



Peace Sunday 2022 Worship Resources

Prepared by the
MWC Peace
Commission for
18 September 2022

1

Theme and texts

a. Theme:

Being a new creation in the midst of external turmoil

b. Why this theme was chosen:

How do we maintain resilience in hardship, turmoil and conflict? How do we maintain our hope for something better when times are tough?

This year's Peace Sunday resources will explore the ways in which people throughout our communion give expression to God's new creation during difficult circumstances.

c. Biblical texts:

- Matthew 5
- Mark 7:24-30

2

Prayer Requests

- Pray for peace and stability of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Pray for brothers and sisters who are persecuted because of their faith in some parts of the country.
- We pray that Christians would seek the unity of the Spirit, showing grace and forbearance in a politically divided culture. We pray for peace and stability of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.
- We pray for the churches and servants of God to be protected from persecution in India.
- We mourn with our brothers and sisters in Myanmar who have been sheltering in forests or border regions for months after their towns and villages were destroyed by the military in the ongoing civil war.
- We pray that the churches may be instruments of peace, justice, and reconciliation for the people of Colombia.
- We pray for a just peace in Ukraine. Pray for courage and perseverance for people in Russia who work for peace. Pray that refugees may find safety and welcome.



Joshua Garber

3

Song Suggestions

From the MWC International Songbook 2015

- [“Canticle of the turning: My soul cries out with a joyful shout”](#), Rory Cooney, Irish traditional, #36 (English)
- Hamba Nathi (Come, walk with us), South African traditional, (Zulu, English, Spanish) #3
- Malembe (We know this), Joseph Kabemba Mwenze, (Lingala , English, Spanish, French) #10
- [Am Do Monem Men Mone \(Oh, my heart cries out to God\)](#), traditional Santali tune, Samuel Hembron and Dwight W. Thomas, (Santali, English) #21
- Dios Hoy Nos Llama/Momento Nuevo (God calls us to this time), Dea C. Affini, Ernesto Barros, Tércio Junker, Darlene Schützer, Paulo R. Selles, Eder Soares, translated by Pablo Sosa, (Spanish) #23

4

Additional resources

mwc-cmm.org/peacesunday

a. Additional resources in this package

- Activities
- Suggested liturgies for gathering and benediction
- Prayers
- Teaching resources
- Testimonies

b. Additional resources available online:

- Pictures (including all used in this package)



**5
Activities**

Engage in “guerilla gardening”

- As a congregation, “arm” your members with packets of seeds (vegetables, native flowers).
- Find patches of dirt in need of beauty (e.g., under bridges, between the concrete downtown).
- Plant these seeds. Water and tend them if you can.

Create a community garden

- Create a community garden for those within your congregation and for those who live in the neighbourhood around your gathering place. Sacrifice part of your church lawn for growing food. Or, if you don’t have property, seek out a public/community space where you can plant.
- Mark out plots for vegetable gardens.
- Provide a water source.
- Foster a positive spirit among the people who plant gardens.



“[As part of the GREEN Legacy to plan 5 billion trees], our church members planted trees in their church compounds, open spaces and community lands.”
—Desalegn Abebe, president, Meserete Kristos Church, Ethiopia

Design a “garden” mural for your congregation

- Using colourful paper, create a garden bed poster using brown, black or red paper as the soil. Attach to a prominent indoor wall in your church.
- Supply paper **cut-outs** of fruits and vegetables OR invite congregation members to make their own.
- Invite congregation members to write on the paper plant cut-outs how the church is an expression of hope in the midst of external turmoil.
- Place the cut-outs in the “garden.”
- Thank God for the ways the church is equipped to be agents of peace.



Nature photography
Photo: Len Rempel

Contact Information:

Andrew Suderman | MWC Peace Commission Secretary

AndrewSuderman@mwc-cmm.org | mwc-cmm.org/peace-commission

How did you use these resources to practice peace?

✉ Send your stories, photos, videos or artwork to photos@mwc-cmm.org

The biblical texts, prayers, song suggestions, sermon ideas, testimonies and other resources in this package have been prepared by members of MWC out of their experience in their local context. The teaching does not necessary represent an official MWC position.



