

IMAGINE: PEACE

Bible Meditations and Worship Resources for Advent



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October 2008

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Foreword

Peace is at the heart of Jesus Christ's message and also at the heart of every church service. Christians throughout the world confess a God of peace every time they worship. The congregation is greeted by "Peace be with you", intercessions may begin "In peace let us pray to the Lord", a sign of peace is shared at the celebration of the eucharist, and at the end of the service we often hear "Go in peace".

The authors of this booklet wanted to make this peace more visible, touchable and perceptible. "Imagine: Peace" offers Advent meditations and worship outlines to celebrate and reflect upon the annunciation and expectation of the coming of the promised Prince of Peace. Advent is a time when the Church on the one hand confesses its own entanglement in the world's strife, and on the other expresses its hope that God's peace reaches farther than we imagine, as "The peace of God surpasses our understanding": a powerful message of consolation in the midst of the illusory and unholy talk of peace in the world around us.

The booklet begins with personal experiences and approaches to the chosen Bible texts from biblical interpreters in Costa Rica, Great Britain, Indonesia, Palestine, Paraguay and South Africa. In the middle are some Latin American worship traditions and ideas which were taken up by musicians and liturgists at a workshop in Cuba, and worked into texts and songs for the four Sundays of Advent. At the end of the booklet is information about the World Council of Churches' ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence and the preparations for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) planned for 2011.

The song of the angels in the fields of Bethlehem is the theme of the 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, pointing the way forward and to our task as Christians: "Glory to God and Peace on Earth".

"Imagine: Peace" takes its shape and content from the interaction of many different people. We are grateful to those who provided inspiration and artistic talent, who have allowed us to use their prayers, songs and music, who shared their insights on a specific biblical text, who have made translations and corrections, or in any other way participated in the process of preparing this booklet.

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WCC's special thanks go to

- ★ Red Create, and Gerardo Oberman who as a member of the spiritual life committee of the IEPC initiated the project and brought the participants to the Matanzas (Cuba) workshop;
- ★ Feautor and Mary Hess who supported the project from the beginning, enthusiastically and not least financially;
- ★ SET in Matanzas and all the collaborators there who helped to create an atmosphere of trust and friendship which enabled the artists' creativity to flourish.

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How to use this booklet

The idea behind this booklet came in December 2007, when the WCC project on spirituality and worship organized a meeting in Baar, Switzerland to plan for spiritual life at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), due to take place in Kingston, Jamaica, from 17 to 25 May 2011 as the culmination of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV).

The meeting had two main tasks. One was to deal with questions like these: What do we mean by spiritual life, how does spirituality sustain people in violent situations, how can spirituality contribute to peace building? The other was to help develop resources and material on the way to the IEPC for use in churches and groups.

“Imagine: Peace” has suggestions for services for the four Sundays in Advent. It is being published as the first part of a collection of worship material for the IEPC from different regions of the world.

The meditations are invitations to reflect further on different biblical aspects of peace and overcoming violence. Four of them are taken up in the worship outlines, not as sermons but as background to the preaching text.

The Latin American context from which the texts and songs for the four Sundays of Advent come puts a strong emphasis on community. Peace can only be experienced and celebrated together with other people. This is why the congregation is very involved both in the preparation and in the realization of the services.

This aspect of community moved the authors to relinquish their individual rights to the texts and songs and instead to agree to joint copyright which is protected with a Creative Commons licence.

The services are put together in such a way that they follow one another; but they may also be celebrated independent of one another. The texts and songs may also be used in contexts other than church services.

We particularly hope that you will adapt this material to your own context. Depending on your local possibilities and customs (congregations with cantors, choirs or musical groups will find it easier to learn new songs), the texts or songs may be added to or changed for more

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well-known or traditional texts and hymns. The songs were originally written in Spanish and appear with their Spanish titles in the worship outlines. We hope the index with the titles in English helps.

Each outline is introduced by a short explanation of the order of worship and a list of the things that are needed for it. A few further instructions are within the service outlines.

In the litanies and prayers, plain type signifies that one person is to read a line; **bold type** indicates that the congregation reads the line; and *italics* carry information or an instruction that is not to be read aloud.

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BEING WITH GOD

Mother Joanna Burton

Isaiah 9:1-6

1 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. 3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. 4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah writes in a situation where the people are tempted to make alliances with other nations against a fierce and frightening oppressor: first with neighbouring Israel and Syria who pressure and threaten Judah seeking its co-operation in an alliance against Assyria, and then mighty Assyria itself bent on conquest. Isaiah describes Judah “as a tree shaken by the wind” and speaks against such temptations as sin against God and Judah’s special covenant relationship with God. It is a placing of trust in human strength, and human activity, the strength of “horses and chariots” (2:7), instead of in God. Such an attitude is ultimately idolatry (2:8), an act of human pride (3:16f) and a deed against God. It forgets and dismisses both God’s abiding presence and the strength that comes from that presence (3:8). It forgets the gracious reality of God’s promise of salvation in covenant love.



Isaiah shows another side of this apostasy. Judah does not live according to the commandments of God, the precious heritage of the covenant law, which shows the nation how to behave as “God’s own people”. Instead of righteousness, there is bloodshed (1:15), oppression of the poor and helpless (3:14), a flaunting of pride and empty self-satisfaction (2:11f) and a misuse of authority by rulers (3:15). What is evil is called good, and good evil (5:20). Both speech and deeds are “against the Lord” (3:8). Judah is like the vineyard planted by Yahweh, to which he comes seeking good grapes but finds only sour grapes (5:2).

Isaiah warns that disaster will come upon Judah because of its sin. The “vineyard” will become desolate, a tangled, moisture-lacking wilderness. The nation will be overrun, destroyed and taken into bitter exile. God will use the reckless might of Assyria to accomplish this. He will enter into judgement with Judah and its sin. Yet it will not end in disaster. Through this grievous experience, Judah will be cleansed and purified and fit to be what it truly is – God’s special possession and instrument for universal salvation. A remnant will survive the “gloom and doom” of purification and will return to Judah. Wars shall be no more and authority will not be in the hands of the corrupt and power hungry, but of the one whom God provides – a child. Peace will reign with justice forever. God’s plans are for our true peace and happiness.

There is always a temptation to trust too much in human means. Which of us has not planned and organized our security, while paying lip service to trust in God? Contemporary life has a frenetic pace with its ceaseless activity and ever growing desire for more: more things, more recognition, more acceptability, more status, more success. It is often a model of the sort of life choices that Isaiah condemns as “darkness”. It is we who are engineering everything, although paradoxically we also become slaves to everything and everyone outside ourselves. Of course, we must act, plan, organize and relate, but in a way that truly allows God to remain God and at the centre of our lives. People often have a sense of being enslaved: caught up in a rhythm that they would not choose but not knowing how to change. This change may well call for some costly choices, choices not understood or appreciated by those whose goal is solely worldly success. Sometimes our ecclesial communities are not immune from being influenced and overcome by secular attitudes and approaches, just as Judah desired and adopted the idolatrous customs of her neighbours (2:6). Our situations are varied and different. For each one the way forward will be particular and concrete, but none of us can afford to miss out on being vigilant about taking regular daily time to be alone with God in prayer. Even here, the emphasis is not on “doing”, “saying prayers” or “meditating on scripture”, good as these are, but on simply being with God, in God’s presence. Without this daily intentional encounter, this coming-back-to-the-centre, this loving recognition of dependence, we shall quickly become idolatrous in our actions and attitudes, often without realizing it. In terms of peace and justice, peace can perhaps only truly be ours,

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both personally and universally, when God is given God's true place, when God is the first Recipient of our justice.

Isaiah also tells us that if we do not keep close to God, we shall not act according to God's commandments. The Curé d'Ars spoke of prayer: "He looks at me and I look at Him". This "looking" at God by being before God in prayer makes us "like" the one who gazes at us and at whom we gaze. The Orthodox vision of salvation as "*theosis*" tries to express this reality. God's salvation actually transforms us, our being, our attitudes. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit we become "like" God. We share his attitudes to people, things, time, priorities and values. No amount of ascetic struggle or moral determination can effect this, even if we must struggle to live according to Jesus' teaching. We cannot effect the transformation ourselves, but we can place ourselves before God so that God can transform us and, through us, our world. Then we shall gradually become people who do not oppress others, who are not animated by a more or less subtle will to power, status and recognition in the roles we are called to perform, whether in society or in the church, who care for those in need, who have become through grace like the Child. Our personal transformation hastens the world's transformation. Without it, there is no peace and justice to be had, for there will be none in our hearts once those hearts are challenged.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov, a modern Russian saint, thought that the purpose of the Christian life was the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Saint Silouan, another modern Russian saint, said that the sign of a true believer was in the ability to forgive enemies, after the example of Jesus, the Word made flesh, and in the power of the trinitarian love we receive through the gift of the Spirit. Such forgiveness, impossible to human vision and strength, is God's way of being just. It cannot be invoked as a panacea for all resolutions of injustice – for God also punishes or at least purifies his chosen people. However, it can enlarge our horizons when we are thinking about peace and justice.

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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Margaretha M. Hendriks-Ririmasse

Isaiah 11:6-9

6 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. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 9 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.

