



Coming to Life

Worship Aids for the Living Peace Church

Praying for transformation and courage

Undertaking thoughtful study of scriptures

Actively answering Christ's call to peace

Facilitating dialogue among differing opinions

Lent 2006

Holy Audacity

The hard cold earth is pushed aside.

The delicate green leaves from buried bulbs emerge.

How can anything so supple and tender move the earth?

The cement cracks

And a yellow dandelion blooms - victorious!

The audacity of such pliant plants!

What bold courage - to grow!

One of the marks of God's spirit in the early church was the spirit of boldness. An anonymous devotional writer in *Streams in the Desert* names an essential quality of faith using the term "holy audacity." Audacity means bold courage, daring. Jesus lived audaciously and called his disciples to audacity; for it is in Christ Jesus "we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him" (Ephesians 3:12).

As we witness the boldness of the new life of spring we can also share in the audacity of renewal. What

earth have we recently pushed aside to emerge and blossom? Is there hardened cement around us which we might crack open for new life to break through? What boldness have we dared for the sake of God?

Ah, the audacity of spring, the bold courage of new life! Let us grow in "holy audacity" - with the power which broke open the tomb!

~ *Louie Rieman, Co-Pastor*
Northview Church of the Brethren, Indianapolis, IN

Prayer for the Beginning of Lent

God, should I fast this Lent? What is it you would have me consider, give up, let go of, distance myself from? Should I go to Sudan and help refugees? Should I go to Iraq and "get in the way"? What do you want from me this season of reflection? More Bible study, more direct witness, more money, more service? I have forty days not counting Sundays...who made up this idea anyway? Seems like a short time to get my act together and yet an awful long time for deep reflection. Did Jesus struggle like I do? Is my wilderness as out of whack as his was? I know I can't turn rocks into bread and I really have no desire for authority over kingdoms and sometimes I think if I even take a small leap of faith I'm doomed...

God, help me find a place to start, or a way to get better at what I'm trying to do. Maybe this purging, fasting thing won't work. Open me up, God, to these next forty-six days (yeah, I'm including Sundays as an extra bonus); open me to your spirit and your guidance. Challenge me in new ways and embolden me with courage. Please God, help me make the most of every day. These forty-six, and the infinite number that follow.

I love you God. Amen.

~ *Phil Jones, Director*
Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office

In response to the 2003 Annual Conference resolution, "A Call for a Living Peace Church," this is a resource from the Brethren Witness/Washington Office and On Earth Peace. Previous issues can be viewed at www.brethren.org/oepa/resources.html.

Prayers of Lent

During Lent, take time as a congregation to make a commitment to pray, to fast, to be in silence. The following prayers incorporate spoken, silent, and sung prayers (hymns #1000 and above come from the Hymnal Supplement; all others come from Hymnal: A Worship Book).

Ash Wednesday

Merciful God, we come today entering this season of Lent recognizing that we have fallen short of what You have called us to be. (Silence)

Hymn #1004 *O God, we call*

Help us to let go of the burdens that turn us away from You. (Silence)

Hymn #1004 *O God, we call*

Help us to set aside the darkness and fear that is prevalent in our society. (Silence)

Hymn #1004 *O God, we call*

Help us to release our anger, self-pity, and guilt so that we can open ourselves to healing and wholeness. (Silence)

Hymn #1004 *O God, we call*

As we feel the ashes upon our skin, bring forth in us a spirit of commitment for this journey through the Lenten wilderness. Amen.

1st Sunday of Lent

God of truth, in this wilderness of life show us Your ways of steadfast love and mercy. (Silence)

Guide our hearts so that we may be humble in what is right. (Silence)

Lead us as we speak the truths of justice. (Silence)

Hymn #487 *Teach me, O Lord*

2nd Sunday of Lent

Hymn #1144 *If I have been the source of pain vs. 1* (Silence)

Hymn #1144 *If I have been the source of pain vs. 2* (Silence)

Hymn #1144 *If I have been the source of pain vs. 3*
Gracious God, we come before You struggling with what it means to take up the cross. Be with us as we strive to follow Christ that we might bring healing into this broken world. (Silence)

Hymn #1144 *If I have been the source of pain vs. 4*

3rd Sunday of Lent

God of justice, forgive our complacency toward the injustices in our world. (Silence)

Help us to be sensitive to all that You created. (Silence)

May the righteousness of Jesus be our standard, rather than the injustice and violence visited upon the poor. (Silence)

Amen.

Hymn #540 *Strong, righteous man of Galilee*

4th Sunday of Lent

Hymn #1097 *Siyahamba*

God of mercy and grace, we thank You for proclaiming Your love for all creation through Jesus. Forgive us for our part in the violence and exclusion in the world; help us to shine Christ's light in the darkness. (Silence)

Restore in us the strength to be compassionate and full of grace toward all of creation, even those called "enemy." Amen.

