



**Standing in the Need of Prayer, Volume II**

**Spiritual Voices**

**Envisioning Just Peacemaking in the Marketplace**

**Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries**

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First Published in 2016

Printed & bound in the United States by  
Church on the Hill (Swedenborgian), Boston, MA 02108

Distribution through Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries  
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Newton, MA 02458  
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## **Standing in the Need of Prayer, Volume II**

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## *Preface*

### *Prayer for Just Peacemaking in the Marketplace*

By Rev. Dr. Rodney L. Petersen, CMM Executive Director

*Rev. Dr. Rodney L. Petersen, PhD, is executive director of CMM. He came to this position after serving as the executive director of the Boston Theological Institute (BTI) for almost 25 years. He has taught in BTI member schools and overseas, in addition to facilitating workshops on restorative justice, reconciliation, interfaith just peacemaking, and community engagement. He is author and editor of a wide bibliography and co-founder of the Religion and Conflict Transformation program now centered at Boston University School of Theology. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., co-chair for the national committee for “An Interreligious Stance of the Presbyterian Church (USA),” and he serves on the board of several Greater Boston nonprofits.*

This is a booklet about reflections and prayers for *Just Peacemaking in the Marketplace*. Place is a geographical term, but it is also social, political and religious. And “marketplace” is a place as old as the first effort to form community. It is a space for the exchange of goods, but also for sharing thoughts, ideas and news. In Swahili, it is Sokoni, the place of exchange. It is a *souk* (Arabic), *bazaar* (Persian), a *mercado* (Spanish), or *palengke* (Philippines). There are many different kinds of markets. And, there is Main Street, Wall Street, and stock exchanges around the world.

Just as an audit of an organization can reveal the health of a company, an analysis of the marketplace reveals the health of a society. This analysis shapes our prayers and guides our work toward just peacemaking in the marketplace. The collapse of the marketplace in 2008 was an “x-ray of the country” (Jon Sobrino). It showed us the truth about our markets. It is an x-ray of the globalized world, characterized by the accumulation and consumption by the few at the expense of the many. Any prayers that do not take into account the scandal of this division and the poverty of many become cynical words.

One of the burdens of the twenty-first century is peacebuilding in relation to economic justice. As the eminent African-American ethicist Peter Paris admonishes: “We must remember always that social justice is not an abstract idea. Rather it is an empirical reality; it is specific, concrete, visible, and quantifiable.” It is a just peacemaking practice of just and sustainable economic development. Religious traditions have shown us many ways to foster *Foundations of the Responsible Society* (Walter Muelder, 1959). There is the example of Buddha’s life; tithing (giving ten percent of one’s income); the pillar of Islam *zakat* (alms giving); *tikkun olam* (the healing of the world); and then the words from Mark’s Gospel 10:21, “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21).

Peace and economic justice are interactive and shape prayer. Each conditions and is conditioned by the other. Social ethicist Nimi Wariboko argues that any approach to the study of peacebuilding that privileges peace at the expense of justice or vice versa is inadequate. The principles affirmed in these reflections and prayers affirm human dignity, the beginning of every prayer that is heard. Prayer finds that persons are to be treated as subjects, and never merely as objects in the marketplace. These prayers do this. Persons are always in the process of becoming, actualizing his or her potential through his or her own agency that is always grounded, mediated, and aided by community. It is an abuse of fundamental dignity when persons are taken advantage of by the more powerful. These reflections acknowledge the social nature of human beings: individuals need healthy community to become healthy persons. The nature of community is discerned by an audit of the marketplace. Markets are essential spaces for self-realization and human flourishing, but can also be abusive and destructive. For this reason all religious traditions argue for equitable weights and measures in the marketplace.

Every person, by virtue of his or her membership in a community, has the right to active participation in the process of seeking and ordering the common good of the community. "Discerning the body"; as Saint Paul informs us, is about being sensitive to issues that cause alienation, divisions, fractures in the social body, alert to the sufferings of its weak, marginalized, and disinherited members; and being compassionate enough to care for the harmony of the whole body. Money is a reflection of social relations in the light of the dynamic interaction of meaning, value, participation, and voice.

In a booklet of reflections and prayers such as this, questions of equity come to the fore like, "*What do we mean when we say God?*" This question is raised by former priest and Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in his book, *Eyes of the Heart: Seeking a Path for the Poor in the Age of Globalization* (2002). It is one that resonates differently for one growing up in Cité Soleil, Port-au-Prince's largest slum, than for one living in Palm Beach, Florida, USA. But if "God" means "God," then the term has the same referent whether one is impoverished or wealthy and issues of prayer and work come together around just peacemaking before a common court of appeal.

We can make no excuses for it, but the question of social privilege was and is one of the issues being played out in our world today where many of the young are impoverished and without employment, or prospect of it. Social alienation and division foster marginalization and disinheritance, a wound in the body politic, at a very time in history when globalization brings us into more immediate proximity to one another. John H. Yoder observes that "The world of the twenty-first century will not be able to back away from having become one world." The nature of that one world is discerned in our markets and in our prayers and work for just peacemaking in the marketplace.

## A BAHA'I OFFERING

*Ramin Abrishamian is a Baha'i. He was born in Iran and attended high school and university in England and Scotland, respectively. With his wife and two children he has been a long time resident of Needham, MA. He was trained as a Chemical Engineer and has been engaged in commercializing new technologies and businesses for the past three decades. He has served in a number of administrative capacities with the Baha'i Community. He has represented the Baha'i Community at the Needham Clergy Association and been its Treasurer since 2006. He is a founding member, director and officer of Needham Diversity.*

The idea of a "marketplace" is as old as the earliest attempts of humanity to form communities. In its simplest form, it is a place where people gather to sell, buy and trade their goods and services. As our societies and communities grew in size and complexity, our conception of the marketplace and its role has become more complex and intrinsic to our lives. Unfortunately, also since the beginning of time, some of humanity's worst individual and communal moral failures have been a common theme in our relationship with the marketplace.

Greed and dishonesty have often been the driving force in transactions among individuals and groups for manipulating the marketplace to gain unfair advantages or benefits. Furthermore, even countries have gone to war against their neighbors for the purpose of gaining dominance on markets. Therefore, it is no wonder that all the religions and many moral philosophers since the earliest times have offered moral guidance regarding human behavior and responsibility in the marketplace. For example, Deuteronomy 25:13-16 and Leviticus 19:35-36 promote honesty in weights and scales. Throughout the Gospels, Christ gives numerous warnings to his followers about the evils of greed and the importance of fair and honest dealings in their financial transactions. In the Quran also, there are many instructions regarding the requisite moral standards for economic and financial interactions among individuals and communities, for example, At-Touba: 34.

The Baha'i Faith, which is the most recent of the major monotheistic religions, started by Baha'u'llah (1817 – 1892), also extensively addresses the moral requisites that both an individual and society need to observe to foster a just and effective marketplace. Baha'u'llah taught that human beings are fundamentally spiritual beings and the journey through this material world is necessary for acquiring and perfecting spiritual attributes and qualities. Therefore, the many challenges and problems that people encounter, including those associated with working in the marketplace, should be considered in the light of fundamental spiritual principles, such as selflessness, generosity, justice, trustworthiness, honesty, detachment from material wealth, and humility, are foundational to the presence of justice, tranquility and peace in the marketplace. However, to make these qualities a part of our interactions and community behavior they need to become internalized, otherwise they will be just empty ideals and thoughts. Baha'i teachings state that daily meditation, reflection, and prayer are essential for instilling these spiritual qualities into our daily interactions and behavior.



