

**OPENING MUSIC:** [Peace \(Irimi\)](#) – audio – 04:52

## **OPENING WORDS**

Let us reflect upon our gathering.

Let us celebrate what we have discovered already, and let us be grateful for what we have not yet discovered.

Let us contemplate what it is that we need to find during this hour.

Let us remember all those previous occasions when our needs have been met, especially when we thought that would have been impossible.

Let the air and the fire of the Spirit renew the water of our souls, and let the presence of each of us create the community in all of us.

Amen

## **CHALICE LIGHTING**

We light this chalice as a symbol of the spark of life which abides within us and around us.

May it be as a light in a dark night, a light in a window that welcomes the weary traveller home!

May it be as a light in the hand of a trusted friend that guides us along the path!

May it be as the light in the face of one we love, bright with joy!

## **INTRODUCTORY PRAYER by Mother Teresa**

O God, we pray for all those in our world who are suffering from injustice:

For those who are discriminated against because of their race, colour or religion;

For those imprisoned

for working for the relief of oppression;

For those who are hounded

for speaking the inconvenient truth;

For those tempted to violence

as a cry against overwhelming hardship;

For those deprived of reasonable health and education;

For those suffering from hunger and famine;

For those too weak to help themselves

and who have no one else to help them;  
For the unemployed who cry out  
for work but do not find it.  
We pray for anyone of our acquaintance  
who is personally affected by injustice.  
Forgive us, Lord, if we unwittingly share in the conditions  
or in a system that perpetuates injustice.  
Show us how we can serve your children  
and make your love practical by washing their feet.

**HYMN 87** – Leave behind your bags and baggage (purple book)

## QUOTES

“The moment a little boy is concerned with which is a jay and which is a sparrow, he can no longer see the birds or hear them sing.” — Eric Berne

“Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.”  
— Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays*

**SHORT STORY:** The Last Quiet Morning (**to be read by Ann Kader?**)

In the village of Larkspur, peace was not a word but a rhythm — soft footsteps on cobblestone, the hum of bees in lavender fields, and the slow turning of the river under the willow trees. For decades, no one had raised a voice in anger, and disputes were settled with tea and patience.

Mara, the village’s oldest resident, remembered a time before this calm. She had seen storms of steel and fire and had watched neighbours vanish into the smoke of conflict. When the war ended, she planted a single seed in the centre of the village square — a seed she had carried in her pocket through every battle.

It grew into a great oak, its branches stretching like arms in an embrace. Beneath it, people gathered not to argue, but to listen. The oak became the heart of Larkspur, and Mara became its quiet guardian.

One autumn morning, a stranger arrived, his eyes restless, his voice sharp. He spoke of distant lands where peace was a fragile dream and asked why Larkspur had never been touched by such turmoil.

Mara led him to the oak. "Peace," she said, "is not the absence of trouble, but the choice to meet it without harm. We tend it like a garden — every day, with care."

The stranger sat beneath the oak's shade, and for the first time in years, his shoulders eased. The river whispered nearby, the bees hummed, and the village breathed as one.

That morning, the stranger stayed and Larkspur's rhythm continued, unbroken, like the steady pulse of the earth itself.

**MUSIC:** Gustav Holst – The Planets, 'Mars: Bringer of War' (06:57 – video) [Holst: The Planets, 'Mars' - BBC Proms](#)

## **BIBLE READINGS ABOUT WAR AND PEACE**

**Psalms 27:1** – *The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?*

**Psalms 144:1-2** – Blessed be the LORD, my rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle; My lovingkindness and my fortress, My stronghold and my deliverer; My shield and He in whom I take refuge; Who subdues my people under me.

