

Peace Sunday Worship: Darfur 2008



Over 4 million people are affected by the ongoing conflict in Darfur, western Sudan. About 2.5 million are homeless, forced to live in makeshift camps, reliant on humanitarian aid for their survival. Whether they live in Darfur, neighbouring Chad or overseas, they long for a chance for peace and the opportunity to rebuild their lives. CWS and Caritas are launching the Darfur Appeal to provide much needed assistance.

Peace Sunday

Peace Sunday is celebrated on the nearest Sunday to Hiroshima Day (August 6). This year the appropriate Sunday falls closest to Nagasaki Day (August 9) and so we invite you especially to remember the victims of the bombing of Nagasaki. Images and testimony can be easily found on the internet.



Nagasaki Day

At 11.02 am on August 9, 1945 the United States detonated its second atomic bomb codenamed "Fat Man" on Nagasaki, Japan, three days after the one on Hiroshima. The bomb was dropped by parachute and exploded 500 metres above the ground. Almost 30% of Nagasaki was destroyed and 74,000 people killed. A similar number were injured and its citizens have continued to live with the after-effects of the nuclear fallout. The city has committed itself to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons and 'for the achievement of universal everlasting peace'.

Focus on Darfur

*Peace is like the rain that
makes the grass grow,*

*War is like the drought that withers
and kills the grass.*

Sudanese Proverb

In the search for peace Christian World Service is aware of many people living in conflict. This year the resources have been prepared with a focus on Darfur, Sudan, and encourage all people to walk together with those living in constant fear for their lives. A number of communities are holding vigils for Darfur on August 1. These resources can be used for this purpose, in support of the joint Christian World Service Caritas Darfur Humanitarian Appeal or as part of Sunday worship. For more information on Darfur see the separate Darfur Backgrounder and the Appeal leaflet.

*"Let me ask you this: what does peace mean to me
as a Darfuri woman who was forced to
flee her home in the dark of night?"*

Niemat Ahmadi
Save Darfur Coalition

Let's Walk Together





“Whatever God does, the first outburst is always compassion.”

Meister Eckhart

Opening Prayer

God of Peace

We remember those who live in conflict and hunger
Who are living each day
Not sure if there will be another.

God of Justice

We remember those who are the victims of war
Who live in fear and in danger
Not sure what the future holds.

God of Love

We remember those who seek your peace
Who stand against the forces that harm
Not sure whether their efforts will end the violence.

Come Peace-loving God, fill us with your healing presence.

Come Prince of Peace, help us mend our hurting world.

**Come Holy Spirit, fire us into action
Amen**

A woman from East Chad rides her donkey in the Aradib Camp for internally displaced people. More than 180,000 residents of eastern Chad have been displaced by the violence spilling over from neighbouring Chad.



Paul Jeffrey/ACT International

Biblical Reflection

(Note the Peace Sunday 2007 resources include reflections on the readings suggested in the Presbyterian/Methodist lectionary. These are available at: www.cws.org.nz/Resources/church)

The following readings are for August 10, 2008:

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

The Bible has been called the Ultimate Immigration Handbook (www.churchworldservice.org/Immigration/bible-as-handbook.html). Many people can trace their roots back to a migration story whether it is travelling from Hawaiiki, the United Kingdom or a nation of the Pacific. Joseph is no exception.

Joseph's grandfather (Isaac) had settled in Canaan as an alien (v1). Joseph as a young man seeks out his brothers who are herding the family flocks without him. His brothers, jealous of his favoured place in the family, at first plan to kill him and leave him for a wild animal to eat. Reuben intervenes and **Joseph** is stripped of his robe and placed in a pit (v 23-4) from where Reuben plans to rescue him later. While they are eating, some Ishmaelites pass by on their camels heading towards Egypt. In v 28 Midianite traders lift him out of the pit and sell him for 20 pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites heading to Egypt.

In the very familiar story Joseph does very well for himself and is later in a position to save his extended family during a time of famine that took place around 1700 BCE. Despite the conflict and tension within the family, God is faithful to the covenant, caring for God's people in time of need.

Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b

This is a hymn of praise for all that God has done in the history of the people of Israel. Note v16-22 recount the story of Joseph being sold into slavery, and then how he helps save his people. The intention of the writer is undoubtedly to help the people of Israel in their worship remember God's care and concern despite the catastrophes that befall them. In the midst of suffering the people may not see an end to their pain but through the lens of history, there is an end and life will be restored.

“Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being.” Mohandas Gandhi

Romans 10:5-15

In this passage Paul is pleading with the Jewish people, inviting them to share in the salvation he has found in Christ. For the Israelites righteousness is derived from living according to the divine law (v 5). Rather than obedience to the complex law that has guided them in faith until now, Paul is offering them a faith of the heart (v 10). Salvation is through confession rather than by complying to the rules of their tradition. Citing Isaiah 28:6, in v 11 Paul affirms that they will not suffer shame if they make such a confession. Note that shame is an important aspect to their cultural community.

