

Prelude: “Make Me A Channel of Your Peace” [Annie Schulz]

Gathering Thoughts: [Doug Schulz]

Welcome to our Grace Mennonite Church worship time for the second Sunday in November. We continue our series of biblical reflections on the theme of “Walking Humbly Toward God” with a focus on peace-making in the name of Jesus Christ. On this coming Wednesday, Remembrance Day will be observed in our country. With great respect mixed with sadness, Canadians honour the millions of people who have died worldwide because of warfare – so many soldiers and far too many innocent civilians.

Our way of remembering, as Anabaptist Christian believers, is always to work for peace. Today and next week we will honour the 100th anniversary of the Mennonite Central Committee, our humble but effective global relief and development, peace and justice organization. We will look at efforts to transcend violence with acts of restoration. Next week, November 15th, guest speaker Kathy Bergen, who has done much work with MCC and other organizations concerning Palestine-Israel conflicts, will invite us into deeper understanding and greater compassion about that part of the world. Look in this week’s “Grace Weekly News” for a list of relevant readings.

But today our focus is on the ongoing sad concerns of refugees, people who lose - or must run for their lives from - their homes because of injustice, violence and war. Instead of one speaker today, there will be a team of us weaving some Scriptures together, producing a readers’ theatre item and telling a refugee’s story.

So this is our focus on peace during this annual Remembrance Day time in our nation. Annie Schulz and Women’s Chorus provide our music today; our sound and recording technician is Ted Kopp. Thanks to all who are willing to serve in worship today, and always. Special thanks to Ester Funk for researching the MCC materials to help resource today’s service.

Let’s join our hearts together now in the Call to Worship and Opening Prayer.

Call to Worship & Prayer: [Doug Schulz]

Call to Worship: Come, people, from your places where you live, and consider those who are displaced today. While you celebrate your faith and God’s grace, remember those who migrate, without a home place.

Come, friends, whose past is full of stories of God’s provision and God’s peace. As you thank the Lord for blessings like these, deep within your heart make room as well for those whose calm and well-being is shattered, whose livelihood destroyed, whose security has been stolen by violence and war.

Come, Christians, who call upon the name of Christ and trust the Spirit of the Living, Giving God, unite your minds and join your hearts to concentrate on those from many lands where life cannot go on as once it did, so they must run and hide and dwell in camps and dirt-poor settlements until someone reaches out a helping hand.

Come, those who trust in God for everything, be sure to keep your soul attuned to everyone who needs a thing or two from you to make a new life possible again. Today, renew your vision for the kin-dom, the neighbourhood, the world that Jesus died to save from hatred, violence and destructive pride. Today, remember the refugees, as you worship the holy, wholesome God of hope and love and peace.

Prayer: O God, we come to you now with confidence in your power to work transformation in our lives and in the world. May our worship be an act of renewal of devotion to your purposes revealed in Jesus. May our worship be an act of peace and a call to justice. May this time be a rich moment in our lives as we remember why we are here, and as we embrace once more the power of your love to overcome any kind of fear so that we can live with conscience and purpose clear, In Jesus' name, AMEN.

Women's Chorus: "Called as Partners" [WT #647 vv. 1,2,4]

*Called as partners in Christ's service, called to ministries of grace,
we respond with deep commitment, fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing, side by side and friend with friend,
equal partners in our caring to fulfill God's chosen end.*

*Christ's example, Christ's inspiring, Christ's clear call to work and worth,
let us follow, never falt'ring, reconciling all on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer, all God's people, young and old,
blending human skills together, gracious gifts from God unfold.*

*So God grant us for tomorrow ways to order human life
that surround each person's sorrow with a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living, our compassion to increase,
messengers of faith, thus giving hope and confidence and peace.*

Scripture: Psalm 78:1-7 [Beth Woelk]

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
 incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2 I will open my mouth in a parable;
 I will utter dark sayings from of old,
3 things that we have heard and known,
 that our ancestors have told us.
4 We will not hide them from their children;
 we will tell to the coming generation

the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

5 He established a decree in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach to their children;

6 that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up and tell them to their children,

7 so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments.

