

“And the Hour is Now Late”

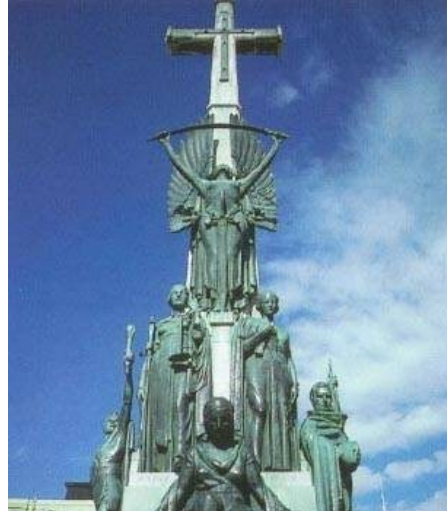
Matthew 14:15b

Remembering World War 1, Hiroshima Day and praying for peace in Gaza.

“Give Peace in Our Time O Lord”

There is a certain familiarity about the prayer at the base of Christchurch’s World War 1 memorial. Unveiled in 1937, the five figures represent resignation and sacrifice (a mother), valour (a knight with flag and lance), peace (a young woman clutching a dove and carrying an olive branch), youth (holding the torch) and justice (an older woman holding scales and sword of justice) sit below an angel whose arms are outstretched intent on breaking the sword of war. At the very top is the cross. William Trethewey’s sculpture reflects the longing for peace in what even from Aotearoa New Zealand looked increasingly like war.

On August 4, 1914 Britain declared war on Germany, immediately catapulting members of the empire like Aotearoa New Zealand into the offensive. The New Zealand Governor promised ‘come good or ill, she... is prepared to make any sacrifice to maintain her heritage and her birthright.’ More than 100,000 New Zealanders served overseas and around 18,500 were killed. Sometimes in remembering the events of the first World War, people may forget the legacy of those people who opposed it. Archibald Baxter has written most powerfully of his time as a pacifist



Christchurch War Memorial

William Trethewey

Creative Commons:
<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/christchurch-war-memorial>

on the battlefields of Europe. The Religious Society of Friends issued a statement earlier this year saying remembering the history of World War 1 does not mean that war should be glorified.

To pray the words “Give Peace in Our Time O Lord” is not enough without a commitment to action. As Christians we have an obligation to work for the Biblical *shalom* - peace with justice. Christians are called to be peacemakers (Matt 5:9). There is a strong tradition in this country, from the time of Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu who led their people in peaceful opposition to land confiscation at Parihaka.



Peace Sunday

Peace Sunday remembers the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Three days later another followed hitting Nagasaki on August 9. These resources seek to capture the urgency of peacemaking by remembering the beginning of World War I, the bombing in Japan, those who have been damaged from the effects of nuclear testing and today’s conflicts. In particular we ask for continued prayer for the peoples of the Middle East.

Call to Worship

Loving God

You are the pulse of the universe, the heartbeat of the world, joining each one of us with the whole creation.

We come to give thanks and praise,
To meet you in the lives of each other
To listen for your voice of hope
To reach out for the community that surrounds us.

The Hour is Late but we are here.

Amen.

For Children

Today I am thinking of the number one hundred. Do you know anyone who is 100 years old? If we add up all your ages to see if together can we make 100? Ask each child to stand up and say how old they are, making a line and a running total as you go eg Danny is 10 plus Maggie is 3 plus Julian is 6 and so on. If you run out of children before reaching 100, you might like to ask for a volunteer to get to the magic goal. Continue, now that we have 100, I want to talk about something that happened 100 years ago—a very long time ago. 100 years ago tomorrow New Zealand went to war. Our government sent people, horses, food and equipment to Europe and Africa to fight in a war that lasted for 4 year. Because it was 100 years ago, some New Zealanders are talking about it a lot. However, there are still wars going on today....

[Depending on the age of the group, you might want to explore further.] One of the names Jesus is sometimes called is the Prince of Peace. As Christians we follow in his path. How can we make peace? At home? At school? In our world?

Let us pray together for peace:

Loving God, we pray for those people who live in fear and who have lost loved ones through war. May they find the care and help they need. We will work for peace. Amen.

Lectionary Readings

Genesis 32:22-31

Jacob came into the world grasping his twin Esau's ankle. Having tricked Esau out of his birth right, Jacob had to escape when Esau threatened revenge. With the help of his mother Rebekah, he fled and found shelter with her family. Taken by Laban's younger daughter, Jacob worked 7 years for Rachel's hand in marriage, only to be tricked by Laban into



Gaza port, May 2014

marrying Leah. Seven years later he earned the right to marry Rachel. After seven more years labour and with sizable herds of animals and considerable wealth, Jacob had to leave again after a confrontation with Laban. They made a peace agreement and Jacob headed back to his home. He sent his messengers to meet Esau. They returned, warning that Esau was advancing with 400 men. In response, Jacob sent gifts to appease Esau. This was not without anguish. On the way he spent a night alone with God. In doing so, Jacob faces up to what he has done, and is able to grow into a new identity, Israel. Names in the Bible speak a lot about character and so Jacob leaves behind his past. Dealing with conflict and facing up to history is a very real part of peacemaking for Jacob and for us.

Psalm 17: 1-7, 15

Surrounded by enemies, the psalmist cries out for help. It is also the prayer of innocent people caught up in wars and violence that they have not started. In v1 the psalmist states his 'just cause' and in v15 he speaks of righteousness. Despite international rules of law, many innocent people are injured or killed in conflict.

Roman 9:1-5

Chapters 9-11 pick up the topic of Israel following from chapters 2-3. Paul is concerned about why his people, the Israelites have not recognised Jesus in the same way he has. In verses 4-5 he lists the core components that distinguish the Israelites from their Greek neighbours. Paul is writing primarily to Israelites living within a larger Hellenist community.

