

## **Liturgy for the World Week of Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024 16 – 22 September 2024**

### **Sunday 15 and Sunday 22 September 2024**

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias, Church of Scotland for this liturgy to use alongside the Word Council of Churches World Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024.

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

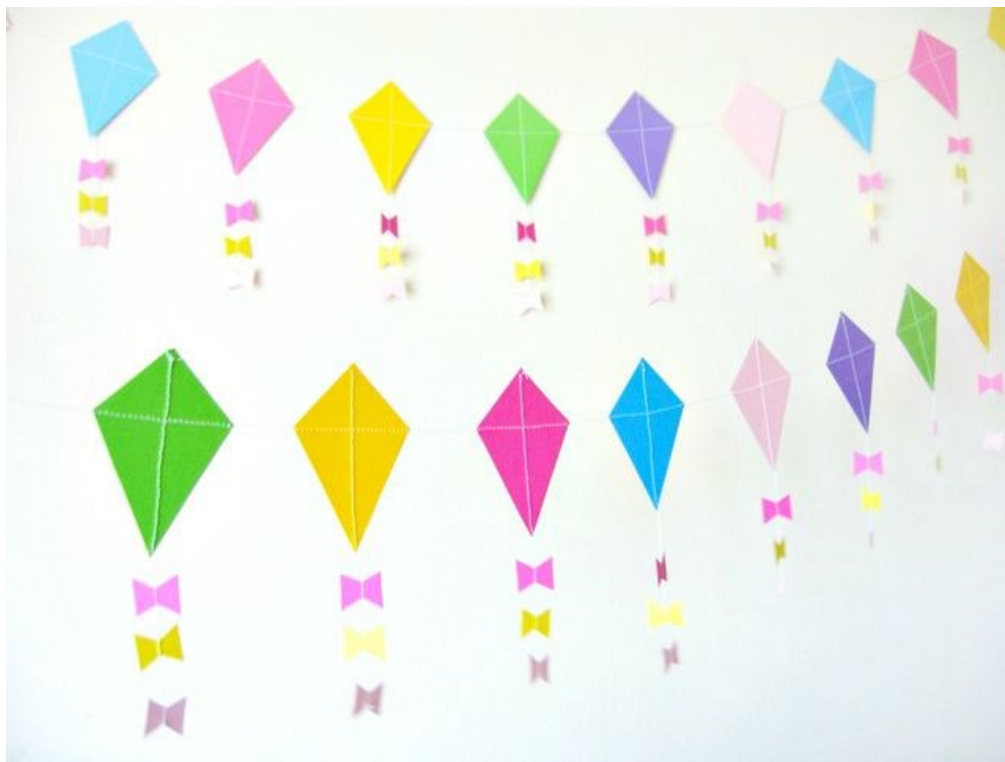
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## Introduction

The WCC Jerusalem Liaison Office Advisory Group Advisory Group have chosen to focus on Gaza this year, and the Scripture passage is Matthew 25:35-40. The chosen theme is “Whatever you did, you did for me.” (verse 40). Their daily resources throughout the week can be found on the [World Council of Churches website](#).

This liturgy largely follows the pattern of our Sunday worship in St Andrew’s Jerusalem and Tiberias, Church of Scotland, which leans on Iona Community worship resources and has, at its heart, a prayer for peace in Arabic, English and Hebrew.

You will need some colourful paper kite shapes and felt pens, some tiny (craft) clothes pegs, enough for everyone present, and some string that the kites can be attached to.



You may want to run over the tune of the Arabic/English/Hebrew song, used in the prayers of the people, at the beginning of your worship time, perhaps to ‘la’, and say to folk not to worry too much about fitting the words in.

Pax Christe has produced prayer cards on the theme of *Sumud*, which can be purchased here: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/product/sumud-prayer-card/> £3 for pack of 50.

