

“Power and Promise of Peace”

An Interfaith Service of Reflection and Prayer

*“Lead us from unreality to reality; Lead us from darkness to light;
Lead us from death to life.” (Upanishads – Hindu Scripture)*

Gathering Music

Welcome

Clergyperson of host congregation

Preparation for Worship

Leader: *Let us pause in silence...
In the midst of, clamor and confusion,
Hurries and worries, fear and frustration*

Silence.....

Congregation: *We wait upon you, O God,
To feel your presence, to know your purpose
To experience your power.*

Silence.....

Leader: *In quietness we wish,
To listen to your voice, to think your thoughts,
To act your will.*

Silence.....

Call to Prayer

Imam

“God of Grace and God of Glory”

Words: Harry Emerson Fosdick (alt.)

*God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power
Crown thine ancient justice story bring its bud to glorious flower
Grant us wisdom; grant us courage, for the facing of this hour
For the facing of this hour.*

*Cure thy children's warring madness; bend our pride to thy control;
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom; grant us courage, lest we miss thy righteous goal.
Lest we miss thy righteous goal.*

*Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
Let the search for thy salvation be our glory ever more.
Grant us wisdom; grant us courage, serving thee whom we adore,
Serving thee whom we adore.*

“Every Life Is Precious”

A Call to Repentance

(A short statement by a key interfaith leader about the nature and purpose of the service, and explanation of how the service will flow, for instance that there will be long silences and instructions about how the congregation should respond at the time of commitment. Point out to the congregation that the sub-theme of the service “Every Life is Precious” is depicted by the visual symbols of flowers that represent not only US military personnel who were killed but also Iraqi civilians.)

“Ashes, Stones and Flowers”

(A litany by Rev. Patricia Pierce, pastor, Tabernacle Church modified by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director, The Shalom Center, Philadelphia)

(During the litany, the names of US soldiers and the names of Iraqi civilians who died in the Iraq war will be projected on a screen and will be voiced by two persons during the time of silence.)

Leader: For vibrant lives suddenly and shamelessly sacrificed we lift up the ashes of our loss, O Source of Life.

Congregation: For the lives that continue, haunted forever by the pain of absence, we lift up the ashes of our remorse, O Wellspring of Compassion.

Leader: For the conflagration of flames and nightmare images forever seared into our memories we lift up the ashes of our pain, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

Congregation: For the charred visions of peace and the dry taste of fear we lift up the ashes of our grief, O Infinite.

Leader: For all the deaths that have been justified by turning the love of God or country into fanatical arrogance, we lift up the ashes of our shame, O God.

Congregation: As we cast these ashes into the troubled water of our times, Transforming One, hear our plea that by your power they will make fertile the soil of our future and by your mercy nourish the seeds of peace.

Silence

Representatives of families of soldiers will come forward and light candles on the communion table or altar.

Leader: For the ways humanity pursues violence rather than understanding, we lift up the stones of our anger, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

Congregation: For the ways we allow national, religious and ethnic boundaries to circumscribe our compassion, we lift up the stones of our hardness, O Wellspring of Compassion.

Leader: For our addiction to weapons and the ways of militarism we lift up the stones of our fear, O Source of Life.

Congregation: For the ways we cast blame and create enemies we lift up the stones of our self-righteousness, O God

Leader: As we cast these stones into this ancient river, Transforming One, hear our plea:

Congregation: Just as water wears away the hardest of stones, so too may the power of your compassion soften the hardness of our hearts and draw us into a future of justice and peace.

Silence

Representatives of families of Iraqi civilians will come forward and light candles on the communion table or altar

Leader: For sowing seeds of justice to blossom into harmony, we cast these flowers into the river, O Source of Peace.

Congregation: For seeing clearly the many rainbow colors of humanity and earth, we cast these flowers into the river, O Infinite.

Leader: For calling us to life beyond our grieving, we cast these flowers into the river, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

Congregation: As we cast these flowers into this ancient river, Transforming One, hear our plea:

All: Just as water births life in a desert and gives hope to the wounded, so too may the power of your nurturing renew our commitment to peace.

“Amazing Grace”

Solo (or choir)

Prayer: (Adapted from the Christian Orthodox Tradition)

O God of spirits and flesh, Who has trodden down death, destroying the power of the devil, bestowing life on Your world, to the souls of Your servants departed this life, do You Yourself, O Lord, give rest in a place of light, in a place of green pasture, in a place of refreshment, from where pain and sorrow and mourning are fled away.

Give rest, O God, unto Your servants, and appoint for them a place in Paradise; where the chorus of the Saints, O Lord, and the just will shine forth like stars; to Your servants that are sleeping now do You give rest, forgiveness and mercy.

Everlasting be your memories, O our brothers and sisters, who are worthy of blessedness and eternal memory. Amen

Acknowledging Our Grief

Reading from the Sacred texts

The Four Noble Truths

Buddhist Text from the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta

“Now this is the noble truth concerning suffering. Birth brings pain. Decay is painful. Disease is painful. Death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful. Separating from things pleasant is painful. Any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief, the five aggregates that spring from attachment, the conditions of individuality and their cause, are painful. This is the noble truth concerning suffering.

Now, this is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering. Truly, it is thirst or craving, causing the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight, seeking satisfaction now here, now there. That is to say, it is the craving for the gratification of the passions, or the craving for a future life, or the craving for success in this present life. This is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering.

Now this, is the noble truth concerning the cessation of suffering. Truly it is the cessation, in which no passion remains, of this very thirst. It is the laying aside of, the getting rid of, the being free from, the harboring no longer of this thirst. This is the noble truth concerning the cessation of suffering.