Prayers of the People:

[Beth Woelk]

Lord Jesus Christ, we remember in your infancy you were a refugee. The political leaders of your country sought to end your life as an infant. Your parents took you to another country in secret.

Help us, O Lord, to grow in compassion for those who are displaced from their homes in our day. Help us not to see refugees as problems, statistics or threats. Help us to see them as fellow humans who have been forced to flee their homes.

O God, we know that refugees and displaced persons must make excruciating decisions, and we ask for your mercy upon them. We ask for mercy for parents who take their children and leave their homes. Mercy for children who leave parents too weak to travel. Mercy for those who choose to stay for whatever reason and who live with the severe consequences of that choice. We ask for mercy for those whose housing is inadequate – cold in winter, hot in summer, insufficient for privacy or hygiene or satisfaction. Have mercy on your children who have left their homes, O God.

And God, we know – sometimes too well – the causes of displacement and migration. We pray for the situations that have led to the refugee crises in our world. We pray for those who promote extremist ideologies, that they would change their ways and not choose violence. We pray for repressive regimes that they would seek to engage people in building freedom. We pray for human smugglers and traffickers who prey upon those who have fled their homes, that they may stop victimizing the fearful and vulnerable.

Help us O Compassionate One, to be compassionate and to know how we can help those who have been displaced. Help us to know when it is time for humanitarian relief, when it is time for resettlement, and when advocacy for peace and change is

what is needed most. Give us courage and strength to be people of justice and mercy in the face of complex and overwhelming demands.

We know that You love all people. Help us to be the instruments of Your love and peace in the world. Amen

And now we pray as Jesus taught, saying... "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. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever." AMEN

Prayer written by Steve Plenert in 2015 when he served as Peace Program Coordinator for MCC Manitoba (with adaptations).

Women's Chorus: "Touch That Soothes and Heals" [VT #17]

*Touch that soothes and heals the hurting, hands that break a loaf of bread;
steps that walk beside the weary, bearing burdens in their stead:*

Refrain: *See my hands and feet, said Jesus, love arisen from the grave.
Be my hands and feet, said Jesus, live as ones I died to save.*

*Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit ones in need of care,
give the homeless warmth and shelter; Christ will find a welcome there.*

*Love and serve without distinction all earth's people, first and least.
Know within each act of kindness, hope and wholeness are increased.*

*Hands that beckon little children, bind a wound, prepare a meal,
feet that rush to share good tidings, Christ arisen, still reveal.*

Scripture Weave: [Ester F; Annie S; Doug S; Beth W]

Doug: When you read through the Bible you find that there are many stories about people on the move. Sometimes they move because God's voice has essentially told them to "get up and go, and I'll be with you." Sometimes they've had to move because they are running for their lives, crying out to God on the way to bring them back to safety and security. And then there's the sense that we should be on the move when it comes to following Jesus, who asks us to go where God leads in order to love our neighbour as ourself, to care for the stranger, even for the enemy. You are going to hear four voices now reading a weave of Scripture texts from the Old and New Testaments, in which this sense of God's call to be fair and just and kind and generous, especially to the 'foreigner' or refugee, echoes loud and clear.

Ester: The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born.

ALL: Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

Annie: God spoke: “For 400 years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated.”

ALL: He himself is our peace, who has made the enemies one and has destroyed the barrier.

Doug: The God of glory appeared to Abraham. “Leave your country and your people,” God said, “and go to the land I will show you.” He gave him no inheritance there, not even enough ground to set his foot on.

ALL: Even the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands.

Beth: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me?” says the Lord. “Or where will my resting place be?”

ALL: In him we are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives.

Ester: Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you.

ALL: Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some have shown hospitality to angels.

Annie: For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.

ALL: When did we see you a stranger and invite you in?

Doug: The King will reply: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me.”

ALL: In him we are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives.

Beth: By faith Abraham made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country.

ALL: All these people were still living by faith when they died.

Ester: They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

ALL: Instead, they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one.

Annie: The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born.

ALL: Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

Doug: You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of God's household.

ALL: He has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Beth: For he himself is our peace.