## **Opening sentences**

God above us

**God beside us.**

God within us

**God who holds all things in life.**

God who walks with those who suffer

**God who inspires all who seek peace and pursue it.**

With You, we yearn for justice to be done

**for creation to be free from threat.**

For the hungry to be fed

**for captives to be released.**

For Your reign of peace to come on earth.

- CH4 88 – “Up from the depths I cry to God” (Psalm 130) *or*
- CH4 87 – “Lord, from the depths to the I cried”

## **Prayer of approach and lament**

We come, O God,  
with lowered eyes  
and hearts full of questions,  
and doubts and grief and hate.

We come, overwhelmed  
by the enormity of suffering  
in Gaza  
and elsewhere in Your broken world.

We cry from the depths:  
Why God?  
Where are You God?  
How can such disregard for human life,  
such hypocrisy and self-serving,  
such fear of annihilation  
be overcome?

If we can still our ragged breath  
and calm our troubled minds  
we can hear Your voice:

I am  
I am who I am  
I will be who I will be  
I am with you  
I will be with you.

You come to us in Jesus  
Word made flesh  
to honour flesh and save us  
to call us to fullness of life  
to help us 'be envelopes  
to carry Your love letter  
to the world.'

And so, by Your Spirit with us now  
we open ourselves  
to let go of hate  
to share our doubts  
to find comfort for our grief  
and to be filled with love  
and hope and faith.  
To see You in our suffering sisters and brothers  
in Palestine and Israel  
and all for Love's sake. Amen

## **Litany**

*'When did we see you, Lord?' (Matthew 25:37,44)*

### **We see you**

When we do not turn away from images of violence and torture and malnutrition.

### **We see you**

When we watch film, taken by brave newsgatherers, of children lugging jerry cans bigger than themselves.

**We see you**

When we see the agony of families separated from loved ones and see the pain, whether Palestinian or Israeli.

**We see you**

When we read reports of prison violence and inhumanity.

**We see you**

When we see streets crowded with protestors shouting, 'Stop the war!'

**We see you**

When we hear counter-cultural voices urging justice and crying out against revenge.

**We see you**

When the International Court of Justice investigates genocide.

**We see you**

When powerful nations continue to send weapons, while urging humanitarian relief.

**We see you**

Crucified still. Your agony, Your broken body, Your ragged cry: "Why have you forsaken me?"

Lord, when we see You, we don't know what to do. But You have told us: "Whenever you fed the hungry, gave a drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, healed the sick, visited the prisoner; when you did these things, you did it for me."

"Whatever you did.... you did it for me."

- CH4 721 – "We lay our broken world"

**Scripture reading [Matthew 25:35-40](#)**

**Poem – “If I Must Die”** *Rafaat Alaarer*

If I must die,  
you must live  
to tell my story  
to sell my things  
to buy a piece of cloth  
and some strings,  
(make it white with a long tail)  
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza  
while looking heaven in the eye  
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze —  
and bid no one farewell  
not even to his flesh  
not even to himself —  
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above,  
and thinks for a moment an angel is there  
bringing back love.  
If I must die  
let it bring hope,  
let it be a story.

*Rafaat Alaarer, citizen of Gaza, pinned this poem in a Tweet. He was killed on 6 December 2023. He has no surviving family and no lawyer to process literary editorship. It is the world's most recited poem and there is a Twitter thread of it translated in every language.*

**Reflection**

You may like to use the materials produced by the World Council of Churches, or perhaps have a conversation around the litany or poem used in the service.

**Prayers****Act of Commitment**

The World Council of Churches asks us educate ourselves, to pray and to act.

On one of the colourful kite outlines invite people to write down something to commit themselves to find out more about, to pray about or an action to take that contributes to peace with justice.

