

Worship Service

BY BRUCE AND CAROLYN WINFREY GILLETTE

*Call to Worship*¹

God promises a day when swords will be turned into plowshares
and spears into pruning hooks,

**when nations will spend resources on building peace
instead of on waging war.**

God promises a day when children will be healthy and safe
so they can live to adulthood,

when the violence of injustice will not shorten their lives.

God promises a day when people will build houses and inhabit them,
and plant vineyards and eat their fruit,

**when the violence of greed will not drive the poor from their homes
and livelihoods.**

God promises that the peacemakers will be blessed, as children of God.

**We gather to worship God who calls us to turn
from the ways of violence
to God's way of peace.**

Gathering Hymn

"Come, All You People"

SHONA:

*Uyai mose,
tinamate Mwari;*

*uyai mose,
tinamate Mwari;*

*uyai mose,
tinamate Mwari;*

uyai mose zvino.

ENGLISH:

Come all you people,
come and praise your Maker;

come all you people,
come and praise your Maker;

come all you people,
come and praise your Maker;

come now and worship the Lord.

Alexander Gondo, translated by I-to Loh (1986)

Tune: UYAI MOSE

Call to Confession

Jesus said: "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (*Matthew 5:23-24*).

Litany of Confession

God of love, we have created a patchwork of violence in your world.

We have neglected your patterns of peace.

We listen to people talking about the right to bear arms,

but we forget the right of children to be safe in their homes.

We talk about the importance of marriage,

but we do little about abuse in families.

We seek bargains in the store,

but we overlook the violence and injustice that workers face as they make our cheap goods.

We use energy like there is no tomorrow,

but we ignore wars fought over oil and violence caused by greed.

We desire the best for our children,

but give them video games and movies that numb them to violence.

Forgive us, we pray.

May we turn swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

May we reject unjust laws and work to establish justice in the land.

May we elect leaders who will seek the common good.

May we seek peace in our families, our churches, our communities, our nation, and our world.

May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven! Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Friends, hear the good news: "For Christ 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*).

God has taken away the things that separate us from one another.

"For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son" (*John 3:16a*).

God has taken away our separation from God.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Time with Children

Let's think about what Jesus meant when he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). What are some places and ways we can work for peace? One of them is right in our own families. This Family Pledge of Nonviolence shows some ways we can practice peacemaking there.²

(Distribute copies of the Pledge and briefly discuss some of the promises with the children. Encourage families to sign it and post it where they can see it.)

Family Pledge of Nonviolence

Making peace must start within ourselves and in our family. Each of us, members of the _____ family, commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people:

To Respect Self and Others: to respect myself, to affirm others, and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks, and self-destructive behavior.

To Communicate Better: to share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

To Listen: to listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others' feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.

To Forgive: to apologize and make amends when I have hurt another, to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

To Respect Nature: to treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

To Play Creatively: to select entertainment and toys that support our family's values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny, or acceptable.

To Be Courageous: to challenge violence in all its forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

This is our pledge. These are our goals. We will check ourselves on what we have pledged once a month on _____ for the next twelve months so that we can help each other become more peaceable people.

Pledging family members sign below:

"Eliminating violence, one family at a time, starting with our own."

Scripture Readings

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.
They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.
Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain.
When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.

Isaiah 53:7-10

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:1-3

Sermon

Hymn of Response

“O Christ, You Did No Violence”

O Christ, you did no violence yet you were crushed with pain;
you suffered great injustice to make us whole again.
As lambs are led to slaughter and sheep in silence wait,
you gave your life to offer a love that conquers hate.

You gave your life to save us, yet, God, we now confess:
forgetting that you love us, we live in hatefulness.
We tolerate injustice that breaks the human soul;
we overlook the madness as violence takes its toll.

When children hear the popping of one more fired gun
and know there is no stopping and look for where to run,
when workers face oppression, and women face abuse,
Lord, hear your world's confession, for there is no excuse.

Our games and movies teach us that violence is all right.
O God, our greed is boundless; our wealth depends on might.
Our nations' moral failings in politics and war
all lead to countless killings – to violence you abhor.

