

Praying toward the Millennium Development Goals

As we consider ways our nation can support the Millennium Development Goals, let us hear what they mean and how we can use them to pray:

MDG 1 is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Fact: More than one billion people around the world live on less than a dollar a day and most of them are not sure where they will find their next meal. As a result of extreme poverty, more than 10 million children die each year.

Prayer: Loving God, you love us more than we can comprehend, and you weep because of the world's injustices – whether they are rooted in hunger or poverty, ignorance or violence, pollution or disease, discrimination or apathy. Give us the strength to struggle for justice for all people. Amen.

MDG 2 is to achieve universal primary education

Fact: Children of women with five years of primary education have a 40 percent higher survival rate than children of women with no education. AIDS spreads twice as quickly among uneducated girls as it does among those with minimal schooling.

Prayer: Gracious God, help us to share our blessings of health, education, food and clean water with all of your people, offering a more hopeful life for millions of your children. Amen.

MDG 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women

Fact: According to UNESCO, there are more than 850 million people in the world who do not have the opportunity to learn to read and write. Two-thirds are women.

Prayer: Paul writes that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Precious God, enlighten us to provide women everywhere with equal dignity and opportunity. Inspire every society to oppose violence against women and strengthen gender justice. Amen.

MDG 4 is to reduce child mortality

Fact: More than 25 percent of children under age 5 in developing countries are malnourished.

Prayer: “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me” (Mark 9:37). Loving God, we pray for the 30,000 children who will die today as a result of poverty and other preventable causes. Strengthen us to not tolerate this reality. Give us the compassion to meet their basic needs for food, clean water, health care, education and freedom from exploitation. Amen.

MDG 5 is to improve maternal health

Fact: A woman in sub-Saharan Africa has a 1 in 16 chance of dying in pregnancy. This compares with a 1 in 3,700 risk for a woman from North America. More than half a million women die each year from pregnancy-related causes.

Prayer: Dear God, lead us to advocate for suffering mothers and families around the world, whose health, dignity and choices are in jeopardy due to illness, poverty, hunger and violence. Amen.

MDG 6 is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Fact: Every day, 8,000 people die of HIV/AIDS. Every 30 seconds an African child dies of malaria, a treatable disease. Education and low-cost prevention programs can drastically decrease these statistics.

Prayer: “[Jesus] welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing” (Luke 9:11). Compassionate God, open our eyes to the plight of people, especially children, who will lose their lives today due to HIV/AIDS and malaria. Empower us to be instruments of your healing by advocating for affordable medicines for our brothers and sisters who do not have the means to cope with their illnesses. Amen.

MDG 7 is to ensure environmental sustainability

Fact: More than 2.6 billion people – more than 40 percent of the world's population – do not have basic sanitation, and more than 1 billion people have no access to safe sources of drinking water. Forests, which contribute to the livelihoods of more than a billion people living in extreme poverty, continue to shrink in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia due to unsustainable practices.

Prayer: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1). Creator God, thank you for the earth and for its beauty and abundance in which we partake. Help us return this gift by being good stewards of your creation. Equip us to seek justice for your creation and for the world’s poorest people. Amen.

MDG 8 is to develop a global partnership for development

Fact: Although trade generates a larger share of GDP than ever before, global trade has yet to yield sustainable benefits for a majority of the world’s poorest countries. Low-income countries account for only three cents of every dollar generated through exports in the international trading system, and the world’s poorest countries have seen their share of global trade decline over the last 25 years.

Prayer: Reflect on Proverbs 31:8-9, our charge to speak up for the poor and hungry. God of Justice, inspire us to urge our government to take this charge to heart and commit the United States to take seriously a commitment to care for our neighbors. Great Spirit, may the world be ONE in solidarity with our neighbors who are hungry and poor. Amen.