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## Peace Surpassing Understanding

This service of Lessons and Carols from 2009, through the movement of scripture and prayer, melodies and rhythms, images and metaphors, may God's Spirit open our hearts to the breadth and power of the peace that surpasses understanding.



The Advent and Christmas gospel comes, wondrously, with two strands of promise: one with a scope as vast as the cosmos; one that is as intimate as our own interior lives, so often hidden from everyone but God. Both strands of promise are captured in a simple word with breathtaking scope: "Peace."

The gospel of peace comes with healing both for neighborhoods that are racked with violence, and for hearts that are filled with turmoil.

The gift of peace turns swords into farming instruments, and inner turmoil into tranquility. In response to God's promises, in solidarity with God's people in ancient Israel, we declare with hope and trust:

The Prince of Peace shall surely come to heal the cosmos and to quiet our hearts.

In this service, through the movement of scripture and prayer, melodies and rhythms, images and metaphors, may God's Spirit open our hearts to the breadth and power of the peace that surpasses understanding.

Following this service, consider returning to these texts, savoring the joy and hope of the Advent and Christmas gospel.

### **Prelude:**

"La Nativité" (from *Poèmes Évangéliques*), Jean Langlais

"Organ Hymn," Raymond Haan

## Processional Hymn:

"Ososo/Come Now, O Prince of Peace," Geonyong Lee

## Greeting:

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**All: Who made the heavens and the earth.**

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**All: Amen.**

## Bidding Prayer:

Leader: Beloved in Christ, as we await the great festival of Christmas, we prepare ourselves so that we may be shown its true meaning. We have gathered to hear, in readings from the holy scriptures, how the prophets of Israel foretold that God would visit and redeem his waiting people. We rehearse again the account of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience to the glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice, in carols and hymns, that the good purpose of God is being mightily fulfilled. The Psalmist declares: "Surely, salvation is near those who fear God: Love and faithfulness meet together; right- eousness and peace kiss each other."

But first, we pray for the world which God so loves, for those who have not heard the good news of God, or who do not believe it; for those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death; and for the Church in this place and everywhere, that it may be freed from all evil and fear, and may in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God.

These prayers we humbly offer as we meditate on the readings from holy scripture, and also now, in the words that our Lord Jesus Christ taught us.

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.**

**Amen!**

## A Song in the Night

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:14-19; Job 3:20-26, 19:25-27

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

"How Can I Keep from Singing," Bradley Ellingboe

"There Shall a Star Come Out of Jacob," Felix Mendelssohn

"My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is." Lamentations 3:17
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## Prince of Peace

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9:6-7

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

"Dona Nobis Pacem," Z. Randall Stroope

"O Day of Peace that Dimly Shines," Carl P. Daw Jr.

"I will make a covenant of peace with them;  
it shall be an everlasting covenant with them;  
and I will bless them and multiply them,  
and I will set my sanctuary among them forevermore." Ezekiel 37:26

## **The Gospel of Peace as the Vocation of God's Servants**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 52:7-10; James 3:13-18

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

"Prayer of St. Francis," David N. Childs

"Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it." Psalm 34:14  
"...a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace." James 3:18

## **The Shepherd of Peace from the Town of David**

**Scripture:** Micah 5:1-5a

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

"Wonderful Peace" (Jul, Jul), Gustav Nordqvist

"Song of Zechariah/O Little Town of Bethlehem"

"They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' but there shall be none."  
Jeremiah 6:14 and 8:11  
"When anguish comes, they will seek peace, but there shall be none." Ezekiel 7:25  
"Because, in truth, because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace; and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets whitewash on it." Ezekiel 13:10

## **The Angels Sing of Glory and Peace**

**Scripture:** Luke 2:8-15

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

"Gloria," Ola Gjeilo

"Gloria in Excelsis" from *Missa Brevis*, Paul Basler

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

*Psalter Hymnal 347*

"Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other." Psalm 85:10

## **Simeon and Anna Greet the Hope of Israel**

**Scripture:** Luke 2:21-38

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

"Song of Simeon," Alexander Tikhonovitch Grechaninov

"Chapel Royal Nunc Dimittis," Paul Ayers

"The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever."  
Isaiah 32:17

## **The Gift of Peace Through the Word and the Spirit**

**Scripture:** John 1:1-4, 14; John 14:25-27

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

"Emmanuel," Dennis Friesen-Carper

"Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace--in peace because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for in the LORD GOD you have an everlasting rock." Isaiah 26:3-4

### **Charge:**

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:8-9, 13-15a, 18)

## Closing Prayer:

Choir: Come, Hope of unity, make us one body. Come, O Lord Jesus; reconcile all nations.

Pastor: Eternal God, you taught us that the night is far spent and the day is at hand. Keep us awake and alert, watching for your kingdom, and make us strong in faith, so that when Christ comes in glory to judge the earth, we may joyfully give him praise who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

*The Worship Sourcebook*

## Benediction:

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

## Recessional Hymn: "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

*Psalter Hymnal 345*

## Postlude: "Finale" (from *Sixth Symphony* Opus 42, No. 6), Charles Marie Widor

"Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet: righteousness and peace will kiss each other." Psalm 85:8-10

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A service plan for Advent focused on Moses' experience of God breaking in to him at the burning bush and preparing him for the next big steps God was about to take. The first in an Advent series, beginning the period of anticipation, focused on what happens when God breaks in to our lives.

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### **What A Friend We Have in Jesus - Service of Prayer for Healing - Isaiah 61, Matthew 11**

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