



World Council
of Churches



Telling Peace

Stories of Peace with Worship Resources for Advent





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of Churches

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November 2009

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FOREWORD

In the stories we tell about a just-peace we discover the world anew. As Christians when we tell stories of peace then we begin to see the world in the light of the gospel message and the Good News of the angels “Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace!”

We do not accept the world as it is. We are not only critical of the injustice we see with our own eyes, the injustice others or we ourselves have to put up with, but we also commit ourselves to continue telling the Good News story. Telling the story in our own contexts is a real step towards making peace and overcoming violence.

The stories of peace in the first part of this book come from Africa, Latin America and Europe and show how people are changing the world sometimes in small ways: always through courageous action.

The children’s drawings which tell of peace were painted by young artists from the Philippines. This year’s liturgical outlines for the four Sundays of Advent come from Asia and were put together by a group of liturgists and musicians who live in a variety of Asian contexts as the four themes chosen makes clear.

Harmony plays a very important role in the Asian context. Peace comes about through the harmony of singing or of telling stories, between different religions, in difficult political situations and particularly in the interaction between the original inhabitants and inhabitants there as a result of foreign colonization.

At the end of the book you will find information about the World Council of Churches’ call to a Decade to Overcome Violence and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) which is planned in 2011.

“Telling Peace” and last year’s book “Imagine Peace” have both been produced as a result of many people in different areas working together. We want to thank them all and give special thanks to Swee Hong Lim and Alison Phipps, both members of the Spiritual Life Committee of the IEPC, who helped coordinating this book.



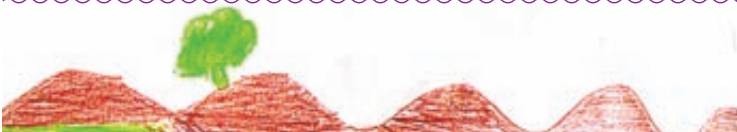


TELLING PEACE: HUMANITY LIVES THROUGH STORIES

We are story tellers. Each day gives us new opportunities to tell stories about the way the world seems to be, how we have experienced it and how we would wish it to be. Sometimes stories come instantly, stories which make us laugh or which need to be told immediately, urgently so that news will spread of happenings, danger, possibilities. Sometimes stories need a long time to grow: pains and hurts, ambiguities and missed moments, errors and opportunities grasped; it is only later, in the retelling, that they can begin to be shaped into stories to be told.

Some people are gifted in the art of telling stories, they are precious to our worldwide Christian faith community and have been important throughout history.

The Bible is full of stories. Some of the stories are hard to stomach, violent tales of warfare and destruction; some are stories of birth to the barren, of promises fulfilled. The stories are biased towards the teller, stories are like that, but as we read them, or come up against them, a space opens for us, as it has opened up for others through the ages of their telling and we are granted new ways of imagining our own stories in the light of those who have lived and told their stories before us.





Jesus told the most wonderful stories, stories which did not so much tell us how to live our lives but which made the story of our lives in a new Covenant with God seem as natural to us as breathing. Every day stories of lost coins, squandered opportunities, injured strangers, forgiving fathers, runaway sons, of salt losing its saltiness, of light. And the way Jesus lived bred stories, gospels and epistles, which kept the story of his extraordinary ordinariness, his divine humanity, alive.

Stories about Jesus are our stories towards the IEPC: stories of community peace, peace between women and men, domestic peace; economic peace; a woman stops bleeding, five thousand are fed, the Master listens to a Samaritan woman at a well. Stories of peace with the earth as a storm is calmed and fish return abundantly, stories of peace between peoples where an occupying soldier can approach Jesus for help and healing, and where the context of Galilee and Jerusalem is always palpable. These are stories told in and from a particular context and as such, these stories become our own.

It was not so much that Jesus told pretty little stories, even domestic stories, but that his stories seem to suggest that there is a more excellent way of living; a way of non-violence and reconciliation, of overcoming prejudice and offering forgiveness. A costly way, indeed, but a way which was inviting, possible, just round the corner, or in the next street, with our neighbours and with those given in to our care.

There is Good News in the stories and parables told by Jesus, news about a way of non-violence, a way of just peace. And it isn't just the stories themselves which invite us in as attentive readers and listeners, it is their remarkable way of telling and suggesting. The stories invite us to imagine ourselves in such tales, as forgiving fathers, and losers of coins, and runaway children, as attacked, injured and lying by the road, or chancing upon a stranger and being offered the possibility of relationship. In these stories we are in the world of possibility, a familiar world, one which parallels the stories we tell every day. "I couldn't find my keys, I turned the house upside down." "I was just on my way to the market when I came across someone who was injured in a hit and run."; "I decided I'd make that call home, after all, it is too long since we argued."

Telling peace, means telling the stories of our ordinary lives which show that the work of love, of God and neighbour, is still alive within us. It means telling stories of small miracles of just peace; telling stories of lives changed and moved towards God's kingdom of justice and peace.



THIS PLACE IS PEACEFUL
BECAUSE IT IS CLEAN
AND THE MOUNTAINS
HAVE NO HOLES FOR
MINING.
AEDEN JOICE SOLIMAN
Birthdate: 1999 April 10
U.S. DRAFT UP THE
CHANGE

When we tell stories of justice and peace we are re-imagining the world in new ways, in ways according to the Gospel and the Good News of the Angels. Glory to God and Peace on Earth. We do not simply accept the world as it is; we are not just critical, even angry at the injustice we see, the wrongs done to others and to ourselves, but we engage in telling the Good News in our contexts as an act of peace making and overcoming violence.

The story of Good Friday is of death overcoming, of violence overcoming life. The story of the Risen Christ is a story of life overcoming death and violence; because look! there he is walking among his disciplines, breathing on them, calling them by name, letting them touch his wounds, cooking breakfast for them on the beach and saying "Peace be with you."

If Christ's peace is with us then we are both invited and enabled to live our lives as stories of peace making and overcoming violence. Peter did, Paul did, and through the ages men and women of faith have lived lives of justice and peace – big and small – and the stories of this have been told over and over again in each context and for each age.

When we hear stories of lives lived beautifully committed to overcoming violence in their contexts, we are given life and hope and healing.

So through the stories in the Bible, through the stories in your own context, through the stories in the Great Book of creation, we invite you to tell peace and be your own story of peace.





TELLING PEACE through the Bible - Exodus 14: 19-31

Alison Phipps

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."



In these years because of our society of noise and me one trying to destroy ^{the} heaven's father's creation
 It also reminds me of the dark paper did in the 20th century, paper in those days were noisy
 kind and not trying to destroy it. This shows that the paper is shining brightly, like flying.
 clean and surroundings that became noise culture in not destroyed and I wish people do not
 destroy it for the sake of their own feelings and as God's disciples we should do your duty to please
 and make our feet happy.

August 8: Fallen
 Feb. 27, 1997
 72 years old

ICCP Chapel of the Evangel Fellowship
 Marikina City, Philippines

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

It's there in each one of us, isn't it? Today was just another ordinary day in my own institution. I received emails and listened to stories from students and colleagues which appalled me greatly. Later, in the company of trusted friends, as we tell one another of recent woes within our own peculiar contexts I find language turns to violence, my imagination fertile with all the kinds of humour that feels necessary for justice. I listen, horrified, as one among us tells of a seminar where colleagues who should know better





used images demeaning both to women and those who live in poverty. I find myself in tears as I rail against the ways the impossible and contrary complexities of the incredible volume of regulation, red tape and legislation, stored on endless websites, now paralyze attempts at caring with compassion for those entrusted to our care, in professional life. And I worry for the colleague I found in tears at his desk, overwhelmed, just utterly overwhelmed by the unrelenting slaveries of unmeetable deadlines, inflexible colleagues, the loneliness of conscience.

With trusted friends my own rhetoric becomes wilder, tipping over into laughter as together we tell of imagined punishments for the faceless authors of our frustrations and griefs, and of those we care for. “Can I spit roast them?”, “What would it take to make them understand?”, “You cannot be serious, that’s outrageous, that’s so completely out of order! How can that be allowed? How can they get away with it?” In all of our tales of frustration and woe, born of the insatiable demands of the gods we now are paid high salaries to worship, the gods of bureaucratic, consumer capitalism, we find ourselves gleefully imaging the worst for our “enemies” and laughing joyfully as we paint pictures, with words, of how things could be, were pigs to fly, seas to part, email servers to seize-up, income and expenditure models to become defunct.

It is not pretty, contemplating the seeds of violence in ourselves or our friends. Such rhetoric and imaginings are edgy, dangerous and Jesus tells us plainly in The Sermon on the Mount, just how much acting on such activity can separate us from the work of greater love within us. “But I tell you anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says ‘you fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew 5: 22). In the Gospel lectionary reading we have the uncomfortable answer to the question of forgiveness: “How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy seven times.”

Yet here, in the defining story of Exodus, the crucial dramatic story which Israel lives by throughout its times of exile, we find ourselves right in the midst of precisely such tricky, unpalatable, triumphalist recounting of God acting violently on behalf of God’s people. The central, warrior actor in this part of the Exodus story, is suddenly and most dramatically, Yahweh, who controls the elements of life – fire, water, dry land, air – and who, through these same, throws the Egyptian army into such confusion. Moses, Israel’s greatest leader and prophet, the ultimate symbol of hope for an abused and enslaved



Shelsea Rey L. Rendon
 23 JULY 2002
 UCCP - SAN JOSE
 PHILIPPINES

Telling Peace
 See bec. when I
 See It I Feel Peaceful
 and happy.

people, only achieves victory over Pharaoh by running away, and then, on the banks of the Red Sea, by stretching out his hand in prayer throughout the night, as Egypt's enemy armies camped roundabout.