## **A Spiritual Offering from the Baha'i Tradition:**

The following reflections and prayers form the basis for those who seek to practice justice and achieve peace in the marketplace:

*"O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes." - Baha'u'llah*

*"We entreat God to deliver the light of equity and the sun of justice from the thick clouds of waywardness, and cause them to shine forth upon men. No light can compare with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquility of the nations depend upon it." - Baha'u'llah*

*"Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired." - Abdu'l-Baha*

*"O MY SERVANT! The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds." - Baha'u'llah*

*"O Lord! Unto Thee I repair for refuge, and toward all Thy signs I set my heart. O Lord! Whether traveling or at home, and in my occupation or in my work, I place my whole trust in Thee. Grant me then Thy sufficing help so as to make me independent of all things, O Thou Who art unsurpassed in Thy mercy! Bestow upon me my portion, O Lord, as Thou pleasest, and cause me to be satisfied with whatsoever Thou hast ordained for me. Thine is the absolute authority to command." - The Báb*

## A ROMAN CATHOLIC OFFERING

*Sister Linda Bessom, SND de N., is currently the Outreach and Senior Community Organizer for the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (Lynn, MA). Sister Linda leads the Coalition's public policy Campaign to Strengthen EAEDC (Emergency Aid for the Elderly, Disabled and Children). She is also Co-chair of Pax Christi USA - Beverly, MA, and a member of the USA Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Anti-Racism Team and is a former elementary school teacher.*

The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (Lynn, MA) has provided valuable services to poverty stricken households who are at risk or facing homelessness since 1981. Our mission is to eradicate homelessness in the Commonwealth, and is steadfast in the belief that homelessness can be resolved by long term solutions, such as: homelessness prevention, supplying safe, affordable, permanent housing for the lowest income households; accessing services and opportunities for families and individuals to build economic stability; and involving those most impacted in this process of just, structural change.

In 2016, the Coalition will continue to find solutions to poverty and homelessness. Each of the Coalition's initiatives plays a critical role in helping children growing up in poverty to have the tools needed to be prepared for school. One of these initiatives is ensuring all children, regardless of their socioeconomic levels, are able to receive an education. For the past eleven years, the Coalition's Homelink Initiative has been working within public schools to assist students and their families who are at risk of becoming homeless.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in Massachusetts a minimum wage worker would have to work 110 hours a week to afford a basic two-bedroom apartment (\$1,281 fair market rent). Poverty is one of the main reasons why so many are homeless. We also have a housing shortage of more than 174,000 units for extremely low-income households. Without an adequate safety net homelessness prevention funding and affordable housing for low-income households, it is very difficult for people who have an economic setback through loss of a job or illness. This is why the Coalition has a strong advocacy public policy program to address the structures that cause homelessness and is the main reason why I have worked with the Coalition for so long.

Catholic Social Teaching on justice and the common good requires that those with the greatest need must have the first, most urgent claim on society's resources, especially in claiming what is rightfully theirs (food, healthcare, housing, education, just wages, etc.) due to their basic human dignity. For this reason, I have chosen Matthew 13:33 as the source of my action, involvement in anti-racism organizing, and justice work. I feel this is the most radical sentence in the Christian Scriptures.

## **A Spiritual Offering from the Roman Catholic Tradition:**

### Leaven Prayer

Matthew 13:33, *"The 'Kin-dom' of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened."*

O loving God, with your help and strength today, I will hide with others the leaven of:  
Love, justice, mercy, nonviolence and peace in the 50 pounds (three measures) of flour you set  
before me: in my community, neighborhood, state, country and world; as I go about this day;  
Trusting that with the right combination of water, heat, darkness, and kneading...  
especially with my sisters and brothers on the margins who are struggling to claim what is  
rightfully theirs, and with other companions on this journey;  
Then New life will rise that will transform  
    hate into love, and respect for basic human dignity,  
    despair into hope,  
    war into shalom,  
    homelessness into housing for all,  
    institutional racism into racial justice,  
    poverty into economic justice and well-being for all;  
    violence into a culture of nonviolence and deep peace;  
    degradation of Earth into healing and justice for Earth;  
Where everyone will be invited and included to share your Bread around this Table of New Life  
and Love. Amen.

## A BUDDHIST OFFERING

*Nadia Colburn is an OI aspirant (Order of Interbeing (OI) in the tradition of Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village). She is a writer, spiritual coach and workshop leader who brings together the head and the heart for personal and communal healing. Nadia is a founding editor at Anchor Magazine of Still Harbor, an organization “where spirituality and social justice meet.”*

The Buddhist loving kindness (metta) is a meditation, blessing and prayer that offers an orientation to the world at every level, including the economic, and can help us move towards greater prosperity and economic justice. The wisdom in this meditation, which is thousands of years old, is profound, and the effects can be transformative.

For a fulfilled, happy life, our wish is for protection, safety, contentment, physical well being, and a limit to tragedy or great hardship. To this traditional metta meditation, I have added a final wish for creative expression and fulfillment, which I believe is essential for a fulfilled life.

In this meditation, one starts first by wishing these conditions for oneself, as in the version of the prayer printed below, using the pronoun I. One practices for some period of time for oneself. Then, when one feels ready, one extends one's wishes to a loved one, changing the pronoun from I to You or using a particular name. Next one chooses an acquaintance and extends one's wishes to him or her. The next step is more challenging, wishing for an enemy (or someone one does not like) to have these positive conditions, and finally, one extends positive wishes out to all living beings.

Doing this meditation expands one's heart and awareness of others' suffering and need for well being. At first the meditation may seem overly simple, but if we were to follow its wisdom, we would contribute to transforming our world. In this way everyone would become more kind and generous not only on an individual level, but also on an institutional level.

On an economic level, many people recognize that our current system does not provide the conditions that we wish for in this metta prayer. Poverty and economic and social inequality prevent countless people from being protected and secure. When we practice metta, we wish that everyone has sufficient material conditions. Everyone needs to be able to afford nutritious food, the opportunity of having a good paying, safe and respectable job, health insurance and the possibility of receiving a good education.

This version of metta meditation prays not only that people “be” protected and safe and contented but also that they “feel” these conditions. For this emotional security, we need not only the material conditions of well being but also a social system in which people do not need to live in fear of losing them. Only then can people have the emotional freedom and security that we pray for in metta. Our current cut-throat economic system, in which some people

possess great amounts and the vast majority experience deprivation and insecurity, creates stress and ill-being for everyone.

At the same time that we wish for material conditions of enough-ness and security, practicing metta shifts our orientation so that we can assess how many material goods we really need in order to feel satisfied. Often what we need is not more material possessions, but a more just, caring community, and a more equitable economic system.

I use a version of the metta prayer in which we also wish for our own light to shine without obstacles, and for the light of all beings to shine. We acknowledge the ways in which we are all unique and precious beings with insights, creative abilities, and love.

Living in the light of one's creativity and love allows our Buddha nature to manifest. Our hope is to work to create a world in which each person is respected, honored and valued. Our present economic system devalues the individual light and needs of many individuals and, ultimately, limits the incredible human potential of our economy.

Practicing Buddhist metta meditation can help us transform our economy as we learn to see that our own personal fulfillment is inextricably bound to the well being of others, helping us recognize that each of us depends upon the well being of all of us. Similarly, we come to see that our own personal light is unique and at the same time part of a collective whole.

This reflection is not a simple prescription for economic vitality and well being, but if we allow it to penetrate our heart, and if we make our actions and decisions from that place, the world will be not just more safe and stable but also more economically sound, prosperous and joyful.

### **A Spiritual Offering from the Buddhist Tradition:**

It is best to sit in an upright position, legs crossed if possible; this position facilitates concentration and the flow of energy throughout your body. The particular wording of this metta meditation is from Buddhist teacher, Sylvia Boorstein, with a final line that I have added. As you continue to practice with this prayer, you will change the pronouns so that the prayer is directed toward others.

