

# Prayers for Asia

## Bangladesh

**Context:** Bangladesh, located in central Asia, is one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world, with a total population of almost 160 million. It became a nation in 1971 after a liberation war from Pakistan. Its population is predominantly Muslim, with Christians numbering less than one per cent. MCC has worked in Bangladesh since the early 1970s, with a focus on community development projects.

**Author/contributor:** Mary Lou Klassen is an interim peace advisor for MCC. She writes: “Our MCC office in Dhaka gathers each morning for a brief check-in and morning prayers.... I invited staff to write down their prayers for peace over a couple of days. Some wrote in English, some in Bangla which we have translated.”

### Prayer:

সারা বিশ্বের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন।

*Pray for the world.*

প্রতিটা মানুষের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন

*Pray for every human.*

We pray for the war-affected people in the world, especially for the children in different countries around the world.

We pray for the Marawi people in the Philippines who are caught in the middle of a war between their government and ISIS-related parties.

Peace in Palestine is inevitable. The question is, how do we make it happen today?

Amen.

বাংলাদেশের শান্তির জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন এবং সব পরিবারের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন

*Pray for the peace of Bangladesh. Pray for all of our family.*

Road accidents are one of the great problems of Bangladesh. Every day, an average of eight people are killed and more than double this number are seriously wounded. We pray for the families and departed souls, and that accidents would be reduced.

Please pray for our MCC offices in Bogra, Dhaka and Mimensingh. May our work together in food security, education, public health training, and peacebuilding bring more resilient communities. We pray for the well-being of MCC national staff, service workers and our families.

Amen.

আমাদের সবার পরিবারের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন।

*Please pray for all of our family*

We pray for those suffering from political violence. During general elections, people are impacted by the political party's conflicts. In Bangladesh, elections will happen in 2019, but the politicking has already begun.

We pray for our people who are suffering from climate change, especially poor people.

Amen.

হে ঈশ্বর আমাদের প্রত্যেকের সন্তানদের জন্য আর্শিবাদ ও সুস্থতা দান কর।

*God please bless our children and give them good health.*

প্রত্যেক মানুষের জন্য প্রার্থনা করবেন।

*We pray for everyone.*

Amen.

## Cambodia

**Context:** Cambodia is a small country of 15 million people located in the southern portion of the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. Cambodia lives with the legacy of French colonialism, the Vietnam War, the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge and political intervention by Vietnam. Respect for the rule of law is poor and violence at election time is very common. Cambodians and Vietnamese continue to harbour hatred and resentment toward each other. A deep and true peace evades the country.

**Author:** Sovannara Yyoeun is a young adult who served with MCC's IVEP (International Volunteer Exchange Program) in Canada during 2016–2017.

### Prayer:

Dear God,

Please be with Cambodia and its people – so much in need of peace.

We pray for healing from the burdens of colonialism, war and genocide, and an end to the violence which is so ever-present.

We pray that hatred and animosity and division can be overcome. We pray especially for forgiveness between Cambodian and Vietnamese people.

We pray for the elections in 2017 and 2018. May the elections this year and next be free and fair. May there be no violence. May people who are just and righteous be elected.

We pray that the children of Cambodia can live with the hope of peace.

We pray for peace for Cambodia.

Amen.

## **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea) and Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea)**

**Context:** The 70-year division in Korea is tragic. The 1950–1953 war remains unresolved between DPRK/North Korea on the one hand, and the U.S. and ROK/South Korea on the other. A peace agreement has never been reached, and tensions today remain high due to concerns for human rights abuses and nuclear weapons development. MCC and our partners in DPRK and ROK are working toward peacebuilding and reconciliation by serving the vulnerable, responding to need and offering spaces of reconciliatory dialogue.

**Author:** Donna Rice is MCC representative for Northeast Asia.

### **Prayer:**

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

In this region of hostility, send your Spirit to establish peace between nations. We bring before you the disunity of Northeast Asia, its history of injustice and oppression, the fear of the unknown, and, now, threats of nuclear war. May your church be a voice of reason, reaching across divides to speak peace to a region that has endured 70 years of hostility and division.

Lord, as your people, we pray for the power to be gentle; the strength to be forgiving; the patience to be understanding; the grace to be compassionate toward our enemies; the endurance to accept the consequences of holding to what we believe to be right.

Lord, strengthen the will of all those who work for reconciliation and peace, renew your church, and give us the peace which the world cannot give.

Amen.

