

WORLD WIDE COMMUNION SUNDAY

Olive Oil Communion and order of service

October 6, 2024 or other dates

Prepared by members of Living Skies Regional Council of The United Church of Canada and Mennonite Church SK as part of a focus on the olive harvest in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

[Click here for more information.](#)



The spirit of the Lord
God is upon me, because
God has anointed me to
bring good news to the
oppressed... to give them
a garland instead of
ashes, the oil of gladness
instead of mourning.

Isaiah 61

Add a subheading



PREPARATION

1. Feel free to adapt and update this service for World Wide Communion Sunday as suits your situation. Included is the basic service format, with a suggestion for a Children's Time, and links to three diverse stories for reflection and an Olive Oil Communion liturgy.
2. **The elements:** pita bread and olive oil, preferably Palestinian where possible.
 - Palestinian olive oil is in short supply, with military and settler violence creating very difficult conditions for farmers and exporters. The planning team is ordering a crate of 12 750 ml bottles from **Zatoun.com**, which we hope to have by our first event on October 1. If you wish to purchase a bottle for the cost price of \$30 please contact Ursula Wiig, ursula.wiig@sasktel.net.
 - **The Relief Collective, Islamic Relief Canada** also has Palestinian olive oil, 250 ml for \$25 plus shipping. [Click here for their website.](#)
3. **The distribution of the elements** can be done by intinction, either by congregants dipping small pieces of pita into the cup of olive oil, or, with COVID precautions in mind, by having 2 sets of communion glasses, one to hold pieces of pita bread and the other a small bit of olive oil. Then the congregants do their own mini intinction by dipping the bread in the oil & consuming it. The traditional practice for 'holy oil' by Palestinian Orthodox Christians, Anglicans, and Catholics is for congregants to be anointed with olive oil as a reminder of their baptism with just as a touch on the forehead.
4. **Hymns:**
 - ***Now There Is War, O WALY WALY 8.8.8.8*** ("Though I May Speak")

Now there is war and children die,
but theirs is not the battle cry.
This is their time to live and grow—
to think of things the young should know.

This is their time to open doors—
to read new books, to do their chores,
to make new friends, to share their bread.
The world gives pain and death instead.

This is their time for soccer teams,
for watching clouds, for dreaming dreams.
They long for peace; they're told to, "Wait!"
They long for love; they're taught to hate.

O God, your reign belongs to these
who make up songs and skin their knees.
May we seek peace and daily strive
to build a world where they may thrive.

This is a new hymn by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette to lament the deaths of children in the Middle East War. Copyright © 2023. All rights reserved, but permission is given for free use of this hymn. The author would appreciate hearing (even afterward) that you used it. carolynshymns@gmail.com

- Other suggestions: in United Church hymnals:
MV 12 Come Touch Our Hearts; MV 78 God Weeps; VU 600 When I Needed a Neighbour
- 5. **Olive Tree Seedlings:** Purchasing seedlings to replace uprooted and destroyed olive trees is another way to support Palestinians, through one of the following organizations:
 - **The Relief Collective, Islamic Relief Canada** \$10 per tree. [Click here for more information.](#)
 - **Zatoun**, (Palestine Peace Awareness Inc.) <https://zatoun.com/> Tree sponsorships \$20 each.
 - **Presbyterian Church in Canada** (works with JAI below) \$30 per tree In its Olive Tree Campaign, The Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) of East Jerusalem YMCA and the YWCA of Palestine works to replenish the orchards of affected farmers and advocate on their behalf. [Click here for more information.](#)

Advocacy: Prophetic justice calls us to take action on root causes. We call on Canada to stop fanning the flames of the atrocious violence in Gaza and the West Bank. With the Mennonite and United Churches, **we call on all our churches and members to call for an immediate military embargo between Canada and Israel.** There are many resources for raising our voices at [Arms Embargo Now](#). Please prayerfully discern what action you can take.

A note about commemoration and lamentation:

Worldwide Communion Sunday falls on October 6 2024. The next day is the one-year anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel, and Israel's attack on Gaza. If you wish to include October 7 in your service, the Palestine-Israel Network of Mennonite Church Canada offers us all liturgy and prayers, scripture, stories, and the song "If the War Goes On" by John Bell, who gives voice to the questions we ask in times such as these. [Click here for a video of the song.](#) The free download for worship leaders [is available here](#) and at the PIN web page [here](#).

We commemorate with grief not only October 7 and the ensuing genocide, but the decades of violence that precede it, particularly the military occupation of the Palestinian Territories that stretches back multiple generations. We bear witness to the agony of all who live in this sacred land, and we commit to working for a just peace, in faith and in hope beyond hope.

CALL TO WORSHIP

All around us: signs of plenty, signs of gathering in, signs of the harvest.

We come to gather the harvest of abundance, so we may share.

On this day people around the world gather to remember Christ's self-giving love.

We gather in joy and thankfulness.

We gather with different languages and customs.

We gather with differences too numerous to count.

Yet we are more the same than different.

We all long for the basic necessities of life, love and community, peace and security.

Created in the image of God, we are all treasured by our Creator,
so let us worship in unity, peace, and joy.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

OPENING PRAYER

As we gather today in our abundance,
we recognize that there are places in the world
where there are no harvests this year:
places of conflict and war,
where farmers worry about more than the weather,
where famine rages,
and people live in constant fear for their lives
struggling just to survive.

God, this day we especially hold in prayer
our sisters and brothers in Christ – 'the living stones' -
in the land where your son Jesus was born,
and all the people of that land whatever their faith.