I would like us to read this text as an urgent call from the divine to restore peace in the world. Our world is sick, suffering under the burdens of violence and terror, human rivalry, selfish ambition, greed and enmity, which alienate people from one another and objectify nature, thus bringing about its current pitiful condition. Human beings can be wilder than beasts: lion and tiger hunt their prey only to satisfy their hunger; men and women can kill for pleasure. This can bring great devastation. Yes, the current condition of the world is like a woman bleeding, a mother groaning in pain (actually, in my culture, the earth is called mother). We as offspring of the earth should be troubled by the cry and hear the call to nurture her back to health. Isaiah's prophetic words then can be read as God's call to the whole of creation to strive towards reconciliation and peace.

The picture of harmony as well as the tranquil sphere of the primeval paradise contained in verses 6-8, is a portrayal of the world transformed in a way befitting God's intention for the universe. There should be no more domination, nor fear of being victimized, when friendship and equal partnership among all living beings is established in the world. The divine imperative must be fulfilled, and it is in this context that I would like to share the following experience.

About two years ago, the Protestant Church in the Moluccas, Indonesia held a programme for pastors of the same church mainly focusing on the theme, "Living and Witnessing in the Pluralistic World". One of the sessions in the programme was an overnight stay for participants in the homes of our Moslem sisters and brothers, with the objective of rebuilding social relationships between the various faith communities which were severely damaged after the traumatic experiences of brutal mass conflict involving Moslem and Christian groups in the region. To many people, it was seen as one of the most undesirable programmes ever drawn up by the church. Such rejection is understandable because the memory of violence relating to the past power contest among the warring groups was still vivid in people's minds. "How could you plan such a programme?" some people asked us. What if the pastors get

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killed in the middle of the night? Or what will happen if they are poisoned? So many “what ifs” were raised by people in the church. Even the pastors themselves were doubtful; many got really scared. But when they came back from the visit, they were totally changed, as though they had gone through a process of metamorphosis. Apparently they enjoyed their stay and the company of their hosts and hostesses so much so that some even agreed to bring their own families to get better acquainted with the newly found friends. The old fear and prejudices disappeared and were replaced by mutual appreciation and kindness. Early this year, a local NGO chaired by a young female Moslem organized a programme of the same nature, this time bringing Moslem youth to spend a night with Christian families. The response from people in general was most encouraging.

For the community of faith, commitment to peace and reconciliation is unavoidable. The God whom we worship is a God of peace, who intends to restore peace to the world. The same God calls us into this ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 8:15).

Of course peace building is never easy to accomplish. Speaking from experience, I have to say that peace building can become difficult, mostly because those involved in power contests are often too reluctant to give up their games, due to greed and lust for money and power. It is common knowledge in various conflict- and war-torn areas that there are certain individuals and parties who accumulate capital and power from the tragedy. The longer the conflict situation prevails, the more intense it becomes, and the greater the gains they make from it. Human beings really can be wilder than beasts in the jungle. But such things must not continue. Change must come about, a drastic and total renewal needs to happen, allowing wolves and lambs to sit side by side, babes to play near poisonous snake and lions to eat straw ... (v. 7), according to Isaiah. But is this possible? In another text, the same prophet speaks about the time that is to come, when people will pound their swords and spears into shovels and rakes, and will study war no more (Isaiah 2:4). It does sound like a strange and impossible dream. But, then as now, dreaming is essential. In a world confronted with so much threat and destruction, a dream for a better world is a necessity. Dreaming is also a sign of being alive. Only those who are able to dream have something worthwhile to offer to their society. Yet dreaming should never remain just a dream; on the contrary, it must be made manifest, against all the odds. However, the question remains, how do we go about realizing the dream?

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From the text we can hear the prophet’s distinct admonition regarding the matter. All things predicted will come into existence, according to Isaiah, only when “the world is full with the knowledge of God ...” (v. 9). We need to notice that the term “knowledge of God” appears more than once in the text: in verse 2 it is used along with “fear of God”; both indicate the conditions required for a just and peaceful society. So the message we hear from Isaiah is convincing; it draws our attention to God, calling people to make God the focus of their attention and life. Nothing is going to be effective if God is left out of the world’s set-up.

The world will come to nothing but devastation and chaos without God. Just as in the story of the Tower of Babel, all human efforts finally come to an end with a big flop because the city is built without and outside God (Genesis 11). Actually the biblical writers use various expressions to say very emphatically that the God factor is the most important element in the make-up of the universe. Look at Isaiah 2:2-5, which says, "... when the mountain of God's temple will be highest among all ...". The prophet is saying again that only when the centrality of God is affirmed, specifically within human society, can peace prevail. The God factor becomes the main prerequisite for real transformation to take place. Yes, any human efforts at all, including those related to peace and reconciliation, will be effective only when people have reached the point of realization and affirmation of God's supreme power over the whole of creation. In short, we can say that one of the most essential points which Isaiah is trying to drive home to us is about the importance of God in creation and that this needs to be restored. This is the main source for change and transformation. For by affirming God's centrality, we are at the same time acknowledging our humanity and limitations. This should prevent us from trying to be like God, for when we have behaved like the builders of Babel it has always caused much ruin and great devastation.

This brings us to the next part of this study. The story of paradise lost is the story of human pride, greed and hunger for power to dominate. In the words used by one of the Genesis writers (the Yahwist) it is indeed the story of human beings exceeding their humanness and trying to become like God. Arrogance and selfish ambition bring them to compete with God for supremacy and total power. Peace is disturbed by human pride as they strive to become like God. In this line of thought, we can say that paradise will be restored only when men and women repent from their self centeredness and become more God centered. Paradise will be recovered when men and women return to their God-given destiny of being humans created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), thus carrying the responsibility of representing God in the world and not striving to become God. For the term "image of God" connotes specifically the ethical responsibility intended for men and women. In other words, being created in the image of God, human beings are called to reflect through their very presence, their work and deeds, the good, just, peaceful, loving and caring nature of God. The loving face of God must be reflected through the life and work of those who are God's image, and who are real men and women. We cannot afford to do otherwise, for forms of injustice, inequality, discrimination, violation of rights and evil practices, which bring sufferings and destruction to others, are contrary to our calling. This defines the basic direction towards the real peace and wellbeing of the whole universe. Being images of God also means carrying the responsibility of forgiving and asking forgiveness where wrongs are committed, and building bridges in the places where relationships are severed.

The call to build peace and reconciliation is the call to repentance, the summons from God that we may be true once again to our destiny of being images of God in the world and to work it out in real life.

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THE NEW HOUSEHOLD OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Gerald West

Matthew 5: 43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."
44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

In the ongoing struggle against HIV and AIDS, as well as in the related struggle to eradicate violence against women and children, the Christian household has become a key site. Faithful married Christian women are at risk from both domestic violence and HIV. Clearly something is wrong in our households. How can our households become places of mutual respect, mutual care and tenderness, mutual compassion – places of peace?

The recent International AIDS Conference in Mexico has confirmed what we feared, that South Africa is indeed the epicentre of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The conference has also confirmed that the bio-medical experts are pessimistic about a vaccine or any other medical breakthrough in the foreseeable future. The emphasis has shifted to the social sciences, including religion and theology. Our struggle to change the virus is a long-term one; so in the meantime we must concentrate on changing behaviour. And the behaviour that needs changing most urgently is the behaviour of men.

Concern about the behaviour of men is not new, but recently there has been an increasing openness among men themselves to consider alternative forms of masculinity. Many of our modes of being men are dominating, damaging and dangerous. But there seems to be some space at the moment, in South Africa and elsewhere in southern Africa, to appropriate redemptive masculinities.

This interest in and openness to alternative masculinities has been taken up by the social sciences, with many articles and books on the subject. There is even an emerging field within biblical studies on biblical masculinities. This work has included some insightful reflections on the masculinity of Jesus as it is portrayed by the different gospel writers.

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For example: What kind of man is Jesus, according to Matthew? We gain some insight into this question in the passage that is the focus of our meditation. Matthew 5:43-48 is part of a larger literary unit, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:1 we read that Jesus “went up the mountain” in order to gain some respite from the crowds that followed him (4:23-5:1). While on the mountain Jesus addresses his disciples in a lengthy series of teachings. He does not come down from the mountain until 8:1. As we read through the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes clear that Jesus is speaking primarily to his disciples but that he is also being heard by the crowd (7:28-29).

Here Matthew presents us with the picture of a typical first century Palestinian male; or so it seems! One of the defining characteristics of the ideal male in the Mediterranean world of that time was that he should occupy public space, preferably among other non-kinship males. Another key feature of the ideal male was that he was expected to lead and take command; he was expected to be the master of others and of himself. So when Matthew describes Jesus surrounded by his disciples (all of whom, according to Matthew, are non-kin males), teaching them, he is describing Jesus in terms of the cultural expectations about males. Matthew reinforces the public role of Jesus repeatedly, making it clear that from the beginning Jesus “taught in their synagogues and preached the gospel of the kingdom” (4:23).

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Furthermore, another defining characteristic of the ideal first century male was that he should generate heirs (preferably male heirs) and found a household (in which he would have control of kinship males, females and slaves). The prelude to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 4:18-25, makes it clear that Jesus has plenty of male followers and that he has constituted a form of household, “the kingdom of God”.

