

Peace Sunday Worship Resources 2010



Peace Sunday

Peace Sunday is celebrated on the nearest Sunday to Hiroshima Day (August 6). This year it falls closest to Nagasaki Day (August 9), the site of the second nuclear bomb drop. We invite you to remember the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 (see earlier resources at: <http://www.cws.org.nz/resources/church>) by praying for peace. Please join with others to pray for those who still suffer the effects of nuclear testing, including the workers of Moruroa and their families (see last year's resources). As we remember the millions of people caught up in conflicts not of their making, the plight of child soldiers, let us speak out for peace.

Military Spending Increases

In June each year the Stockholm International Research Institute (SIPR) releases an annual report of data and analysis on military related matters. Despite the financial crisis, SIPR found that in real terms military expenditure had increased by 5.9% in 2009 compared to 2008 and 49% since 2000. Total expenditure was an estimated US \$1,531 billion. In 2009 they estimate that there were around 7500 operational nuclear warheads in the arsenals of the eight nuclear armed states: the USA, Russia, China, the UK, France, India, Pakistan and Israel. Almost 2000 of them were kept on high alert and capable of being launched in minutes.

The five yearly review of the UN Non-Proliferation Treaty was held in May. While renewing commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons, progress was limited.

From war to promise in DRC

Kahindo Bauma was 11 when a rebel army stole her childhood. While she sat in class one day, militia stormed her classroom and forced her and her friends to choose between joining their group or being killed. She was in her fifth year of primary school and would never attend school again. Kahindo was not alone. Child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not yesterday's story. The second half of 2008 saw an "explosion" of child recruitment by non-state armed groups, the United Nations reports.

Kahindo is from Masisi territory, west of Goma, and home of the worst atrocities involving child soldiers in the DRC. For four years, Kahindo's duty as a soldier was to cook for the head of the militia unit. The job description included training in the use of firearms - "learning to live as a soldier," she says.

Did she have to fight? "Ndi," she says eyes downcast. "Yes." Did she have to kill? "Ndi." Unlike many other girls recruited as soldiers, she was thankfully not forced to have sex with other soldiers. One of Kahindo's brothers is still in the army and another is dead.

Now 15 and rescued from the militia, Kahindo looks for all the world like any other 15 year old girl: chipped red nail varnish, traces of glittery lipstick and hair braided. She speaks quietly and confidently. She shows little emotion as she tells her story.

Kahindo was rescued by a humanitarian organisation and spent three months in a transit camp to begin her gradual re-integration to society. She now attends ACT Alliance-supported Tumaini vocational training centre in Goma, where she studies tailoring. The name Tumaini in Kiswahili means hope. ACT members Norwegian Church Aid and Finn Church Aid support the centre. Local ACT member Eglise de Christ au Congo runs an accompanying programme for adults. ACT's recently issued US \$2.2 million appeal for the eastern DRC includes support for the centre.

"Our God comes and is not silent" Ps:50 3a



Kahindo's dream for her future is simple: to return home to her village to use her new skills as a tailor and to be a witness to the success of Tumaini. "People will then be saying: this lady was a soldier but now she's a responsible person." But her village doesn't want her. Although there is "somehow" peace in her village now, the residents refuse to see former soldiers, accusing them of running away with weapons. She's afraid that if she goes home, she will be killed, she says.

Child soldiers in the DRC

Child soldier recruitment is an entrenched facet of the ongoing armed conflict in the eastern DRC. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers says that while use of child soldiers is illegal under Congolese law, very few cases against militia have been brought to trial. With little deterrent, militia have a virtual free hand in conscripting children. Unicef says that all parties to the conflict are responsible for the forced recruitment of children.

In 2008, the United Nations reported that child recruitment in the Kivus was up 38 percent in the year to September 2008. Since 2004, child protection groups have negotiated the release of 36,000 children associated with armed forces. Last year, 6000 children were demobilised in the eastern DRC.

