

Seek Peace and Pursue It

Order of Worship

Prelude

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

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalm 34:1-14

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.

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

art by Catriona McGlashan Long

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

Sermon: "Living Towards Peace"

by Brett Younger

Healing Ceremony: Offering of Peace Cranes

"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