However, while Matthew does represent Jesus as an ideal male in these important respects, he also undermines and subverts traditional notions of masculinity. The genealogy of Jesus, for example, consists of both noble and ignoble ancestors, including women like Tamar, Rahab and Ruth. It is also clear that Jesus is unmarried and that he does not take up the domestic responsibilities of an ideal male. In fact, Matthew never describes Jesus in the private world of kin and household, and progeny of Jesus are not biological but spiritual. Matthew’s Jesus resists and rejects traditional biological ties, privileging instead his spiritual ties with those outside his biological family.

Similarly, though Jesus is the ideal male, leading and teaching a band of non-kinship males, what he teaches subverts traditional male values. The Sermon on the Mount is, indeed, a radical reformulation of traditional male norms and values. Jesus discredits conventional honour-gaining and honour-maintaining behaviour. The beatitudes in 5:3-11 turn conventional notions of masculinity upside-down: “Blessed are the poor in spirit ...” Crucially, males in public were expected to behave in masculine ways: with boldness, aggressiveness, eager to defend and advance their families’ interests. Jesus counters, however, saying, “You have heard that it was said ..., but I say to you ...” (5:21, 27, 33, 43).

The section of the Sermon on the Mount which is the focus of our meditation, Matthew 5:43-48, is located within this set of sayings. Jesus is contrasting what the received wisdom and tradition says with what defines the new community of God’s people. Speaking to males, predominantly, Jesus challenges their categories and values. While traditional males love other males like them, who are bound by the same code of honour as they are, they hate the enemy that threatens their control and mastery over their households. Jesus counters, arguing for a new conception of family and community, one in which spiritual relationships of solidarity and mutual care supersede biological bonds. The only father in this new community is God, and God intends that all eventually enter into this new community, even those who persecute the emerging community and even the unrighteous. Jesus is here delineating the shape of a community not structured by biological and ethnic bonds, but by radically egalitarian spiritual relationships. In this community the unrighteous, the tax-collectors, those who are non-kin and even the Gentiles are welcome. The “perfect” male, Jesus is arguing, is therefore quite different from the traditional understanding of the ideal male, for the “perfect” male sees things and participates in life from God’s perspective, for God is the Father of the new household of God’s people, no matter who they are.

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THE MEANING OF PEACE

A Reflection from Palestine and Israel SABEEL

John 14:25-31

25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 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. 28 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; 31 but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way."

In this passage from the gospel of John, Jesus is preparing his disciples for what is about to come: his own death. He is giving them words of assurance, and one of the promises he makes is the promise of peace. What is this peace that Jesus promises?

It is apparent that the peace to which he refers is not something that is present in the world. It certainly wasn't present in the world of Jesus' time which lived under the oppression of the power of Rome. And it isn't present 2000 years later, when this part of the world is under the domination of American/Israeli military power. There must be something more to the promise that Jesus makes.

In this land of Palestine and Israel, we witness a steadfastness (*sumoud*) that enables people to maintain their faith even as they experience forty-one years of oppression. This steadfastness has the look of peace. We see it in the action of a child who plays in the dirt at the checkpoint and who does not notice the soldier with the gun because of the love in the eyes of her mother. We see it in the families that celebrate weddings with joy even though many of the party have to leave part way through the festivities because their permits have expired, and others are missed who were never granted the permit to come. We see it in our churches that gather to pray even as our numbers dwindle due to Christians emigrating because of the Occupation. Our faith is strengthened by our people's witness, and we try to imagine this same steadfastness lived in a land that is free from the stranglehold of oppression. Would this be the peace that Jesus speaks of?

In the scripture, Jesus links this peace with "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." We know from experience that anxiety and fear are counter to peace. This is so whether we talk about "inner" peace (peace with God or self) or "outer" peace (peace

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that is lived in relationship with others and with the world). But our worlds, both inner and outer, are filled with fears. In fact, we might argue that decisions being made in our world today are motivated by fear. How then do we distance ourselves from this prevailing climate of fear in order to experience the peace that Jesus gives?

Catholic theologian Thomas Merton, said: "Where there is a deep, simple, all-embracing love of man, of the created world of living and inanimate things, then there will be respect for life, for freedom, for truth, for justice and there will be humble love of God. ... As long as you see your fellowman as a being essentially to be feared, mistrusted, hated and destroyed there cannot be peace on earth."

This peace that Jesus gives us may not always look like our accepted concept of peace. It involves the shaking up of social structures and disturbing the peace in the pursuit of justice, all being necessary to move Christians closer to right relationships with others and with God.

We see this peace that challenges us to join in the quest for justice here in Palestine and Israel. We see it in the young people in Bi'llin who every Friday for three years have protested the wall cutting into their land by holding a nonviolent march. We see it in the Palestinian political prisoners who stage hunger strikes for their basic right to a fair trial. We see it in the daily confrontation with authority that young and old Palestinians alike perform at Israeli checkpoints where they have to insist on their basic rights to visit their families, friends and places of work. This peace can be difficult to understand for the world outside. People asking for their rights under international law are often portrayed as the obstacles to peace, rather than an essential part of the journey towards peace with justice.

As Christians we begin this journey to peace by acting from a deep conviction about who we are, beloved children of God, human beings called to love and serve other human beings. For peace with justice, we must look at the world with eyes that seek the radical peace of Jesus and not just the simple peace that is an absence of conflict. From this awareness we can learn to make peace with those around us and with others throughout the world, and thus become true instruments of God's own peace.

God of mercy and compassion,
Of grace and reconciliation,
Pour your power upon all your children in the Middle East.
Let hatred be turned into love, fear to trust,
Despair to hope, oppression to freedom,
Occupation to liberation,
That violent encounters may be replaced by loving embraces,
And peace and justice could be experienced by all. Amen

Said Ailabouni

IMAGINE:
PEACE

WHEN THE DIVINE FRAGRANCE IS EVERYWHERE

Elsa Tamez

Ephesians 2:14-22

14 For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. 15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, 16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. 17 So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; 18 for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Smell is one of our five senses. Like the other senses we humans have, it involves our minds, our bodies and our emotions. When you smell something, you discover something. At the same time, you feel something. On the one hand, you perceive with your mind what it is that you are smelling. On the other hand, as the smell enters your body through your nose, there arise feelings of pleasure and delight or of disgust and revulsion. When you smell something, it can lead you to take action – to run away or to look for it – or simply to be grateful that you are alive. If you smell something unpleasant, you move away or attempt to remove its source. If it is your sister who is smelly, it moves you to weep and hug her, and you put up with the bad smell! And, if you smell something that is highly pleasing, then you go towards it and all your senses become alert. You want to see what is giving off the smell and enjoy it. You want to touch it. In other words, we feel that we are alive and we thank God for it.

IMAGINE:
PEACE

This happens with everyday things, like freshly baked bread or a perfume. But, when we feel the fragrance of God everywhere, that is something much deeper and mysterious. It is an experience of transcendence in the whole cosmos, from the smallest particle to the most imposing; in all earthly bodies, also in heavenly bodies, like the stars, and even in the Church of Christ, which is Christ's heavenly and earthly body. Experiencing transcendence in our world is experiencing that God is everywhere, as it were, giving off a very particular



IMAGINE:
PEACE

smell. In fact God can give off a disagreeable odour. Our present-day world often gives off this divine stench – in war, torture, rape, child abuse, joblessness and polluted rivers – which shows that the crucified God dwells there in solidarity. That despicable stench warns us that transcendence, the divine glory reflected in God's creatures, has not been respected. But that is not the sort of smell that we want to smell.

I like to think of peace in our world and in our homes as the petals of a flower giving off a divine fragrance. It is a fragrance that leads us to discern God's presence in all things, whether created by God or by humans. That could be the end of all human violence against other humans and against nature because, just as I cannot catch and hold in my hands that fragrance and keep it as my own possession, so I cannot dominate other human beings or whole peoples. They have a divine fragrance that restrains me. It is a fragrance of peace and reconciliation because we respect that divine fragrance in others.

The letter to the Ephesians suggests that the whole cosmos is God's dwelling, a holy temple, like a well-constructed building with sound foundations. It calls it "Church" but, because that word has nowadays taken on a narrow meaning, I would call it "the cosmic community" in which there is room for a diversity of spiritualities. In this community, everyone and everything is alive "in Christ", which is a deep recurring image in Ephesians. That is a way of saying that everyone and everything is breathing in God and is taking in the divine fragrance, because we live within that divine atmosphere. For Christians, Jesus Christ is "God with us", the human face of transcendence. According to Ephesians 2:20, the human face of God is the cornerstone of this dwelling of God. This cornerstone in the building of the cosmic community is a constant reminder that he himself is peace, makes peace and proclaims it as good news (Eph. 2:14,15,17). He has the authority to do so, because in his own flesh he has experienced violence, torture and betrayal, in undergoing crucifixion under the Pax Romana -a type of military peace that believes that it is by killing bad people that peace will be achieved. Military peace is a peace without justice, a peace where people do not embrace one another. By contrast, he who is "God with us", who is an embodiment of peace, gives off a fragrance of peace, where no one is killed, raped, dominated or excluded. That is a peace built, not by driving back those who are scaling the walls, but by dismantling the walls of hostility. It is a peace that is not built by erecting walls to keep immigrants out or to repel armies. Such walls lead only to hatred, exclusion, fear, murder and greed.