Tumaini centre director Pascal Badibanga says children are usually recruited by force, grabbed from their school or village but sometimes sent by the community to defend a town or village.

"A child soldier is a child trained to kill. In an army, he can kill, rape, smoke, steal." Children as young as eight are assigned a miserable life on the front line as soldiers, cooks, sex slaves or porters until their release from the army is negotiated.

Can the children be returned to their state of mind before abduction? "It's possible to go back. They can

be aggressive, turbulent with their family. But after about six months training, they can return to their normal behaviour, reintegrate into society, their families, and eventually get married, have children, work," Badibanga says.

A good future

At Tumaini, 150 former child soldiers, street children, orphans and teenage mothers receive a new lease on life learning tailoring, carpentry, masonry, welding, IT, radio and TV repair, computers, plumbing, hotel work and car mechanic skills.

International outrage at use of child soldiers rarely reaches or bothers the rebels. If Kahindo could meet her abductors again, her message to them would be clear: "I can't say that they must be put in jail but maybe they must be told to stop taking young children because they really destroy the mentality of children." Time and education are helping Kahindo forget. She feels she's being changed because before she couldn't live peacefully with her family. She refused to work but now is able to. Of her future, she is optimistic. "Yes, it will be good, I know that".

Sandra Cox, ACT Alliance (ed)

<http://www.actalliance.org/stories/a-childhood-of-war-to-a-future-of-promise>

Call to Worship

God , the sustainer of life
We come with open hearts and minds
And the concerns that are our own.
We wait to hear your word
And to discover what we might be together.

**We gather in the name of Christ,
Listening for words of peace
And ready to spread hope
In the name of Jesus
Amen**

Children's Time

You may like to tell the story of Sadako and the Peace Crane. The story can be found at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A302202> After talking about Sadako you might like to discuss ways children can help make peace happen. Some may have experience of school mediation schemes. You could try making origami peace cranes. Instructions can be found at: <http://monkey.org/~aidan/origami/crane/index.html>

Alternatively make or draw a large dove. Have ready some streamers or cut out olive branches, and invite the children (and others if it works) to write peace messages on them. Affix them to the dove as a visual prayer.

Biblical Reflection

Lectionary readings for August 8, 2010:

Isaiah 1:1;10-20

The book begins with First Isaiah identifying himself as the son of Amoz at work as a prophet in Jerusalem through the time of four Judean kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. This is the period from approximately 738 BCE until about 700.

The earlier verses of this text are characterized as God's lawsuit against Israel. God is very clear—the people have failed to meet God's requirements. The image is of God utterly fed up with people who did not understand (3) and were rebellious (2). In v 11 Isaiah reported that God was not impressed by animal sacrifices or in v 13 the celebration of festivals, outward forms of worship. Isaiah reported God's clearly stated terms of a settlement in vs 16 and 17. The terms are familiar: washing and cleansing, ceasing from evil, learning to do good, seeking justice, rescuing the oppressed, defending the orphan and pleading for the widow. If the people of Israel would not meet these terms, it is inferred that they may not eat well (19) and will live by the sword (v 20).

Taken together these could be seen as heavy demands but they provide a foundation to ensure a much fairer and kinder morality than the one that operates in the world. It is easy to say that we have had enough of injustice than to take responsibility for working to change what is not right. Silence in the face of injustice is not an option.

Psalm 50:1-8,22-23

This is a prophetic psalm signalled by the invitation to the heavens and the earth (v 4). The psalmist uses images of a devouring fire and a mighty tempest to create a sense of God's awesome power. The God who made a covenant with Israel (v 5) is not to be meddled with and those who forget God will be shown no mercy, rather torn as though a lion was tearing up its prey (v 22). The psalmist speaks against animal sacrifice (v 9) and favours an offering of thanksgiving (v 23).

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

The text confronts us with the essence of faith. The writer of the Hebrews does not see faith as a wistful longing or of last resort but rather something of utter certainty and conviction. Such faith is found in God and can be heard in the testimonies of many of the martyrs and people who have stood against unjust authority, some times called speaking truth to power.

