

**Holy Name Province: Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
Prayer Service Template**

**“Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace”:
A Christian Ecumenical Service Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of
the Interfaith Assisi Gathering for Peace**

Several days/weeks prior to the service, a symbolic action should be thought of which can engage all participants in the service. This action should include some concrete activity or dedication of the local ecumenical community to a witness of peace in the spirit of St. Francis. Examples would be a peace pole dedication, a movement from the prayer service to some direct service [soup kitchen work, etc.], a commitment card to personal nonviolence, etc.). Depending on the type of action, it could be incorporated into the service itself, or proceed it immediately, or after some time.

Environment: Gathering area is dimly lit as people gather. A collection of items reflective of the Franciscan tradition of peacemaking, and other symbols of peace and justice work are in a focal area in the space. A large, decorative copy of the Scriptures should be open and viewable as one of these symbols.

Prelude (optional – 15-20 min): Music selected from the various Christian denominational repertoires reflecting the themes of peace and justice are presented by a combined choir of local denominations if possible.

Immediately prior to the service, lights in the gathering area are brought to minimum or turned off leaving only light for readers. No candles are lit.

Gathering Rite (8 min):

Assembly remains seated. Lit candles are brought in (or lit in place) as different (pithy) readings are proclaimed by representatives of the various Christian denominations present. Candles should be located in the focal area, but can also be around the space. As each is lit, more light is brought to the space. Readings should be short sayings or short paragraphs from representative peace and justice thinkers, theologians, practitioners from each Christian tradition represented. These should be collected and prepared beforehand and put in the prayer program if possible. The images of these readings should be evocative and also convey that “peace” is not just “inner peace” or contemplation but may be confrontation to disrupt violence.

Examples that can be used are as follows:

Roman Catholic: “Christians are peacemakers, not because they cannot fight, but because they prefer the force of peace. And so I invite you, let us place all that energy that God has given our ... people, like a torrent, not at the service of bloodshed or violence. We have nothing to fear when [we] put all the assertiveness that God has given [us] at the service of building true justice, of building the order of things that truly ought to be defended.” (Archbishop Oscar Romero, August 27, 1978)

A candle is lit.

Calvinist: ““The decisive contradiction of the kingdom of God against all concealed or blatant kingdoms of force is to be seen quite simply in the fact that it invalidates the whole friend-foe relationship between one human and another.... The disciples are told: ‘Love your enemies!’ This is the end of the whole friend-foe relationship, for when we love our enemy he ceases to be our enemy. It thus abolishes the whole exercise of force, which presupposes this relationship, and has no meaning apart from it.” (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV*)

A candle is lit.

Anglican: “Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.” (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

A candle is lit.

Quaker: “There must be amidst all the confusions of the hour a tried and undisturbed remnant of persons who will not become purveyors of coercion and violence, who are ready to stand alone, if it is necessary, for the way of peace and love among men.” (Rufus Jones, Quaker theologian)

A candle is lit.

Baptist: “Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for mankind to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.” (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., December 11, 1964)

A candle is lit.

United Church of Christ: “We may never be able to stop shouting the chant, ‘No Justice, No Peace,’ but I believe we can try if we persevere in doing good to the end of life. I want to be God’s hands and heart on earth and continually be moved by grace and compassion to eliminate social inequities and injustices. As the faith community we must fight the good fight and leave the victory to God’s grace.” (Barbara Bayler, UCC Minister for Health Care Justice)

A candle is lit.

Evangelical Lutheran Church: “In publicly gathering to proclaim and celebrate God’s Gospel of peace, the Church uniquely contributes to earthly peace. Its most valuable mission for peace is to keep alive news of God’s resolve for peace, declaring that all are responsible to God for earthly peace and announcing forgiveness, healing, and hope in the name of Jesus Christ. In praying for peace in the world, in interceding for all who suffer from war and injustice and for those in authority, the Church acts for peace.” (ELCA Churchwide Assembly, *For Peace in God’s World*, 1995)

A candle is lit.

These readings may be substituted if other denominations are present, or representatives from the different traditions may be asked to bring their own short quotation from a leader, theologian, or minister from their tradition about peace and justice to share.

As the final representative is reading, and the final candle is lit, leaders for the following prayer should move into position. The music leader uses a drum, chime, or some other instrument to call people to attention. Leader(s) should gesture for all to stand. A final prayer from the Franciscan tradition on peace should be read by all. A sample is provided here. The leader begins:

Leader: Let us pray together using the words of St. Francis of Assisi ..

**ALL: Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God,
grant us in our misery the grace
to do for You alone
what we know You want us to do,
and always
to desire what pleases You.**

**Thus,
inwardly cleansed,
interiorly enlightened,
and enflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
may we be able to follow
in the footprints of You beloved Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**And,
by Your grace alone,
may we make our way to You,
Most High,
Who live and rule
in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,
and are glorified
God all-powerful**

forever and ever.

Amen.¹

Song (3 min): World Peace Prayer (arr. by Marty Haugen)²

All remain standing and sing the song together. Leaders sit and invite all to sit after the song as needed.

The psalms which follow may be prayed antiphonally as written. If chanted, the setting listed may be used. For a sung psalm, use the suggested setting for each psalm in place of the text provided.)

Psalm 67³ (3 min) (Alt. “May God Bless Us in His Mercy” by Michel Guimont⁴)

Leader: Favor us and bless us, Lord. I



**Left: Favor and bless us, Lord.
Let your face shine on us,
revealing your way to all peoples,
salvation the world over.**

**Right: Let the nations sing your praise,
every nation on earth.**

**Left: The world will shout for joy,
for you rule the planet with justice.
In fairness you govern the nations
and guide the peoples of earth.**

**Right: Let the nations sing your praise,
every nation on earth.**

**Left: The land delivers its harvest,
God, our God, has blessed us.
O God, continue your blessing,
may the whole world worship you.**

¹ Adapted from Armstrong, Regis A. and Ignatius C. Brady (trans.). *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. (New York: Paulist). 1982. p. 61.

