

Prayers for Peace



An Interfaith Cry from the Heart
Part II

Evangelicals for Social Action

O Lord our God,

We hesitate to come before you with prayers about politics because our knowledge is so limited, our perspective so one-sided. Protect us, O Lord, from using our prayers as political propaganda.

But tens of thousands of people whom you love-Iraqis and Americans, Christians and Muslims-have been maimed or killed in Iraq. We must come to you for help.

O God of peace, freedom and justice, please bring the killing to an end.

Please make Iraq and all the Middle East, indeed all your world, a land overflowing with genuine freedom and lasting justice.

Please grant that Americans seek, not that you be on our side, but that America be on your side. Grant America the humility to work respectfully with other nations in a true partnership.

Bring us quickly, O Lord, to the time when everyone may sit securely under their own vine and fig tree and no one will make them afraid. May your peace be our peace, O God of peace.

In the Name of Christ our Lord, the Prince of Peace.

Ron Sider

Hymns for Peace

A Hymn for Peace

LEONI 6.6.8.4 ("The God of Abraham Praise")

"A Hymn for Peace" is dedicated to the memory of Shaul Lahav, grandson of Helen and Paul Loeb, who was killed on November 18, 2003, on the road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Another son is killed,
Another daughter dies,
And loving, waiting homes are filled

With loved ones' cries.
As rivers never sleep,
So wars flow on and on.
Hang up your harps, sit down and weep
For those now gone!

We grieve for children lost,
For hearts too sad to pray;
We mourn, O Lord, the growing cost
Of hatred's way.
And sure as threats increase
And anger turns to war,
We pray that we may find a peace
Worth struggling for.

We know your way, O Lord,
For all your people here:
A plowshare from a fighting sword,
A transformed spear!
Now comfort those who grieve,
Be in each saddened home,
And by your grace may we believe--
And seek Shalom.

Psalm 137:1-2 and Isaiah 2:4

Tune: Hebrew melody adaptation by Thomas Olivers and Meyer Lyon, 1770.

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Carolyn Winfrey Gillette gives free one-time use of this hymn to congregations that support Church World Service.

Click [for another Gillette Hymn, *God's Love is Always Stronger*](#)

Unitarian Universalist

A Litany of Witness

By the Rev. Kathleen McTigue (Senior Minister, Unitarian Society of New Haven, Hamden, CT)

We gather together this evening to honor our grief in this time of war, a weary grief born from violence that breaks bodies and hearts, families and communities. We gather as a circle of remembrance, to honor those now missing from the circle.

We bear witness to our loss.

We remember the ones we knew and loved who perished, and we honor the strangers whose smiling faces and shattered hopes have haunted the edges of the news all through this long year.

We bear witness to our loss.

We honor those 2,000 soldiers—our children, spouses, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends—those brave ones who turned their faces towards the danger rather than look away, who offered their bodies to serve our nation, who paid the price of war with bone and sinew, breath and blood.

We bear witness to our heroes.

We have learned that our world is a complex web of sorrows, a litany of wrongs and injustices into which we are bound. Our pain has sometimes led us to the ancient and dangerous equation of an eye for every eye, a tooth for every tooth.

We bear witness to our choices.

There are strangers half a world away whose lives have also been lost, innocent others just as beloved as our dead, just as worthy of lives rich and long.

We bear witness to our violence.

Yet we know ourselves to be people who hunger for righteousness. We hear the persistent whispers from our prophets and teachers who remind us of the sweet movement from the fist to the open hand, and tell us how urgent is the call to that movement now.

We bear witness to the power of forgiveness.

There is only one human tribe across all the earth. Within each confused and yearning heart is the capacity for unspeakable cruelty, and the seed of great goodness that can open us to new life.

We bear witness to our unity.

All around us we hear the language of war sounding out. We are called into the stronger lilt and music of a different syntax, a language of peace, a language in which our future can still beckon us as a place of safety and nurture, justice and harmony.

We bear witness to the way of peace.

Compilation of worship resources focused on war with Iraq, from the Unitarian Universalist Association website.

PEACE SEEDS

Peace Seeds represent the 12 prayers for peace prayed in Assisi, Italy on the Day of Prayer for World Peace during the United Nations International Year of Peace, 1986. The prayers were brought to the United States and entrusted to the care of the children at The Life Experience School.

"Like the bee gathering honey from the different flowers, the wise person accepts the essence of the different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions."

