

World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel (WWPPI)

2015



Worship Liturgy

Sunday 20 September 2015

Theme: "God has broken down the dividing walls"

Ephesians 2.14

#WallWillFall

Foreword

The liturgy of this year for the World Week of Peace in Palestine and Israel is meant to be simple and short. It aims to be flexible, for use in different contexts, whether a Sunday morning communion service or a special World Week of Peace event. Feel free to adapt this framework for your particular community.

The theme for this Week (20 – 27 September of 2015) is the scandalous separation wall that Israel has built across occupied Palestinian territories. The Separation wall is the longest and highest wall in the world. It divides people, families, and communities, humiliates the Palestinians, and builds a culture of fear and separation.

You are invited to reflect on the meaning of this wall. You are also invited to reflect on the walls in your neighborhoods and communities. Our hope is that this liturgy would inspire us to break down walls of prejudice, fear and violence in our own communities, and would activate communities across the world to speak out against the scandalous wall separating Israel and Palestine. “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” (Ephesians 2:14)

GATHERING

Welcome

L: We gather as people of God in this place to celebrate life, to thank God for God's company in our daily life, and to pray for God's people. We turn our minds and hearts to all the walls that separate people, break communion, and tear apart lives and communities. Some walls are made of stone. Some are constructed of anti-immigration laws, prejudice, economic injustice, or fear. We reflect especially today on the scandalous wall separating the Palestinian people from family, friends, farmland, and neighbors. Let us open our minds and hearts to hear God's call to be peacemakers, advocates, and ministers of reconciliation. Let us express our hope and faith in the God of justice who promises to overcome all the iniquity and injustice. Let us express our hope and commitment to the fall of the Israeli Wall of iniquity and injustice.

Opening Prayer

C: Holy God, Creator of a universe without walls, Reconciler of every human division, we invite your presence among us today. Send your Spirit among us as a mighty wind, powerful enough to blow down every dividing wall. Amen.

Song (To be chosen by the congregation)

Prayer of Confession

(You may sing "Brazilian Kyrie" after the prayer of confession, or you may use a spoken or sung response of your choice.)

L: Let us confess our brokenness and division in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for reflection.

C: God of mercy, we, your people, have divided your one world. We do not speak out when we see new walls constructed. We seek safety behind walls of egoism, fear, and prejudice. In the name of security, we have sacrificed day-to-day life together and have lost the opportunity to see you in the face of the other. In our complacency, we have allowed walls to stand which threaten our survival as one, living community. We call upon your mercy and your forgiving love. Lead us in a way that we may construct bridges! Change our hearts and minds so that we come closer to each other as different peoples, different faiths, different cultures, different nationalities, but as one family, one humanity. We confess that the Israeli Wall still stands because we are failing in struggling for justice. We pray for your forgiveness and mercy, so that we can be transformed entirely and become resilient in this struggle to break down the Israeli Wall and all other walls that we face and do not challenge. Amen.

Kyrie Eleison (Brazilian Kyrie)

L: We do not ask only for ourselves. We know that you are the God of the whole creation so we pray for your mercy also for the whole creation, singing

C: “For the Trouble and the Suffering of this world”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGhNbCe0dM>

For the troubles and the sufferings of the world
God we call upon your mercy
The whole creation is laboring in pain
Lend an ear to the rising cry for help
From oppressed and hopeless people
Come Hasten your salvation, healing love
We pray for peace,
The blessed peace that comes from making justice
To cover and embrace us, have mercy, Lord!
We pray for power
The power that will sustain your people’s witness
Until your kingdom come, Kyrie Eleison!

WORD

L: The Word of God is wisdom for our struggles to transform instruments of death into instruments of life. Let us read the words of the prophet Isaiah who denounced the iniquity of the people and the judgment of God.

A reading from Isaiah 2. 1-4

First reader:

² The word that Isaiah son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² In days to come
the mountain of the LORD’s house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

L: Let us sing and praise to the God of the victory who listens to our hearts and fulfill all God's promises:

Psalm 20 (read or sung responsively)

L: ¹ The LORD answer you in the day of trouble!

