

PEACEMAKING SUNDAY

marking the United Nations
International Day of Peace



Baptist Union
of Great Britain
Encouraging Missionary Disciples



The
United
Reformed
Church



The **Methodist** Church

PEACEMAKING SUNDAY

These prayers, hymns, readings and images have been prepared for Peacemaking Sunday, the Sunday closest to the United Nations International Day of Peace on 21 September 2009. We hope that the resources provide a flexible range of material, so that worship leaders can make a suitable selection.

Note: The readings used are the Common Lectionary texts for Sunday 20th September, although you could use the materials to pray for peace on another day.

READINGS

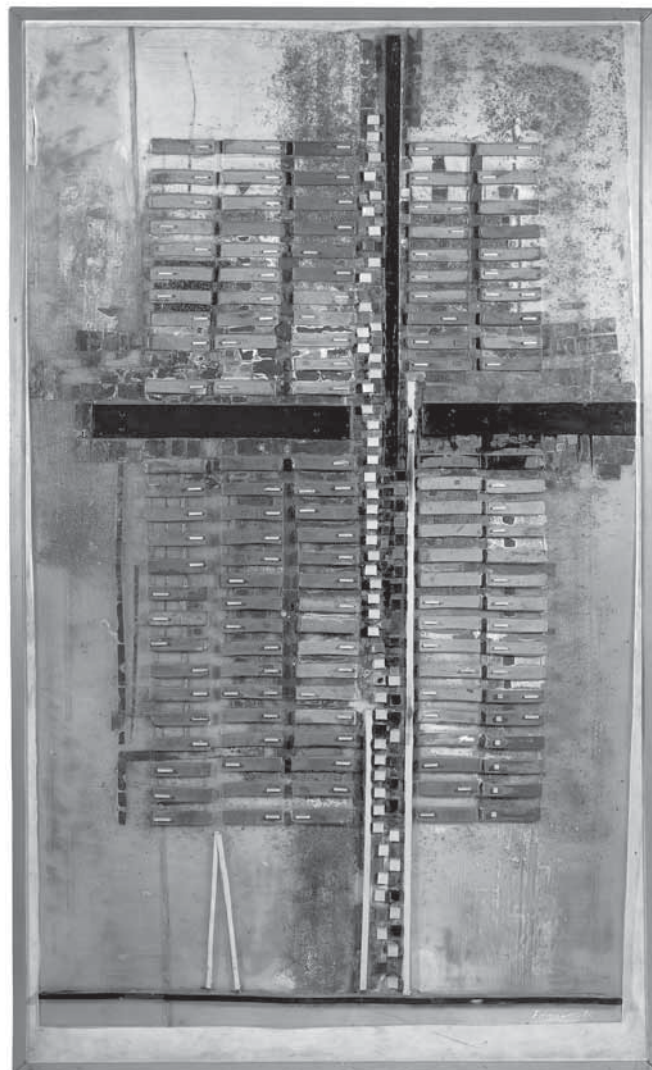
- Psalm 54
- Jeremiah 11:18-20
- James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a
- Mark 9:30-37

CALL TO WORSHIP

From James 3:17 and 18, let us hear:

‘But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace’.

So, come, let us worship the God of Wisdom, of Justice and of Peace.



THE CROSS OVER THE CITY, MICHAEL EDMONDS
© METHODIST CHURCH COLLECTION OF MODERN CHRISTIAN ART

A COMMENT ON THE THEME, USING THE CROSS OVER THE CITY

The artwork, entitled *The Cross over the City*, by Michael Edmonds is a three dimensional panel, which forms part of the Methodist Church Collection of Modern Christian Art.

What do you see? Perhaps it is an aerial view of a crossroads and many red roof tops. The people below probably don't realise that the cross, symbolising the unseen but ever-present God, is hovering over their locality - protective and forgiving.

The longer we look at this dynamic artwork we begin to sense the potential for hope, for reconciliation of the hurt and conflicts within the community which lives under the shadow of the redeeming love of Jesus Christ.

PRAYERS

GATHERING PRAYER

Living, living God,
we come before you in wonder because
despite all the terrible things that happen in the
world, you love humanity very deeply.
You love each one of us.
You have given us life and breath to come before
you, to sing your praises and to talk with you.

Today we come to you bearing the shared weight
of sadness for the innocent lives damaged by
conflicts all across the planet, even as we pray.
We are so thankful that we can bring to you all the
grief and anger we feel about senseless violence,
because in and through the life and death and
rising of Jesus Christ, there is hope for your world.

We thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit,
who touches human lives, and brings healing
through those who love and serve you.
We believe that one day there will be no violence
or grief, because as you have promised, the earth
will be filled with your glory, as the waters cover
the sea. **Amen**

- *You could follow this with the Lord's Prayer.*

A PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN

As a tickle teased
As a hurt hugged
As a giggle shared
As a stomach filled
As a hand held
As a tear smoothed,
Bring peace to your little ones
Gentle God
As a world loved
As a life lived
As a child cherished. **Amen**

REVD DR BARBARA GLASSON: THE METHODIST CHURCH

A PRAYER TO POUR OUT OUR HEARTS

Living God, once more, as so often before we
pray for peace.

We bring before you those areas of conflict
which are always in our news,
and those which have flared up but are now
forgotten even by us,
and those which have never hit the headlines
and are known only to you.

And we bring before you our sense of
helplessness and fear in the face of violence and
hatred and turmoil. We feel there are powers at
work in our world which threaten to overwhelm
us and appal us and drive us to despair.

Forgive us Lord, our small, easily threatened
faith in the power of your love, forgive us our
readiness to assert our own rights, forgive
us our unwillingness to practice in our own
lives what we preach to each other daily: love
overcomes evil, forgiveness is stronger than
bitterness, negotiation is more powerful than
violence. As you forgive us, Lord, teach us how
we, in our small sphere, may become better
peace-makers, peace-bringers.

And remind us, Lord, that there is no true
peace without justice, no lasting ceasefire
without reconciliation, no way forward until
the injustices of the past have been faced and
dealt with. So we pray for those who tread the
path of peace-making and justice-seeking on
the world stage - the powerful whose position
gives them opportunity to speak, the weak
whose example is nevertheless influential,
the respected whose voices are listened to.
Grant them wisdom and inspiration, and the
fearlessness which comes from knowing we are
praying for them.

Living God, we ask our prayers in the name of
Jesus Christ, your Son and the peace-maker for
the whole world. **Amen**

REVD SUE THOMPSON: BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN

A PRAYER FOR THE FEARFUL

For the baby, absorbing muffled sounds of
terror within the womb,
For the child, clinging close to a trembling
source of security,
For the parent, stricken with fear for young
minds and bodies;
For the elderly who never hoped to see this day,
For the solitary life in anguish;
For the weapon-bearing aggressor of this
moment...
For pity's sake...
God of Peace, have mercy on them
Risen Jesus Christ, save them
Holy Spirit, comfort them. **Amen**

STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe in one God
who created all the world,
who will unite all things in Christ
and who wants all people to live together in one
family.

We believe in God the Son
who became human: died and rose in triumph
to reconcile all creation to God;
to break down every separating barrier
of race, culture or class,
and to unite all people in one body.

We believe in God the Spirit,
the pledge of God's coming reign
who gives the Church power to proclaim the
good news to all the world,
to love and serve all people,
to strive for justice and peace:
to warn that God judges both the individual and
the nations;
and to summon all the world to accept God's
reign, here and now.

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God,
on this Day for Peace
we acknowledge with shame
our share in all that works against peace
and contributes to violence.

We profess to serve the Prince of Peace
and yet all too readily
our hearts harbour
hatred and resentment
toward those with whom we disagree;

We profess to serve the One
who urges us to 'turn the other cheek' and
'love your enemies',
and yet all too readily
we refuse to walk the hard and sacrificial
path of reconciliation.

We confess to you,
our shared responsibility for a world
in which weapons and war
continue to wreak their havoc
and claim their victims;
our natural inclination
toward protection of 'us' and 'ours'
and our suspicion of 'them' and 'theirs'.

Forgive us and help us pledge ourselves
anew
to work for a world
in which swords are beaten into
ploughshares,
and spears into pruning hooks
and where peace may flourish.

Amen

REVD GEOFFREY CLARKE: URC



INTERCESSIONS using PowerPoint

Congregational response is in bold.



IMAGE: Earth from space

Creating God, we gaze with you at the beautiful earth which you have made, and we are aware that ‘all manner of things’ are not well, because of human selfishness and greed.

Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: Iraq from the air

Creating God, we gaze with you over the lands of Iraq, and we pray for all Iraqis whose lives have been devastated by war. We pray for all who are struggling to create a new future for their country.

We pray for the UN peacekeeping forces and their families.

Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: Gaza from the air

Creating God, we gaze with you on Gaza, in Israel-Palestine, and we weep, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

We pray for those whose lives are devastated by the ongoing conflicts over territory in this land, and we long for a lasting, peaceful and just solution to be negotiated.

Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: Lokichoggio, Sudan

Creating God, we gaze with you over Lokichoggio, in Sudan, where the cycles of drought are getting more extensive because of global warming, and people there live in permanent crisis, desperately searching for grazing and water across the desert lands.

We pray for them, and for those who work, both in politics and NGOs, to halt the effects of climate change in this region.

Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: London from the air

Creating God, we gaze with you over our capital city, and see here the great potential for effective democracy, fair representation and justice, but we know that the ideal is forever compromised by human shortcomings.

We pray for a national spirit of caring and generosity of heart. We pray for our political leaders, that they will be peace-brokers on the international stage.

Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: Afghanistan from the air

Creating God, we gaze with you over the country of Afghanistan, and we pray that the warring factions will realise the utter futility of violence, and seek to build a new future which respects the human dignity of all Afghan people.

Be with all those who are caught in the crossfire, and we think especially of the British troops and their loved ones, and the chaplains who minister to them.

Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: Faslane from the air

Creating God, as we look on the Faslane naval base in Western Scotland, we know that this benign view obscures the Trident nuclear submarine arsenal. We confess that these so-called 'weapons of defence' are not your way of peace.

We pray for wisdom for all the world leaders who will participate in the Global Nuclear Security Summit to be held in the United States in March 2010. We pray that they may have the courage to call on their nations to disarm.

Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: Your own church or town. You could use Google Earth

Creating God, we gaze with you over (insert the name of the area you have chosen) and we pray that we may be peacemakers here.

Help us to live as Jesus lived, to share your love with family, friends and neighbours.

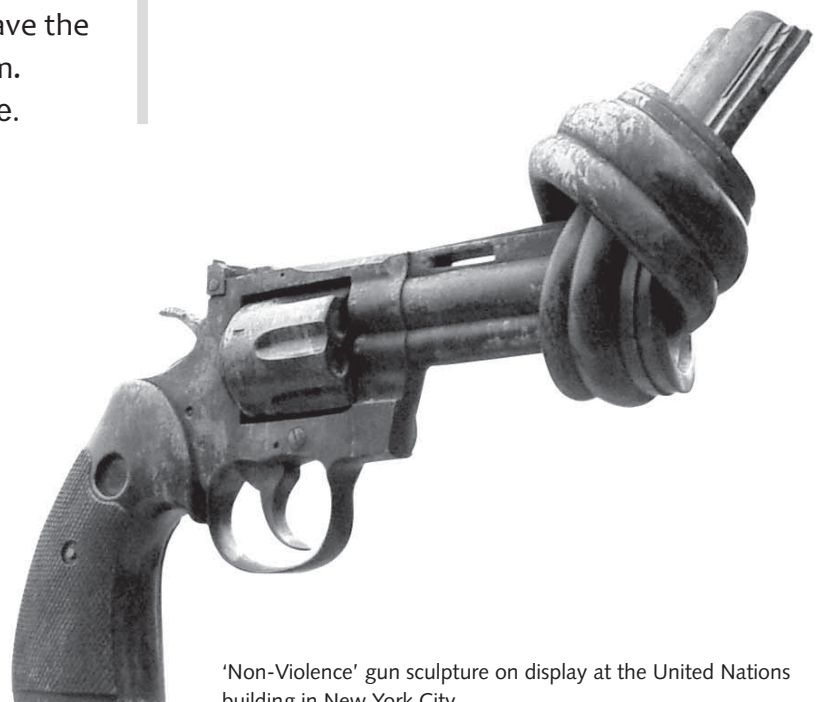
Creating God, bring healing, bring peace.



IMAGE: *The Cross over the City* by Michael Edmonds

Creating God, thank you that in Jesus there is hope for humanity. We offer you ourselves and the work of this church community to work for peace, knowing that you are always with us, watching, caring and loving.

We bring our prayers in the name of the Risen Jesus Christ, Amen.



'Non-Violence' gun sculpture on display at the United Nations building in New York City.



A PRAYER AS THE PEACE CHILD STANDS AMONG US

This prayer is based on *Jesus stand among us*, by Graham Kendrick © Thank you Music 1977 which can be found in Mission Praise 381. The response, in bold, could be read by a second voice or the whole congregation.

