

starters for Sunday

Peace and Reconciliation in Korea

9 August 2015

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Alan F Miller, Minister of Church of the Holy Rude and Viewfield Erskine churches, Stirling and member of the World Mission Council and Vice Convener of the Asia Committee for their thoughts on Peace and Reconciliation in Korea.

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Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

The World Council of Churches (WCC) invites its member churches to join in prayer for peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula on Sunday, 9 August.

The 15 August, celebrated as Liberation Day in both North and South Korea, marks the date in 1945 when Korea won independence from Japanese colonial oppression, yet ironically it was the day when the peninsula was divided into two countries.

The Korean War, which lasted from 1950 – 1953 saw The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China line up behind North Korea against South Korea, which was backed by a United Nations force led by the USA but including troops from other nations, including the UK. The war has never formally ended, as hostilities ceased with the signing of an armistice, but no peace treaty, and the Korean peninsula remains deeply and bitterly divided to this day into North and South Korea, separated by a heavily guarded Demilitarized Zone between the two states.

Each year, Christians are invited to join in prayer for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Prepared by the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Korean Christian Federation, the prayer is traditionally used on the Sunday before 15 August every year. In 2015, this date falls on Sunday, 9 August.



Reflections on the Scripture Readings

[Psalm 133](#)

This psalm is one of fourteen 'Songs of Ascent' in the Book of Psalms – songs likely to have been sung by pilgrims on their journey up to Jerusalem to worship in God's Temple at one of the great religious festivals. For Christians, the Psalm may be used to call God's people together for worship, and in particular, reminds us of our unity in Christ when we share together in holy communion.

Its words speak with joy of how good it is when God's people come together to live and worship without division, united by their common heritage of faith. The Hebrew word for 'good', 'tob' carries explicit theological meaning, reminding us of the goodness of God's creation, and of a God who desires for his people to live in community and relationship with one another – in the creation story God declares that it is 'not good' for people to live alone, or separated from one another.

The image the psalmist uses to illustrate his point is that of the anointing of Aaron as a priest by Moses, the (perfumed) oil - (in Hebrew, the 'good' oil) - poured out abundantly on Aaron's head and running down into his beard as an image of fullness and generosity, a sign of God's blessing. Equally, Mount Hermon, a high mountain in the north of Israel, was known for its heavy dewfall, and here the image of dew falling on God's holy mountain, cool and refreshing, underscores the idea of goodness and pleasantness that is the essence of God's blessing.

By implication, when kindred do not live in unity, when they are divided among themselves, whether by temperament or attitudes or geographical barriers, there is no experience of God's blessing. Sisters and brothers separated from one another cannot know the joy of family or close community, and in isolation from one another find that distrust and jealousy thrive, and fear of the unknown, of the 'other', creates barriers to healthy relationships.

The situation of the Korean peninsula, divided by a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) after the ceasefire that ended the 'hot' phase of the Korean War in 1953, shows how alienation from one another can devastate the lives of people and of nations. The ensuing cold war between the North and the South has led to deeply entrenched positions on both sides, characterised by fear and mistrust of the other side. The promise of God's blessing for those who seek unity and



friendship with one another is assured for those who seek to break the stalemate and seek peace for Korea and for the surrounding region.

[Isaiah 2: 1-5](#)

This reading from Isaiah, so familiar to us, speaks words of hope and promise, of a future in which war and violence will come to an end. The nations of the earth, will be drawn to God's holy mountain, and will set aside their old enmities and learn to live in peace.

Isaiah speaks of a God who is above all gods and nations, a God who desires for the peoples of the world to turn to him and listen to his word, that they might walk always in the light of God, which is the path of wisdom that leads to fullness of life.

The reading is one of the readings for the first Sunday of Advent, as the Christian Church has discerned within the prophet's proclamation the promise of God's Messiah, who will reign over all creation as the Prince of Peace. We believe Jesus to be the one sent by God who is light in the darkness of the world, and whose parting gift to his disciples was the peace that is not the world's peace, but the peace that passes all our understanding, the enduring peace of God.

That peace is offered to a world scarred by division and hatred, greed and jealousy; it can only be known when justice is done for all, when human hearts are converted, when enemies are reconciled, and we learn to forgive one another for all that is past. Only when these conditions are met, can Isaiah's vision of God's future be fulfilled, when human beings learn to put their trust in one another, and in God, and lay down weapons of war in order to engage instead in the dialogue that leads to renewed understanding and relationships.