--Mahatma Gandhi

1. HINDU PRAYER FOR PEACE

Oh God, lead us from the unreal to the Real. Oh God, lead us from darkness to light. Oh God, lead us from death to immortality. Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all. Oh Lord God almighty, may there be peace in celestial regions. May there be peace on earth. May the waters be appeasing, May herbs be wholesome, and may trees and plants bring peace to all. May all beneficent beings bring peace to us. May thy Vedic Law propagate peace all through the world. May all things be a source of peace to us. And may thy peace itself bestow peace on all, and may that peace come to me also.

2. BUDDHIST PRAYER FOR PEACE

May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be free from their illnesses. May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free. May the powerless find power, and may people think of befriending one another. May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wildernesses--the children, the aged, the unprotected--be guarded by beneficent celestials, and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood.

3. JAINIST PRAYER FOR PEACE

Peace and Universal Love is the essence of the Gospel preached by all the Enlightened Ones. The Lord has preached that equanimity is the Dharma. Forgive do I creatures all, and let all creatures forgive me. Unto all have I amity, and unto none enmity. Know that violence is the root cause of all miseries in the world. Violence, in fact, is the knot of bondage. "Do not injure any living being." This is the eternal, perennial, and unalterable way of spiritual life. A weapon howsoever powerful it may be, can always be superseded by a superior one; but no weapon can, however, be superior to non-violence and love.

4. MUSLIM PRAYER FOR PEACE

In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful. 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. If the enemy incline toward peace, do thou also incline toward peace, and trust in God, for the Lord is the one that heareth and knoweth all things. And the servants of God, Most Gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility, and when we address, them, we say "PEACE."

5. SIKH PRAYER FOR PEACE

"God adjudges us according to our deeds, not the coat that we wear: that Truth is above everything, but higher still is truthful living." Know that we attaineth God when we loveth, and only that victory endures in consequence of which no one is defeated.

6. BAHAI' PRAYER FOR PEACE

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be fair in they judgement, and guarded in thy speech. Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness, and a home to the stranger. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility.

7. SHINTO PRAYER FOR PEACE

"Although the people living across the ocean surrounding us, I believe, are all our brothers and sisters, why are there constant troubles in this world? Why do winds and waves rise in the ocean surrounding us? I only earnestly wish that the wind will soon puff away all the clouds which are hanging over the tops of the mountains."

8. NATIVE AFRICAN PRAYER FOR PEACE

Almighty God, the Great Thumb we cannot evade to tie any knot; the Roaring Thunder that splits mighty trees; the all-seeing Lord up on high who sees even the footprints of an antelope on a rock mass here on Earth. You are the one who does not hesitate to respond to our call. You are the cornerstone of peace.

9. NATIVE AMERICAN PRAYER FOR PEACE

Oh Great Spirit of our Ancestors, I raise my pipe to you. To your messengers the four winds, and to Mother Earth who provides for your children. Give us the wisdom to teach our children to love, to respect, and

to be kind to each other so that they may grow with peace in mind. Let us learn to share all the good things that you provide for us on this Earth.

10. ZOROASTRIAN PRAYER FOR PEACE

We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world: that understanding triumph over ignorance, that generosity triumph over indifference, that trust triumph over contempt, and that truth triumph over falsehood.

11. JEWISH PRAYER FOR PEACE

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the paths of the Most High. And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation-- neither shall they learn war any more. And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

12. CHRISTIAN PRAYER FOR PEACE

Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS, for they shall be known as the Children of God. But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To those who strike you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from those who take away your cloak, do not withhold your coat as well. Give to everyone who begs from you, and of those who take away your goods, do not ask them again. And as you wish that others would do to you do, do so to them."

Peace Seeds are distributed by the children at The Life Experience School under the care and direction of The Peace Abbey, 2 North Main Street, Sherborn, Massachusetts 01770 508-650-

Peace Meditation

*by the Rev. Anthony P. Johnson
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County,
Orange, New Jersey*

Delivered at the Isaiah Wall opposite the United Nations on Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Let us invoke the Love that moves above us and below us, around us and within us. Let us invoke the Spirit of Love that made the banner I saw hanging over the freeway in East Orange, New Jersey, this morning: an outline of a dove and in letters five feet high one word: *Peace*.

Let us invoke the living spirit of the peacemakers who have gone before us. We have recently lost Philip Berrigan and Nicholas Cardell. Let us invoke their spirit.

Let us invoke the Spirit of Love that is lived as solidarity of each with all, of one with the other:

man with woman...
adult with child...
black with white...
Christian with Buddhist with Jew with Muslim...

Let us acknowledge our interconnectedness.
Let us make real the solidarity we know we may make real as we acknowledge that it is broken...

