

Benediction

God, grant us peace. Whatever bitterness we hold towards another human being, let us give that up into your hands now. Whatever enmity poisons our hearts, let us release into the cross of Christ. Whatever guilt clouds our judgment, whatever grief grips our souls, whatever past corrupts the present, help us be freed from it by your forgiveness. Let the peace that passes understanding well up from within our souls and spread within our families and associations and communities until through us you touch the world with peace, in the name of Christ. Amen.

—Larry Bethune

Go forth in silence, and God grant you peace.

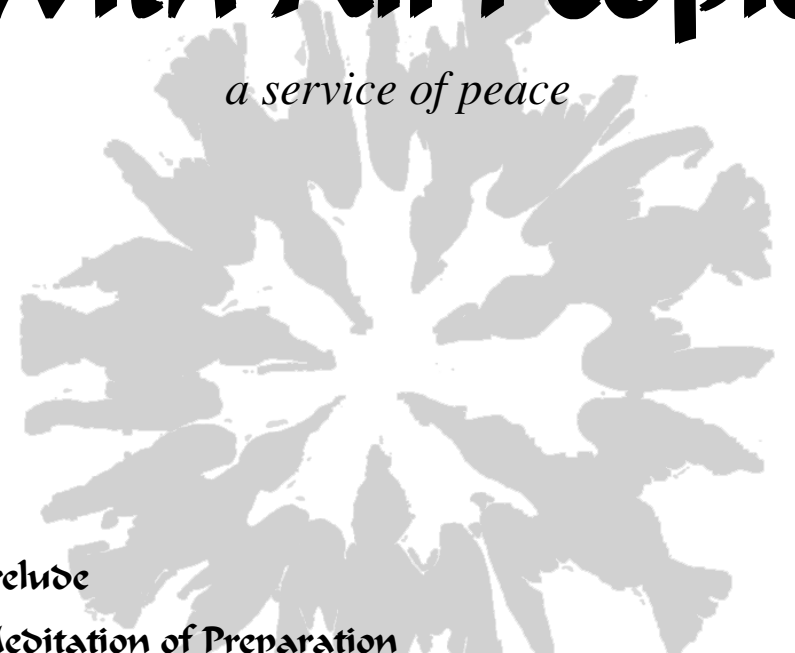


About the Contributors:

- The sermon for this service was written by **Larry Bethune**, the senior pastor at the University Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. The benediction is taken from a sermon titled “Is Peace Possible?”
- The service was compiled by **Katie Cook**, the editor for the Seeds of Hope publications *Sacred Seasons* and *Hunger News & Hope*, and also the editor of *Baptist Peacemaker*, the journal/newspaper of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. She compiled this worship service.
- The poem “Peace Flowers,” read during the healing service, was written by **Mitchell Nicola Dean**, an artist and writer who describes himself as part Cherokee, part Mayan, and also part Irish and Lebanese and Mexican. He lives in Sparrowhawk Village, near Tahlequah, Oklahoma.
- The meditations were taken from a theme interpretation for this service by **Dwight Lundgren**, the Coordinator of Intercultural Ministries and Reconciliation for the American Baptist Churches USA, headquartered in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The full text of the theme interpretation can be found at www.nationalministries.org/mission/reconciliation.
- The Prayer for Discernment is one of the prayers referred to as a “Prayer Before the Cross” by **St. Francis of Assisi**. Most scholars consider it to be a prayer that he prayed before the icon of Jesus on the cross, in the chapel at San Damiano, near Assisi.

As Far as It Depends on You, Be at Peace with All People

a service of peace



Prelude

Meditation of Preparation

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. It is a direction which immediately suggests a question that has all the energy of a challenge, specifically, “How much does it depend on me?” To live at peace? To be a peacemaker? Have I done enough? Have I availed myself of the disciplines that could transform my capacities and commitments to respond to conflict in hopeful and not hostile ways. The whole passage assumes the possibility, if not probability, that Christians will find the world in conflict with them—because they have given themselves into a new community where class distinctions and assumptions of privilege, possession and priority have been relinquished, “counted as refuse,” before the riches of the Gospel.

—Dwight Lundgren

Chiming of the Hour

Musical Invocation

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

LEADER: To the God of majesty we pray today;

WOMEN: Who made the gardens bloom with colors rich and bright;

YOUTH: Who made the seasons in their change;

MEN: Who crafted the mountains and the seas;

ALL: Open our eyes to the splendor of our world.

LEADER: To the God of hope we pray today;

YOUTH: Who created the peoples of the earth;

MEN: Who invites us to reach out to each other;

WOMEN: Who calls on us to care for the helpless;

ALL: Open our hearts to the pain in our world.

LEADER: To the God of grace we pray today;

WOMEN: Our petitions for the wounded of our world;

MEN: Our confessions for neglect and prejudice;

YOUTH: Our cries for peace, within and without;

ALL: Heal us, and heal our world.

LEADER: Help us to be true to ourselves, while loving each other,

YOUTH: Even when we get on each other's nerves.

WOMEN: Help us to care for each other,

MEN: Those sitting next to us now, and those halfway across the globe;

LEADER: We lift up our gifts to you today, our talents and our visions;

ALL: We lift up our hopes for a day of peace. Amen.

—Katie Cook

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 65:17-25

Hymn

“Give Peace in These Our Days”

Words for Meditation

By living with the question of how much the peace of my neighborhood, my community, my country, and even my world depend on me, the Christian and Citizen sets an example of not foreclosing the struggle to live at peace and for peace. Our minds naturally go to the present war in

Iraq, the attendant struggle against terrorism, the dynamics of an epoch that makes of all nations neighborhoods. There are other momentous challenges to peace, challenges which have the potential to wreak greater, even more enduring havoc.

The elimination of nuclear weapons, the rejection of a policy that entertains such weapons as a privileged national option—these commitments press upon us in a day in which the reversal of the nuclear threat is seriously threatened. For the moral imagination inspired by the love of God in Jesus Christ, the only “coals of fire” that are to be heaped on the heads of the enemy (Romans 12:20) are the acts of kindness and mercy that anticipate and invoke a life together in God's Shalom.

—Dwight Lundgren

Reading from the Gospels

John 14: 18-27

Prayer for Discernment

Congregation prays together:

Most high and glorious God,

Bring light to the darkness of my soul.

Give me right faith, certain hope,

And perfect charity.

Lord, give me insight and wisdom,

So I might always discern

Your holy and true will.

—St. Francis of Assisi

Reading from the Epistles

Romans 12:14-21

Hymn

“O God of Love, O King of Peace”

Sermon

“We're All in This Together” by Larry Bethune

Ceremony of Healing

This ceremony is inspired by the use of floating lanterns in Hiroshima to signify prayers and wishes for peace and healing. If you have a prayer for reconciliation or healing, please come forward, light a candle, and put it on the water. If you feel comfortable doing so, share in a word or phrase what this prayer is for.