Matthew 14:13-21

Immediately after Matthew tells the story of the beheading of John the Baptist (v10), he says that Jesus withdrew from the population centres (v13). The

political context is important to the story. By carrying out Herodias's wishes as transmitted through her daughter, Herod had been forced into an action that he was reluctant to take. He knew the political consequences of murdering John, and this must have been a clear signal to Jesus and the many peasants and fishermen who followed him. Not wanting to provoke further trouble in the villages and towns and grieving for his friend, Jesus withdrew into a deserted area. The crowds uncertain of what might happen, followed him. Jesus 'had compassion for them'. It is a very human feeling. People did not usually eat in the wilderness, but 'the hour was now late'. Somehow in the middle of this lonely place, the community finds more than enough food to share. There are two central aspects to this good fortune: Jesus and the sharing community. Both are central to our faith.

Prayer for Gaza and Israel

Loving God

We pray for the people of Israel and Palestine—living in a small strip of land where conflict seems the rule and division is multiple. Help us to see each person as you see them—a whole and wonderful person deserving of all that is good in life. May they find ways to overcome their fears and share the resources that belong to all.

We pray now and always for peace.

We pray for Israelis who live with the daily fear of rockets, for Palestinians harassed and living in fear of attack, and for the people of Gaza who have no means to escape the military attacks, who lack food, shelter and medical care.

We pray now and always for peace.

We pray for all those who have lost loved ones, for the people injured and frightened. We pray for the children and young people caught up in a terror that seems to have no end.

We pray now and always for peace.

In the Name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen

Prayer Remembering World War 1

We remember today the start of the Great War, the war to end all wars. We remember the many people who lost their lives—killed in combat, though lack of food and medicine, and disease. In silence we remember the people from our families. [You may like to invite people to come forward and light a candle at this time.]

We pray now and always for peace.

We remember the people who lost their homes, their health and their country because leaders could not resolve their differences and work the magic that is peace. We remember the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and the way the unresolved history feeds the region's conflict until this very day.

We pray now and always for peace.

In the Name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

Prayer Against Nuclear War

We remember the peoples of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who experienced first the shock of nuclear weapons. May they continue to be strong in their commitment to peace and be lights to our broken world. We remember the people of Moruroa and other nuclear test sites. May they receive justice and the healthcare they need.

We pray now and always for peace.

In the Name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

Closing Prayer

The Hour is Late but we are here.

We are here to do what is right: to love our neighbour and you, God of the universe.

We are here to do what is honourable to forgive and make room for friend and stranger.

We are here to speak words of hope when times are tough; to look with compassion on a world where too many people are denied their basic rights.

We go in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace,

Prepared to take action for justice and love,

To bring hope to our broken world.

Amen.



The Erez Crossing, between Gaza and Israel.



Focus : The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees

CWS has been supporting DSPR since 1949, making it our oldest partner. At the time of writing it is too dangerous for DSPR to run its normal programmes because of the Israeli military attacks that began on July 8. Staff are worried for their communities and the many people involved in their work. They are planning to resume operating the three maternal health clinics and the four vocational training programmes as soon as they can. They are planning to expand their psychosocial programmes to help children and women deal with the trauma through play and the arts. They will provide US\$100 cash grants to families in need. They have found this the most effective way to help. Other ACT Alliance members are working in Gaza. The [Al Ahli Hospital](#) run by the Anglican Church has been bombed. CWS is posting news from DSPR [here](#). We recommend reading the 2009 statement by Palestinian Christians, A [Moment of Truth](#). The Middle East Council of Churches has expressed its sadness at the number of Christians leaving the region. In Gaza there are now 1313 Christians, down from 2000 in 2009.

Please consider holding a special collection for the [Gaza Appeal](#) this Peace Sunday. Donations can be sent to CWS, PO Box 22652, Christchurch 8140.

Further Resources

Historical Background: In 2003 the Churches Agency on International Issues in cooperation with CWS produced "[Israel/Palestine: Understanding Conflict in the Holy Land](#)."

In May 1916, the United Kingdom and France made a

secret agreement with Russian support. Known as the Sykes-Picot or Asia Minor Agreement, the parties agreed to divide the Arab peninsula between them if and when the Ottoman Empire collapsed. Some of today's conflicts in the Middle East have roots in World War I diplomacy.

There are many resources to help remember the bombing of Hiroshima. Two examples: <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/atomic-bomb-dropped-on-hiroshima>

Or: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/6/newsid_3602000/3602189.stm

Some testimonies of *hibakusha* or eyewitness accounts of the bombing are available at: <http://www.inicom.com/hibakusha/>

More on nuclear testing in the Pacific can be found in previous [Peace Sunday resources](#) and from [Moruroa E Tatou](#), including a recent petition about the removal of a memorial.

Time for action on military spending

Last year global military expenditure was \$1,747 trillion (US\$) - on average, almost \$4.8 billion (US\$) every day. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, military spending rose by 13.82% this year, to a total of \$3,709,902,000. Most is for increased combat capability - a new combat training center for the Special Air Service (SAS) and a \$446 million combat systems upgrade for the navy's two frigates - the latter almost equivalent to the \$493 million package aimed at assisting families in this year's budget. More information is available [here](#) or from Peace Movement Aotearoa, email pma@xtra.co.nz

WW1 anniversary: Peace vigils

On Monday, 4 August at 6pm, Peace Movement Aotearoa, in association with Quakers, is coordinating nation-wide [candle-lit vigils](#) at local war memorials or other suitable locations. For more information, please contact Peace Movement Aotearoa email pma@xtra.co.nz