You could use the hymn by;

- having it played quietly and asking someone to read Mark 9: 36-37 over it
- singing or saying together the first four lines of it.

Jesus, you stand among us; when we fail to respond to the child waiting to be welcomed

Our eyes don't meet
our hands don't touch
our hearts are cold
our lives our own.

Jesus, you stand among us; when we fail to respond to the child waiting to be welcomed

The cry of hunger
the shouts of anger
a song for freedom
prayers for healing.

Jesus, you stand among us; when we fail to respond to the child waiting to be welcomed

With tears of grief
with pain that weeps
with wounds to bind
with hearts to mend.

Jesus, you stand among us; when we fail to respond to the child waiting to be welcomed

Like a child,
you stand among us.
In humble truth
you show the way.
Come, welcome me,
we hear you pray.
Yet still you stand
in your wilderness,
our greatest help
against the Devil's hand.

Jesus, you stand among us; when we fail to respond to the child waiting to be welcomed

- At this point you might sing or say again the first four lines of the hymn.

Child of Peace,
You stand among us
and tell the truth:
It's time for change.
We cause the pain
with too much pride
and selfish greed.
It's time to change,
to humble ourselves
to welcome you
and be like you
to throw away the sins
that chain us to the world
to walk in freedom
as children of the Kingdom
Jesus, you stand among us,
you are the Child of Peace
who we welcome with open eyes to see,
ears to hear,
and hands to hold.
So now we change to be like you as humble
servants of God's Kingdom.
Amen

BLESSINGS

- If you have a copy of *Common Ground* say or sing number 121, Peace Blessing from Guatemala.
- A Celtic Blessing

The deep peace of the powerful wave be with you,
The deep peace of the air that moves be with you,
The deep peace of the water that flows be with you,
The deep peace of the silent land be with you,
The deep peace of the shining stars be with you,
The deep peace of the Creator, Redeemer and the Spirit of Peace be with you. Amen

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

Beginning with the Gospel text, and anticipating the International Day of Peace, you might choose to centre on Mark 9:35-37, in which Jesus draws attention to the special role the 'little ones' have in the economy of God's kingdom.

If possible, project *The Cross Over the City*, by Michael Edmonds onto a screen and invite people to imagine the community living in the homes under the shadow of the cross. Is this, perhaps, a community under threat of conflict? Might war break out in this city, as it did in Sarajevo, or Gaza, or Kabul? Will there be chaos, as there was when the Olympic stadium in Sarajevo burned down in twenty minutes? Does the cross of inhumanity and suffering and destruction hover over these people? Will their homes 'just' be pock-marked by shells or destroyed completely?

Remind people that it is always the world's 'little ones' who are the first and most tragic victims of human violence and conflict – children, frail elderly, pregnant women, and people with acute disabilities.

These are the very people whom Jesus names as closest to the heart of his father, and central in God's purposes.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to care for them as he did. It is our task now to ensure that God's 'little ones' are cared for and treated with respect. So, how will we play our part in the making of God's kingdom?

Perhaps, in the following ways;

- make our voices heard in peacemaking processes which expose the distorted motives of conflict – such as hidden quests for power, self-gratification and greed
- practically and financially support agencies who work for peace and seek to provide humanitarian aid for the victims of conflict
- get the right information about communities currently suffering, and engage in intercessory prayer. This could be something you do as part of this service.

This reading from Mark makes it clear that these activities are gospel activities, not an add-on to a message of spiritual salvation – this is evangelisation, or 'gospel-doing'.

If you want to support your sermon from the other lectionary readings, you might find the following pointers useful.

- Psalm 1:1-3 - a manifesto for righteous living brings out themes such as running counter to world opinion (v1), delighting in the ways of God (v2), aiming to be like the tree feeding on the living water of God (v3).

- Jeremiah 11:18-20 - the ministry of Jeremiah gives a great example of someone who pays the price for standing up for the righteousness of God.
- James 3-4 - the qualities of living the righteousness of (God; wisdom, gentleness, being peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy) are explored.

It is important that your service is realistic about the reality and inevitability of human conflict. For example, there is no reason why you should shy away from acknowledging the complexity surrounding the role of UN peacekeeping forces and military forces.

We should always be vigilant about our human tendency to self-deceive, which history has shown us can happen at the national and international level as well as at a personal level. We need to be prepared to speak grace, justice and mercy and this may mean challenging governments, even our own, when we suspect such deception is at work.

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For further information see www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/peacemakingsunday

