

Hear the prayer of Jill Duffield of the Presbyterian Outlook. July 8, 2016.

"I feel like a small child, cowering and afraid in my room because my parents are fighting. I no longer believe their reassurances that everything will be all right and they will never argue like that again and that I shouldn't worry because will always stay together. Your family, Lord God, is ripping itself apart. We are killing each other.

I am tired of the news, the nightly news, the morning news, the 24-hour news cycle of bullets and brutality and murder. I am angry at the complacency, my own, that of Your church, that of the people who make up the systems that aren't faceless entities just doing their jobs but certain people, as Jesus says, in a particular place devastating other certain men and certain women and particular families, families with Saturday rituals and report cards on their refrigerators and photos on their night stands.

I am tired and ashamed of being among the particular people who perpetuate the systems that crush other certain people.

I am tired of seeing righteous indignation parsed out in posts and tweets. I am tired of not knowing what to post and newsfeeds devoid of outrage. I am exhausted with writing prayers and frustrated with those who say prayer is meaningless.

I want to cry when my kid's doubt of Your existence is given weight by Your seeming inaction, by Your church's complicity, by my ineffectual response to violence, racism, hateful rhetoric and oppression.

Your language, creator God, is performative. You say, "Let there be light." And there is. You say, "Your sins are forgiven." And they are. What can we say, that will enact the syllables that cry mercy, make the vowels bring peace and the consonants call forth healing? I don't know.

But You, loving, merciful, reconciling, peace granting God, You know. You know if dry bones can live. You command us to prophesy to them, to raise our voices not in a whisper but in a cry of longing lament: Enough!

Our God is a God of grace, of justice, the One who blesses the meek and breaks the chains of the oppressed. Our God is the One who sent Jesus Christ, the light of the world, the living water, the bread of life, the Way, the truth and the life, not to condemn the world but to save it. Evil and death will not have the last word.

Even now, yes, even now, in this valley of blood and bone, in this time and place where murder is documented on phones and live streamed on the internet, You call us to prophesy, to speak Your performative word until it is embedded in our sinews and we walk the talk.

Jesus, suffering Savior, you always went to certain places and specific people. You named names. You ate meals. You stopped when people cried out. You sought out the

ones suffering on the sidelines. You rebuked the religious leaders. You refused to capitulate to the powerful no matter the cost. You didn't mince words with the ones who thought they had the inside track on God's favor. You came to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and let the oppressed go free. You did what he said. You were, are and forever will be God's Word made flesh. And as you walked the talk, you prayed.

So, I am going to pray, today and every day. I am going to prophesy, too. I am going to cry out with all I've got, "Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." I am going to shout with horror but not without hope to all the valleys of violence and blood and death: God says there will be breath. God says there will yet be life.

I am going to pray some more.

And then, with God's help, I am going to stop cowering and start going to certain people, in particular places and do what Jesus did: share meals, stand up to the powerful who oppress, come alongside the vulnerable, hold space for those pushed to the margins. I am going to speak God's living, performative, efficacious, Word until I live and breathe it and the valley of darkness gives way to green pastures and all our cups overflow and we dwell in God's house together."