**Ecclesiastes 3:8** – *A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace.*

**Matthew 5:8-9** – *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*

**1 Timothy 1:18-19** – *This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good*

*conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.*

**1 Chronicles 5:20** – *And they were helped against them, and the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hand; for they cried out to God in the battle, and He was entreated for them, because they trusted in Him.*

**Ephesians 6:11-17** – *Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up [the shield](#) of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

## **BUDDHIST READING ON PEACE**

In the Jataka Tales, the Buddha had given ten rules for Good Government, known as “Dasa Raja Dharma”. These ten rules can be applied even today by any government which wishes to rule the country peacefully. The rules are as follows:

1. Be liberal and avoid selfishness
2. Maintain a high moral character
3. Be prepared to sacrifice one’s own pleasure for the well-being of the citizens
4. Be honest and maintain absolute integrity
5. Be kind and gentle
6. Lead a simple life for the citizens to emulate
7. Be free from hatred of any kind
8. Exercise non-violence
9. Practise patience, and
10. Respect public opinion to promote peace and harmony

## **HYMN 151** – Strong and steadfast (purple book)

### **REFLECTIVE ADDRESS:**

Today I invite us to reflect on two of humanity's deepest aspirations: non-violence and peace. These ideals are not the possession of any one religion, culture, or philosophy. Rather, they are shared treasures that emerge whenever human beings seek to live with wisdom, compassion, and reverence for life. As Unitarians, we honour the insights of many religious traditions and affirm that truth may be discovered through diverse sources. In this spirit, let us explore peace through the wisdom of Judaism, Buddhism, and the Book of Mormon, while also considering the rich meanings embedded in the ancient languages of Hebrew and Arabic.

The English word "peace" can sometimes suggest merely the absence of conflict, tension, or war. Yet many religious traditions offer a more profound understanding.

In Hebrew, the word for peace is shalom. Shalom signifies far more than the absence of hostility. It conveys wholeness, completeness, harmony, well-being, prosperity, and right relationship. To wish someone shalom is not simply to wish them a peaceful day but to wish them a life marked by flourishing and integrity. Peace is therefore an active condition in which individuals, communities, and creation itself exist in healthy balance.

Similarly, the Arabic word salaam carries meanings of peace, safety, security, and wellbeing. It derives from a linguistic root associated with wholeness and reconciliation. Salaam speaks not only of external tranquillity but also of inner serenity and trust. The familiar greeting "As-salaamu alaykum" expresses a prayer that peace may rest upon another person and encompass their entire being.

These meanings remind us that peace is not passive. Peace requires healing where there is brokenness, justice where there is oppression, and understanding where there is fear. Peace is a task as much as a gift.

The Jewish tradition repeatedly points humanity toward this deeper vision of peace. The Hebrew prophets dreamed of a world transformed by justice and compassion. The prophet Isaiah envisioned a day when people would "beat their swords into ploughshares" and learn war no more. This remarkable image has inspired peacemakers for centuries because it calls not only for the ending of violence but for the transformation of human

priorities. Instruments of destruction become tools of cultivation. Fear gives way to creativity. Competition yields to cooperation.

Judaism also teaches that every human being is created in the image of God. If every person reflects something sacred, then violence against another becomes not merely a social failure but a spiritual one. Non-violence emerges naturally from the recognition of another person's inherent dignity. To look upon the stranger, the neighbour, or even the opponent and perceive a fellow bearer of divine worth is to take a significant step toward peace.

Buddhism approaches peace through a different but complementary path. At the heart of Buddhist teaching is the recognition that suffering is often fuelled by craving, attachment, fear, and ignorance. Violence frequently arises when individuals cling to desires, identities, or grievances that separate them from others. The Buddha taught that compassion, mindfulness, and loving-kindness provide a way beyond this cycle.

The principle of ahimsa, or non-harming, occupies a central place in Buddhist ethics. Although not unique to Buddhism, it is deeply woven into Buddhist practice. Followers are encouraged to cultivate goodwill toward all living beings, recognising the interconnectedness of existence. The practice of loving-kindness meditation extends blessings not only to friends and family but also to strangers and those with whom one has conflict.

This teaching offers an important insight. Peace in society begins with peace in the heart. Anger, resentment, and hostility cannot be overcome solely through political agreements or social structures. Lasting peace requires inner transformation. When we learn to pause, listen deeply, and respond with compassion rather than reaction, we become agents of reconciliation in a troubled world.

The Book of Mormon likewise contains powerful teachings about peace and non-violence. Among its most striking narratives is the story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Having experienced profound spiritual conversion, they renounced violence completely. Rather than taking up weapons, they buried them, symbolising their commitment to a new way of living. Even when threatened, they refused to return to bloodshed.