In the midst of the drama, in the retelling of this great escape story, we find all of those familiar yet deeply unattractive human attributes; a heady rush of words witnessing to the defeat of the enemy; the end of all that has been feared and hated; the escape of a people who can now suddenly change their self-understanding and live as people with a story of successful escape, but who also claim this as God's justice, God's action, God's violence for them.

This story is one with which we are bound to struggle, if we do not wish to accept at face value the simplistic image of a God who will stand on top of a fiery pillar and decide to drown hundreds of people. At the heart of this story the narrator, justifiably biased against the imperial violence of Pharaoh, places the image of a violent God and this God cannot be explained away, much as it may offend our sensitivities and desires to sanitize this text.





It is very hard for us to read such accounts without being taken in completely by the bias of the narrative and to conclude, simplistically, that God acts violently to save us from our oppressors. In times of exile, oppression, and overwhelming angry frustration in impossibly unjust situations, the image of a sudden and violent end to all we loathe is reassuring and honestly human. We see this in our lives as individuals, wherever we are, and we see it writ large across the struggles of all oppressed peoples throughout history. As I listen to the testimonies of asylum seekers who have been imprisoned, who are waiting endlessly for their hearings, for the Home Office, for their immigration lawyers, for word of their families, from where they wait behind bars, I also hear stories of how escape might come, the Home Office might burn to the ground with all the asylum papers in it, how the prisoners might miraculously find their release, some agent - a member of parliament, a prime minister, a chance visitor - might suddenly find ways of acting which will change everything for all, because they take a stand. Such narratives of an imagined future are shot through with open-handed yearnings, like Moses with his hands stretched out through the dark night between chase and safety. But they are also streaked with visceral anger which is our knee-jerk narrative, our darker human response to the longing for justice, for safety, for an end to our suffering and the suffering of those entrusted to our care.

The seeds of violence are there, in us all, and in the God we make in our own image, the God we imagine from our places of entrapment, the God we want to just fix things for us, miraculously, because these are bound to be the best of stories, for the hardest of times. The theologian Walter Wink sees such violent, quick-fix stories as part of the myth of redemptive violence, the belief we have lived by for centuries which suggests that we are made most fully human - redeemed - when we act in violence, rather than when we work for non-violent ways of overcoming the worst of injustices. Yet whilst the central motifs of violence in this story cannot and should not be easily explained away, if we orient ourselves to the example of Moses here, to the human figure caught up in the tides of history, we find a remarkable example of non-violent protest, leadership and prayer. Throughout the whole of Exodus 14, this pivotal point in the story of Israel's tidings as a people, Moses makes only one utterance, and not out loud to Yahweh, but as a command to the terrified people who have fled with him to the banks of the sea. "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you, you need never be afraid." (Exodus 14: 13).

Outside the gates of Faslane nuclear naval base in Scotland protestors stand, surrounded by police and in close proximity to the United Kingdom's full arsenal of weapons of mass destruction singing "Stand firm, O stand firm, stand firm, O stand firm, stand firm, O stand firm and see what the Lord can do." And they break bread and drink wine together, as dawn breaks, and "the cloud brought darkness to one side and light to the other". They celebrate in song and colour and with outstretched hands the coming of different futures, when peace flows like a river, when the goodness at the heart of humanity can be affirmed and celebrated and shared freely and without fear. These words of Moses are words which reach down into the lives of each one of us, for none of us can escape such struggles and desires for justice, or the accompanying wish that there might be easier ways, where an outside agent would just fix it for us, even violently. Moses stands firm, in the midst of impossible and overwhelming odds, with an outstretched hand, waiting for the sea to roll back, for the tide to turn. And once the carnage of the flood and the drowning is over, before the great song of celebration and Miriam's dance, with all the women, of deliverance, we are left with the simple image of a people who have learned to trust in a different future to the one they had always believed in. No longer a people enslaved in Egypt, bound to make bricks for Pharaoh, but instead a people far enough from those ways of living to know that other lives are possible, a people who are freed up to Yahweh and Moses, his servant.

Coda:

Gathered with trusted friends today, drinking sweet tea and settling after the rush of our urgently shared stories, my surging desire for dramatic, violent justice gradually ebbs away, like the waters draining away with the tide. Hands stretch out to touch, to comfort, to reassure. There is an encouragement between us to see those who have so appalled us, as human too, "probably good people" we keep saying, caught up in webs of complexity and injustice which are the same as those which enmesh each one of us. We confess to each other our thoughts and failings, our frailties and brokenness. We stop imaging the worst for our faceless enemies, and begin to turn back towards the world and out of the comfort of our stories, back into the hard work of planning, working, returning to those contexts which overwhelm, but with renewed hope in better futures, strengthened belief, through one another perhaps, that there are more excellent ways, more forgiving ways, perhaps "seventy seven" ways. There is a sense of dry land once again, a firmer footing than when we all first arrived. Trust.





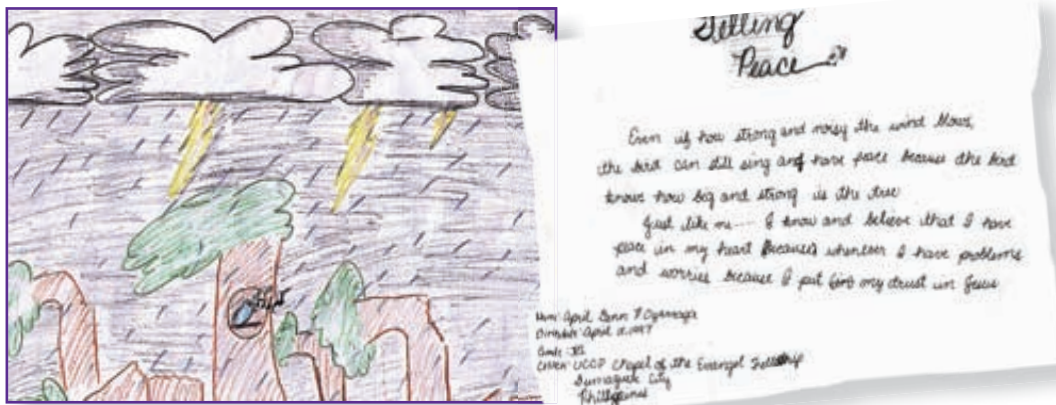
Short stories from “Living Letters” visits in Africa

James Macharia

The Living Letters programme started in 2007 as part of the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), which will end with the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation 2011 in Kingston, Jamaica. Living Letters are small ecumenical teams of five to six people who visit churches and countries in conflict or post conflict situations. Living Letters have visited 21 countries so far.

The aims of the visits are to:

- demonstrate solidarity with the churches and people who are living in contexts of, and responding to particularly painful experiences of violence;
- share insights and helpful approaches in overcoming violence;
- deepen ecumenical contacts among the churches, national councils of churches and related organizations and networks;
- connect congregations, student and youth groups, theological and other church-related institutions in the search for an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace.



Despite the common aims of all the visits, each country's situation of conflict varies. Some experience conflict due to dictatorial regimes or coup d'état, for example in South American countries in the 1970s. A rather different recent case would be Sri Lanka whose government declared an end to the three decades civil war in May 2009. Other countries have been involved in conflict for decades without an end in sight, such as the Middle East conflict, primarily between Israelis and Palestinians. Many countries in Africa have had civil war for decades. Other countries are struggling with unstable political regimes. Some, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, have experienced the worst conflicts and violence.

Living Letters teams have been visiting churches in some of the countries in conflict or post conflict. The people and the churches have responded differently, most with gratitude for the solidarity, prayers and willingness to learn from them in their moments of difficulty. Others have asked whether the WCC could do more to intervene in their challenging situations of violence, especially at an international level.

In all cases, the Living Letters have heard from the people who have had to bare the brunt of war, conflict or violent situations. They listened to their stories during visits to church leaders, internally displaced peoples camps, children centres, women's groups and youth groups. In the midst of the suffering, pain and hurt that the conflicts have left or inflicted, the teams have been privileged to listen to some inspiring stories. They witnessed the involvement of churches in peace building, rebuilding and reconciliation. They heard testimonies of men and women who have stood for peace despite the odds.





A story of the church

When Living Letters travelled to Liberia and Sierra Leone, they had mixed expectations. Though the war was officially declared over in 2001/02 many who have not visited these countries remain sceptical about the cessation of violence. During the war, most international news from the two countries depicted bloody faces, amputees and the infamous Liberian president and war crime convict – Charles Taylor. So one could understand those sceptical about peace in these countries.

Whatever the members of the Living Letters team may have felt beforehand, after the visit no doubts or scepticism about peace in the two countries remained.

The team walked in the streets freely. They interacted with people who genuinely shared their past and current difficulties. They opened their hearts and shared with the team their hurtful past. The team was heartened by their trust, which seemed simply to be based on the fact that we came from the WCC. The government and church leaders talked about their efforts to rebuild the countries and establish lasting peace.

