

2nd Week of Advent: Peace Liturgy

Invocation

Fellow voices in the wilderness, let us prepare the way of our God! May we be a choir of justice, singing out with the notes of harmony and the tempo of truth in our songs. Way-maker in the Desert, we come to worship you today. Guide us with words of the prophets, who always spoke truth to power, and give us the strength to rise up for justice in our world today. Amen.

Litany of the Advent Candle

One: The prophet Ezekiel proclaimed, "I will make a covenant of peace with them...and will set my sanctuary among them forever" (Ez 37:26). Yes, friends, let us become sanctuaries of peace here and now.

All: May we embody the spirit of shalom in our songs and deeds to proclaim freedom for all.

One: What might it mean to take refuge in this place, gathered around this humble wreath?

All: What could it mean to be a refuge for others or even the lost parts of ourselves?

One: As we gather around to light the second Advent candle, may we encircle each other with a sense of care and protection.

All: May we hold on to and support each other, knowing that safety is shared work. (Light the two candles)

One: Bless our prayer for peace, our hope in justice realized.

All: Bless us in our longing and believing, in Christ Emmanuel. Amen.

One: O God of Hope and Light, shine upon us today...

All: With our hearts pointed towards the morning sun and our spirits open to your good news. Amen.

Prayer of Transformation and Grace

"A gentler world begins in the way you touch your heart," writes poet Alfred K. LaMotte. "God is nothing else but the place where the sun comes up in your chest." As we come to this time offered for forgiveness, reconciliation, and repair, may we remember how the pathway to peace is guided by a holy light already within us. Perhaps let us consider the wisdom of gentleness in a harsh world, and how such softness is not meek but rather fierce in its resistance to violence. Thus, forgive and transform us, O God of Peace, for the ways in which we cause harm from the inside out and the ways we take in and replicate the harm we encounter. May we find hope in the peace you offer and be empowered to bring such loving energy to life. Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Since ancient times, offering peace has been a form of greeting. Perhaps saying, "Yes, let us speak this vision into being together. Yes, let us welcome in harmony as a way of being with each other." As we enter into this time of offering, let us reflect on what the gift of simple everyday peace might look like today: the relief of a covered porch in a storm, a care package sent to a friend, a casserole at the community meal, a visitor's pass at the hospital, a text message to make sure your family made it home safely. May our offerings, big and small, be a source of comfort and peace, cultivating wellbeing in ourselves, in each other, and in our world. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

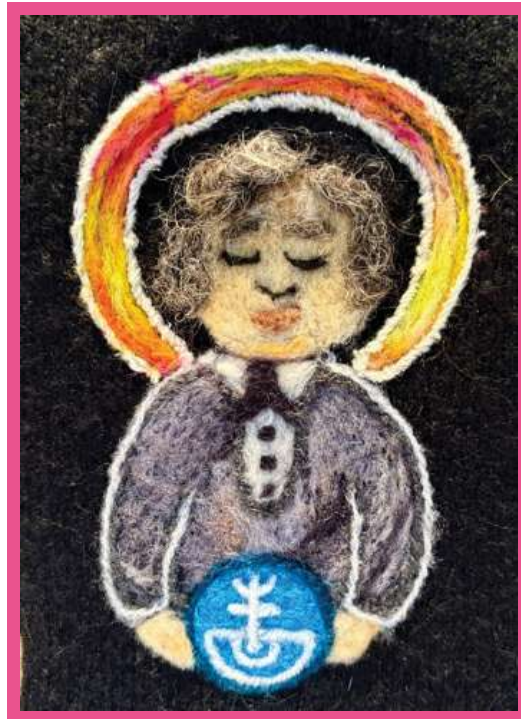
Communal Creator, we dedicate these offerings to the restoration of right relationships in the world, our community, and within our own hearts. Continue to empower us to be advocates of peace at every size, for everyone, and in every place. Amen.



THE GREATEST OF THESE...

LOVE...

Children's Moment



The Rev. Louis Edward Nollau was a 19th-century German immigrant, minister, and founder of several St. Louis-area health and human service organizations in the United Church of Christ. In the wake of a horrible cholera epidemic, countless children lost their parents, leaving them without support or a place to live. Being moved by the lives of these children, the Rev. Nollau began to gather others to raise money and resources for a home and school for these children. But there were those in his congregation who said, "Why pastor, we haven't a thing with which to start an orphan's home." "Oh yes we have," Nollau replied. "We have everything we need; we have the children (the orphans)."

Through his passion and partnering with others, the German Protestant Orphan's Home was founded in 1858. Today, this organization is called Every Child's Hope and continues to provide services for children and youth in St. Louis. The Rev. Nollau also established Good Samaritan Hospital, which cared for patients of any religious or racial background—a rarity for the time.

Today, these organizations are part of the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries of The United Church of Christ, more commonly called CHHSM. All over the country, there are hundreds of hospitals, mental health facilities, affordable housing, transitional housing, services for people with disabilities, and other types of ministries that live into the mission of the UCC beyond the church walls. These organizations started out much like Edward Nollau did—with a passion and vision for making the world a more just, peaceful, and caring place. He reminds us that it is everyday people responding to the world around them that make the biggest difference.

What kinds of causes do you care deeply about? Perhaps it is the environment, mental wellness, the rights of children, or world peace. What is your vision for a world with more kindness, care, and community? How might Spirit be calling you into loving action this Advent season?



THE GREATEST OF THESE...

LOVE...