

“Out of the Depths I Cry to You”

Psalm 130:1



Children in Gaza play where once their homes stood. Photo: ACT/P Jeffrey

Peace Sunday

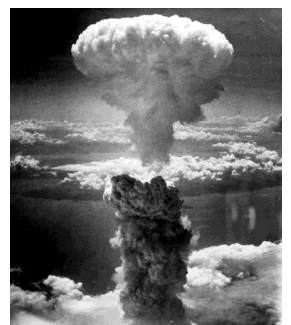
Our lectionary marks Peace Sunday on the closest Sunday to August 6. It is time to join in prayer and peacemaking for a world broken by greed and violence. These resources will help you find ways to make peace in your community and as part of God's work to bring wholeness and healing. You can find more ideas and background in resources from previous years: <http://www.cws.org.nz/resources/church> (heading: conflict and peace). We have used the readings for August 9 but you may prefer to read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-12, Jesus's words of peace in John 20:19-21 or the man in his fig tree in Micah 4:1-4.

This year we remember the legacy of the first nuclear bombs dropped on Japan, those involved in nuclear testing and people and families traumatised by last year's war in Gaza. We hear their longing for safety and peace at the same time as we hear the voices in our own communities seeking to tackle the causes of violence. There are no shortcuts to peace—we need to work to make it happen everyday.

Nuclear Anniversaries marked

Seventy years ago the shock of a sudden white flash and the sight of the mushroom cloud unleashed terrible suffering on the residents of Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on 9 August. The bomb destroyed almost 30 per cent of Nagasaki and killed 74,000 people. These two Japanese cities have remained beacons of peace through the last 70 years and will hold special events on the anniversary.

American, British and French forces tested nuclear weapons in the Pacific. Greenpeace sailed to Moruroa Atoll in Maohi or French Polynesia for the first French test in July 1966. The NZ government joined efforts to stop French testing, which ended thirty years later. Maohi workers and their families continue to seek compensation for the harmful effects of testing—a few have received some. This year is also the thirtieth anniversary of the bombing of Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbour.



Call to Worship

Loving God

In the dark of winter

We come as your people

Looking for light to guide us,

Listening for the sounds of

companions on the way,

Seeking the warmth of a world

where God's gifts are shared.

**We come as we are, to find your
peace to share with each other
and the broken world. Amen.**

For Children

For younger children, you may like to bring more than enough soft toys to share. Invite them to choose one as a friend. Then lie down on their backs with their friend on their stomachs. Ask them to pay attention to their breathing – feel the air go in and out, and their tummies up and down. Tell them to breathe in and out, encouraging them to go slower each time. When you think they have done enough, ask them to talk about how they felt. Finish by saying: thinking about our breathing helps us when we are worried or scared.

For older groups begin by asking them what sort of things make them feel scared. Then introduce them to Hend (see PowerPoint image or leaflet). Last year Hend was one of many children who lived through a war. She has a lot of bad memories but now she is getting help. She lives in Gaza part of the Occupied Territory of Palestine and cannot leave. Many homes were damaged in the war but there is not enough money to fix them. Despite their experiences, the children have dreams — show the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees) short video [Message in a Bottle](#). Ask them about the dreams of the children in the film. Invite them to write messages for the children in Gaza (you could post them on UNRWA's Facebook page) and draw them in a large bottle on the wall.

Loving God, we pray for the children living in Gaza. They have lived through a horrible war and want peace. Make sure they have food, water, homes and schools. Amen.



Nagasaki, August 1945

Lectionary Readings

2 Samuel 18:5-9. 15. 31—33

The story of David provides an opportunity to explore the grief caused by war. At a time when land and probably food were short, battles seemed the way to further your own interests. The tensions within the family that now ruled a centralised kingdom were very great. There was rape, intrigue, murder and power plays a plenty.

David had sent Absalom into exile for three years after he killed his eldest half-brother Amnon for raping his sister Tamar. In exile he found support in Judah the dissatisfied south of the new kingdom and led an army that took over his father's palace in Jerusalem before raping his concubines. David fled with the remnants of his army and was able to rebuild sufficient force to retake the city. The final battle was fought amidst the forest of Ephraim. David had told his commanders to 'deal gently' with Absalom (v.5) and the victory was decisive (v. 7).

The forest proved treacherous for the fleeing Absalom who got caught in a tree "hanging between heaven and earth". Mindful of David's commands none of his troops would touch him until one commander, Joab thrust three spears into his heart (v.14,15). Victory was declared but his troops were reluctant to tell David about the death of his favoured son. When he heard, David was overwhelmed by grief. He fired Joab, showed mercy to his enemies and set about rebuilding a more stable kingdom.

Psalm 130

This psalm is very appropriate when telling the story of a grieving David, confronted with his past sins and failures. It offers the hope of forgiveness and redemption through the steadfast love of God.