The team and the leadership of the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone met with the head of state of the Republic of Sierra Leone, President Earnest Bai Koroma. He acknowledged the churches' efforts in ending the war. Some of the church leaders risked their lives, by deliberately meeting with war lords and rebel leaders urging them to stop the war and rather seek resolution to any grievances through dialogue, thus helping to restore peace in the country. The team left Sierra Leone with a message from the minister of trade Alimany Koroma. He urged them to be peace ambassadors by telling the world that Sierra Leone was no longer at war but at peace for six years, that efforts are bearing fruit of a lasting peace. In the words of the president, and in relation to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, the president was optimistic that "by the time the decade comes to an end, Sierra Leone will have something positive to show... by 2011, Sierra Leone will be a shining example of peace."



Christine Joy L. Daguplo

September 8, 1999 15 years old

UNCCD CHAIR OF CHANGE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Telling Peace

telling Peace = is peaceful ground
and many plants are strong
and healthy that's why we call
them peaceful
= peace are important in our
family in our community
that's why i chose peaceful

A story of two pastors

If every person in society played their small or big role in promoting peace the world would be a better place. Perhaps there would be no war, conflict or violence. This is the lesson that the Living Letters team learnt when they visited Bo in Sierra Leone. The team met two young energetic people who really inspired them and they shared their story. Pastor Justin and James are respected youth pastors in Bo.

It all started during the war, after getting tired of seeing people dying in their village and youth being used to perpetuate the killing or taken to join rebel groups. The two pastors started a counter attack on the rebels and their brutal ways of doing things. They declared "war" on the rebels' movement and the government forces. The difference was that they used no bullets, guns or any weapons to fight apart from a Bible. Their course of action was to mobilize as many young people as they could to resist joining the rebel, government or any other groups that perpetuated violence in their village. Their efforts were rewarded since no sooner had they started than the violent groups found it harder and harder to find new recruits. The pastors began giving code names to their group members who were growing in numbers everyday to resist the war. The codes helped the group forge an identity so that they did not mistake each other for rebels. Youths joined



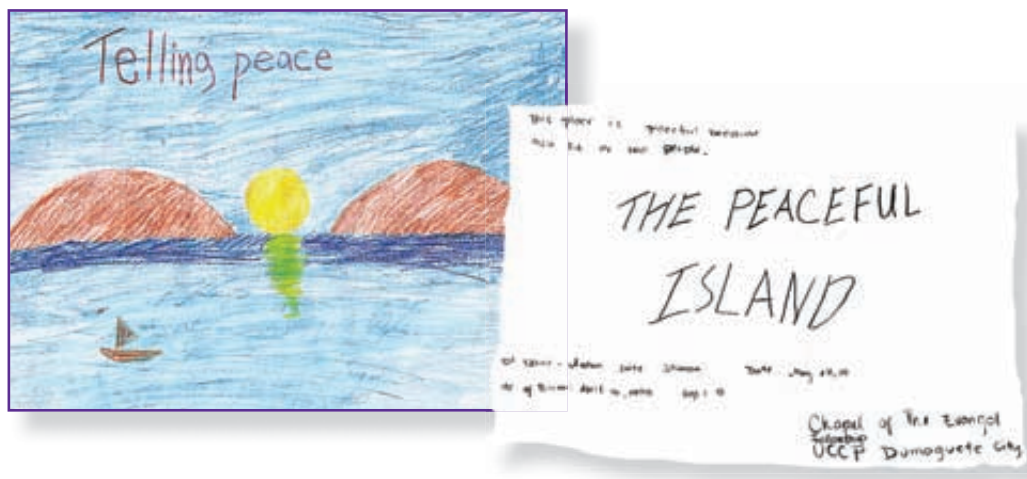


in their hundreds and later thousands to resist the war and soon there were no killings in Bo. Today, the two pastors are role models amongst their peers. They continue to inspire and motivate the youth to become responsible adults. They told the Living Letters their story saying, “the only way to end violence is not through guns, fights or conflict but through dialogue.” That was and has been their motivation ever since.

The story of the “humming-boy”

This story can be told in relation to others from different Living Letters visits but particularly the one to Kenya. Living Letters visited Kenya in the midst violence. In December 2007, after a disputed election, severe violence erupted. The Living Letters team nevertheless encountered positive efforts by people and churches to calm the situation down and return to peaceful living. Among the churches, people and institutions that the team visited, they met a young boy playing his role and making an effort to restore his country to peace. There is an African folk tale of a tiny humming bird trying to quench a forest engulfed in fire, with its small beak full of water while the elephants, giraffes, lions and other big animals watch on. Unlike the big mammals in the folk tale, the team met a church leadership trying to do the best they could to quench the post electoral violence, which literally was burning the country. At the time of the visit the team visited churches whose buildings were burned down; houses, gas stations and other buildings were also burned. More saddening was to learn that even people had been burned beyond recognition while seeking refuge in a church by arsonists.

The team visited Molo, Mauche and Lari areas in Nakuru district some of the hot spots of the violence. They were heartened to see that in a place where groups of people were involved in animosity, prejudices, blame games, accusations and killings, one small boy stood out. Like the humming bird trying to quench an inferno in its habitat, this 12 year old artist was using his talent to pass a message of peace to his fellow tribes’ people. He painted a warrior from his community holding a spear in one hand and a young plant in the other. He stood on the roadside, conspicuous and every passerby could see him. Out of curiosity most people from whichever tribe would ask him the meaning behind the painting. The boy full of innocence replied with a simple answer that he was trying to communicate to his community to stop fighting and instead plant seeds of peace.



The story of the peace cake

The visit to Liberia and Sierra Leone had more in store. It is a good example of how churches continue to enhance and deepen relations among themselves and with the WCC. Through its head of delegation, the leading Bishop of the United Methodist Church in Ghana, the team received a cake from the United Methodist Church in Monrovia. The cake was given as a symbol of unity by the church and people of Liberia to their fellow brothers and sisters in Sierra Leone. It was a symbol of reconciliation and maintaining stability between the two countries. The cake would also be shared with the WCC. This showed that the church supports and is in solidarity with the WCC in its work of advancing a peace message to the world through the Living Letters. Before receiving the cake, the Bishop had had an opportunity to preach to the United Methodist congregation in Monrovia. He preached from one of the prophetic books in the Bible, Jeremiah 33: 6-12. The essence of the reading is healing, rebuilding, restoration, forgiveness and reconciliation. The biblical context is similar to what the churches and the people were experiencing in both countries.

It seemed prophetic when the team arrived in Sierra Leone, it coincided with the triennial assembly of the Christian Council of Sierra Leone. It gave the team a good chance to present the cake and the peace message not only to the entire CCSL leadership but also to the hundreds of Sierra Leoneans attending the assembly. For the team that was truly a prophetic moment.





The cake that the church in Liberia gave to the Living Letters in the spirit of reconciliation was a valuable gift. From Liberia to Sierra Leone to the WCC in Geneva and to other countries where it was shared, it brought great joy. It became a thread that bound every place that the team had visited and all other places that the cake “travelled”. The cake reminded the team about the Living Letters guiding biblical verse “you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered to us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the human heart.” (2 Cor. 3:3) It added life to the visit and the cake became a “living letter.” When the cake was presented in Sierra Leone, people ate it happily and peacefully. This was also the case for those who ate it across different continents where it was taken by each of the team members. It was the team’s prayer that the seed of peace already beginning to sprout in the two countries may grow and flourish, and not only in those two countries, but in every country that has experienced strife, turmoil, violence, conflict or war. That the spirit of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) may reign in the universe so that all shall celebrate at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011 and sing “Glory to God and Peace on Earth”.

Kneading the dough of peace – a story from Argentina

Gerardo Oberman

It was July 2002. Argentina was going through one of its many economic crises. Millions of unemployed, a stagnant economy, no sign of any political solutions, no leadership from the government, the churches silent... Then thousands of people began to organize themselves through the many social movements that exist in the most humble neighbourhoods of our cities.

These groups began to organize a type of protest that became very popular in our country – the “pickets”. Groups of people, including many women with small children, would occupy the streets, bringing the traffic to a halt, calling for their basic rights to be respected and clamouring for a little dignity.

Along with a group of men and women belonging to several denominations in Mar del Plata (in the south of Buenos Aires province), we began to reflect on our gospel responsibility in the midst of the crisis. It was impossible to remain silent, it was impossible for true believers to ignore what was going on. God did not expect us to remain indifferent.

A proposal emerged to involve our faith communities in an active process of reflection. And this reflection took place around a table while we made bread. While we mixed the flour with the water and yeast we sang and prayed, seeking inspiration from our faith in a living God, a God close to his people. While our hands got dirty as they gave form to a food that is essential for Argentineans, the Word of God spoke to us of peace as the fruit of justice and announced to us that justice and peace wanted to kiss each other. While the dough rose and the bread baked, we shared our fears, hopes, desires and problems. Everyone was able to share their thoughts. There was space and time for everyone. And in the cold night, the warm presence of the Spirit became increasingly evident.





The dough was divided into very small pieces before finally being put in the oven. Then, with the help of the children, we put the bread into small bags and added a message of hope and encouragement.

The next day, on Sunday morning, representatives of the four faith communities involved approached people at one of the biggest pickets in the city centre. We talked with the people and spoke of the need to be able to freely express our demands. As a sign of hope, as a sign of how a coherent commitment to and witness of faith could change things, we shared with them and with many other people who were walking through the city centre that day, pieces of bread made with love, baked in hope and given as a gesture of the presence and solidarity of God in the midst of his suffering people.

It was a marvellous day, which changed forever the face of the community tended at that time by the Noah's Ark Reformed Church. From that day on, the Church was recognised for its solidarity with the most humble sectors of local society.