² Musical scores available from GIA Publications, Inc. (<http://www.giamusic.com>).

³ Printed text of psalm and psalm tone from ICEL *Psalms for Morning and Evening Prayer* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications), 1995.

⁴ Musical scores available from GIA Publications, Inc. (<http://www.giamusic.com>).

All (recited): Favor us and bless us, Lord. Let your face shine upon us.

Silent Meditation (2 min)

Psalm 72⁵ (3 min) (Alt. “Every Nation on Earth” by Michael Joncas – with Refrain II⁶)

Leader: I have made you the light of all nations to carry my salvation to the ends of the earth.



Left: **God, give your king judgment,
the son of the king
your sense of what is right;
help him judge your people
and do right for the powerless.**

Right: *May mountains bear peace,
hills bring forth justice.
May the king defend the poor,
set their children free,
routing their oppressors.*

Left: **May he live as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, for ever.
May he be like rain on a field,
like showers that soak the earth.**

Right: *May justice sprout in his time,
peace till the moon is no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
from the River to the ends of the earth.*

All (recited): I have made you the light of all nations to carry my salvation to the ends of the earth.

Silent Meditation (2 min)

Scripture Reading (2 min)

Reader: A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians

⁵ Printed text of psalm and psalm tone from ICEL *Psalms for Morning and Evening Prayer* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications), 1995.

⁶ Musical scores available from GIA Publications, Inc. (<http://www.giamusic.com>).

Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I will say, Rejoice!

Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything,
by prayer and supplication,
with thanksgiving,
let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved,
whatever is true,
whatever is honorable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is pleasing,
whatever is commendable,

if there is any excellence
and if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.

Keep on doing the things that you
have learned
and received
and heard
and seen
in me,

and the God of peace will be with you.

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Sermon (for longer services) or **Silent Meditation** (2 min – for shorter services)

Intercessions (5 min)⁷

The leader stands and gestures for all to stand. The leader offers the opening prayer and then a reader proclaims the intercessions. The response may be sung or recited. (If sung, the recited responses provided here are not used.) After a few prepared intercessions, the leader should open up the opportunity to make intercession to all. Each spontaneous petition is concluded by the same pattern of recited responses or sung refrain.

Leader: We come before the God of peace in prayer.

Reader: To bring about a peaceful co-existence between peoples of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions, may we maintain a dialogue of mutual respect and esteem. We pray:

All: May we seek your truth, O God.

Reader: Since a culture of dialogue is essential to authentic peace, may we work toward understanding and mutual trust among peoples. We pray:

All: May we make peace, O God.

Reader: In working together to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, may we work together for justice, in order to achieve a genuine and lasting peace. We pray:

All: May we reverence life, O God.

Reader: In the desire to offer men and women of our time, a genuine hope of justice and peace, let us refuse to justify violence and evil. We pray:

All: May we seek your truth, O God.

Reader: To achieve a world of solidarity and peace built on justice, let us take every opportunity to encourage leaders in government, religion, and business to establish just policies. We pray:

All: May we make peace, O God.

Reader: The *Spirit of Assisi* calls every person to seek truth, justice, liberty, and love, may every human person enjoy their inalienable rights, and every nation, peace. We pray:

⁷ Intercessions based on *The Assisi Decalogue* – January 24, 2002.

All: May we reverence life, O God.

Leader: Please speak aloud any personal intentions at this time ...

(People add their intercessions; the responses continue in the three-fold pattern above. The leader brings the intercessions to a close by inviting all to the Lord's Prayer.)

Leader: We bring all of our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus taught us. Let us each pray this prayer in a language and with the words that are close to our hearts.

All: Our Father ...

Invitation to Symbolic Action (3 min)

All are seated. A chosen representative of the community comes forward and describes the action to be undertaken and offers instructions. If the action takes place immediately and within the service, music should be added to the action as necessary.

Concluding Prayer⁸ (1 min)

The leader gestures for all to stand and then offers the closing prayer.

Leader: The desert will sing and rejoice.

All: and the wilderness blossom with flowers;

Leader: all will see the Lord's splendor,

All: see the Lord's greatness and power.

Leader: Tell everyone who is anxious:

All: Be strong and don't be afraid.

Leader: The blind will be able to see;

All: the deaf will be able to hear;

Leader: the lame will leap and dance;

All: those who can't speak will shout.

⁸ Litany taken from the *Iona Community Worship Book* (1988) and based on Isaiah 35; Micah 4:1-4. Reprinted in Morley, Janet (ed.) *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year* (Maryknoll: Orbis), 1992, p. 20.

Leader: They will hammer their swords into ploughs

All: and their spears into pruning-knives;

Leader: the nations will live in peace;

All: they will train for war no more.

Leader: This is the promise of God;

All: God's promise will be fulfilled. Amen.

Song (“Let There Be Peace on Earth” by Sy Miller and Jill Jackson⁹)

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Service arranged by Mr. Marc J. DelMonico (marc.delmonico@gmail.com) for use by the Office for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation for the Franciscan Friars of Holy Name Province (<http://www.hnp.org/jpic>). Please provide appropriate recognition (name and contact information) in programs and other service information.

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⁹ Musical scores available from GIA Publications, Inc. (<http://www.giamusic.com>).