

**Prayer of Confession for Sins
Committed in Our Name**

One: The Bible promises that when we turn to God and confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore, with confidence in God's promise, we turn to God.

Holy One, we need cleansing.

As a nation, we have engaged in horrible acts of cruelty against people held in custody by our armed services and our intelligence agencies. We have tried to justify these acts in the name of national security, believing that engaging in them would protect us from further harm and danger.

We have tried to justify these acts by saying they are not as bad as they seem. We have tried to justify these acts by calling them enhanced interrogation techniques. We have tried to justify these acts by pretending the people we used them against are less than human, less human than we are.

We are trying now to cleanse ourselves of this wrongdoing by debating it, by explaining it, by ignoring it.

We were wrong. Our leaders who authorized these acts were wrong. Those of us who did not speak against them were wrong to keep silent. Those of us who did speak against them were wrong to give up in frustration. Those of use who want to ignore them are wrong to turn our faces away.

We were wrong to torture our enemies. In torturing our enemies, we have failed to uphold the ideals of equality and justice our

nation professes. In torturing our enemies, Holy One, we have fallen short of your teachings to love one another, to love our neighbors, even to love our enemies.

Forgive us for the sin of torture. Even if we ourselves did not commit this sin, it was committed in our name as citizens and residents of the United States of America.

Forgive us for the sin of torture whenever and wherever it has been committed by our government in our name. Forgive our leaders for authorizing it. Forgive those men and women who inflicted it, whether under instructions from our leaders or acting on their own initiative. Forgive us for failing to speak against it, for failing to speak persistently against it.

Forgive us for believing that we can find our ultimate security in anything other than your mercy, grace, and love.

Forgive us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Please observe a time of silent reflection.

**Assurance of Forgiveness Offered
by the Pastor**

Adapted from Psalm 103, The Message

God makes everything come out right.
God puts victims back on their feet.
God is sheer mercy and grace.
God is not easily angered and is rich in love.
God doesn't endlessly scold us nor hold
grudges against us.
God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve nor
pay us back for all our wrongs.
God doesn't torture us.

As high as heaven is over the earth,
so strong is God's love to those who
give God honor and praise.
As far as the sunrise is from the sunset,
God has separated us from our sins.
As parents feel tenderness and
compassion for their children,
God feels for those who give
God honor and praise.

God knows us inside and out.
God knows we are made of dust,
that we are limited in our understanding of
what is right and just,
that we fail to live up to God's hopes for us.

God knows all these things about us.
And God's steadfast love for us never fails.

Brothers and sisters, believe the Good News.
By the tender mercies of God,
our sin is forgiven.

Go, and sin no more. Amen.

Note from the Pastor

On May 3, in my sermon, I spoke of the acts of torture committed in the name of the American people by its military and intelligence agencies over the last eight years. Ample evidence is emerging that these acts were approved by the highest officials in the executive branch of our federal government in violation of both American law and international treaties and conventions. I called upon our nation to confess the sin of torture, beginning today, in our worship service.

This Prayer of Confession is written in the hope that by offering it, we will relieve in some small way the burden these acts place upon our collective spirit. And in the hope that we, in true repentance, will resist the temptation to commit them in the future.

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Church of Christ, 1190 East First Avenue,
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Jim Peck, Pastor