

## A New Song Even Though

*A poem prayer by Rev. Loren McGrail, written for World Communion Sunday 2014*

*So I have been wrestling for days on writing an opening prayer for World Communion Sunday on October 5th. It is the day the Church remembers through the holy sacrament of communion that we are members of one body. Sometimes we do this by sharing different kinds of bread remembering that Christians celebrate this holy event in a variety of ways. Other times we lift up Christians in other parts of the world. Some believe the wine and bread are changed. Some believe they are symbols. All are asked to remember the night Jesus broke the bread and poured the wine. Some celebrate communion every Sunday, others once a month. Some come forward to receive, others sit and are served. Some dip and others drink. For myself I need to remember that the body was whole and then broken. It is a holy moment to stand before the congregation and hold the bread and break it apart in front of them and say, "Eat in remembrance of me." Remembering wholeness and brokenness in the same breath is not easy.*

*And so it seemed appropriate that one of the missionaries assigned to Israel and Palestine should offer a prayer from the Holy Land, from Jerusalem, the city that still knows no peace for her church. But I couldn't. I couldn't write; I couldn't figure out how to talk about a body sacrificed after a summer of genocide in Gaza and nightly violence literally outside my doorstep. I couldn't write at night because the sounds were too scary and the morning was filled with memories of the night. So instead, dear ones, I wrote a poem and the poem led me to the prayer. I humbly offer it to you as both a reflection and food for your journey.*

The day is breaking  
but my room  
is composed of a long night.

—Nazim Hikmet

Birds on the fence and the cry of a small kitten  
wake me from a vigilant sleep  
night prayers of worry still hang in the fresh air  
like laundry that should have been brought in  
days ago

The long night of violent attacks and counter attacks  
is silenced but my body holds onto fear  
like a dirty blanket familiar and soiled

My mind relives the sound details  
searching for evidence of how much death  
or destruction this time  
as if the count of explosives is any real measurement

Yesterday mourners gathered to go to the cemetery  
They delivered huge pots of chicken and rice  
for the after meal into a darkened doorway  
A shopkeeper said, "Don't worry, it's just a funeral.  
God's death not Israel's."

I didn't know there was a difference.  
Is there?

Last night the moonlight in my garden  
of olive and orange trees and a single majestic pine  
made the feral felines appear bigger than they are  
The sweet fragrance of the jasmine blended  
with the putrid smell of fresh skunk water  
to make an intoxicating perfume

The incessant beat of arab disco  
was background to the steady firing  
of sound bombs and firecrackers  
and the whoosh of tear gas  
and the secret moans  
of lovers completing each other

This went on for hours  
as I sat trying to write a prayer  
the call to the table of holy communion

Jesus knew when he broke bread  
his body would be broken open  
He knew when he poured the sabbath wine  
his blood would be spilled

These boys know they could become martyrs  
in a flash, their bodies destroyed  
They know their rocks and firecrackers  
are no match for the firepower waiting for them

They know their spirit of resistance  
outweighs the orders to wound, injure, destroy or  
kill them they know this truth  
just like He knew

that death is final  
but not victorious

So come to the table  
dear ones just as you are  
to be reminded that His suffering is yours  
their suffering yours  
that you are one body  
condemned and redeemed  
not because of the suffering  
but in spite of it

**Come eat and share the bread of life**

Come to the table  
dear ones just as you are  
to remember that the wine  
is both spilled blood and  
the fruit of the harvest  
it is the blood of the lamb

**Come drink from the cup of blessing**

Come for all things are ready  
and all are invited

Come confess  
how the long nights have colored your mornings  
how your sins have crowded out your good traits  
how your pettiness has overshadowed your generosity  
how your need for security has overtaken your ability to share  
how you tried to make yourself numb by saying it is normal  
how you silenced yourself so you didn't have to speak about the pain

You who are hungry  
eat this bread

You who are thirsty  
drink this wine

**You will be filled**

You who are hungry for peace  
come and be fed so you can feed others

You who are thirsty for justice  
come and be filled so you can pour yourself out for others

**You will be filled**

Come  
for the world needs you strong and humble  
to stand in the streets  
to weep with the prophets  
to sing above the explosions

*Rev. Loren McGrail is mission personnel for Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ. She serves their mission partner, the YWCA of Palestine.*