

Seeking Peace: Everybody Is Fulfilled

Worship Service for Asian Heritage Month

With deep concern for the suffering of West Asia/the Middle East, the poverty in South and Southeast Asia, and the tension in East Asia, this service is focused on seeking peace. As it recalls the faith and values of Asian traditions, it celebrates Asia's cultural richness and diversity.

Context: A Few Words about Asia

Asian cultures are very diverse. There is also an expansive interfaith context in Asia, with traditions including Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

Over half of the world's population lives in Asia. Immigrants and refugees from Asian countries are migrating to Canada in increasing numbers. When they do, they contribute to Canada's racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

Although East Asian countries, as well as some South and Southeast Asian countries, are growing economically, there is still overall a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Most Asian countries experienced colonization in the 19th century through to the 20th century; they are still affected by post-colonial systems of empire.

There have been small and large conflicts among Asian countries because of differences of religion and the aftermath of colonization. But Asian people as a whole are peaceful, respectful, and hospitable. And no religion opposes those values.

Preparation

- Decorate the altar and chancel with various colourful Asian fabrics. Invite people with Asian backgrounds to wear culturally significant clothing.
- Invite a musician who plays a traditional Asian instrument such as Koto, Erhu, or Sitar to play in the worship service.
- Prepare origami sheets in different colours for the congregation, and give one piece to each person at the door. *(Some of you may choose to learn how to make a paper crane beforehand, so that it can be part of the children's story; to learn how, search for online instructions or watch <https://youtu.be/RsnEFQv3uCl>.)*
- Use a chime for a silent prayer.

Order of the Worship Service

Music (Introit)

You might use traditional Asian music throughout the service. (Invite a traditional Asian instrumentalist, or consider using musical selections by Asian Canadian artists.)

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, come to the Source of love, light, and peace.

All: We come to enter the gate of love!

Leader: Come, come and celebrate the rich traditions and wisdom of the people of God.

All: We come to look for the light shining on our journey.

Leader: Come, come and pray for peace, peace in our communities, peace among nations, peace in Asian countries, and peace in the world.

All: We come to pray for peace. May all nations and peoples be united in love.

Leader: Let us praise the Holy One who created all nations and peoples.

Opening Hymn (choose from the following)

VU 243 "Praise to God"

VU 251 "God Created Heaven and Earth"

VU 252 "Jaya Ho"

VU 414 "God, Be Praised at Early Morn"

MV 56 "Come, O Come, Let Us Praise"

Opening Prayer

God of the Universe, we come here to worship together, to celebrate the beauty and diversity of your creation, and to seek peace in our diverse communities, in Asian countries, and all over the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who is called Prince of Peace. Amen.

Remembrance and Celebration of Asian Wisdom and Faith Traditions

Leader: With gratitude and respect, let us listen to what Asian wisdom and faith teach about peace.

Reader 1: Hindus are taught to fulfill DHARMA, which means caring for your family, friends, and animals with kindness and respect, and living in harmony with all creatures.

Reader 2: A Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, says that we may think of walking on water as a miracle, but it is walking peacefully on the Earth that is the real miracle. When we walk peacefully, appreciating the peace and beauty that are available right now, in the present moment, we can learn to touch a healing and transforming peace both around us and within us.

Reader 3: Muslims have five duties. The third is to be aware of other people's needs and to help those in need. The fifth is showing respect for Allah and other people.

Reader 4: Confucius said to his disciples, "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you." Confucius taught that loving kindness, compassion, tolerance, respect, and honesty are important virtues as a human.

Reader 5: The Taoist master Zhuangzi said, "the heavens and the Earth and we ourselves depend on each other to manifest, and all things in the universe are one with us." So a Taoist knows all lives and things in the universe are interdependent and interconnected in harmony.

Leader: God of all nations, open our hearts to learn from the wisdom and spiritual traditions of our Asian siblings. Open our minds to understand and enjoy our differences and richness. Open us fully to receive your love and compassion and fulfill your peace on the Earth. Amen.