Just as this passage is often also read for Remembrance Sunday, when we focus on themes of peace, reconciliation between former enemies, and of repentance for our failure to keep the peace and our readiness to take up arms to achieve our goals, so Isaiah's words speak a powerful truth to the people of Korea and the surrounding region: of the need to step back from the present situation confrontation backed by military power and threats of aggression, and begin a sincere process of seeking a just resolution to the unfinished business of the Korean war through dialogue, diplomacy, and the re-establishment of understanding and trust on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone.



[2 Corinthians 5: 16-21](#)

This passage from 2 Corinthians has at its heart the need for the people of God – and by extension, all people – to be reconciled with God and with one another, in order to secure the peace and unity of the community, and of the world.

Paul speaks of the new creation which is inaugurated by Jesus Christ in his incarnation, death and resurrection. In Christ, both God and human, God reconciles the world to God, closing the gap that has opened up between the Creator and creation.

We know that Paul did not have an easy relationship with the Christian community in Corinth, so it is all the more remarkable that his emphasis is on the need for Christians to live in unity, or perhaps better, in harmony, with one another, for the good of the church and its mission to proclaim Christ crucified and risen to the world.

Through Christ, and in Christ, Christians have entered into a new relationship, a new covenant, with God. This covenant, grounded in the Spirit and not the Law, is the fulfilment of God's promise of salvation not only for Israel, but for all peoples. As people within the new covenant, God's people are to live not according to the 'flesh' but according to the 'Spirit'. Those who live according to the Spirit will know the Spirit's gifts (Galatians 5), which are the product of the new creation in which God redeems and transforms people in heart, mind and spirit, and offering the prospect of life that shares in the power of Christ's resurrection.

Through the work of the Spirit, all things are made new -and all that represents the old self, and the old creation, are swept away. Grace and faith offer the hope of reconciliation, even in the most difficult of circumstances, where relations are strained to breaking-point. In the face of obduracy and estrangement, God's Spirit can still work miracles to transform the mess that human beings can make of their lives. Even when all seems lost and there is no way forward, the possibility remains that the Spirit can open up hearts and minds.

[John 17: 20-23](#)

The prayer of Jesus comes as part of the lengthy 'farewell discourse' in John's gospel, in which Jesus gives final words of teaching to his disciples gathered round the table of the Last Supper, before his betrayal, trial and crucifixion the following day.



The prayer is for those he will leave behind in the world – in the context of Good Friday, this is after his death on the cross, and for us, it is for the world after his resurrection and ascension. The prayer is for all who will follow him over the years that are to come, that they may stand united in the cause of the gospel against the threats and temptations of world whose values are often starkly at odds with those of God's kingdom.

The focus of Jesus' prayer is unity – that as he and God are one, so his followers may be one with God and with each other. The purpose of the unity Jesus prays for is that the world may know the love of God revealed in Jesus himself, and that his words and actions, which have borne witness to the good news of salvation, carry the same authority as they were from God.

We know that the disciples were far from united among themselves: Judas, frustrated and disillusioned, will betray Jesus; James and John squabble over power and privilege; Peter lacks the courage of his convictions, and will deny knowing Jesus. We cannot condemn any of them, for we behave as the disciples did, and still lack the unity and love for one another that the experience of God's grace offers to us.

For Korea, the deep and enduring division of the country into two states bitterly opposed to one another may seem an impossible wound to heal. Yet we believe that through the working of the Holy Spirit the experience of God's love and grace has the power to transform human lives and human societies. The hope of reconciliation between the two Koreas and for a lasting peace rests on both sides' willingness to abandon attitudes of fear and mistrust and to intentionally set out on a process seeking mutual understanding, dismantling the array of military hardware (including the North's nuclear weapon programme) with which North and South Korea confront each other.

In this, the peoples and governments of North and South Korea should be able to look to the Christian Churches to set an example, reflecting the love of God for the world in a desire to achieve the reconciliation of enemies, and thereby the establishment of a lasting peace grounded firmly in the longing for reunification of the divided nations.



Prayers



Living Stones is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It was also the theme for Heart and Soul 2015. *Living Stones* is available from [St Andrew Press](#). Discounts on bulk orders are available.

