

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

IT'S TIME FOR PEACE

A Service of Reflections

Featuring the voices of young Palestinians and Israelis

For use during the ecumenical week of action [‘World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel 4-10 June 2009’](#)

Inspired by an Irish Church visit to Israel and Palestine

Offered with sincere hopes for a peace that is just, that comes soon and will end the suffering of all concerned

Notes for the use of this liturgy

Voices

It is suggested that the four stories of the young people and the nine prayers in the liturgy might be read by young people in the parish or congregation.

Stories

Each of the four stories (pages 4-6) carries the heartfelt message of a young Palestinian or Israeli. If possible, relate each one to a phrase from the lesson, e.g. 'a time to hear', 'a time to plan', 'a time to build up', 'at time to mourn', 'a time to speak' and finally 'a time for peace'—which echoes the theme of World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel.

It is suggested that each story is read by a young person of a similar age to the author.

Please note that further stories from Palestinian daily life, including diary fragments, moral stories of remarkable civil courage, peace and non-violence stories are available from the Arab Educational Institute, Bethlehem. Look for: 'Palestinian stories from daily life' on this website: www.aeicenter.org

Prayers

The prayers offered for use in this service are by people in Israel-Palestine, including a prayer by a Jewish rabbi in Jerusalem and a prayer by a Muslim carpenter in Gaza.

Time as the theme

At the beginning of the service, to call attention to the passage of time and especially to demonstrate support for those affected by 40 years of occupation, a large clock might be placed at the front of the sanctuary, perhaps with a wreath around it, or surrounded by thorns, and/or flowers.

The leader may also wish to invite parishioners to participate, for example, inviting them to:

Take off their watches and lay them out in view the way some people do when conscious of time, or, invite them to bring their watches and place them on the altar during the first reading ('For everything there is a season', page 3) and, later, to collect them after the Jerusalem prayer (page 11), or at the end of the service during the postlude.

As watches are retrieved from the altar, parishioners might be encouraged to say a silent or spoken prayer for peace and for their part in peace.

Music

Hymns are suggested at certain points in the liturgy. In two places, specific hymns are indicated (see next paragraph). Where no specific hymn is indicated, consider choosing from the easy-to-learn songs of peace available in English, French, German and Spanish for download (text, music, sound): <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/other-liturgical-resources/advent-resources/advent-resources-2008.html>

'Make me an instrument of your peace', is also known as 'Make me a channel of your peace'. If the melody is not familiar, a recording is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtJeI4Q9nBE>

An appropriate folk song is Pete Seeger's arrangement of the Ecclesiastes text which is the theme of this liturgy. This song 'Turn, turn, turn' sung by Pete Seeger and Judy Collins is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DejUPN4SksU>

The song suggested at the end, 'Yarraba Salami', is available in the following international ecumenical hymnbooks: 'Thuma Mina', #160, (Basel Verlag); and 'Agape', #110, (Oxford/LWF).

PRELUDE MUSIC

GREETINGS

OPENING INVOCATION: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Leader reads:

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has gone on too long. Ordinary people on both sides have suffered immeasurably, and many yearn for a just peace. The three-week bombardment of Gaza, in response to rocket attacks on southern Israel, at the beginning this, the International Year of Reconciliation, caused great loss of life, thousands of injuries, widespread destruction and untold trauma and suffering. Rockets and missiles continue to fall on both sides. There is daily misery in Gaza and throughout the West Bank. Ordinary civilians separated by a man-made Wall are not safe or secure, and live their lives in fear. Instead of more violence, both sides urgently need a new way.

At the outset of this service we wish to affirm that, where even one life is lost or one child is orphaned, our humanity is diminished. Our hope is for the spiral of violence to be broken and security to be shared by all, for a new beginning and a new commitment to parity of esteem.

The Holy Land is HOLY for each of the Abrahamic faiths: Christian, Muslim and Jewish. As people of faith, we believe peace is possible. Majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians continue to support a negotiated solution based on two secure and sovereign states as the best way to end this tragic conflict.

In today's service we will hear the words of young Israelis and Palestinians. Their stories reflect the lesson from the Book of Ecclesiastes and say what more and more people are saying: **'It's time for peace. Without further delay, it's time for peace'**.