May I feel protected and safe.  
May I feel contented and pleased.  
May my physical body support me with ease.  
May my life unfold smoothly with ease.  
May my light shine unobstructed with ease.

## A CHRISTIAN OFFERING

*Paul Drake is the director and lead organizer at Massachusetts Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ). Paul also served as the North Shore regional coordinator for the Raise Up Massachusetts campaign to raise the minimum wage and win earned sick time in 2014 and continues to draw people of faith into the advocacy process. Paul studied social ethics at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, where he graduated with Masters of Arts in Religion in 2011. He cherishes collaboration and helping people find their voice for social and economic justice.*

Be maladjusted. That is part of the wisdom of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, as reaffirmed by modern day prophets such as Dr. King, regarding the injustice that bedevils our economic and social relationships.

"If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still" (Ecclesiastes 5:8).

Relationships are notably at the core of most faith traditions' ethical teachings: love, justice, mercy. And relationships are also at the core of our market economy: customer/seller, worker/manager, retailer/distributor, owner/financier, lender/debtor. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and Judeo-Christian traditions draw our attention to not only the tragic result of poverty but to the human agency that so often causes it. We are inherently in relationship whenever we participate daily in the economy. The oppression of the poor is simply the economic consequence of not following the biblical ethic of "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Thus, the Scriptures ask "What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" (Isaiah 3:15). And they set forth bedrock visions of debt forgiveness, slave release, land restoration, and sharing of resources, a dramatic and regular reorienting of relationships from economic inequality and power imbalances towards a shalom, where "the goal is equality" (II Corinthians 8:14; cf. Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15:1-18; Acts 2:44-45).

Today, more and more workers from the margins bring forth their stories of exploitation through movements like the Fight for 15, speaking out in the streets, in businesses, in congregations and in the halls of power. A clear pattern of systemic exploitation has emerged: widespread poverty wages, sexual harassment, discrimination, abusive scheduling practices, minimal access to paid or even protected leave, rampant wage theft, and employee surveillance and pressure tactics used to clamp down on any resistance. This all at a time of record corporate profits and record wage lows, as a share of the economy. This is exactly the kind of brokenness and inequality in human relationships our Scriptures relate so clearly.

The exploitation at the core of our economic relationships is perhaps made most clear by the pernicious epidemic of wage theft, where workers are not even paid fully their already

insufficient wages, as Interfaith Worker Justice has helped bring to light. More money is lost each year to wage and hour violations in the United States than to petty robbery and burglary: \$50 billion in stolen wages more than triple the \$14 billion in stolen possessions. Not paying people for their labor is an age-old problem as we know from our own Scriptures, which confront not just slave owners but wage defrauders (Deuteronomy 24:14-15; James 5:1-6). The direct financial relationship between employers and workers means the opportunity to steal is readily available. We ought not be surprised. Instead we must have eyes that see and ears that hear, so that the cries of the oppressed are not heard by God alone but by also we the community.

As workers come forth, they not only speak out, but they take the significant action of organizing strikes, boldly declaring "workers deserves their wages," (Luke 10:7) because "whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest" (I Corinthians 9:10). The marketplace is often lauded as a place of voluntary collaboration. A work stoppage by workers takes this contractual relationship seriously as workers exercise their agency to refrain from offering their labor in return for substandard terms, which honor neither workers' human needs nor their daily contributions in meeting our needs. Without that ability, the market's freedom is illusory and its peace false, as people find their weak position leveraged against them, irrespective of their needs and limits as human beings.

"They dress my wounds of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 8:11)

The momentary disruptions of strikes and protests prompt us to acknowledge the permanent disruption embedded daily in our economic relationship: widespread poverty wages, wages stolen on a large scale, exclusion, eviscerated work-life boundaries, and workplace intimidation and retaliation on top of all that in the face of any attempt to organize against these conditions.

These sobering economic realities are vitally important to behold, especially since they too often lay just beyond view. This dynamic of hidden abuse underscores the ability of the powerful to obfuscate the abuse their models are based on. "Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed" (John 3:19-20).

Thus, when we create space to hear the urgency of the stories of workers, we recognize their humanity, as our system does not. We are invited and indeed called then to bear true witness to our shared human dignity and mutual human needs, not just workers with utilitarian value only. Therefore, people working throughout our economy need our support in overcoming systemic exploitation in order to make real these human truths in their economic relationships. Our Scripture and traditions call us to this solidarity and herald a greater light we participate in by

doing so: "If you do away with the yoke of oppression... then your light will rise in the darkness" (Isaiah 58:9-10).

### **A Spiritual Offering from a Christian:**

Being maladjusted to the world's brokenness then, is a holy discipline for each of us. May we follow in words and practice of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to prepare our hearts to do the work of justice in all our relationships, declaring:

*There are some things in our nation and some things in our world, for which I am proud to be maladjusted, and I call upon all men of goodwill to be maladjusted to these things until the good society is realized. I must honestly say to you I never intend to adjust myself to racial segregation and discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few and leave millions of God's children smothering in an airtight cage of poverty, in the midst of an affluent society.*



## A PROTESTANT OFFERING

*Rev. Dr. Stan G. Duncan is a Protestant pastor with the United Church of Christ. He holds degrees in both theology and economics and has written, served, and taught in both fields. He lived and worked in Central America as an economic development advisor for a number of non-profit organizations. He has been a commentator for public radio's Marketplace and a columnist for the Huffington Post. His most recent book is *The Greatest Story Oversold, Understanding Economic Globalization* (2010).*

At one level, Protestant Christianity, and my Calvinist, Reformed, Congregational branch of it, has little that distinguishes it from prayer in general and prayer for justice in particular. The 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian, Paul Tillich, introduced the "Protestant Principle," stating that nothing is God but God, and no government, corporation or ideology can have God-like control over the world or its inhabitants. When we were at our best, this has informed and undergirded our theological and political critique of the "Principalities and Powers" and has moved us towards saving lives, protecting the earth and reducing oppression.

Early in the evolution of Protestant prayer there was a thread of "justice in the marketplace," the call to stand up to power on behalf of the abused. The Reformers built it into their structure of public prayer that contained three elements: "Adoration and Praise," to introduce the prayer and open one to God; "Thanksgiving," which showed gratitude for having been loved by God; and "Confession, Supplication and Intercession," which could carry the ethical weight of the prayer. Here the worshiper could lift up individual or corporate sins (confession), pray for relief from them (supplication) and pray for the hurts of others (intercession). So, in addition to praying for our own sorrows, these elements helped express a larger concern for the physical, spiritual, economic and political suffering of others.

Generally, we have preferred condemning the sins of individuals rather than corporate sins of oppressive groups over those individuals. There was a time in the 1960s and 1970s when a healthy minority of our churches experimented with rediscovering the prophetic voices of Amos and Isaiah and Jesus. Those years strengthened movements for human rights, civil rights, women's rights, and world peace. But for a variety of reasons the movement dissipated; perhaps the pullback from justice ministries happened at the same time as the millions of justice progressives migrated from our churches.

*What would a prayer for justice in the marketplace look like today?* There is certainly no shortage of biblical calls for advocacy for the poor, or global concerns that they can be applied. While poverty has swelled and the middle class has shrunk, the wealth of the minority at the top has grown to astounding levels. The lion's share of campaign donations come from the wealthy, and studies consistently show they have little interest in changing living wages, clean air, and universal health care.

Prayer, during this age of skewed wealth and growing poverty has to be done daily and hourly, and if necessary, as St. Francis once said, use words. Prayer means writing letters to Congress and local newspapers. Prayer can also mean arranging a meeting or rally to talk about legislation affecting the minimum wage, or unjust international trade deals. Prayer means joining with other organizations to magnify your voice, like Bread for the World, Jubilee USA and Interfaith Worker Justice. Prayer also means words of praise and intercession to God who feeds our souls and gives us strength. Following this model, such a prayer from my branch of Protestantism might look something like this.