The WCC prayer for peace and reunification in Korea is available on the [WCC website](#):

Approach to God

Holy God, Maker of all,
 We praise you that you have given us
 the gift of this world in which to live.
 All nations will come to you
 and seek your truth and your wisdom;
 peoples will turn to your light
 and walk humbly in your ways,
 loving justice, seeking peace.
 Yours O God, is the glory
 and you alone do we worship.
 Be present with us now
 through the creative power of your Holy Spirit,
 as we offer you our sacrifice of praise and prayer,
 that we may live in the knowledge of your love
 for us and for all the peoples of this world.
 In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Confession and Absolution

God of Compassion and mercy
 we turn to you in confession
 seeking your healing for our broken lives
 and our broken world.



We acknowledge before you
and in the presence of our sisters and brothers,
that we have not listened for your word,
neither have we obeyed your commands
to love as we have been loved;
to seek your peace, and the unity of the church;
to forgive as we pray we may be forgiven.

We have allowed distrust and fear to rule our heart
and diminish our lives,
and have created division and hurt
when we should have sought each other's good.

Forgive us all that is past,
and renew us for all that lies ahead
reconciling us with each other
and with you, our God.

The Good News is this:
Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation;
who we have been is gone; who we are yet to be,
God is revealing to us day by day,
as we are shaped by the knowledge
of God's mercy and reconciling love.
Know that in Jesus' name you are forgiven,
and be at peace.

Intercession

God of every nation
hear us now as we come to you
with our prayers of intercession for the world,
offered in the name of Jesus Christ.



We pray for all the nations of this world,
and especially for those places where war
and violence destroy the lives and livelihoods
of ordinary men and women and children
as we pray for peace.

We pray especially for Korea, both North and South
and for the peoples of both countries,
kept apart by conflict, distrust, and fear.
May your Holy Spirit transform hearts
and minds and attitudes
on both sides of the border
that both may be open to listening to the other,
and seek to renew their broken relationship.

We pray for those who hold power in Korea:
for the governments and military leaders ,
that they may come to face to face
not with hands holding weapons
nor with the threat of destruction,
but in the hope of dialogue seeking understanding,
and a way forward together
and the reconciliation of enemies.

We pray for those who work constantly
for justice and peace, in Korea
and in the surrounding region,
who challenge the powerful
to think of the weak,
and who encourage the rich
to share with the poor
the riches of God's earth.



We pray for those whose families
have been separated by war;
for those who have lost loved ones;
for those who have been the victims
of oppression and persecution;
for those who live in exile from their homes;
for those who long for divisions to be healed
and their country and people united in peace.

For the people of Korea, North and South
we pray, O God, in your mercy, hear our prayer,
offered in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanksgiving

We give you thanks and praise at all times
O God our Maker and Redeemer,
for you are the Creator of all
and the one who fills us with hope.
You have brought us from death to life
and from darkness into your light,
through the Resurrection of your Son, Jesus.
He was put to death on the cross by those who feared him
and whose hearts were filled
with jealousy, anger and hatred.
Yet you raised him from the tomb
that we might all be saved, and brought safely
into your kingdom of joy and peace.

We thank you that in Jesus
we have seen your promise
of fullness of life for all peoples
made flesh and come among us,



and that in him
we see what we must do
to bring your peace and justice to this world
through the proclamation of the gospel
in word and action.

To you we lift up our hearts, O God,
and give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ, who with you
and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns
one God, now and for ever, Amen.

Time with Children

Children will probably know Korea best through electronic products from the South: Samsung, LG (electronics, mobile phones, TVs), Kia, Hyundai (Cars) – all signs of South Korea's dynamic economy and growing wealth; contrast with life in North Korea, food shortages, power cuts, closed borders and most of the country's money diverted to the military and nuclear weapons programme. There is also plenty of scope to talk about Korean culture (music and food especially), particularly if you have multi-media facilities, to get children and young people thinking.



Musical Suggestions

CH4 113	God the Father of Creation
CH4 250	Sent by the Lord am I
CH4 275	Come now, O Prince of Peace
CH4 261	Father Eternal, Ruler of Creation
CH4 263	God of freedom, God of justice
CH4 359	He came down that we may have love
CH4 456	Christ is the world's true light
CH4 473	'Thy kingdom come!'- on bended knee
CH4 482	Come, let us to the Lord our God
CH4 486	'Forgive our sins as we forgive'
CH4 528	Make me a channel of your peace
CH4 622	We sing a love that sets all people free
CH4 646	Forth in the peace of Christ we go
CH4 706	For the healing of the nations
CH4 707	Healing river of the Spirit
CH4 710	'I have a dream', a man once said
CH4 715	Behold! The mountain of the Lord
CH4 721	We lay our broken world
CH4 787	May the Lord, mighty God



Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Living Stones](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots i the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Alan F Miller for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