In v 12 Paul hastens to remove the distinctions that divide Jews and Greeks offering faith in 'the Lord of all and [who] is generous to all who call on him'. He quotes from Isaiah 52:7, "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" to underscore his message. Even today God continues to offer liberation from oppression and sin.

Matthew 14:22-33

Matthew contrasts Jesus praying alone on the mountain away from the crowds with the disciples at sea in a boat. Traditionally people like Moses went up the mountain to find God. After the death of John the Baptist recounted in v1-12 and the expectations of the crowd in the story of the feeding of the five thousand (v 13-21), Jesus needs time to pray and find direction. In contrast the disciples sailing through a storm encounter Jesus at a time of insecurity and potential physical danger.

William Barclay points out that there are two possible interpretations of this passage. The first a miracle of Jesus walking on the water. The other is that the disciples' boat was driven by the wind to the shore of the lake. Jesus, seeing they were struggling, walked down the mountain and through the surf and waves to suddenly appeared to the disciples who had not seen him coming. In this story Matthew is saying that Jesus is always there when we are in danger or being overwhelmed by the storms of life.

Affirmation (St. Yared, Ethiopia)

The cross is the way of the lost.
The cross is the staff of the lame.
The cross is the guide of the blind.
The cross is the strength of the weak.
The cross is the hope of the hopeless.
The cross is the freedom of the slaves.
The cross is the water of the seeds.
The cross is the consolation of the bonded labourers.
The cross is the source of those who seek water.
The cross is the cloth of the naked.
The cross is the healing of the broken.
The cross is the peace of the church.

Children's Time: Planting Hope

You need: One paper cup or small pot for each child; potting soil; a packet of seeds

Say: I want to plant these seeds so they will grow. Can you help me? Have the children poke the seeds into the soil. Then act like you are done.

Ask: Is this all the seeds need to grow?
Someone should say they need water to grow.

Ask: Is this all they need? Can I just forget about them?

Talk about the continual care the seeds will need. Talk about the people of Darfur using the image below or another, and how the people are dependent on outside assistance for some of the food they need. They will continue to need our help.

End with a simple prayer: We pray for the people of Darfur that they may find the food they need to grow, the help they need to keep living and the hope of peace to come soon. Amen.

A woman prepares ground outside her hut in the Habile Camp for internally displaced people from Eastern Chad.



Prayer for Others

Loving and Creating God,

You bring all things into being and sustain them with your love. We place before you the suffering people of Darfur and those who have fled to Chad. You know their needs more intimately than we do. We pray that you protect them from violence within the camps; ensure that they have adequate food and water; restore hope to mothers and children; encourage all who are trying to offer medical and educational support; strengthen those who continue to bring aid; and touch the hearts of all who burn and rape and pillage, so that they turn to the ways of peace.

We ask you to touch our own hearts more deeply, so that we may feel true compassion and a greater yearning for justice and peace. Let us never forget those whom you love, the little and the forgotten ones of the earth and those who live their lives on the margins. May we find ways, even at this distance, to walk alongside and to offer assistance, so that all may share in the gifts you have created so abundantly.

Above all we plead with you for peace in the region. May the Government of Sudan, the militias, and all who find benefit from continuing hostilities lay aside their anger, fear or greed and turn towards the ways of your peace.

We make this prayer with confidence in your abiding love, through Jesus in the Spirit. Amen

By Elizabeth Mackie

Take Action

Lighting candles of hope

Prepare a large sand tray with wet sand and organise small candles with matches. Mark out either the shape of a dove or the outline of the map of Darfur in the sand. At a time of reflection in the service invite those who want to light a candle for the people of Darfur to place it in the shape. You might say: 'We pray that all those people suffering in Darfur and as refugees find hope and strength for the future'. You may like to play some appropriate reflective music.



Write

Write a brief letter to the Prime Minister raising the situation of the people of Darfur using some of the information in the Darfur Backgrounder and asking what action the New Zealand government will take as part of the United Nation's Responsibility to Protect those vulnerable to genocide. You could ask other people to sign the letter if they were willing.

Closing Prayer

God of Peace,
God of Justice,
God of Love

We turn to you

Seeking an end to the violence in our world

Praying for peace in Darfur

And longing for the coming of your kingdom.

Amen



Peace Sunday Worship Resources 2008

Resources

More on the bombing of Nagasaki:

news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/9/newsid_3580000/3580143.stm

The Nagasaki Museum site includes stories of survivors, images and appeals for peace:

www1.city.nagasaki.nagasaki.jp/na-bomb/museum/museum01.html

You may also like to join the International Day of Prayer for Peace on 21 September, 2008, an initiative of the World Council of Churches. See <http://overcomingviolence.org/index.php?id=1487>

Find out more about the situation in Darfur at:

www.act-caritas.org and www.savedarfur.org

Further prayer resources are available at:

www.cws.org.nz/resources/church

Further resources on Darfur are available on the CWS website or from CWS directly, including display material.



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