Ephesians 2:20 also says that the ancestors of this cosmic community, the apostles and prophets who followed this divine scent, also form the foundation of this universal community. These pioneers of the community remind us of the calling for which we have been created: to live simply as human beings, as a family of God in relationship with one another as brothers and sisters, together with sister moon and brother sun. The footprints of our ancestors, the builders of our community, point the way ahead.

IMAGINE:
PEACE



I can imagine peace lived in a cosmic community, where everyone has their own space, from snotty children to incontinent old people. Everyone, every thing is respected, because all have a divine fragrance.

In this cosmic community, this holy temple, this dwelling place of God, there are no weapons, not even toy guns. The nightmare of war and hijackings is left behind, buried beneath the debris of the walls of separation (Eph. 2:14). There is no violence, because true peace provides food, work and dignity. There is no longer any discrimination, because there are no longer people who are far away or people who are near (Eph. 2:13). None is chosen and none is left behind. All peoples are living in the lap of God and God's heartbeat is peace and reconciliation. Those who were far away have not been assimilated to those who were near, and those who were near have not held on to their privileges over the others. Everyone forms this new cosmic community, blessed with its diversity of languages, cultures and ways of giving glory to the creator God.

So I can imagine peace without people being assimilated or excluded, or some dominating others. That is because the fragrance of God in others restrains our urge to put the knife in and make others submit. In this new human community people live peaceably in diversity and have left behind the devices for becoming rich at the cost of the poor and preferring those who are white and fair-skinned to those who are coffee-coloured and black. Oh yes, and it occurs to no one to feed machines instead of living beings, because this new multicultural community is intelligent and lives by the wisdom of God.

That is the sort of peace I can imagine. I see it in the letter to Ephesians as a promise that I want to believe to be possible. It gives me strength not to be afraid of the hidden forces of the "principalities and powers" (Eph. 6:12), those forces that are invisible but still hit us hard – the invisible hand that makes the currency of a country rise and fall, that makes the price of petroleum continually rise, and that makes basic foodstuffs suddenly become unobtainable. I can believe this because God, according to Ephesians, has brought "all things in heaven and on earth together" under the Crucified One (Eph. 1:10), who has risen from death out of love for humankind. I am moved by the hope that, just as the Crucified One was raised from death and exalted far above the invisible powers (Eph. 1:20), so we too have been raised from death to the same place (Eph. 2:10). I thus believe that we are all in some way "God with us", because we can breathe in the fragrance of God everywhere and can ourselves give off that fragrance of God.

Now, of course, when I open my eyes and look out on our surrounding world, I realize that what I have just said is simply a prayer, a cry to God by God's Spirit within me, like the cry of the earth groaning like a woman in childbirth (Romans 8:22).

IMAGINE:
PEACE

THE NEW JERUSALEM

Graciela Chamorro

Revelation 21:10-27

10 And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. 18 The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass. 22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 People will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The text of Revelation 21:10-27 answers the question of what life will be like in the new world through a number of symbols, which I would like to meditate upon with you.

The New Jerusalem. The new world is identified as a city, in verse 10. It is a city that comes down from heaven, unlike Babel, the city that rose from earth towards heaven. This city coming down from heaven is a symbol of community, of an organized nation, of restored social relations. The New Jerusalem is a metaphor for humanity and nature that have been redeemed. It is the point at which heaven and earth kiss: transcendence is not distant, but here in history, on earth. But what is the New Jerusalem like?

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It is a city of light. But it is not the Paris beloved of tourists. Nor is it any other city with ultra-bright Christmas illuminations in order to boost sales. The New Jerusalem is, in verse 11, a place flooded with radiance like that of crystal-clear jasper, God's presence, which is itself light. God's glory is the light illuminating everything, revealing everything, in verses 23 to 25. The precious stones that are the foundation and decoration of the city walls, in verses 18 to 20, are symbols of light: they reflect the divine light.

Is it a walled city? Yes, but the city wall is transparent! We can see that it reflects the divine light. It connects the city with the outside. The repetition of the number twelve in the description of the wall is no coincidence. The number twelve appears six times: twelve angels, twelve gates, twelve names of the twelve sons, twelve names of the twelve apostles, twelve types of precious stones, twelve pearls. The number twelve here symbolizes the fullness, totality and maturity of God's plan: the New Jerusalem. The twelve names of the twelve sons of Jacob, who gave rise to the twelve tribes of Israel, represent God's people according to the self-understanding of the Jews, who at a particular moment in their history started to see themselves as God's only people. The twelve names of the twelve apostles here represent God's people restored after the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is God's people in an inclusive sense. In verse 13, the twelve gates – three at each of the cardinal points – here suggest a city where all peoples are welcome. Many openings in a structure are generally a sign of vulnerability. Here the openings stand as a symbol of the security based on peoples' "freedom to come and go". These are not, then, the "walls" built by the European Union, the United States, Israel and other countries to protect themselves from poor migrants, political asylum seekers and others of no economic interest.

It is a city without symbols of power. This is what we can deduce from the materials used in its construction. Among them gold stands out. It is a working tool (v. 15). The city is made of pure gold. The people walk on gold. Thus, gold loses its added, bartering, trading, iconic value. It is taken out of the strong rooms of the banks and stately homes. It becomes a public good, useful and beautiful for those living in the New Jerusalem. It is no longer an object of display with destructive power. The Americas would not have been invaded, nor their people forced into submission for the sake of this gold. The same can be said of the precious stones and the pearls. Supplying light and beauty to the whole city, the twelve types of precious stones – jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth and amethyst – and the twelve pearls are even more precious. And the nations of Africa – I am thinking of Sierra Leone and Congo – will no longer be disfigured for their precious stones. The European buyers will no longer have a reason for it. Their businesses will be permanently ruined.

IMAGINE:
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It is a perfect city. Again this stems from the tradition of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. The width of twelve thousand stadia and the same length are exaggerated dimensions with no architectural or engineering significance. The measurements are a symbolic statement of the perfection of the city, and the numbers 12 and 144 show that it embraces the old and the new.

It is a city without a sanctuary: God is its sanctuary!

The new city is the dwelling of God. God no longer lives in heaven or in a sanctuary. God is the Tabernacle in which all live. For one sector of Jewish thinking, this is a great crisis! The New Jerusalem without a temple? For humanity as a whole, this frees it from any exclusiveness. The temple was a symbol of differences, conflicts and separations between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, priests and laypeople, holy and profane, etc. Now God fills and illumines the world with God's radiant countenance, brighter than sun and moon! All human beings and the whole of the new creation are drawn to the heart of God. Conversely, the new city is populated by those who turn to God and live in God, those who acknowledge God as their God.

Outside the City. Whoever does not turn towards God will not enter the New Jerusalem (v. 27). Seven examples are given, which can be summed up as "everyone who loves and practices falsehood". For them, eternal destruction awaits.

This vision gave the early Christian communities hope to resist the persecution and cruel oppression of the Roman Empire. The vision gave them courage to have greater belief in the power of the risen Jesus than in the powers of the Empire. May this vision also light our path today, as we pray for peace, knowing that it is based on justice. Amen.

Based on: RICHARD, Paulo. *Die Apokalypse. Das Buch von Hoffnung und Widerstand* [Revelation: the book of hope and resistance], Lucerne, Exodus, 1996.





First Sunday in Advent

VISUALIZING PEACE

Resources for the service:

- ★ a star with a tail
- ★ strips of coloured cloth
- ★ traditional Advent decorations
- ★ a purple cloth
- ★ recorded noises

In preparation:

- ★ This is the first of a series of four liturgies prepared to celebrate Advent, focusing on the idea of peace. Advent means preparing the way for the arrival of the Prince of Peace. This first service deals with the situation of violence prevailing in our world. Therefore the service starts unexpectedly with a situation of violence, and the layout of the worship area and the form of the service are not what people would have expected for this season.
- ★ The layout should not include any traditional Advent decorations.
- ★ Strips of coloured cloth should be provided for each participant, for them to be blindfolded while the introduction is being read. Alternatively, participants could be asked simply to close their eyes and be given a ribbon. Later, those same strips of cloth or ribbons will be used to form a symbolic star with its tail forming the colours of the rainbow.
- ★ We suggest that the Bible be wrapped in a purple cloth, which is the liturgical colour for Advent, and placed on a table at the front. The Bible will be uncovered when the gospel is read.
- ★ A recording should be made of sounds indicating distress, such as car horns, screams, weapons, voices reading news chaotically, children crying, voices of people all speaking at once.
- ★ Psalm 62 is to be read with the words jumbled so as to create a sense of confusion.

Footnote:

Latin American Psalm for Peace, adapted from "Ver la realidad, oír la esperanza", Bishops' Consultative Group for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1993.

GATHERING

Latin American Psalm

The feet of the people of the world today tread the asphalt of the city's violent streets,
but the hearts of the humble are stronger than cannons and bombs.

Peace for human beings will not come from outside,
neither will it be built by means of nuclear weapons,
nor will it come by agreements between governments.

Peace is present in the heart of the universe
and everything is moving towards peace.

It will come as a new dawn to this abused and weary world.
It will come from the simple, the humble and the poor of the earth.
It will be announced by the voices of children,
and the stirring music of the young.