And everything began by kneading a bit of dough.

Perhaps that is how to start all attempts to achieve a just and lasting peace: getting together with our brothers and sisters, equal before God, making bread together, sharing the work, the Word and our ideas in the search for solutions. This is not a utopia. Another world is possible.



Joy! Noreen & Ruiz grade 3 March 7, 2001 Eyes all
 Telling Peace
 This picture tells Beautiful. Fresh air, no trash, many trees clean water
 Beautiful Bird nice songs all God's creation is there.

We only need to dare - a story from Germany

Fritz Baltruweit

Worship instead of Nazi demonstrations

No one can say any more whether or not the extreme right-wingers were really attacked when they were handing out leaflets. But that was the reason used as the excuse for holding an extreme right-wing demonstration in Hildesheim through the multicultural area known as Fahrenheit, a hot spot of poor housing. The demonstration was registered and it even took place. But the route it took was shortened and ended before it reached that part of town – thanks to an idea of Wilfried Otto. He is the Catholic deacon. He’s well known locally as the person who set up things like the lunch club of the Good Shepherd congregation, which lies in the heart of the district.

Otto was very clear, “We don’t want anything to do with this Nazi way of thinking – and we want to demonstrate that.” So the deacon informed the town council that the parish, just like every Saturday, was inviting people to its service, on church property though for once not inside but outside, in front of the church. The Catholic dean and the Protestant superintendent minister immediately agreed to take part, as did the neighbouring Protestant parish.

People met in the Martin Luther Church to pray and sing hymns together. During the service the far right demonstration went past very noisily. The atmosphere was quite strange, but the singing and praying gave strength to those there. Afterwards people walked together to the ecumenical service in the Fahrenheit part of town. Things there were cordoned off for quite a large area around the church. The demonstration was not allowed into the streets around the Good Shepherd Church. Deacon Otto proudly said,





"This is because the right to freedom of religious expression is higher than the right to demonstrate – that's why they couldn't come in here."

A lot of people came to the service, though some had qualms. In his sermon Helmut Assmann said out loud what many were thinking:

"In the era of globalization racist dreams are life-threateningly harmful. This is why the churches in Hildesheim are saying: All human beings are God's children; whoever comes to Hildesheim is first of all welcome, those needing help especially so – that is why our altars are places of church refuge. We welcome and uphold the diversity of the cultures which visit and enrich us. We are ready for and open to everything that serves life and peace and we want to clearly distance ourselves from all who speak in favour of violence, injustice or selfishness, whether they be foreigners or people originally from here. For we have come from the cross of Jesus Christ, whose message is mercy, the forgiveness of sin and the promise of peace on Earth."

Deacon Otto was not only pleased "that more people came to the service than took part in the Nazi's demonstration". He also drew a conclusion from which others could learn: "We can use our own frameworks as the space for doing and saying what we have to say. If we celebrate worship in those places where Nazis want to hold demonstrations then we do have that right. We just need to dare to do it."



Kaalam Danielle C Rombuyan
 Birth Date: May 16, 1995
 age: 14
 Date Finished: May 26, 2009

Chapel of The Evangelical Fellowship
 UCCD - Davao City, Philippines

I chose this place to be peaceful
 because there are no bad people
 in this place. The people in this
 place has an understanding heart.

Telling peace in your context

Preparing your stories

Choose one of the thematic areas identified below from Asia and offer a story as a response from your own context:

Interreligious peace
Political peace
Social justice peace
Incarnational peace

The story may be a story of protest; a story of overcoming violence; it may be funny or it may be tragic.

It should, however, be a story – not a rational argument! – and one where the context is of God’s people at work for just peace.

Think of your own worshipping community, congregation, group, church. It may well be that in this work God’s people are struggling, failing, falling, faintly ridiculous, loveable, annoying... Tell a story of the incarnational, humanness of work for just peace and overcoming violence.

Think of a story where the dominant characters in the story are not church people – it may be that the dominant character is not even human (it may be money, or a building, a gathering place, a river, a journey).

Try re-telling a big story which has been used as a symbol of peace in your context and which always works to pull people together to work from just peace.
Tell a small story, emerging and inspiring and deserving to be heard to help inspire others in other parts of the world.

Do you know a story involving heads of government and banks and institutions which also involves humble stories of ordinary folk? It may be a story which is unique or it may





be a story of daily repeated struggle and action. It may be a story of what happens when these meet and work for transformation of conflict together. It may be a story of beauty and longing and hope fulfilled or it may be a story of deep and agonized frustration and anger or isolation and injustice.

Telling your stories and using them to tell peace

Think of your story as being part of a “world story telling project”.

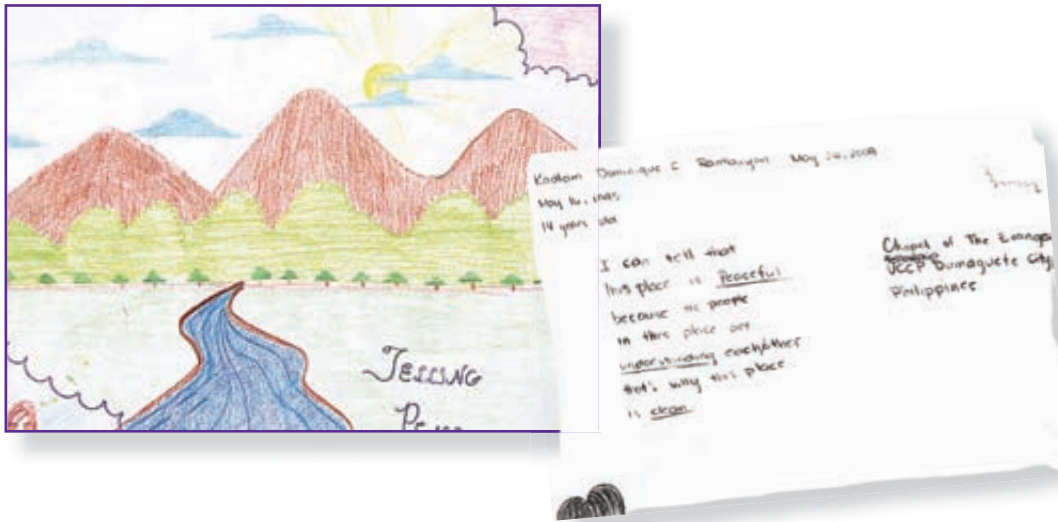
In Scotland, Europe, they have the idea of a Ceilidh, which is a time when people come together to tell stories and sing songs. One story told inspires the next on the same theme, which inspires a song and then a dance.

Have a Ceilidh in your context. Take time over this. Let one person begin with telling a story of peace or overcoming violence and then let that story rest. Then wait until another person picks up a thread from the story just told and tells another, different story of peace, weaving their story into the one before and so on.

As you slowly, carefully and respectfully listen to each other’s stories think of yourselves as weaving them into a text where the colours and shapes of the stories blend and offer a harmonic whole which echoes the movement and liturgy of our Asian friends’ words and music.



THIS PICTURE IS TELLING PEACE
BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE TRYING
THEIR BEST TO TELL PEOPLE
NOT TO PICK FLOWERS AND
TAKE CARE OF THE PLACE FOR
ANIMALS TO LIVE HAPPILY AND
BE SAFE.



Think of your story as giving “voice to the voiceless” – as Mary sings of in the Magnificat – of letting peace be heard.

Remember, in doing this, to be sensitive your context and people. Please do change names of people or places if you are at all concerned that tracing their stories may bring difficulty. This is always part of story telling. And be careful not to speak for others, to give them opinions which may not be faithful to their story of just peace. Tell peace as an act of solidarity.

Think of your story as part of the witness and testimony of God’s people around the world to the work of telling peace.

Who tells peace? What means do they use? Do people “tell peace” by maintaining silent vigil or witness; do they tell peace in song or dance or picture or story; do they protest; do they tell peace by baking bread or cooking meals for the hungry? What, incarnationally, does telling peace and witnessing to God’s work of just peace look like in your context? Try not to use rational, logical, theological argument but stories and descriptions. Do use key words in your own language here – slogans, cries, greetings, exclamations that give texture and colour to your stories.



WORSHIP RESOURCES

ASIAN WORKING THEMES



Asian working themes

The Asian liturgists and musicians developed the idea of weekly themes based on the issues faced daily in the Asian context. These can be developed in each particular world region and each local situation, no matter how big or small. Whilst the context is Asian there are clear resonances with other regions of the world and also with our local, domestic, work and cultural situations around the world.

The first Sunday of Advent: “Interreligious Peace”, has a cultural background from South Asia.

In Asia, there are many conflicts that are caused by interreligious tensions. Christianity, generally speaking, is in the minority in Asia. So how do we pray for and bring peace in the midst of inter-religious conflict? And how about Christians who ignore, even sometimes condemn, their non-Christian neighbours? What does it mean to hope for the second coming of the Prince of Peace in a multi-religious context? How can we deal with all forms of religious fundamentalism (either Christian or non-Christian)?

The second Sunday of Advent: “Political Peace”, has a cultural background of East Asia (in particular North and South Korea).

How do people in both Koreas and other surrounding countries, which feel threatened by North Korea, hope and bring peace? How do we pray for and bring peace in countries where dictators rule and the ordinary people are oppressed (e.g. in Myanmar)? How must





Christians with non-Christian act together? Some churches choose not to get involved in political matters because of the ideology of the separation between religion and the state. Can we really ignore the politics of our government?

