

## FESTIVAL OUTLINE

### “In Times of Trouble, O God of Peace: A Hymn Festival on Veterans Day”

#### Teaching Time

- Leader teaches a few things that will show up in the festival

#### Prelude

- Organist or band can choose anything they deem appropriate to the theme and or match one of the hymn tunes that'll be used.

#### Opening Scripture

- **Ecclesiastes 3** (NRSV) - For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.
- **Matthew 5:9** (NRSV) - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- **Matthew 24:6-7** (NRSV) - And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places...
- **Revelation 21** (NRSV) - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,  
“See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.”

#### Reflection

- Douglas MacArthur said, “The soldier above all others prays for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war.”  
J.R.R. Tolkien said that “War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend.”  
And, maybe most famously, William Sherman said, “War is hell.”  
We know that the history of human-kind is one that includes an immense amount of violence, war, and oppression. Indeed, even our scriptures are full of stories of war. Victories, defeats, life, and death. Some of the world’s greatest spiritual leaders, philosophers, and politicians are known through their quotes about war and peace. Even one of the Western World’s most well-known novels is entitled “War and Peace.”  
It is clear...war is a fact of life, and God is well aware of that fact. In fact, God is often brought into play concerning war by those claiming that God is on their side, or God ordained this or that. God helped us win this or that war. Etc, etc...There’s even a doctrine called the “just war theory” that has been debated and upheld by theologians dating as far back as Saint Augustine in the year 1470 AD. When is war just? Are militaries doing the will of God? What does God think of war?

Now, I’m not here to answer these questions. And, I imagine, there are those within this room where these types of questions would create a significant amount of disagreement and consternation. So let us frame this day and this hymn festival like this:

1. If you have grown up in the United States and are 16 or younger, you have never known this country to be living in peace-time.
2. If you were born in 1984, 50% of your life has been spent with the U.S. at war.
3. If you were born in 1950, 44% of your life has been spent with the U.S. at war, and that includes The Korean War, The Vietnam War, The Gulf War, and The War on Terror
4. In the history of America, we have had 41.9 million veterans
5. Currently in America, we have 23.2 million living veterans, with 17 million of those have seen active duty

Folks...with numbers like that, I can tell you 2 things for certain.

1. We need to pray. We need to pray and pray and pray. Pray for our veterans, pray for our country, pray for our world. We cannot do that enough.
2. When God’s kingdom is on earth, like we pray each time we pray the Lord’s Prayer...When God’s kingdom is on earth, God will wipe every tear from our eyes. Death will be no more. And I can’t think of a better gift from God for our veterans and all that they fight for than to help usher in that day, when mourning and crying and pain will be no more.”

Hymn “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

- Stanza 1 solo, Stanza 2 unison all, Stanza 3 harmony, Stanza 4 harmony acapella

Reflection on the history of Veterans Day

- Veterans Day originated as “Armistice Day” on Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and Nov. 11 became a national holiday beginning in 1938. Unlike Memorial Day, Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans—living or dead—but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime.
- Great Britain, France, Australia and Canada also commemorate the veterans of World War I and World War II on or near November 11th: Canada has Remembrance Day, while Britain has Remembrance Sunday (the second Sunday of November). And across Europe, it is common to observe two minutes of silence at 11 a.m. every November 11.

- Our next hymn was written the year that World War 1 ended by a man who was at the eve of his life. In fact, he passed away later that same year, 1918. As a clergy-person, he did not fight in the war, but was ministering to those who were still at home. Notice the trajectory of the text, beginning with a prayer for God's protection of those at war, for peace for those who die, trust and peace in God for those at home, and finally an end to all war through the coming of God's kingdom. Even when praying for God's protection of our troops and their families, our ultimate prayer is for peace.

HYMN – “O God, The Strength of Those Who War” – Sung to ST. ANNE

- Organ
- Trumpet 1 Melody – Stanzas 1, 2, 5
- Trumpet 2 Alto part – Stanza 2
- Trumpet 2 descant – Stanza 5

1. O God, the strength of those who war,  
The hope of those who wait,  
Be with our sons gone forth to fight,  
And those who keep the gate.

