains when its leaves have fallen, so are we the holy offspring that is the stump. Praise be to you, O God! Praise be to you who breathes in us life anew and who empowers us to bear witness to all that is life-giving!

Charge and Benediction

May we be the soil in which new life will take root. May we, as a community of faith and hope, respond to the suffering of our South Sudanese sisters and brothers by taking action, lifting our voices, and relying on the power of the living gospel of Jesus Christ to redeem the world. Go in peace to serve our Lord.