

Just Peace Sunday 2024 Litany ***“Things That Make for Peace”***

Grounded in UCC polity and covenantal theology, the Just Peace Pronouncement and resulting church movement has at its core a call to alleviate systemic injustice of all kinds using non-violence, challenging us to explore the intersections between peace and justice, offering to the world the prophetic message, grounded in the hope of reconciliation in Jesus, that “Peace is possible!”

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Today, we are grateful to gather and worship God in peaceful conditions.

All: While some congregations are rocked with bombshells, our service can exist in calm.

One: While some communities are rife with discord, our neighborhoods are primed for dialogue.

All: We are provoked to bring God’s peace and praise wherever we go.

One: We hold fast to the vision of Shalom throughout all of God’s creation.

All: We believe that peace is possible.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All: Christ, forgive us for harboring discord in our own hearts. At times, we hold unresolved anger in our bodies, in our families, and institutions. We forego confessions that would release us from silent stalemates. We are often quiet during the proliferation of warfare and buy into cultures of violence as if there is no peaceful alternative. We need your model and Spirit to lead us ever into fearless dwelling and loving communion. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

One: Friends and peacemakers, “Just Peace is not a destination, but a path...may God grant us the required awareness and constant vigilance to resolve existing and developing conflict in ourselves and our communities.” May we be inspired by the serenity of creation, the reconciliation of Christ, and the breath of the Holy Spirit to dwell in and share Shalom. Help us recognize the ‘things that make for peace’ in our world.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

One: Holy God, as we follow you up the mountain of our lives, it is easy to feel lost. Inspire us with hope from your Word today. Teach us the peaceful way that invites all unto the lighted pathway of renewed love. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke: 19:41-44

(New Revised Standard Version)

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not

leave within you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God."

RESPONSE TO THE READING

One: God of every space, we are grateful for the land where we dwell, work, and worship today.

All: Remind us that the borders and division, the ownership and possession of the land was not your original plan for us.

One: Embolden us to recognize the places in our world where peace is more precious, where violence abounds.

All: Restore shalom within our land and between our nations and those around us.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

One: God's teaching surrounds us. If we wish to know love, to understand justice, or to embody wisdom, we must only pay attention. The gospel is always coming alive somewhere. For every new way God reaches out to us, takes on flesh and manifests within and around us, let us bring our offerings with gratitude. We can share with the church and the world our time, our talents, or our wealth, all for God's love and justice.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

All: Incarnate One, especially in these times of uncertainty, we hope to be companions of righteousness. We hope to divest from all that destroys. We hope to live into the Spirit of Christ that sets the captives free. With these offerings, we pray that our gratitude will manifest in acts of radical love and peace where and when they are needed most. Amen.

Additional Prayers:

The Lighting of the Peace Candle

O God, who would fold both heaven and earth in a single peace, let the design of your great love enlighten and heal our world so torn by misunderstanding, violence & war. Give a just peace to your people, a just peace among nations, a just peace in our dwellings, & a just peace in our hearts. We ask this through Jesus, your Son and our brother. Amen

Prayer from the Shalom Center – A Call to the Community

May all who are gathered here sense the warmth of God's presence.

May we reach out in love and fellowship toward God & one another during this time of deep & profound anxiousness.

Our hearts are aching as we pray for a world without violence, for peace among nations & peace in our hearts.

Opening Words

Christ, Take our words . . . our world . . . our weapons . . . our work
And transform them into your image.

So we may see your face in truth where news is reported
In justice where power is abused. In peace where war is threatened.
In reconciliation where deeds foster hatred.

Open our eyes Lord !

Forgive us when we ignore the suffering of your people
And violence and injustice near and far.
Give us courage to confront our fears & help us to act as agents of peace.
Restore to us the vision of one church.

Open our eyes!

God, We are created in your image.
The only way to show your peace and justice is through us.
We are responsible for your world and for each other.
Transform us through your Holy Spirit.

Open our eyes!

Unison Prayer for the Leaders of the Nations (National Council of Churches)

*O God, our Heavenly Creator, whose love sets no boundaries
And whose strength is in service; grant to the leaders of the nations
wisdom, courage & insight at this time of global insecurity.*

*Give to all who exercise authority determination
to defend the true principles of freedom, love and tolerance,
the strength to protect and safeguard the innocent,
and the clarity of vision to guide the world into the paths
of justice and peace. Amen.*

Prayers of the People

By Rev. Alice Harper-Jones

Left: Merciful, loving and all powerful God we come into your presence with
hearts of thanksgiving and praise as we unite for world justice and peace.
We pray for peace among people of various cultural traditions that are
different from our own.

All: LORD HEAR OUR PRAYERS

Right: We pray for peace and justice within our communities, our individual nations and throughout the world.

All: LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYERS

Left: We pray for the youth around the world. That they will come together to positively enrich their lives, their communities and their countries.

LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYERS

Right: We pray for global economic and political solutions to situations that will bring peace and justice to all of God's people, created in God's image.

All: LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYERS

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus and for His sake. Amen.

Just Peace Litany & Closing Song

By Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillaume

One: On this Sunday, we celebrate the United Church of Christ's Just Peace commitment of our denomination, Conferences, Associations and local congregations

All: who are grounded in hope for our world, and proclaim that 'peace is possible' when rooted in Justice for all.

Sing: Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

One: In this moment, let us rejoice on behalf of our being open and affirming to the belief that God, who is creator of all that is,

All: has created us equally in an abiding and everlasting love.

Sing: Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

One: As the Body of Christ, we praise you, God, for creating us with a diversity of cultures, racial compositions, genders, languages, nationalities, theological perspectives, and socio-economic levels,

All: Help us so that we can better understand the call for humanity to become as one, by joining our spirits together with the Spirit of God.

Sing: Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

One: Trusting in your faithfulness, we humbly seek your guidance to have a stronger living relationship with you,

All: being the light which shines amongst your kingdom here on earth as instruments of your peace, now and forevermore.

*** Blessing**

May the blessing of the God of peace and justice be with us;

May the blessing of the Son who weeps the tears of the world's
suffering be with us;

And may the blessing of the Spirit who inspires us to reconciliation & hope
be with us; from now into eternity. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Compilation of litanies and prayers from Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey, Rev. Amber Henry Neuroth, Rev. Denise Andersen, and Rev. Alice Harper Jones