Women's Chorus: "*Dona Nobis Pacem*" (Grant Us Peace) [HWB #346]

Readers' Theatre: "On the Way Home" [Ester; Annie; Doug; Beth]

Beth: I invite you to close your eyes and imagine a time when you felt out of place. The first day of school. Or getting off the plane in a new landscape and hearing languages you didn't understand. Visiting your future spouse's family and realizing you were underdressed for the occasion. Or the first day at a new job, desperately wanting to do well, but not knowing what was expected. We all have experienced that unsettling feeling of not fitting in. Many of our parents or grandparents and even some of us felt that fear and confusion while fleeing war, famine or persecution to come to Canada. Continue to hold this awareness in your imagination as you listen to this Reader's Theatre with refugee voices from across time and place:

Beth: I am Jochebed, a daughter of Abraham, and the mother of Moses, Aaron and Miriam. My story is thousands of years old.

Doug: Guten Tag, I am Johann from the Molotschna Mennonite settlement in what is now Ukraine. My story begins more than 100 years ago.

Ester: My name is Nhung (NeYung). My story starts 40 years ago in Vietnam. I had a loving mother and five siblings.

Annie: I am Alma. My story starts now.

Beth: My family lived safely in Egypt for generations.

Doug: In 1915, I married Maria. Over a feast of roast mutton and pudding, we committed to live for God's glory.

Annie: I was born among churches and castles with centuries of stories in their stones.

ALL: We were happy.

Beth: As we grew in numbers and strength, a new Egyptian leader was afraid that our people would threaten his. We were enslaved, forced to work for nothing but beatings.

Doug: In 1916, the Czar was ousted and there was utter chaos. Many rich Mennonites were imprisoned, some shot. I went to a neighbouring town with my brother, not assuming any danger, but was shocked to encounter soldiers. When we told the others, there was deadly silence, as everyone knew they were closing in on us.

ALL: We were feared and hated.

Beth: Our sons were drowned.

Annie: I learned arithmetic – 1, 2....3 – while the bombs fell.

Doug: Our colony had no rain. Since soldiers had taken our horses, we were forced to hitch our cow to the plow. I tried everything so we would not starve.

Annie: There was nowhere to even buy a toothbrush. Museums, schools and markets – all turned to rubble.

Ester: The Vietnam War left our country devastated, with conditions worsening under an oppressive Communist regime. There was nothing left for us in Vietnam.

ALL: We left at night.

Ester: My mother was a widow with six children. She put her trust in God.

Doug: My half-brother took us on the hayrack to the train station. Along the way, we stopped at a church to sing, "Jesus, go before us."

Beth: God parted the sea. We danced and sang, "In your unfailing love, you will lead the people you have redeemed."

Ester: In the bottom of the wooden boat, I lay with 300 other people. I remember it was so hot and hard to breathe. It smelled of vomit, and my older sister was crying.

Doug: At the train station, Russian guards went through our belongings and helped themselves to whatever they pleased. A baby was buried just before we passed through the Red Gate.

Annie: I walked through the cold rain to the border and slept in fields, not knowing whom I could trust.

ALL: We were so frightened.

Doug: From England, we boarded a ship to Canada. The fog horns sounded almost continuously; it gave us an eerie feeling and we prayed for safety on this voyage.

Beth: In the desert, we missed the good food we left behind: the cucumbers and melons, the leeks, onions and garlic. We cried, not knowing when we'd find our next drink.

Ester: We came to a refugee camp in Malaysia. We didn't know how long we'd need to stay. We were told that Canada considered sponsoring a widow with six children "an economic risk."

ALL: But God went with us.

Beth: Who sees clouds in the desert? We did. With their promise of water and refuge of shade.

Annie: I met a farmer on the road who shared her bread with me.

Doug: We came to a flat country: the Canadian prairies. It was August, but the potato plants showed evidence of frost. At the station, someone saw me with my wife and her sister, and shouted, "That man has two wives. They should go back to Russia!" My wife counted the ones who had died in Russia lucky.

Beth: Our people came to a land of giants. Would they let us enter?

ALL: We wanted to turn back.

Ester: Behind the scenes, MCC was starting a resettlement program to bring "boat people," like my family, to safety.

Doug: Mennonites from Kleefeld, Manitoba, got us from the train. They gave our children candy. I was exhilarated: we'd arrived in time to help with the harvest!

