

Prayer stations

Walk with the world — Zimbabwe



This 'Walk with the world' resource has been approached differently to the rest of our other country and continent creative prayer resources. It reflects a deliberate choice to create a more stark and formal vigil, based on the themes of dark and light, out of respect for, and solidarity for the Zimbabwean people, at this time of great difficulty. But you can still use it in the same way as the other nations and continents:

- *In personal or small group prayer by working through the prayer in 'Zimbabwe: the headlines'*
- *To set up prayer stations for intercessions, a prayer meeting, or as an instillation for a day of prayer.*
- *As part of the wider family of 'Walk with the world' to create a prayer labyrinth for a day of global prayer.*

Zimbabwe: the headlines — the main areas of focus for our current prayers are:

- **Change in governance** is vital if real or lasting change is to happen. There must be an end to the corruption and exploitation which has crippled the country of its resources.
- **Widespread poverty** – which has drastically increased in severity, and the number of people it affects due to corruption, mismanagement and oppression – to end.
- **Rapid change and reconstruction of the economy and society** so Zimbabwe can recover.
- **Spiritual re-awakening**, renewal and Christian revival. We long for all Zimbabweans to know God, and his principles – both for the sake of his glory, and its future health.
- **Protection for Christians, and particularly pastors who speak out** against corruption and bad governance, and in particular for members of the Zimbabwean Christian Alliance – a network of pastors and Christian organisations, several of whom have been jailed for their dedication to speak out for what is right.
- **People living with HIV/AIDS, and orphans** in this country. Sub-Saharan Africa is disproportionately affected (two thirds of the world's 33 million people living with HIV or AIDS live in the region*). More than twelve per cent of the Zimbabwean population is living with HIV or AIDS.** *(2009 Tearfund) ** (2009 UNAIDS).
- **The Changing climate** is leading to less rain so we need to pray for farmers, NGOs and Aid agencies developing, or sharing techniques in adaptation, and for world leaders negotiating carbon reduction policies.

Setting the scene

Help people stand with Zimbabwe:

Use the country outline of Zimbabwe to project on to a screen, or to help you draw a chalk outline on the floor or on a large sheet – if using the latter, you could lay the stations around the outside of the map so people literally walk around Zimbabwe.

Aside from this, everything should be very stripped back and sparse. This vigil is designed to be sombre in tone, helping people to reflect and meditate on scripture, and mourn with those who mourn, as they offer up Zimbabwe to God. Information and stimulus are minimal to stress the fact that little information is getting in or out of the country, and to increase the empathy for the uncertainty of the people of Zimbabwe.

Each station requires the same, minimal equipment – a suitable number of tea light candles for the number of people taking part, matches, and the relevant sign, so descriptions have been kept to a minimum in this outline.

You might also consider visually enhancing the contrast between light and dark by draping a table in black cloth at each station, and having the candles and sign on top of this and/or using dark cloth or matting on the floor to map out the route between each station.

In order to tie in with one of the stations, which considers time, it would be helpful if you could take down, or cover, any clocks that are in the church or room you are using.

Help set the tone for people's prayers:

Encourage people to undertake this whole prayer experience in silence – in solidarity with all those in Zimbabwe who have been denied a voice.

If you are using the stations for a drop-in extended time of prayer, it might be worth putting a sign on the door in that explains about being silent, so that the silence is not broken when new people arrive.

Following up afterwards:

Station 8 – 'Unfinished business?' invites people who are interested in finding out more, or taking action for Zimbabwe through giving or campaigning, to sign up.

In the week following the prayer time, email or call these people with details of organisations who might be able to help. You might want to suggest Christian Aid (www.christianaid.org.uk), Tearfund (www.tearfund.org) as starting points, or refer people to more specific campaigning groups.

Intercessory prayer stations

Please note that each of the following stations should be set up in the same way. (See above for equipment details and instructions.) The one exception to this is station 8 – ‘Unfinished business?’, which requires a sheet of paper and a pen.

The signs to be enlarged, printed out, and displayed at each station are provided below. For each station, we suggest you put the scripture reference on one sign and then have the instructions, prayer points, and a candle-lighting prayer on a second sign.

1. The people who walked in darkness

“The people walking in darkness
 have seen a great light;
 on those living in the land of deep darkness
 a light has dawned.
 You have enlarged the nation
 and increased their joy;
 they rejoice before you
 as people rejoice at the harvest.”