*Play Palestinian music (perhaps on oud) while the kites are being written on. Invite people to attach their kites to the string with the small clothes pegs, or collect them, to be displayed during the hymn.*

- CH4 275 – “Come now O Prince of peace, make us one body”

### **Prayers of the People**

*Between each petition we sing the song of peace, ‘Ya Rab as-salami’, first in Arabic, then in English, and then in Hebrew. (The music can be found in Voices Together #711:*

<https://hymnary.org/hymn/VT2020/711> Once License song #72491).

- *Arabic:* Ya rabba ssalami amter alayna ssalam, ya rabba ssalami im nah' qulubana salam.
- *English:* God of peace, in your wisdom give us the will to seek peace; God of peace and of healing, fill with your peace every heart!
- *Hebrew:* Ho Adon Sar-Shalom, ta belibenu shalom; ho Adon Sar-Shalom, ten be'artsenu shalom!

Lord of all life,  
we thank You for Your Spirit,  
who calls us together in the name of Your Son, Jesus, our Saviour.

We thank You for the gift of Yourself in Christ,  
for being today as You were in Him.

A God of love  
who calls us to acts of compassion and courage,

A God of justice  
who calls us to put right what is wrong within ourselves and our world,  
a God of wisdom,  
who calls us to seek the things that make for life and not death,  
a God of peace  
who calls us to make peace, and enjoy right relations with others and  
with Your creation.

We see You weeping still, over Jerusalem and all who live in the city,  
over all cities indeed throughout the world.



We pray that the wisdom of peace be pursued by their leaders, and by those who negotiate terms of truces and ceasefires.

We pray they might hear the call of Your wisdom to come sit at her table.

That the killing be stopped.

That detention and torture be stopped.

That the wars be stopped.

***We sing in Arabic the prayer of peace:***

Ya rabba ssalami amter alayna ssalam,  
ya rabba ssalami im nah' qulubana salam.

Dear Lord,

we pray again for those whose experience of life has taught them hatred,  
whose pain nourishes rage, whose dreams are violent, whose religion divides.

We pray for Your people who face suspicion as they reach out across the lines,  
who are persecuted for righteousness' sake –  
help them to sustain their witness to Your wisdom,  
whose invitation goes out to one and all,  
that the force of hatred of others be checked within us,  
that the impulse to demonize others be checked within us,  
that the rush to violence against others be checked within us.

We continue to pray for those who have been bereaved by this war  
and by the violence of occupation and resistance,  
who are in need of Your presence and comfort, Your healing in mind, body and soul.

We continue to pray for the release of all Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners,  
that they might return to their families and friends.

We continue to pray for medical and humanitarian aid to reach safely those in desperate  
need of it.

***We sing in English the prayer of peace:***

God of peace, in your wisdom give us the will to seek peace;  
God of peace and of healing, fill with your peace every heart!

Dear Lord, we pray for the people of Jerusalem and Ramallah,  
for those who live in the south and those who live in the north,  
those in the coastlands and those in the hills,  
that the physical and spiritual needs of all be met.

Help us learn better how to study our future.  
Grant us Your eyes and imagination,  
that we be enabled to gain a vision of the future you have for us,  
if we had but the heart and wit to see it. And love it. And work for it.

Loving God, You call us to make our places of worship places of welcome,  
a church without walls, offering the hospitality of Your table to all who need it.  
Lord, help us to be people who bear true witness to Your intention in creation,  
that we, by our very lives, proclaim Your praise,  
respecting the sanctity of the life and the equal right of all to live and be honoured.

To Your greater glory, and our joy in your salvation.

***We sing in Hebrew the prayer of peace:***

Ho Adon Sar-Shalom, ta belibenu shalom;  
ho Adon Sar-Shalom, ten be'artsenu shalom!

- CH4 250 – “Sent by the Lord am I”

**Blessing**

May the blessing of the God of peace and justice  
be with us.

May the blessing of the Son who weeps the tears of the world's suffering  
be with us.

May the blessing of the Spirit who inspires us in reconciliation and hope  
be with us now and forever.

Amen