(Prelude: recorded sounds indicating distress)

Psalm 62

(to be read with words jumbled so as to create a sense of confusion)

- v. 1 Salvation for my God comes soul him waits from in silence.
- v. 2 Shaken he be alone is never my shall rock I and fortress my salvation.
- v. 5 Him for God from alone is hope in for my silence.
- v. 10 Them put on heart confidence no your confidence extortion in on and robbery set
 hopes vain riches if set increase.
- v. 12 Work and their steadfast to according love belongs all to to repay you o you Lord.

Silence

The Child of Peace is coming to be born.
But into what sort of a world are we welcoming him?
We have made this world a violent world.
Today we confess, before the Lord,
how we have contributed to this situation,
as individuals, as a community of faith, and as a society.

IMAGINE:
PEACE

★ **Song: El mundo pide paz** *(All people long for peace)*

(While it is being sung, participants, as they feel ready, start uncovering their eyes or are asked to open their eyes. Once they have done so, they are invited to share, in only one word, how they felt at being blindfolded or having their eyes closed at the beginning of the service. After a while they are invited to share in a prayer of confession.)

Litany of confession: From the darkness of violence into the light of your peace

**Here I am, Lord, laying my life before you,
confessing my faults, whispering my sins to you.**

Because I do not accept the peace you give me and I cherish violent thoughts:

Voice 1: I find it difficult to forgive others.

Voice 2: If I am offended, I offend in return.

Voice 3: Sharing is a word that does not exist in my vocabulary.

Voice 4: I sow weeds instead of good seeds.

Voice 5: I fold my arms, but I know that I could use my hands to build justice.

Today, I pray, be merciful to me.

Give me strength and courage

to walk from the darkness of violence into the light of your peace.

**Here we are, Lord, laying our lives before you,
confessing our faults, whispering our sins to you.**

**Because we do not understand the peace you offer us, and we build up
structures of violence:**

Voice 1: We accept social and political systems that oppress the weakest.

Voice 2: We respond to violence with more violence.

Voice 3: We find it hard to commit ourselves to changing this distressing situation.

Voice 4: We promote violence as a form of entertainment.

Voice 5: We remain silent in face of injustice.

Today, we pray, be merciful to our society.

Give us strength and courage

to walk from the darkness of violence into the light of your peace.

**Here we are, Lord, as churches, laying our lives before you,
confessing our faults, whispering our sins to you.**

Because we do not practice the peace you offer us:

Voice 1: We use your Word to justify attitudes that produce violence.

Voice 2: We misuse the power of the church.

IMAGINE:
PEACE

Voice 3: We do not accept diversity and we exclude others.

Voice 4: We keep the oppressed at a distance and receive oppressors with open arms.

Voice 5: As Christians, we claim to have the absolute truth.

Today, we pray, be merciful to the Church.

Give us strength and courage

to walk from the darkness of violence into the light of your peace.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

★ **Song: En Cristo hay nueva vida** (*In Christ there is new living*)

(As it is sung, the items to decorate the worship area are brought in by a group of children. Churches are invited to use their traditional Advent decorations. Also, a place is prepared for the star that will be a symbol of peace.)

★ **Song: Aleluya entre tu pueblo** (*Alleluia all you saints*)

(During the singing the Bible is uncovered.)

Gospel reading

Mathew 5: 38-48

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Sermon: "You have heard that it was said"

IMAGINE:
PEACE

*(You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy
Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you
An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth
Do not resist an evildoer, share your belongings, do more than what is asked, share without expecting anything in return
Because God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous)*

★ **Song: Venga tu reino** *(Your kingdom come)*

Offering

DISMISSAL

(As a symbol of peace, participants exchange the coloured strips of cloth or ribbons with one another, wishing one another peace. The action can be accompanied with appropriate words, such as: May the peace of the Lord take you from sadness to happiness, from pain to comfort, from oppression to freedom, from illness to health, from unemployment to work, from offence to forgiveness... Afterwards each participant will place their strip of cloth or ribbon on the tail of the star. While this is being done, a well known song is played on the theme of "Seeking the star".)

Blessing

And now, people of the church, we go,
encouraged by the presence of the Lord,
inspired by God's Word,
strengthened by the lives of our brothers and sisters,
visualizing signs of peace.

You are invited, during the coming week, to look at the world around you and identify some such signs of peace.

Amen.

★ **Song: Gloria en lo alto a Dios** *(Glory be to God on high)*

IMAGINE:
PEACE

El mundo pide paz (All people long for peace)

Adagio

Dm F



¡El mun - do pi - de paz, el mun - do pi - de luz, el
All peo - ple long for peace, all peo - ple long for light, all

Gm 1. A 2. A



mun - do pi - de a - mor, oh Dios! _____ ¡El Dios! _____
peo - ple long for love, O God! _____ All God! _____

Dm C



_____ ¡Es - cu - cha el cla - mor _____ de tu
O Lord, _____ hear your peo - ple as

B♭ 1. A 2. A



pue - blo, Se - ñor! _____ ¡Es - ñor! _____
they _____ cry to you! _____ O you! _____

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IMAGINE:
PEACE

En Cristo hay nueva vida (*In Christ there is new living*)

Allegro
*Ritmo de Son

En Cris - to hay nue - va vi - da, en Cris - to hay per -
In Christ there is new liv - ing, in Christ there is for - giv -

dón. ing. En Cris - to hay es - pe - ran - za,
In Christ there is new hop - ing,

1. B7 E en Cris - to ha - lla - mos paz.
in Christ we find our peace.

2. B7 E en Cris - to ha - lla - mos paz.
in Christ we find our peace.

* Son is a Cuban rhythm.

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IMAGINE:
PEACE

Song: Aleluya entre tu pueblo (*Alleluia all you saints*)

Allegro

1. A B E 2. A B E *Fine*

Le ro le, le ro lay, ¡A - le - lu - ya! ¡A - le - lu - ya!
 Le ro le, le ro lay, Al - le - lu - ia! A - le - lu - ia!

A E B⁷ E

A - le - lu - ya en los cie - los, a - le - lu - ya en - tre tu pue - blo.
 Al - le - lu - ia in the heav - ens, al - le - lu - ia, all you saints.

A E B⁷ E B⁷ *DC al Fine*

Glo - ria a Dios en las al - tu - ras y en la tie - rra paz. ¡A - le - lu - ya!
 Glo - ry be to God in hea - ven, peace to all on earth. Al - le - lu - ia!

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Song: Venga tu reino (*Your kingdom come*)

Moderato

D A/C[#] Bm⁷ Bm⁷/A G

Ven - ga tu rei - no, há - ga - se tu vo - lum - tad
 Your king - dom come, your will be done on earth,

A A^{#dim} Bm⁷ A

a - si en la tie - rra co - mo en el cie - lo!
 your will be done on earth as in heav - en!

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Song: Gloria en lo alto a Dios (*Glory be to God on high*)

Moderato

D A/C# Bm Am D7 G F#o7 B7

Un ca - mi - no se a - bre ha - cia la luz a - nun - cia vi - da y sue - ña li - ber -
A new way has o - pened toward the light an - nounc - ing life and dreams of li - ber -

Em Em/D A/C# A7 D A/C# Bm E4sus E7

tad, ges - tan - do un tiem - po de jus - ti - cia y paz, un pue - blo u - ni - do ce - le -
ty, and birth - ing times of jus - tice and of peace, when God's own peo - ple feast in

A A/C# D A/C# Bm Am D7 G F#o7 B7

bran - do va. Ho - ri - zon - te de ar - mo - ni - a y fe, un rum - bo cla - ro ha - cia la ple - ni -
un - i - ty. Vis - tas shine with har - mo - ny and faith, and there is plen - i - tude in ev - ery

Em Em/D A/C# A D A/C# Bm E7 A7 D7

tud bus - can - do fuer - za en la co - mu - ni - dad, Des - te - llos so - mos de tu luz.
place which finds its strength in the com - mu - ni - ty. We are the spar - kles of your light.

G A/G F#m Bm Em A7 D D7

¡Glo - ria en lo al - to a Dios y en la tie - rra vi - da nue - va y paz!
Glo - ry be to God on high and on earth new life and last - ing peace!

G A/G F#m Bm Em A7 D

¡Glo - ria en lo al - to a Dios y en la tie - rra vi - da nue - va y paz!
Glo - ry be to God on high and on earth new life and last - ing peace!



GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH

Note:

This liturgy for the second Sunday in Advent follows on from the order for the first Sunday.

Resources for the service:

- ★ Attach the rainbow and the star from the first Sunday to the wall as a background.
- ★ A path is laid out, drawn out on paper or made up of cloth, and along it stones are placed forming obstacles. During "Assurance and a symbolic gesture of peace", the stones are rearranged tidily along the edge of the path. The path should lead up to a point just beneath the star.

IMAGINE:
PEACE



Prelude

(Any vocal or instrumental music, preferably one on the theme of following a path.)

Welcome

Welcome to this second Sunday in Advent when we celebrate one more step along the way to peace. How many of you have done what you were asked to do last Sunday? Have you identified any signs of peace in the course of this past week? During our service we shall be sharing our discoveries and we will reflect on the obstacles which no doubt you have found along the way to peace.

The Lord invites us today to journey towards peace. God calls us to celebrate God's kingdom of peace which is among us.

Invocation

We rejoice at the presence of the God who journeys with us,
who does not forget God's people,
who has sent Jesus Christ, God's Son, to give us peace,
and has given us the certainty that the Spirit of Jesus is among us.