The patterns of our violence give shape to all our days,
yet you, O God, are gracious; your ways are not our ways.
Now by your Holy Spirit, we pray you'll make us new,
till peace becomes our pattern as we all follow you.

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (2016)

Suggested Tunes: AURELIA or LLANGLOFFAN
(pp. 43-45 in this volume)

Litany of Dedication

Gracious God, all that we are and all that we have are gifts from you.

In thanks, we give you some of the blessings we have received.

We give you our money

so the church can be your peace in this community.

We give you our minutes and our hours

**so the church has enough workers to be your peace in this
neighborhood.**

We give you our skills, our talents, our ideas, and our imagination

so the church is strong to be your peace in this world.

As Christ is our peace,

we seek to be your peace in a violent and troubled world. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for entering into this violent
world with the gift of love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We thank you for those people who seek to counter hatred with love,
who protect others in gentle, caring ways,

who help others in our community,

who teach others to settle differences peacefully, and

who work for the healing of creation and bring hope to your hurting
world.

We pray for people who are suffering because of violence in their lives
and communities.

We pray especially for children who are abused in their families,
for little ones who are hurt by powers that put self-interest and profit
before love,
for women who live in fear of domestic violence, and
for others who are hurt and manipulated by those who are stronger.

We pray for people whose homes have been destroyed by the weapons
of war, and whose spirits and bodies have been broken by violence.

We pray for those who are denied clean water and air,
and do not have a healthy environment.

O God of peace, may we, your church, bring your peace into this
hurting world.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn of Commitment

“God of Grace and God of Glory”

God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power;
crown your ancient church’s story,
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn the Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

Cure your children’s warring madness;
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom’s goal,
lest we miss your kingdom’s goal.

Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

Harry E. Fosdick (1930), alt.
Tune: CWM RHONDDA

*Benediction*³

May God bless you with a restless *discomfort*
about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,
so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with *holy anger*
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace
among all people.

May God bless you with the *gift of tears*
to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the
loss of all that they cherish,
so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform
their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough *foolishness*
to believe that you really can make a difference in this world,
so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim
cannot be done.

Amen.

NOTES

¹ Based on Isaiah 2:2-4, 65:17-35, and Matthew 5:9.

² *Family Pledge of Nonviolence* is produced by the Institute for Peace and Justice (www.ipj-ppj.org), 475 East Lockwood Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63119; phone: (314) 918-2630. You are free to make copies of the pledge as long as you keep the Institute for Peace and Justice name and contact information on the copies. If the pledge is not used during the children's time, consider incorporating it into the worship service in some other way. If it is introduced to the congregation during the sermon, have copies available in the worship bulletin or for pick-up after the service.

3 The benediction is adapted from a prayer available on the Internet, which is usually cited as “A Four-fold Benedictine Blessing” by Sister Ruth Marlene Fox, O.S.B. (1985).

4 You can adapt this worship service for your congregation’s specific concerns regarding violence by adjusting the sermon topic and substituting one of the following hymns by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette for the Hymn of Response. The following texts are copyrighted by the hymn writer, who retains all rights to their use. She gives permission to *Christian Reflection* readers for the free use of these hymns in a local church. These and other new hymns by Gillette are available online at www.carolynshymns.com. Email her at bcgillette@comcast.net to request other permissions or to obtain copies formatted in Microsoft Word™ for a worship bulletin insert or projection software.

The first hymn addresses the violence of war. Written on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, it was published in Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, *Songs of Grace: New Hymns for God and Neighbor* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2009).

“God, Whose Love Is Always Stronger”

God, whose love is always stronger
than our weakness, pride and fear,
in your world, we pray and wonder
how to be more faithful here.

Hate too often grows inside us;
fear rules what the nations do.
So we pray, when wars divide us:
Give us love, Lord! Make us new!

Love is patient, kind and caring,
never arrogant or rude,
never boastful, all things bearing;
love rejoices in the truth.
When we’re caught up in believing
war will make the terror cease,
show us Jesus’ way of living;
may our strength be in your peace.

