

Ten years after the terrible events of September 11, 2001, not a day passes without reminders of how our lives were changed that day. Blood continues to be shed in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. Skirmishes in the ongoing war on terror are daily occurrences around the world. The physical and emotional impact of the 9/11 terror attacks continue to affect thousands of men and women who lost loved ones or were among the first-responders at the scenes of destruction. The tenth anniversary of 9/11 is a time of deep spiritual reflection for all who were touched by it. For Christians in the U.S. and around the world, this will be a time of prayer and remembrance for those who were lost, as well as a time for each of us to seek to discern God's will for ending the hatred and resentments that spawned the violence. In this spirit of hope, the National Council of Churches prayerfully offers these worship resources for pastors and churches to use or to modify as they are led. May the God of Love and the Prince of Peace guide us now as we seek to be messengers of God's will.



Michael Kinnamon
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Worship Resources for the Ten Year Remembrance of 9/11

The events of September 11, 2001, shocked the world and fostered many physical, emotional and spiritual reactions among Americans. The resources which follow were prepared for use by clergy and other church leaders as they plan worship services that mark the tenth anniversary of those events.

September 11, 2011 falls on a Sunday. Some will wish to use a single prayer or song from the resources below in recalling those events within the liturgical patterns of their own traditions. Others will wish to develop their worship that day with remembrance as a more central focus of worship. Congregations in different parts of the country experienced that day and its aftermath in ways unique to their communities. Pastors will want to be sensitive to the way in which these events are recalled locally and whether there are persons in attendance who lost family members that day or in the subsequent wars. Those who project visual images on screens during worship will want to avoid photographs that underscore violence, destruction or nationalism in ways that divert worshippers' focus away from God's sovereignty and mercy. The outline and resources which follow are based upon the use of Psalm 46, "Be still and know that I am God," and 2 Corinthians 4: 1, 5-10, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed..." as the scriptural basis for reflection. The pastor may wish to preach from one or both of these texts or from other appropriate scriptural passages.

Preparation

- Set up three tables (*Remembrance, Comfort, Hope*) in the front or center of the worship space.
- Place tea candles and matches on each table.
- If appropriate recruit leaders for various portions of the service.

Music Resources: (recorded or performed)

- "Song of Peace" set to the familiar tune of "Finlandia;" this song is found in many hymnals. Listen to this song as performed by Zhender at <http://bit.ly/nccpeace>. Lyrics are available online at <http://bit.ly/ncclyrics>.
- "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" by Sebastian Temple, arr. By Mark Hayes; Hear this song at <http://bit.ly/nccyoutube>. Sheet music is available online at <http://bit.ly/nccsheetmusic>.
- "Hear My Prayer" by Maranatha Singers; Listen to this song at <http://bit.ly/nccmaranatha>.
- "Be Still and Know" by Steven Curtis Chapman. For a preview and lyrics see <http://bit.ly/nccbestill>
- "Goodness Is Stronger than Evil" by John Bell. Listen to a preview and purchase sheet music for this song at <http://bit.ly/nccgoodness>.
- "O God, Our Hearts Were Shattered," a new hymn for the 10th anniversary of 9/11, by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, <http://bit.ly/ogodourhearts>

A Service of Hope and Remembrance

Opening Sentences (said by the Leader or in Unison)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid. (*John 14:27*)

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear God. As a mother comforts her child so I will comfort you, says the Lord. (*Psalms 103:13; Isaiah. 66:13*)

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. (*Isaiah 41:10*)

Song

Goodness is Stronger Than Evil

Psalm Reading

Psalm 46: 1-3, 9-11

Prayers of Remembrance, Comfort and Hope

Remembrance

Leader: God of the years, we call to you this day when the memories of 9/11 weigh so heavily upon our hearts. We recall with horror and renewed shock that day when airplanes flew into buildings and people perished. We remember our fear and anger, our confusion, and sense of threat.

All: We remember all that was lost to us that day: our sense of security, our peace, our innocence, our belief that we were safely beyond such random violence and death. Most of all we remember those who died in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, their lives of promise extinguished in hatred.

Leader: Let us light a candle and remember.

(As this portion of the prayer is said, participants are invited to approach the table to light a candle as they feel led and, if they wish, to speak the name of an individual or groups of individuals, e.g. firemen, airline passengers, etc.)

Sung Response

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (verse 1)

Comfort

Leader: God of mercy, even in our worst moments your loving kindness surrounds us. In those tragic days a decade ago, our confident faith that you were with us enabled us to go on. We give you thanks for the ways in which you comforted us in those grim days through a deepened sense of community.

We trace the movement of your grace through those among us who risked their lives to save others. We are comforted by those who offered kindness and succor and shelter to persons in distress, and by those who would not let hatred overcome love. For those whose witness to a deeper wisdom and faith comforted us, we give you thanks.

All: For public officials, neighbors, friends and strangers who brought to our troubled lives solace and clarity of purpose, we give thanks. For the calm and reassuring voices of the wise who gave us comfort and strength, we give thanks.

Leader: Let us light a candle in tribute to those persons and also those places which gave us comfort and for the words and deeds that restored to us peace.

(As this portion of the prayer is said, participants are invited to approach the second table to light a candle as they feel led and, if they wish, to name a way in which they were comforted.)

Sung Response

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (verse 2)

Hope

Leader: O God, you have taught us that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. We live by hope in the future you hold for us and the whole world. Grant us, we pray, hope for our children and our children's children that they may not know or inflict the horror and terror we recall this day. Bolster our hope when it flags and teach us to strive in all that we do to realize the hope that is in your Word and witness.

All: Eternal God, in you our hope is boundless. You renew hope in us through the promise of a future in which none shall be afraid or lift up sword against a neighbor. We pray in hope for the peace of the world among peoples and nations, religions and cultures, until we become a beloved community reconciled to one another under your sovereignty.

Leader: Let us light a candle and give voice to our hopes for our lives in obedience to God.

(As this portion of the prayer is said, participants are invited to approach the third table to light a candle as they feel led and, if they wish, to express a word of the hope we have in Christ.)

Sung Response

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (verse 3)

Leader: May these candles represent for us the light of our shared memories, the light of comfort and strength, and the light of our hope. In memory, comfort and hope God abides now and forever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

New Testament Reading

2 Corinthians 4: 1, 5-10

Homily or Sermon may be offered

Hymn of Dedication

Song of Peace

Unison Prayer

God of all creation, our hearts are broken over the destruction and loss we remember this day. And we acknowledge, O Lord, that on that day of human carnage yours was the first heart to break. In our remembering, may we stand with those who mourn and those who cannot stop mourning. Through remembering, may we find new comfort in your care. In our remembering may we be drawn to a new hope for the whole world, and may we gain for ourselves a measure of your peace.

You who can turn the shadow of night into the bright promise of a new day, empower us to shape a world marked by ways of life that lead to justice and peace

for all peoples. Fashion in us a people who are more ready to grow in understanding than eager to judge those who are different from us. Form us as a people determined to heal wounds rather than inflict them.

We pray at last that you would cultivate such love in us that we may reach out in compassion to all those who are still wounded by the events of that day; and in seeking to heal others, may we experience a love that makes us whole. This we pray in the strong name of Jesus our Christ. Amen

Closing Hymn

Oh God, our Hearts Were Shattered

Blessing

Leader: In God's providence you were created and preserved unto to this day for purposes unafraid. Let memory now reside in you at peace. Let comfort companion you in all your days. Let hope spring forth in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. May you serve God in all that you do and say, witnessing to the reign and realm of God to come. Amen.



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