



“Then they cried to the Lord in their Trouble” Psalm 107: 6a

Peace Sunday Resources August 4, 2019

**Peace Sunday is a time to reflect on the Christian responsibility for peacemaking. In the Anglican and Methodist/Presbyterian lectionaries it is set aside as the closest Sunday to 6 August, Hiroshima Day—this year August 4. We remember the great harm done in war and through nuclear testing, and commit ourselves to the task of ending violence at every level. CWS offers this material around the lectionary readings and with a focus on the Pacific. Please adapt them for your people.**

On 6 August 1945 US forces dropped the first atomic bomb “Little Boy” on Hiroshima leaving 100,000-180,000 people dead and 63% of buildings destroyed. Three days later a larger bomb “Fat Man” was dropped on Nagasaki leaving 50,000-100,000 dead and 22.7% of its buildings consumed by fire.

France [undertook](#) 193 nuclear tests between 1966 and 1996 on Maohi Nui. Britain [insists](#) nine nuclear tests on Kiribati were clean. The USA conducted 105 nuclear tests in the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands. [Leaking waste](#) and [radiation](#) remain major concerns.

**Take time to set up the worship space with some symbols of peace. You could make a giant peace symbol, dove or a white feather (raukura) the symbol of [Parihaka](#), as a focus, or use a world map or globe.**

*In 2015, Japanese people were joined by a delegation from the World Council of Churches and others to mark 60 years since the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima by the USA. People from many faiths remembered those who had died and prayed for peace.*

*Photo: WCC/Paul Jeffrey*

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## “Then they cried to the Lord in their Trouble”

Today’s lectionary readings provide entry points for reflection:

*Hosea 11:1-11*

Hosea lived in the eighth century when the politics of the Northern Kingdom were unstable. A few years later (721 c.e.) the kingdom was taken by Assyria. The prophet condemns Israel’s unfaithfulness to Yahweh before making this touching description comparing God’s love for Israel or Ephraim as that of a parent for a son. God taught him to walk, held him and healed him (v. 3). In v. 4 God lead his people with “bands of love” even though they turn from God (v. 7). When they rebelled, God was consumed by love (v. 8) - “my compassion grows warm and tender” - God will bring the people safely home from Egypt and Assyria (v. 11).

*Colossians 3:1-11*

The words of Colossians are a call to action, a challenge to examine the way we live at a very personal level, framed by a focus on the ‘things that are above’ (v. 2). One can read v. 5-9 as a checklist of areas to work on as we seek to live with Christ as the centre of our lives. The writer rejects human made divisions built on racism, physical attributes, foreignness, and slavery or exploitation, emphasising “Christ is all and in all” (v. 11).

*Luke 12:13-21*

This story may only be found in the gospel of Luke, but it is a familiar warning. Jesus was talking with the large crowd that had gathered around him (v. 1). Jesus used a man’s question about dividing a family’s wealth between sons as the basis for a lesson in economics. Land was the source of livelihood. Referring the technical division of inheritance to local religious authorities (v. 14), he warned of the dangers of possessions and greed. The rich man who had collected wealth by exploiting others in the eyes of many in his audience will die. Jesus showed that he was on their side. As Christians our priority is generosity consistent with God’s love. Greed and power are common threads in situations of violence and conflict.

*Psalms 107:1-9, 43*

*Reflection by Rev Jordan Redding, a minister in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Otago, he lives in Dunedin and attends Knox Church. In 2017, he [won](#) the Lombard Prize of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.*

### Campaigning for Peace in the Pacific

*Jordan locates the task of peacemaking in the Pacific, reminding us of the nuclear legacy and the need to support efforts for justice.*

Earlier this year I was in Tahiti for an ecumenical gathering. Our task was to partake in a series of bible studies through which we explored issues of colonial and racial violence in the South Pacific. During one bible study we were shown an artist’s impression of Paul Gauguin’s painting Two Tahitian Women (1899). In this new, modern day interpretation, the centre woman now wears a gas mask, and in her hands, instead of a plate of fruit, she holds an erupting nuclear mushroom cloud.

### Call to Worship

*Today is Peace Sunday, a time to celebrate the peacemakers in our community and remember those who have been harmed by war and violence. August 6 is Hiroshima Day, the day the first atomic bomb was dropped 64 years ago.*

Jesus,  
We hear your voice,  
We hear it in the cries of children traumatised by violence and war, in the silent anguish of people injured in conflict, in the protests of people demanding justice.

**We come to this safe place in search of new pathways to peace. You are the light of the world and giver of new life. Amen**



### Children’s Talk

*For younger children assemble a large connection of soft toys. Invite them to choose a friend. By example show them how to play, dance, clap with them. Conclude by holding your toy and say this is a way of reminding us of God’s love for us (cf Hosea).*

*For older children tell the [story](#) of Sadako and [make](#) paper cranes to share with those present. End by sharing the peace.*

The artist is drawing attention to France's historic nuclear testing at Moruroa, which caused massive environmental damage and rendered some islands unsafe for human habitation. The negative impacts on health for people and the environment will be felt for generations to come. Recently the Ētārētia Porotetani Māōhi (Maohi Protestant Church) has been involved with taking the French Government to the International Court of Justice to seek justice for the historic abuses of power.



