



Celebrating Christian-Jewish Relations

| The United Church of Canada

A Service of Christian Worship. Celebrating Christian-Jewish Relations. A Liturgy.

A Service of Christian Worship

Celebrating Christian-Jewish Relations

This resource was recommended by the United Church of Canada to its congregations. The church had some years ago approved a theological study document called [Bearing Faithful Witness: United Church-Jewish Relations Today](#) and developed a [statement](#) on United Church-Jewish relations which has been recommended to its congregations for discussion and will be presented to its General Council for approval. This worship service is an additional resource that builds on the ones mentioned. All these resources are available at the [Web site of the United Church](#) of Canada. They are presented here as encouragement for other churches, Christian groups and individuals to participate in the renewal of Christian-Jewish relations.

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Notes: The word "Shoah" is the preferred term for the Holocaust. In Hebrew, Holocaust refers to a burnt offering in the context of faithful worship. The Hebrew term 'shoah' means 'ruin.'

* indicates all who are able may stand. **bold type** indicates words to be said by the congregation

Gathering

Preparation

You may wish to prepare for worship by meditating on the following contemporary Jewish prayer.

Grant peace to our world,

goodness and blessing,

mercy and compassion,

life and love.

Inspire us to banish forever

hatred, war and bloodshed.

Help us to establish forever

one human family

doing your will

in love and peace.

O God of peace,

bless us with peace.

*** Call to Worship**

Based on Deut. 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is One.

You shall love the LORD your God

with all your heart,

and with all your soul

and with all your might.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is One.

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.

Recite them to your children

and talk about them when you are at home

and when you are away,

when you lie down

and when you rise.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is One.

Bind them as a sign on your hand,

fix them as an emblem on your forehead,

and write them on the doorposts of your house

and on your gates.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is One.

*** Hymn**

Voices United (VU) 255 "The Living God Be Praised"*

Opening Prayer

Holy God of life and love,

you bless us with your creation

and embrace us in your covenant.

We bless your Holy Name.

Holy God of Torah and Gospel:

you show us the ways of wisdom

and inspire us with your Word.

We praise you for your teaching.

Holy God of justice and compassion:

you call us to be your people,

to love you and our neighbours.

We thank you for your guidance.

Be with us in this time of worship, we pray,

that we may renew our relationship with you,

and with our Jewish sisters and brothers

in the covenant we share, by your grace.

This we pray in the name of Jesus,

our Rabbi and teacher,

friend and Saviour. Amen.

An Act of Confession

Invitation: Friends in Christ, our relationship with God and one another has been deeply compromised by the manner in which we have treated our Jewish neighbours. We cannot let this manifestation of our sin continue. Let us confess to God, and before one another and our neighbours, these sins, and seek to renew our faithful witness in the world.

... silence

Sung: VU 949

Grant to us, O God, a heart renewed.

Speak to us afresh your forgiving word.

We confess, O God, our unfaithfulness

in relation to our Jewish kin.

We acknowledge our part in a shameful history of prejudice:

we have used scripture to justify our sin;

we have perpetuated racism and violence;

we have been insensitive to suffering;

we have betrayed the Gospel call to love our neighbour.

Help us to reject all beliefs and practices

that denigrate the integrity of Judaism

and the faith of Jews.

Help us to affirm our common covenant with you, O God of love,

and our common calling to justice and compassion.

Help us to encourage faithful witness in the Body of Christ,

through study and service, worship and work

in church and society.

Hear our confession, we pray;

and guide us as we seek to walk your way....

... silence

Sung: VU 949

Grant to us, O God, a heart renewed.

Speak to us afresh your forgiving word.

Assurance of Grace:

The Lord God is merciful and gracious,

endlessly patient, loving and true,

showing mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin,

and granting pardon.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

-- trad. Jewish

*** Response of Praise:**

VU 717 "Hallelujah"

Children's Time

"Dayeinu! Enough!" (using "Refrain" of VU 131)

Word

God offers to us, through prophets and apostles,

words of life and living Word.

Let us listen for that Word.

Sung: Word of Life and Living Word, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

VU 167 Word of Life among us, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

First Reading: Micah 4:1-4

A prophetic vision of reconciliation and peace.

This is the witness of Israel

Thanks be to God.

Sung: God is speaking through the prophets, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

VU 167 God's Word through the prophets, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

Psalm: 133

The blessing of unity.

How very good and pleasant it is

when kindred live together in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head,

running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron,

running down over the collar of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon,

which falls on the mountains of Zion.

For there you ordained your blessing,

life forevermore.

How very good and pleasant it is

when kindred live together in unity!

