

Peace and Justice Prayer 12 September 2021

It is 9:00 o'clock on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. I leave my classroom in my downtown Atlanta inner city school because the Spanish teacher has arrived for my third graders Spanish lesson. As I walk past the secretary's office she calls out to me and says it looks like a Cessna has just crashed into the World Trade Center she's listening to a little portable radio that she keeps on her desk. We are both surprised and listen to the news reports. I leave her and walk to the Science Teachers classroom a couple of steps away as I know she has a television in her classroom. When I get there I join her watching the live footage on the news. Shocked, I make my way back to my third grade class as their Spanish lesson finishes at 9.25am. I am still their teacher.

The next day when all the children know about what has happened and we are having a debriefing in class one of the children says, I saw some people jumping out of the buildings yesterday – I hope they are okay? When I chatted to my third grade colleague the first thing she said to me was, now my brother has to go to war. These are just two of the comments that have stayed with me over these 20 years.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord

The barbed wire represents so much loss and pain about an incident that happened on 9/11/2001 which changed so much of what and how we live in the world. The wire represents hatred and war – a war which has taken more than 20 years of fighting in Afghanistan. We pray for so many lives lost in the USA on 9/11 and the thousands of family and friends affected. But we also pray for the thousands in Afghanistan and the surrounding region who have endured war, pain, anguish for more than 20years. Soldiers not only from the USA but the UK, Germany and other countries arrive in planes and leave as cargo. Flying over the many graves of those who lost their lives in Afghanistan, many of the graves containing the bodies of children killed in this senseless war.

The barbed wire is a reminder of the children, the many children who were directly affected by the events of 9/11. What it meant for children to grow up in a country like the USA knowing that by the time they turned 18 they could be heading off to carry on fighting a war. We pray for the erroneous decisions about who was to blame for the 9/11 attacks and how that has affected who we continue to treat as those who we think are different. How we define who a terrorist is based on the colour of their skin, the religion they practice, their beliefs, their passport or visa or simply because of the land of their birth. We pray for the way flags and borders, the words patriot and citizen applied to some and not others can draw blood and enact the pain represented by the barbed wire.

But... the light of the candle shines through this darkness, this darkness of destruction and exclusion that has raged for 20 years and many, many before that. The light of the flame is about the love of Christ which helps us not judge people based on the colour of their skin and perpetuate the stereotypes and conventions which permeate every aspect of our lives. Christ's love is an example that justice can overcome, prevail and that there are many more who always choose peace over war, who work every day in small and big ways with compassion and kindness and use these ways to love and live together. We thank you Lord for giving us the tools to relight the flame through our actions by choosing justice, seeking truth, choosing to listen, doing the work of inclusion and transformation and contesting the binary that there can only be war or peace. It is time to start thinking and working towards all that exists in the liminal space(s) between war and peace.

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