

PSParish Support Pack

Awareness Sunday 2011

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INTRODUCTION

Awareness Sunday - a Path to Peace

Awareness Sunday is to mark the 10th Anniversary of 9/11. It is being sponsored by the Awareness Foundation whose patron is The Archbishop of Canterbury. The Foundation's Director, the Revd Nadim Nassar, said, "Through education, Awareness Sunday can play a part in ending all kinds of violence in the name of religion; it is about loving your neighbour as yourself, whatever their faith or worldview."

He said his hopes were that "Awareness Sunday begins a dialogue that can deepen one's own faith and bring awareness of the faith of others. It is a path to peace". Nadim Nassar is the only Syrian-born priest in the Church of England and is a frequent voice in the media dealing with the current complex Middle East scenario.

This resource has drawn on materials presented on the Foundation's web site. To these have been added other resources which were composed and created after 9/11 or to mark anniversaries since then.

On 11th September 2011 there will be a service, "Vespers of Peace", at Westminster Abbey, which will be open to the public.

The Awareness Foundation is an educational, ecumenical and international charity, founded in 2003 in response to the disturbing increase in religious conflict and violence around the world.

NOTES ON LECTIONARY READINGS

Exodus 14: 19-31

Emphasise God leading his people to new life, away from oppression and fear to the possibilities of freedom. Acknowledge God charting a pathway for us through the complexity of the last ten years since 9/11. Face the contrast of victory (for the Israelites) and defeat (for the Egyptians) head-on by emphasising that such a way of reading events is inherently dangerous. The rabbinic tradition (earliest reference by Rabbi Johanan who died in AD279) offers this telling comment which has come to us in the form of a prayer: O Lord our God and God of our Fathers, we pray that, in this moment of victory, we may remember the legend handed down to us by our Doctors: that when, after the crossing of the Red Sea, Miriam raised her voice in exultation, and the angels at the throne of your glory began to take up the refrain, you rebuked them, saying: "What! My children are drowning, and you would sing?" Explore the all-too-human desire for revenge, to see not just evil vanquished but evil-doers receive their come-uppance (which is often different to justice). Think back over the last ten years to key moments – like the execution of Saddam Hussein or the death of Osama Bin Laden – when less than temperate language from some who hold religious convictions did not seem to enhance but to diminish the quest for peace.

Psalm 114/ Canticle Exodus 15: 1b-11, 20, 21

In relation to the psalm emphasise the idea that the songs we sing about our faith often tell more people about its true character than a lifetime of sermons. Note in relation to the psalm that a note of victory and celebration is tempered by the awe with which people are to "tremble at the presence of God". All that we do in the world is to acknowledge and point to his glory, his ability to transform the hardest situations – the rock – into a spring of water. How can we work to ensure such "streams in the desert?" In relation to the Exodus canticle – with its strong narrative recall of the freedom from Egypt – emphasise the way in which people of faith and goodwill can come together to defeat evil and sing a common song of the victorious. Recognise that sometimes people are tempted to 'sing songs' against other faiths which caricature them on the basis of their 'worst' not their 'best' adherents, and diminish our ability to defeat evil and work for peace.

Related: Genesis 50: 15-21, Psalm 103: [1-7], 8-13

The Joseph saga in the Hebrew Bible is one of the most embracing. Almost every emotion experienced in any family is to be found within it – from jealousy to outright hostility, from favouritism to forgiving love. This passage reveals the nature of the true leadership required of Christians – and people of goodwill – in relation to evil. Is the cycle of hurt and oppression to continue, or will someone break it. Note the power differential. Joseph's brothers are afraid because he has power over them, and could – presumably – use this to punish them – justly – for their treatment of him. But he correctly attributes power to God and uses his position to banish fear. God he says will use the situation for good. Reflect on whether and how we have responded to the events of 9/11 in this 'Christ-like' way. What might be small steps we could take towards asserting or reasserting such a paradigm of leadership.

Romans 14: 1-12

This Pauline text emphasises God-centredness. In the context of the disputes about what is appropriate eating practise it is God who is to judge. We have to be careful about the judgements we make of others. We are not to judge or despise others but to see all life in the context of accountability to God. This offers opportunity to reflect on the sort of

commentary that has often characterised the last ten years in public discourse – which has at times been one of blame whilst suggesting the opposite. How might Christians work with people of goodwill to promote a sense of accountability to God for the way we live?

