# The United Church of Canada/L’Église Unie du Canada

# Worship Service—Peace in the Marketplace

*prepared by Brian McIntosh; adapted from Morning Prayer, May 21, 2011,  
International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica* (©2011 WCC)

## Gathering

### Greeting and Passing the Peace

L: Glory to God and peace on earth,

said the angel,

with all the heavenly host.

So, we say to one another:

the peace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**All: And also with you.**

L: We greet each other with the peace of Christ.

*(people greet one another with the sign of peace)*

### Call to Worship

We come hungry,

**hungry for a justice**

**that provides enough for all.**

We come thirsty,

**thirsty for a market**

**that looks after both the last and the first.**

We come hungry,

**hungry for a communion**

**with the poor and the oppressed.**

We come thirsty,

**thirsty for a corporate culture**

**that reconciles profit with need.**

We come hungry and thirsty

for the just peace of Jesus.

**Come let us worship him.**

### Opening Hymn

“Let Us Build a House” (MV 1)

### Call to Confession

In our day, people with money

make more money;

people without money

lose ground, weight, and teeth.

People with money

enjoy health and wealth,

while people without money

hover between life and death.

In our day,

¼ of the people eat ¾ of the food.

A few get a lot.

Many get none.

Let us reflect for a moment on our part in these realities.

*\*a moment for private reflection\**

Let us pray.

### Prayer of Confession

Maker of heavens and earth and of all that is good,

**we confess that we ignore**

**your covenant of grace and love**.

We shun those who are poor

**And let the rich have what they want.**

You who overturned temple tables,

and in whose eye, all of us are equal,

**forgive us.**

Liberator who dwells with the lost and least,

**we confess that we have sinned against you,**

**and against all who cry out,**

**all who suffer in silence,**

**all who know only abuse and violence.**

**Forgive us.**

You long for all needs to be met,

**give bread to all those who are hungry,**

**and hunger for justice to those who are fed.**

Strengthen us,

so that we may give to you

not only our attention,

**but our lives of service**

**with the one who is bread for all,**

**Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### Words of Assurance

*(suitable words are offered by the leader)*

## Listening

### Scripture Reading

Matthew 20:1–16

### Response to the Reading

“I Saw the Rich Ones” (MV 127), verse 3 (“The men in the vineyards…”)

### Sermon Suggestions

* Times were tough for 80 percent of the population in and around Galilee who lived at the time of Jesus.
* The Romans exercised the power of empire, dominating the lives of the majority and ruling with terror and taxation.
* The gap between haves and have-nots was huge, with a very small middle class of merchants and tradespeople in between.
* In his travels, Jesus spoke mostly to the marginalized, and he likely spoke directly to their living conditions when he told this parable.
* Jesus’ parables always have startling endings, a twist that points to domination-free living.
* All who worked all day get paid the same as those who worked a couple of hours. The end result doesn’t strike us initially as fair or just.
* This landowner doesn’t act as most landowners or as good capitalists today do. This landowner offered a different model of economic compensation, based on need and not on greed.
* Instead of pursuing efficiency and endless profit, our Christian communal life is to be built on covenant love, compassion, and the passion for distributive justice.
* What if we organized the global economy along these lines? Impossible to imagine? The gospel would have us imagine nothing less!
* Human beings created the present system, and we are the ones to transform it!

The end of the World Council of Churches’ Decade to Overcome Violence, marked by 1,000 delegates at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 2011, signals not an end but a beginning of a new pursuit of a just and lasting peace. In its closing message to the churches of the world, Glory to God and Peace on Earth, the Convocation said this about the third of its four themes, Peace in the Marketplace:

The global economy often provides many examples of structural violence that victimizes not through the direct use of weapons or physical force but by passive acceptance of widespread poverty, trade disparities and inequality among classes and nations. In contrast to unfettered economic growth as envisioned by the neoliberal system, the Bible signals a vision of life in abundance for all. The churches must learn to advocate more effectively for full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights as the foundation for “economies of life.”

It is a scandal that enormous amounts of money are spent on military budgets and toward providing weapons for allies and the arms trade while this money is urgently needed to eradicate poverty around the globe, and to fund an ecologically and socially responsible reorientation of the world economy. We urge the governments of this world to take immediate action to redirect their financial resources to programmes that foster life rather than death. We encourage the churches to adopt common strategies toward transforming economies. The churches must address more effectively irresponsible concentration of power and wealth as well as the disease of corruption. Steps toward just and sustainable economies include more effective rules for the financial market, the introduction of taxes on financial transactions and just trade relationships.

*(To read the entire message, visit* [*www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/  
wcc-resources/documents/presentations-speeches-messages/iepc-message.html*](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/presentations-speeches-messages/iepc-message.html)*.)*

### Affirmation Litany

L1: Society wants us to believe

in goodness determined by supply and demand,

by productivity and efficiency.

L2: We are called to challenge these idols

and commit to an economy of Christian grace.

L1: Society wants us to believe the value of our lives

depends how much we possess and consume.

L2: Christ says:

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,*

*and with all your soul, and with all your mind….*

*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matt 22:37, 39)

**All: This is true. This we believe.**

L1: Society would have us believe wealth and power

are the sum and aim of humanity.

L2: Christ says:

*“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*

*than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”* (Luke 18:25)

**All: This is true. This we believe.**

L1: Many today think jobs must always go

where labour is cheap and people expendable.

L2: Through Amos, God says:

*“Thus says the Lord:…*

*I will not revoke the punishment*

*because they sell the righteous for silver*

*and the needy for a pair of sandals.”* (Amos 2:6)

**All: This is true. This we believe.**

L1: The market is not

the best distributor of wealth and resources.

L2: Through Isaiah, the Spirit says:

*“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;*

*and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!*

*Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”* (Isaiah 55:1)

**All: This is true. This we believe.**

L1: The earth is not meant for exploitation

in the name of progress.

L2: The Psalmist says:

*“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it,*

*the world, and those who live in it.”* (Psalm 24:1)

**All: This is true. This we believe.**

L1: Greed is never good.

L2: The apostle John says:

*“The world and its desires are passing away,*

*but those who do the will of God live forever.”* (1 John 2:117)

**All: This is true. This we believe.**

L1: We are not at the mercy

of those who use violence.

L2: Jesus said:

*“Blessed are the peacemakers,*

*for they shall be called the children of God.”* (Matthew 5:9)

**All: This is true. This we believe. May it be so.**

### Hymn

“God Weeps” (MV 78)

## Responding

### Invitation and Presentation of Offering

*(by local custom)*

### Prayers of the People

You created the wondrous cosmos,

and birthed to your people from earth’s holy ground,

**and so we praise and thank you, O God.**

When empire threatened your people,

you released the Hebrews from bondage.

You liberate the poor from debt,

you inspired Christ with the passion for solidarity.

and so we affirm before you, O God of grace:

**Goodness is stronger than evil,**

**love is stronger than hate,**

**truth is stronger than lies,**

**peace is stronger than war.**

When we go astray,

when corruption and violence divide up the world,

when our courage is weak,

we want to believe, O God of grace:

**Goodness is stronger than evil,**

**love is stronger than hate,**

**truth is stronger than lies,**

**peace is stronger than war.**

Help us to share until there is

enough for each and for all.

Help us to become

a commonwealth of equality and creation’s care.

Help us seek common interest and communion everywhere.

*(add local prayers of thanks and intercession*

*and end with the Lord’s Prayer)*

### Hymn

“For the Fruit of All Creation” (VU 227)