The name of the God of Jacob protect you!

C: ² May he send you help from the sanctuary,
and give you support from Zion.

L: ³ May he remember all your offerings,
and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. *Selah*

C: ⁴ May he grant you your heart's desire,
and fulfill all your plans.

L: ⁵ May we shout for joy over your victory,
and in the name of our God set up our banners.

May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

C: ⁶ Now I know that the LORD will help his anointed;
he will answer him from his holy heaven
with mighty victories by his right hand.

L: ⁷ Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses,
but our pride is in the name of the LORD our God.

C: ⁸ They will collapse and fall,
but we shall rise and stand upright.

All: ⁹ Give victory to the king, O LORD;
answer us when we call. ^[a]

L: The apostle Paul reminds us that our God is a God of peace and reconciliation. It is impossible to live in peace and to be reconciled with brothers and sisters when there is a monumental Wall between us. For this reason, to have peace and reconciliation all the walls have to fall. Let us read the word of Paul, reminding that Christ breaks down the dividing Walls.

A reading from Ephesians 2. 14-22

Second reader:

¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Inspired by Ephesians 2: 14-18

“The Wall” – A prayer by Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah

O Lord, you came to us to demolish barriers between people,
To establish peace and to unite hearts
And to create a new “human being” who does not know enmity but only love
Look at us all, we who live on this land that you, yourself, sanctified
You made it a land of encounter and reconciliation with all human beings.
Look at us in your sacred land,
We still live separated by walls
Though we believe that you love us all, with the same love for all

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, and hear our prayers (Ps. 4:1)
O God, the walls still exist and they are high
Not for protection but for isolation and separation, ignorance, discrimination and killing
The walls are silent but they create strife and drive love away
O lord, your children are fighting
Change their hearts,
Change the expenses of building walls and make these expenses for building fraternity
and love among your children

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, and hear our prayers
They say: they are afraid
They say: They are satisfied and content
They say: They do not want to know anything about what lies on the other side of the
wall
And we say: we are besieged and our life is in a big prison
There is anxiety in our hearts and confusion in our speech

Song (To be chosen by the congregation)

Listening: Testimonies from the Wall

L: The God that we call to stay among us is a God who showed Godself in history. Since the creation of the world God has been present in the world, showing His/Her face in different places and times. In Jesus Christ we saw plenty of what God wants to show us. We have encountered a God who speaks through weakness, through the poor, and through vulnerabilities. “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor 1:18) We have learned that God comes closer to us through the suffering people of the world. For this reason we listen today to the people of God experiencing daily suffering because of the Israeli Separation Wall. We listen to understand the suffering of our sisters and brothers. We listen to hear God’s voice. Now, let us open our hearts and minds as the people of Palestine speak to us today:

Testimony 1

(Different readers may be chosen for each testimony)

“After the Wall around Rachel’s Tomb was build, I felt terrible. Nobody was walking here, only the cats and dogs. The Wall creates a feeling... the feeling that it surrounds you; that you are not permitted to move. Every time, every day you see the Wall. When I look outside through the window to see the sunrise or the sunset the Wall is in front of

me. When I go to the Wall I feel that something closes in on my heart, as if the Wall is on my heart... When I see the Wall I also feel ashamed of myself, because it is created by human beings.”

Melvina, Bethlehem

Silence for reflection

Let us pray:

God of compassion, we are at fault for building walls of injustice. We cannot hide behind excuses such as security reasons or other assumptions that justify acts of violation and separation. We recognize the suffering that we cause to other people when we build up Walls. The Israeli Wall creates pain and suffering to a people, to women, to children, to men and to the youth. We ask you for your courage and your inspiration. Blow your Spirit upon us so that we can take part in the struggle against the wall and that the Israeli Wall might fall! Amen.

Testimony 2:

“All my life was in Jerusalem! I was there daily: I worked there at a school as a volunteer and all my friends live there. I used to belong to the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and was volunteer there. I arranged the flowers and was active with the other women. I rented a flat but I was not allowed to stay because I do not have a Jerusalem ID card. Now I cannot go to Jerusalem; the Wall separates me from my church, from my life. We are imprisoned here in Bethlehem. All my relationships with Jerusalem are dead. I am a dying woman.”

