

September 11th Ten Years Later: Our Commitment to Peace and Justice

These are some worship resources offered by the WI Council of Churches Peace & Justice Commission. They may be used as part of worship on Sunday morning, September 11, 2011, or as part of a separate worship event. In conjunction with the WCC Non-Violence Conference to be held in Milwaukee on Sept. 10, 2011, we also encourage communities to plan a local interfaith gathering. Be sure to visit www.wichurches.org for ongoing updates with sermons, reflections, and more resources for the day.

A Litany of Remembrance, Penitence, and Hope

*Words of confession and reconciliation, with the option for candle-lighting.
Adapted from the piece by Rev. Eileen W. Lindner and Rev. Marcel A. Welty, National Council of Churches*

We light a candle in remembrance for all those who suffered and died on September 11, 2001. We light a candle to remember those who still live and who suffer because of the events of that day.

Remembrance begins with deep, personal identification. It begins with remembering the affliction of our brothers and sisters, and marking their pain as our own. Remembrance is a sacred moment when we raise up and hold to the light of the eternal moment, the good who have passed.

We light a candle, in penitence, recognizing that we have not done enough to address the sources of anger, hate, dehumanization, rage and indignation that lead to acts of violence.

In our sadness, horror and shock we acknowledge that our own fears turned murderous and we have sought revenge, sometimes against even the innocent.

We confess and regret our own anger and recognize its dangers to our spirits, our health, our community, and others.

We have been tempted to seek only our own good, hear only our own truth, acknowledge only our own suffering.

We know that peace will come to us and to our children only when the concerns of justice anywhere become the subject of political and social will everywhere, and that no justice leads to no peace.

In striving for national security and domestic peace we run the risk of confusing might for right and participating in the very behaviors we condemn.

Guard and guide our country that in our search for security we may not trample the rights of the innocent nor disregard the rule of law.

We recall with joy the unity we felt in the outpouring of help, kindness, thoughtful words and deeds from at home and around the world.

We must hold firmly to our unity, borne forward now not of tragedy but of loving kindness.

Repentance means to turn away from wrong deeds. Repentance means choosing instead deeds which require moral restraint, and are more beneficial to all persons who suffer.

We light a candle to light the way to a better world for our children and our children's children, and all the children of God.

God of the ages, before your eyes all empires rise and fall yet you are changeless. Be near us in this age of terror and in these moments of remembrance. Uphold those who work and watch and wait and weep and love. By your Spirit give rise in us to broad sympathy for all the peoples of your earth. Strengthen us to comfort those who mourn and work in large ways and small for those things that make for peace. Bless the people and leaders of this nation and all nations so that warfare, like slavery before it, may become only a historic memory. We pray in the strong name of the Prince of Peace.

Amen

A Litany

*This may be used in full, or specific petitions may be adapted for prayers of intercession, concluding with words like "Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**"*

We mark this day with sadness as we remember the fear and terror, sadness and struggle that marked September 11, 2001.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

We continue to grieve for the deaths and mourn with those who have lost loved ones on that day and in the time since, Americans as well as so many others.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

We acknowledge that violence breeds an evil cycle, and that we are susceptible to imagining somebody's death makes us safer.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

We recall the emerging goodness of those early days: of unity, the shared sacrifice, the dedication to vigils and so many people turning to you.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

We give thanks for those then and since who have accepted callings to care—rescue workers and firefighters, leaders and citizens, all those who strive for peace and work for justice around the world.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

We pray for all who seek your will, for those who gather in congregations and mosques and synagogues and we wait for you to draw all people of all religions to yourself.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

We have seen the worst and the best we are capable of. We desire—and want all in this world—to be people who bear your gifts for a more excellent way.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

We observe this 10th anniversary of a national tragedy that led to a global war. Still, when we see wrong, help us to confront it. But this day may we recommit ourselves to working together for what is right.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us.

As we continue forward, light our paths out from darkness. Give us hope that is stronger than fear, love that is broader than despair, and your life that is beyond even death.

Show us your goodness as your steadfast love abides with us. Amen

Possible Hymns

This is a small selection of some common hymns that sing of reconciliation, about God's love continuing to work through sin, about hoping for a better future

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound
Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive
Let Justice Flow Like Streams
Lift Every Voice and Sing
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
The Magnificat (Mary's Song)
O God of Every Nation
O God, Our Help in Ages Past
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
This is My Song
World Peace Prayer (Lead Us From Death to Life)
Prayer of St. Francis

Bible Readings

The Revised Common Lectionary texts for September 11, 2011 have themes that relate well to our journey forward after 9/11.

Genesis 50:15-21

After the trauma induced by his brothers, Joseph finds a way away from fear and vengeance. After the plea, "forgive the crime of your brothers," Joseph says, "Even though you intended to do me harm, God intended it for good." As we continue forward in healing after 9/11, what are the goods God is bringing out of the evil?

Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13

The Psalm repeats the refrain of the Hebrew Scriptures that "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Our God does not "deal with us according to our sins." Where is this ancient message to the people of Israel proclaimed in our world today?

Romans 14:1-12

"Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?" Paul uses language reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount in calling us not to presume ourselves "holier than thou." How is September 11, 2011 a good time to pay attention to our own behavior before passing judgment on others?

Matthew 18:21-35

Sometimes known as "the parable of the unforgiving servant," one whose debts have been forgiven refuses to release another from a smaller burden. The story illustrates Jesus' instruction on forgiveness. How are we still imprisoning each other over the debts of ten years ago and what is the way forward?

Visit the WCC website for more reflections and sermons. If you would like to submit something, send it to wcc@wichurches.org