In our prayers we will support these young people, their hopes for the future, and the new beginning that a just peace would bring them, their families and their communities. We join with them, and all people of faith – Jewish, Christian and Muslim, Israeli and Palestinian – to say we will never give up HOPE that peace will come.

Leader: Let us pray.

Our loving heavenly Father, more than ever before, the security and well-being of one people cannot be separated from the fate of another people, nor from us. With our Israeli and Palestinian brothers and sisters, we pray for sustained political engagement leading to a treaty of peace that will finally put an end to the occupation imposed by one people on another, granting freedom to Palestinians, giving security to Israelis, and freeing all from fear.

RESPONSE: Amen

HYMN

During the lesson, parishioners may bring their watches to the altar or place them in view at their seat.

LESSON: ECCLESIASTES 3: 1-8 (Arabic, English, or Hebrew)

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to reap, and a time to sow; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for PEACE.

STORY ONE: BY OMAR HARAMY, A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN FROM JERUSALEM, WHO WORKS AT THE SABELL ECUMENCIAL CENTER IN THE YOUTH DEPARTMENT



*‘Loving Father, Creator of all of us
...WHERE ARE YOU? I have no security.*

I have lost my dignity. I do not want to wake up in the morning or leave the house. I am tired from checkpoints. I am tired from the harassment of soldiers everyday. I am very, very tired. The West Bank is only one tenth the size of Ireland and there are hundreds and hundreds of checkpoints and blocked roads:

physical obstacles, dirt piles, concrete blocks, boulders, trenches, fences, and iron gates -- all restricting the movement of Palestinians. I have been crossing or trying to cross these checkpoints for over nine years on a daily basis. Not a day that passes by I do not witness a story that has contributed to my despair.

I find it so hard to take it looking at the eyes of the sick as they are turned back from checkpoints; I can't take it watching school children turned back and not allowed to go to school; I am weak and I need you to help. Jesus tells me to love my enemy. I try, but it's very, very hard. Loving Father, Creator, please send the peace I need, that we all need, and help us to love again”.

MUSIC (or silence)

STORY TWO: AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN ANONYMOUS SOLDIER IN THE WEST BANK, BY HILARY BROWNE OF THE ECUMENICAL ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAMME IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL.

The Accompaniment Programme supports local and international efforts to end the Israeli occupation and bring about a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a just peace based on international law and United Nations resolutions. ‘Ecumenical Accompaniers’, volunteers who serve in this WCC programme, accompany Palestinians and Israelis affected by the occupation and carry out advocacy work for peace in their home countries.

An order of service from Ireland for the ecumenical week of action

World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, 4-10 June 2009

Joint action for a just peace convened by the World Council of Churches



“At Huwara checkpoint near Nablus, a young Israeli soldier came over to speak to me across barbed wire. He asked me where I was from and why I was there.

I told him we were volunteers working in a very small way to end the occupation and working for a just peace in Israel/Palestine.

Well this soldier just stood quietly listening.

Suddenly, his eyes filled with tears. Pointing at his gun, he said: ‘I don’t want this. I don’t want to do this. We stood together, not speaking, but in a shared silence which was very moving.

Eventually I said: ‘You are a good man. May I tell people what you have said?’ With his eyes still full of tears he nodded, and walked away”.

www.cappi.org/en/news-vents/encounters/r/browse/1/article/4837/encounters-with-the-army.html

MUSIC (or silence)

STORY THREE: BY DINA AND VIDA DAHER (TWINs), 16 YEARS, 10TH GRADE, ROSARY SISTERS HIGH SCHOOL, JERUSALEM



“As young Palestinian girls, a lot of things about this conflict affect us: we’re living under occupation, and we feel that our lives are so much different than others who live in peace. All we want is peace, no more, no less.

But here is an example of why life is so difficult for us: we are obliged to wait so long at the checkpoints to go any place in

the West Bank. In addition, the Separation Wall has taken away a lot of lands that were full of olive trees which have maybe lived over 1000 years.

But what really has affected us was hearing the news of our friend’s house being demolished in the middle of the night -- without giving them the opportunity to take anything from their home, even their slippers, so they walked barefoot into the night. It was so touching and shocking to know that one of our friends’ was suddenly homeless. They ruined her house in front of her eyes. She saw her memories and her belongings destroyed.

All of this and also the war that happened in Gaza at Christmas 2008 made us think that our turn might soon come, and that we will suffer a lot to protect our land. These bad things are being done on purpose, hoping we will emigrate or forcing us to go on living this way as things get worse and worse. We are so afraid”.

