

PRAYER VIGIL

We offer to God our prayers, scriptures, song, silence and candlelight on behalf of detained CPMC pastor, Max Villatoro, his family, congregation, and thousands of other migrants fearing or facing detention and deportation, as well as immigration officials, lawyers, legislators

Centering Scripture: Leviticus 19: 1-2 & 33-34 (NRSV)

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.... When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.’”

Welcome

Gathering Song: HWB no. 142,

Brothers and Sisters of Mine

The Lament of God’s People [*adaptation of Psalm 142; see final appendix page below*]

Silence

Response Action: Candle Lighting

“There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle.”

Centering Scripture: Leviticus 19: 2 & 33-34 (NIRV)

“Speak to the whole community of [God’s people]. Tell them, ‘Be holy, because I am holy. I am the Lord your God.... Speak to the whole community of Israel. Tell them, ‘Be holy, because I am holy. I am the Lord your God. Suppose an outsider lives with you in your land. Then do not treat them badly. Treat them as if they were one of your own people. Love them as you love yourself. Remember that all of you were outsiders in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.’”

Silence

An Immigrant’s Story

[*Preferably one that represents the majority of those gathered, local if possible, reflecting our own shared identity as immigrants or descendants of immigrants*]

Silence

Max Villatoro’s Story

[*Vigil organizers can summarize Max’s testimony from his 9/28/14 sermon “Increasing Our Faith” at www.firstmennoniteiowacity.org/sermons-2014.html (minutes 24:45 – 50:00)*]

Silence

Centering Scripture: Leviticus 19: 2 & 33-34 (CJB)

“Speak to the entire community of Isra’el; tell them, ‘You people are to be holy because I, Adonai your God, am holy.... If a foreigner stays with you in your land, do not do him wrong. Rather, treat the foreigner staying with you like the native-born among you — you are to love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land.... I am Adonai your God.’”

Silence

“Immigration” Prayer

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Dear Lord, we are divided, unloving, prejudiced, at times inclined to misunderstanding ... intolerant. Make us instead united and loving, open to learning, understanding and forgiving. May your Spirit be present in us and in all peoples, drawing us together as one. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Jesus, we pray for the children who are US citizens, but live in fear of broken families because of the undocumented status of their parents. We think specifically of and lift up by name Max and Gloria’s children: Anthony, Etna, Angela, and Aileen. We pray that You may bring them hope as we work toward conversion of hearts and minds, and we pray that You would give Gloria strength as she endures separation from Max – as she struggles against fear and uncertainty, resentment and frustration. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Merciful Savior, we pray for the teens and young adults who were brought to this country as children and have now been deported to a country they barely know, that You will be with them and guide them to reunite with their families. Let us pray to the Lord, recalling that Jesus told His disciples, “Let the children come to Me,” that we too may welcome the children of immigrants and work to provide security and dignity to the lives of their families. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Loving Father, we pray for the immigrant children who have known only this country and work hard at school, that they may know the value of their work through the support of the DREAM Act. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Sojourning God, we pray for immigrant families, suffering in the shadows from poverty and brokenness, May You bless them and protect them as we all work for a just and peaceable community that is inclusive and loving to all Your children. We pray for immigrant families searching for life and dignity, that they may find it wherever You lead them as we work together in a continuing ministry of reconciliation. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Our Refuge and Strength, we recognize the pain, rejection, and fear surrounding immigration and we pray for the immigrant that faces rejection and pain in this country, that they may know the value of their life and work no matter where they live, and that they find a welcoming community here in this country, even here in Freeman. Even as we pray this we recall the fear that the disciples felt after the death of Jesus, and we ask that immigrants in this country may come to know the power and strength of the Holy Spirit through our welcoming embrace. May all people know that we stand together, not alone! Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Comforting Spirit, we pray that by seeing God's presence more clearly in every human life, we may repent of the ways that we have failed to honor, protect, and welcome all people as neighbors. We confess our complacency in the face of violence and we ask that we may become a haven of comfort and rest to *all* people regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Precious God, we pray for the many who work for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency and similar organizations whose decisions impact our communities and our homes. We pray not only for their wisdom, but for their compassion. We pray not for “stronger walls” to separate us, but for “wider doors” that draw us nearer to one another, for just laws that free those working in enforcement to welcome and bless, moving us from punitive measures and the criminalization of immigration to acts of reconciliation that see all people as beloved sisters and brothers, neighbors and friends. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Merciful Redeemer, we pray specifically for Max, pleading with You to intercede on his behalf. He is a tender of Your flock and a brother for whom we care deeply – a brother in chains. Take this cup from him if it be Your will. Bring release and relief and rejoicing. Bring hope and freedom. We release Max into Your hands, trusting in You. We release Max to You in the hope that You will see fit to bring him home.... In this Lenten season, echoing Jesus' plea, we cry, “not our will, but Yours be done.” Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: HWB no. 348,

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Amen.

A Word of Hope: Acts 12: 1-17

Silence

Closing Song: HWB no. 395,

Here I Am, Lord

(with verses; in Accompaniment Book if music needed for them)

Benediction: Leviticus 19: 2 & 33-34 (ESV)

“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.... When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.’”

“Speak to all the congregation of the people ... and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’”

Depart in Hope and Peace

Appendix

“The Lament of God’s People”

An Adaptation of Psalm 142: A Prayer for Deliverance

(Read this lament with true intensity of emotion)

¹I cry aloud to the LORD;

I howl in pain and anger.

I lift up my voice, shouting to the LORD for mercy.

²I pour out before him my complaint;

I fall on the ground in God’s presence,

before him I tell my trouble:

God, they have come to take Max away.

We dreaded it would come eventually, but it still shocks!

*After years of heart wrenching legal battles,
the “laws” have finally ripped his family apart.*

Where is justice in that!?!

I would shake my fist at you God, but I know you’re not at fault here...

³When my spirit grows faint within me,

it is you who watch over our way.

In the path where Max and his family and congregation walk

our country has hidden a snare for them.

⁴Look and see, there is no one left to protect him!!

no one is concerned for him who can actually do anything about his arrest.

Max has no refuge;

no one cares for his life or his family.

⁵I cry to you, LORD;

I say, “*You are our refuge,*

our portion in the land of the living.”

⁶If that’s *really* true, then listen up to our cry!!!

for we are in desperate need;

rescue Max from those who have pursued him,

for they are too strong for me, or him, or our congregation,

the laws are too big, too warped,

for the church, or the lawyers, or the ICE officials to help him.

⁷Only you, God, can set Max free from his prison.

So do it. Set Max free,

that we may praise your name.

If that happens, the righteous will gather

because of your goodness in showing mercy and justice!