Liturgies

Opening Prayer

Invitation to Trust

When dangers invade our sense of safety
and we wonder if our Redeemer cares,
we hear the invitation:
Be at peace. Be calm.

When we face job loss and financial downturns,
and our sense of security is shaky,
we hear the invitation:
Be at peace. Be calm.

When our congregations experience distress, conflict,
and loss of significant leadership,
we hear the invitation:
Be at peace. Be calm.

When controversial issues and rigidity of spirit
threaten to tear at the very fabric of the faith
community,
we hear the invitation:
Be at peace. Be calm.

When our lives feel chaotic and desolate
because of illness or sorrow,
we hear the invitation:
Be at peace. Be calm.

Help us to know, O God,
that the one who calmed the dangerous sea is
present with us,
cares for us, and can calm the stormy waters of our
lives.
Help us to trust more fully and more deeply in you.
We pray in the name of Jesus, who invites us to be at
peace.

Amen.

—*Connie R. Burkholder, Monitor Church of the
Brethren, McPherson, Kansas, USA. Used by
permission.*

Prayer

You who are weary
Sleepless
Tired
Depressed
Discouraged

Do not be afraid!

You who are fed up
Hopeless
Visionless
Fearful
Tearful

Do not be afraid!

God is present in your suffering.
God will calm the winds and waves of your soul!

—*“Prayer” by Junius Dotson reprinted from
The Africana Worship Book Year B, eds. Valerie
Bridgeman Davis and Safiyah Fosua.
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by permission.*



**Worship service at La Voie du Salut in Guinea.
Photo: Guilvogui**



Intercession

Intercessions in time of crisis

God of mercy, God of comfort, we come before you in this time of difficulty, mindful of human frailty and need, confused and struggling to find meaning in the face of suffering.

We are grateful that even as we share in the joy of Christ Jesus, we can also share abundantly in comfort in the midst of suffering.

For victims of fire or flood, storm or earthquake, famine or disease,
For those whom disaster has left homeless, injured, or bereaved,
For refugees and those separated from loved ones,
(The liturgist may add specific petitions relating to the immediate crisis.)
For all who are in danger, trouble, or anguish,

We ask the presence and strength of your Spirit.

Give all who suffer the love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

We know that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because your love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Be the support of all who give their strength, their skill, and their stamina in a ministry of mercy.

Open our hearts in generosity that we may be partners in their commitment to bring relief.

Where tempers flare and a partisan spirit provokes new hostility, raise up people who have patience and restraint.

Where indifference allows crisis to deepen and suffering to go without relief, awaken deliverers who have zeal and strength.

We pray for those who are engaged in making important decisions in this time, for those who report on these events, and for those who shape public opinion.

Give them the courage to speak out and the restraint to listen, that together we may discern the truth and hold aloft its light.

Take away the temptation to trust in human power and military solutions, and give us the courage to be your servants to the community of nations.

Direct all governments in the way of peace and justice, that your will may be known and done among the nations. Deliver us from the sins which lead to war and conflict, and strengthen within us the will to establish righteousness and justice on the earth.

We pray for those who are suffering and can make no sense of tragedy.

Help them to turn to the One who embraces us in our lives - even Jesus Christ, who lived and suffered among us.

There is no one who is righteous, not even one, for we have all turned away from you. Make us aware of our common need of a Savior, and remove from our hearts the pride, ambition, and greed that would lead us to enslave and demean other people.

Have mercy on your whole creation. Hasten the day when the kingdom of the world shall become your Kingdom, and by grace make us worthy to stand before you. Amen.

—Reprinted from 1995 *Moravian Book of Worship with the permission of the Interprovincial Board of Communication, Moravian Church in America.* © 1995 IBOC. www.moravian.org.



A prayer for storm survivors

*The words in regular print are spoken by one voice.
The words in bold print are spoken by all.*

Jesus, we see you calming storms-
storm tossed seas and stormy lives.
Extend your power and grace again,
especially upon these most recent storm victims.
Speak peace and healing over bodies and spirits
broken by the chaos.

Jesus, speak peace.

Silence

Speak peace and hope over families and communities
devastated by sudden loss.

Jesus, speak peace.

Silence

Speak peace and unity over diverse groups of people
so they would come together for greater provision,
just distribution, and effective rebuilding.

