

# **"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down"**

## **Joint Service of the Churches of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Libanon and the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany December 11, 2016, Third Sunday of Advent**

### **Music**

#### **Opening**

Biblical Greetings:

Our help is in the name of the Lord

**Who made heaven and earth.** (Psalm 124,8)

#### **Welcome**

In the face of war and the devastating situation in Syria  
we call for common prayer and worship.

Today we do this with our sisters and brothers in Damascus and Aleppo,  
in Latakia and Homs and in many other places  
where the Reformed Church is at home.

We do this because we need each other.

We do this in the time of Advent

for we trust

that our Saviour, the Prince of Peace, will come.

#### **Hymn**

#### **Opening Prayer**

In the light of a new morning we come to you, o God,  
bringing to you all our hope a new beginning inherits.

We await your Advent,  
we are longing for your peace.

We trust your promise  
that you will come to meet us,  
offering your Son to us.

Lord God,

daily life has become more unsteady.

We witness the brokenness in society,  
between people and between nations.

We often don't know what is right to do.

It is easier to look away, to seclude oneself

or to become distracted from what is happening around us

and what is becoming more and more complex and incomprehensible.

We are tempted to ask: Who am I to make a difference?

God, whenever this happens

we ask you to remind us of your Word,

and of your mercy incarnated by Christ Jesus,  
our Saviour,  
who brightens up our darkness,  
who touches us and lifts us up,  
who secures our steps  
until we will live in your light  
as human beings  
doing each other well,  
as daughters and sons of your pleasure,  
until we will taste your peace, very soon.  
This we pray for in the time of your coming.

**Psalm reading** (responsive)

Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?  
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?  
In arrogance the wicked persecute the poor—  
**let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.**  
For the wicked boast of the desires of their heart,  
**those greedy for gain curse and renounce the Lord.**  
In the pride of their countenance the wicked say, “God will not seek it out”;  
**all their thoughts are, “There is no God.”**  
Rise up, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;  
**do not forget the oppressed.**  
Why do the wicked renounce God,  
and say in their hearts, “You will not call us to account”?  
**But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief,**  
that you may take it into your hands;  
the helpless commit themselves to you;  
you have been the helper of the orphan.  
**Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers;  
seek out their wickedness until you find none.**  
The Lord is king forever and ever;  
the nations shall perish from his land.  
**O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek;  
you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear**  
to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed,  
so that those from earth may strike terror no more.  
*Psalm 10, 1-4.12-18*

**Hymn: O come, o come Emanuel**

## **New Testament Reading:**

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren,  
a tender heart and a humble mind.  
Do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling; but on the contrary bless,  
for to this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing.  
For "He that would love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and  
his lips from speaking guile;  
let him turn away from evil and do right; let him seek peace and pursue it.  
For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against those that do evil."  
Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right?  
But even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.  
Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,  
but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord.  
Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you  
to account for the hope that is in you,  
yet do it with gentleness and reverence;  
and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused,  
those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.  
For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong.  
*1 Peter 3,8-17*

## **Voices from Germany**

### **A Syrian who had to flee tells us:**

*"I got to Germany in August 2015 via Lebanon, Turkey, Greece and the Balkan Route after a months journey. From Munich I was taken to Hanover and from there to a little village near the border to the Netherlands. Here I stayed together with twelve people from Syria in a house which was given to us. After two month I could join classes to learn the German language. I also join a band in my village where I play the drums. By this I got a little bit in contact with the people living here. In the meantime I got the legal status to be recognised by the authorities as a refugee. Now I would like to move to a city to make more contacts, also for playing music. I hope to be able to take more German classes and to be educated as a technician, maybe I even could take up university studies.*

*I miss my family and my friends. I hope they will stay safe. My friends, like me, also had to leave our country, otherwise we would have been recruited by the army. My friends live now all over in Europe and I am in little contact with two of them because they are in Germany."*

### **Kyrie eleison (sung)**

#### **One of our Pastors reports:**

*"We often don't get to know why the people have left and what they went through on their way. Sometimes, but only after a long time, and only when feeling safe, people talk about*

*themselves. Some are not only traumatised by the violence they have suffered before they got here, but by what they experience with our state and legal authorities.*

*A Syrian refugee, being with us since two years, opened up towards us. But he wouldn't do this in public. He says he regards his flight as a defeat. He feels ashamed for having left his wife and his children behind. He fears for their lives."*

### **Kyrie eleison**

**And we hear about a Armenian-Christian family coming from the region of Damascus:**

*„We lost our place in society in the conflict between Assad and the opposition. Now we don't belong anywhere. We have lost our future and, even worse, our children lost their future. That's why we left Syria, seeking a home for our family. And that's why we came to Germany.*

