

We Are Peacemakers with the Spirit of Wa(和)

Worship Service for Asian Heritage Month

May is Asian Heritage Month in Canada. It is a time to acknowledge the long and rich history of Asian Canadians and their achievements and contributions to the growth and prosperity of Canada. It also provides us an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the beauty and wisdom of various Asian cultures and traditions.

Wa(和) is a fundamental concept of Japan's moral system and a traditional Japanese family value. The term means "harmony" and implies a peaceful unity within a social group. It stems from the Japanese constitution around 600 AD and is still alive today in Japan.

Preparation

If possible, ask Asian members to teach the congregation hymns in Asian languages and to help you discern the ways you can incorporate traditional Asian instruments—drum, flute, gong, bell—in your worship.

Consider using artwork from Asian heritages in your bulletin and PowerPoint. You might decorate the sanctuary with origami cranes. As part of your hospitality time after the service, consider serving tea or food from various Asian countries with a little background on an accompanying sign.

Gathering

Welcome and Announcement

Passing of the Peace

God has called us to live in peace.

The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

As we light this candle we are reminded of the flame in each of us; a fire of passion to be shared with the world. With Christ as our light and our way, we come now to worship. Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Thanks be to God!

Opening Hymn (choose from these suggestions)

VU 243 "Praise to God" (traditional Japanese melody, "Sakura")

VU 251 "God Created Heaven and Earth" (Taiwanese hymn)

VU 395 "Come In, Come In and Sit Down"

VU 412 "This Is the Day" (Fijian folk melody)

VU 414 "God, Be Praised at Early Morn (Qing-chen zao qi zan-mei Shen)"

MV 1 "Let Us Build a House"

MV 5 "Holy Spirit, You're Like the Wind"

Call to Worship

One: We are different in personality, in background, in age, and in abilities,
but we worship as one.

All: We are people of God.

One: We have different needs, different fears, different hopes,
but we know that God is here for us.

All: We are children of God.

One: We are aware of crying injustice, unequal wealth, and discrimination,
but we are determined to be God's co-creators for good.

All: We are co-workers of God.

One: God is universal, God is powerful, God is empowering.

All: Let us praise and worship God!

Prayer of Approach

God of all people,
we give you thanks for bringing us together
to strengthen our faith community.
Jesus has come among us
to bring acceptance, healing, and peace.
Help us to seek for peaceful harmony.
Lead us into new and faithful ventures
so that we may work with you
to build a better neighbourhood and world.
Amen.

Children's Time

Share the story and meaning of origami cranes with children and church members. (See, for example, the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre's Origami Crane Project, www.jccc.on.ca/origami-cranes.) Children could be shown how to fold the origami cranes in a small group, e.g., Sunday school class, youth gathering, study group, meditation class.

Folding Senbazuru, 1,000 origami cranes, is a symbol of peace in Japan. After World War II, the famous story of Sadako Sasaki stood as an inspiration to all, and a testament to the power of the paper crane as a compelling symbol for hope, love, honour, and peace. Also, the cranes became a powerful symbol of care, courage, and healing for the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami on March 11, 2011.

Listening

Suggested Scripture

Psalm 46

Colossians 3:12–15

Matthew 5:1–12

Scripture readings can be read in different languages, including Asian languages, particularly if the service is held on the Day of Pentecost.

Reflection

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount shows a new understanding of the law of God and offers us practical wisdom on what it means to live now in response to God’s desires. Our commitments and efforts may make our world a safer place to be.

Option 1: Peace Pole Project

A Peace Pole is a monument that displays the message “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in 4–8 languages. The first Peace Poles outside Japan were constructed in 1983. Since then, more than 200,000 have been placed around the world in over 180 countries. Learn more on The World Peace Prayer Society’s website (www.worldpeace.org), or search YouTube for “peace pole.” Youth may be interested in making and placing a peace pole in your church garden.