## **A Spiritual Offering from the Protestant Tradition:**

Adoration and praise

O God of all that ever was, or is, or ever will be,

You have made us and enabled us and empowered us with life and joy and complexity,

We are yours, the hands of your creation.

The agents of your reconciliation

In you we find peace and solace in a land of fear,

In you we find hope. Thanksgiving.

We thank you, O God for the gift of life itself, which we take for granted.

We thank you for the majesty of this planet that overwhelms us with beauty

We thank you for the warmth of relationships that touch us, and stun us, and give our lives meaning.

And we thank you for the lives of others all over the world,

Those who are our cousins in creation,

Those who live in great bounty, and

those who live in great poverty,

for they are our brothers and sisters, near and far,

and all have received your blessings,

and all have blessed your planet.

Confession, supplication, intercession,

Have mercy on us.

For we have not often lived up to the generosity and joy which you have given us.

We have turned our backs on you and your children,

and attempted to go our own way and rule our own worlds.

Place before our eyes the needs of the homeless and hurting and hungry in our towns.

Place before us their faces and their lives so that we cannot look away and say we did not know.

Don't let us hide, don't let us look away...and then change us.

Remind us of the complicity that we who are comfortable share in the creation of the poverty so close to our homes.

Remind us of our national complicity in the creation of poverty and racism and hate that weakens our souls.

Make us grieve over our own roles in the crushing poverty that grows in our nation, the wealthiest on earth,

Make us weep over the conditions that so many have to live in to stay alive, and

Make us angry at those who control the power in capitals and corporations, who like the world just the way it is.

Amen.

## AN EPISCOPAL OFFERING

*Rev. Dr. Norm Faramelli is an Episcopal priest and teacher. As Lecturer at Boston University School of Theology for over 12 years, he taught courses in philosophy, theology, and ethics. He also was an adjunct at Episcopal Divinity School in Christian Ethics, and for many years coordinated the Ethics Colloquium at the Boston Theological Institute. Norm currently serves on the Board of Massachusetts Interfaith Worker Justice, a group he has been affiliated with for over 15 years.*

Several years ago, as I was marching with a group protesting injustice to workers, I heard the chant “No Justice, No peace”. The chant has been recently and extensively used in the Black Lives Matter and other movements. The origin of the chant goes back to the days of Martin Luther King, Jr. At a protest on December 14, 1967, outside a California prison (where civil rights protesters were being held), King exclaimed: “There can be no justice without peace, and no peace without justice”. In that speech, he also noted that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. King understood profoundly that peace and justice must always go together hand in glove.

Most of us understandably desire both justice and peace in the marketplace, but the marketplace is a vast arena and the problems are manifold and diverse. For instance, there are serious issues confronting the middle-class workers as high paying manufacturing jobs are being replaced by low paying jobs in the service sector. There are serious issues of a “just price,” absurd executive salaries, and reasonable profit margins. There are issues of Wall St. versus Main St., where almost all of the financial benefits of economic growth and development are going to the top 1 to 5 percent. The list goes on and on, and one of major justice issues in our society is the struggle of low-wage workers, mostly in the service sector, many of whom are immigrants from Central and South America, Africa and Asia. That brings us to the work of an organization in which I am involved.

Mass Interfaith Worker Justice (MIWJ) is focused primarily on workers who are on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. Recently, there were struggles for an increased minimum wage (enacted last year in MA), and earned sick time (passed via ballot initiative last year), but much more remains to be done. There are the struggles for family medical leave, decent health benefits, safe working conditions, etc. There is the endless struggle for workers to organize into labor unions, (and these workers) who are repeatedly threatened and attacked by managers and owners. Mass Interfaith has been involved with examples of low wage earners: janitors, security guards, cleaning crews, cafeteria and hotel workers, workers at our universities. Part of that struggle is now focused on paid family medical leave for workers, as well as the “Fight for 15,” a push for a higher minimum wage of \$15 per hour at fast-food establishments and other large companies.

On the Mass Interfaith T shirts one can find a slogan: “The work of Justice will be Peace,” based on Isaiah 32:17, or that the effects of justice and righteousness will result in peace. The full text in Isaiah 32:16-17 reads: “Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.” The prophet Isaiah knew that Peace and Justice are inseparable.

In demonstrations and in conversations with low-wage workers, it clear that they are calling for respect; they want to be seen as part of a common humanity, not as second-rate expendable employees. It is also clear that there needs to be a common understanding of what it means to be made in the image of our Creator (Imago Dei). If that spark of the divine is recognized in each person, then that recognition must result in showing respect for all people. The two words frequently heard at worker justice rallies, are “dignity” and “respect”. Respecting the inherent dignity of every human being can influence and change our behavior. There is a need for safe and more humane working conditions, adequate health care benefits, work schedules that are not totally disruptive to family life, etc. The key words are, indeed, dignity and respect.

The emphasis on dignity and respect requires that we find our common humanity, which has ramifications for the way we treat all people, (especially those most neglected—) such as the low-wage workers, who come from a diversity of nations and cultures. “Just Peace” is a reminder that peace is not simply the absence of armed hostilities, although we certainly could use more of that in our violent and turbulent world today. The peace we need is in the tradition of shalom—encompassing the dimensions of harmony, reconciliation, and, above all, justice in the social, political, and particularly, the economic arenas.

As we work for a Just Peace in the Marketplace, we bring different religious traditions to our endeavors. Each tradition gives us a different window into the divine—a divine that is both transcendent and immanent- beyond us, and near and in us. As a Christian, my belief places a strong emphasis on the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ. That understanding provides my window into the divine reality. But I believe that no one religion has a monopoly on absolute truth claims. God has and continues to speak in many different ways and in a variety of tongues.

A valuable exercise for each of us is to recite the prayers in traditions other than our own. Let us recover that sense of transcendence that the God whom we worship is beyond any words that we can utter. Yet, the divine Spirit is near us and in us as well. When we do that, we will obtain deeper insights into what it means to share our common humanity- where ethnic, racial, economic and social barriers are confronted, but ultimately overcome.

## **A Spiritual Offering from Episcopal Tradition:**

The following prayers are from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer:

God of Peace: "O God of Peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we will be saved and in quietness and confidence will be our strength: by the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence where we may be still and know that you are God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." (p 832)

For the Human Family: "O God, you made us in your own image, and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love, and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen." (p. 815)

## A SECULAR, CULTURAL JEWISH OFFERING

*Michael D. Felsen, Esq., has spent most of his professional life as a lawyer committed to enforcing the rights of employees under a host of federal worker protection laws. For six years he was president of Boston Workmen’s Circle, a Jewish educational, cultural, and social justice-focused community organization. He has written extensively on these subjects; his op-eds and letters have been published in The Boston Globe, The Jerusalem Post, Haaretz, Common Ground News Service, and many other publications. The reflections below reflect his personal words, not his official or professional capacity.*

Perhaps Pope Francis said it best: “Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?”

Just Peace in the Marketplace is desperately needed today in Massachusetts, throughout the United States, and throughout the world. America has more wealth and income inequality than any major developed country on earth, and the gap between the very rich and everyone else is wider than at any time since the 1920s; and, we have the highest childhood poverty rate of any developed country on earth. These are moral challenges, and they cry out to all of us to take them seriously.

