

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit

Sunday Worship Sheet 17th September 2023

Our worship for this week was written by Howard Jackson,
a Local Preacher and Member at St. John's Bangor.

You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Introduction: Today in the Circuit, it is Peace Sunday. This gives us the opportunity to reflect on what leads to peace and how we might contribute to peace.

Opening Prayer: Lord, we live in a world torn apart by armed conflict and divided by competing opinions. Help us to see how we can make our contribution to creating a harmonious society and peace between nations. Amen.

Hymn 1: 693 Beauty for brokenness

Prayer of Approach: Lord, we long for a world without conflict, where justice and equality are enjoyed by all. Help us to ensure that our own lives reflect the justice and mercy of your kingdom in all our thoughts and actions. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration: Gracious Lord, you created a world with enough resources for everyone to thrive and prosper. But we have distorted this so that the majority have barely enough to exist and a small minority have riches that they cannot possibly need or use. Give us a mind content with our needs provided for. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Prayer of Confession: Loving King, we bring our debts to your house, and pray that you will answer us with forgiveness. You have given us treasures of love and peace, opportunity and joy, knowledge and honesty. But we have been poor stewards of your gifts, and have not loved them, nor used them, as we ought. So now we bring debts of selfishness, of greed and thoughtlessness, prejudice and obstinacy, pride and deceit. We fall on our knees and look into your face, where we see love, peace, joy, knowledge, honesty, compassion. God of grace, forgive us our debts, as we forgive others who owe debts to us. Amen.

From Companion to the Common Lectionary Volume 2.

United Nations Charter 1945 - Article 1:

The Purposes of the United Nations are:

1 To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;

2 To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;

3 To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and

encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and

4 To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

OT Reading: Micah 4:1-5

Psalm: Psalm 34:8-14

NT Reading: Galatians 5:13-22

Hymn 2: 652 Lord we come to ask your healing

Reflection: When I was seven years old, I remember walking in bright sunlight on to the open moor just beyond our allotment. I sat down in the grass to admire the view over the valley which seemed full of cotton mills and rows and rows of terraced houses. In the trees at the edge of the moor I heard a cuckoo calling. It was a really peaceful experience, and I sat there a long time immersed in the quiet and stillness. I didn't know then, but I do now, that God was giving me a taste of his peace in the middle of the Second World War. Air raid sirens were an everyday occurrence and it was a rule to take your gas mask and ID card to school every day. Today I heard a report from Ukraine on how people there were coping with war. Just like when I was a child, they were suffering air raids and bomb damage, regular reports of progress on the battlefield and mourning the loss of so many young men. But they were not losing hope. On the contrary, they were more and more determined to persevere to see Russia withdraw its army.

Ukraine is not the only place where armed conflict is causing pain and suffering. We have regular reports of the civil war in Sudan, with millions of refugees fleeing their homes to safer countries. We don't have regular reports of similar problems in Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Myanmar, Cameroon, Mali, Syria, Ethiopia. But the threats to life and livelihood continue there and other places. In many of the above examples, more powerful nations are involved in covert financing of the rebel forces for their own political reasons.

The United Nations Organisation was set up to prevent war between nations but explicitly keeps away from civil war. In the case of Ukraine, the perpetrator is a member of the Security Council which makes it impossible for the UN to take effective action to bring the armed conflict to an end. Truly, there is no end in sight for armed conflict. Until communities bring up their children to be peacemakers, there is no hope of ever seeing an end to it. The sad truth is that in most countries, men (in particular) are brought up to believe that participation in armed conflict is a duty and an honour.

What can we do to alter this hopeless situation? Within our own families, friends and colleagues we can be an influence for peace and conflict resolution. Beyond this, we can actively support organisations dedicated to promoting world peace, such as the Community of the Cross of Nails, created as a result of the destruction of Coventry Cathedral, which includes 250 churches worldwide, Mercy Corps, operating in 40 countries worldwide. Or we can actively support organisations, such as All We Can and TearFund that provide emergency and ongoing funding and

other resources to alleviate the effects of warfare on civilians.