...broken by criminalizing and imprisoning young men of color way out of proportion to their numbers...
...broken by taxing every penny earned at minimum wage while hardly taxing fortunes made on high profits...
...broken by inadequately funding of education in rural towns and inner cities, the education of children who are poor or black or immigrant and by under funding of education making military enlistment in the so-called voluntary army the only way up that many can see...
...broken by sending these oppressed young men and women to kill and be killed by other oppressed men and women, conscripts of a dictator or conscripts of a dictatorial economy...
...broken by bombs however precise that destroy homes, shatter neighborhoods and make children orphans or even kill them.

Let us invoke the Love that moves above and below us, around us and within us.
Let us invoke the Spirit of Love that is greater than us, but which is made real through us -- and only through us.
Let us invoke that human solidarity that makes justice possible and through which by making justice, we make peace possible.
Let us invoke love and live it as solidarity.
Our lives are our prayers.
Amen.

Prayers

Pastoral Prayer
From Rev. Dr. M. Maureen Killoran
March 20, 2003

ENTRE NOUS

Every time I turn around, I hear more words of war.
When I look at the paper, I see the color of blood.
When I listen to people on the street, I feel their anxiety
as they talk about what might be or what was,
both years ago and yesterday.
Hope, somebody tells me, is a chimera.
Humanity is a violent animal run amok.
All we can look for is more of the same.
I cannot function, a dear friend says.
All I can do is feel the children's pain.
Another smiles in silence, makes mental statues
of the way the world could be.
In the bar a woman drowns her fears.
On the parkway, a man makes daisy chains to tell his dreams.
Oh God, it is too hard to bear, we pray.
Oh Mother, take this pain away.
But no. Once opened, our eyes cannot refuse to see.
Unlike the generations gone before, we cannot say we didn't know.
We can no longer wash our hands.
For now we know that "they" is "us."
There is only one world, no "them" but only "we."
Oh God, our prayer-of-now, let me not abandon to despair.
Oh Mother, give me strength to do what e'er I can.
Grant that those I touch each day may feel my core of hope,
The stubborn refusal to let destruction win.
Oh God, give me courage to endure this time of trial.
Oh Mother, help me devote my heart and hands to peace.

Prayers

Pastoral Prayer

*delivered at Fourth Universalist Society in New York City
by the Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley,
March 9, 2003*

"O God about whom we know so little, but ask so much,"
Goddess of Justice, giver and sustainer all Life:
Your daughters and sons call upon you once again
as we did in centuries past.
We have known war, and once again, there are rumors of wars.

And so we come this morning
to lay this burden on the altar of prayer.
We know that violence cannot sustain us ...
And so we seek a new way:
a way that leads to peace ...
a way that leads to the promise of
freedom, justice, and security
for all the peoples of the Earth.
Oh Thou who gives us perfect freedom to find the ways of truth:
We know that democracy is a fragile thing that needs to be guarded;
And some of us see our nation taking a backward step—isolating and insulating
itself from the world.
It's easy to think that our voices are not being heard;
that we have been silenced.
And under such circumstances,
one can easily resort to disillusionment and anger.
But let our thoughts not turn to cynicism and despair.
Let our fears not become helplessness or hopelessness.
Help our leaders to transcend their delusion
about the righteousness of their cause.
Help them to respect the Sacredness of Life more than conquest.
In the coming days and weeks,
as we wander through pathways unknown,
“Grant us wisdom. Grant us courage.
Lest we miss your peaceful goal.”
Ashé. As'Salaam Alakim. Blessed be. Shalom, and Amen.

Readings

*From the Farewell Message of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960
Submitted by the Rev. Paul Beedle*

“We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security alone more than the net income of all United States corporations. Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence – economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the Federal Government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society . . .

“Together we must learn how to compose differences – not with arms, but with intellect and decent purpose. . . . To all the peoples of the world, I once more give expression to America’s prayerful and continuing aspiration: We pray that peoples of all faiths, all races, all nations, may have their great human needs satisfied; that those now denied opportunity shall come to enjoy it to the full; that all who yearn for freedom may experience its spiritual blessings, those who have freedom will understand, also, its heavy responsibility; that all who are insensitive to the needs of others, will learn charity, and that the scourges of poverty, disease and ignorance will be made to disappear from the earth; and that in the goodness of time, all peoples will come to live together in a peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love.”