Jesus, speak peace.

Silence

Speak peace and protection over rescue workers
as they reach out to those who are suffering.

Jesus, speak peace.

Silence

**You are the Prince of Peace.
You are the Resurrection and the Life.
You are strong to save.
Our hope and trust are in you. Amen.**

—Rev Lisa Ann Moss Degrenia is a United Methodist
minister in the United States. This prayer was posted
to her blog on Christian practices, Revlisad.com.



**Member churches around the world celebrated Peace Sunday
2021 using Mennonite World Conference’s Peace Sunday
worship resource: “Finding hope and healing in crisis.”
Photo: Ashish Kumar Milap**



Teaching resources

Jesus' message of resilience and liberation

Reading: Matthew 5:3-20

In June 1981, our family moved to Cochabamba, Bolivia, where my parents were to teach in a Baptist seminary that wanted more Anabaptist input.

We arrived at a particularly raucous point in Bolivian history. In July 1980, Luis García Meza, a commander of the Bolivian army, led a *coup d'état*, initiating a brutal Pinochet-style regime. Meza only ruled for about 13 months: due to pressure from the international community, he was forced to resign in August 1981. His friend and fellow army general, Celso Terrelío, succeeded Meza with almost an equally repressive rule.

Like other dictators, García Meza introduced a “banned book list.” This move was an attempt to squelch that which could potentially influence people’s thinking, which could also then challenge his rule. Interestingly, Meza included Matthew chapters 5-7 – the Sermon on the Mount – in this “banned list” of books.

The problem, of course, was that my father was supposed to teach the book of Matthew. This led to many significant conversations within the seminary. Would they listen to the government and therefore focus on another book of the Bible? Would they plan to teach Matthew but skip over these three chapters?

They eventually decided to ask the foreigner to teach the course (including the Sermon on the Mount)!

But this came with risks, especially as Meza’s government actively silenced the voices of those whom it perceived as challenging the narrative that it sought to instill. In fact, Meza’s chief repressor Colonel Luis Arce who served as the Minister of Interior cautioned all Bolivians who opposed the new order by saying that they “should walk around with their written will under their arms!”

Why would a dictator want to ban these three chapters? Why did he find these chapters threatening?

There have been interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount that do not challenge power.



United Mennonite Brethren of Panama
Photo: Iglesia Evangélica

When my wife and I served as youth pastors, *The 700 Club*, a weekday American television program made its way onto television screens in our little area of southern Ontario (Canada). Airing since 1966, it describes itself as “a news/magazine program that has the variety and pacing of a morning show.... It also features in-depth investigative reporting...[and] covers major events affecting our nation and the world.”

One day, out of curiosity, I watched a program that focused on Matthew 5:13-16.

What I found striking about the host’s explanation was the way in which he interpreted the categorical statements of Matthew as though it was speaking to American Christians.

*You are the salt of the earth...
You are the light of the world...*



Americans, he suggested, had an obligation to share about the American way of life. This God-ordained American way of life, with its emphasis on freedom, economic prosperity and of course democracy provides an example to the rest of the world, according to the host. It offers, the host suggested, American hope that provides flavour and light for the rest of the world.

This program demonstrated how easy it is to interpret the Sermon on the Mount, and the biblical story in general, as an expression of Manifest Destiny, which is itself a product of nationalism. The Western missionary enterprise, notes the late South African missiologist David Bosch, assumed the superiority of Western culture and that God has chosen Western nations as standard bearers.¹ “The nation-state,” he argues, “replaced the holy church and the holy empire.”²

Kelly Brown Douglas – a Black, womanist theologian in the United States – depicts this mindset as “American exceptionalism,” grown from seeds of the white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon myth. “The ‘city on the hill’ that the early Americans were building,” she says, “was nothing less than a testament to Anglo-Saxon chauvinism,”³ that shaped democracy though a particular perception as to how the country should be structured defined by race;⁴ the repercussions of which we continue to see today.

Part of the issue – as my students at university hear often – is the tendency to not take the socio-political context or the literary context into consideration when reading and interpreting Scripture. The host of *The 700 Club*, for example, assumed the “you” in the “you are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...” to refer to him and/or American Christians as Americans.