Boston Workmen’s Circle (“BWC”), a Jewish educational, cultural, and social justice-focused community that I had the honor of serving as president for six years, has long been concerned with justice in the marketplace. The men and women who built the Workmen’s Circle were Jews who fled the poverty, oppression, and rising violence of Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They came to America to build new lives. Their new fraternal organization provided benefits that poor immigrants were otherwise denied: health benefits, sick benefits, death and funeral benefits, a bustling social services department, and homes for the aged. The Declaration of Principles adopted in 1901 at the first Workmen’s Circle Convention proclaimed:

*“The constant want and frequent illness which particularly afflict the workers have led us to band together in the Workmen’s Circle, so that by united effort we may help one another. The Workmen’s Circle knows that the aid which it can bring to the worker today is no more than a drop on a hot stone. It will do in time of need. But that there shall be no need—this is the true ideal. The Workmen’s Circle desires to be one more link in the workers’ bond of solidarity, ultimately bringing on the day of complete emancipation from exploitation and oppression.”*

The Workmen’s Circle came to be known as the Red Cross of Labor responding to the country’s industrial disasters of the time.

Exploitation and oppression have hardly disappeared from the marketplace. And while Workmen's Circle's own members have largely been "emancipated" from those bonds, we recognize their painful weight still burdens far, far too many in this wealthiest country on earth, and across our planet.

What can we do? For many years, BWC's Sunday School classes have led our community in a "protest against sweatshops," targeting businesses engaged in policies and practices harmful or unfair to workers. In each case, the students presented a letter setting out the claim and asking that the company address it. One example of their efforts was when the students asked Trader Joe's to support the Immokalee, Florida tomato farm workers in their quest for fair pay and dignity. The Immokalee campaign, supported by other Jewish organizations including T'ruah -- a Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, and the Jewish Labor Committee-- was ultimately successful. It created a Fair Food Program that raises the wages of tomato pickers and ensures fair, regulated working conditions in the fields, effectively ending working conditions that were tantamount to slavery. BWC also seeks higher wages for workers and supports the "Fight for Fifteen", a minimum \$15/hour pay rate for fast food workers.

BWC's Acting for Racial and Economic Justice ("AFREJ") committee has also joined with other like-minded groups to address economic justice challenges in our local community. For example, AFREJ recently helped ensure that in Massachusetts both temporary and domestic workers have a "Right to Know" the terms and conditions of their employment—which wasn't assured before these bills became law. Additionally, mindful of the serious attention that's due the "Black Lives Matter" movement, BWC has begun an internal process of self-reflection and evaluation. How do we, as individuals and as a community, address and contribute to the terribly destructive effects of institutional racism on people of color? Can our work for economic justice help pave a path to racial justice as well?

Just Peace in the Marketplace includes these issues, and so many more. So this year, as Pope Francis suggests, let's commit to a set of new commandments that address workers' needs and rights:

- No worker shall be a victim of forced labor or human trafficking
- No worker shall be a victim of discrimination based on race, gender, sexual preference, gender identity, or other such criteria
- All workers, whether documented or not, and regardless of what job they hold, shall be treated with dignity and respect
- All workers shall be paid a living wage, and have safe and healthy working conditions
- All workers shall have a full opportunity to join a union
- All workers shall be protected from retaliation for exercising their workplace rights

And, let's think long and hard about how we might implement this overarching economic justice commandment:

- Income and wealth inequality in this country shall be fairly and systemically addressed.



## **A Meditation from the Secular, Cultural Jewish Tradition:**

Let's inquire and let's consider, when we patronize a restaurant or buy a factory-made product: are the workers treated with respect; are their conditions safe and healthy; are they paid enough to support themselves and their families? If not, shouldn't we be looking elsewhere?

And in this nation that prides itself on being a democracy, but where moneyed interests hold undue sway, let's commit to electing leaders who cannot be bought, whose value systems hold economic justice as an unshakable pillar, and who are prepared to work hard to make it a reality.

If we make these commitments and find the willpower to honor them, we will surely move closer, step by step, to Just Peace in the Marketplace, so needed, and yet thus far so elusive.

Let's recall this still-relevant but little-known verse from Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land," penned in 1940, more than 75 years ago:

*In the squares of the city—*

*In the shadow of the steeple*

*Near the relief office—I see my people*

*And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'*

*If this land's still made for you and me.*

*Let's pledge to do all we can to make sure this land's promise – to offer everyone a chance to share fairly in its bounty – proves to be more than a distant dream.*

## A HUMANITARIAN OFFERING

*Kimball Gallagher is a classical pianist, entrepreneur and humanitarian. He has performed more than 300 concerts in the past 4 years across all 7 continents and 30 countries. His organization 88 International (88 for the 88 keys on the piano) initiates international music festivals and education programs in select countries around the world including Tunisia, Myanmar and Taiwan. At CMM's fall fundraiser, he treated an audience of 100 to a spectacular concert that included pieces from many countries representing their diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. We were inspired by his work internationally, sharing his humanitarian stories with us at our Global Harmony Through Music concert.*

Music remains, after centuries, a convening force around the world. It offers a source of hope and, at times, the possibility for transformation both spiritually and economically. Several years ago, I participated in an innovative 6-city concert tour in India that raised the awareness of waste pickers in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, and other cities. Waste pickers organize and sort garbage for a living and in most cities in India, this work, while providing a clear benefit to the community, is not legal. A group of NGOs has taken on the work of legitimizing their profession and mitigating the risks associated with it. The concert tour included piano works by Beethoven and Liszt, and 2 world premieres by lesser known composers, works that combined Indian and Western influences. Additionally, I composed a short piano piece in each city dedicated to a particular waste picker whose life had been positively impacted by the NGO.

I explain during my concerts that the greatest of western classical composers were experts in "economy of means," a concept essential to environmentalism and waste processing. Beethoven, for example, uses the barest of raw materials, a musical motif of 3 notes, from which he created a masterpiece of epic proportions, the famous "Moonlight" Sonata. In Pune, I created western style piano accompaniment in collaboration with a choir of waste pickers singing songs in their native tongue describing their experiences. This project was inspired by the Delhi based NGO, Chintan, whose founder, Bharati Chaturvedi, received one of the first ever Innovation Award for the Empowerment of Women and Girls from Hillary Clinton (worth \$500,000 USD). Chintan's main initiative evolved to the point where it organized waste pickers into a recognized labor force and also removed children from this labor force and put them in school. With such important recognition, an innovative concert tour was an apt addition to the swell of support for Chintan and other waste picking organizations. I was quoted in the India Times that "The idea was to spread the message of judicious use of resources and the concept - use less, waste less. This is the need of the hour. To use minimum resources in the best possible way."

A concert for a Thai eye-care foundation led to funds being raised for the restoration of sight to 20 people. Another concert in Cairo, Egypt raised \$7000 USD for widows to develop skills for their business so they can support themselves and their families. Numerous benefit concerts in Tunisia led to \$15,000 USD for autistic children, \$8000 USD for single mothers and \$19,000

USD for a new technology center, part of an initiative to bring technology to underserved areas in Tunisia.

As the wealth inequality crisis has become a global phenomenon, Sunfar, a Taiwanese computer retailer, announced they will donate 20% of profits to public welfare. This philanthropic philosophy promotes a form of social enterprise that gives consumers the opportunity to be socially responsible through their consumption behavior. Sunfar has been a sponsor of Taiwan88 supporting concerts and workshops in rural communities while inspiring students' creativity and active participation in music-making.

Two notable piano students I have mentored from Afghanistan and Myanmar have both recently been awarded scholarships to music school in the United States. Elham Fanoos, the first classical pianist in history to come from Afghanistan was awarded a scholarship worth over \$100,000 to Hunter College in New York, and Kevin Yang was awarded a full scholarship, worth over \$80,000 to Missouri Western University in St. Joseph, Missouri. Kevin and Elham are both examples of young men whose lives have been completely transformed by their involvement with music and assisted by philanthropic NGOs who believe in supporting such humanitarian efforts.

### **A Creative Humanitarian Reflection:**

I see that music possesses many powers: its convening power, its inspirational power, and its power to transform lives spiritually and economically. I believe that there is no greater unifier than music since it cuts through all of our differences, brings disparate worldviews together that can form the foundation for trust while dealing with the difficult work of making our world in harmony with our ideals.