Antoinette, Bethlehem.

Silence for reflection

Let us pray:

God of compassion, we pray for the Palestinian people who are cut off from friends, family, and community because of the wall. We pray for those who cannot attend family celebrations, access medical care, or visit holy sites. We pray for those, like Antoinette, who feel hopeless living in the shadow of the wall. Awaken us from sleep and stir up our hearts, that we would no longer accept such living conditions for our sisters and brothers in Palestine. Strengthen our voices to challenge this “wall of security” which has become a prison wall. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song (To be chosen by the congregation)

Testimony 3

“The wall affected our economic situation in a terrible manner. As we say in Arabic, ‘We lost below zero’. My brother and his wife had a drugstore and a store in Bethlehem for different kinds of products. They had 23 people working for them; 23 families lived from their business. But because the stores are close to the Wall, and people do not like to come there, there are no employees anymore.”

Melvina, Bethlehem.

Silence for reflection

Let us pray:

God of compassion, we pray for the shopkeepers whose businesses suffer because of the wall. We pray for the families who struggle to pay rent and school fees and face an uncertain future. You call us from all the corners of the world to hear your word, to celebrate your memory, and to be transformed. Transform us to be ministers of reconciliation. Teach us to construct bridges instead of walls. Remind us also that we may only be reconciled and live in peace when the Wall falls. Lead us to struggle with hope for a better future for all your people and creation with no walls and no divisions. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Testimony 4

“I am a town councilor: I work hard inside my house: cooking, doing my daily tasks at home, taking care of my husband and children while at the same time working to earn a living. I also try to volunteer and participate in public activities. My friends and family strengthen my sumud (steadfastness) and encourage me, as a woman, to work in the fields of peace building, Christian-Muslim living together, and inter-religious and intercultural communication skills.”

Fayza, From Doha, South of Bethlehem.

Silence for reflection

Let us pray:

God of compassion, we pray for those who use art and music to bring hope and life in the shadow of the wall. We pray for teachers, musicians, artists, and students. Open our hearts to hear the voices of our sisters and brothers in Palestine, whose songs of hope and resistance will not be silenced by the wall. Help us imagine a future for Israel and Palestine in which all voices are heard. Inspire us to join in singing a song of peace, justice, and liberation for all people. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Testimony 5

“The Wall next to my house divides people. Music brings people together. I am a music teacher, and I know that music is a language which all people can enjoy. Music gives my pupils joy and life. Among my pupils have been my niece and nephew. My nephew has become an excellent pianist. Once I made music for a national song when I taught at a school in Beit Sahour. The occupation forbade the song.... Imagine!”

Rana, Beit Jala

Silence for reflection

Let us pray:

God of compassion, we give thanks for the strength of the Palestinian people. We pray for the women and men who have sustained their families and communities with steadfastness and courage. We pray for those who are bravely doing interfaith, intercultural, and peace-building work to break down the wall. Lead us and guide us

along the same path, trusting not in bulldozers, guns, or tanks, but only in your steadfast love for all people. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Testimony 6

“The Wall is like a sign to say: ‘Go away from here’. It is intimidating. If you go from the checkpoint toward Gilo you can see all the land that was taken for its construction, and the land what we can no longer access. Some of the land had belonged to my grandparents. Despite everything, we must continue to resist. To continue with our daily life is a form of resistance. One example of resistance is coming every day to the Sumud Story House. The Israelis want to stop our lives by pushing us out. We can resist with any sign of life, and any activity helps, because activities make people want to stay here. You can organize a concert or another cultural activity. These are ways that we can reach the world and the world can reach us.”

Ghada, Bethlehem.