★ **Song: En camino sigamos** *(On a journey we're going)*

Confession

On our journey we inevitably come up against obstacles. The road is not always smooth. The surface is uneven, there are potholes and rocks like those we find on country roads. It is the same on our journey towards peace.

Let us reflect for a moment and ask ourselves
what are the obstacles that stand in the way of peace
in ourselves?
in our families?
in our community?
in the world?

Silence

IMAGINE:
PEACE

Assurance and a symbolic gesture of peace

Let us remember the words of Jesus, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

Moved by the Holy Spirit let us turn these stones that stand in the way of life into living stones that help us to build peace.

(Participants are invited to take a stone and place it along the edge of the path laid out on the floor. They are helped by someone standing by the path. As they do so, they are invited to sing. They then share the peace with one another.)

★ **Song: La paz de Dios sea contigo** *(The peace of God be always with you)*

Gospel reading

★ **Song: Aleluya** *(Alleluia)*

John 14: 25-31

I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 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. You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

★ **Song: Aleluya** *(Alleluia)*

Sermon

Prayers of intercession

★ **Song: Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo** *(O God replenish your peace in the midst of all your people)*

Lord, we pray for
Peace for those who weep in silence

IMAGINE:
PEACE

Peace for those who cannot speak
Peace when all hope seems to disappear.

★ **Song: Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo** *(O God replenish your peace in the midst of all your people)*

In the midst of rage, of violence and disappointment,
In the midst of wars and destruction of the earth,
Lord, show us your light in the darkness.

★ **Song: Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo** *(O God replenish your peace in the midst of all your people)*

Lord, we pray for
Peace for those who raise their voices to demand it,
Peace when there are many who do not wish to hear of it,
Peace as we find the way to justice.

★ **Song: Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo** *(O God replenish your peace in the midst of all your people)*

Offering

★ **Song: Nuestra ofrenda** *(Our offering)*

Blessing and dismissal

Let us go with Jesus, the light who guides us on our way.
May our hope be that the Sun of Justice will rise one morning on all humankind.
May the God of Peace, our constant companion,
lead us along paths of solidarity and hope,
and give us the joy of being united in God's love.
Amen.

★ **Song: Envío** *(Sending)*

IMAGINE:
PEACE

En camino sigamos (*On a journey we're going*)

Allegro

A

En ca - mi - no, en ca - mi - no si - ga - mos, a en - con -
On a jour - ney, on a jour - ney we're go - ing, lit - tle

A Bm

trar - nos con el ni - ño Je - sús, en ca -
Je - sus is the one we will meet, on a

mi - no, en ca - mi - no si - ga - mos, con la es -
jour - ney, on a jour - ney we're go - ing, we'll be

E A

tre - lla que nos brin - da su luz, En ca -
guid - ed by the light of a star, On a

A

mi - no, en ca - mi - no si - ga - mos al en -
jour - ney, on a jour - ney we're go - ing to be

A⁷ D

cuen - tro del a - mor y ver - dad, Glo - ria
streng - thened by God's love and God's truth, Glo - ry

D E/D C[#]m F[#]m

Dios en las al - tu - ras y en la tie - rra,
be to God in hea - ven and on earth

Bm E Em A⁷ D E/D

glo - ria y paz! Glo - ria a Dios en las al - tu - ras
glo - ry and peace! Glo - ry be to God in hea - ven

C#m F#m Bm E A

y en la tie - rra, glo - ria y paz!
and on earth glo - ry and peace!

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La paz de Dios sea contigo (*The peace of God be always with you*)

E A B⁷ E

La paz de Dios se - a con - ti - go, que - ri - do a - mi - go, se - a con - ti - go.
The peace of God be al - ways with you, be - lov - ed broth - er, God's peace go with you.

E A B⁷ E

Con es - te a - bra - zo nos u - ni - mos, que - ri - da a - mi - ga, en el ca - mi - no.
With this em - brace we are u - nit - ed, be - lov - ed sis - ter, while on the jour - ney

E⁷ A E B⁷ E

Ha - cia la paz y la ver - dad, ha - cia el a - mor y la a - mis - tad.
And may your jour - ney bring you peace, may truth and love at - tend your way,

E⁷ A E B⁷ E

Ha - cia la paz y la ver - dad, ha - cia el a - mor y la a - mis - tad.
and may you find some bless - ed friends to walk be - side you ev - ery day.

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Aleluya (Alleluja)

Moderato

A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya. A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya.

A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya. A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya.

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Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo (O God replenish your peace in the midst of all your people)

Andante

Se - ñor re - nue - va tu paz _____ en me - dio de tu
O God re - plen - ish your peace _____ in the midst of all your

pue - blo. _____ Se - ñor re - nue - va tu paz _____ en
peo - ple. _____ O God re - plen - ish your peace _____ in the

me - dio de tu pue - blo. _____ A - mén. _____
midst of all your peo - ple. _____ A - men. _____

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Nuestra ofrenda (Our offering)

Andante



1. Que nues - tra o - fren - da se - a u - na a - la -
2. Que nues - tra vi - da se - a co - mo u - na o -
1. May ev - ery gift we of - fer be live - ly
2. We hope the lives we of - fer will be a



ban - za vi - va a ti, Se - ñor. Co - mo un
fren - da bue - na en tu al - tar. Co - mo a
praise to you, our e - ter - nal God. As
gift most pre - cious to you, O God. Like a



can - to nue - vo de a - do - ra - ción, que - re - mos en - tre - gar -
ro - ma sua - ve de pu - ra a - mor, que - re - mos en - tre - gar -
song of ad - o - ra - tion to you, we give it un - to you
gen - tle, pure a - ro - ma of love, we give our - selves to you



la, que - re - mos en - tre - gar - la,
nos, que - re - mos en - tre - gar - nos,
now, we give it un - to you now,
now, we give our - selves to you now.



¡Re - ci - be nues - tra o - fren - da, Se - ñor!
¡Re - ci - be nues - tra o - fren - da, Se - ñor!
Re - ceive the gifts we of - fer, O God!
Re - ceive the gifts we of - fer, O God!

Envío (Sending)

Moderato



1. El que vi - no con la paz,____ ¡el Sal - va - dor!____
 2. El que vi - no con la paz,____ ¡el Sal - va - dor!____
 1. He who came to us with peace,____ the Sav - ior!____
 2. He who came to us with peace,____ the Sav - ior!____



Nos en - vi - a a las ca - lles, a las flo - res, al do - lor.____
 Nos en - vi - a a las ca - lles, al si - len - cio y li - ber - tad.____
 sends us now in - to the streets,____ to the flow - ers and the pain____
 sends us now in - to the streets,____ to keep si - lent and to speak,____



Nos en - vi - a a las ca - lles, sus o - lo - res, su sa - bor.____
 Nos en - vi - a a las ca - lles, a - nun - cian - do su ver - dad.____
 sends us now in - to the streets,____ to their smell and to their taste.____
 sends us now in - to the streets,____ to an - nounce true lib - er - ty.____

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IMAGINE:
PEACE



IMAGINE:
PEACE



Third Sunday in Advent

GIVING BIRTH TO PEACE

Resources for the service:

- ★ a blanket
- ★ a light (a candle or a lamp)
- ★ sheets of paper
- ★ pens
- ★ an empty manger

In preparation:

- ★ The worship area should be dimly lit, with the manger at the front just beneath the star.
- ★ It is the third Sunday of preparation to welcome the Prince of Peace. We long for his presence in the midst of this violence-ridden world. The path has been cleared of those situations preventing the coming of peace and the star continues to guide us on the path to peace. Today we must prepare the manger where the new-born Prince of Peace will be laid. We must allow tenderness to enfold us so that we can welcome him, cradle him in our arms and sing a lullaby to him.

Prelude

Call to worship

There will not always be darkness or pain for those who wait in sadness.

We have waited long for your peace. Come, O Lord!

There are promises of hope and joy for those who long for a new age.

We have waited long for peace to be born.



Song: Nana del Adviento *(Advent lullaby)*

Litany

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night",
even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth. *(Psalm 139: 11-15)*

**We thank you, O God,
because you do not forget your people, your church or your world,
because, even in the midst of the dark shadows of our life,
you look upon us with pity.
You cover us with your wings
and you come to visit us.**

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand;

I come to the end—I am still with you.

O that you would kill the wicked, O God,

and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—

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PEACE

those who speak of you maliciously, and lift themselves up against you for evil!
Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?
I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts. (*Psalms 139: 16-23*)

Confession

O God of peace, you know us from before we were formed in our mother's womb.
Forgive us when we only have good intentions and do not commit ourselves
to concrete action for peace and justice.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of justice, you judge our human race with mercy.

Forgive us when we allow your image in us to be marred as we remain passive in face of so
much violence and exclusion.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of love, you have created humankind to be one great family.

Forgive our inability to be reconciled with others, both our dear ones and our enemies.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of grace, you have given us the gift of speech to be an instrument for change.

Forgive us for the times when we have spoken too hastily without thinking of the
consequences, or have remained silent out of fear or indifference.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of life, you have placed us on this earth to tend and watch over it. Forgive us if we
have failed to care for your world, to protect nature, the home you have given us, the home of
our ancestors and of our descendants. Help us to promote life and seek peace.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

Assurance of forgiveness

John 14:27

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 be afraid.

