# Advent Service for Peace in Palestine and Israel (2A)

### Introit

*Voices United* 34, “Come Now, O God of Peace”

#### Call to Worship

One: A voice cries out in the wilderness.

**All:** **Prepare the way of the Lord!**

One: Straighten the road so peace may prevail!

**All:** **Straighten the road so justice may triumph!**

One: So God’s glory can be revealed.

**All:** **And God’s people may live in peace.**

(*S. Berube*)

### Opening Prayer

Holy One,

we come before you this day hoping to find a sense of peace

for ourselves, our families, our neighbours, and for all of your people.

We long for the day when the wolf and the lamb,

when the leopard and the kid may all live together in harmony.

In the same way,

we dream that your people in Palestine and Israel,

in Syria and Canada may all live in peace with justice.

Open us to your Word

so we may fully recognize that we too may be instruments of your righteousness and your peace.

**Amen.**

(*S. Berube*)

### Learning Together Sparks

Reflect on the idea that peace is not the absence of something (the absence of bullying, war, noise, chaos) but the presence of something (justice, love, understanding, God).

How would you define peace? Imagine and discuss (with the aid of visuals) what peace would look like

* in the playground
* at home
* in your community (be specific)
* in Israel and Palestine
* in [*name other areas that are significant to your community*]

What would need to be present for peace to come into these places? How can this reflection help to inform our prayers?

Consider incorporating a variety of people’s visions of peace in your reflection (famous theologians, activists, and people in your community).

### Prayer

VU 683, “An Affirmation of Peace”

### Scripture Lessons

Isaiah 11:1–10

Psalm 72:1–7, 18–19 (VU 790 parts one and three)

Romans 15:4–13

Matthew 3:1–12

### Reflection

*The following reflection inspired by the scripture lessons is by Steve Berube, a recently returned Ecumenical Accompanier from Palestine/Israel.*

As a 31-year-old starting at the Atlantic School of Theology in 1988, I was worried about the General Council decision that sexual orientation was not a barrier to ministry. I supported the decision of the General Council but was worried by the tremendous amount of acrimony and fear-mongering at that time. Many in the broader Christian community were deriding the denomination. We were the brunt of any number of jokes and insults. I admit, I feared for my future on the path toward ministry.

Our denomination has faced many challenges from our inception through to today because of our willingness to embrace the call for justice and the vision of God’s peaceable kin-dom so firmly embedded in our scriptures and sacred stories.

Today, we are facing another moral imperative. Our Palestinian brothers and sisters are asking us to “speak a word of truth and take a stand for truth” against the occupation of their land.

Our support is rooted in the desire to see an end to the human rights abuses and violations of international laws and treaties faced daily by Palestinians and witnessed by various groups, including those appointed by our denomination to serve in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel of the World Council of Churches.

Our support is also rooted in the rulings of the International Court of Justice and the Red Cross, who have some responsibility for upholding the Geneva Conventions. Our criticism is squarely placed at the feet of those who knowingly benefit from the occupation, including the Israeli government. Our criticism is not of the Israeli population in general. It does not take a prophet to realize there are those who will challenge us and speak against us. All manner of insults will be hurled at us. I suspect we will be dismissed as irrelevant, uninformed, and prejudiced by voices in the media.

There will also be those who will say to us, “Not now!” or “Take a different path.” These voices echo the sentiments shared with Dr. Martin Luther King when he was unjustly imprisoned in the Birmingham jail. The question in reply is “If not now, then when?”

Once again, as we have so many times before, we need to offer a vision of peace like that of Isaiah that stretches the imagination. Like John the Baptist, we once again need to be willing to bravely speak truth to power. For that is our history, that is our legacy, and that is God’s call to us.

Peace, Shalom, Salaam,

Steven Berube

### Pastoral Prayer

May your wisdom and understanding rest upon us, O God.

So we might live into the reality your vision offers us:

A vision of wolves and lambs together,

of leopards lying down with kid goats,

a vision of peace with all of our brothers and sisters.

May your mercy and compassion prevail between us, O God,

So we might experience the forgiveness we need for ourselves

and be empowered to offer forgiveness and compassion to others.

May your righteousness give us strength, O God.

Enable us to withstand the taunts and criticisms of those

who would prefer for us to ignore

the voices crying out for peace with justice in Israel and Palestine

May our faithfulness to your call bear fruit, O God.

So the earth will be filled with the grace and peace

that you desire for all of your people.

**Amen**

(*S. Berube*)

### Hymn Suggestions

VU 682, “O Day of Peace”

VU 684, “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”

VU 8, “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

VU p. 883, “Comfort, Comfort Now My People”

MV 19, “Maranatha”

MV 24, “Breath of God, Breath of Peace”

MV 149, “Peace for the Children”

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