In verses 8–16 the writer uses the life of Abraham as an example of such faith. You may like to reread the story from Genesis 12 onwards. Abraham went into the unknown leaving home and his land, compelled by his faith in God. It is a story of great courage suggesting that faith is about risk and adventure. Abraham waited patiently through most of his life for the gift of a child, Isaac. Perhaps most strikingly his vision was focused on 'a better country' (16), the new Jerusalem. This reading will have resonance for some migrants even as they miss their homeland. It is a text that shows how Christians are in for the long haul—success will not always come quickly. Like Abraham and Sarah, we need to keep the faith.

Luke 12:32-40

Luke continues Jesus' teaching on treasure and greed. Before he instructs the reader or listener to sell their possessions and give alms (v 33), Luke says 'do not be afraid'. In return for such generosity, God promises God's kingdom (v 32b). It is a totally different way of operating than what is seen as economically sound in our culture with its emphasis on accumulation and consumerism. The message is not easy but it would have been no simpler for Jesus' followers all those years ago. Leaving the family or clan could literally be a matter of life and death, especially for the rich. Membership in the early Christian communities demanded such total commitment as part of the new faith but also as a means of survival. Faith was not separate from material circumstances and sharing what one had was a mark of such radical community. The familiar words, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (v 34) sums the text up succinctly.

We must build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear... That old law about "an eye for an eye" leaves everybody blind... The time is always right to do the right thing... Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Prayer for others

We pray for all those who suffer because of the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, especially those who have survived attack or been involved in nuclear testing. We think of the people of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki, the workers and families of those affected by testing at Moruroa who are still waiting for justice, for military personnel who suffer from illness and trauma.

R: Where there is pain, grant your peace.

We pray for the many people who are caught in places of conflict and violence, especially those who are hungry and frightened, for child soldiers in the Congo and other places. We remember those who use violence as their sole means of communication—we also pray for those who stand up for people and for peace, in the most dangerous circumstances especially...

R: Where there is pain, grant your peace.

We pray for those who are involved in the arms industry and in the use of arms. Help them find other uses for their skills and a greater desire to develop better ways of resolving conflict or earning a living. We pray for those who make war and create violence—may they be converted to the path of peace. We pray that new energy will be found to accommodate differences and to share limited resources so that all people may have what they need to lead a decent life.

R: Where there is pain, grant your peace.

We pray for ourselves, that we will keep true to the faith that compelled Abraham and Sarah to venture into the unknown. Help us to speak out against injustice and create the means to make peace within our communities, our families and ourselves.

R: Where there is pain, grant your peace.

In the name of Christ, the Son of peace we pray.
Amen

Closing blessing

We go as people of faith,
Challenged by your word
Equipped with your faith
Ready to make peace in the world, our home.
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**



Take Action

- Choose a topical issue. It could be an instance of violence in the community or a matter of public policy. Think and pray about how you might respond, perhaps by inviting a speaker or making a submission. CWS can help. The parish might like to consider a joint action that tests their faith!
- Conscious of the responsibility to share what we have with those in need, you might raise funds for a CWS partner working to end violence. Many of the partner groups we work with have a peace-making aspect to their work. Psycho-social care programmes for those who are traumatized in places like Haiti and Gaza are two examples. CWS also works with partners in Maridi, South Sudan, helping to rebuild the lives of young people, including former child soldiers shattered by decades of war and poverty. If you would like more information or resources about specific programmes contact cws@cws.org.nz.
- You may like to join the International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21, 2010.

Resources

On the bombing of Nagasaki: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/9/newsid_3580000/3580143.stm

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

Stories and information on the work of the ACT Alliance of which CWS is a member, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: <http://www.actalliance.org/>

Stockholm International Peace Research International: <http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases/100602yearbooklaunch>

WCC Decade to Overcome Violence, including preparations for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held in Jamaica in 2011: <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/>



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