May our faith in you be nourished;
may your churches hear your call.
May our lives be filled with courage
as we speak your love for all.
Now emboldened by your Spirit
who has given us new birth,
give us love, that we may share it
till your love renews the earth!

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Suggested Tunes: BEACH SPRING, ABBOT’S LEIGH, or HYFRYDOL

The next hymn laments gun violence. Its unusual title refers to the total number of people (335,609) who died from gun violence in America between 2000 and 2010 – more than the population of St. Louis, MO (318,069), Pittsburgh, PA (307,484), Cincinnati, OH (296,223), Newark, NJ (277,540), or Orlando, FL (243,195) (source: “Just the Facts: Gun Violence in America,” January 16, 2013, usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/01/16/16547690-just-the-facts-gun-violence-in-america?lite).

"335,609 (I Cried to God)"

I cried to God, "Three hundred thirty thousand!
Five thousand more, six hundred more, and nine!"
In just ten years, a truth we can't imagine:
all died from guns, one loved one at a time!
And then I heard... "Whom shall I send to grieve them?
Go tell the world: 'I love them! They are mine!'"

I asked the Lord, "Why is there so much violence?
If you are God, why don't you stop the pain?
God, won't you speak? For all around is madness!
Just say the word and make us whole again!"
And then I heard... "Whom shall I send as prophets?
Speak out my truth! Shout till the killings end!"

I knelt and prayed, and wept for all the fallen;
so many lives, so many dreams now gone.
More than a name—each one was someone's cousin,
or someone's child, or someone counted on.
And then I heard... "Whom shall I send, who knew them,
to work for peace, to labor till the dawn?"

Lord, here am I! And here we are, together!
No one alone can end this killing spree.
The powers of death pit one against another,
yet you are God and you desire peace.
As mourners, prophets, laborers together,
give us the strength to make the killings cease.

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Tune: FINDLANDIA*

The following hymn, based on the story in John 8:1-11, laments violence against women.

"Christ Would Not Cast the Judgment Stone"

Christ would not cast the judgment stone
at one who stood afraid, alone;
he stopped the violence in that place
by speaking truth and showing grace.

To one the world would not protect,
Christ offered care and showed respect;
in one whom others cast away,
he saw a child of God that day.

May we show Christ's compassion here
to girls and women bound by fear,
to those who live in silent pain,
to those who can't go home again.

We pray for those who from their birth
are never shown their human worth;
we pray for women hurt this day
while others turn their eyes away.

O God, may we who call you Lord
now labor for a world restored,
where, in your image, all will be
protected, valued, safe and free.

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Suggested Tunes: GERMANY, WOODWORTH, or O WALY WALY

The final hymn specifically addresses the issue of violence in marriage.

“God of Love, We’ve Heard the Teaching”

God of love, we’ve heard the teaching: “Wives must honor and obey!”
Yet your scriptures say submission doesn’t only go one way.
For as wives are called to honor, so are husbands called to be
Christ-like as they serve their partners, loving sacrificially.

We have heard of preachers preaching: “You should stay! God hates divorce!”
God, we know of victims, suffering, who’ve been told to stay the course.
Yet it’s those who are abusive who have torn their vows in two;
for their violence and excuses cause great pain and anger you.

God, we’ve heard the old, old saying, “Better stay with what you know.”
So we pray for women wondering, “Should I stay or should I go?”
When they ask, “Will others help me? Who will come and stand by me?” –
may they know we love them dearly. We will be there; they will see!

God, we’ve heard a world of teachings; show us what is really true –
that you weep with those who suffer as they daily face abuse.
You want couples to be loving and to listen, share, and give.
This is mutual submission; this is how we’re called to live.

By your Spirit, may we witness to your peaceful, loving way.
May we share your love and justice every moment, every day.
May the people hurt by violence know they’re valued, by your grace,
and may all who are in crisis find a refuge in this place.

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Tune: BEACH SPRING



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Wilmington, Delaware.*