It's easy to overlook music in a world where billions of people unfortunately lack basic services- that is their economic reality. Our instinct is to focus on food and shelter though the healing, hope and meaning that come from the arts are often needed more in such situations. The arts, and in my case music, gives people the strength to carry on and inspires them through beauty. I feel grateful to be an artist and to live a life where I'm privileged to witness and contribute to these special moments.

*“My piano is a universe. Those eighty-eight keys arrange the seven planets in musical scales, an aural cosmos.”* - Thomas Moore, from Original Self

## A PROTESTANT OFFERING

*Dr. Alice Kidder, PhD, is a trained economist and a member of First Church, Cambridge, UCC. Alice volunteers to help low-income entrepreneurs create business plans, working closely with the Mattapan-Hyde Park EDC. She is the clerk of the Board of Directors of CMM, and is proud of the interfaith and interracial work of the organization, such as the Values over Violence Project, where she was trained with 25 others to promote a violence prevention curriculum.*

*She taught at Babson College, Syracuse University, North Carolina A&T University, and Spelman College.*

*“And judgment is turned away backward and justice stands afar off.” Isaiah 59:14*

*“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Luke 11: 4.*

The injustice in our society and marketplace is visible without doubt. As a Christian, I pray that we can humbly come before God with these sins of society and ourselves, repent, and do better in the future.

We do not invest in truly affordable housing, and we make the poor work over 100 hours a week to afford an apartment. Bring justice to laborers in our marketplace.

We do not keep our shelters safe. We require families experiencing homelessness to sleep in unsafe surroundings outside of shelters, before they can get emergency assistance. Bring justice to the housing market place.

We are told to lend freely, but we deny loans illegally through redlining and legally through insistence that the poor have collateral. Thus we deny many persons the ability to develop their talents and entrepreneurship. Bring justice to the capital markets.

We are taught to tithe, but we note that the wealthy give away a much lower percentage of their income than do the poor. Bring justice to our stewardship.

We close our ears when we hear stories of undocumented workers being denied the pay they have worked for, and we fail to raise the minimum wage to a livable level for all. We tolerate the continuation of gender and racial wage gaps. Bring justice to the employment market.

We look in vain for full scope grocery stores in poverty neighborhoods, thereby denying low cost, nutritious food to individuals, children and families. Poverty creates more poverty, abusing new generations growing in our neighborhoods. Bring justice to our food markets.

## **A Spiritual Offering from the Protestant Tradition:**

Dear God, our Creator, Sustainer, and Comforter,

We thank You, the Creator, for putting justice initiatives in our hearts. We thank You for food banks, for community gardens, for campaigns for living wages, for legislators who care about those experiencing homelessness, for employers who give back, for Tikkun Olam, Zakat, and Tithing. We thank You for the vision of justice in the marketplace and the calling out of greed as a questionable motivation. Teach us to repent of our transgressions, and lead us to a more just world.

Amen.

## A JEWISH OFFERING

*Rabbi Claudia Kreiman is the Rabbi of Temple Beth Zion in Brookline, where she has served since 2007. She grew up in Santiago, Chile and at age 18, she moved with her family to Argentina. In 1996, she moved to Israel and was ordained at the Israeli Conservative Seminary in 2002. After ordination, Rabbi Claudia became the Rabbi for NOAM, the Masorti-Conservative Youth Movement in Israel. Prior to TBZ, Rabbi Claudia was the Jewish Studies director at Jewish Community Day School in Watertown. She has been a social justice activist both in Israel and in MA. She is married to Rabbi Ebn Leader and they have two daughters.*

The Hebrew Bible introduces one of the world's earliest social welfare systems. In the book of Leviticus, we are taught to leave the corners of our fields and the gleanings of our harvest for the poor (Leviticus 19:9); and in the book of Deuteronomy (15:4-15) we find one of the most important biblical statements about the creation of a just society. As the Israelites prepare to cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land, Moses instructs the people as follows: "There shall be no needy among you since the Lord your God will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a hereditary portion. If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut down your hand against your needy kinsman. Rather you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs. For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land."

Moses urges his community to use their newfound power and wealth to establish a just society, and not to return to the inhumane ways of their Egyptian oppressors. He also stresses that while we aspire to create a fully just society in which all people have sufficient means to thrive, there is much work to do along the way, so we must actively support one another, particularly those in need.

Two years ago, I had the opportunity to join a rabbinic delegation to Immokalee, Florida, with the organization T'ruah. Simply put, it was a transformative experience for me. We spent two days learning from and with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). This worker-based human rights organization is internationally recognized for its achievements in the fields of corporate social responsibility, community organizing, and sustainable food. CIW is also a leader in the growing movement to end human trafficking through its groundbreaking work to combat modern-day slavery and other labor abuses common in modern American agricultural settings.

Listening to the stories of the workers, seeing their strength and witnessing that their faith helps them believe in the possibility of change, this was a powerful reminder of our own capacity to help make a real difference in the world. Article Four in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reads as follows: "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave

trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." And the Torah teaches us, "Do not oppress your neighbor and do not rob him. Do not keep the wages of the worker with you until morning" (Leviticus 19:13), and "You shall not abuse a needy or destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is in need and his life depends on it" (Deuteronomy 24:14-15).

We learn through these examples that the work of economic justice goes far beyond charity; it requires fairness, attentiveness, sympathy, and responsibility. The Bible does not merely command us to give to the poor, but to help empower them and to advocate on their behalf. We are told in Proverbs 31:9 to "speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy." Our faith commitments require communal responsibility.

### **A Spiritual Offering from the Jewish Tradition:**

To believe in God, requires us to "walk in God's ways." The Talmudic sage, Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina, teaches us about the fundamental elements of this sacred journey (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sotah 14A): What does the text mean: "You shall walk after the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 13)? Is it possible for a human being to walk after the Divine Presence? Has it not been stated, "For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire" (Deuteronomy 4). But the meaning of the first statement is to aspire to the attributes of the Holy One. These attributes include clothing the naked—as the Holy One clothed Adam and Eve; visiting the sick—as God visited Abraham in a time of healing; comforting the mourner—as God blessed Isaac after Abraham's death; and burying our dead—as God took care of burying Moses.

It is my prayer that we can walk with our beliefs on this path of responsibility and righteousness together, seeking to embody these divine qualities as we develop a more just and compassionate world.

## A ROMAN CATHOLIC OFFERING

*Jerome D. Maryon, Esq., gives leadership to and worships at St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, Harvard Square. Educated in Political Science, Law, Theology, and Grand National Strategy, Maryon served as the Commissioner of the U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Court of Military Review. Included in his work are three of the most influential texts to be published in the military justice system spanning the era between the Vietnam War and the current Afghanistan/ISIS War. Key interests include Jurisprudence, the Rule of Law, and a deepened professional sense of "enlightened self-interest" and the "common good" in American social, political, and legal discourse. At the recommendation of the Papacy, Maryon is working on the book, Politics as a Vocation.*

*Brothers and sisters: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;  
there are different forms of service but the same Lord;  
there are different workings but the same God Who produces all of them in  
everyone.*

*To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.*

*To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom;*

*to another, the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit;*

*to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit;*

*to another, mighty deeds; to another, prophecy;*

*to another, discernment of spirits; to another, varieties of tongues; to another, interpretation of  
tongues.*

*But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person  
as He wishes.*

- St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 4-

11

The dialogue of Faith-&-Reason is one of the gifts of the Catholic tradition to our life together. Communing with one another is how we meet one another in-depth. Since such reflective communing is our best step together, there are beautiful parallel practices in many other spiritually-informed cultures; v., e.g., the Jewish love of Torah; the pursuit of wisdom by Avicenna; the Confucian insistence on deep textual exegesis; etc., etc.