The third Sunday of Advent: “Social-Justice Peace”, has a cultural background of South East Asia.

Poverty and the wide gap between the poor and the rich, aboriginal people and new comers; the sex industry involving human trafficking and child prostitution; the caste system, sexism and other forms of injustice are rampant in Asia. How do people survive in the midst of these calamities? What have people done to hope for and bring peace and justice for the marginalized in society? What does the coming of the Prince of Peace mean for marginalized people? How does the church, together with non-Christians, tell and act for incarnational peace in the midst of a context of social injustice?

The fourth Sunday of Advent: “Incarnational Peace”, has a cultural background from Australia/New Zealand, a mixture of Asian cultures.

The focus is on telling about and praying for peace in preparation for the Advent of Baby Jesus, the Prince of Peace. What is the impact of Jesus’ first Advent on peace on earth, not only for Christians, but also for all humans, and not only for humans, but also for the whole of creation. How do we affirm our faith or consensus to live in peace and to offer our solemn promises when the manger is empty? Perhaps we can repeat those acts of dedication, which can be enriched by Asian perspectives on peace and harmony. In some Asian philosophy of life, harmony is an important value to live out ... the lamb shall live with the lion.



FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Interreligious Peace LIVING IN PEACE AS GOD'S CHILDREN

Resources for the service:

- ✦ Advent candles on a candle stand or Advent wreath
- ✦ A blue or purple cloth
- ✦ Six long strips of cloth in different colours
- ✦ A pole

In preparation:

For all four Sundays in Advent:

- ✦ Use a palm tree, bamboo tree or other appropriate tree as a Christmas tree. In Malaysia, a palm tree is used as a decoration in the festive season and symbolizes goodwill.
- ✦ During the Advent season, the Advent candles are placed in front of the palm (or other) tree.
- ✦ At Christmas, this tree will be decorated as a Christmas tree.

For the First Sunday in Advent:

- ✦ Decide on whether there will be a sermon or a story on inter-religious peace or the presentation of a project with an inter-religious element as the heart of the service.
 - ✦ Choose an appropriate song to follow the sermon/story/peace project presentation as well as a well known hymn during the offering.
 - ✦ Appoint six people to give the six readings from the sacred texts.
-





GATHERING

Prelude

Call to worship

Advent means coming:

**We are waiting for the second coming of the Prince of Peace;
we are celebrating the first coming of the Prince of Peace.**

Advent means coming:

**In earnest expectation, we pray for the days
when the nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
when nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.**

(Isaiah 2:4)

Advent means coming:

**In sincere anticipation, we hope for the time
when love and faithfulness meet together,
when righteousness and peace kiss each other,
when faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.**

(Psalm 85:10-11)

In prayer and anticipation let us come before the Lord of the universe.

In humbleness we worship the Lord of the nations.

♪ **Song: Varum Dheevanee** *(Come, our prince of peace)*

Greetings

Peace be with you and the mercy and blessing of God.

And also with you.

Let us greet one another with a sign of peace.

(As instrumental music is played, the congregation is invited to greet each other with a simple bow or other gentle gesture that conveys peace. The word "Shanti" can be used in the act of greeting.)

Lighting of the first Advent candle

(The first candle is lit, if possible by a family. A blue or purple cloth is placed surrounding the candle stand/wreath forming a womb-like shape. Only the first verse of the song "Come, O Prince of Peace" is sung.)

We light this first Advent candle:
in remembrance that all humans are born from the Divine Womb;
in prayer for reconciliation between nations;
in hope for peace between religions;
in joyful anticipation of the coming of the Prince of Peace.

♪ **Song: Come, O Prince of Peace** *(verse 1 only)*

Prayer of confession and absolution

Let us come humbly before God, asking for God's mercy.

O Creator of all living things,
yours is the earth and all that is in it,
yours is the world and those who live in it.
Yet we often deny that all people are created in your image;
that all people are born from your loving womb;
that we, regardless of our religions, share a common humanity.
Compassionate One, we ask:

♪ **Song: Lord, have mercy**

O Wisdom,
yours is the eternal truth,
yours is the everlasting knowledge.
You always revealed yourself in many ways to all people
in different times and places.





Yet we often claim to be the only owners of your truth.
 We reject any spiritual truth outside Christianity,
 because we are afraid of denying your truth
 revealed in Christian scripture and traditions.
 Compassionate One, we ask:

♪ **Song: Lord, have mercy**

O Almighty One,
 you command us to love one another,
 you instruct us to be messengers of peace.
 Yet we often cannot accept those who are different from us
 as our sisters and brothers.
 We often fail to honour believers of other faiths.
 We often choose a violent approach in dealing with differences and
 religious diversity.
 We often fight and kill each other in your name and under the banner of
 our religions.
 Compassionate One, we ask:

♪ **Song: Lord, have mercy**

O Holy Mystery,
 you have revealed your loving being to us
 although dimly as in a mirror.
 You grace us with your presence through the Holy Spirit.
 You want us, all people, to share in your salvation.
 Yet we often forget that you are always present
 and working in every place and every time;
 in every work that brings justice, peace and reconciliation in the world;
 in every good deed for the well being of your creation;
 in every effort to bring salvation to all humankind.
 Compassionate One, we ask:

♪ **Song: Lord, have mercy**



This is what the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One says:
"I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you,
who directs you in the way you should go.
If only you had paid attention to my commands,
your peace would have been like a river,
your righteousness like the waves of the sea.
Your descendants would have been like the sand,
your children like its numberless grains;
their name would never be cut off
nor destroyed from before me."
(Isaiah 48:17-19)

♪ **Song: Siirimigu Vanpuvi** (*Great Lord of heaven and earth*)

PROCLAMATION

Prayer of illumination

God of Alpha and Omega,
your promises come to us bringing hope.
Grant us the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding to listen to your word,
the Spirit of counsel and of power to do your will,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord to be your messengers
of peace.
In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.
Amen.

First Bible reading

Isaiah 11:1-9
A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.





He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
 or decide by what his ears hear;
 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
 and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
 he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
 and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
 and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
 the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
 the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
 and a little child shall lead them.
 The cow and the bear shall graze,
 their young shall lie down together;
 and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
 and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
 They will not hurt or destroy
 on all my holy mountain;
 for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
 as the waters cover the sea.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Second Bible reading

I Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

♪ **Song: Al'leluyaa**

(As the Alleluia is sung, the Bible is carried into the midst of the assembly where it is read. After the Gospel reading it is returned to the altar accompanied once again by the Alleluia.)

Gospel reading

Luke 21:25-36

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

♪ **Song: Al'leluyaa**

Sermon





Telling a story of peace on interreligious relationship
(Invite a person of a non-Christian religion to tell a story about how his/her religion perceives and practices peace. If that is not appropriate, read a story - or show a video or power point presentation - about peace building between religions or an activity in a local area that is done together by different religious communities, such as food distribution, shelter, etc.)

♪ **Song**

(Choose a song that takes up the theme of the story.)

RESPONSE

Readings from sacred texts

(Several persons read the texts below. Each person carries one of the differently coloured strips of long cloth. After reading their text, each one ties one end of the cloth to the top of the pole, while still holding on to the other end. Later, after all the readings have been read, the readers, still holding one end of their piece of cloth, circle the pole in different directions weaving the strips of cloth together into a braided shape. This action symbolizes unity in diversity. The action can be presented differently, for example by attaching the strips of cloth together in the shape of a rainbow, as long as the symbol of unity in diversity can be seen and well understood.)

Reading of Luke 10:27 and Matthew 7:12:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

This teaching of love of others is a universal truth.

Our Buddhist neighbour says,

“A state which is not pleasant or enjoyable for me will also not be so for him; and how can I impose on another a state which is not pleasant or enjoyable for me?”

This teaching of love of others is a universal truth.

Our Hindu neighbour says,

“This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.”

This teaching of love of others is a universal truth.

Our Jewish neighbour says,
"What is hateful to you, do not do to others. That is the law: all the rest is commentary."
This teaching of love of others is a universal truth.

Our Moslem neighbour says,
"No one of you is a believer until they desire for their brothers and sisters what they desire for themselves."
This teaching of love of others is a universal truth.

Our Indigenous neighbour says,
"Respect for life is the foundation."
This teaching of love of others is a universal truth.

(The readers then circle the pole with their strips of cloth forming the pattern of unity in diversity.)

Prayers of intercession

Merciful God,
we come to place before you the concerns of our lives
and the sufferings of the world.
In the midst of scepticism and doubt of your loving being,
kindle your light in the hearts of all people
to feel your presence,
to trust in your faithful covenant,
to have faith in your promises of salvation,
to believe in the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One.
In your mercy, we pray:

♪ Song: Maranatha!

In the midst of religious plurality,
which can cause suspicion and hatred within communities,
kindle your light in the hearts of all peoples
to honour each other as your children, born in your image,
to respect each other's beliefs,
to end the use of religion to exercise political and social power,





to stop discrimination and division based on religion.
In your mercy, we pray:

♪ **Song: Maranatha!**

In the midst of terrorist threats and wars in the name of religion,
kindle your light in the hearts of all peoples
to turn our weapons of death into instruments of life,
to seek truth, peace and justice,
to offer genuine forgiveness and love,
to work together in harmony as sisters and brothers
in caring for victims,
in comforting those in distress,
in consoling those who live in fear.
In your mercy, we pray:

♪ **Song: Maranatha!**

As we wait for the coming of Jesus Christ,
kindle your light in our hearts
to keep us watchful and hopeful,
to open our lives to Christ's coming in many ways through all our days
- even in the least expected ways,
to witness to Christ's ministry and love to our neighbours,
to work together for peace and reconciliation with our neighbours,
to pray for our concerns in this congregation and in our lives.
(a moment of silence or praying aloud)
In your mercy, we pray:

♪ **Song: Maranatha!**

Gracious God,
in your loving embrace hear our prayers and grant all that we need
to live in anticipation of Christ's glorious advent.

