The Suffering Church and a Call to Prayer and Fasting

Part of the community where church leaders have called for prayer and fasting (Photo credit: from video "Build a World of Peace," by One Tribe, www.onetribepeople.org)



This past Sunday, March 22, Archbishop Ben Kwashi and Archbishop Foley Beach issued <u>a call</u> to <u>GAFCON</u> to <u>pray and fast</u> to intercede against the spread of COVID-19; the locusts moving across East Africa, the Middle East, and Asia; and famine and hunger throughout Africa.

As a global movement of Anglicans, we heeded the call. At the same time, most of us have also heeded the call of our own country and local governments to practice social-distancing and self-isolation in valiant attempts to keep the virus from spreading.

Trying to stay virus-free and staying at home have resulted in some feelings of fear and loneliness. Just in terms of foregoing gathering together as the Body of Christ, we can feel extremely sorry for ourselves, while logically we understand the necessity.

Think about your persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. Think about *their* fear and loneliness ("Does anyone know about us?" "Does anyone care what happens to us?"). Many experience this on a *regular* basis and now they have COVID-19 to deal with, as well. Think about those who gather for worship realizing that any time they do <u>could be their last</u>. And those who cannot gather for worship at all.

As I have been self-isolating, working at home, I have been blessed by the efforts of brothers and sisters in Christ to keep in contact. I've sung along with two Rend Collective "Social-Distancing Worship Club" Live sessions; a St. Patrick's Day Hymn Sing with Keith and Kristyn Getty; Sunday night worship with Michael W. Smith; my own wonderful Church of the Apostles, Fairfax's online church service; and I've talked or texted with beloved friends. But a great many persecuted Christians do not have that blessing.

And yet, from a part of the world in which Christians have seen their share of persecution and suffering, a call to prayer and fasting is being issued that is very similar to that of our own GAFCON leaders. A group of church leaders in East Africa are looking at the crises facing the world today with both faith and determination.

If COVID-19 can spread across the globe, why cannot a movement of God spread across the globe? If those with COVID-19 can infect an average of 3 or 4 others, why cannot those with the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit infect 3 or 4 others? We have seen the contagious character of a deadly virus. Can we create a #prayercontagion?

Because the request to join in a regular, weekly appeal to God with prayer and fasting has come from those who have already greatly suffered for their faith, let us honor their invitation to join them. If you would like to pray and help spread this movement around the globe, please respond to www.onetribepeople.org/contact with your name, location, and, if you wish, contact info. Here is the call to prayer from leaders within the Body of Christ in East Africa:

With trust in the sovereignty of the Triune God and with full awareness of our own sin, weakness and unworthiness, we turn to Him in this time of global disease, pestilence and famine to seek His forgiveness, wisdom, protection, deliverance, comfort, and healing of all nations of this world He created.

Understanding in part the highly contagious nature of the global COVID-19 virus and the likelihood of one infected person to further infect approximately three to four others, this multiplying effect yielding inestimable individual, national and global destruction; and comprehending the mass, devastating impact of a regional locust plague blighting East Africa and the Horn of Africa with this pestilence on course toward the Middle East, we unite and establish this community with the aim of **persistent prayer with fasting** before the Creator of Universe.

Believing in both the justice and mercy of God as demonstrated through the sinless life, sacrificial death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the coming of His promised Holy Spirit, we collectively humble ourselves in daily hourly prayer, and join prayer with fasting on Wednesday of each week.

Believing also in the doctrine of priesthood of the believer, we ask each faith community leader and congregant or parishioner to **invite three to four more leaders or persons to join this effort** with the goal of reaching a mass-scale prayer movement.

Our ultimate hope is to see the Body of Christ rise, unite, turn from our divisions and our sin to seek God and love and support each other as we plead wholeheartedly for Divine mercy and healing.

This call was birthed in the hearts and minds of leaders in the Church in East Africa and is quickly spreading by way of its grassroots networks, spanning the region and beyond.

If you desire to join us in this holy endeavor, please respond to www.onetribepeople.org/contact so we can add your name to this growing movement.

Scripture:

- For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. Psalm 32: 3.
- I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich). . . be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of Life. Revelation 2: 9 & 10b

Suggested Actions: Join this prayer and fasting effort started by church leaders in East Africa, but going global. Start a #prayercontagion by sharing this initiative with friends and fellow church members. **Begin tomorrow, Wednesday, March 24, with weekly fasting in addition to daily prayer.** Share what you hear from God and Scripture verses that impact you, to encourage everyone.

Prayer: Father God, as we practice social distancing and isolate ourselves from each other in this crisis time, we thank You that You are always with us, a very present help in trouble. Thank You, too, that You are always with the Suffering Church and help them to know that we are praying for and with them. Please bless this time that we have set aside to offer our prayers and fasting to You. God, we ask You for miracles of healing and deliverance from COVID-19 and from the locusts. And we ask for a spirit of repentance that will bring forgiveness, reconciliation, and revival, to the Glory of Your Holy Name. In Jesus' Name. Amen.