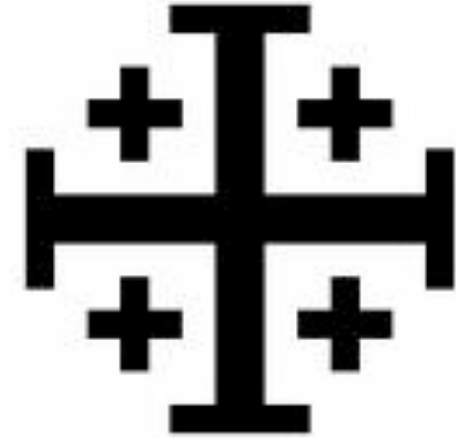


PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS
for Peace in the Middle East



At the Cross

L1: When the music begins again, you are invited to come to the cross, to kneel, and to pray. Come alone or with another. Stay as long as you would like. If you cannot kneel, you may use one of the chairs or remain in your seat to pray. Light a candle as a sign of the promise God made to be our light in the darkness, to make all things bright and new. Come when you feel drawn. All who remain in their seats will sing and support one another in prayer.

Songs *“O God, We Call”*
 “Peace”
 “Calm to the Waves”
 “Come and Fill”

L2: Holy and benevolent God, receive our prayers and petitions as Jesus received the cries of the needy, and fill us with your blessing, that we may live as Christ’s body in the world. Amen

L1: You shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle and the olive; it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Song *“When Our Song Says Peace”*

The service is ended. The congregation may leave in silence. Those wishing to stay in silent meditation are invited to do so.

The assembly gathers around a central cross which is surrounded by pillar candles of various sizes, and trays of sand with small tapers ready for worshipers to light later during the service.

The room lights should be lowered. Two readers lead the service; they may stand at the front, or be seated in the congregation.

Instrumental music is played as the people gather.

Opening/Greeting

L1: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

L2: Our worship tonight is a simple service of intercessory prayer. The room will remain quite dark throughout the service. We will hear scripture, we will pray together, and we will sing. Our singing together is a way of breathing prayer to God.

L1: During intercessory prayer, we offer ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually on behalf of that for which we pray. Our very bodies express to God the concerns of our hearts. We pray tonight for our broken world; in particular, for Palestine and Israel, and the United States; for their leaders, their citizens, for those who commit violence and the victims of violence; for world leaders and all working for peace. And when we do not know how to pray, the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

L2: Later you will be invited to kneel or sit by the cross to pray. The candles near the cross are for you to light, as a fragile sign of hope glowing in the darkness.

Pillar candles are lit during the following song.

Song *“Come Now, O Prince of Peace”*

Readings

L1: A reading from Isaiah, chapter 61.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those

who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called mighty trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined fields and cities, the devastations of many generations....For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

L2: I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Song *"Light Dawns on a Weary World"*

Prayers

L1: Gathered as one body, we cry out to the Lord for that reconciliation which only he can bring. We voice our concerns for Palestine and Israel, trusting in God's mighty will for good, and offering ourselves as his ambassadors for peace.

L2: Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we glorify and praise you. You are our only refuge in this troubled world. On the cross you reconciled us with yourself and with our fellow human beings. Our heavenly Father, we come before you with all the troubles and pain experienced now in the Middle East. We pray for the victims of injustice and violence. We pray also for those who are responsible for the injustices and all forms of violence. We ask you to teach us the peaceful ways of our Lord Jesus and write them on our hearts. We pray:

C: Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.

L1: Lord God, we pray for our country's leaders, and leaders of other nations, whose daily work and decisions affect the lives of so many around the world. Give them wisdom and show them how to bring security to the world without using evil to try to overcome evil. Give them your grace that, amid the clamor of war, they may seek a new path to prosperity and freedom for all. We pray:

C: Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.

L2: Sustain with your power, O Lord, those who, in the midst of all difficulties, quietly are building the culture of reconciliation, justice and peace. Strengthen and guide the Christians living in Palestine and Israel. Make them beacons of hope in their communities and witnesses to the power of your peace. We remember especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, its bishop, pastors, congregations and schools. We remember also those serving as Ecumenical Accompaniers and the Christian Peacemaking Teams in Gaza and the West Bank. We pray:

C: Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.

L1: God of all people, never has the reconciliation of person to person been more urgent. The stakes are so high, and the gulf between us seems so wide. In Christ you have reconciled us to yourself; help us now to be reconciled one with another. Grant all people the grace to reach out to one another in mutual respect and humanity: Arab and American, Palestinian and Israeli, Democrat and Republican, Muslim, Christian and Jew. May the thirst for peace be stronger than the appetite for domination. We pray:

C: Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.

L2: Compassionate God, champion of the weak and powerless, protector of the widow and orphan, who welcomed the sinners, the outsiders and strangers, and healed the suffering ones: open our eyes and ears and hearts to the suffering of the people in Israel and Palestine. Prod us to use the resources you have so abundantly given us, to bring about the peace that will put an end to their strife. We pray:

C: Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.

L1: O God of many names and many nations, you sent your Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world may be saved through him: so enflame us with a love of you that together we may show forth your kingdom. Give us, and those who hold authority in all areas of the Middle East, the wisdom to know your will, courage to speak the truth, and strength to abandon retribution and seek your new creation. Free us from our bondage to violence and greed, and enable us to see your world at peace. We pray:

C: Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.

L2: Merciful God, accept our prayers and our yearning. You are the only strength we have: Jesus, our liberator and redeemer. Amen

(moment of silence)