Amen.



Offering

(If possible, devote a part of today's offering for a local interreligious programme.)

Offertory song

(Sing an Advent hymn that is well-known in your congregation.)

Offertory prayer

God of abundance,
we thank you for what we have received and what we can share.
We offer these gifts and ourselves to be used as instruments of peace.
In Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING FORTH

♪ **Song: Siirimigu Vanpuvi** *(Great Lord of heaven and earth)*

Dismissal

Let us walk in this Advent season
with hope for the advent of the Prince of Peace,
with joy in God's loving care,
with courage to bring God's shanti, shalom, salaam, peace for everyone in
every place.

Blessing

May everyone be happy and safe, and may their hearts be filled with joy.
May all living beings live in security and in peace -
beings who are frail or strong,
tall or short, big or small,
visible or not visible, near or far away,
already born or yet to be born.
May all of them dwell in perfect tranquility.
Let no one do harm to anyone.
Let no one put the life of anyone in danger.





Let no one, out of anger or ill will,
wish anyone any harm.

(Taken from Metta Sutta (Stuttanipata) - Buddhist Blessing for All Beings)

And may the blessing of God the Creator, the Prince of Peace and the
Holy Spirit be with you always.

Amen.

Postlude or song

Al'leeluyaa

$\text{♩} = 110$

Al' - lee - lu - yaa, Al' - lee - lu - yaa, Al - lee - lu - yaa - vee,
Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah.

3
Al - ba, O - mee - ga - vuk - kee, Al' - lee - lu - yaa - vee.
You are the Al - pha, O - me - ga, Hal - le - lu - jah to you.

Come, O Prince of Peace

Dm
E♭
C
B♭
C
F
A/E

1. Come, O Prince of Peace, _____ save__ your peo - ple from all fear.
 2. Come O Prince of Peace, _____ re - fine and pur - i - fy us.
 3. Come O Prince of Peace, _____ ex - ult o'er us with song. _____
 4. Come O Prince of Peace, _____ fill__ the hun - gry with good things.

Dm
C
B♭
A
Dm

In - crease our love for o - thers and strength - en__ our hearts.
 Help__ our lead - ers rule in peace and grant__ your fav - our to us.
 Let__ your peace__ guard your child - ren so__ that just - ice rules.
 Res - cue those who are op - pressed__ save__ O Lord, save us.

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Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy.

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Maranatha!

Ma - ra - na - tha! Ma - ra - na - tha!



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Siirimigu Vanpuvi (*Great Lord of heaven and earth*)

Siir - mi - gu Van - pu - vi, Dhee - va, Thoth - rem Si-rush-tip - pu Ya - ve - yum
Great Lord of hea - v'n and earth, we - praise you praise you, cre - a - tor of all cre - a - tion,
Un - chang - ing af - fect - io - nate lov - ing Lord we praise you joy - ful - ly we pray and praise you
Life health and strength and all bless - ings you have giv'n us day by day your gra - tious mer - cy

Pa - dei - thai Thoth - rem Eer - gu - nne - nee Thoth - rem - A - di yark -
we - praise you praise you won - der - ful Lord we praise you par - don us,
give us your gui - dance bless us now and for ev - er Lov - ing Lord
fol - lows us al - ways will - ing - ly we praise you for your love

-ki - reng - gi - du - vai Thoth - rem, Ma - nee - sa.
be - gra - cious un - to us Lord, we praise you.
bless us now and for ev - er, lov - ing Lord.
we praise you for - ev - er and ev - er. A - men.



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Varum Dheevanee (*Come our Prince of Peace*)

Va - rum Dhee - ve - nee, Raa - Ja - dhi - raa - je - nee,
 Come our King of Kings, you are the Lord of Lords, O Lord.

Thal - mei Veen - dhe - nee, Sa - maa - dha - nep - pre - bhu - vee,
 Hum - ble King you are, Prince of peace, Ho - ly Lord of all,

Im - ma - nu - vee - lee Niir, I - reng - gi Va - ru - mee,
 come now, come O come Lord, you are the king of Kings,

Um se - maa - dha - nem Than - dhu Em - mei Kaa - ru - mee
 grant your peace O Lord, You are the Prince of Peace.

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SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

POLITICAL PEACE

Resources for the service:

- ✦ Two Advent candles on a candle stand or Advent wreath

In preparation:

This service for the Second Sunday in Advent is based on the Siraya Formosan tribe's cultural and social outlook and their experience as a people. Siraya is one of several Formosan aboriginal groups. They were the first to receive the gospel through the Dutch mission in Taiwan, though the Dutch missionary work only lasted for some 38 years. In 1661 the Dutch were forced to leave the island by Zheng Chenggong. Zheng Chenggong's occupation of Formosa, and later the large scale Chinese immigration during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were critical in the moulding of Formosa by Chinese culture.

Sirayans were mostly assimilated into mainstream Han society. As a result, the Siraya language, culture and distinctive customs and practices are now on the verge of extinction. Believing in the resurrection of God, the Siraya Christians are now attempting to revive their culture, influencing even non-Christians with their movement for cultural renewal.

Although our focus is political and social peace, reflecting on the Siraya experience, we hope that the Church's view of Advent and God's salvation for the whole creation will be enhanced and broadened. What the world needs is a church that prophesies to the lands, the nations and the world's leaders.





GATHERING

Opening litany

God created the earth and it belongs to the Lord.

All the peoples of the earth belong to the Lord.

Beauty, goodness and diversity are manifested in all God's creation.

It is God's desire that all of us dwell in harmony.

In the midst of darkness, as in the beginning

the light of God has come.

The one who has been foretold of old,

is conceived by the Great Spirit.

The fruit of the Mother's womb

comes to give hope and joy to God's people.

Proclaim his justice and peace; let the people of God rejoice.

And let them proclaim their hope, joy and love of God.

Lighting of the Second Advent candle

(The congregation stands and, while the candles are lit, sings verses 1 and 2 of 'Come, O Prince of Peace').

♪ **Song: Come, O Prince of Peace (verse 1 and 2)**

Opening prayer

Omnipotent, ever-present, creator God,

whose beauty and goodness are manifested in the diversity of all of your creation,
grant to us your people that we may love the thing that you desire.

That among the differences and the many changes of the world today,

our hearts and minds may certainly be fastened on the joy, hope and love granted us
through the coming of your Son and the fellowship of the Spirit.

Help us, O God, to know your will and by knowing it,

to dedicate ourselves to the advancement of your sovereignty,
where peace and love always reign. Amen.

Entrance of the Bible

(Children dance accompanied by traditional music, moving forward from the entrance of the chapel towards the altar/table, which is in the midst of the congregation where it can be clearly seen, and open the Bible on the altar/table. The readers come forward as the children exit.)

First Bible reading

Malachi 3:1-4

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight - indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

♪ **Song: The Lord is our light**

Second Bible reading

Philippians 1:3-11

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

♪ **Song: The Lord is our light**





Gospel reading

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

♪ Song: Alleluia

(The following passage is a story from a Siraya woman. She recounts how her motherland called Taivuan embraced different peoples at various periods in history bringing these different peoples together into her womb like a real mother taking her young into her loving arms.)

Chinese, the Dutch and Japanese of various periods came here as friends or as enemies, battling against and finally coexisting peacefully with the Siraya people in their land that is called Tayua¹.

The relics of our ancestors have been found where they were buried. Whether their spirits soar high in the sky or wander around somewhere in this world, one is not sure. I merely feel the wind blowing from the hills and the riverbank in the distance caressing my face gently. Through the light from the leaves, they inhaled the message emitted from the stars in outer space. The sound of the stream's chattering, ever ringing: 'Remember your Mamu Ina' (*'Remember your creator'*)².

¹ Taiwan or Tayuan comes from the word Taivuan and is believed to be of Siraya origin referring to a 'big bay'. There are two possible connotations: one, 'from the moon', tai or tagi means 'from a certain location', and vuan means 'moon'; the other, ta-vuan or ta-buan, a different rendering, means 'rendez-vous'. This connotation seems more logical, in that historically the early place called Taivuan was indeed a meeting place, a crossroads where everyone met, that is, the early inhabitants did their early trade. It was the main seaport where travellers and foreigners landed. In short, this place was the location where most important events took place

² Mamu Ina in the Siraya language designates female ancestor. Siraya is a matriarchal society.

Sunset. Wagi matub. Let the eagle fly, let it soar! Pasubug-a Akey, Pupavulum Akey!

After the stolen era, history has passed into oblivion. The gap has grown too wide to bridge and the countless tales have become hard to recollect and restore. We are piecing together the images of past generations, portraying our tribe and territory, but our memory of historical events seems too remote to be recovered. However, those two centuries could not prevent the moon from shining. The moon in the sky kept on glinting above rivers, sand dunes, gardens, and the land of Taivuan - like the beautiful curve of a crescent moon – like the outstretched arms of our dear mother. “Remember your Mamu Ina” (“Remember your creator”).