Hymn #1097 *Siyahamba* (refrain only)

5th Sunday of Lent

God of forgiveness and promise, we pray for new life. We acknowledge that our old ways of bitterness, fear, selfishness, and our failure to speak on behalf of those who need us, get in the way of the hope that the Gospel brings. (Silence)

Help us to bear fruit, gleaning from our past mistakes, and leading us to fresh insight. Accept our commitment to work for the benefit of others with understanding, compassion, and humility. (Silence)

Give us life that we might be nourished to share the gospel of hope and love. Amen.

Hymn #483 *O God, who gives us life*

Prayers of Lent (continued)

Palm Sunday

Hymn #43 *Christ is our cornerstone*
God of passion and wisdom, we hear the story today of how Jesus is first received with joyous praise as he enters into Jerusalem triumphantly. Betrayal follows. This reminds us of the abundance we often receive, yet we don't take the time to be thankful or pass it on. Forgive us our own betrayal of who You call us to be. (Silence)

Be with us, enlightening our minds with Your wisdom, opening our eyes with Your wonder, instilling Your compassion in our hearts. (Silence)

Help us to join the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us to do Your work in an imperfect world, not shying away from difficulties, but accepting them knowing that You are with us unceasingly. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

Reconciling God, we seek Your wisdom and mercy this evening.

Forgive us for the misery we have caused others. (Silence)

Forgive us for our part in the suffering, violence, and poverty of our world. (Silence)

This evening as we partake of the bread and wine of suffering, nourish us with healing and peace. Amen.

Hymn #1068 *In seeking, in silence*

Good Friday

On this day of sorrows, God, we pray for illumination of those shadows within us that separate us from You. May we know openness and forgiveness. (Silence)

Hymn #1000 *Thank you for the night vs. 1*

On this day of sorrows, God, we pray for those who feel bombarded with noise and clutter. May they know silence and rest. (Silence)

Hymn #1000 *Thank you for the night vs. 2*

On this day of sorrows, God, we pray for those who are burdened of grief and loneliness . May they know compassion. (Silence)

Hymn #1000 *Thank you for the night vs. 3*

On this day of sorrows, God, we pray for those who are in the midst of war and despair. May they know comfort. (Silence)

Hymn #1000 *Thank you for the night vs. 4*

Thank you God for extending love, forgiveness, and care through Jesus Christ. (Silence)

Hymn #1000 *Thank you for the night vs. 5*

Easter

Hymn #1011 *Now the green blade rises*

Hallelujah, love has come again!
We give thanks that after a season of darkness in the wilderness, this light and promise comes.

Renew our hearts with new life like wheat that springeth green. (Silence)

Fill us with the expectation and hope we need to believe that peace can happen in this world. Keep our concerns and actions noble of the calling to which we are called. (Silence)

Help us to be examples of Christ's resurrected love in all that we do in this world. Amen.

~ *Barbara Saylor, Co-Director
On Earth Peace*



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A Litany of Forgiveness

Hymn #25 *Jesus, stand among us* vs. 1

Lord, teach me to cast all wrongs deep into a pool of your sublime forgiveness. Let the splash of its cleansing water soak the driest unyielding parts of me, those most vulnerable to the pain of this life.

Hymn #25 *Jesus, stand among us* vs. 2

Lord, remove from me sour Grief who dances with Unforgiveness in my mind. And reveal in me a new song of your mercy to sing.

Hymn #25 *Jesus, stand among us* vs. 1

Lord, let my light shine among all people. For a light dimmed by unforgiveness smolders beneath a suffocating shroud of self-pity and swollen pride.

Hymn #25 *Jesus, stand among us* vs. 2

Help me, Lord, to decrease as the light of Christ increases. Remove from my altar the smoking fat of self-righteousness and replace it with the enduring clear flame of that perfect Lamb of God.

Hymn #25 *Jesus, stand among us* vs. 1

~ *Verdena Lee, Akron (OH) Eastwood Church of the Brethren*
written for the On Earth Peace Board of Directors meeting in April 2005

Prayer for the Transformation of Apathy

Source of energy and strength, we ask for your presence in our hearts and in our community. We want to feel your Spirit breathing life into us once again.

Apathy, like a cobweb, has suddenly appeared in the corners of our souls. If we don't face this apathy and do our best to resist its selfish carelessness, we will become warped. As we begin to feel the world owes us something, our souls and bodies twist. Our generosity dries up like a pool of water on a hot day. Our words and actions shrink and wither. Because we are so interested in our own wants and needs, we no longer take an interest in the wants and needs of our neighbors. Please forgive us. (Silence)

But God, we feel you near us just now. We feel your love warming us gently, and our frozen hearts thaw. You strengthen our bodies and energize our passion to share your light with the world.

Change our apathy into energy. Transform our empty words into solid action. May we be increasingly aware of our own apathetic attitudes; give us courage to overcome these obstacles in order to become the sources of light you wish us to be!

~ *Becky Ullom, Director of Identity and Relations*
for the Church of the Brethren General Board

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