IMAGINE:
PEACE



Old Testament reading

(A woman, who will read the scriptures, carries in the Bible in her arms on a blanket, and is accompanied by another who carries the light.)

Isaiah 9: 1-7

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,

as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;

authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards
and for evermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Gospel reading

★ **Song: ¡Aleluya!** *(Alleluia!)*

(All the lights are turned on.)

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 fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

★ **Song: ¡Aleluya!** *(Alleluia!)*

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Sermon

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, you came upon Mary and she gave birth to the Prince of Peace.
Come upon your people and may peace be born in us.

★ **Sung response: ¡Que la paz que nace en nosotros sea paz para el mundo también!** *(May the peace which is born among us be the peace that envelops the world!)*

Holy Spirit, you made the child leap for joy in Elizabeth's womb. May your people joyfully celebrate peace.

★ **Sung response: ¡Que la paz que nace en nosotros sea paz para el mundo también!** *(May the peace which is born among us be the peace that envelops the world!)*

Holy Spirit, in the beginning you shaped and gave order to the world. May peace live again in your people.

★ **Sung response: ¡Que la paz que nace en nosotros sea paz para el mundo también!** *(May the peace which is born among us be the peace that envelops the world!)*

Offering

(Participants are asked to write on a piece of paper their wishes for peace in the world, between the churches and in their families. They are invited to place them in the manger while the following song is sung. Afterwards the musicians continue improvising.)

★ **Song: ¡Que todo el tiempo sea tiempo de paz!** *(May every season be a season of peace!)*

Prayer

O Lord, we offer you our wishes for peace, born in our hearts.
Cradle them in your arms of love, and help us to make them a reality in the world, in the churches and in our families.

Blessing

(Participants are invited to lay their hands on their stomachs, like an expectant mother protecting her unborn child.)

Just as a mother's hands protect the child in her womb from danger, threats and violence, so may the Lord protect us on our journey to peace.

★ **Song: Que nuestro Dios creador** *(By your Word creating God)*

Nana del Adviento (Advent lullaby)

Andante

Cuan - do lle - gues, ni - ño lin - do, se - rás re - ga - lo de luz____
 When you come, O lit - tle ba - by you will give light to the world.____

Co - mo un re - nue - vo bro - tan - do de un tron - co se - co se - rás pro -
 Even from the dried root a vi - brant blos - som is grow - ing. You will give

me - sa en flor.____ Nos da - rás tu a - le - gri - a, ple - na vi - da.
 hope to the world.____ You will bring us life and glad - ness, joy un - boun - ded.

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IMAGINE:
PEACE

Mi paz les dejo (*My peace I leave with you*)

Moderato
*Juan 14, 27

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, key of E major (indicated by four sharps), and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The score consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a whole rest followed by a half note E, then a quarter note G, a quarter note A, a half note B, and a whole note C. The second staff begins with a whole rest followed by a half note E, then a quarter note G, a quarter note A, a half note B, and a whole note C. The third staff begins with a whole rest followed by a half note E, then a quarter note G, a quarter note A, a half note B, and a whole note C. The lyrics are written below the notes.

E A

Mi paz les de - jo, mi paz les doy.
My peace I leave with you, my peace I give.

1. B7 E

¡U - na paz que el mun - do no les pue - de dar!
I don't give to you as the world gives to you.

2. B7 E

¡U - na paz que el mun - do no les pue - de dar!
I don't give to you as the world gives to you.

*John 14, 27

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IMAGINE:
PEACE

¡Aleluya! (Alleluia!)

Moderato

A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya. A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya.

A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya. A - le - lu - ya, a - le - lu - ya.

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¡Que la paz que nace en nosotros sea paz para el mundo también!
(May the peace which is born among us be the peace that envelops the world!)

Moderato

¡Que la paz que na-ce en no - so - tros se - a paz pa - ra el mun - do tam - bién!
May the peace which is born a - mong us be the peace that en - ve - lops the world!

¡Que la paz que na-ce en no - so - tras se - a paz pa - ra el mun - do tam - bién!
May the peace which is born a - mong us be the peace that en - ve - lops the world!

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¡Que todo el tiempo sea tiempo de paz! (*May every season be a season of peace!*)

Allegretto

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the staff, with Spanish and English versions. The chords are indicated above the staff: Am, F, E, and E/G#.

Am F E E/G#

¡Que to - do el tiem - po se - a tiem - po de paz! —
 May ev - ery sea - son be — a sea - son of peace! —

Am F E E/G# Am

— ¡Que to - do el tiem - po se - a tiem - po de paz! —
 — May ev - ery sea - son be — a sea - son of peace! —

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Que nuestro Dios creador (*By your Word creating God*)

Adagio

The musical score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Adagio'. The melody consists of quarter and half notes. The lyrics are written below the staff, with Spanish and English versions. The chords are indicated above the staff: Am, F, E, and E/G#.

Am F E E/G#

¡Que nues - tro Dios cre - a - dor nos ben - di - ga con su a - mor
 By your word cre - a - ting God bless us now with grace and love,

y que a - ni - de en su pue - blo la paz!
 and gent - ly nest your peace in our hearts!

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Fourth Sunday in Advent

LIVING TOGETHER IN PEACE

Note:

As this is the fourth Sunday in Advent, and the last one of the cycle of services based on the idea of peace, the service is celebratory in style.

Resources for the service:

- ★ Various items of fruit and vegetables, fruit juices
- ★ Several baskets for the offerings
- ★ A mosaic, or jigsaw puzzle cut out from a tile, wood, cardboard or any other similar material, comprising all the colours of the rainbow. Each piece should have a small hole in it so that a thread can be passed through it to turn it into a pendant.
- ★ Enough thread for all the pieces of the jigsaw
- ★ Light-coloured tablecloth

In preparation:

- ★ Pews or chairs forming a circle
- ★ The central table should be empty and will be decorated when participants enter the worship area.
- ★ The star on the wall used on the first Sunday in Advent is displayed, as well as the stones and the manger used in the second and third Sundays in Advent.
- ★ Drawings by children on Isaiah 11 (which can have been produced the previous Sunday or in an Advent/ Christmas workshop).

Further possibilities:

- ★ You can organize a communal meal for the participants after the service, using the fruit, juice, etc. on the table.
- ★ Instead of using the jigsaw puzzle, participants can exchange the items of fruit on the table with one another. Or you can turn it into a gesture of solidarity by preparing baskets of fruit to be given to families in need.

Before the service, participants wait outside the worship area; the doors are shut.

Reading

Ephesians 2:17-18 *(in a loud voice)*

So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Greeting

(Participants are invited to greet each other by saying:)

"Through Christ we have access, because he is our peace".

(Then the door opens and participants enter singing. A group carries in all the resources to be used in worship for decorating the table.)

★ **Song: Él es nuestra paz** *(He is our peace)*

Decorating the table

In Christ, our peace, we gather as a community,
a community that acknowledges that we depend on the generous hand of God,
who makes abundant provision for us.

We invite you to decorate this table with some of the beautiful things
that the Lord of life has provided for us.
And let us join together and use our abilities to create a symbol of God's peace.

(Participants are invited to decorate the table with the fruit of the earth in a lavish and colourful way. Four people representing the different generations in the community form the jigsaw puzzle. They take the jigsaw pieces from a basket and put them together to form the colours of the rainbow. While that is being done, the following hymn is sung.)

★ **Song: La mesa de la paz** *(The table of peace)*

Psalm 100 *(paraphrase)*

Come before the Lord with joyful songs,
because he is good,
because he is generous,
because we lack nothing.

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Let us enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Serve the Lord with gladness,
because of his greatness and justice,
because he puts an end to war,
and to all forms of violence.

Let us enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Come before the Lord with joy
because he is faithful to his promises,
because his Word is eternal.

Let us enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Know that the Lord is God,
and we are his people,
his community, his family.

Let us enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

It is he who has made us to the praise of his name,
and therefore today, in the same spirit,
we have a festival to celebrate his peace.

Let us enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

★ **Song: ¡Gracias, Señor por la vida!** *(Thank you, O God, for our lives!)*

Confession

(A group of the community - children, young people or any others with dramatic skills - is encouraged to produce a short sketch representing the opposite of Isaiah 11. Where the text speaks of harmony, encounter, living together, sharing, they act out the complete opposite – discord, conflict, intolerance, discrimination. It can be a short dramatic piece, a silent dramatization, a shadow show, mime, puppets or anything produced by the creativity of the local group.)

Silence *(A long silence, which then gradually gives way to instrumental music.)*

Reading

Ephesians 2:14-22 *(read slowly, like a prayer)*

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but

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PEACE

you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

(The instrumental music continues for a short time leading to the following song.)

★ **Song: ¡Escucha, Señor, a tu pueblo!** *(Now, listen, o God to your people)*

Affirmation of faith

We believe that there will not always be darkness
for the people who live in pain and sorrow,
through injustice, marginalization, discrimination or the stigma of HIV/Aids,
because Christ is light.

We believe that people will not always live apart hostile to one another,
separated by hatred or bitterness, by cultural or ideological differences,
by their social or economic situation, by creed, race or sexual orientation,
because Christ is reconciliation.