*Bremerhaven welcomed us and we met open and friendly people here. By now our kids go to school and we did find friends around, also in the Reformed Church where we just by accident passed by. They received us with warm hearts and now we join the worship services regularly. We feel accepted and regained hope for future times.“*

### **Kyrie eleison**

**Voices from Syriah:**

***A young man who insisted on Staying in Syria:***

Omar a young Syrian Engineer surprised his parents who are from the Presbyterian Church in Homs that he insists on holding his wedding in a church in Hamidieh, an area of the old city of Homs which was occupied earlier by the rebels and around 138 000 Christians had to flee without taking anything with them. Just as the Area was freed he insisted that his marriage will be held in a church that was damaged in war and partially rebuilt as a strong symbolism that life is stronger than death. In the wedding Omar stood to say that he is committed to this land and he will not give up in helping his nation in the midst of pain. He is dedicated to stay in the midst of lack of electricity and lack of basic living conditions and daily threat of war in the nearby streets. Although he has easy means to leave Syria but he insist on staying and encouraging other people in staying strong and holding on to their faith and hope.

### **Kyrie eleison**

***A mother; a Refugee struggling***

Rosa is a mother from Bloudan near Damascus feels like the numerous mothers whom the circumstances have driven them far, away from their loved ones. She had no choice but to travel to Canada. Every Morning she starts her day with the tears of sorrow for her homeland . She misses playing with her grandson, and hugging the other, and enjoying their faces. They are growing, while she is away. "Bodies separated afar, but hearts are still there " she says . She yearns for the noise of streets, and the sound of church bells in Syria. She prays full heatedly that the Lord will bring safety to her country and bring the scattered Syrians back home. Although she is a refugee but she waits for the moment when she can return home.

### **Kyrie eleison**

## Reading: Isaiah 63,19 - 64,5

### Sermon

#### Confession

L: We believe that God wants to bring about true justice and lasting peace on earth.  
We believe that God is, in a special sense,  
The God of the suffering, the poor and the downtrodden.

**C: God gives justice to the oppressed  
and bread to the hungry;  
God sets captives free  
and makes the blind to see;  
God protects strangers, orphans and widows  
and obstructs the plans of the wicked.**

L: We believe that the church, belonging to God,  
should stand where God stands:  
against injustice and with those who are wronged.

**C: We oppose every policy that causes injustice:  
We witness against the powerful  
Who seek their own interest and harm others.  
We stand with those who suffer  
To share our lives with them.**

*(from the Belhar Confession, South Africa)*

(Hymn)

### Announcements

#### Prayer of the people/intercession

God our refuge,  
we look to Syria and this seemingly endless war.  
We do not want to turn away from the misery  
people are suffering.  
Instead we want to look closely to what happens there.  
Like us worshipping here and now  
our sisters and brothers gather in their churches  
that has been bombed  
and rebuilt  
as for their faith and their hope shall be visible in places of destruction.

Together we turn to you,

God of life,  
appear in this maltreated world.  
Make an end to the horror of war in Syria,  
make an end to all the violence.  
Intervene where humankind is not willing or able  
to oppose the daily hell.  
Put reason into the hearts of those bearing responsibility  
and teach us to endure in respect and to defence of your peace.

We pray that you strengthen our sisters and brothers to live on.  
We pray that you equip them to be signs of peace.  
We pray that you let them become ambassadors of reconciliation.

We pray for the people in Syria  
and committ our selves to help them  
that the day shall come  
when no one has to leave their home,  
and no one has to mourn the victims and those who has been murdered.

We commit ourselves to your will  
so you can use us as intruments of peace  
that the day shall come  
when the captives will be free  
and the broken be healed.

We commit ourselves for the wellbeing of the people  
that the day will come  
when children can play in security  
and adults will learn anew to trust each other again,  
the day when we celebrate life.

We pray to you, o God,  
that this day will come, and soon.

### **The Lords Prayer (to be sung): "Abana in Heaven"**

#### **Sending and Blessings**

<b>Liturgist:</b>	See, how very good and pleasant it is when kindred stay together in unity.
<b>Congregation:</b>	<b>It is like the precious oil on the head that nurtures us and grands us high regard.</b>
<b>Liturgist:</b>	How very good it is to care for each other now and in the time to come.
<b>Congregation:</b>	<b>By this we become a blessing to each other by this we become a blessing to the world.</b>

Liturgist: Now leave, protected by God,  
and go where God will use as instruments of peace.  
May the Lord bless you and keep you.  
May God make his face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you.  
May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you  
and give you peace.

Congregation: **Amen**

## **Music**

*This Liturgy has been written by  
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