Sunderland Mennonite Church, Dhamtari
Photo: Supplied

But, if we pay attention to the text and the flow of Jesus’ words, the “you” refers to the final Beatitude: “*you* who are persecuted for my sake” (Matthew 5:11). It is those “you” who will function as salt and light in this world.⁵ It turns this passage into a revolutionary and subversive tool.

Jesus is very clever in his preaching style. Note how Jesus highlights a different logic. Those who are “blessed” are the ones who typically would not have mattered in society (the poor, the meek, the merciful). They are the ones who do not first come to mind (those who mourn, those who are pure in heart, those who are the peacemakers).

But these forgotten and unexpected people are precisely the ones who Jesus highlights as examples of what it means to be blessed! The spirit that the poor possess is a blessed one because the poor understand what it means to be in solidarity with one another. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness or justice see and understand God’s desire for people to live in right relationships with one another, with creation and with God. These are traits of God’s Kingdom.

¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 298.

² David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 299.

³ Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 10.

⁴ Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground*, 10.

⁵ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew: Interpretation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 44.



Remember that the type of blessing Jesus talks about is not something passive that one simply receives, but rather is active and impels people to get up and move. The Beatitudes highlight an alternative logic that moves away from the desire toward seeing ourselves as “exceptional” precisely because that would then replace God who is the very source of exceptionality, salty flavour and light in our world.

It doesn't seem as though Jesus encourages us to determine *who* is salt and *who* is not, or *who* is light and who is not. Rather, Jesus makes these categorical statements as a way to describe *when* someone serves as salt and light; *when* someone embodies Jesus' alternative logic.

What's more, Jesus' use of “you” – “you are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...” – moves away from an individualized understanding and highlights the corporate nature of this claim. As New Testament scholar Douglas Hare notes, “You are salt, yes, but for the earth, not for yourselves. Likewise you are light, but for the whole world, not for a closed fellowship.”⁶

The “community as a whole is challenged to fulfill its corporate mission of serving as salt and light for the world.... It is one we must work at together.”⁷

When we adopt Jesus' alternative logic as our vision and embrace our communal walk to participate in it, we liberate ourselves from narratives that destroy, demean, exploit and exclude. In other words, we listen to the voices of those who are oppressed, poor and marginalized precisely so that we may hear God's cry. Things are not as they should be; we must continue to struggle to make things right. Jesus' logic challenges the clamour of other narratives that seek not only our attention, but our allegiance.

In standing up to these other narratives, narratives that seek to maintain “exceptionalism,” cause injustice, and create systems of oppression we embody an emancipatory politics. This term from Jacques Rancière (a French philosopher) means a form of politics that ruptures and disrupts the “what is” with the “what can be.” In other words, it challenges systems that perpetuate death, exclusion and violence, exposing the contingencies on which they rest, and reasserts an alternative political agency that embodies the future God desires in and for this world.

At the end of teaching the book of Matthew at the Baptist seminary in Bolivia, my father asked whether Luis García Meza, the Bolivian dictator, was right in banning Matthew chapters 5-7. The students all responded with a resounding “yes!” These chapters provide the seeds of a revolutionary logic that would challenge Meza's – or any dictator's – rule.

Jesus invites us to participate in a community called to resiliently embody Jesus' subversive and revolutionary logic of liberation in our world.



—Andrew G. Suderman is secretary of the Peace Commission, Assistant Professor of Theology, Peace, and Mission at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Pennsylvania, and the Director of Global Partnerships for Mennonite Mission Network.

⁶ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, 44.

⁷ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, 44.



Testimonies

Peace with broken pieces: the power of resilience

“The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him” (Jeremiah 18:4).

This theme has been discussed a lot recently, especially since the pandemic, while some of us may be struggling with health concerns, loss of hope, and so on. What exactly is resilience?

During my training with Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute in 2018, I met a Palestinian Christian woman who shared about her life within a war zone. My biggest question is *how can they have such a resilient, strong character, endurance, in the midst of their chaotic, and horrific place to live?* How has she and her family managed to live her entire existence in the middle of persecution, hostility and even bomb explosions? She revealed that one of her closest friends was killed in a bombing. I’m not sure how she manages to survive in such a setting.

