

Reduce Child Mortality

January, 2009



Call to Prayer:

*"Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."
-Jeremiah 31:15*

What does it take for a child to grow?



*Think how different each baby is from all others...
Think how each baby is a gift to his or her family...
Community....
To our world...*

*Think about all the different kinds of things a baby
needs to grow into an adult....*

Reflection *Prayer of the Children*

Intercessions

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

LEADER: Good and gracious God, you love each child into being long before it is born. We ask that you protect the health and safety of all women in childbirth and the children whom they bear, and inspire your people to work for an end to the deadly conditions which fuel maternal and child mortality throughout the world; that, in building strong and healthy families and communities, all may be strengthened to do your will on earth until the day when you gather us into one heavenly family. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray...

ALL: Amen.



Notes for using this prayer:

Please feel free to make adaptations to this prayer to meet the needs of your learning community. You may decide to add music before, during or after the pieces that are outlined here. Other materials needed:

- √ A copy of the 1st page of this document for each participant
- √ A bell, gong, drum or other instrument that can be used for the call to prayer.
- √ A leader of the prayer and additional readers if you decide to use them for the various parts.
- √ A small amount of Play Dough or some kind of modeling clay for each participant.
- √ Internet connection and equipment to view *Prayer for the Children*.
- √ A focal point for the prayer using a statue of mother and child (religious or other).
- √ A copy of the content below for the leader and/or readers.

Call to Prayer:

The LEADER reads the passage from Jeremiah 31:

"Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."

The leader then strikes a gong (or bell or drum) 20 times in one minute (once every 3 seconds).

The Leader continues: Who are the children Rachel mourns? Who are the children we pray for today? We heard the gong (or bell or drum) strike 20 times for the 20 children below the age of 5 that died in the past minute.

Close to 11 million children (under the age of five) die every year. That means 20 children die per minute, 30,000 children die per day. Nearly 4 million of these die before they are 28 days old. Most of the deaths are due to a handful of causes (like pneumonia, diarrhea, measles, malaria, and neonatal causes). We know how to prevent and/or treat all of these causes. Well over half of these deaths are associated with malnutrition. We know how to prevent and treat malnutrition. Close to 99 percent of these deaths are in low and middle-income countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Today we gather to pray for these children, and for efforts in our world to reduce the number of deaths among infants and young children.

What does it take for a child to grow?

Give each participant a small piece of play-dough or some kind of modeling clay (enough to easily make a clay sculpture of a baby). Ask them to make the clay into a figure of a baby. As they work the clay, have them think about the gift that each child is to their families, to their communities and to the world. When they have finished, have them name their clay baby.

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Once they have created a clay baby, ask them to take that baby and mold it into an adult. As they work, ask them to think about the question: what are all the different things a baby needs to grow into an adult?

(If you are doing this prayer in a classroom setting, you may want the participants to talk about the reflection questions with each other as they work with the clay. The participants may have difficulty making an adult out of the small amount of clay they have been given. With older participants it will lead to reflection on the resources necessary for a child to grow into an adult. With younger participants, you may need to help them make the connection.)

Once they have completed the exercise...have the participants place their clay figures near the focal point of the prayer space. As each participant brings their figure up...the LEADER asks: "What did you name this child?" The participants gives the name and the LEADER continues: "We pray that God's loving care embrace all children named (fill in the name) in our world." All the participants can be asked to respond: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reflection: *Prayer for the Children*

The following link is to a music video of *Prayer for the Children* by Kurt Bestor.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTZF1cqnQMg>

If you cannot show the video...you may want to have the participants listen to the music.

Have the LEADER introduce the reflection:

"Let's take a few moments of quiet prayer for the children we've named and all the children in danger of death around the world."

Intercessions:

(If you are in a classroom setting, you may want to invite the participants to offer spontaneous prayers based on their earlier reflections of what a child needs to grow. Then if desired you can move into the intercessions that follow...)

Leader: We pray for those precious children under the age of five who die every 3 seconds due to disease caused by unclean water, sanitation and poor nutrition. Lead us to reduce child mortality, we pray:

We pray for the more than 500,000 women who die each year from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Lead us to improve maternal health, we pray...

We pray for those building new maternity clinics to care for expectant mothers and newborns. May more organizations add to these efforts to provide services to reduce child mortality, we pray...

We pray for those studying to be midwives and other medical professionals dedicated to the care of mothers, infants and young children. Help them to use their gifts to reduce child mortality, we pray...

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We pray for all those working in programs to prevent malnutrition in children under five years of age. May their efforts grow in effectiveness to reduce child mortality, we pray....

We pray for all those working to provide mosquito netting in Africa where 94 percent of all child deaths attributed to malaria occur. May their efforts succeed in reducing child mortality, we pray....

Closing Prayer

LEADER: Good and gracious God, you love each child into being long before it is born. We ask that you protect the health and safety of all women in childbirth and the children whom they bear, and inspire your people to work for an end to the deadly conditions which fuel maternal and child mortality throughout the world; that, in building strong and healthy families and communities, all may be strengthened to do your will on earth until the day when you gather us into one heavenly family. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray...

ALL: Amen.