*** Hymn or Anthem:**

VU p. 856, Psalm 133, "Behold, How Pleasant"

Second Reading: Romans 15: (1-6,) 7-13

Paul's vision of harmony between Jews and Gentiles.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Sung: God is speaking to the churches, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

VU 167 God's Word to the churches, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

Third Reading: Mark 7:24-30

The inclusive vision of a Gentile woman challenges Jesus.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sung: Word of Life and Living Word, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

VU 167 Living Word among us, glory, hallelujah! (repeat)

Sermon

silent reflection

*** An Affirmation of Faith: "God is Faithful"**

Friends in Christ,

let us bear faithful witness to the Holy God of heaven and earth,

the Sovereign One of our forebears in the faith;

and in so doing, let us seek also

to bear faithful witness to our Jewish neighbours.

We believe that God is faithful.

We believe in the faithfulness of God.

We believe

that the God whom we know in Jesus Christ

is the One who called Sarah and Abraham,

the One who gave the Torah to Moses,

the One who put passion for justice

into the hearts of the prophets.

We believe

that the Eternal Word became flesh

in the person of Jesus,

who lived as a Jew,

died as a Jew,

and was raised as a Jew.

We believe

that the Holy Spirit calls us to bear faithful witness

to God's reconciling mission in Jesus Christ,

that in Jesus Christ

God has grafted us into the vine of the covenant.

We believe

that God will never abandon the covenant with Israel,

that the love of God is expressed

in the giving of both Torah and Gospel,

that our faith should yield ethical fruit,

that it is our common calling with Jews

to serve God's world-mending work.

We believe

that we are called to repent of all false witness towards Jews,

to resist antisemitism and anti-Judaism in church and society,

to love our neighbours as ourselves.

And we believe this because we believe that God is faithful.

We believe in the faithfulness of God.

Thanksgiving

* The Peace

Jesus said: "When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift."

Mat 5:23-24

The peace of Christ be with you all .

And also with you.

Let us bear witness to the peace of Christ.

Gestures of peace and reconciliation are shared

Offering

*** Dedication Hymn**

VU 697 "O For a World"

Dedication Prayer

Eternal Source of good, we thank you for the numberless gifts and blessings that fill our days: for life itself and its endless variety; for all that sustains body and mind; for love and friendship; for the delights of the senses; and for the excellence of your Word, which deepens our life and enriches our days. Help us, O God, to work for a just and compassionate society, where all may share your gifts in the joy of freedom. Amen.

-- contemporary Jewish

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern

Let us give thanks to the God of the Covenant,

always and for everything, saying,

we thank you God.

For Abraham and Sarah, who in faith began a journey

into an unknown future,

and for the people Israel, who received the gift of the covenant

as a treasure of infinite value,

we thank you God.

For the judges, who helped the people of God

to remain faithful,

and for the prophets, who called the people back

when they had strayed,

we thank you God.

For Mary and Joseph, who remained faithful

to the Law of Moses,

and for Jesus, who rejoiced in the tradition of his forebears,

praying the Psalms and worshiping

among his brothers and sisters,

we thank you God.

For the grafting of Gentiles onto the vine of the faithful,

accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus,

we thank you God.

For all who, in following the Way of Jesus over the centuries,

have understood the spiritual indebtedness of Christians to Jews,

and have stood against the intolerance of unjust laws,

the bigotry of hateful accusations,

the deliberate attempts to harm members of Jesus' own family,

we thank you God.

For all Jewish men, women, and children,

who in the face of unbearable pressure

have refused to desert their covenant faith,

we thank you God.

For Jews and Christians, who during the Shoah,

remained faithful to the call to "let justice roll down like waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream,"

we thank you God.

For all who, since that dark time,

have refused to let the shadow of the Shoah

overwhelm the light of life, of hope, and of love,

we thank you God.

God of the covenant,

these and all our prayers we offer through Jesus,

faithful sign of your covenant and our Saviour:

we thank you God.

Prayers of concern may follow, with a special focus on relations among Christians and Jews.

Going Forth

*** Hymn**

VU 634 "To Abraham and Sarah"

*** Blessing and Going Forth**

May the blessing of the God of Sarah and Hagar,

as of Abraham,

the blessing of the Son, born of the woman Mary,

and the blessing of the Spirit, who broods over us

as a mother with her children,

be with you today and always.

Amen.

Be strong and of good courage, Deut 31:6

do not be afraid:

for it is the Lord your God who goes with you,

God will not fail you or forsake you.

*** For Going Forth**

VU 701 "What Does the Lord Require of You"

* VU = *Voices United*, the new worship and hymn book of the United Church of Canada

[Notes on this Service](#)