

Prayers for Peace, Hope and Justice

The lit, candle a flickering flame surrounded by the barbed wire that symbolizes the pain hurt suffering and fear in the world.

Last Wednesday was Women's Day. In the Western Cape we did not celebrate Women's Day because of the taxi transport issue that resulted in a strike with violence, death and destruction over days. We are grateful for the current respite.

People are angry , saddened, tempted to vent, to blame to support, to fear, and even to act lawlessly ... our response to conflict is so predictable ... And the media especially social media did its thing.

There was an article in [Groundup News](#) on Thursday, by Sadiso Phaliso on women marching in Philippi. In the face of days of staying at home, unable to travel to work with limited income and food supplies and price increases and with on-going violence and looting (the community library was vandalized and looted) these courageous women, decided to march.

They did not march on the political or taxi powers. No it went deeper in its purpose. They marched on, and in, their own community. Their own friends, neighbours and the broader Philippi community . They called for an end to the violence, looting, and the destruction of property and they called out those who broke the law.

One of these women was quoted as saying, " As women we felt so powerless. In such cases, women and children are told to stay at home while men go out to solve the problems, but now we decided to stand up and tell the community to stop."

The women reclaimed their streets seeking to be family rather than foe, challenging mothers, yes mothers not to hide culprit children but give them up, not to allow stolen goods into their homes, and to end destruction of property.

Those women exhibited the true spirit of women in crisis situations.

In a focused way they cared about the core of their community, showing a spirit of community building. But done in love and care and challenge each other. I believe they reflected what is right and true and of God in such situations. Truly Good news.

For the courageous women of Philippi, the march was like the flickering of this candle, a small but a "cannot be ignored" protest in the so called bigger picture of our country.

It sends a message of hope that defies the darkness of a fear that paralysises.

Let us pray:

Lord of hope we celebrate with all of creation, a new day. We rejoice O Lord in Christ.

As we reflect on the past week we know you weep with us at the frailty of humankind in living in community. We too morn the many lost opportunities to live together as the human family.

Forgive us, Lord, our ways and means of resolving conflict are not your ways.

We are easily persuaded, incited, convinced, obliged, to follow certain courses of action and become agents of fear despair and even hatred. Discernment and joy struggle to be seen or heard. We want to be a people sharing hope and your love.

We give thanks for signs and symptoms of flickering flame that shines through the self-encompassing barbed wire that we use to define our lived experiences of fear and injustice.

Such a flickering flame has been the example of the women of Philippi. `the flicking flame is vulnerable, is at risk yet in its flickers brightly in darkness denying the progress of fear.

For all the courageous women, and all who have been courageous we give thanks O Lord.

Lord in your mercy we prayer for those Philippi feet that marched, the mouths that spoke truth, the arms that sought to embrace, and the hearts so vulnerably opened.

Lord may women continue to show the way , not to tire, to be courageous and to share the love of Christ each day. May there be many more flickering flames of courage in our communities.

The journey has not yet ended, O Lord. May we all rediscover the love of Christ in our feet, our arms, our voices, our hearts, and above all, we may actually rediscover ourselves as we build community.

Amen