As followers of Jesus, guided by God's Holy Spirit, we are natural peacemakers. We know peace in our lives and relationships because we are forgiving people. Jesus said "Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be known as God's children." There is no room for conflict in our lives. We can resist pressure to "take sides" when faced with disagreements amongst our family members, friends, church members and colleagues. Instead we are in a position to call for finding a way to resolve the differences and helping them to do it. That is just one way of contributing to peace right where we are. That is where peace-making begins.

Pause for thought:

Prayer of thanksgiving: You are the source of our forgiveness when the lives we lead do not reflect the words that we profess. You are the strength we are searching for when faith is weak, as you draw us to your loving arms to bless. You are the hope that we inherit of a kingdom in heaven and on earth, one that will never cease. You are the source of all that we are or ever could be, and to you we bring this offering of our thanks. Amen.

From The Act of Prayer

Prayers of Intercession: On this Peace Sunday, we pray for our own homes, our families, our Circuit community; that the grace and peace Christ came to bring may reign over us, so that the stranger may find welcome and those hurting may find comfort in our company. Let us pray to the Lord: Christ, be our light.

For our political leaders, that they may seek to find a shared understanding and achieve reconciliation in the face of divisions of every kind. And for our nation, that we may work to achieve a just peace across the world. Let us pray to the Lord: Christ, be our light.

For a rejection of violence as a solution to human conflict: We pray especially for a negotiated end to the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the many forgotten ongoing conflicts of today – in Yemen, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, South Sudan. Let us pray to the Lord: Christ, be our light.

On this Peace Sunday, we pray for all who work, whether locally or internationally, for peace and justice; for all who will not be silent in the face of injustice or suffering; for all who take risks for peace. Let us pray to the Lord: Christ, be our light.

Let us commend to God's mercy all who are unwell (especially.....) that they might be restored to health. Let us pray to the Lord: Christ, be our light.

In a moment of silence, let us place before the Lord our own thirst for peace. Amen.

Based on Pax Christi Peace Sunday 2023 Prayers of the Faithful

Collect for Peace Sunday: Eternal God, comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken, the source of all life and hope: teach us the ways of gentleness and peace, that all the world may acknowledge the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Based on Collects for Common Worship

Hymn 3: 713 Show me how to stand for justice

Blessing: May the God of peace bring peace to those in the midst of conflict. May the God of justice bring peace to those who work for world peace. May you find peace in your heart this day and every day.

Hymn 693

- 1 Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase !
- 2 Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for all people,
trade for their skills ;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.
*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray :
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain ;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*
- 3 Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
his cross for the pain.
- 4 Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned —
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed ;
make us content with
the things that we need.
Refrain
- 5 Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until your justice burns
brightly again ;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise.
Refrain

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Hymn 652

- 1 Lord, we come to ask your healing,
teach us of love ;
all unspoken shame revealing,
teach us of love.
Take our selfish thoughts and actions,
petty feuds, divisive factions,

hear us now to you appealing,
teach us of love.

- 2 Soothe away our pain and sorrow,
hold us in love ;
grace we cannot buy or borrow,
hold us in love.
Though we see but dark and danger,
though we spurn both friend and stranger,
though we often dread tomorrow,
hold us in love.
- 3 When the bread is raised and broken,
fill us with love ;
words of consecration spoken,
fill us with love.
As our grateful prayers continue,
make the faith that we have in you
more than just an empty token,
fill us with love.
- 4 Help us live for one another,
bind us in love ;
stranger, neighbour, father, mother —
bind us in love.
All are equal at your table,
through your Spirit make us able
to embrace as sister, brother,
bind us in love.

Jean Holloway (b. 1939)

Hymn 713

- 1 Show me how to stand for justice :
how to work for what is right,
how to challenge false assumptions,
how to walk within the light.
May I learn to share more freely
in a world so full of greed,
showing your immense compassion
by the life I choose to lead.
- 2 Teach my heart to treasure mercy,
whether given or received —
for my need has not diminished
since the day I first believed :
let me seek no satisfaction
boasting of what I have done,
but rejoice that I am pardoned
and accepted in your Son.
- 3 Gladly I embrace a lifestyle
modelled on your living word,
in humility submitting
to the truth which I have heard.
Make me conscious of your presence
every day in all I do :
by your Spirit's gracious prompting
may I learn to walk with you.

Martin Leckebusch (b. 1962)