

Liturgy for East Congo Travel Seminar Closing Worship

Adapted from the Global Ministries (United Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ) Congo Sunday Liturgy, 2014

Call to Worship

In the midst of a world where people hunger and thirst . . .

Come worship a God who feeds the hungry.

In the midst of a world where people are abused and oppressed . . .

Come worship a God who calls for compassion and justice.

In the midst of a world filled with wars and rumor of war . . .

Come worship a God who desires nothing less than peace for the world.

In the midst of a world of spiritual emptiness . . .

Come worship a God who gives life meaning.

In the midst of a world of animosity and hate.

Come worship a God whose grace and love know no end.

Litany: Nzambe (God), Transform our Compassion into Action

For the Congolese man caught up in war and mistrust and power of the elite, who feels trapped by circumstance and no easy solutions, who searches for a way to survive and find a livelihood:

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese widow whose husband died in a war over rocks in the ground, who sells fish or makes soap or sews in hopes to provide enough food or shelter from the night. Who is afraid to walk alone through the tropical fields. Who wants her children to have a better life:

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese children who ache to learn to read or write but don't have schools or teachers or books or money. For those without enough to eat, or wear, or safe water to drink, who gaze with frightened eyes because life is not safe or carefree or guaranteed:

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese doctors and nurses who agonize over the children they can't reach or treat because the distance is too far, the medicines are not available, the needs are too great. Who watch little ones die of cholera for lack of access to what they need or treat the survivors of sexual trauma:

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese church that seeks to heal the wounds, whose spiritual wealth outweighs its material means, yet speaks hope to the suffering, provides opportunities and schools, builds wells and hospitals, that leads in ways of peace and praise, that gives heart and soul to serving the Lord:

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

Merciful and Mighty God, we thank you for allowing us to come before you with honesty and humility. We confess that we have allowed ourselves to become captivated by electronic gadgets, with little concern for those who labour to extract the precious raw materials from the earth. Please forgive us when our actions lead to the oppression of others. We confess that we have dismissed the deaths of nearly six million Congolese people and the displacement of an estimated 1.3 million more as sad but predictable outcomes of protracted regional conflict. Please forgive us when we ignore the pains and the joys of our neighbors near and far. When we feel like we can make no difference in the face of injustice and suffering, please redeem us and set us free with the good news that You are a God through whom all things are possible. When despair threatens to overwhelm, please fill us with your Spirit of hope and lead us forth with your saving love, which knows no bounds. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God is faithful, slow to anger and quick to forgive. God hears our confessions, forgives our sins, and gives us a new beginning. May we live in the assurance that we are God's forgiven people and empowered to break our deafening silence, speaking justice and defending those who are helpless and have no hope. Hear the Good News: you are forgiven, in Jesus' name.

Thanks be to God!

Scriptures

Proverbs 31:8-9

Luke 4:16-21

Prayer:

Creator God, Great Physician, we praise you for the blessing of Kyesharo and Panzi Hospitals and many other health centers that minister to the needs of the people in Congo. We have seen your healing hand as it manifests itself through those working long hours in difficult conditions to offer care to those who suffer. We give thanks for counselors, psychologists and social workers who help survivors of sexual violence to reclaim their lives. Surround the Congolese people, surround us as well, with your mercy and healing spirit as we pray for one another in all our afflictions, physical or spiritual. *Amen.*

Invitation to the Lord's Table:

This is the joyful feast of the people of God!
People will come from the north and the south
and from the east and the west
to sit at table in the kingdom of God.
This is the Lord's table.
Our Saviour invites those who trust him
to share the feast he has prepared.

We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus,
on the night before he died, took bread,

and after giving thanks to you, he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples saying:
Take, eat, this is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, Jesus took the cup saying:
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it do this in remembrance of me.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon these your gifts of bread and wine
that the bread we break and the cup we bless
may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

Jesus said: I am the bread of life.

Jesus said: I am the vine, you are the branches.
Come to me and never be hungry.
Believe in me and never thirst.

The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

Prayer after Communion

God of abundance,
with this bread of life and cup of salvation
you have united us with Christ,
making us one people.
Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit
that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world
and continue forever in the risen life
of Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Benediction

(English translation)

God bless Africa.
Guard her children.
Guide her rulers,
And give her peace for Jesus Christ's sake

(Lingala translation)

*Nzambe Pambola Congo
Batela bana na ye,
Lakisa bakonzi na ye nzela,
Pesa ye kimya, na kombo ya Yez u Kristu.*

-Written by Trevor Huddleston in An African Prayer Book Image and Doubleday, New York, NY (1995)
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