Matthew 18: 21-35

The theme of forgiveness may pose the greatest challenge to those leading worship or preaching on a day such as this one since much Christian reflection on forgiveness presupposes repentance, and in relation to the events of 9/11 there do not appear to have been any expressions of contrition from the perpetrators and their supporters. How then can what happened be forgiven? This raises very difficult issues between faiths since the models of forgiveness are very different. Jews and Muslims, for instance, may very clearly wish to assert that only the 'victims' may forgive the perpetrators and, furthermore, that since restitution needs to be made by the perpetrators to the 'victims' – and since this is not possible since so many of the latter (and some of the former) died, forgiveness within religious categories is not possible. The Christian tradition similarly emphasises the need for repentance – and, at times, for restitution (witness the call to Zacchaeus to pay back four-fold what he took in taxes). But as this passage emphasises – and as the parable of the Prodigal Son extends further – there is also unequivocal teaching on that free, unmerited forgiveness which is, if you like, pre-emptive. It does not presume repentance or restitution. It recognises that a situation of immense complexity and dysfunction may perhaps only be addressed by what appears to be a 'super-human' attempt to forgive in the sense of beginning anew. This is not easy territory. Believers mustn't be made to feel that there is a compulsion to forgive where they have not reached the point in their journey where they are able to forgive. But the challenge to walk a pathway to forgiveness 'from the heart' remains – Father, forgive them for they know not what they do; forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

PRAYERS

A Prayer of John Henry Newman chosen by the families of the British victims of 9/11 for the memorial service in Westminster Abbey, November 2001:

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublesome life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes; the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

A Prayer of GA Cleveland Shrigley (adapted):

Father of all, free us from prejudice born of hate and fear and kept alive by ignorance and pride. Open our hearts and minds to new friendships and new contributions of the spirits from peoples, cultures and religions not our own. Enrich us by the great thoughts and experiences of all peoples and countries. With all your children on earth make us sharers of your abundant life and workers together in your kingdom of love and peace.

A Prayer of Alan Warren

Lord Christ, shine upon all who are in the darkness of suffering or grief; that in your light they may receive hope and courage, and in your presence may find their rest and peace; for your love's sake.

A passage by Henry Van Dyke (1852–1933) American Author and Clergyman

Time is too short for those who wait
Too swift for those who fear.
Too long for those who grieve,
Too short for those who rejoice.
But for those who love, time is eternity.

A prayer for responsiveness by Canon Chris Chivers:

Transforming God: take my anger, and make of it a well-spring of compassion for the bereaved and distressed; take my revulsion, and make of it a burning desire to overcome wickedness; take my incomprehension, and make of it an open channel through which I may see the realities of evil; take my pity, and make of it a source of remembrance; take my despair, and make of it a fountain of hope: Turn me, O God, from indifference and apathy that I may work to ensure that never again will the sanctity of human life be destroyed in this – or any – way.

Prayer written by an unknown prisoner in the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp and found on a piece of wrapping paper in the camp near the body of a dead child

O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will but also those of evil will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted upon us; remember the fruits we have borne thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this; and when they come to the judgement, let all the fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.

An Elizabethan Prayer for our enemies

Most merciful and loving Father, We beseech thee most humbly, even with all our hearts, To pour out upon our enemies with bountiful hands whatsoever things thou knowest may do them good And chiefly a sound and uncorrupt mind, Where-through they may know thee and love thee in true charity and with their whole heart, And love us, thy children, for thy sake. Let not their first hating of us turn to their harm,

Seeing that we cannot do them good for want of ability. Lord, we desire their amendment and our own. Separate them not from us by punishing them, But join and knot them to us by thy favourable dealing with them. And, seeing we be all ordained to be citizens of the one everlasting city, Let us begin to enter into that way here already by mutual love, Which may bring us right forth thither.