Although the economy of our Commonwealth of Massachusetts at the beginning of 2016 is in relatively better shape than the condition of many of the other states, Boston and Massachusetts cannot prosper in isolation from the national economy. There is a deepening concern that we are all, from Wall Street to Washington, and from Brussels to Beijing, caught in the same boat, caught with the tide going out. For the singular fact is that, just as no single American state can hope to thrive for long when the country falls into a deep recession, so, too, no one nation in the world can hope to thrive for long when the global economy fails. *We need a new dialogue.*



We know that advocates of *neoliberalism* – the revived economic ideology of 19<sup>th</sup>-century *laissez-faire* capitalism – have argued, ever since they came into Anglo-American political ascendancy in the late 1970’s, that competition must become (a) ever more global and (b) simultaneously ever more unregulated. This argument has been made, even though ample evidence shows that an exclusive focus on the bottom line has meant that more and more of our domestic job positions are being outsourced to far lower wage-paying factories abroad. In fact, long-term job loss results in more of the remaining wages at home hitting a plateau or even nose-diving. As in the 19th century, once again, it’s “Every man for himself!” What advocates of unbridled neoliberalism have failed to acknowledge is that the long-term consequences of this domestic wage-stagnation, underemployment, and unemployment harm families, communities, and, eventually, the economy itself. This refusal to focus on anything but the current bottom line represents a woeful refusal to learn from history and makes a mockery of reason and faith.

This is a matter of Reason, and a call for Faith. Reason can be marshalled, but not if we do not have Faith in community action, Faith in the Creator and Redeemer of all communities, Faith that, even as the Spirit has moved through history in the likes of St. Catherine of Siena, Gandhi, Rachel Carson or a Martin Luther King, Jr., – so too, in our time, we might once again be inspired to create a critical mass. There will be no such common plan, no movement, unless the grassroots citizens in the United States and in major market economies around the world are convinced that the plan will create justice.

Which is to say, the stakes for success or failure in 2016 are as high as they were at the start of the Great Depression when far too many nations’ political leaders failed to grasp the need to work together across borders. The resulting beggar-thy-neighbor national acts of pure protectionism (esp. tariffs) only served to exacerbate the downward spiral worldwide. *Yes, we need a new dialogue.*

## **A Spiritual Offering from the Roman Catholic Tradition:**

And so, I believe that the best Catholic prayer I can offer is none other than the reflection offered by Pope Francis (November 10, 2015):

*“I also advise that you have, in a special way, the capacity to dialogue and encounter. Dialogue is not negotiating. Negotiation is trying to obtain one’s “slice” of the common pie. This is not what I mean. It is seeking the common good for all. Discussing together, I would dare say getting angry together, thinking about better solutions for all. Many times the encounter involves conflict. Dialogue is always given to conflict: thus it is logical and predictable. We must neither fear it nor ignore it, but accept it. ‘It is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 227).*

“We must always remember, however, that authentic humanism does not exist unless it contemplates love as a bond between human beings, be it of an interpersonal, intimate, social, political or intellectual nature. Rooted herein is the need for dialogue and encounter in order to build together with others in civil society. We know that the best response to conflicts of human beings, from the well-known *homo homini lupus* of Thomas Hobbes is the “*Ecce homo*” of Jesus who does not recriminate, but welcomes and, paying in person, saves.

“Remember moreover that the best way to dialogue is not that of speaking and debating but that of doing something together, of making plans: not alone, among Catholics, but together with all those who are of good will. Do not be afraid to engage in the exodus necessary for every authentic dialogue. Otherwise it is not possible to comprehend the reasons of the other, nor to completely understand that a brother is worth more than the positions that we judge as far from our own authentic certitudes. He is a brother.”

## A MUSLIM OFFERING

*Dr. John Robbins is the Executive Director of the Massachusetts chapter of CAIR (the Council on American-Islamic Relations), the largest Muslim advocacy and civil rights group in the United States. His interests include Islamic theology, jurisprudence, women's rights, and interreligious dialogue. He sits on the CMM board of directors, and holds a PhD in English Romantic literature.*

*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*

By William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

Wordsworth's poem, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" was written a little over 200 years ago, but the society in which he found himself was remarkably similar to the one in which we're living today: the Industrial Revolution was facilitating technological advancements at a

remarkable speed, upending patterns of life that had been established for millennia; socioeconomic forces were driving an urban exodus, so that for nearly the first time in history a generation of people were being born, living, and dying without ever encountering the natural world; and the effects of the French Revolution – not unlike our own Arab Spring – were reverberating around the globe through conversations about the place of government in the lives of its citizens and whether the interests of states trumped those of individuals. All of these elements created a society in turmoil, then and now, and led to a deep pondering of the place of religion within the private life of the individual. Many such as Wordsworth found that such social progress was also accompanied by a loss, reflected both in the dehumanization of laborers and the mechanization of the human body, and in a consequent stifling of genuine feeling and connection with the inner spirit. Although “Daffodils” is not explicitly religious in tone (yet note the telling inclusion of a heavenly “host” in the fourth line), such introspection nevertheless provided the poet with a tool for examining his own relationship with nature and the divine (for Wordsworth the two were fundamentally the same thing), and for finding the music and the power of genuine sensation to be a refuge from the cold detachment of the world around him.

My own religious practice and social struggle is intimately informed by my reading of the English Romantics, Wordsworth chief among them. Our contemporary historical moment is marked by a similar lack of empathy with others: we absorb data and information in huge quantities, but seldom have a significant emotional connection with those with whom we are interacting. We have countless associates, but too few friends. And how many of us can truly say that we’ve let down our emotional barriers and allowed ourselves to be truly, deeply empathic with another human being? Such dissociation enables us to blame the innocent for their exploitation, to turn our eyes away from the poor crying out for our help, because we fundamentally do not feel for them. It is the condition of necessity for the perpetuation of a winner-take-all economic mentality, in which the infliction of pain upon others is justified as a sacrifice on the altar of self-advancement. It’s often said that bigotry toward religion, especially Islam today, are fueled by anger, but I would argue that they’re enabled by an emotional distance that places a chasm between us, that doesn’t allow us to see the world through another’s eyes, that allows us to move through life barely reflecting, thinly engaging in anything more than a cursory sense with our fellow human beings.

Islam is for me a vibrant, urgent call for a greater depth of feeling, a daily reminder of shared humanity, that we owe it to one another, to ourselves, and to our Creator to do more than talk, but listen; to do more than argue, but feel. In an echo of the Golden Rule, a narration attributed to the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) has him say “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself,” and I think it’s no accident that the affective “love” is entered into the equation. In a world in which emotions, especially love, are frequently relegated to the sidelines in favor of mechanistic interactions, faith calls us to live passionately, with all the risks that such extension of ourselves and our hearts entails. It is in that spirit that I offer the following prayer:

### **A Spiritual Offering from the Muslim Tradition:**

*Oh God of the heart, we ask you to awaken within us the fire that has dwindled down to an ember. We come before you cold, hardened by a world that leaves no room for feeling, and we ask you to relight within us our capacity to feel fully – your gift to us as human beings, and as believers in you. We ask for the courage to make ourselves vulnerable as beings of feeling, and for the strength to bear when we are hurt as a result. But we also ask for the guidance to use our hearts as well as our minds to serve you, and to be conduits of your compassion and love into the world. We ask these things using the words that open each of our five daily prayers, and which remind us that you have instructed us to come to you in a relationship defined by feeling and love: “In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.” Ameen.*

## A PENTECOSTAL OFFERING

*Rev. Mark Scott, formerly Captain in the Air Force, is the Associate Pastor of the Azusa Christian Community a Pentecostal storefront serving one of Boston's emerging neighborhoods – Four Corners, Dorchester. Pastor Scott is a member of the City of Boston's Streetworker team, where he works connecting Boston's faith communities with youth-focused street work and community development. He also coordinates Operation Homefront, pairing pastors with police officers to visit the families of Boston students who need extra support. Pastor Scott is married to Mrs. Jay Scott. They have four children and live in Dorchester.*

We all should bring everything we have into prayer. Particularly if we are going to pray for the impossible, a just peace in the marketplace. I bring the memory of my grandfather who escaped Mississippi to avoid being lynched. He then brought his family North to raise his son and daughters in Chicago's public housing with dignity and into prosperous adulthoods. I recall another grandfather who owned and worked 100 acres of Mississippi Delta land, and sent with Godly pride, his sons and daughters into productive adulthoods.

