



**Mennonite
Church
USA**

Peace and Justice
Support Network

PEACE Sunday 2014

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Key texts

Psalm 122
Micah 4:1-4
Luke 19:41-44

Along with Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Church USA celebrates Peace Sunday the Sunday closest to the International Day of Prayer for Peace, which is Sept. 21. **However, you may use these materials any Sunday that works for your congregation.**



Introduction

In many ways, Jerusalem is a microcosm of our world. It is ancient, beautiful, and teeming with life. And it continues to be torn apart by violence and enmity, fueled by injustice, mistrust, and often—tragically—the misuse of sacred Scripture.

Jerusalem is a holy city to not just one but three of the world's religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three claim Jerusalem as a place of reverence and worship. All three share Abraham as a common ancestor and "father of their faith." That they cannot share Jerusalem is the epitome of human fallenness and spiritual brokenness. It is the antithesis of Psalm 133:

*How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.*

It is no wonder that Jesus wept when he looked down upon the city (Luke 19:41-42). So shall we weep. And so shall we pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).

Order of service

*As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying,
“If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!
But now they are hidden from your eyes.”*

—Luke 19:41-42

Call to worship (Psalm 133)

L: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

**P: It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.**

L: It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.

A: For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

Prayer

Oh, God, we celebrate the vision of the Psalmist, who understood the wondrous beauty of your reign, in which all of your children dwell together in unity. We humbly and sadly acknowledge that the full beauty of your reign is not yet a reality. Especially in that most ancient and holy city that sits upon the mountains of Zion, Jerusalem. Come, be with us; speak to us in our worship, that we may recognize on this day the things that make for peace. Amen.

Hymn(s)

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 14: “Come, we that love the Lord”

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 310: “How good a thing it is”

Psalm 122 (for two readers; may also be read responsively or antiphonally)

One: I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!”

Two: Our feet are standing within your gates, O, Jerusalem.

One: Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

Two: For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David.

One: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you.

Two: Peace be within your walls,

One: and security within your towers.”

Two: For the sake of my relatives and friends, I will say,

Both: “Peace be within you.”

One: For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,

Both: I will seek your good.

Song(s) of response

Sing the Story, No. 16: “Peace before us”

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 346: “Dona nobis pacem”

We bring our gifts (offering)

Sing the Journey, No. 147: “Prayer of dedication ”

O God ... God of extravagant mercy, with hands outstretched, you have poured out wonder and pleasure and delight, goodness and beauty and bounty. So take these offerings, we pray, as our protest against all that is evil and ugly and impoverished, trivial and wretched and tyrannical, in our world and in ourselves—that we, too, may be poured out for the world. Amen.

Children’s time

Option 1: Read the children’s book, *Snow in Jerusalem*, by Deborah Da Costa, Ying-Hwa Hu, and Cornelius Van Wright. *Two boys—an Israeli Jew and a Palestinian Arab—become friends after they discover they’ve been caring for the same stray cat.*

Option 2: Read “The Tree House” from *The Big Book for Peace*, Ed. Ann Durell and Marilyn Sachs. *Two next-door neighbor girls feud over who has the best tree house, until they begin sharing with one another. And they decide that building a bridge between the two is the best solution of all.*

Scripture reading

Romans 12:1-2, 9-21

Song(s) of lament*

Sing the Journey, No. 66: “If the war goes on”

Sing the Journey, No. 52: “Jesus help us live in peace”

**Either of these songs of lament may be sung congregationally, or performed by a soloist or small ensemble.*

Scripture reading

Micah 4:1-4

Sermon: “Praying for the Peace of Jerusalem”

Note to the preacher:

It will be essential to the theme of the service to make reference to the current political and social reality of Jerusalem, and of Israel-Palestine as a whole. On one hand, Israeli Jews, Palestinian Christians, and Palestinian Muslims have all been victims of the violence in that land. As Christians, our prayers for peace in Jerusalem must be for peace with justice for all its inhabitants. On the other hand, we shouldn’t presume that culpability for the violence is shared equally by all. (For a helpful overview and history of the conflict, see *What is Palestine-Israel?* by Sonya K. Weaver.) Nevertheless, the focus of the sermon should be not on political expediency, but rather on faithfulness to God’s will, as expressed in and interpreted from today’s Scripture texts.

Ideas and sermon starters:

Referring to the children’s story (whichever option is used) could be one effective way to begin the sermon, and to make initial connections to the current reality in Israel-Palestine. As one begins to explore the Scripture texts, the broader meaning of the biblical words for “peace” (*shalom* and *eirene*) could be explored. (One help-

ful resource is *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace* by Perry B. Yoder.) In particular, it should be noted that the biblical terms convey not just the absence of violence, but the presence of a broader well-being and wholeness for all. This is precisely what is in view in the text from Micah—not just the cessation of violence, but the ability (indeed, right) of all peoples and nations to “sit under their own vines ... and fig trees,” without fear. Unfortunately, this “peace” eluded the people of Jerusalem in Jesus’ time, and continues to elude them today.

The preacher may wish to identify specific examples in which Micah’s vision remains unfulfilled—in Jerusalem, and Israel-Palestine more broadly. This can lead to specific examples of what our prayers and actions for peace in Jerusalem might include. Jesus’ phrase, “the things that make for peace” (Luke 19:42), would certainly include examples from his own life, summarized as the way of sacrificial love. (Examples from Christian Peacemaker Teams’ work in Hebron could be cited.) The preacher may also wish, at some point in the sermon, to refer to the document entitled “Kairos: Palestine,” which is essentially a plea from Palestinian Christian leaders to Christians around the world to become aware of their struggle.

Hymn(s) of response

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 367: “For the healing of the nations”

Sing the Journey, No. 64: “Somos el cuerpo de Cristo”

Sing the Journey, No. 56: “Make me a channel of your peace”

Prayers of the people

Sending song(s)

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 366: “God of grace and God of glory”

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 407: “We are people of God’s peace”

Benediction

Sing the Journey, No. 158

L: From where we are to where you need us,

A: Jesus, now lead on.

L: From the security of what we know to the adventure of what you will reveal,

A: Jesus, now lead on.

L: To refashion the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,

A: Jesus, now lead on.

L: Because good things have been prepared for all those who love God,

A: Jesus, now lead on.

For peace and justice resources, or to join the Peace and Justice Support Network, visit www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace, or check us out on Facebook. For more information about PJSN, or to offer your responses to the Peace Sunday material, contact Peace@MennoniteUSA.org. **Your financial gifts are crucial for continuing to strengthen the vision of peace and justice in Mennonite Church USA. Thank you for your support.**