2. Give to our hosts in battle's hour  
Firm hearts and courage high,  
Thy comfort give to those who fall,  
Thy peace to those who die.

3. Breathe on our land the spirit calm  
Which faith in right bestows,  
And in the hours of dark suspense  
A faith which stronger grows.

4. In Thee alone we place our hope,  
Thou Keeper of the just,  
And Thou, through fight and fire and fears  
Wilt justify our trust.

5. Thy ways are wonderful, O God,  
Who makest wars to cease:  
O let this be the final war  
That ushers in Thy peace.

Prayer Litany for Veterans - Hold 10-15 sec silence after each prayer, followed by the tolling of a bell

- On this Veterans' Day, we gather together to remember before God those who have served in our armed forces to pursue of peace. We pray in the hope that, one day, in God's kingdom of peace, all peoples will stand united. Until that day, we pray for peace, and honor those who stand face to face with conflict. At the end of each short petition, I invited you to contribute your own prayers, silently or aloud. After a moment of sharing our prayers, I'll conclude saying, "Lord in your mercy," please respond saying "Hear our prayer."

- Let us pray for those who serve, and with them, pray for peace.
- Let us remember those whose lives have been given and taken away, and the sacrifices they have made.
- Let us pray for those who, even now, experience sorrow, disability, pain, and the terror of trauma.
- Let us offer our lament that the world is not filled with peace and justice, calling on God who always draws near to us and comforts us in distress.
- And with those who care for the bereaved, let us remember the hope of God's promise that one day, in God's kingdom of peace, the nations will stand united, and there will be "no more death, or crying or pain."

[Collect:]

God of peace:

We long for a world where people live in harmony,  
but we live in a world of fragile peace and bitter conflict.

Open our hearts as we remember with gratitude  
all persons who have offered themselves in the face of conflict,  
And open our eyes to see the hope of your kingdom to come.

In Jesus' name we pray.

AMEN

Hymn "It Is Well With My Soul"

- Piano
- Verses as led by leader with congregation on refrain

Reflection on the Psalms

- Many of the psalms allude to or directly address times of war and strife. They include celebrations of victory, laments after loss and exile, nervousness on the brink of battle...the emotions run the gamut. The following selections are Psalm 2, Psalm 13, and Psalm 77. Each of these addresses different aspects of war and wartime. They don't gloss over the realities. They are raw. They don't strive to hide realities from God. Rather they express the deep and often startling emotions that come along with strife. We have much to learn from the psalms. One of the most important lessons is that we should not shy away from bringing to God the deepest and rawest emotions we have as humans living in a broken and pain-filled world.

Psalm 2 - The anxiety and spiritual conflict of approaching war

"Why This Dark Conspiracy" Psalms for All Seasons 2C

- Each Stanza: Solo 4 part to double-bar, Congregation sings double-bar to end
- Organ
  - Light and chuffy, especially on verses which will be sung by a soloist

STRAIGHT INTO

Psalm 13 - The turmoil in the midst of war

"How Long, O Lord" Psalms for All Seasons 13D

- Piano – Brian plays
- Congregation All

STRAIGHT INTO

Psalm 77 - The aftermath of war

"I Refused to Be Comforted Easily" Psalms for All Seasons 77B

- Soloists for Stanza 1 through 4; Congregation on Refrain

Solo - Go straight into this hymn from the end of Psalm 77

"I Choose Love" by Mark Miller

Scripture: Galatians 5:13-25 (NRSV)

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Hymn - "My Life Flows On (How Can I Keep From Singing)"

- Congregation All

Hymn - Flow straight into this acapella from previous hymn

"Kwake Yesu"

- Choir leads, congregation joins
- Get them humming
- Read Revelation 21:1-4 over the top of the humming
- Back to words

Final Reflection

- A call to peace & justice. The new heaven and earth of God's kingdom. (incorporate Revelation 22:1-5) – Brian Hehn

Hymn – "I Saw A River Flowing" (Tice/Brody)

STRAIGHT INTO

Hymn - "O Day of Peace" tune: JERUSALEM

END