

# The 26<sup>TH</sup> Annual Service of Hope

Good Friday, April 7, 2023

South Dakota State Penitentiary, Sioux Falls



## INTRODUCTION

*Hoop Dance*

Jackie Bird

## OPENING

South Dakotans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is guided by the formal positions against use of the death penalty which have been adopted by nearly all major denominations and faiths in the United States. SDADP works in HOPE:

- That families of murder victims will find peace and be consoled in their grief through the healing presence of the Creator and the support of their faith communities.
- That people of faith will influence our society to reject the desperate and hopeless dynamic of violence which the death penalty expresses.
- That murderers – who have betrayed the Creator’s law and their own humanity – will repent, renounce violence, and, even though in prison, seek reconciliation with themselves, with God, with Society, and with the families of their victims.

Please join me in a prayer written by Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*.

*God of Compassion, You let your rain fall on the just and the unjust.  
Expand and deepen our hearts so that we may love as You love,  
even those among us who have caused the greatest pain by taking life.*

*For there is in our land a great cry for vengeance as we fill up death rows  
and kill the killers in the name of justice, in the name of peace.*

*Jesus, our brother, you suffered execution at the hands of the state  
but you did not let hatred overcome you.*

*Help us to reach out to victims of violence so that our enduring love may help them heal.*

*Holy Spirit of God, You strengthen us in the struggle for justice.  
Help us to work tirelessly for the abolition of state-sanctioned death  
and to renew our society in its very heart so that violence will be no more.*

*Amen.*



## SILENT MEDITATION

To prepare ourselves for this service, we will participate in a Smudging Ceremony.

As the burning sage passes by you, gather some of the pungent smoke and bathe yourself in it – purify your mind, body, and spirit for this time as we connect with ourselves, with each other, our greater community, and, yes, even the Universe.

Traditional Smudging – feet on the earth, deep breaths, be still, be here.

## OPENING SONG

*Holy Ground*

Christopher Beatty

This is Holy Ground, we're standing on Holy Ground,  
For our God is present and where God is, is Holy.  
This is Holy Ground, we're standing on Holy Ground,  
For our God is present and where God is, is Holy. (2x)



## HOMILY

Deacon Henry Knapp

St. Mary Parish, Sioux Falls

## CALL TO PRAYER

**Speaker 1:** We want to be clear. We do not gather today to defend the actions of those on Death Row. We believe they should serve time for their crimes. We do not believe, however, that we have the right to take their lives any more than they had the right to take the lives of their victims. We gather because we have had enough of violence. In the midst of war and death, and in a society which so often shows a lack of respect for one another's lives, we believe the world cries for non-violent responses. **We do not need to kill killers to prove that killing is wrong.** We begin by remembering those affected by these particular acts of violence.

**Speaker 2:** We pray for **Allen Poage**, 19 years old, who was tortured and murdered and left to die in a creek outside Spearfish in 2000.

**(Chime...pause...for Allen)**

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us.

**Speaker 3:** And we pray for the perpetrators of this crime. We pray for the man on Death Row: **Briley Piper.**

**(Chime...pause...for Briley)**

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us.

**Speaker 3:** We recognize that crime and the death penalty are but a piece of the violence in our society. We acknowledge the violence we might do to one another in the ways we speak, in the ways we break the trust of one another, and in our lack of respect for people

with whom we disagree.

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us.

**Speaker 3:** We acknowledge the global violence which increases fear in the lives of all people in countries currently torn asunder by this violence.

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us.

**Speaker 3:** We acknowledge the violence we perpetuate when we remain absent and distant from a victim's family who may need us to listen to them as they speak about the wonderful and beautiful life their loved one lived.

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us.

**Speaker 3:** We acknowledge the violence within our country: Which allows millions of children and elderly to live in hunger, and without homes or shelter; Which deprives the sick of adequate physical & mental health care; Which imprisons and executes the poor in disproportionate numbers.

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us.

**Speaker 3:** We acknowledge the violence in our churches, communities and homes when we remain silent while family members and neighbors are violated, battered, and abused.

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us.

**Speaker 3:** We acknowledge the impact of violence upon the prison employees doing their job, and the prison inmates as they experience incarceration for bad choices, especially for those with life sentences without parole. We acknowledge that healing and reconciliation for them is just as important as it is for all of us.

**All:** Divine Presence, let your peace & understanding be within us...inside the prison walls as well as outside the walls.

### **A MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER & REFLECTION**

Pause, be still, breathe deeply.

**Speaker 2:** We affirm victims who are no longer with us, but who, when alive, were a testament to the goodness that is in all of us, and whose goodness still shines in those with whom they shared their lives:

**All:** Divine Presence, hold them in your care.

**(Chime...pause... )**

**Speaker 2:** For all of those who have been executed by



the State, here & everywhere – We hope to remember them for all they were in life. We ask you not to let the word “murderer” be the only thing for which people remember them.

**All:** Divine Presence, hold them in your care.  
**(Chime...pause...)**

**All:** AMEN

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL WITNESS**

Please speak if you feel so moved...

**CLOSING SONG**

*Amazing Grace*

Traditional Hymn

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved and set me free.  
I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind but now I see

Was Grace that taught my heart to fear  
And Grace, my fears relieved  
How precious did that Grace appear  
The hour I first believed

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved and set me free.  
I once was lost but now am found  
Was blind but now I see



**CLOSING PRAYER**

**ALL:** May the Divine Presence of the Universe bind us together in the pursuit of a more peaceful and non-violent world.

**Let us go in peace.**

**Sponsoring Organizations:**

- *South Dakotans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty*
- *Pax Christi South Dakota*
- *Pax Christi Brookings*
- *Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary*
- *Alternatives to Violence Project, Sioux Falls & Springfield*