**Ash Wednesday**

**Christian Witness and Resistance- 17th February, 2021 at 7pm**

**A group of people protesting

Description automatically generated with low confidence**

**Welcome and Call to Worship**

L: To keep Lent is to confront the principalities and powers, firstly in prayer. With Jesus, we face the dark side of ourselves and repent of the violence within us. We remember that the Ministry of Defence is where the military violence, that threatens millions of lives, is being implemented.

The Government intends to maintain the UK’s nuclear weapons and disregard the UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

We too have responsibilities: to repent of these policies, to name them as challenges to the Gospel, to invite the Government to repent and turn away from a military security - which is based on threat, fear and the destruction of our planet.

**Prayer**

L Jesus, help us to follow you, deep into the waters of baptism, to put to death past wrongs, and to look for the coming of God’s kingdom

R Jesus, our brother, help us to follow you.

L Help us to follow your ministry of healing and restoration, so that we may work with you to cast out greed, resentment, hatred and fear.

R Jesus, our brother, help us to follow you.

L Help us to follow you into the desert, to fast with you, denying false values, refusing the ways of self-indulgence

R Jesus, our brother, help us to follow you.

l. Help us to follow you even to the cross, to seek our hope in your self-giving love, and to die to all that is not born of love.

R Jesus, our brother, help us to follow you.

**First Station Call to repentance**

**Introduction:**

L: Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God.

R: For the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

L: Even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart,

R: With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. Amen.

**Prayer:**

From dust we came

to dust we will return

We belong to God

We gather in penitence

we gather in confidence

We belong to God

At the beginning of Lent

at every moment of our lives

We belong to God *Ruth Burgess. Wild Goose Publications*

**Silence**

**Reading:** Isaiah 58: 4-8 (The Poverty and Justice Bible)

Do you think the Lord wants you to give up eating and to act as humble as a bent-over bush? Or to dress in sackcloth and sit in ashes?

Is this really what he wants on a day of worship?

I’ll tell you what it really means to worship the Lord.

Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly.

Free those who are abused!

Share your food with everyone who is hungry;

Share your home with the poor and homeless.

Give clothes to those in need;

Don’t turn away your relatives.

Then your light will shine like the dawning sun, and you will quickly be healed.

**Blessing of water and of ash/soil:**

*We bless our water and soil, as we hold a hand over them and say:*

L. Creator God we ask you to bless this water, already holy but blessed now for its use today. Creator God, we ask you to bless this soil, which we will use as a sign of repentance, and a mark of your salvation through Christ, who died for us and rose from the ashes of death to bring us eternal life. Amen

**Act of Penitence**

L: From the dust of the earth we were created.

R: To the dust we shall return

L: We have destroyed and squandered the resources of the earth.

R: May our repentance gather us into a new community, which cherishes the earth and all her people.

*We take some of the water and soil to anoint ourselves with the mark of the cross, and say:*

**I repent, and believe the Gospel. Amen**

***Silence***

**Second Station Lamentation**

**Introduction:**

**Litany of remembrance**

R1. We remember, with horror, the image of the mushroom clouds

that have resulted in death and destruction to so many people and to our precious world.

R2. We remember all those who lost family and friends in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the families that still mourn.

R1. We remember the children and young people who died, and those who died later of burns, sickness and leukaemia.

R2. We remember all survivors who lived with their wounds and terrible memories.

R1.We remember the doctors and nurses who treated the victims in the ruins of the cities and those who have suffered since.

R2. We remember the Indigenous People, whose lands have been used to mine for uranium, to test nuclear weapons and are now filled with our nuclear waste.

R1.We will remember the cost to all life of our world’s commitment to death through nuclear weapons.

R2. We remember all those who worked, and those who still work, for peace and healing with a commitment that grew from the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

*You are invited to hold up your papers with the places and people who have suffered*

**Prayer:**

Oh God

Your light surrounds us,

Your love enfolds us, and

Your power protects us.

Grant us the wisdom and courage

to turn back to you,

to abolish nuclear weapons, and

to seek true security built on

justice, respect for human life,

and the protection of creation,

in accordance with your will. Amen

**Third Station Repentance and Change of Heart**

**Introduction:**

L. Call us Lord Jesus to repent, to turn away from the culture of death and choose a culture of life. Give us the courage to speak and act against violence and militarism; nuclear weapons policies and the false peace they offer our world.

**Reading:** Joel Chapter 2:12-14 (New Jerusalem Bible)

“But now, now – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning”. Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent. Who knows if he will not turn again, will not relent, will not leave a blessing as he passes, oblation and libation for the Lord your God?

Taking our blessed water and soil, we write the word REPENT on our cloth or paper

**Silence**

L. The UK is committed to spending billions of pounds on Trident

From robbing the poor through catastrophic waste **R/ O Lord deliver us**

L. The Government promotes the benefits of employment on Trident

From the lie that we are economically dependent on Trident **R/ O Lord deliver us**

L. Our Government ministers ignore the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

From shutting our minds to the Treaty  **R/ O Lord deliver us**

*We hold our cross as we keep silence and pray for a change of heart*

*in the nine nuclear countries, including our own.*

**Prayer**

L: Creator God, the heavens are yours and the earth is yours. All our life belongs to you

**R/ Make us your messengers of peace and justice**

L: May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

**R/ Make us your messengers of peace and justice**

L: May all injustice, violence and oppression give way to justice, mercy and good will.

**R/ Make us your messengers of peace and justice**

L: Teach us to use the many resources of the earth so that none may waste and none may want.

**R/ Make us your messengers of peace and justice**

**Call and encouragement to change direction**

Pope Francis - Nagasaki 2019: ‘Our world is paradoxically marked by a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust, one that ends up poisoning relationships between peoples and obstructing any form of dialogue.’

**Fourth Station Thanksgiving**

R1. We give thanks for the coming into force of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. The treaty states that all ratifying countries will “never under any circumstances ... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.”

R2. We give thanks for the 122 countries who voted in favour of the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty, the 86 who have signed it, and the 52 whose governments have now ratified it.

R1. We give thanks for Pope Francis who has repeatedly voiced his support for the Treaty and appealed for all nations to work toward a world without nuclear weapons. The best way to do this, he said is by “contributing to the advancement of peace and multilateral cooperation, which humanity greatly needs.”

R2.We give thanks for the Faith Leaders and MPs who have spoken in support of the Treaty and we give thanks for all those who have worked tirelessly through the years for a nuclear free world.

**Silence**

**Action for Creation:**

*We take some of our seeds put them onto the soil and sprinkle them with water,*

*blessing them in hope for new life.*

**Sign of Peace and Blessing:**

*We now offer one another a sign of peace by holding our hand up to the screen and saying:*

**The Blessing of the God of Life be ours,**

**The blessing of the Living Christ be ours,**

**The Blessing of the Holy Spirit be ours**

**To cherish us, to help us, to make us holy.**

**What More Can we Do?**

• Set aside a time for regular prayer for an end to the Arms Trade and an end to nuclear weapons;

• Make our own commitment to nonviolence and encourage others to support and join Pax Christi and CCND;

• Contact our MPs, either to thank them for their support for the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty or to ask them to support it; Call on your local Council/Councillors to support the NWBT;

• The report ‘Banks, pensions and nuclear weapons: Investing in Change’ by Pax Christi, Christian CND and others. Use the information in the report to challenge your bank or pension provider on their investment in nuclear weapons; Link

• Read and use our Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty brochure. http://paxchristi.org.uk/2019/02/02/nuclear-weapon-ban-briefing

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