## India

**Context:** MCC in India is the oldest, continuous MCC program. In 1943, MCC became involved with the provision of food and clothing to victims of the Bengal famine. Today, among other things, MCC in India works with the Gilgal Mission Trust (GMT) on the project “Peace and Justice.” GMT works in an area where there is significant conflict between high caste and Dalits (members of lower castes), which results in a “peace-less” community. Apart from the violence, other major problems in the area are illiteracy, underdevelopment, distance from government, joblessness and more. The violence committed against Dalits by other castes and religions – including killing – is increasing in an alarming manner, especially in Tamil Nadu state.

**Author:** Mrs. Suja Phinehas is a speaker and teacher of women’s Bible study. She has organized and led the peace program for women. She is now president of All India Mennonite Women Conference (AIMWC).

### Prayer:

The Gilgal Mission Trust asks prayer for:

- GMT and peace projects in Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu;
- Peace for families and communities experiencing conflicts;
- Strengthening of those working in the local communities;
- Social and economic development for the oppressed Dalits;
- Cooperation between and support from the government with the community;
- Women and children who are violated.

## Myanmar (Burma)

**Context:** Located in Southeast Asia, near both India and China, Myanmar's (Burma's) modern history is marked by violence and colonialism. Myanmar gained independence in 1947, but colonization left the many ethnic groups and hill tribes within the country at odds with each other and the government, resulting in considerable ethnic tension which has fuelled protests and separatist rebellions. The MCC program in Myanmar focuses specifically on peacebuilding and trauma awareness through three local partner organizations who concentrate on grassroots peacebuilding initiatives.

**Authors/compiler:** Monica Scheifele, program assistant in the MCC Ottawa Office, wrote this prayer based on a prayer request list from Maung Maung Yin. Yin is the Director of the Peace Studies Centre at the Myanmar Institute of Theology, which has been an MCC partner since 2009. Director Yin worried his list of prayer requests was too long, but stated he was "greedy when it comes to peace." He also used the phrase "in this very moment," evoking a deep sense of longing and urgency.

### Prayer:

In this very moment  
We share Myanmar's "greediness" for peace  
with "too long lists" requiring a multitude of prayers.

In this very moment  
When the people of Myanmar deeply desire peace,  
We pray with them for the lasting peace they seek.

In this very moment  
May they find genuine forgiveness among diverse religious and ethnic groups,  
Leading to reconciliation between ethnic armed groups and the state military.

In this very moment  
May there be peace and healing for those who have suffered 50 years of civil war,  
In addition to the devastation of annual floods, fires, landslides and droughts.

In this very moment  
We echo Myanmar's prayers for their government, and the determined efforts of those working for a  
nationwide ceasefire agreement.

In this very moment  
We pray for strength and wisdom for the continuing work of the Peace Studies Centre within Myanmar,  
and for all efforts for peace in the world.

In this very moment  
We pray for peace.  
Amen.

## Vietnam

**Context:** Vietnam is a small but densely populated country in Southeast Asia. Its history is dominated by a long list of foreign invaders – Chinese, Khmers, Chams, Mongols, French and the U.S. The U.S. waged war against communist-led North Vietnam beginning in 1964, finally withdrawing in defeat in 1973. One of the ongoing legacies of the “American War,” as the Vietnamese call it, is the long-lasting health complications resulting from the use of the highly toxic herbicide Agent Orange by U.S. forces to clear foliage and expose North Vietnamese fighters during the war. After many years, a U.S. embargo against Vietnam was finally lifted in 1994.

**Authors:** Major and Karen Treadway are MCC representatives in Vietnam.

### Prayer:

God of hope and life,

We trust in your redemptive power to bring about peace in places and between groups once believed to be unimaginable. We trust in this power because we see the seeds that have been sown and nurtured among the people who were terrorized during the U.S. war in Vietnam – soldiers, civilians, children.

Though seeds have been sown, there is much work left to do. Though no shots have been fired nor bombs dropped in the name of that war in over four decades, there continue to be new casualties. Farmers continue to find unexploded mines and bombs. Children continue to be born with genetic mutations as a result of their parents’ and/or grandparents’ exposure to Agent Orange. Families continue to live on different continents, separated by complexities of allegiance, politics and identity that we will never fully understand.

And so we look at these seeds of peace and we wonder. What do you have in store for the people of Vietnam? We look into their eyes and we see that, like all people, they are created in your image. How might they know and experience your peace? What does your peace look like among the people of Vietnam?

We pray where there is despair, you would bring hope. We pray where there is pain, you would bring someone to give comfort. We pray where there is loss, you would bring community.

Additionally, we pray that you would embolden those with freedom and power to speak to governments to remind the decision makers that the cost of war is too high and unpredictable. Unborn children and grandchildren should not have to bear the burden of warring nations.

We lift this prayer with the hope and assurance that, even in our lack of understanding, your peace is possible. May it be every more pervasive than the war that was fought in Vietnam more than 40 years ago.

Amen.