Now this is the noble truth concerning the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. Truly it is this noble Eightfold Path: right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the noble truth concerning the way that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Silence

Guidance for Meditation:

In this time of silence get in touch with your pain and suffering about the Iraq war. Your suffering may be deeply personal (as when a family member is injured or killed), or perhaps it is vicarious. How can the Buddha’s explanation of suffering help you to deal with your grief?

“How Can I Keep from Singing”

*My life flows on in endless song above earth's lamentation.
I hear the real, thought far off hymn that hails the new creation
Above the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing;
It sounds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing?*

*What through the tempest loudly roars, I hear the truth, it liveth.
What through the darkness round me close, songs in the night it giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I'm clinging.
Since love is lord of Heaven and earth how can I keep from singing?*

*When tyrants tremble, sick with fear and hear their death-knell ringing,
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?
In prison cell and dungeon vile our thoughts to them are winging.
When friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing?*

Receiving Divine Comfort

Reading from the Sacred Texts:

From Hebrew Scripture

Psalm 23

Adonai is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of *Adonai* my whole life long.

Silence

Guidance for Meditation

The images of green pastures, still waters, the protective rod and staff of the Good Shepherd have been comforting images to religious people across the centuries. The juxtaposition of these images with the images of the dust and heat of the Iraqi desert and the severe destruction visited upon Iraqi families and communities can be jarring. Use this meditative time to imagine a new reality, a new world of peace and justice, a place we all can “live in the house of *Adonai*” – a place of *shalom* (Peace) -- not only Iraqis, but Americans and all the people in the world can live “our whole lives long.”

“The Power and Promise of Peace”

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*Come together. We can build a dream
Meant to ease the wounded soul.
Tell the stories that are hard to hear
So the broken can be whole.*

*For the children and the innocents,
Those who tremble in the night—
Can they ever learn to trust again?
Can we ever make it right?*

*And if a dove can fly, then our dream can soar.
We'll take back the night, study war no more.
Let's give peace a chance, all the people sing.
Come and join the dance. Let the dove take wing.*

*Anger colors all our history.
The wrongs are old. The pain is deep.
Then soldiers take their guns and march to war.
Death takes hold while justice sleeps.*

*Peace is calling us to change the plan.
This is the day. This is the hour.
To make a difference, we must take a stand,
Feel the promise and the power.*

*And if a dove can fly, then our dream can soar.
We shall overcome. What's the fighting for?
Let's give peace a chance, all the people sing.
Come and join the dance. Let the dove take wing.*

[Instrumental]

*Blessed, blessed are the peacemakers.
They shall be the chosen ones.
Release the dove. It may return again,
Or it may fly beyond the sun.*

*And if a dove can fly, then our dream can soar.
We'll tear down the walls, open every door.
Let's give peace a chance, all the people sing.
Come and join the dance. Let the dove take wing.*

Moving Out to Become Peacemakers

Reading from the Sacred Texts

From the Taoist Tradition:

Lao Tzu

I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others.

Be gentle, and you can be bold; be frugal, and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others, and you can become a leader of men.

Gentleness brings victory to him who attacks, and safety to him who defends.

Those whom Heaven would save, it fences round with gentleness.
The greatest conquerors are those who overcome their enemies without strife.

From the Islamic Tradition

Excerpt From An Islamic Prayer for Peace

Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us and
made us into tribes and nations,
That we may know each other, not that we may despise each other.
And trust God, for the Lord is the one that heareth and knoweth all things.
And the servant of God,
Most gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility, and
when we address them, we say "peace."

From the Jewish Tradition

Micah 4:1, 3-4

In the days to come,
The Mount of *Adonai's* House shall stand firm above the hills.
The peoples shall gaze upon it with joy.
They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks,
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
nor ever again shall they train for war.
Then everyone shall sit under their own grapevine or fig tree
with no one to disturb them.

Silence

Guidance for Meditation

In the silence, listen to the prompting in your heart to become a peacemaker. In what specific ways might you engage in the important work of “beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks?” In the space below, would you list two or three specific commitments that you are willing to make today?

1.

2.

3.

Call to Commitment

An Affirmation of Peace and Justice

All: I believe in God, who is love and who has given the earth to all people, who heals us and frees us from all forms of oppression and for whom each life is precious. I believe in the community of faith, called to be for the agent of peace and justice. I believe in the Divine promise to destroy the power of evil and to establish justice and peace for all humankind.

Reader 1: I do not believe in the right of the strongest, or the force of arms, or the power of oppression

Reader 2: I believe in human rights, in the solidarity of all people, in the power of non-violence.

Reader 1: I do not believe in racism, in the power that comes from wealth and privilege, or any

established order that enslaves.

Reader 2: I believe that all women and men are equally human; that order based on violence and injustice is not order.

Reader 1: I do not believe that war and hunger are inevitable and peace is unattainable.

Reader 2: I believe in the beauty of simplicity, in love with open hands, in peace on earth.

All: I do not believe that suffering need be in vain, that death is the end, that the disfigurement of our world is what the Creator intended. But I dare to believe, always and in spite of everything, in the Divine power to transform and restore, fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth where justice and peace will flourish.

(Following the Affirmation and during the song of commitment, the congregation will rise as an expression of its commitment to peacemaking and walk forward, row by row and pick up a bouquet of flowers which they will take outside the church. They may stand on the steps or sidewalk for a final song and Benediction.)

Song of Commitment: Let There Be Peace on Earth

*Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator, children all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*

Recessional Music

Benediction (From Christian Scripture 1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

“Love is patient; love is kind;
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never ends.”

Go in peace to love all beings. Amen