Ester: After eight months in the camp, we received word: a church in Edmonton, Alberta, wanted to sponsor us! Today, I'm a Canadian doctor, a mother, an author and an advocate for other refugees.

Beth: My grandchildren tasted freedom in the land God gave us.

Doug: My great-great-grandchildren are free because of other Mennonites who helped us.

Beth: Thank God YWHW was here.

Doug: Thank God they were here.

Ester: Thank God you were here.

Annie: I'm waiting in a refugee camp. Thank God you're here.

Story: "From refugee to sponsor: A journey of 40 years" [Beth Woelk]

In our reader's theatre you just heard the voice of Nhung (NeYung) a young refugee from Vietnam. I will read for you her true and inspiring story written by Emily Loewen which reminds us that although it can be overwhelming to think of all the needs in the world and all there is yet to be done, there are many hopeful stories of lives changed and goodness being paid forward. Here is the story of Nhung:

As a five-year-old resting in her mother's arms at the bottom of a boat crowded with refugees, Nhung Tran could not have imagined the life she's living now. A life as a doctor in Canada. A life where she is responsible for bringing two families to safety as a sponsor.

It was the fall of 1978, and Tran's mother, a widow, joined the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Vietnam. She packed herself and six children into a boat in the midst of the storm season with a hope they would make it to Malaysia. "She did sacrifice pretty much everything," says Tran (now Tran-Davies). "Put our lives on the line because she just had hope that we would find something better than what was there in Vietnam."

As a five-year-old, she remembers only glimpses of the two-day journey. "It was really tight, and it was very hot and you know it was hard to breathe down there. I remember the smell of the vomit and my older sister crying because she was sick to her stomach." Despite the difficult crossing, she knows they were lucky. Another boat loaded with refugees that left minutes before them got caught in a storm and sank.

The family lived in a refugee camp in Malaysia for eight months before getting word that a church in Edmonton wanted to sponsor them. "When we came over to Canada our family was a mother and six kids... What I understood is that not a lot of the other nations wanted our family because they thought that our family would be a burden to their community, to their economy," Tran-Davies says.

Her mother was anxious when the plane hit the tarmac in Edmonton and feared getting off. Though she was relieved to be in a safer place, Tran-Davies says, she didn't know how a tailor with little education could make it in a new country with six children.

But then they walked off the plane and saw the faces of the sponsors there to greet them. As the youngest, Tran-Davies doesn't remember much but does recall receiving a doll from one of the sponsors that she still has today. "We were just so

happy; we knew that we were in good hands. And we had no idea how good we were going to have it just because the sponsors were so wonderful to us.”

Nearly 40 years later, Tran-Davies is bringing that same peace to two families fleeing violence in Syria. She heard about the conflict in Syria and wondered how to help and realized she could become a sponsor. She wanted to bring over two families, so she asked two separate groups of friends for help. One group of former refugees and immigrants from Vietnam, the other a group of children of the families that sponsored her all those years ago.

They were matched with two Syrian families through MCC Alberta’s refugee sponsorship program. Inspired by the church that sponsored her, Tran-Davies specifically asked for families that would be harder to settle, for groups larger than four. “It does seem funny how life works out,” she says. “Forty years later it’s sort of like a *déjà vu*, we’re in the same situation but this time I am the sponsor.”

Hymn of Response: “They’ll Know We Are Christians” [WT #440, vv.1-3]

*We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that all unity may one day be restored:*

Refrain: *And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.*

*We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
we will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
and together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land:*

*We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
we will work with each other, we will work side by side,
and we’ll guard each one’s dignity and save each one’s pride:*

Benediction: fr. Ephesians 2 [Doug Schulz]

Remember: you were strangers. But now you who were far have become near. For Christ himself is our peace, who destroyed the dividing wall of hostility. Out of two, he made us one, to reconcile us all to God, killing hostility through the cross. He preached peace to you who were near and you who were far. So then, you are no longer strangers. You are fellow citizens with God’s people from ages long past until now. For Christ Jesus is our cornerstone. In him we rise, built up, and joined together into a dwelling place of God.

Sending Hymn: “What does the Lord require of you?” [STS #54]

What does the Lord require of you?
To seek justice, and love kindness,
and walk humbly with your God.