

Worship Service, No2Torture Gathering, January 6, 2006

Kirsten Klepfer, Pastor, Grinnell, Iowa

Gathering Music

Call to Worship

One: To disciples, then and now, Jesus has said, "You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before all."

All: We have come together to be community, to receive light, and to be light. To this end we dedicate ourselves.

One: We have come together to be windows through which, instructed and illuminated by God, we might see the world more clearly.

All: We have come to be windows through which the world might know the light and the love of God. Let us worship God.

Music

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah:

"I am Adonai, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."

Voices from prison:

"...They were laughing, taking pictures, and they were stepping on our hands with their feet. And they started taking one after another and they wrote on our bodies in English. I don't know what they wrote, but they were taking pictures after that. Then, after that they forced us to walk like dogs on our hands and knees. And we had to bark like a dog and if we didn't do that, they start hitting us hard on our face and chest with no mercy. After that, they took us to our cells, took the mattresses out and dropped water on the floor and they made us sleep on our stomachs on the floor with the bags on our head and they took pictures of everything."

Abu Ghraib Detainee, Haidar

Haidar was released without charge or trial in April 2004.

Silence

God of mercy, shine your light.

“[T]hey treated us like animals, not humans. They kept doing this for a long time. No one showed us mercy. Nothing but cursing and beating. Then they started to write words on our buttocks, which we didn’t know what it means. After that they left us for the next two days naked with no clothes, with no mattresses, as if we were dogs.”

Abu Ghraib Detainee Nori, January 2004.

Silence

God of mercy, shine your light.

Then [the guard] brought a box of food and he made me stand on it, and he started punishing me. Then a tall black soldier came and put electrical wires on my fingers and toes and on my penis, and I had a bag over my head. Then he was saying ‘which switch is on for electricity?’

Iraqi detainee, Abu Ghraib prison, January 16 2004

Silence

God of mercy, shine your light.

“It was a very bad place. Whenever I started to fall asleep, they would kick on my door and yell at me to wake up. When they were trying to get me to confess, they made me stand partway, with my knees bent, for one or two hours. Sometimes I couldn’t bear it anymore and I fell down, but they made me stand that way some more.”

Mohammed Ismail Agha, aged 13

Silence

God of mercy, shine your light.

"First the group took her out of her cell and escorted her down the cellblock to an empty cell. One unidentified soldier stayed outside the cell; while another held her hands behind her back, and the other forcibly kissed her. She was escorted downstairs to another cell where she was shown a naked male detainee and told the same would happen to her if she did not cooperate. She was then taken back to her cell, forced to kneel and raise her arms while one of the soldiers removed her shirt. She began to cry, and her shirt was given back as the soldier cursed at her and said they would be back each night."

God of mercy, shine your light.

"Our interrogations in Guantánamo, too, were conducted with us chained to the floor for hours on end in circumstances so prolonged that it was practice to have plastic chairs for the interrogators that could be easily hosed off because prisoners would be forced to urinate during the course of them and were not allowed to go to the toilet. One practice that was introduced specifically under the regime of General Miller was "short shackling" where we were forced to squat without a chair with our hands chained between our legs and chained to the floor. If we fell over, the chains would cut into our hands. We would be left in this position for hours before an interrogation, during the interrogations (which could last as long as 12 hours), and sometimes for hours while the interrogators left the room.

Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal.

Silence

God of mercy, shine your light.

"Around 11 they took me for interrogation. It was in a metal container, a caravan, with chairs. I was forced to kneel with my feet in the air and my arms raised in the air. If my hands or feet went down they would hit me. The interrogation lasted three or four hours. They put tissue in my mouth. I could hardly breathe. There was abuse throughout the night. We were beaten on the ground. They placed tape on our mouths, and bags on our heads."

Ahmad Mohammad Hussein al-Badrani

Silence

God of mercy, shine your light.

For those who have died:

Abdul Jaleel, January 9, 2004. The autopsy report concluded that, "the severe blunt force injuries, the hanging position, and the obstruction of the oral cavity with a gag contributed to this individual's death. The manner of death is homicide."

Abd Hamad Mawhoush, November 26, 2003. Died in US custody after two soldiers slid a sleeping bag over his body, except for his feet, and began questions him as they rolled him repeatedly from his back to his stomach. Then a soldier sat on his chest and placed his hands over the detainee's mouth.. It was during this interrogation that the detainee became non-responsive. Four soldiers were charged in the death of Abd Hamad Mawhoush.

Nagem Sadun, June 6, 2003. Died three days after his arrest as a result of “asphyxia due to strangulation.” The military investigation also found that on June 6 he was left “naked outside in the sun and heat for most of the day and into the night.” A Marine reservist was convicted of assault and dereliction of duty.

Silence

God of mercy, Shine your light.

For all the names of those who have died, those who have been tortured and released those currently in detention facing abuse and torture, and for those who perpetrate torture on others,

God of mercy, shine your light.

Communion

Prayer after communion (Mark Koenig’s Prayer on No2Torture web site)

The gospel of John says,

“In the beginning there was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through the Word, and without it not one thing came into being. What has come into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

Voices of Hope:

Do we sacrifice our ideals in order to preserve security? Terrorism inspires fear and suppresses ideals like freedom and individual rights. Overcoming the fear posed by terrorist threats is a tremendous test of our courage. Will we confront danger and adversity in order to preserve our ideals, or will our courage and commitment to individual rights wither at the prospect of sacrifice? My response is simple. If we abandon our ideals in the face of adversity and aggression, then those ideals were never really in our possession. I would rather die fighting than give up even the smallest part of the idea that is “America.”

-Captain Ian Fishback
1st Battalion,
504th Parachute Infantry Regiment,
82nd Airborne Division,
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

God of hope, make us your light.

Lately I feel so tired. There's always a part of me that wants just to sleep; sleep and make all of THIS – the war, my government's policies and actions, the counter-violence of the insurgency, all the greed and sin in the world – just go away for awhile. I can identify with the apathy of citizens who give in to violence: yes, just make the evil go away, press the button, fire the missile, send the young ones off to war. Take any way out. There is no way out. But there is a way through. I tasted it the other day, when I was tired and wanted to hide, but instead went down the street to visit an Iraqi family who are going through a troubled time. On the way, I met little Huda in the street. I gave her a kiss; she gave me a piece of candy. Simple relationships, simple human connections – that's the way through.

– Sheila Provencher, Christian Peacemaker Teams-Iraq

God of hope, make us your light.

Day after day around supper time a mother and her three children walk by our living room window to the park across the street. The western sun illuminates her face. She looks tired, as do so many, many people here in Iraq. She looks a bit fearful too. Will today be the day the insurgents set off a car bomb near the park? Will today be the day the young men of the Iraqi National Guard, riding like cowboys in the back of their pickup trucks, get trigger happy and start shooting with her children in the line of fire. Underneath the fatigue and fear I sense hope and courage in her heart. It reflects on her children as the setting sun reflects on the nearby Tigris River. She lives in the present moment – aware of the dangers and uncertainties, yet not giving in to despair. She gives me courage to face the overwhelming difficulties of life in this broken land.

- Tom Fox, Christian Peacemaker Teams, abducted November 29, 2005 in Iraq

God of hope, make us your light.

Charge

Benediction