

## Advent 2A

### 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.

### 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.

### 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 remain deaf  
to the voices crying out from Palestine for a word of truth in the face of occupation;  
Voices crying out for peace with justice.

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.

### Some thoughts on the passages and our churches position on Palestine/Israel from a returned EA.

As a thirty-one 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 I 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 to take a stand for truth" against the 66 year old 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 on a daily basis by Palestinians and witnessed by various groups including those appointed by our denomination to serve in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine/Israel of the World Council of Churches.

Our support is also rooted in the rulings of International Court of Justice and the Red Cross who are responsible for adjudicating the Geneva Conventions. Our criticism is squarely placed at the feet of the Israeli government and those who knowingly benefit from the occupation. 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 manners 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 peacelike 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, that is God's call to us.

Peace, Shalom, Salaam,  
Steve Berube

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### **Pastoral Prayer**

Holy One, we long to be thought of as a people who work for peace with justice. But -  
There are times when we are unsure if we can make a difference.  
There are times when we become anxious in taking a step forward.  
There are times when deep in our hearts we know we must face criticism from those who would prefer we remain silent.

We long for peace with justice for the people of Palestine and Israel:  
We hear Palestinians cry out asking us "to speak for truth and to take a stand for truth regarding the occupation." (A Moment of Truth: Kairos Palestine document)  
We hear Israeli peace activists echoing the voices of Isaiah and Jeremiah, Amos and Micah calling their government to account for human rights abuses against Palestinians.

We long for safe and secure living conditions for all;  
For Israelis who worry about missile attacks from Hamas,  
For Palestinians who live with the constant reality of Israeli military incursions into their homes and communities.

We long for safety for the vulnerable;  
We pray for children and other civilians who face live fire, plastic and rubber bullets, stun grenades and land mines, tear gas and skunk water attacks.

Weeping God, provide comfort to those who mourn.  
We remember all who have lost loved ones to fighting, to terrorism and to state sponsored terrorism.  
We remember those who have been wounded in body, mind and spirit.  
May we be moved to tears whenever we hear of death or gratuitous violence.

We remember Palestinians whose homes have been demolished,  
Those who have lost access to the land tended by their families for countless generations.  
Those who have been forced into refugee camps for 66 long years.  
Steadfast God, we pray that all will have safe shelter.

We give thanks for the words of Jesus, who said, "Blessed are the peace makers",  
For, it is through the peace makers we find hope.  
Grant strength to those who dare to speak truth to power.  
Grant wisdom to those who work for non-violent solutions.

Healing God, we ask that you open the eyes of the blind.  
Help all to see the sin of the occupation and the injustice and horror that flow from it.

As we struggle with how to make a difference;  
Help us to more clearly see the ways we support injustice by our silence,  
Help us realize that some of our purchases support those who benefit from the occupation.

Enable us to see a time when peace with justice prevails,  
When the occupation ends and good news is proclaimed for all to hear.  
When the captives are released and the blind can see.  
When your favour is proclaimed across the Holy Land.

Loving God, hear our prayers,  
and guide us in the way of peace with justice, compassion and mercy.

Amen.

### **Communion Prayer**

May God be with us.

**God is with us.**

Let us open our hearts.

**We open them to God and to one another.**

Let us give thanks to God.

**It is right and good to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right and good that we give you our praise, Holy One,

- You made a covenant with Noah and placed the rainbow in the sky as a reminder of your promise.
- You pledged to Abraham and Sarah that they and all their descendants would be your people and you would be their God.
- You lead Moses and the Miriam out of enslavement to liberation and into a land of abundance.
- You gave David strength and courage in the face of violence and oppression.
- You called forth the prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah; Amos and Hosea to again spread your word of hope and peace rooted in justice.
- Throughout time you offered life in abundance,  
    life and abundance to be shared with all.

Still your people turned away from you as we do too.

But you remained faithful and sent Jesus to us:

Born in Palestine - in Bethlehem - then a refugee in Egypt.

Raised in Nazareth - baptized in Jordan.

He called his disciples while in the Galilee and journeyed through the Golan and along the Mediterranean coast, through Samaria and then back to Palestine - to East Jerusalem.

He rejoiced with all who rejoiced and wept with all who wept.

He healed those who were broken.

He spoke your word of hope.

He worked wonders to reveal your glory  
and he offered your peace to all.

For all you have done, we join in thanksgiving and offer our praise:

**Holy, holy, holy God**

**Source of life and love!**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory!**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes to bring your peace with justice to earth!**

On the last night he spent with his friends,

Jesus took a tradition of the people of that land  
and transformed it into something new.

He took unleaven bread, the common food of the common people,

He blessed and broke it, and gave it to those around him saying,

Take, eat for this is my body, broken for you.

Whenever you do this, remember me.

After supper he took a cup of wine, the common drink of the common people,  
and gave it to them, saying,

Drink this, all of you, this is the new covenant in my blood.

Each time you do this, remember me.

By remembering Jesus in this way,

we claim our common heritage,  
we join in solidarity with all across the ages  
we stand together with all who have been on the margins,  
on this day we also stand with those who are struggling:  
- the people of Syria embroiled in the ravages of civil war  
- Palestinians deserving a just peace  
- Israeli peace activists struggling to be heard  
- Our First Nations brothers and sisters longing for healing and hope

Together let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ has risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

Send your Spirit upon us and these gifts,  
that all who share in this meal  
may be the body of Christ:  
disciples who believe in peace with justice,  
compassion rooted in love,  
reconciliation based in mercy.  
In this hope and as your people, we praise you.

**Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory is yours, God most holy,  
now and forever.**

**Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Cup**

**Sharing the Bread and Cup**

**Prayer after Communion**