(Isaiah 9:2-3)

- The people of Zimbabwe are experiencing great darkness. Three decades of independence have meant three decades of leadership under Robert Mugabe’s regime. The results? Poverty, oppression and economic ruin for the majority of the nation.
- But however dark, bleak, and devastating any situation seems, there is a light that is infinitely greater.
- Pray for hope to grow in Zimbabwe, and for the light of God’s love to strengthen its people to fight for freedom.
- Pray also for hope to grow in the International community, and for many people, governments and nations to continue to speak up for justice, and to become increasingly insistent that change can and must come to Zimbabwe.
- Light a candle, and pray for hope:
Light of the world, shine in Zimbabwe’s darkest night until morning dawns, and joy comes with it. Amen.

2. Victory for the vulnerable

“He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap...
 He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.
 It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be broken.
 The Most High will thunder from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.”

(taken from Hannah's prayer, 1 Samuel 2:8-10)

- Meditate on this scripture for a few minutes.
- Now, if you would find it helpful, take off your shoes and socks so that you are standing bare-feet.
- How do your feet feel? Cold? Vulnerable? Do you feel exposed?
- There are many who are especially vulnerable in Zimbabwe:
 - There are no statistics available now for the number of people living below the international poverty line, but it is believed to be the majority of the country.*
 - Those now entirely dependent on grain hand-outs or who have had to flee the country.**
 - The nearly 2 million people (15.3 per cent of its population living with HIV or AIDS).*
 - Those seeking to speak out against Mugabe's regime, including many churches and their leaders.
 - The poorest of the poor – for example in 2005 Mugabe's regime 'cracked down' on slums in many of its cities in 'Operation Murambatsvina' – forcibly evicting and destroying markets and houses built 'illegally' – and affecting at least 700,000 through loss of homes and/or livelihood.***
 - Those living in rural areas affected by deforestation and climate change who are struggling to grow crops.
 - The small minority of white people still living in the country (estimated to be less than 50,000) following independence in 1980 and Mugabe's land seizures of 1999.
- Pray for God to 'guard the feet' of the vulnerable – and to protect them from further harm.
- Pray for God's blessing, protection and wisdom for international aid agencies, churches and NGOs within Zimbabwe who are helping those who are most vulnerable.
- Light a candle and pray for victory for all who are vulnerable:
Light of the world, shine in Zimbabwe's darkest night until morning dawns, and joy comes with it. Amen.

(*2009 World Bank **2010 BBC ***2010 Wikipedia)

Continue on to the next station in bare feet – leaving your shoes and socks behind until you have finished praying. Each time you feel cold or embarrassed during the rest of this time, remember the vulnerable, and offer them up in prayer as you move round the other stations.

3. How long?

“How long, LORD? Will you forget us forever?
 How long will you hide your face from us?
 How long must we wrestle with our thoughts
 and day after day have sorrow in our hearts?
 How long will our enemy triumph over us?

But we will trust in your unfailing love;
 our hearts rejoice in your salvation.
 We will sing the LORD's praise,
 for he has been good to us.”

(Based on Psalm 13:1-2 and 5-6)

- Zimbabwe has been in swift and extreme decline for more than ten years, and suffering continues to grow. How much longer must it feel to people living there – struggling to survive day to day, and wondering if change will ever come?
- Are you wearing a watch? If so take it off, and put it in a pocket or bag, where you can't see it.
- Wait for about five minutes and do nothing. How do you feel? Unsure? Embarrassed? Frustrated?
- Light a candle and pray for perseverance for all who are waiting, and breakthrough to come:
Light of the world, shine in Zimbabwe's darkest night until morning dawns, and joy comes with it. Amen.

Keep your watch hidden for the rest of the time you are praying if that is possible – every time you wonder what the time is, offer up the people of Zimbabwe – pray for perseverance and for their time of deliverance to come quickly.

4. Mourn with those who mourn

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

(Matthew 5:4)

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.”

(Romans 12:14-16)

- Kneel down and think of all who mourn in Zimbabwe:
 - For those who have died young (life expectancy has fallen to 44 in the last decade, and infant mortality stands at 56 out of 1000)*
 - For those who have died from HIV and AIDS related illnesses, poverty, or through violence
 - For all those who simply love their country, and grieve for the life that has been lost.
- Pray for God to comfort them through his Holy Spirit, and through Christians living in Zimbabwe.
- Pray for the persecuted church in Zimbabwe, and for increased courage to speak out for what is right.
- Pray too for miraculous power to forgive where the government are directly to blame for the loss of loved ones.
- Pray for all who grieve, that they would know Christians around the world are standing with them:
Light of the world, shine in Zimbabwe's darkest night until morning dawns, and joy comes with it. Amen.

