



LET US PRAY

A Prayer Vigil for Justice & Peace

About the cover image

Michael Richards, Tar Baby vs. St. Sebastian, 1999, body cast in resin and fiberglass, painted, and supported by steel shaft, with airplanes cast in resin and fiberglass, painted, and attached by steel bolts, on loan to the NC Museum of Art from the estate of the artist.

This is a painful time. Once again, bodies are pierced by bullets: *Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Patrick Zamarripa, Brent Johnson....* Once again, the darkest parts of humanity are on display, leaving behind little more than anger, confusion, hatred, fear, and tears.

We mourn with those whose loved ones are dead. We share in anger and frustration toward those who would take the lives of others. And we confess that we are confused. We do not understand what is going on: how can young black men continue to die at the hands of those sworn to protect? How can police officers become victims themselves? How is the church called to respond?

This statue holds together so much of this painful story. Its name evokes the racialized history of our country, the stories of how dark flesh is somehow less, capable of being broken and cast aside for the sake of others. It captures the memory of the Tuskegee Airman, those African-American pilots whose heroic contributions to World War II were recognized only in the past few decades. It invokes St Sebastian, that early Christian martyr whose body was pierced with arrows under Emperor Diocletian's persecution.

Michael Richards used his own body to mold that of the airman. An African-American artist, he spent a tragically short career creating stunning sculptures that criticize oppression in all its forms. Over and over again, he helped tell the story of people who know what it means to have their children's bodies pierced, to have their own bodies pierced and tossed aside by others.

Richards was himself a casualty of our violence: his studio was on the ninety-second floor of Tower One. Pierced because of another's hate, Richards died in the attack on the World Trade Center, fifteen years ago this year.

We Begin in Silence

We Are Called to Prayer

Creator Spirit, wellspring of our lives.

As the refreshing rain falls on the just and the unjust alike,

**Refresh us with your mercy,
who knows our own injustice.**

As the stream flows steadily on,
defying all the odds of stone and water,

**Flow over every boundary and border
that separates us from each other.**

As the waters of our baptism washed us and welcomed us,

Renew us now in newness of life and unity of love. Amen.

We Sing

We Confess Our Sin & Remember Our Baptism

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

Lord, have mercy; we do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

Christ, have mercy; we do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

Lord, have mercy; we do.

We Share in Silence

We Share in God's Pardon & Assurance

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn?

Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us,

Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us.

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun.

Know that you are forgiven, and be at peace.

Thanks be to God.

We Share in Christ's Peace

We Listen to God's Word

Isaiah 40:6-11

We Share in Silence

We Listen to God's Word

Ephesians 4:25–5:2

We Share in Silence

We Listen to God's Word

Luke 10:25-37

We Share in Silence

We Pray as Christ's Body

...Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

...praying as Christ taught us: **Our Father, who art in heaven,...**

We Affirm Our Faith

The United Methodist Social Litany

God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ,
calls us by grace

**to be renewed in the image of our Creator,
that we may be one
in divine love for the world.**

Today is the day

God cares for the integrity of creation,
wills the healing and wholeness of all life,
weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference,
favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God cries with the masses of starving people,
despises growing disparity between rich and poor,
demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

And so shall we.

Today is the day
God deplores violence in our homes and streets,
rebukes the world's warring madness,
humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

And so shall we.

Today is the day
God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace,
celebrates where justice and mercy embrace, exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

And so shall we.

**Today is the day
God brings good news to the poor,
proclaims release to the captives,
gives sight to the blind, and
sets the oppressed free.**

And so shall we.

We Share in Silence

We Sing

We Are Blessed & Sent

God, lead us, that we may stand firm in faith for justice.

Teach us love. Teach us compassion.

Above all, out of love and compassion, teach us to act. Amen.

May the God who shakes heaven and earth,
whom death could not contain,
who lives to disturb and heal us,
bless you with power to go forth
and proclaim the Gospel.

Amen.