A Prayer of Sister Frances Dominica, Founder of Helen and Douglas Houses in

Oxford: Almighty God, Creator of the universe, I feel small and helpless

In the face of the atrocity and terror and war I offer you the only thing I can – My ordinary, everyday life. I ask you to take it into your hands

And to use it to bring peace. I do not ask to understand But only to accept that you need very little In order to do much, For you once fed five thousand hungry people With five loaves and two fish, The gift of one small boy.

for a spirit of understanding

Ever-loving God, we bring before you the deep tensions and divisions of our world: the desire of some to dominate, the willingness of others to resort to violence, the misery of those whose lives are blighted by fear, suffering, grief and sorrow. Set in our hearts, we pray, a spirit which will draw us together in understanding, unite us in friendship, and finally establish the transforming power of your reign over all the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

for the promotion of all that is good

Almighty and ever gracious God, you have made each of us to reveal the image and likeness of your glory: teach us to reverence and cherish this gift of life: by offering ourselves as temples of your Holy Spirit by protecting and promoting all that is gracious and good

and by opposing all that degrades or destroys our humanity that justice and peace may prevail and the whole world be transfigured by the light of your love, now and always.

for an end to fear

Loving God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, and no strength known but the strength of love: so guide and inspire, we pray, the labours of those who seek to establish righteousness and peace in the world, that all people may find their security, not in force of arms, but in that perfect love which casts out fear, and in the fellowship revealed to us in your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

That pride may diminish and humility increase

Heavenly Father, be with us in our search for peace, in ourselves and in the world you have made: Following the example of your saints, help us to diminish pride and increase humility;

to weaken suspicion and nourish trust; to deepen love and understanding in every heart, and unite us all as members of the human family. So may your kingdom come and your will be done, both now and always.

After a speech of Martin Luther King

O Almighty God you have called us to dream that people of all races will join hands together as sisters and brothers and transform the jangling discords of the nations into a beautiful symphony of love and brotherhood: grant us to strive for that day when freedom will ring from every hill and mountainside, and all God's children shall see the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ.

A prayer of St Francis of Assisi

Lord make us instruments of your peace: where there is hatred let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love: for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

A prayer of Eric Abbott

Lord Jesus Christ who hast made peace by the blood of thy cross and now ever livest to make intercession for us, ever praying that we may be one as thou art one with the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit: bring all those who have been baptised into thee, bring all those who love thee in sincerity, bring all thy children into one body at the last; for thy dear love's sake.

For an end to boasting and arrogance

Lord of peace, be with those who guide the destinies of the world so that an end may come to boasting and vainglory, and the reign of arrogance dwindle in our time. Give them the courage to speak the truth and the humility to listen. Help us all to put the good of our neighbours above our own ambitions, and the truth which does not profit us above the lie which does. So may we stand upright, freed from the burden of fear and the weight of suspicion, learning to trust each other, for your mercy's sake.

A Prayer of Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Lord Jesus, help us to know that Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate, light is stronger than darkness, life is stronger than death, and that victory is ours through him who loves us.

for the power and peace of the resurrection

Living Lord, conqueror of death, we remember with gladness how on the day of resurrection you appeared to your disciples in your risen power and said to them, 'Peace be with you'. Speak that word to the hearts of your children, O Lord. Lift them above their doubts and fears; and help them so to practise your presence and to rest upon your victory, that your peace may be known over the whole earth.

for peace in church and world

O God, whose will is to fold both heaven and earth in a single peace; let the design of your great love lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows; and give peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts.

Prayers of Alan Paton for peace

Take all hate from my heart, O God, and teach me how to take it from the heart of others. Open my eyes and show me what things in our society make it easy for hatred to flourish and hard for us to conquer it. Then help me to try to change these things. And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for Thee.

Lord, help me to give myself when I am giving. Teach me to give without thought of receiving, and to receive without thought of giving. Teach me not to withhold or withdraw myself. Teach me to hoard nothing: love, money, time, possessions. Make me ready to give, even my life if it is required of me. And while I have it, use it as an instrument of Your peace.

Unison Prayer

God of the ages, before your eyes all empires rise and fall yet you are changeless. Be near us in this age of terror and in these moments of remembrance. Uphold those who work and watch and wait and weep and love. By your Spirit give rise in us to broad sympathy for all the peoples of your earth. Strengthen us to comfort those who mourn and work in large ways and small for those things that make for peace. Bless the people and leaders of this nation and all nations so that warfare, like slavery before it, may become only a historic memory. We pray in the strong name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

With all our heart and mind, let us pray to God, saying, "God of grace, be with us."