I approach prayer like the Catholic Pentecostal, Pentecostal Catholic that I am. I approach prayer by listening as hard as I can to God's Word. I read a little piece of his word, read it again, and again, and again. Then I start over again. I try to let it ruminate in my belly, mind and heart. My Caribbean sister tells me her elders used to teach that you had to chew the word, the cud, 100 times. Folks from the South know 'bout pot liquor. When you cook turnips, collards and/or mustards you have to add the fat back (lean turkey or herring in 2016) and let it cook down. The liquid is the pot liquor. The pot liquor has the essence of the meal. You use your hot water bread to sop up the pot liquor. I want to sop up the pot liquor of God's word. I want to look at it. I want to think about it. I want to eat it. Get it in my belly. Get it hidden in my heart. Pray until I believe it. Pray it until I do it.

I have stood on my porch and watched the young brothers on the corner. I know them, I know their talents, interests and struggles. I know it appears there is no room for them in the marketplace.

At our prayer meeting the other evening I was struck by how many members of our small fellowship were praying for jobs, good jobs. Not jobs that pay a salary you cannot live on, not jobs that have too few hours that scatter you across the region and the calendar. Not a job that does not value family. And not no job.

I bring all these past experiences and future concerns through the Word and into prayer.

“With God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

## **A Spiritual Offering from the Pentecostal Tradition:**

We sing our joy. We shout aloud our praise to You. You have cattle on a thousand hills. You have in your hand the depths of the earth and the mountain peaks belong to you. The sea is yours. Your hands formed the dry land. All the earth and the fullness of it, everything in it, is yours.

It is you who brought us all the way from slavery through the vast, dreadful, thirsty and waterless wilderness into your promise. You made bitter water sweet in the desert.

We remember. Hallelujah! Praise God! Thank You!

Help us not let our hearts become proud. Help us not to forget it was you who brought us up out of slavery. Let us not say it was our minds, power and strength that produced wealth for us. Help us to remember that it is you who gives us the ability to produce wealth.

We know the worker is worthy of her hire. We know you work. You create. You created us in your image. So we work.

You work all things together for the good. So we come to you to pray for good jobs. Good hours. Good conditions. Jobs that pay a wage that honors family life.

The wages the unjust have failed to pay the workers are crying out. This wealth rots, this gold and silver corrode. The corrosion testifies against rich people who hoarded wealth in the last days and lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence, fattening themselves in the day of slaughter. Rich people weep and wail because of the misery that is coming.

We are sick in the marketplace. But we hear you visit even the marketplace. Help us to recognize you in the marketplace. We are running, carrying our sick selves, begging you to let us touch even the edge of your cloak. To know you, to touch you, is to be healed.

We are so busy in the marketplace. We are rushing to and fro; we are pushing; we are anxious. Help us hear your voice, "do not be anxious about anything." We will wrap up tight all our fears, frets and worries with thanksgiving. We will bring our bundle to you, the one who cares and the one who is able to do something about it. We know that your understanding surpassing peace will stand guard over our minds, will stand guard over our hearts.

We pray that justice and peace kiss each other in the marketplace.

This we pray in the name of Jesus. Your son born of a young mother for whom there was no room, suffering, dying, resurrecting, sending with the Father the Comforter who gives us the

power to be your witnesses and reminds us all your promises are true, and soon coming again.  
Amen.

Some of the scriptures that inform this prayer are:

Exodus 15:22 – 17:7

Deuteronomy 8

Psalm 24:1

Psalm 50:10

Psalm 85:10

Psalm 95

Mark 6:39 – 56

Philippians 4:5 – 7

James 5:1 – 6.



## A NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN OFFERING

*Paris Swindle has more than 25 years of experience in the field of community and faith-based economic development. Recently, he cofounded the Mattapan Hyde Park Economic Development Corporation as well as played a major role in organizing CMM's Values Over Violence Project to address the youth violence in Boston. He is a member of Fellowship Christian Church in Hyde Park. Mr. Swindle earned his M.B.A. in Community Economic Development, and his experience includes project management, construction management and cooperative worker-owned business development. He has utilized the Mondragon Model of worker owned cooperatives first developed in the Basque region of Spain, which he has used to develop urban faith-based communities.*

***Deuteronomy 8:18 (NIV): "But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today." Peter 4:10 (NIV):" Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."***

Western culture teaches that those with the greatest wealth are the winners in life. God's purposes for wealth are quite different from modern societies. Wealth is not important to God. Therefore, in determining winners and losers in God's economic system, it is the quality of financial management, not the quantity of finances, that matters most. Godly financial stewardship is a matter of how, not how much.

### **FIVE PRINCIPLES OF GODLY STEWARDSHIP:**

1. **God owns everything.** The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it (Ps. 24:1). The Book of Genesis makes it clear that God is the sovereign Creator who owns and reigns over the earth. It is also clear that God appointed man to manage this creation (Gen. 2:15).
2. **The people of God are God's management company.** If you are a Christian, being part of God's household gives you responsibilities to work for the house of God. You enter into a contract with God that requires you to be a steward of your part of His creation. It is a further obligation that, although you are free to make your own choices, the choices you make must give God glory.
3. **Stewardship is responsibility with accountability.** God did not create a people to be servants but to be relatives, sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth (Is.43:6). He receives no glory from having slaves; He receives tremendous glory from people who willingly serve Him as a manifestation of their relationship to Him. God wants to know if you truly love Him, and He intends to test that love by seeing how you respond to the temptation of wealth.
4. **Stewardship demands a commitment to others.** It is a response to God's goodness to you. Stewardship is not doing something for God with your wealth, but doing something for others with His wealth. You act on God's behalf and in His name. The apostle Paul

described himself as a slave to everyone (1 Cor.9:19) and always seeking the good of them. (1 Cor. 10:24, 33). Further he told us to look not only to your own interest, but also the interests of others (Phil. 2:4). Your attitude, Paul wrote, should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Phil. 2:5-7). Stewardship is both an expression of your love for God and the realization of that love in your relationships to others.

5. **Stewardship has eternal consequences.** Underlying most of Jesus' instruction is the assumption that your life on earth will prepare you for your future in heaven. Paul explained to the Philippians believers, I am [not] looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your [future, heavenly] account (Phil. 4:17). Stewardship builds heavenly treasure by transferring wealth from your bank account to your heavenly account. Because God is eternal, He operates in an eternal time frame. Likewise, the actions of God's stewards will have eternal consequences.

### **A Spiritual Offering from a Non-Denominational Christian:**

*Deuteronomy 8:18 (NIV): “But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”*

Father God, give us the knowledge and the wisdom and understanding that this planet belongs to you and we have a responsibility to take care of planet earth for all of your peoples. Father God, I ask you to forgive our sinful behavior of selfishness and greed and destructiveness toward our planet and our earthly home. Help us move toward a better and Christ like behavior. I thank you for your love and mercy through your Son Jesus Christ.

**PLEASE WRITE IN YOUR OWN PRAYERS:**