Whether one approaches this account historically, spiritually, or symbolically, the message is compelling. Peace often demands courage greater than warfare. It is easier to strike back than to exercise restraint. It is easier to nurture grievances than to pursue reconciliation. The

example of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies reminds us that the renunciation of violence can be a powerful witness to faith and moral conviction.

Throughout the Book of Mormon there is also a recurring emphasis on humility, repentance, and turning toward God. These themes suggest that peace is not achieved solely through external means but through the transformation of character. Communities become peaceful when individuals choose honesty over deception, forgiveness over revenge, and service over self-interest.

From a Unitarian perspective, these traditions offer complementary insights rather than competing claims. Judaism teaches us that peace is wholeness and justice. Buddhism teaches us that peace begins with compassion and inner awakening. The Book of Mormon teaches us that peace requires moral courage and the willingness to renounce violence. Together they illuminate different facets of a shared human aspiration.

Unitarians have long affirmed the importance of freedom of conscience, respect for diversity, and the search for truth. These principles encourage us to listen across religious boundaries. We need not agree on every theological detail to learn from one another's wisdom. Indeed, one of the great gifts of religious pluralism is the opportunity to discover unexpected companions on the journey toward peace.

Our world today faces many challenges. Wars continue to devastate communities. Political divisions fracture societies. Economic inequalities leave many feeling excluded and powerless. Social media can amplify anger more quickly than understanding. In such a climate, peace may seem distant. Yet the traditions we have considered today remind us that peace has always been difficult. It has always required perseverance, courage, and faith.

Peace begins when we refuse to dehumanise those who differ from us. It grows when we choose listening over shouting, understanding over stereotyping, and cooperation over hostility. It flourishes when societies commit themselves to justice, because peace without justice is merely the silence of unresolved suffering.

As we conclude, let us remember the rich meanings of shalom and salaam. Peace is wholeness. Peace is reconciliation. Peace is wellbeing. Peace is right relationship with ourselves, one another, and the world we inhabit.

May we draw wisdom from Judaism's vision of shalom, from Buddhism's path of compassion, and from the Book of Mormon's witness to courageous non-violence. May we become builders of peace in our homes, our communities, and our wider world.

And may peace, in its fullest and deepest sense, dwell within us and among us all. Amen.

**MUSIC**: Sergei Prokofiev – Alexander Nevsky, 'Russia under the Mongolian Yoke', (03:05 – audio) [Prokofiev - Alexander Nevsky - Russia Under The Mongolian Yoke](#)

**HYMN 218** – With heart and mind (purple book)

### **PRE-OFFERTORY PRAYER**

This church is sustained by what we are able to bring to it:

Our time and our energy, our love and our resources.

This morning collection will be gratefully received at the end of this service to support the work of this congregation.

**POETRY**: Sir Thomas Wyatt – I find no peace (**to be read by Sheila?**)

I find no peace, and all my war is done.

I fear and hope. I burn and freeze like ice.

I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;

And nought I have, and all the world I seize on.

That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison

And holdeth me not—yet can I scape no wise—

Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,

And yet of death it giveth me occasion.  
Without eyen I see, and without tongue I plain.  
I desire to perish, and yet I ask health.  
I love another, and thus I hate myself.  
I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;  
Likewise displeaseth me both life and death,  
And my delight is causer of this strife.

## **PEACE QUOTES**

“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.” — Albert Einstein

“The day the power of love overrules the love of power, the world will know peace.” — Mahatma Gandhi

**HYMN 45** – Go now in peace (purple book)

## **CLOSING WORDS**

We are blessed with an abundance of good things for which we are truly thankful, as long as we remember them. We are privileged with great freedom and power, for which in return we act with responsibility. We are lucky to have shared this time and space together, because we are lucky to have each other. May the spirit of this place and these friends go with us into the busy city!

**CLOSING MUSIC:** [Canto General - VOY A VIVIR - von Mikis Theodorakis live im Konzerthaus Berlin - YouTube](#) – video – (05:36)

## **ORDER OF SERVICE**

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