



Ecumenical Prayer Service for Peace in Palestine and Israel

(based on a Service prepared by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem for a Service in Jerusalem on June 4th 2008)

Blessed are the peacemakers

L refers to Leader, R to Readers, A the whole Assembly
(each person to be handed a branch or section from an Olive Tree)

Opening Hymn and procession (hymn of praise to God)

Gathering of God's People: Welcome and Introduction to the focus.

(Leader should give an acknowledgement of country, welcome those attending.)

Opening Invocation:

L. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen

A. “Let justice roll down like rivers, and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

L. We gather today to remember, to pray and to seek direction after 60 years of conflict in the land Christians call Holy. Living under Occupation since the War of 1967 has left the people of the Palestinian Territories feeling bereft and isolated. We know as Christians that there is hope in God and there is a path to justice and peace. Yet the Palestinians ask “how long O Lord?”

L Let us pray

A **O loving God,**
We remember those who struggle for freedom,
We remember the disabled who cling on to hope,
We remember the injured who fight for their life,
We remember the captives who yearn for freedom,
We remember the deportees who long for their homeland.
We remember those in towns, villages and camps
that are often under siege.

We remember the children whose eyes reflect the light of the future,
We remember the brave who say “no” to injustice,
We lift the olive branch which says “yes” to a just peace.

R O God, we call upon you to grant us your patience, determination and power, so that we may say:

A. **No to hate and yes to love,**

R. No to death and yes to life,

A. **No to falsehood and yes to truth**

R. No to oppression and yes to justice,

A. **No to cruelty and yes to mercy,**

R. No to violence and yes to the path of peace,
A **No, no matter what it may cost, and
yes, no matter what it may cost.**

R. For you are the source of love leading to reconciliation and forgiveness.

Hymn: (the universality of God's love)

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: Isaiah ch.32 vv16-18

Psalm 46 (Read together)

**God is our refuge and strength
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.**

**There is a river whose streams make glad
the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
God is within her, she will not fall:
God will help her at break of day.
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.**

**The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.**

**Come and see the works of the Lord,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shields with fire.
Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.**

**The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be
world without end, Amen**

Epistle: Colossians ch3. vv12-17

Hymn: (reflective)

Gospel: St. Mathew Ch. 5 vv 1-12

Address:

Music: with silence for Meditation

Prayer of Penitence - All

O God of justice and judgment, bring your mighty hand into the deep pit of violence, despair, and ruthlessness that shapes the lives of so many in the Holy Land.

-Kyrie eleison

We thirst for justice, O God, because we know that there will be no peace until equity prevails for all people and until the forces of evil are defeated by your commandment to love, respect, and honor all our sisters and brothers.

- Kyrie eleison

We thirst, too, that a pervading sense of your righteous judgement will fill the land, not from vindictiveness or desire for retribution, but in order that the power of your Word might become real for those who suffer and those who cause suffering. Both are badly damaged by the violent insanity that prevails in the Holy Land.

-Kyrie eleison

May the hearts of both those who suffer and those who kill, maim, terrorize, or dehumanize others through their dependence on military might or violence remember that you are the ultimate judge of all our thoughts, words, and deeds.

-Kyrie eleison

We ask for your mercy and forgiveness for any part we have contributed to the pain of others by what we have done or what we have not done. We ask your forgiveness for our silence when we see oppression and do not speak out. We ask your forgiveness for when we speak words that hurt rather than heal.

-Kyrie eleison

Merciful God, so much conflict is within us. Our jealousy, our pride our passion, our power-seeking and our greed all disturb the balance of life and undermine the harmony of society. Forgive us, and lead us by your Spirit, that in our lives love may go hand in hand with peace, so filling our community with joy

-Kyrie eleison

L. Having prayed to God for the forgiveness of our sins, and as we ourselves forgive each other, let us now exchange a sign of peace, and seal our unity in prayer, in faith and love. Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body on the cross. We meet in His name and share His peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

A: And also with you.

Hymn (of Peace) – and an offering may be taken up here for those in need in Palestine or Israel.

Litany for Peace:

R. *"I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a hopeful end."*
Jeremiah 29: 11

So we pray together:

Gracious God, your love knows no limits. Fill our hearts with your compassion; open our eyes to your presence in the world; enlarge our minds to understand your will. Take our hands and minister through them. Speak through our words and direct our feet in the path of peace that Christ may be revealed in us and the world may believe. Amen

R.1 We give you thanks and praise for your gift to us of your only Son, Jesus -- His birth in Bethlehem, His ministry throughout the Holy Land, His death on the Cross and His Resurrection and Ascension. He came to redeem this Land and the world. He came as the Prince of Peace.

R.2. We give you thanks for every Church and congregation around the world that is praying for peace. The cities and land of Palestine and Israel are much in need of peace.

R.1. In your unfathomable mystery and love for all, let the power of your Redemption with your Peace transcend all barriers of cultures and religions so filling the hearts of all who serve you, of all peoples, but especially Israeli and Palestinian - and of all religions.

R.2. Send us political leaders ready to dedicate their lives to a just peace. Make Israeli and Palestinian leaders courageous enough to sign a treaty of peace that puts an end to the Occupation imposed by one people on another, granting freedom to Palestinians, giving security to Israelis and freeing all from fear. Give leaders who understand the holiness of your city and will open it to all its inhabitants - Palestinian and Israeli - and to the world.

R.1. In the Land you made holy, free all peoples from the sin of hatred and killing. Free the souls and hearts of Israelis and Palestinians f

R.2. We trust in you, Gracious God. We believe you are good; moreover we believe that your goodness will prevail over the evils of war and hatred in the Holy Land.

R.1. We seek your blessing especially on the children and young people, that their fear and the anxiety of conflict may be replaced with the joy and happiness of peace. We pray too for the elderly and the handicapped, for their well-being and for the contribution they can make to the future of Israeli and Palestine.

R.2. We pray, finally, for the refugees across the whole World. God give the politicians the wisdom and courage to find suitable and just solutions.

All this we ask in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

The Blessing:

- L. Let us leave this place glad to have worshipped together, and committed to pray and work for peace for the people of Palestine and Israel, and for all peoples living in fear and in the midst of violence around the world. The Lord Jesus Christ be with you:
- A. **And also with you**

The Final Hymn (commitment to peace) sung during the procession of Olive Branches.