Readings

Responsive Reading (adapted from a poem by Mzwakhe Mbuli)

MINISTER: Now is the time,
MEN: To climb up the mountain and reason against habit,
ALL: Now is the time.
MINISTER: Now is the time,
WOMEN: To renew the barren soil of nature, ruined by the winds of tyranny.
ALL: Now is the time.
MINISTER: Now is the time,
MEN: To commence the litany of hope,
ALL: Now is the time.
MINISTER: Now is the time,
WOMEN: To give me roses, not to keep them for my grave to come.
ALL: Now is the time.
MINISTER: Now is the time,
MEN: Give them to me while my heart breaks.
ALL: Now is the time.
MINISTER: Now is the time,
WOMEN: Give them today, while my heart yearns for jubilee.
ALL: Now is the time.
-- submitted by the Rev. Louis V. Schwebius, Consulting Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Central Nassau, NY and Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bellport, NY.

Readings

The War Prayer

by Mark Twain

(This prayer was written in 1904-05, it is believed, and found after Twain's death in his unpublished manuscripts. It was first published in 1923 in Albert Bigelow Paine's anthology, Europe and Elsewhere. The story is in response to a particular war, namely the Philippine-American War of 1899-1902, which Twain opposed.)

It was a time of great and exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism; the drums were beating, the bands playing, the toy pistols popping, the bunched firecrackers hissing and spluttering; on every hand and far down the receding and fading spread of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun; daily the young volunteers marched down the wide avenue gay and fine in their new uniforms, the proud fathers and mothers and sisters and sweethearts cheering them with voices choked with happy emotion as they swung by; nightly the packed mass meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest depths of their hearts, and which they interrupted at briefest intervals with cyclones of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country, and invoked the God of Battles beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpourings of fervid eloquence which moved every listener. It was indeed a glad and gracious time, and the half dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast a doubt upon its righteousness straightway got such a stern and angry warning that for their personal safety's sake they quickly shrank out of sight and offended no more in that way.

Sunday morning came – next day the battalions would leave for the front; the church was filled; the volunteers were there, their young faces alight with martial dreams – visions of the stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender! Then home from the war, bronzed heroes, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden seas of glory! With the volunteers sat their dear ones, proud, happy, and envied by the neighbors and friends who had no sons and brothers to send forth to the field of honor, there to win for the flag, or, failing, die the noblest of noble deaths. The service proceeded; a war chapter from the Old Testament was read; the first prayer was said; it was followed by an organ burst that shook the building, and with one impulse the house rose, with glowing eyes and beating hearts, and poured out that tremendous invocation

God the all-terrible! Thou who ordainest! Thunder thy clarion and lightning thy sword!

Then came the “long” prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was, that an ever-merciful and benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers, and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in the day of battle and the hour of peril, bear them in His mighty hand, make them strong and confident, invincible in the bloody onset; help them to crush the foe, grant to them and to their flag and country imperishable honor and glory –

An aged stranger entered and moved with slow and noiseless step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the minister, his long body clothed in a robe that reached to his feet, his head bare, his white hair descending in a frothy cataract to his shoulders, his seamy face unnaturally pale, pale even to ghastliness. With all eyes following him and wondering, he made his silent way; without pausing, he ascended to the preacher's side and stood there waiting. With shut lids the preacher, unconscious of his presence, continued with his moving prayer, and at last finished it with the words, uttered in fervent appeal, "Bless our arms, grant us the victory, O Lord our God, Father and Protector of our land and flag!" The stranger touched his arm, motioned him to step aside -- which the startled minister did -- and took his place. During some moments he surveyed the spellbound audience with solemn eyes, in which burned an uncanny light; then in a deep voice he said:

“I come from the Throne – bearing a message from Almighty God!” The words smote the house with a shock; if the stranger perceived it he gave no attention. “He has heard the prayer of His servant your shepherd, and will grant it if such shall be your desire after I, His messenger, shall have explained to you its import – that is to say, its full import. For it is like unto many of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more than he who utters it is aware of – except he pause and think.

“God's servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused and taken thought? Is it one prayer? No, it is two – one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear of Him Who heareth all supplications, the spoken and the unspoken. Ponder this – keep it in mind. If you would beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse upon a neighbor at the same time. If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are possibly praying for a curse upon some neighbor's crop which may not need rain and can be injured by it.

“You have heard your servant's prayer – the uttered part of it. I am commissioned of God to put into words the other part of it – that part which the pastor – and also you in your hearts – fervently prayed silently. And ignorantly and unthinkingly? God grant that it was so! You heard these words: ‘Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!’ That is sufficient. the *whole* of the uttered prayer is compact into those pregnant words. Elaborations were not necessary. When you have prayed for

victory you have prayed for many unmentioned results which follow victory –*must* follow it, cannot help but follow it. Upon the listening spirit of God fell also the unspoken part of the prayer. He commandeth me to put it into words. Listen!

“O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle – be Thou near them! With them – in spirit – we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it -- for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen.

(*After a pause.*) “Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High waits!”

It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.

Please duplicate and distribute freely.

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