

Seek Peace and Pursue It

Worship Leader's Guide

Note: This is a suggested order of worship for a Peace Sunday service. We encourage you to adapt it to your congregation's needs. For the offering of paper cranes toward the end of this service, you will need enough cranes for each person in the congregation to receive one. Hopefully there will be someone in your congregation or community who can fold origami cranes. You might even hold a class and bring someone in to teach several of your people how to do it. For more information about how to fold cranes, download the pdf file "howtofoldacrane.pdf."

You probably already have ushers in place to distribute worship bulletins as worshippers enter. If so, ask them to give each person a paper crane as well. If not, you will need to place someone at each entrance with a basket of cranes.

You will also need to prepare an altar table to receive the paper cranes. You could drape it with a simple white cloth and then use lots of colors for your cranes. You could get a white cloth or paper covering and ask your children to decorate it with drawings about peace. You could write the word "peace" in different languages all over it. You could put the Christ candle from your Advent wreath in the middle, and light it when the service begins. (It might be wise to surround it with a globe from an oil lamp to keep from catching the cranes on fire.)

As worshippers enter, an usher hands each an origami crane.

Prelude

A suggested song for this is "God of Grace and God of Glory," played quietly and slowly.

Words for Meditation:

"Seek peace and pursue it." Because *shalom* is so essential to the life in community that God intends, it cannot be left to chance or circumstance. It cannot be taken for granted. It cannot be simply wished for or even earnestly petitioned in prayer. It must be pursued; it must be sought; it must be built.

—Dwight Lundgren

Musical Invocation: "Servant of Us All"

by Jeremy McLeod

Note: This is adapted by Jeremy McLeod from the "Prayer for Peace" attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. The music is reminiscent of Taize music and is offered to you with Jeremy's permission and blessings. The lead sheet version is available here as a pdf. If you would like to get a full score with choral and instrumental parts, you can purchase this at (<http://members.aol.com/St.FrancisSong/Index>).

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalm 34:1-14 (Seek peace and pursue it...)

Litany: "Show Us How to Make Peace"

by Katie Cook

LEADER: Jesus, when you were born the angels sang of peace on earth.

PEOPLE: But all around us are wars and rumors of wars.

LEADER: We wish for the nations to join hands in peace.

PEOPLE: But instead we see the countries of the world ravaged by bombs and paralyzed by terrorists; we watch in shock as ethnic purging stalks the globe; we watch in dismay as whole nations fall before the violence of hunger.

art by Catriona McGlashan Long

LEADER: We long for peace in the land where we live.

PEOPLE: But we see fear throughout our cities, dogging our steps through the streets; we see unchecked greed in the marketplaces; we watch ethnic groups, political parties, and religious communities fling poisoned barbs of prejudice toward one another; we see the slow slaughter of the poor through the violence of greed and denial.

LEADER: We ache for peace among friends.

PEOPLE: But something within us builds walls to keep the love out; something within us holds us back from the embrace that might heal our brokenness.

LEADER: Most of all, we want peace within our hearts.

PEOPLE: But we rush about in our busyness and never give the peace a chance to plant itself and grow; or we have our hearts so heavily guarded that peace cannot penetrate the fortress.

LEADER: We are told that the Messiah was described as the Prince of Peace.

PEOPLE: But we are not sure what that means, and we are confused by the lack of peace around us.

ALL: O Prince of Peace, still our minds and hearts and plant hope where we feel despair. Show us what you meant when you spoke of peace. Show us how to have peace in ourselves, and how to make peace in the world around us. Amen.

Reading from the Gospels

Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes)

Music

*Note: the suggestions for hymns are from *The Worshiping Church* (1990: Hope Publishing Company; ISBN: 0-916642-43-7)*

Suggested hymn: "Hope of the World" (#434)

Alternates: "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life" (#430)

"Let Your Heart Be Broken" (#429)

Words for Meditation

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

—from the Talmud

Reading from the Epistles

Romans 12: 9-21 (marks of a true Christian; live peaceably with all people)

Sermon: "Living Towards Peace"

by Brett Younger

To view the sermon, go to the "Living Towards Peace sermon" page.

Healing Ceremony: Offering of Peace Cranes

Note: Here the worship leader will encourage the congregants to think of at least one person or circumstance that needs to be healed. Then the leader will ask participants to come to the peace altar and lay their peace cranes on it, with the prayer that healing will come. You might want to relate the story of the Japanese girl who started out making 1,000 cranes in order to be healed from radiation sickness. Every crane that she made was a prayer for healing. You also might consider encouraging a few people to share a few words with the congregation about what their crane represents.

It would be effective, as people come forward, to have someone singing the following song a cappella. Then, when everyone has laid a crane on the altar, you could ask the congregation to sing (perhaps with joined

hands) the last verse. You might want to add a couple of verses of your own. A nice alternative to this song would be the old Shaker song, "How Can I Keep From Singing?" If you don't have a soloist to sing it, you could get a copy of D.E. Adams's CD *Songs and Hymns*, where he sings it, quite beautifully, a cappella. (You can email him at adams@dangerousfaith.org.)

"Study War No More" (traditional spiritual)

Gonna lay down my burden down by the riverside
Down by the riverside, down by the riverside
Gonna lay down my burden down by the riverside
And study war no more.
I ain't gonna study war no more,
ain't gonna study war no more,
ain't gonna study war no more (repeat).

Gonna lay down my long white robe down by the riverside
Down by the riverside, down by the riverside
Gonna lay down my long white robe down by the riverside
And study war no more.
I ain't gonna study war no more,
ain't gonna study war no more,
ain't gonna study war no more (repeat).

Gonna lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside
Down by the riverside, down by the riverside
Gonna lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside
And study war no more.
I ain't gonna study war no more,
ain't gonna study war no more,
ain't gonna study war no more (repeat).

Benediction:

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord shine the divine countenance upon you. May the Lord give you peace, but may that peace be a disturbing peace, a peace that calls you to long for the peace of all humankind. May you find in the blessing of God, the blessing of sharing in the service of God and bearing the cross of Christ. As you go forth from this place, go forth in the power of the spirit of God to make a difference in the world.

—Raymond Bailey

Postlude

A suggested song for this is an instrumental version of "Let There Be Peace on Earth."