(*2010 World Bank)

5. Speak up...

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

(Proverbs 31:8-10)

- On 9 December 2007, Archbishop of York John Sentamu cut up his dog collar on live television to speak out in protest on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe, saying he would not wear it again until Mugabe was out of office. He said:
 “As an Anglican this is what I wear to identify myself, that I'm a clergyman. Do you know what Mugabe has done? He's taken people's identity and literally...cut it to pieces... and in the end there's nothing.”*
- People in Zimbabwe have risked their lives to speak up for the truth, particularly Christian leaders. In 2007 a number of members of the ecumenical group the Zimbabwean Christian Alliance were arrested during a prayer meeting for an end to Zimbabwe's ‘political, social and economic crisis’. They were imprisoned for four days and placed on remand – but thankfully freed from charges a couple of months later.**
- And Pius Ncube, The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo has said:
 “I've reached a no going back stand. We must not be intimidated by these people. They use all sorts of tricks. They follow you by car. They threaten you in so many ways and make you feel uneasy. As Christians, we must be ready to die for what we believe in. We cannot exonerate these criminals who are holding Zimbabwe to ransom.”***
- The Zimbabwean people are increasingly silenced by the regime, and international voices are quieter than perhaps they should be due to the length of the problem, intermittent media attention, and competing priorities.
- Pray for campaigners and international agencies who are raising funds. And pray for the Zimbabwean NGOs, and churches still working within the country.
- Light a candle and pray for the voiceless to be heard, and the free world to speak up:
Light of the world, shine in Zimbabwe's darkest night until morning dawns, and joy comes with it. Amen.

(*2007 BBC **2007 Christian Aid and the Zimbabwean Christian Alliance *** 2010 the Zimbabwean Christian Alliance)

6. Govern righteously...

“The LORD takes his place in court;
 he rises to judge the people.
 The LORD enters into judgment
 against the elders and leaders of his people:
 “It is you who have ruined my vineyard;
 the plunder from the poor is in your houses.
 What do you mean by crushing my people
 and grinding the faces of the poor?”
 declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.”

(Isaiah 3:13-15)

- New and reformed governance is vital if Zimbabwe is to come out of the crisis it is now in, and recover.
- In 2008, Mugabe's ZANU-PF party lost parliamentary majority, and then he was defeated by Morgan Tsvangirai in the presidential election, but with insufficient votes. There was a run-off from which Tsvangirai had to withdraw due to his supporters being attacked, but he was eventually sworn in as prime-minister – though there is very limited sharing of power.*

- Mugabe's regime is corrupt, and has led the country into ruin. (It has also now prevented foreign aid agencies from working in the country.) It is also not representative of the people's choice, but the army, intimidation tactics, and sheer poverty that many are facing, keeps the country in stale-mate.
- The EU has imposed sanctions, and a number of leaders have spoken out against the regime. Pray for an increase in international pressure, particularly within Africa, and especially from South Africa's leader Jacob Zuma.
- Pray for a radical change of heart within, or an end to, Mugabe's oppressive regime, and the establishment of righteous leaders for Zimbabwe's people:
Light of the world, shine in Zimbabwe's darkest night until morning dawns, and joy comes with it. Amen.

(*2010 BBC)

7. Heal their land

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

(2 Chronicles 7)

- Christians in Zimbabwe are praying for God to heal their land. They are seeking him, and speaking out for justice and righteousness to replace exploitation and corruption.
- Pray with them that God would heal Zimbabwe by:
 - Restoring its economy – and setting it free from hyper-inflation, quantitative easing, and fraud
 - Restoring its agricultural prosperity – so that it can once more be the 'bread basket' of Africa
 - Restoring its damaged climate – so that agriculture and people can thrive
 - Restoring its people to him – so that righteous leaders can be raised up and the nation can be rebuilt on the firm foundation of God's truth and principles.
- Light a candle and pray for God's light to heal Zimbabwe's land, and pray:
Light of the world, shine in Zimbabwe's darkest night until morning dawns, and joy comes with it. Amen.

8. Unfinished business?

"In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need."

(Romans 12:5-13)

- Be joyful in hope... confess to God where you have struggled to have hope or faith for Zimbabwe's current situation to change... ask for God's forgiveness. Pray that he would build faith in you to pray for what seems impossible.
- Take a moment to consider how you could continue to pray for Zimbabwe after today – what could you do to remind yourself to stand with these people in the coming weeks and months?
- Prayerfully seek whether God is asking you to use your gifts to serve him and the people of Zimbabwe through action as well as prayer?
- If so, and you would like to find out more about campaigning, giving, and keeping up to date with organisations that can regularly tell you the real situation on the ground, write down your name, email address, and what you're interested in doing/finding out about before you finish.
- Close in prayer:
Light of the world, light a candle in my heart for Zimbabwe that burns with compassion until its darkest night ends and joy comes with its morning. Amen.