Option 2: Stories of Supporting Syrian Refugees:

We should not forget that Syria is a country in Western Asia. Thousands of Syrians have lost their lives in almost five years of armed conflict, which began with anti-government protests before escalating into a full-scale civil war. More than 11 million people have been displaced from their homes since the start of the conflict, most of them women and

children. The United Church of Canada has an ongoing appeal for support for Syrian refugees (www.united-church.ca/Syria).

Option 3: Personal Testimony

Invite Asian members of your church or community to share their faith journeys.

Hymn Suggestions

VU 354 “In Old Galilee, When Sweet Breezes Blew (Gariraya no kaze kaoru oka de)”

VU 362 “Here, O God, Your Servants Gather”

VU 595 “We Are Pilgrims”

VU 691 “Though Ancient Walls”

VU 698 “With the Wings of Our Mind (Ttugoun Maum)”

MV 154 “Deep in Our Hearts”

Responding

Prayer of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

Suggestion: Many Asian cultures associate silence with wisdom, and it is also used to express power. Have a few minutes of silence at the beginning of the prayer with shakuhachi (bamboo notched flute) music. (Some samples are available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/5vmShDcuT8U>, <https://youtu.be/hmRPECd9Yiq>).

(silence)

God of a thousand names, Source of Love,
We thank you for the privilege of gathering here
to bless the gifts of diversity that we share.
We give thanks for the vision and energy that transform us.
Here we find friends, and are supported by others,
from here we can go out to change our neighbourhood and our world.
(a sound of a bell)

God of wholeness, God of peace,
to you we give our thanks and praise.
To a world that searches, you are a guiding light,
to a world that is hungry, you are food that sustains,
to a world that suffers, you are hope of release,
to a world that is broken, you are a healer that restores,
to a world full of hate, you are love that forgives,
to a world that denies, you are truth that endures.
(a sound of a bell)

We pray justice for the falsely accused,
freedom for the wrongly imprisoned,
healing for the tortured or abused,
care for those in need of nurture,
concern for the refugee and dispossessed,
and forgiveness for our emotional detachment.
Make us children of quietness and heirs of peace,
enkindle in us the fire of your love;
sow in us your fear;
strengthen our weakness by your power;
bind us closely to you and to each other
in our peaceful unity.

(a sound of bell)

In the silence, as we commune with you, O God,
may you give us courage to change, insight to know how,
and hope in the result.
Hear our prayers for peace in our community and in our world.
We lift all our prayers, spoken and unspoken,
and even some beyond words,
in the name of the one, Jesus Christ
who taught us to pray saying, Our Father ...

(invite each person to say the Prayer of Jesus in their own language)

Minutes for Mission 2016

Introduce one of the Asian stories in the *Minutes for Mission 2016* booklet to the congregation. God calls us to reflect on these stories and to commit ourselves to human rights and justice and peace in the world. Suggested stories: Jan. 24 (p. 4), Feb. 21 (p. 10), March 27 (p. 15), April 3 (p. 16), June 12 (p. 26), July 10 (p. 30), Aug. 7 (p. 34), Aug. 14 (p. 35), Oct. 2 (p. 42).

Invitation to the Offering

Offering

Prayer of Dedication

Sending

Hymn Suggestions

VU 568 “Dear Lord, Lead Me Day by Day” (Philippine folk melody)

VU 602 “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

VU 603 “In Loving Partnership We Come”

Sending and Blessing

Go from this place, taking the peace you have found here.

Renewed in our faith and inspired to act,

let us be the peacemakers the world aches for.

Go in peace. Make peace. Be at peace.

May the presence of God nourish and strengthen us.

May the grace of Jesus Christ encourage us to live with open hearts.

May the power of the Holy Spirit fill our hearts with joy and fullness.

Amen.

Choral Blessing (choose from the following)

VU 34 “Come Now, O God of Peace (O-So-So)”

VU 964 “Go Now in Peace”

MV 218 “May the Love of the Lord (Wei yuan Shen di ai)”

—Rev. Eiko Hosaka