MUSIC (or silence)

STORY FOUR: BY OMER GOLDMAN, A 19-YEAR-OLD FROM TEL AVIV AND MEMBER OF THE SHMINISTIM, ISRAELI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IMPRISONED FOR REFUSING TO SERVE IN AN ARMY THAT OCCUPIES PALESTINIAN TERRITORY.



“I first went to prison on September 23rd, 2008, and served 35 days. I am lucky: after two times in jail, I got a medical discharge, but I’m the only one. Many of my friends will be in prison too: in for three weeks, out for one, and then back in, over and over, until they are 21.

The reason? We refuse to do military service for the Israeli army because of the occupation. I grew up with the army. My father was deputy head of Mossad [Israeli Intelligence Agency] and I saw my sister, who

is eight years older than me, do her military service. As a young girl, I wanted to be a soldier. The military was such a part of my life that I never even questioned it.

But earlier this year, I went to a peace demonstration in Palestine. I had always been told that the Israeli army was there to defend me, but during that demonstration Israeli soldiers opened fire on me and my friends with rubber bullets and tear-gas grenades. I was shocked and scared. I saw the truth. I saw the reality. I saw for the first time that the most dangerous thing in Palestine is the Israeli soldiers: the very people who are supposed to be on my side.

When I came back to Israel, I knew I had changed. And so, I have joined with a number of other young people who are refusing to serve - they call us the Shministim. Many have asked me about what it was like for me during this time. Of course I got scared while in prison. But also, it’s frightening that my country is the way that it is, locking up young people who are against violence and war. And I worry that what I am doing may damage my future. It’s hard to go from being a free girl who can decide things for herself — what to wear, who to see, what to eat — and then go back to having every minute of the day time-tabled.

Last time I was out of prison, I went to see my dad. We tried not to talk politics. He cares about me as his daughter, that I am suffering, but he doesn’t want to hear my views. He never came to visit me in prison. I think it was too hard for him to see me in there. He is an army man. I suppose, actually, we have similar characters. We both fight for what we believe in”.

SHORT SILENCE FOR MEDITATION

Leader: We have heard the voices crying for peace on both sides, young Israelis and Palestinians saying: It’s time for peace!

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

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Joint action for a just peace convened by the World Council of Churches

HYMN OF PEACE: LORD MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF YOUR PEACE (a prayer of St. Francis)

[Chorus]

*Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.*

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

[Chorus]

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

[Chorus]

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

GOSPEL: MARK 12: 28-31 (Arabic, English, Hebrew)

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one", answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

AFFIRMATION

Leader: Christ, You are our Peace.

All: **You have broken down the hostility between us.**

Leader: There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female.

All: **We are all one in You.**

Leader: God was in You, reconciling the world to God,

All: **And has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation.**

Leader: We are in Your body,

All: **And are members one of another.**

Leader: We are a community of the Holy spirit,

All: **Called to be witnesses of God's love.**

THE PEACE

Leader: Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body on the cross; we meet in His name and share His peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: And also with you

SHARING OF THE PEACE:

Each person turns to share a sign of peace with others

HYMN

PRAYERS

Leader: Let us pray

Prayer 1:

We remember all the people of Israel/Palestine who suffer – Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, Israeli and Palestinian – all those who have been victims of violence, who are bereaved, who are isolated by checkpoints and walls, who are in prison, and all those who live in fear.

We ask that you will intervene and allow all people of faith to join together to make their beliefs a driving force for peace. Let the power of your Redemption and your Peace transcend all barriers of cultures and religions and fill the hearts of all who serve you, of both peoples - Israeli and Palestinian - and of all religions. Lord, we pray for Peace.

RESPONSE: O Lord hear our prayer

Prayer 2: A JEWISH PRAYER FOR PEACE, by Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Jerusalem. (*The full text is included as an Appendix on p. 12, and may be used.*)

Eloheinu V'Elohei Kadmoneinu (Our God and God of our Ancestors), strengthen us to overcome our fear and to be Your partners in creating the world that You envisioned when You promised our ancestors, "Through you shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1, 26:4, 28:14).

When we think that we protect ourselves by doing to others what has been done to us, help us realize that today it is we Israelis who have the overwhelming power to act justly or unjustly.