Hymn Suggestions

VU 362 "Here, O God, Your Servants Gather"

MV 56 "Come, O Come, Let Us Praise"

MV 105 "You Are My Father"

Time with Children

Option 1: Make Paper Cranes

See Preparation for where to find instructions. Read or share the story of “Sadako and a Thousand Paper Cranes”:

Sadako was born in Hiroshima in 1943 and 10 years after the disaster of the atomic bomb, she was diagnosed with leukemia. She held origami cranes, wishing to live, since there was a legend that a thousand origami cranes made any dream come true. However, Sadako died before completing a thousand. Her friends finished them and fundraised to make a memorial for Sadako and all the children who died after the atomic bomb. Since then, a thousand origami cranes has been a symbol of the prayer for peace.

Option 2: Explain the Meaning of Peace

Explain the meaning of Peace in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. 「平和」

「平」 means everything is equal and even, well balanced.

「和」 means harmony, and gentle, relaxed, calm, and friendly. The character is made of “rice” and “mouth,” which means people have enough to eat and there is no conflict.

Mild weather and sufficient rain in East, Southeast, and South Asia has made people produce enough rice to feed their huge population. From planting to reaping, people need to work together at the rice fields. The harmony of the family and the community is essential.

So, for East Asian people, “peace” is such an image; everybody can eat sufficiently, is equally respected, and lives together in harmony.

Conversation point: What image do you have of the word “peace”?

Scripture Readings (choose from the following)

Isaiah 11: 6–9

John 14:25–31

Ephesians 2:14–19

Reflection

Questions for reflection:

- Who is Jesus as a Peace Maker?
- What can we learn from Asian wisdom to create peace in our community and in the world?
- What is a challenge in doing so?
- What is helpful in getting over this challenge?

Hymn Suggestions

VU 684 “Make me a channel of your peace”

MV 141 “We Are All One People”

MV 154 “Deep in Our hearts”

MV 173 “Put Peace into Each Other’s Hands”

Prayers of the People

Sung Response: VU 34 “Come Now, O God of Peace (O-so-so)”

(This sung response was written as a prayer for the reunification of the divided Korean peninsula. It is a deep cry for peace in an area that has been divided by conflict.)

We understand that there is a common humanity in our siblings of different traditions.

We are all connected and embraced by love and compassion.

Thanks be to you, O God, for your vision of peace and your unconditional love for all the people and places.

Help us to forgive and be forgiven. Help us to accept others and be accepted by others.

And make us your channel of peace in our community and in the world.

(Chime and Silence)

Sung Response: “Come Now, O God of Peace (O-so-so)”

We pray for people living in poverty and hunger, especially those in South and Southeast Asia.

We pray for children and women in a position of vulnerability.

Increase love, compassion, and care in the people who have power and wealth so that everybody is fulfilled and equally respected.

(Chime and Silence)

Sung Response: “Come Now, O God of Peace (O-so-so)”

We pray for the peace in East Asia.

Remove hatred and restore the trust among the nations.

Increase the capacity for understanding and tolerance in the political leaders.

Help people to remember they are deeply connected in common values—loving kindness, compassion, respect, and harmony.

(Chime and Silence)

Sung Response: "Come Now, O God of Peace (O-so-so)"

We pray for peace in the Middle Eastern countries.

We pray for the people who lost homes and families because of war.

We pray for the enduring work of peacemakers.

Remove fear and hatred and restore love, compassion, and desire for peace in the people and political leaders.

And show us the way to make peace and support the peace makers.

(Chime and Silence)

Sung Response: "Come Now, O God of Peace (O-so-so)"

(Add more prayers of your faith community.)

And we close our prayer saying together the prayer that Jesus taught us...

The Lord's Prayer

Offering

(If origami cranes were folded during the children's time, collect them together with the offering to be brought forward—or ask the children to hold up their piece of paper as the offering is collected.)

Offertory

MV 60 "God, We Give You Heartfelt Praise"

Prayer of the Dedication

Closing Hymn (choose from the following)

MV 216 "Wherever You May Go"

MV 218 "May the Love of the Lord"

VU 698 "With the wings of our minds"

Commission and Benediction

Leader: May God surround us and unite us with Love

All: We are loved and may we love each other.

Leader: May the light of Christ guide our journey to peace.

All: May we walk the sacred path of peace and love.

Leader: May the Holy Spirit free us to live deeply in each moment.

All: May we embrace each moment with peace and love. Amen.

—Rev. Yoko Kihara