As we approach the anniversary of the beginning of the war,
we pray that we will not grow weary,
that our compassion will not become exhausted,
We pray that with your strength and
inspired by the Palestinians resistance
in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles,
we will keep the faith and
continue to fight for a just and lasting peace
in the land where Jesus lived and loved, healed and taught.
May your kin-dom come. Amen

HYMN

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

Where a desire for vengeance grows
may those who hunger and thirst
for healing justice be satisfied.

When violence wounds,
kills and traumatizes,
may peace mend, renew and restore.

Where mercy has run dry
and evil is unleashed,
may justice flow like a mighty river.

Where governments and militias war
may your kin-dom come.

May your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen

CHILDREN'S / ALL AGES TIME: One option is [These Olive Trees](#), by Aya Ghanameh. Here is a [video of the book being read](#).

SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 2:4 - A vision of peace; or Isaiah 61; Psalm 13 – A psalm of lament

THREE STORIES FROM PALESTINE: [available at this link](#) for you to share or read in worship.

HYMN

PRAYER FOR PEACE (3 options)

OPTION 1: PRAYER FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Steadfast God,

As we witness to the horrors and heartbreak in Israel and Palestine, we seek your comfort
and strength, your shelter and hope, your peace and your blessings.

Bless all those who continually attempt to live your teachings of compassion and reconciliation through humanitarian aid and advocacy for those most affected by the atrocities of war. These actions are green leaves on a weakening tree, clear signs of hope, even as fear, death, and grief overwhelm.

Bless all those who mourn, whose heartbreak and sorrow are too deep for words. In their despair may your unshakeable roots protect and hold them in love. And provide us all with the strength to yearn “more than those who watch for morning” for a time when peace prevails globally and in the Middle East.

Bless all who prayerfully seek a peace that leads toward abundant life for all people. Help those of us more removed from the direct conflict to care for and support those of us who are most affected in the Middle East and in our local communities. May we honestly wrestle with our complex emotions, biases, and limited information so that we can work with others toward peace-building that is guided by justice, compassion, and mercy. Together, may we anticipate a time when Israel and Palestine will be a symbol of justice, peace, and liberation for all.

Like an olive tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream,
may our commitment toward a just peace in Israel and Palestine never falter,
 may our hope not be uprooted,
 may our actions bear good fruit,
 may our love be steadfast.

Until freedom and justice for all comes,
may it be so.

Amen

[*Embolden Justice*, <https://united-church.ca/prayers/prayer-peace-middle-east>]

OR

OPTION 2: PRAYER FOR PEACE WITH JUSTICE IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

(Inspired by Psalm 23 and A Moment of Truth: Kairos Palestine, section 3)

God,
you are our hope, we shall not let go.

You help us seek peace, justice, hope, and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis,
You lead us towards courageous actions.

With United Church partners Middle East Council of Churches, Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees, Defense for Children International—Palestine, Sabeel, and Kairos Palestine,

we faithfully journey to places of unrest, instability, and fear,
 to advocate for the basic human rights of all people,
 support the peace-builders who are actively resisting the dehumanizing forces of violence, and

better proclaim the gospel of peace for your sake.

Even though there is uncertainty, indifference, and opposition,
grant us the strength to continually seek

an end to the occupation,

so that Israelis and Palestinians can create a better future for themselves.

Even as we dream of a time when Israel/Palestine will be a symbol of hope, peace, and reconciliation,

help us to be mindfully aware of the volatile present.

Draw close to the multitude of injured and grieving people in the Holy Land;

gather up the hopeless,

and abide with the physically and emotionally oppressed;

may your presence and your kin-dom comfort our siblings in their suffering.

God, prepare tables of dialogue and opportunities for truth-telling around us.

Open the hearts of hurting people so that they may witness small signs of hope.

Surely, with your help, we will continue to seek justice and resist evil,

all the days of our lives,

until all are able to live abundantly.

Amen.

[\[https://united-church.ca/worship-special-days/world-week-peace-palestine-and-israel/\]](https://united-church.ca/worship-special-days/world-week-peace-palestine-and-israel/)

OR

OPTION 3: From Palestine-Israel Network, Mennonite Church Canada,
(posted on <https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/>)

God of love and justice, our hearts are perplexed, paralyzed and broken at the recent carnage in Palestine and Israel. We lament the loss of life and the suffering of so many innocent people on both sides. We are shocked at the inhumanity of soldiers and militants.

Our prayers for peace seem to go unanswered. We wish you would intervene. We cling to your promise of a different world, but we see so few signs of its fulfillment. We do not understand.

Still, we continue to believe that you desire life and peace for all people.

Holy Spirit, strengthen our resolve to advocate for peace, justice, equality, and compassion for all. Don't let us turn away.

Comfort all who are overwhelmed with loss—loss of life, loss of homes, loss of safety and security.

God of the vulnerable and the oppressed, neutralize the power of those who thirst for domination and control. Renew the energy and creativity of those committed to nonviolent resistance and change.

We pray for the Christian communities in the land where Jesus walked and where the church was born. May their witness to your love remain bright among their Muslim and Jewish neighbours. May they recognize your hand in their lives, even amidst the suffering.

God of all nations, guide our own government to respond in ways that support the legitimate rights of all, especially those who are most vulnerable, those who continue to suffer after decades of occupation, dispossession, and denial of basic human rights and those who fear for their safety.

May your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Yours is the kingdom, the power, the glory, now and forever. Amen

OFFERING

COMMUNION HYMN

COMMUNION LITURGY: [click here for the PDF version.](#)

CLOSING HYMN

COMMISSIONING & BLESSING