Both we and the Palestinian people with whom we are destined to share this land strive to strengthen our claims to this land by denying claims of the other. May we all come to understand that two peoples have deep roots in this land. Both we and those with whom we will either live together or die together have desecrated Your Image as we have harmed each other. However, we all so deeply feel our own victim-hood that we are furious when accused of being victimizers. Help us all to understand that violence corrupts even when our cause is just, and that the difference between being a victim and a victimizer is less than a hair's breadth (Rabbi Shmuel Tamerat). We Israelis and Palestinians know how to see each other as strangers – as "other". Yet the word *shalom* (peace) comes from the same

root as *shalem* (whole). Open our hearts to perceive that through your Oneness, we are all one.

Help us to overcome and grant us courage. Though we know in our hearts the path we must take, we have failed to do so. *Barukh Ata Adonai* (Blessed are You Adonai) Sovereign of the universe, who gives strength to the weary.

RESPONSE: Amen

Prayer 3: A CHRISTIAN PRAYER FOR PEACE, by Elise Aghazarian, Jerusalem

We pray for more active voices that challenge ambivalence.
For a more effective, profound, and empathetic spirit of solidarity.
For Palestinian farmers whose lands are expropriated, for families whose houses are demolished, for people who are losing their right to live in their cities.
For West Bankers who are not allowed to pray in Jerusalem.
For students who are tired from standing on checkpoints.
For Palestinian women.
For political prisoners.
For those challenging different forms of pain.
For the besieged in Gaza.
For horizons that challenge walls, for steadfastness that challenges despair.
For the freedom of Palestine.

RESPONSE: Amen

Prayer 4: A MUSLIM PRAYER FOR PEACE, by Abd Al-Rahman, a carpentry student at the Vocational Training Center, in Gaza, a Church-related institution

In The Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,
Liberate our prisoners.
Assist us, for our homes are destroyed
Protect us from frightening Wars
Lead us everywhere
Show us the right Path
Let it rain and do not leave us thirsty.
Make our country safe.
Fix our hurt from corruption
Mend our internal affairs in this country.
Make this country peaceful
Protect us from air strikes.
Free us from occupation.

RESPONSE: Amen

Prayer 5:

We thank you for the links of Churches worldwide with Bethlehem, root of our Christian faith, and throughout the Holy Land. We thank you for the friendships of ordinary people worldwide with Christian communities in the Holy Land.

We remember the humanitarian work of aid agencies and their local partners in the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and Israel, who work to make peace possible. For the pastoral care of many doctors and nurses, and the work of many teachers, priests, and religious, who give committed service working together for the good of others; Father, we thank you.

RESPONSE: O Lord hear our prayer

Prayer 6:

We thank you for the work of the World Council of Churches and of Churches throughout the world that lift up the need for solidarity with the Christians in the birthplace of Christianity and with their neighbours, all of whom are suffering very much.

We remember the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment teams who stand with ordinary people, of all faiths, in daily lives so marked by Occupation. Father, we pray for peace.

RESPONSE: O Lord hear our prayer

Prayer 7:

We ask for your mercy and support for the Christian presence in the birthplace of Christianity, and at this time we remember especially the tiny Christian community in Gaza, and all in Gaza who live in the midst of despair, isolation and immense suffering.

We ask that they will feel your light working to bring them through the darkness. We ask that the people of Gaza will be inspired by peace, resist oppression with love, and that the siege of Gaza will be lifted and dignity restored to all.

Jesus, through your birth, life and death, you gave us a ministry of reconciliation. We ask you to give strength to all who work for peace in Israel/Palestine and to all who promote the need for dialogue and understanding. Lord, uphold them in their work.

RESPONSE: O Lord hear our prayer

Prayer 8: A JERUSALEM PRAYER FOR PEACE, from the Churches in Jerusalem

Leader: Finally, as part of this World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, the Churches in Jerusalem have sent us a prayer for peace. We are invited to pray with them, joining churches around the world, and saying together:

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks and praise for the gift of your Son, Jesus – his birth in Bethlehem, His ministry throughout the land we call ‘holy’, His death on the cross, and His glorious resurrection and ascension. Jesus came as the ‘Prince of Peace’ and we give thanks that around the world the Churches and Christians are praying for the peace of Jerusalem and this land.