Healing the pain of time, she wraps us with her loving and gentle wings; and takes us into her womb from where we all began. Still her veins and umbilical cord are strongly fastened, “Remember your Mamu Ina” (“Remember your creator”).

Ms. Uma Talavan (Wan Shu-juan)

Silence

(A moment of silence will be broken by an instrument playing.)

Sermon

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for the troubles and affliction of others,
either caused by our own greed or our backing of the greed of the powerful.

Lord be merciful!

For the social and political oppression of the simple.

Lord be merciful!

For the tribes that suffer cultural and linguistic extinction
in order that one nation may establish one culture and language,
in the name of unity but at the expense of the tribal groups.

Lord be merciful!

For poor families and communities that are forsaken by local governments.

Lord be merciful!





For the hopeless in our society
 who are cast out and marginalized from their own community
 just because of lack of education or ignorance of the mainstream knowhow.

Lord be merciful!

For the factions and political parties that only talk empty slogans
 dividing our nation and society instead of uniting them.

Lord be merciful!

O Lord our God,
 lead us and illumine our minds to the true meaning of your Advent,
 strengthen us so we may do your will to make your kingdom on earth a reality.

The Lord's prayer *(everyone in his or her own language)*

Act of commitment and symbol of peace

Let us embrace each other with brotherly and sisterly affection
 reflecting the embrace of a mother's love for her children.

SENDING FORTH

The eternal loving God, whose arms like a mother's arms embrace us,
 light of lights, the beginning of life, so fill us with grace and blessing,
 with Christ, the bright and morning star,
 who comes and dwells in us and we in him
 now and for evermore.

Amen

♪ **Song: The love of God abide with you**



Alleluia

♩ = 68
 Em First time: Solo/Cantor
 Second time: Chorus

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,!

Em/D C⁶ Am⁷ Bm⁷ Em

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,!

Em Em/D C⁶ Am⁷ Bm⁷ Em

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The Lord is our light

Moderato

The Lord is our light who grant us sal - va - tion, and leads us to e - ter - nal_ life.

Dm Am⁷ Gm⁷ C(sus4) F Gm⁶/E A⁷(sus4) B^bmaj⁷

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The love of God abide with you

Dm Gm/D Dm B♭ C
 The love of God a - bide with you wher - ev - er you may
 愿 主 的 爱 与 你 同 在 无 论 你 在 何
 Dm Dm/C B♭ C F Am B♭
 go, may God's pre - sence com - fort your soul; May you share in God's com
 方 愿 他 祝 福 你 心 灵 安 康; 主 的 爱 如 流 水
 C F Am⁷/E Dm Gm Am⁷ Dm
 pas - sion like an ev - er-flow - ing stream. In the dark - est night, God's light show you the way.
 涓 涓 愿 你 分 享 他 的 爱 在 那 朦 朦 的 黑 夜 里 见 主 光。

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THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE

Resources for the service:

- ✦ Three Advent candles on a candle stand or Advent wreath.
- ✦ Prepare sheets of paper with hangers and pens for the congregation to write on during the service.

In preparation:

- During this Advent service, the congregation will be invited to hang on the tree the sheet of paper on which they have written their act of commitment.
- Four members of the congregation need to be appointed to offer the prayer of rejoicing.

GATHERING

Instrumental version of the song “Hao mii chii-wit phraw phra jao hai “ *(Released by love to share new life)*

Greeting

(As the music is played several times, the congregation is invited to greet each other with a simple bow or other gentle gesture that conveys peace.)

Litany

Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

With joy we shall draw water from the wells of salvation.

And you will say in that day:
Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;
make known his deeds among the nations;
proclaim that his name is exalted.

**Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.**

**Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.**

(Isaiah 12:2-6)

♪ **Song: “Hao mii chii-wit phraw phra jao hai”** *(Released by love to share new life)*

Lighting of the third Advent candle

As the third candle is lit, the following words are said:

We light this candle as a sign of the coming of Christ.

**The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.**

(Isaiah 35:1-2)

♪ **Song: Come, O prince of Peace** *(verses 1-3)*

Rejoicing

Voice 1: Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, rejoice.

Voice 2: Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

Voice 3: Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Voice 4: And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:4-7)





Offering thanks

(Members of the congregation are invited to offer a brief word of thanks to God. Thereafter the congregation will sing.)

♪ **Song: Rejoice and give thanks to God**

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

Old Testament reading

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

♪ **Song: Maranatha! Halleluyah, Amen!**

Gospel reading

Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked

him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

♪ **Song: Maranatha! Halleluyah, Amen!**

Silent meditation

Sermon

(Share a story of peace.)

RESPONSE

♪ **Intercessions: In the lands of Asia**

(After a soloist sings each stanza, the congregation is invited to pray aloud for the needy in their place, and then sing the refrain as led by the leader.)

The act of commitment and offering

(The congregation is invited to write on the paper given them how they can contribute to bringing peace to the world and they then hang the paper on the tree. While they are making this act of commitment, they may at the same time present their offering at the altar.)

SENDING FORTH

♪ **Song: Oh Tuhan pimpin lah langkahku** *(O Lord God, set my feet on the way)*





Voice 1: God of justice, you dislike injustice,

Voice 2: Grant us courage and wisdom to do justice and bring peace to our people, and to the world.

Sisters and brothers, go forth now:

Rejoice in the Lord always, as our Lord is near,
to bring joy and happiness where there is lament,
to recreate where there is damage.

Blessing

May the peace of God
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and the blessing of God Almighty -
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit -
remain with you always.

(Philippians 4:7)

Postlude or song

Hao mii chii-wit phraw phra jao hai

Released by love to share new life

Moderato ♩ = 84

Hao mii chii - wit phraw phra jao hai, Jeung yawm krab wai duai Jai yam kreng, hao khrit ta
 Re - leased by love to share new life, we bow res - pect - ful - ly to God, the mel - o -

chon ru - am kan ban lang, du - ai sa - ing phleng Jaak jit win yaan, na - mad - sa kaan keu kaan - hab
 dy we - play and sing is - from deep with - in our soul, the har - mo - ny we have in

sai, Jaak duang Jai tii sad Jing nae nawn, hai hao maa nawn Jai - na mad - sa kaan. Phra Jao song
 Christ leads to ser - vice sin - cere and sure: Let us make God's wor - ship our one goal. For this our

sawn hai haodai pob khwam Jing, nai sab - pha sing iik thang Jaak kra waa, poed pho nai phra Ye -
 God loves us so ten - der - ly; the world re - veals what this is like, and Je - sus Christ in - ter -

su pen phuu pra sa - an nai kaan kheun dii, pen phuu pra sa - an nai kaan kheun dii.
 cedes to draw us close to God in peace, to draw us close to God in peace.



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In the lands of Asia

Moderato

Soloist



In the lands of A - sia, peo - ple are op - press - ed;
 In the lands of A - sia, tears fall on dry fa - ces;
 In the lands of A - sia, fear and ter - ror reign; _____



man - y cry for jus - tice, beg - ging for some so - lace.
 child - ren, men and wo - men, hun - gry, dy - ing, hope - less.
 peo - ple long for true peace in the light of your face.

Congregation



O God, let your mis - sion _____ fill your child - ren's vis - ion, _____ to heal the suff - ring and help the strugg - ling.

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Maranatha! Halleluyah, Amen!

Lively

Leader:



Ma - ra - na - tha! Ma - ra - na - tha! _____

All:



Ha - le - lu - yah, A - men. Ha - le - lu - yah, A - men. Ha - le - lu - yah, A - men.



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Oh Tuhan pimpin lah langkahku (*O Lord God, set my feet on the way*)

Moderato ♩ = 88

Oh Tu - han pim-pin lah lang-kah - ku, ku-tak bra - ni ja - lan sen-di - ri, ser - ta -
 O Lord God set my feet on my way, I'd be fool - ish to jour - ney a - lone; stay be -

mu i - tu - lah do - a - ku, a - jar - ku me - ren - dah - kan di - ri, me - nu -
 side me for - ev - er I pray, keep my hand hum - bly held in your own. With your

rut fir - man mu tiap ha - ri, ja - di - kan pe - li - ta da - lam g'lap, men -
 teach - ing my guide ev - er - day, I can hold out a torch in the dark at -

ca - ri dom - ba yang se - sat, i - tu - lah ke - rin - du - an ji - wa - ku.
 tract - ing all those who have strayed, then I hope they will join me on your path.

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Rejoice and give thanks to God

Lively

Re - joi ce and give thanks to God!

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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Incarnational Peace JOY LEAPS FROM THE WOMB

Resources for the service:

- ✦ Four Advent candles on a candle stand or Advent wreath
- ✦ A cradle-like basket
- ✦ A warmly coloured cloth
- ✦ Newspaper cuttings on world problems.

In preparation:

- ✦ Symbols for the caring activities in which the congregation are involved should be found and prepared.
- ✦ Three members of the congregation need to be appointed to offer the call to worship.

GATHERING

Instrumental music

(The congregation may consider getting local musicians to play indigenous wind instruments that have the same primordial musical expressions as the Australian didgeridoo.)

Call to worship

Let us prepare the church and the world
for the One who comes in peace.

Voice 1: There is no place on earth
where this promise of God is not waiting.

Voice 2: The womb for the nurturing of Divine life,
will be found in surprising grace among us.

Voice 3: In humankind the Child of God is conceived
and we will nurture and protect this gift until it is brought to birth.