Remembering the time of confusion, grief, vulnerability and loss on September 11, 2001, let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That those who serve you in all countries and all traditions may remember your love, embrace your forgiveness, and hold fast to your hope.

Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That the leaders of this nation and all others in authority, may be guided by your Wisdom, and find strength and courage to know and accomplish your purposes in the midst of the evil of these days.

Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That all peoples of the earth, especially those who suffer loss due to political or religious persecution or terrorism, may have the hope of healing.

Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That we as a community, having experienced the terror and fear, may find unity of purpose not in revenge but in rebuilding our hope and healing the pain.

Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That we in this community who have lost loved ones, colleagues, and friends can respond to the tragedies of 9/11 in New York City and Washington, D.C., that we all may be embraced with your love and healing grace through the embrace and care of Christ Church and all communities who profess to be your body in this world.

Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That those who have died may find peace and joy among the communion of saints.

Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

God whose vision spans all the ages of the earth, help us to see beyond this moment and to embrace the wider perspective of your whole creation. Deliver us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge, and lead us into a way of love and justice that makes room for all peoples.

Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

For the peace from above, for the loving kindness and constant presence of God, and for the comfort of our hurting souls, let us pray to God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For a way to find and keep peace in this troubled world and for the unity of a distrustful and destructive humanity, let us pray to God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the leaders of our nation that they will guide us thoughtfully and wisely toward reconciliation, let us pray to God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For all who in their hurting want retribution, yet in their souls long for peace, let us pray to God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those whose loss and grief knows no bounds and feels no possibility of succour, let us pray to God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those whose hatred has blinded them to the precious value of human life and whose misguided sense of justice has led them to unmerciful acts, let us pray to God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Grant us your grace, O God, that we through our own experience of forgiveness will be empowered to forgive others.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For deliverance from all danger and violence and from our well-founded, but heart-wrenching fears of what might still lie ahead, let us pray to God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

In all of our sadness, O God, let us not forget that you are also the source of our strength and our joy. You alone are our hope and in you alone do we place our faith. Deliver us from our fears, defend us from our enemies, hold us close in our mourning, and bring us to a unity of all your people whose love knows no end and hope abounds.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Shalom and Amen.

A LITANY OF THANKSGIVING AND RECOGNITION

A Litany of Thanksgiving and Recognition for all those, known and unknown, who responded in love to 9/11

Let us pray for servants of God, known and unknown, who responded with self-giving love on September 11, 2001 and who continued to offer their services in the days, weeks and months following that tragic day.

For their dedication and tireless resolve to answer the cries of those in need.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For the fire-fighters, rescue squad and ambulance personnel, for police officers and others who placed themselves in harm's way in their efforts to save others.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For doctors, nurses, and medical technicians, who continue to employ their gifts of knowledge and wisdom in the effort to provide relief, comfort, and healing.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For trauma counsellors, grief counsellors, pastoral care staff, chaplains, school teachers and guidance counsellors who continue to offer their nurturing support.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For pastors and bishops, representatives of local faith groups and others who share messages of faith and inspiration for those whose spirits are broken.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For all public servants who dedicate themselves to the care and safety of your people.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who perished in the line of duty: hear our prayers of remembrance and grateful thanks for their lives poured out for the sake of those in peril.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who volunteered, giving themselves, their time and their possessions to serve whenever they were needed: hear our prayers of remembrance and grateful thanks for their lives poured out for the sake of those in peril.

We give you thanks, O Lord.

Hear all our prayers, O Lord, and unite them with the prayers of all your faithful people both now and in the days ahead. In your great and powerful name we pray. **Amen.**

AN ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

At the blowing of the wind and in the decay of autumn; in the chill of winter and the promise of spring under the blue sky and in the warmth of summer
we remember them.

At the dawn of day and at the setting of the sun
we remember them.

With joys we long to share and with sorrows we bear alone in work we have to do and life we have to live
we remember them.

With thankfulness and regrets, with memories of the past and hopes for the future, for all that was and all that might have been
we remember them.

By their deaths in 9/11 our fellow world citizens added to the sum of the world's innocent victims. As we commend them to God, we remember people from other nations who also died and those throughout the world who are suffering in innocence.
In the faith of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we remember all of them before God.
Silence is kept

AN ACT OF PENITENCE AND RECONCILIATION

We turn to God in sorrow as we acknowledge before him the suffering of his world and the pain of his people.