Silence for reflection

Let us pray:

Reconciling God, you call us to resist everything which draws us from you. You call us to resist the powers and principalities which attempt to occupy our lives and our world. We pray for the Palestinian people who resist the wall, a symbol of death, with lives of courage, creativity, and compassion. Lord, open our eyes to what we, the international community, can do to resist and challenge the scandal of the wall. Lord, make us instruments of your peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song (To be chosen by the congregation)

ACTION

L: The Walls that surround us are constructed by humanity. There are many reasons given for building these walls: for privacy, for security, for convenience, for defining what is “mine” and what is “theirs.” The Israeli Wall was constructed allegedly as a mean of “self-defense”. But in practical terms what it did was destroy Palestinian lives and communities. It was built in Palestinian territory, stealing land and natural resources from farmers. It divided people from family and friends, excluding people from the possibility of visiting other parts of the country they used to live in. It imposes heavy constraints on daily life and humiliates Palestinians who must cross it for work, school, or medical assistance. This is not a Palestinian problem or an Israeli problem—this is a world problem. What have we done, O God? We, the international community, are responsible for our silence and lack of action when we saw the result of this Wall for the Palestinian people. Lord, have mercy on us.

Action

You are invited to create a wall in your worship space (i.e. a paper banner, a wall of cardboard bricks, or another artistic interpretation). Worshippers can be given paper in which to write their messages of peace, hope, and freedom for the Palestinian people. These can take the form of prayers, of poetry, of art, or of a personal letter. After the worship service (or after the World Week for Peace) these messages can be mailed to sisters and brothers in Palestine. See the end of this liturgy for addresses and suggestions.

Special music can be played/performed during this portion of the liturgy.

SENDING

Closing Prayer

Reconciling God, we have heard the voices of your people in Palestine. We have listened to your voice from behind the wall. Now that we have heard, strengthen us to act boldly in solidarity with the Palestinian people in the struggle to bring down the wall. Help us to bear a united testimony to the world. Transform us from silent witnesses into bold proclaimers of peace, justice, equality, and human rights. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who through the cross and resurrection reconciled all of creation with you, and who by the power of the Holy Spirit unites us as one beloved community. And as one people of God we unite hands, hearts and voices praying the Lord's Prayer:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,^[a]
 but deliver us from the evil one.^[b]
[“For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever and ever.]

Amen"

Mt. 6. 9b-13

Benediction

(Whoever is prepared to do so may choose to stand and receive God's blessing)

Blessed are you, who trust
In the Lord and put your hope in
God.
You are like a tree planted
by the water, that extends its roots
to the river.
When heat comes, you do not fear,
your leaves remain green.
You do not grieve the year of
drought nor cease to bear fruit.
Blessed / as you are.
Go and struggle with the power of the Spirit
To break down all the walls!

Go in the peace of the Lord.
In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

(Adapted from Jr 17.7-8).

Closing song (To be chosen by the congregation)

Resources

Wall Testimonies: http://www.aeicenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=193

(The authors of the liturgy encourage users to also search for alternative testimonies if they so wish. Most of the testimonies in this liturgy were chosen from the Bethlehem area. However, the wall extends far beyond Bethlehem and affects a much larger area of families, and communities)

Liturgy Team: Felipe Buttelli, Nora Carmi, Carrie Smith



Jerusalem Prayer

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.” (2 Corinthians 4.8)

We pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Rescuer.

You, in your mighty works, O God, have sanctified this land and have made it holy. Through the, death and resurrection of Jesus, this land has been set apart with a special calling. The continuing political conflict that scars this land and harms all its peoples is a scandal against Your will.

We lament the many forms of violence afflicting people in this land. We grieve that the barrier of separation has split Palestinian communities from one another and sharpened the divide between Palestinian and Israeli societies. This barrier has contributed nothing to justice, and less to peace.

We pray for comfort, for the strength to not lose heart. We pray that the wall and all similar walls will fall.. We believe that the Wall is a “momentary affliction ... for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4.16–18). We pray for reconciliation and for peace, as we commit to working for justice for all persons who live in this Holy Land.

As we observe this week with our sisters and brothers around the world, we ask for the strong comfort of the Holy Spirit for all who seek justice in this land. Inspire us to not be content with mere words, but to engage in acts of costly solidarity. Inspire us to be instruments of your peace, the workers of your will.

“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Ephesians 2.14)

Amen