**Deep within us, joy leaps in expectation.
 Could we dare to believe that the Christ is coming?
 In faith, we will wait in humble hope.**

♪ **Song: Come, O Prince of Peace** (*verses 1-4*)

Lighting of the fourth Advent candle
(As the fourth candle is lit, the following words are said:)

We light this fourth Advent candle
 and surround it with a cherishing love, like a mother's womb.
**It will remind us of both the promise and the responsibility
 which awaits us at the birth of the Christchild.**

♪ **Song: Come, Holy Spirit, come**

Prayer of invocation

O Holy Spirit,
 source of all the gifts which God offers to us,
 take us beyond our own concerns and doubts
 and speak to us of your dreams for new possibilities.

Prayer of confession

Loving Parent God,
 you who hold us safe within the womb-space of your compassion,
 we come before you as your very human people.
 We acknowledge that there are times
 when we turn away from holding your life in our hands
 when the challenges before us are great.
 We are tempted to allow ourselves to be distracted
 by other concerns and busyness,
 rather than owning and caring for your vulnerable life.

Silent reflection



Hear our humble confession, Jesus Christ.

**Open our lives to receive
your eternal promise of love, we pray.**

Sometimes, we would rather keep you
as a tiny promise of life within the womb
rather than nurturing you and bringing you to birth
in ways which invite us to a mature faith.

Silent reflection

Hear our humble confession, Jesus Christ.

**Open our lives to receive
your eternal promise of love, we pray.
Amen.**

Words of assurance

The love of Jesus Christ waits to be discovered within us now.
When we own our humanness before the holiness of God,
the flowing of grace will amaze us by its kindness.
We are forgiven!

Thanks be to God.

Prayer of thanksgiving *(to be read antiphonally)*

Group I: O God, in Christ Jesus,
we thank you for the reality
that there is never a time in history
when your life cannot be begun anew
among ordinary people.

Group II: We celebrate again the promise
of your holy life being found here,
welcomed and held in our trembling hands
as your hopeful people.





Group I: We thank you for the story of faithfulness
which comes to us today in your word
inviting us to a different future
and the wonder of your company forever.

All: **Thanks be to you, O God,
Creator, Child and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

PROCLAMATION

Suggested Bible readings

Micah 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.

Hebrews 10:5-10

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God" (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).'

When he said above, 'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sin-offerings' (these are offered according to the law), then he added, 'See, I have come to do your will.' He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

or Luke 1:47-55

And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever."

Sermon

RESPONSE

Offertory sentence





Just as God gives to us, so let us give to others now.
Our offering will be received.

♪ **Song: Na o e ha ma ni tei e nei au** (*O our God, you created this our world*)

Offertory prayer

O God, we can never match your generosity.
However, we pray in faith for your blessing
on all that we offer to you now.

**May we bring your love to birth
as we use these gifts. Amen.**

Affirmation of faith and prayers of intercession

Let us affirm our faith together:

**We believe that we too may prepare
to find the Christ among us and within us.**

(The cradle-like basket is placed in front of the altar/table.)

May we search for the beginnings of your life
with faithful expectation, Jesus Christ.

**We believe that we are called
to prepare a sacred place for love to come.**

(The warmly coloured cloth is placed in the cradle together with some symbols of the caring activities of the congregation.)

Through our prayers and our actions we will cherish this love.

Give us strength, commitment and faithfulness
in all that we do in your name, Jesus Christ.

**We believe that even when doors are closed in our faces,
we are those who will firmly hold the growing life in the womb.**

(Newspaper cuttings which tell of a troubled world are placed in the cradle.)

As we look at the world around us,
we know that it will not be easy to sustain hope and justice.
Give us the courage to make a space

for a truly prophetic life, Jesus Christ.

**We believe that, no matter where the sun rises on this day,
the people of God will be there with us,
in a unity of faithfulness to your promise, Jesus Christ.
Together, we will so live
that others will see and believe in your coming.
Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

Dismissal and blessing

Let us walk towards Christmas Day
believing that anything is possible through the love of God.

And may the unborn life within us leap with anticipation.
Amen.

May all the churches open wide their doors to welcome Christ's coming.
Amen.

And may Christmas Day herald the rebirth of love in all the earth.
Amen.

Postlude or song





Come, Holy Spirit come

Lento

1. Come, Ho - ly Spi - rit come. Come, Ho - ly Spi - rit come.
 2. Touch us ___ in ___ love as we o - pen our hearts.
 3. A - men, ___ a - men. A - men, ___ a - men.

Come, Ho - ly Spi - rit come. Come, Ho - ly Spi - rit come.
 Touch us ___ in ___ love as we o - pen our hearts.
 A - men, ___ a - men. A - men, ___ a - men.



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Na o e ha ma ni tei e nei au (*O our God, you created this our world*)

NA O E
from Tahiti

♩ = c.60

Leader or Choir

Na o e ha ma ni tei e nei au
 O our God, you cre - a - ted this our world
 Thank you, Lord, for your bless - ings in our land;
 To you, Lord, fruits of la - bour now we bring;

Congregation

na ro to ta o e pa rau ma na
 by your Word pow'r - ful life and wond - rous love.
 help us guard and con - serve your gifts with care.
 ac - cept them for the glo - ry of your reign.

Hm Hm Hm Hm

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for the four Advent Sundays

First Sunday in Advent:

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- ♪ The Lord is our light 52
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- ♪ Come, O Prince of Peace 42
- ♪ Come, Holy Spirit, come 71
- ♪ Na o e ha ma ni tei e nei au (O our God, you created this our world) 71





THE DECADE TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE

The Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) 2001 - 2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, is an initiative of the World Council of Churches within the framework of the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The DOV calls on churches and all people of good will to work together in addressing the wide varieties of violence, from the personal and interpersonal to the societal and international levels. It highlights efforts by churches, ecumenical organizations and civil society initiatives for preventing and overcoming violence.

The goals of the Decade to Overcome Violence are:

- ✦ Addressing holistically the wide varieties of violence, both direct and structural, in homes, communities, and in international arenas and learning from the local and regional analyses of violence and ways to overcome violence.
 - ✦ Challenging the churches to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence; to relinquish any theological justification of violence; and to affirm anew the spirituality of reconciliation and active nonviolence.
 - ✦ Creating a new understanding of security in terms of cooperation and community, instead of in terms of domination and competition.
 - ✦ Learning from the spirituality and resources for peace-building of other faiths to work with communities of other faiths in the pursuit of peace and to challenge the churches to reflect on the misuse of religious and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies.
 - ✦ Challenging the growing militarization of our world, especially the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
-

In a nutshell the DOV aims at moving the concern and efforts for peace, justice and non-violence from the periphery to the centre of the life and witness of the church and to build stronger alliances among churches and with other faith and civil society initiatives. The coordinating office of the World Council of Churches in Geneva is working to raise awareness on issues related to violence and peace, to share information and stories of good practices, and facilitate networking. It is a member of the World Health Organization's Violence Prevention Alliance whose aim it is to promote violence prevention under the motto: Violence is preventable, not unavoidable! The DOV Annual Focus is on a different region each year, with a different theme. It serves to mobilize churches within that particular region into the DOV movement. The International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21 is a high point during the Annual Focus and shares prayers for peace from the region, inviting others to join in observing the world-wide International Day of Peace through peace vigils and prayers for peace as part of the churches' worship. The Annual Focus in 2010 will be on Africa.





GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH – THE INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL PEACE CONVOCATION (IEPC)

Plans are well underway for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) which will be held from 17 to 25 May 2011 at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica. It will bring together a wide spectrum of people from the churches and from justice and peace movements to celebrate peace as a gift from God, focusing on a recommitment to be peacemakers as a responsibility of the Church. It seeks to assess and strengthen the churches' position on peace, to provide opportunities for networking and to deepen our common commitment to reconciliation and peace.

The motto of the IEPC "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" comes from the angels' song at Christmas. The glory of God and peace on earth are directly related to one another. It is by making peace that people give glory to God. War and violence are violating God's glory.

The motto will be developed mainly in prayer, Bible Study, plenaries and workshops through the following themes:

- ✘ Peace in the Community
- ✘ Peace and the Marketplace
- ✘ Peace with the Earth Peace
- ✘ Peace among the Peoples

An IEPC Study Guide designed to help individuals and groups reflect and act on these themes is in preparation; it will be ready in December 2009.

A consultative process towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace (EDJP) has elaborated a first draft of the declaration which was distributed late 2008 to WCC



member churches and the wider ecumenical community. Responses, reactions and further contributions are being collected until the end of 2009 after which, a second drafting group will develop the final declaration during the course of 2010. This will then:

- ✦ be submitted to the February 2011 WCC Central Committee;
- ✦ serve as the theological basis for the IEPC; and ultimately
- ✦ be presented to the 2013 WCC Assembly.

The basis of the EDJP consists of declarations received, feedback to the first draft, existing ecumenical and church statements from past years as well as reports from WCC Living Letters and Expert Consultations.





HELPFUL WEB-SITES

Creative Commons:

www.creativecommons.org

Decade to Overcome Violence:

www.overcomingviolence.org

Specific enquiries on the IEPC may be directed to:

iepc@wcc-coe.org

Feautor - A free, multilingual, and open space to share religious resources:

www.feautor.org

Red Createe – A liturgical network and resource group intended for Latin American Christians:

www.redcreatee.org.ar

World Council of Churches:

www.oikoumene.org



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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