We pray for all leaders who dedicate their lives to a just peace for their peoples. Send us political leaders ready to dedicate their lives to a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis. Make them courageous enough to engage in a process that puts an end to the occupation imposed by one people on another - granting freedom to Palestinians, giving security to Israelis, and freeing all from fear.

We pray specifically for the people of Gaza to be freed from their unending trials and threats, for all those living in refugee camps in the region, and for those now living abroad. Free all the people of this land from the sin of hatred and violence and bring us together to work for peace.

We seek your blessing especially on the children and young people, that their fear and the anxiety of conflict may be replaced with the joy and happiness of peace. We pray for the well-being of the elderly and those with special needs, and for their contribution to the future of this land.

All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

Watches placed on the altar may be retrieved at this time, or as part of the final recessional.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: *Said by all in their own language*

THE BLESSING

FINAL HYMN: YARABBA SSALAMI *(The final hymn may be sung as a procession of light, with each member of the congregation receiving a lighted candle to carry from the church as they leave.)*

أمطر علينا السلام يا بر السلام	Yarabba ssalami amter aalalya ssalam
م املأ قلوبنا السلام يا بر السلام	Yarabba ssalami imla' qulubana ssalam

God of peace, in your wisdom
Give us the will to seek peace;
God of peace and of healing,
Fill with your peace every heart!

Appendix: A JEWISH PRAYER FOR PEACE, by Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Jerusalem

Eloheinu V'Elohei Kadmoneinu (Our God and God of our Ancestors), strengthen us to overcome our fear and to be Your partners in creating the world that You envisioned when You promised our ancestors, "Through you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1, 26:4, 28:14).

You know that we have so many reasons to hate and fear after 2,000 years of exile and oppression, and after 100 years of struggling for survival against those who would exile us again from our homeland. We have so many reasons to believe that most of the world is against us, that we are a small nation surrounded by enemies much more numerous than we, and that we must rely on our own military might and the might of our allies.

However, our prophets taught us, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely upon horses. They have put their trust in abundance of chariots, in vast numbers of horseman, and they have not turned to the Holy one of Israel," (Isaiah 31:1). Zechariah declared in Your name, "Not by might and not by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

Help us to understand that today it is we Israelis who hold overwhelming power in our hands. That power is the greatest challenge to Your ethical imperatives that we passed from generation to generation, because we now have the ability to do to others what was done to us. Our sages have taught us, "Who is truly mighty? One who overcomes his/her impulses" (Pirkei Avot), and "One who turns an enemy into a friend" (Pirkei Avot D'Rabbi Natan).

All too often we have used our newfound power to act unjustly. Yet, You know that we will enjoy the peace and security we so deeply desire and deserve only when we recognize Your Image in every human being and fulfil Your command, "Justice, Justice shall you pursue, that you may live and inherit the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Deuteronomy 16:20) Even just goals must be pursued in a just manner. (Midrash)

When we think that we protect ourselves by doing to others what has been done to us, help us realize that today it is we Israelis who have the overwhelming power to act justly or unjustly. Both we and the Palestinian people with whom we are destined to share this land strive to strengthen our claims to this land by denying claims of the other. May we all come to understand that two peoples have deep roots in this land. Both we and those with whom we will either live together or die together have desecrated Your Image as we have harmed each other. However, we all so deeply feel our own victim-hood that we are furious when accused of being victimizers. Help us all to understand that violence corrupts even when our cause is just, and that the difference between being a victim and a victimizer is less than a hair's breadth. (Rabbi Shmuel Tamemat) We Israelis and Palestinians know how to see each other as strangers – as "other". Yet the word *shalom* (peace) comes from the same root as *shalem* (whole). Open our hearts to perceive that through your Oneness, we are all one.

You help those who are willing to help themselves, and we know in our souls the path we must take. Yet we fail to do so. We therefore turn to You, Who know the desperate desire to find the way to peace embedded in our innermost thoughts and the deepest recesses of our hearts. We cannot pray to You to do our work for us. We pray that You grant all the peoples of your Holy Land the strength and courage to carry out in deeds what we already know in our hearts – Justice, wholeness and honouring Your Image in every human being will bring us all the peace and security You ordained of old.

Help us to overcome and grant us courage. Though we know in our hearts the path we must take, we have failed to do so. *Barukh Ata Adonai* - Blessed are You *Adonai*, Sovereign of the universe, who gives strength to the weary.

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