Resilience is defined as the ability to bounce back from adversity, adapt, move on and, in certain cases, even flourish, writes Eilene Zimmerman. Genetics, personal history, environment and situational context all play a role in an individual’s resilience.¹

I believe that resilience may be built in individuals and societies via crisis, challenges, calamities, tragedies, hardships and sufferings where they can make peace with the situation and adjust to uncertainty. This is the strength of internal resilience.

Viktor E. Frankl, in his legendary book about his time in a concentration camp, says, “one could make a victory of those experiences, turning life into an inner triumph, or one could ignore the challenge and simply vegetate, as did a majority of the prisoners.”² This

is a powerful thought borne out by real experience about the ability to achieve resilience amid adversity.

During my psychosocial and trauma healing class at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), I learned about the art of *kintsugi*. *Kintsugi* is a wonderful skill of restoring shattered objects by lacquering the cracks and meticulously dusting them with gold powder. The golden flaws, according to the Japanese tradition, make the pieces even more precious. It’s lovely to think of this technique as a metaphor for our life, to imagine our damaged, challenging, broken or painful aspects radiating light, gold and beauty.



Kintsugi
Photo: Motoki Tonn (Unsplash)

Kintsugi teaches us that broken parts of our bodies make us stronger and better than we were before. When we think we’re broken, we can pick up the pieces, put them back together, and learn to appreciate the cracks.³

In the Old Testament, God the Jehovah – also known as the potter’s hand – makes Israel into a new vessel (Jeremiah 18:4). I like the word “reworked” here. I believe this is a process of becoming a new creation, a new person, that only God and us can make happen.

¹ Eilene Zimmerman, “What Makes Some People More Resilient Than Others”, New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/health/resilience-relationships-trauma.html>)

² Viktor Emil Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Pocket Books, 1959, 1963), 115.

³ Candice Kumai, “Honor your imperfections with the Japanese art of ‘Kintsugi’,” Shine (<https://advice.theshineapp.com/articles/honor-your-imperfections-with-the-japanese-art-of-kintsugi/>)





It is a journey of our encounter with God and, at the same time, our practice of self-awareness, self-discovery, self-healing or self-transformation to be a new vessel in the hand of the Creator for God's purpose and glory.

This Peace Sunday, as we remember many hardships, wounds, traumas, challenges, suffering or pain in whatever season we are in, with God's help and loving hands, we can be reworked as a new person and a new community of God.

Are we willing to embrace our brokenness, vulnerability, and scars to be transformed into a more resilient community of God so that we might empower those around us?

This is the power of resilience: working with God to co-create a newness in ourselves; to be more prolific, alive; to be a new human being; and to be a new people of God in this changing world. Let's make peace with our broken pieces!



Andi O. Santoso is a member of the Mission Commission. He is an ordained minister in the GKMI Mennonite church in Indonesia.

Finding new ways to respond: Resilience in the face of the pandemic

When we look back at what happened in the last two years all throughout the world, one could just offer a sigh. We were never prepared for this.

Being locked down for several months in the Philippines forced us to reconfigure our social life. We tend to look at each family member from a different angle; the pandemic has made us realize that our families are treasures that we should nourish.

Everyone was worried about getting simple colds or a little sneezing, as this could be interpreted

differently. When you went to the hospital for a check-up, there was a chance that you would be put in an isolation room with no relatives near you.

Panic and loneliness are our worst enemy.

Simply not having control over the situation and feeling disempowered makes us feel lost.

One good thing that happened during this disruptive and challenging situation was that our creativity was squeezed.

In our country, movement of goods stalled because of lock down. People were hungry. Agricultural products need to move.

This caused a new concept to emerge: "Produce Peace Plus" was born. Produce Peace Plus was a way of moving produce from the farm to the consumer's table while providing a solution for products discarded because of lock down. We were able to deliver food to people in need.

Creativity comes from our great Creator.

As human beings, we submit to the one who created us, we say, "Not my will, but your will be done."

Although we enjoy God's creation, we must not worship Creation itself rather than the Creator. When we trust God, the creative Creator provides imaginative ways to respond to the challenges that emerge during the pandemic and beyond.



Joji Pantoja is chair of the Peace Commission and founder and chief executive officer of Coffee for Peace in Davao, Philippines.