We believe that the doors will not always be shut to life,
that the walls restricting freedom and dignity will fall down
and that all forms of violence and oppression will be overcome,
because Christ is peace.

We believe that there will not always be tables that are empty while others are laden with food,
because the table of creation is for all,
because the fruits of the earth are for everybody to be fairly shared,
because Christ is the sun of justice.

We believe that water will no longer be polluted,
and that there will be enough so that no one will be thirsty.

We believe that rivers will not be private property and nobody will fence off springs,
and that ice will still be eternal and rain a sacred blessing,

because Christ is pure and transparent.

We believe that one day the wolf will no longer want to kill the lamb
and that the creatures will be able to play without fearing the serpents of abuse,
of deceit, of neglect, of kidnapping, of malnutrition and of indifference,

because Christ entered into creation.

We believe that a free and just earth,
where it is possible to live together in harmony,
where everyone will have space and opportunity,
is not a distant dream but a near reality.

We believe that another world is possible

because Christ has come to the world to make it new.

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Bible reading

(It can be the lectionary readings for the day, but we suggest reading only what will be used for the sermon.)

Sermon

(Could be based on Isaiah 11, using the children's drawings.)

Offering

Let us turn our eyes to the table. Let us acknowledge God's generosity,
and let us respond to God's generosity with our commitment in solidarity.

(The leader invites participants to bring their offerings in procession to the central table and place them in the baskets provided.)

★ **Song: Caminando hacia ti, oh Dios** *(We are walking unto you, O God)*

Act of commitment

(Each person is invited to take one piece of the rainbow-coloured jigsaw. They are invited to put it on a thread to form a pendant. They are then invited to exchange their pendant with someone they have not yet greeted or do not know well, as a sign of encounter, of harmony, of the intention that people should live together in love and respect. They take on a commitment to follow up this gesture by praying for each other in the future.)

(Music is played softly as this takes place.)

Dismissal

Let our world be a place of celebration, let our world be a meeting place.

Let justice spring from our earth, and let the fruits of love flourish.

Let us make it possible

by respecting our diversity, by sharing in solidarity,

by uniting hands and hearts, by living together in harmony with creation.

And then peace will be reborn!

Blessing

Let us go in peace, and, in the course of this coming Christian year,

may the Star of Peace continue to light our path;

may we continue to find signs of peace in the faces of all – men, women, adults, young people
and children, wherever we are – at home, work, school or church, in town or country,

so as to turn our dreams into reality,

and bring violence to an end, "that there may be peace on earth and glory in heaven". **Amen**



Song: Él es nuestra paz (*He is our peace*)

Moderato

Por Cris - to te - ne - mos en - tra - da por - que el es nues - tra paz. Por paz.
Through Christ a new av - e - nue op - ens, be - cause he is our peace. Through peace.

¡Bien - ve - ni - do, bien - ve - ni - da! ni - da!
Wel - come, bro - ther, wel - come, sis - ter! sis - ter!

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Song: La mesa de la paz (*The table of peace*)

Moderato

G A D G A D



1. En es - ta fes - ta de la paz te in - vi - to a ha - cer co - mu - ni - dad.
 2. Com - par - ti - re - mos nues - tra fe, go - zo, a - le - gri - a nos trae - rá.
 1. In this great fes - ti - val of peace I bid you, build com - mu - ni - ty.
 2. With joy and glad - ness in our hearts we'll share the faith we have in God.

G A D G A D



Re - fres - ca hoy tu co - ra - zón con a - li - men - to de a - mor.
 Los do - nes Dios re - ci - bi - rá; son nues - tra en - tre - ga en li - ber - tad.
 Re - fresh your heart and soul to - day with food that's filled with ho - ly love.
 The gifts that God re - ceives from us are signs that we are tru - ly free.

Refrán

G A D



Hay a - le - gri - a ya - mor en es - ta me - sa.
 Yes, there is joy o - ver - flow - ing at the ta - ble.

G A D



Cris - to en no - so - tros se ha - ce rea - li - dad.
 and Christ is known as we sit down to eat.

G A D



Hoy le tra - e - mos los fru - tos de la tie - rra
 To - day we bring him the fruits of all cre - a - tion.

Bm Em A D



y nues - tra vi - da con sin - ce - ri - dad.
 we bring our lives in true sin - ce - ri - ty.

¡Gracias, Señor por la vida! (Thank you, O God, for our lives!)

Moderato

Chorus

1. Diez en - fer - mos sa - nas - te Se - ñor,
 2. Las o - fren - das de nues - tra la - bor
 1. There were ten of who you touched, Heal - ing God,
 2. We now of - fer the fruits of our work,

só - lo u - no te lo a - gra - de - ció.
 te tra - e - mos des - de el co - ra - zón.
 on - ly one turned a - round to give thanks.
 and give thanks from the depths of our heart.

Es - te pue - blo te sa - be de - cir _____
 Por tu gra - cia y tu fiel a - mis - tad _____
 We your peo - ple now say un - to you: _____
 For your faith - ful - ness and for your grace _____

¡Gra - cias Se - ñor por tu a - mor! _____
 te a - la - ba - re - mos, Se - ñor. _____
 Thank you O God for your love _____
 we praise your name with a song _____

¡Gra - cias Se - ñor por la vi - da! _____
 Thank you, O God, for our lives! _____

B^b C F
 ¡Gra - cias Se - ñor por tu paz! _____
 Thank you, O God, for your peace! _____

A⁷ Dm
 ¡Gra - cias por la es - pe - ran - za
 As we now look to the fu - ture

Dm A⁷ Dm
 de te - ner un fu - tu - ro me - jor! _____
 we give thanks that you've giv - en us hope! _____

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¡Escucha, Señor, a tu pueblo! (*Now, listen, o God to your people*)

Adagio

A D Bm A D
 ¡Es - cu - cha, Se - ñor, a tu pue - blo!
 Now, lis - ten, O God, to your peo - ple!

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Caminando hacia ti, oh Dios (We are walking unto you, O God)

Moderato

Ca - mi-nan-do ha-cia tí, oh Dios, so-mos tu pue-blo, tu co-mu-ni-dad.
We are walk-ing un-to you, O God, we are your peo-ple, your com-mu-ni-ty.

A - nhe-lan-do vi-da ple-na y paz, o - fren-das tra-e-mos con sin-ce-ri-dad. Co-
We are long-ing for a life of peace, our gifts we now of-fer with sin-cer-i-ty. The

se - cha de la tie - rra, de nues-tra la - bor, se - gui - mos en - tre - gan - do los fru - tos del a - mor, co -
boun-ty of the har-vest, la-bor of our hands, we'll walk with stead-y foot-steps to share the fruits of love. The

se - cha de la tie - rra, de nues-tra la - bor, se - gui - mos en - tre - gan - do los fru - tos del a - mor.
boun-ty of the har-vest, la-bor of our hands, we'll walk with stead-y foot-steps to share the fruits of love.

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for the four Advent Sundays

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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 of other faiths for peace-building 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.

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The coordinating office of the World Council of Churches in Geneva is working to raise awareness on issues related to violence and peace, 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 on a different region and

with a different theme every year serves to mobilize churches within that particular region into the movement of the DOV. 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 2009 will be on the Caribbean.

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Glory to God and Peace on Earth

This is the theme of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) that 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 church and from justice and peace movements to celebrate peace as a gift from God, focusing on a recommitment to be peacemakers. By the sharing of experiences of struggle and resistance, the event will inspire ongoing engagement and deeper commitments to just peace.

The IEPC will be:

- ★ a space to celebrate God's gift of peace by affirming the hope that violence will be overcome and justice and reconciliation will be realized;
- ★ an occasion to inspire one another by sharing stories of struggle and resistance and challenging all that stands in the way of just peace;
- ★ a time to recommit ourselves to the theology, practice and spirituality of the culture of peace and non-violence.

The convocation is an end and a beginning. While it is the culminating moment of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) it will also herald in a new phase to carry the DOV message into the future with a better understanding of how violence can be prevented and overcome, and new networks and alliances formed.

Preparations for the convocation are already well underway through three main streams:

- ★ a programme of Living Letters visits, by small ecumenical delegations to churches and peoples around the world living in violent situations, to demonstrate solidarity and respond to painful experiences of violence;
- ★ a series of Expert Consultations addresses issues related to the thematic areas of the convocation, such as "Peace with the Earth" and "Peace in the Marketplace", to enhance involvement in peace issues and provide input for the Declaration on Just Peace;
- ★ a study process engages all WCC member churches, ecumenical organizations, networks and partners to develop an extensive Declaration on Just Peace, firmly rooted in an articulated theology. It will deal with topics such as just peace, the responsibility to protect, the role and the legal status of non-state combatants, the conflict of values (for example: territorial integrity and human life).

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Helpful Websites

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

www.redcreatea.org.ar

SABEEL Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem:

www.sabeel.org

SET (Seminario Evangélico de Teología) was established in the city of Matanzas (Cuba) in 1946 as an ecumenical training centre. It is governed by a Board of Directors elected from the three establishing denominations - the Cuban Methodist, Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches:

www.cuba-theological-seminary.com

World Council of Churches:

www.oikoumene.org

This material is also on:

www.oikoumene.org/advent

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SABEEL (*Arabic “the way” and also “a channel” or “spring”*) Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center is a Christian liberation theology organization based in Jerusalem.

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