Ephesians 4:25—4:2

Here the writer of Ephesians a follower of Paul gives advice on how to strengthen community: not to tell falsehoods (v.25) or let the sun go down on anger (v. 26) are very familiar. Less so is the admonition telling thieves to work honestly to share with the needy (v.28). In the same way David turned his life around with the loss of Absalom, so our decision to be part of a Christian community is the impetus to choose to live a more truthful, calm and caring life together.

John 6:35, 41-51

The reading begins with what some heard as an outrageous claim by Jesus, “I am the bread of life” (v.35). His claim was rejected by his listeners—they knew his parents (v. 42) and probably everything about him. In response Jesus appealed to those who had gone before him: the prophets (v.45) and the actions of God (v.44). In telling the story John added a new twist that made sense to the early Christians: he spoke of eating the bread that is central to the celebration of the Eucharist or communion. In Jesus time bread provided 50% of the calories for the peasant farmers. Made from barley it took 3 hours for the women to grind enough to feed a family of 5 or 6. Jesus’ claim to be the bread that will give life to the world (v. 51) is a political statement pointing to a new way of living.

Prayer for Peace

Compassionate God

You listen to the cries of your people, broken by violence and grief.

You hear their pleas for an end to the suffering that kills and maims people in the battle zone and those who see war from afar. You watch as people speak words of peace and talk about an end to war, even as they manufacture its weapons and create hatred and division between people.

Together we seek to make peace in our broken world.



A young girl does her homework on the street in Beit Hanoun, Gaza. Photo: Act for Peace/R Wainwright

We pray for the people of Israel and Palestine—caught in a cycle of fear and suffering. May they find the light of peace in the tunnel of violence. May peace overwhelm the words of hatred and war. May the message of care and compassion drown out the drumbeats of war and greed.

Together we seek to make peace in our broken world.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones, who have been injured, who lack food, shelter and medical care. We pray for the children and young people, men and women. We pray that leaders will turn away from talk of war and find new ways to make peace.

Together we seek to make peace in our broken world.

We remember the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who have transformed the harm they experienced from nuclear bombs into a testimony for peace. We pray for those people who carry the damage of nuclear weapon tests in their bodies especially for the people of Maohi. May resources be given so people recover instead of buying weapons to make war. Match our prayers with action for peace.

Together we seek to make peace in our broken world.

We pray now and always for peace.

In the Name of the Prince of Peace. Amen

Closing Prayer

We have shared a moment of peace.

We hold onto a faith that says the world can be transformed.

We take this love as our gift to the world.

We go in the name of Jesus, the Bread of Life and the Prince of Peace. Amen.



Hend watches group members during a psychosocial session in Gaza. Photo: Act for Peace / R Wainwright

Focus : The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees

At 14 years old, Hend (in the middle) is struggling to deal with memories of last year's 51 day war in Gaza. Her neighbourhood in Rafah was badly bombed and her best friend killed. She is finding help in 15 psychosocial sessions run by psychologist Zeinab at DSPR's clinic in Rafah. The young women learn relaxation and breathing techniques, tell stories, play games, act and dance. According to a Save the Children [report](#), more than 70% of children in the worst affected areas suffer nightmares and bedwetting. DSPR is running programmes in its three centres for children and mothers—and they are working.

The war ended on August 27 last year, but left residents struggling in its wake. Neither the 100,000 homes damaged nor the 12,000 homes destroyed have been rebuilt. Tightly controlled borders mean few materials have been allowed to enter the territory. Earlier this year the World Bank [reported](#) the economy was on the verge of collapse and at 43% had the highest unemployment rate in the world. DSPR runs three primary care clinics, vocational training and psychosocial sessions for mothers and children.

A gift of \$40 would provide art materials for therapy for 5 children and \$200 a group session for 20 mothers so they can be strong for their children.

Please consider holding a special collection for the [Gaza Appeal](#) this Peace Sunday.

Further Resources

Our Australian counterpart Act for Peace has a video interview with Dr Wafa Kanaan, the medical director of the DSPR clinic in Shijai'a also supported by CWS: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_sujOh1wwk

Christian Aid has a new documentary that shows the situation and the work of their partners: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/whatwedo/middle-east/iopt-film.aspx>

There are many resources to help remember the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Two examples: <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/atomic-bomb-dropped-on-hiroshima>
Or: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/9/newsid_3580000/3580143.stm

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 [Moruroa E Tatou](#).

Time for action on military spending

Last year global military expenditure was \$1,776 billion (US\$) - on average, more than \$4.8 billion (US\$) every day. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, military spending this year is \$3,454,706,000 - that averages out to \$66,436,653 every week. The cost of the two replacement airplanes for the air force's Hercules C-130s is likely to be at least \$600 million. Expenditure for government Official Development Assistance (aid) was \$558 million in 2013.

More **information** is available [here](#) or from Peace Movement Aotearoa, email pma@xtra.co.nz

Join the campaign to ban nuclear weapons at www.icanw.org.nz



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