When hatred causes division between nations and alienates peoples and cultures

Lord, have mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**

When indifference diminishes the dignity of the imprisoned, the homeless and the refugee, Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

When pride leads us to trust ourselves and to disregard the demands of your word and your laws

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

May God, who has called us to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, and forgiving of one another, pour upon us the riches of his grace, free us from evil, and strengthen us to love

in love and peace with all the peoples of the earth. **Amen.**

Let us then pray with hope for the future of the world: for peace on earth and goodwill among all people, for an end to injustice, terrorism and war, for those charged with building the ways of peace.

God of mercy:

hear our prayer.

For the unity of all Christian people and for people of faith in every land; for all who seek God and the way of truth

God of mercy

hear our prayer.

For the healing of memories, for relief where past wrongs and violence persist, and for all who are in pain or distress

God of mercy:

hear our prayer.

For the strengthening of the bonds of human dignity, for the resolve of all whose courage and compassion bring relief, and for those who day by day meet hostility with restraint

God of mercy:

hear our prayer.

For peace and reconciliation, love and awareness, trust, friendship and respect among all That we might discern more deeply our shared humanity, And for the dawning of a world that is in harmony with itself

God of mercy:

hear our prayer.

O God, look in mercy on the deep divisions of our world. Set in our hearts the spirit of penitence, forgiveness and reconciliation, that the day may soon come when we no longer distrust or fear one another, but are drawn together in unity of purpose, in understanding, and in love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

AN ACT OF DEDICATION

Let us affirm our desire for peace and reconciliation, our commitment to build a world of love which is characterised by awareness, trust, friendship and respect among all people:

Lord God our Father, we pledge ourselves to serve you in serving all people: in the cause of peace with justice and for the relief of want, fear and suffering. Direct us by your Holy Spirit; that we may become rich in wisdom, courage, and hope; and keep us faithful to this pledge: for the glory of your Name, for our good, and the good of all people. Amen.

SERMON STARTER

Fear

Do you remember how afraid we were that day? No one knew what was going to happen next, we didn't really even know what had happened that day. We couldn't believe what we were seeing. It just seemed like it couldn't be real.

Do not fear... be not afraid... fear not... worded different ways, it is probably the words Jesus repeated the most. He said it to his followers the first time they saw him after he rose from death. He's not telling us that it's somehow a sign of weakness or unfaithfulness to feel fear, he's assuring us that he is with us no matter what happens.

Grief

This too will pass. I heard someone say those words once to someone immediately after news of the death of a loved one. It is very hard for many of us to be in the presence of grief that sometimes we say things to try to move it away. Sometimes it is hard to be in the presence of grief because our own feelings of grief frighten us. Many of us have feelings of grief that remain from people we love who have died many years in the past.

To all those who lost someone they love on September 11th five years ago, we express to you our deep condolences. Please know that friends here care for you and will continuously remember you in our prayers. To all others I wish to share that remembrances of disaster and loss such as we remember today from September 11th five years ago can awaken feelings of grief from other losses. Please let those feelings come, don't stifle them. Tears are the communication of feelings so deep that we don't have words for them. Let them come. Jesus wept when he lost a friend and will give us comfort and his nurturing presence in these times. Peace

We knew our lives had all changed the moment the attacks happened, we didn't know how much. We knew that the world and our country had entered a frightening and dangerous time, we didn't know how dangerous. We knew that peace may be gone, we didn't know for how long.

The last five years has brought our people and the peoples of many other lands conflict and war. The fighting in so many countries, and the violence escalating in so many parts of the world shows us that we don't know when peace, true and lasting and just peace will ever come.

The world in Jesus' time was also an unstable and dangerous world. He didn't promise to his earliest followers that he would change all that, and unfortunately we don't have that promise now. He did promise then, and his promises endure forever that in the midst of difficult times, that he gives us something rich and comforting and enduring, the peace of his presence. Jesus said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."
John 14:27

WEB SOURCES

Awareness Sunday website

www.awarenesssunday.com

YouTube - Perspectives: Desmond Tutu on 9/11 and the Killing of ...

www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9moojPEVr4

9 min - 29 Jun 2011 - Uploaded by NuclearAgePeace

Archbishop Desmond **Tutu** gives his perspectives on the attacks of **9/11** and the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. ...