Today, wealthy and powerful nations continue to do violence in the South Pacific: ocean acidification; sea level rise; coral bleaching; overfishing; fresh-water salification; extreme weather events; climate refugees. These are just a few results of today's environmental crisis caused by overconsumption, unsustainable lifestyles, and the burning of fossil fuels. We no longer need to detonate weapons of mass destruction to cause desert wastelands — we can do it from the comfort of our homes.

The effects will be, and already are, far reaching. Just as nuclear radiation stays in the environment for a long time, so too do greenhouse gas emissions. The result of our actions (or lack of action) today will be felt for decades, even centuries to come. But I am not saying anything new. We have known this for a long time.

Read the lectionary Psalm for World Peace Sunday (Psalm 107) with today's environmental and refugee crises in mind. It comes alive with new meaning: the "desert wastes", the "stormy winds", the "wanderers in the desert" looking for a town to welcome them. Four times in the Psalm the petition is heard: "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble..." And the response is given: "...and the Lord delivered them."

The Church it seems to me exists in tension between the petition and the assurance of salvation; between the cry of God-forsakenness on the cross and the declaration of Peace by the risen Christ; between the ache for a world still suffering from violence in its multiplicity of forms and the promise of a world made new; between the cry for justice and the eternal praise around the eternal throne of God.

The petition needs the assurance of deliverance and vice versa. Only if both are heard does the Church's prayer become an act of defiance at the way the world is; a refusal to accept things as they are; but to share in the work of the triune God by the Spirit who prays with and for us with sighs too deep for words: Lord, deliver us!

## Peace Litany (based on Psalm 107)

For those wandering desert wastelands  
We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those who board boats in search of a better life

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those forced from their homes

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those hungry and thirsty

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those imprisoned physically or in their minds

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those bowed down under hard labour

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those with no one to hear them

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those enslaved by sinful ways

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those who battle terminal illness

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those whose courage has melted away

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**  
For those at their wits' end

We cry to the Lord: **deliver them from distress**

The Lord turns desolate waste into fertile ground,

He feeds the hungry and shelters the homeless,

He raises up the needy from their distress  
And blesses them abundantly.

***The redeemed of the Lord say so. Amen.***

*Thanks to Rev Jordan Redding*

## Closing Prayer

In this safe place, we have heard your word,  
we have felt the companionship of those on the same road,  
we have found ways to work for peace.

**We go with God's love. Amen**





## Making Peace through Justice in the Pacific

Churches in Maohi Nui (French Polynesia) have continued the struggle for compensation for workers and their families affected by the legacy of French nuclear testing. Between 1966 and 1996, France conducted 193 tests on the islands of Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls without local assent.

Employment in nuclear testing offered local Maohi the opportunity of well paying jobs in contrast to the local economy based on gardening and fishing. The benefits were short lived. People who had worked on the test sites and their descendants have suffered from cancers and birth defects as a result of their exposure to radiation. The land and the waters have been polluted. Maohi Nui has an economy heavily reliant on France.

The Maohi Protestant Church has been a leader in dealing with the legacy of testing. They have undertaken research on the damage to the atolls and oceans as well as chronicling health effects. With [Moruroa e Tatou](#), they have mobilised global support including from the World Council of Churches and Pacific Conference of Churches over many decades. Thanks to their research and pressure, legislation was passed awarding compensation for workers. In 2010, France passed a law that has provided compensation for around 20 of the 1,000 people seeking support. However, new legislative changes [will](#) close this door, leaving many workers and their descendants with no redress.

Late last year the Church supported a claim to the International Criminal Court [accusing](#) France of crimes against humanity. Six years ago French Polynesia was reinstated on the United Nations Decolonisation List, an action supported by the church.

Christian World Service partner the Pacific Conference of Churches has made decolonisation one of its key priorities. Last year at its 11th Assembly PCC affirmed its support for the peoples of Kanaky (New Caledonia), Maohi Nui and West (Tannah) Papua for self-determination.

General Secretary Rev. James Bhagwan [accompanied](#) representatives of the Church attending the Special Committee on Decolonisation of the United Nations at the end of June. In addressing the Committee, former church president Reverend Taaroarii Maraia pointed to the case the church has taken to the International Criminal Court regarding the legacy of French testing and France's refusal to take part in discussions on decolonisation. France continues to "sweep the issue under the rug" while persecuting "those who have stood bravely in the face of the colonial power".



### Take Action

*The campaign to make New Zealand nuclear free was successful because it was widely adopted. Churches were an active part of the movement. There are many ways you can work together for peace as a church today:*

- \*Write to the [French ambassador](#), H E Mrs Sylvaine Carta-La Vert, regarding compensation and decolonisation
- \*Join [Operation Refugee](#) raising funds for Syrian refugees
- \*Donate to [local partner](#) working with displaced people in South Sudan.
- \*[Make a donation](#) for the Pacific Conference of Churches, giving voice to regional concerns.
- \*Support the [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#)
- \*Join the [Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending](#)
- \*Find our about [Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#)
- \***The world spent US \$1,822 billion on the military in 2018.**

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