

Christian Response to Violence Seminar (Trial Run)

Opening Worship

(borrowed and adapted from *Gods Not Guns Sabbath Worship Guide 2007*
http://www.bradynetwork.org/site/DocServer/SabathGuide_08.pdf?docID=941)

Gathering Song *Wounded World, that Cries for Healing* (TFWS 2177)

Welcome – introduction to this service and to the seminar

Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 2)

Leader: Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the path of the Most High.

People: That we may beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks.

Leader: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war any more.

People: And none shall be afraid for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

Leader: We gather today in remembrance of all those who suffer violence.

People: For those who have died, and for those who still live in fear and anger.

Leader: We are a nation at war with ourselves, a people who have forgotten who we are.

People: We gather today to remember that we are each a child of God. We gather to claim our belonging to each other and our commitment to living the way of God's peace.

Leader: Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the path of the Most High.

People: That we may beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks.

Leader: Neighbor shall not lift up gun against neighbor. Neither shall they learn violence any more.

All: And none shall be afraid for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

Invocation

Gracious God,

Inspire us with the gift of shalom, the gift of wholeness and the promise of your presence. Give us wisdom to seek nonviolence as an answer to the violence of our lives and world. Give us courage to seek wholeness in a fractured and divided world, to find reconciliation rather than revenge, to abandon the instruments of violence and death and entrust our lives, our homes and our families to you. May your presence fill us and others with the thirst for unity, wholeness, and the desire to see all people valued as created in your image. May we and others receive your Shalom that we might be faithful instruments of your love. Amen.

(Adapted from Episcopal Peace Fellowship, "Gift of Shalom")

Scriptures

Matthew 5:9-12

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Romans 12:14-21

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by doing so you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."

Silent Reflection

Song *Goodness is Stronger Than Evil* (TFWS 2219)

Readings (Posted and shared around the room)

"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant."
Martin Luther King, Jr.

"First keep peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others."
Thomas a Kempis

"We challenge the culture of violence when we ourselves act in the certainty that violence is no longer acceptable, that it's tired and outdated no matter how many cling to it in the stubborn belief that it still works and is still valid."
Gerard Vanderhaar

"If you wish to be brothers, let the arms fall from your hands. One cannot love while holding offensive arms."
Pope Pius VI

"All violence is injustice. Responding to violence with violence is injustice, not only to the other person but also to oneself. Responding to violence with violence resolves nothing; it only escalates violence, anger and hatred. It is only with compassion that we can embrace and disintegrate violence. This is true in relationships between individuals as well as in relationships between nations."
Thich Nhat Hanh

“An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.”

M. Gandhi

“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.”

Desmond Tutu

“The nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them new self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

Mother Theresa

While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.”

St. Francis of Assisi

“The way of peace is the way of love. Love is the greatest power on earth. It conquers all things.”

Peace Pilgrim

“Let a man overcome anger by loving kindness; let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome miserliness with generosity; let him overcome lies with truth.”

Buddha

Silence

Song

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (TFWS 2193)

Closing Prayer

(Adapted from Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, worship on Martin Luther King Day, 2007)

God of justice, whenever we settle for the way things are instead of the way love would have them to be, forgive us. Whenever we are paralyzed by fear or limited in vision, increase our trust in you. Whenever we offer charity, but fail to work for justice, show us the more excellent way that love requires. Whenever we tire of the struggle and tomorrow feels overwhelming, restore our hope. Whenever we forget those who have gone before us or act as if we are the only ones who are trying, allow us to recognize our arrogance. May the witness of our brothers and sisters Martin, Mohandes, Theresa, Francis, Desmond, and others, encourage us to be dreamers of peace, for all the world's sake.

Amen.

Benediction

O Holy God, make of us a receiving people.

Let us walk with your feet.

Let us touch with your hands.

Let your voice speak in and through us.

Let your wisdom be transformed into right action within us.

Let us carry forth your spirit into the world.

Let us be at one with You, O God.

And may each who feels as one with You, know also that we are one with every other, until all creation is unified in the light of love.

May you go in peace and in the light of God's love.

(Adapted from a prayer by Bebe Williams, July 10,1994)

CLOSING WORSHIP

Song

It Is Well With My Soul (UMH 377)

Sharing Reflections from Our Day

Contemporary Reading (From *Gods Not Guns Sabbath Worship Guide 2007*)

http://www.bradynetwork.org/site/DocServer/SabbathGuide_08.pdf?docID=941

Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds. Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves. Let us be aware of the source of being, common to us all and to all living things. Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion – towards ourselves and towards all living beings. Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other. With humility, with awareness of the existence of life, and of the sufferings that are going on around us, let us practice the establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth.

Thich N'hat Hanh

***Litany of Commitment to Non-Violence and Peace** (Jennifer Watts)

(from "United For Peace" Worship Resources. http://www.united-church.ca/files/planning/seasons/peace_u4p.pdf)

All:

**Compassionate and loving God,
We stand before you today to renew
our commitment to peace in our hearts,
our homes and our world.**

Right side/North:

We, as members of this faith community,
commit ourselves to peace bearing and peacemaking.
Making peace with the land,

with humanity,
with all creation.

Left side/South:

Like the prophets of old and the prophets of today,
we ask for courage to speak truth to power,
to seek alternatives to violence,
to build peace based on justice,
human rights,
and respect for creation.

Right side/East:

Like countless numbers of people
in our global community
who refuse to give up hope
and instead live their lives as peace bearers and peacemakers,
we ask for your grace to work through us
so that we may bear peace and make peace
in our communities.

All/West:

**We commit to living your love
through the great work of nurturing peace with justice,
today, tomorrow, and always.
Amen.**

Hymn of Commitment

Let There Be Peace on Earth (UMH 431)

Blessing and Benediction