

Hiroshima-Nagasaki

Day of Prayer for Peace

Saturday, Aug. 6 and Tuesday, Aug. 9, mark the 60th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Christians throughout the world, especially in Japan, observe these dates as Days of Prayer for Peace. We invite US congregations to join in making Hiroshima remembrance central to their August 7 Sunday worship.

THE PEACE WITNESS OF JAPANESE LUTHERANS

Our Hiroshima worship resources, prayers, and activities are inspired by the witness of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), a church which feels a call from God to “tell our brothers and sisters of the faith about the misery of nuclear war and about the urgency for abolishing nuclear armaments.” Christians living in Hiroshima were among the 100,000 people killed; survivors recall the initial bomb blast on August 6, when “all Hiroshima became a sea of flames.”

In 1993, the JELC issued a public confession of sin for its own failure to oppose Japan’s militarism during WWII. The JELC continues to work for peace by sharing stories of “hibakusha” (survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), hosting peace seminars, advocating compensation for war victims, and proclaiming peacemaking and reconciliation as the heart of the gospel of Jesus.

WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS FOR AUGUST 7

Worship is Central to Christian Peacemaking

- ◆ Use the “Hiroshima Sunday: Prayers for Peace” bulletin insert (other side of this sheet) prepared by Lutheran Peace Fellowship. Observe a moment of silence.
- ◆ Read the scripture texts chosen by the JELC: Micah 4:1-5, Ephesians 2:13-18, John 15:9-12. A survivor story such as the one below can serve as an additional reading or as a source for sermon reflections.
- ◆ Sing peace hymns like “Dona Nobis Pacem” (774) “O Day of Peace” (762), *With One Voice*. LBW 414, 416, 433, and 463. LBW 417 is from Japan.

- ◆ Read the story of Sadako as a children’s sermon, and teach children to fold origami peace cranes. Peace cranes can be hung over the baptism font as a symbol of reconciliation in Christ. One Minnesota congregation created a mobile of 1,000 peace cranes for their sanctuary!

- ◆ Use rice cakes or rice wine for Holy Communion.

EDUCATION AND PEACE ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Show and discuss a video on Hiroshima from your university, public, or peace group library.

- ◆ Invite children to fold origami peace cranes (simple instructions available from www.sadako.com, LPF...)

- ◆ Read stories of “hibakusha” (survivors), see example below. Create a drama or litany of remembrance.

- ◆ Toll church bells, float lanterns, or organize a “shadow project” to commemorate those who died.

- ◆ Plan a forum on current nuclear issues using the ELCA-endorsed “Urgent Call” on the nuclear danger.

- ◆ Lutheran Peace Fellowship’s Hiroshima packet has additional activities and materials. For a copy or other resources: LPF, 1710 11th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122, 206-720-0313, lpf@ecunet.org, www.Lutheranpeace.org

“The Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn’t necessary to hit them with that awful thing...I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon.”

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, wartime Allied Commander in Europe, in 1963; an opinion shared by other top military leaders, including Adm. William Leahy, wartime Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

TESTIMONY OF A “HIBAKUSHA” (Atomic Bomb Survivor)

In 1945 our house was near Aioi Bridge which was to become the epicenter of the Hiroshima atomic bomb explosion. At that time I was in the fifth grade of elementary school. At 8:15 am, August 6th, we were studying at the country grade school where we had been sent because of the war. There was a flash. With a crash the windows broke into pieces. After a moment a gigantic column of smoke rose high into the sky.

After a week, my mother and I were able to travel to Hiroshima. I can never forget the scene of misery I saw at that time while so many people were walking around in search of family members.

I lost my father and older sister. My father was just leaving for work, and he was crushed by a large post which had fallen across his shoulders and chest. We didn’t know where my older sister was for a month. Finally we learned that she had been badly burned and died at an aid station at Eta Island.

Soon the end of the war came and I encountered Christianity. I learned about God’s great love and the depth of human sin, and I came to know the importance of repentance. I learned what a great truth it is to receive a living hope through faith in Jesus Christ. *Mrs. Hinako Urano, Hihari Lutheran Church, Japan*