World Council of Churches

Ecumenical Service

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2026

Opening

Heavenly Father, God of love, mercy, and peace,

We gather today in Your holy presence with hearts filled with faith and hope, lifting our prayer to You for all the children of the world, especially our children in Palestine, Israel, and the Middle East, many of whom live amid fear, violence, displacement, and deprivation. We come to You trusting that You are a loving Father who never forgets His children, that Your eyes watch over every child, and that Your heart is compassionate toward all who suffer and are in need.

Lord, You blessed children and embraced them with Your love, saying to Your disciples:

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Therefore, we place them in Your hands today, asking You to surround them with Your divine presence, protect them from all evil, fill their hearts with Your peace that surpasses all understanding, and grant all the children of the world the grace of protection, the joy of childhood, and the blessing of peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn: If You Do Not Become Like Children

Refrain:
If you do not become like children,
You will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (2x)

1. My God, grant wonder to my eyes;
   My God, revive my hope.
   My God, grant that I may live what You teach.
2. My God, grant me the faithfulness of the meadows;
   My God, grant me the reverence of the snow.
   My God, grant that I may live what You teach.
3. My God, grant me the purity of flowing streams;
   My God, grant me the generosity of the grain.
   My God, grant that I may live what You teach.

Prayer for Children

Almighty Father,

You who blessed children and embraced them with Your love, we lift up to You the children of Gaza who live under the burden of war, fear, and terror.

Lord, You see the children facing bombardment and destruction, hunger, thirst, illness, displacement, and the loss of their homes and loved ones. You see their tears and fears, and You know the pain they carry in their hearts and the burdens no child should ever bear.

Be close to them. Protect their bodies and hearts, heal their wounds, and provide them with safety, food, water, medicine, the warmth of family, and a secure place where they may live their childhood with dignity.

Lord, do not let the world become accustomed to the suffering of children. Move our hearts to be a voice for them, to work for an end to war, for the protection of children, and for the building of a peace founded on justice and human dignity.

Protect the children of our land, restore their childhood to them, and open before them a path toward a future filled with peace and hope.

Amen.

First Reading

First Letter to the Corinthians 13:1–13 (Love Never Fails)

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding
gong or a clanging cymbal.
2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have
complete faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
3 If I give away all I possess to feed the poor, and if I hand over my body to be burned, but do
not have love, I gain nothing.
4 Love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
5 It does not act dishonorably, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no
record of wrongs.
6 It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.
8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they
will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.
9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,
10 but when perfection comes, what is partial passes away.
11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child. When I
became an adult, I put away childish ways.
12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know only in part; then I
shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.
And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Psalm 121 (Responsorial Psalm)

1

I lift up my eyes to the mountains;
from where shall my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

2

He will not let your foot slip;
he who watches over you neither slumbers nor sleeps.
The Lord watches over you;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

3

The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will preserve your life.

The Lord will watch over your coming and going, from this time forth and forevermore.

Gospel

Mark 10:13-16 (Jesus Embraces and Blesses the Children)

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus so that He might place His hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them.
14 When Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.
15 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."
16 Then He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them, and blessed them.

Sermon

Hymn: *Come Among Us*

Refrain:
Come among us, abide with us,
And make our hearts Your dwelling place.

1. Grant us eyes that look to You,
   And make our lives a kingdom in Your hands.
   Then we shall know the true taste of life;
   O answer our prayer.
2. Remove resentment from our hearts,
   And plant Your word in our conscience.

Then we shall reap the love of giving;
O answer our prayer.

3. We are hungry, You are our bread;
We are thirsty, You are our water.
From You comes all nourishing food;
O answer our prayer

Prayers

1. O God, You love and care for children. We pray to You for all the children of the world, that they may grow up in the embrace of their parents and families, and increase in age, stature, and wisdom before God and all people. We ask You to have compassion on the children of Gaza and all the children of our land who suffer from war, hunger, illness, fear, and injustice. Grant them the peace they long for, so that they may grow up in security and safety.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. O God, You who love all people, look upon the children who are victims of war in our land and throughout the world, and upon displaced, neglected, and abandoned children. May they find those who will care for them and show them compassion, so that they may look toward the future with eyes full of hope and joy.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3. Lord God, we ask You to place in the hearts of all people a longing for reconciliation, that they may live together in love and lasting peace. May they no longer kill one another, but instead work together for the good of all humanity.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4. Lord, we want to live in peace. Yet unjust people have driven many of us from our homes and deprived them of food and drink. Help them; send them enough bread, and stop those who continue to kill them. Restrain them, O Lord, and grant us peace.

Lord, hear our prayer.

5. Our Lord, You look with compassion and tenderness upon all the children of the world. We ask You to look especially upon the children of southern Lebanon, where there is great destruction and where many people have left their homes while others have died. Help them, O Lord, and protect them from every evil.

Lord, hear our prayer.

6. Lord, thousands of Palestinians are in prisons and are being subjected to suffering. Deliver them, O Lord. Have mercy on them, O Lord, and return them to their families, to their sons and daughters, so that they may rejoice together.

Lord, hear our prayer.

7. Lord, there are many military checkpoints that prevent our brothers and sisters from reaching Jerusalem to visit the holy places and pray there. Lord, everyone wishes to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and at Calvary. Why are people prevented from praying? Have mercy on us, O Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Prayer for justice and healing

We are little ones, Lord, and we come to You because You love children. We ask You for our parents and all our families: protect them, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace. You lived and walked in this land, in our mountains, plains, and valleys through which we walk today. Here You taught, here You prayed, and here You performed wonders and healed many who were sick.

Lord, we are in need of healing; we are in need of peace. Some of us are hungry, some are sick, some are imprisoned, and all of us suffer injustice and live under the threat of ongoing war. Save us, Lord. Have mercy on us, Lord.

We pray for ourselves, for our families, and for all our friends. We also pray for those who do wrong, that they may cease their injustice, come to know Your mercy, and stop harming us and others.

The Lord's Prayer (Ecumenical Unified Text)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, our good and loving Father,

We thank You for gathering us today in Your presence, so that we may raise our prayers to You for all the children of the world, and especially for the children of the Holy Land and the Middle East. We believe that You hear the cries of those who suffer, embrace the little ones with Your love, and never abandon those who place their hope in You.

Let Your light shine in the life of every child, dispelling fear, sowing peace and reassurance, and granting them a future marked by peace, dignity, and joy. Bless their families, strengthen all who dedicate their lives to serving and protecting them, and awaken in each of our hearts a spirit of responsibility and love, so that we may faithfully defend the dignity and rights of children and be witnesses to the Gospel of life and peace.

Through the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, Mother of Hope and Peace, who lovingly embraced the Child Jesus, we ask You to surround all children with Your fatherly care, keep them in Your peace, and help them grow in wisdom, grace, and love.

Lord, as we leave this gathering, may we carry in our hearts a renewed commitment to be instruments of peace and mercy, and to see in every child the face of Your Son, Jesus, serving Him with love and devotion. To You be glory and thanksgiving, Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. **Amen.**

Dismissal and Blessing

May the Lord bless you and keep you;
May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
May the Lord strengthen and encourage you;
And may He grant you peace.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Hymn: Thanks Be to God

Thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumphal procession.
As poor people having nothing, yet we sing, making many rich.

Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him always, for He is near.
He gives strength to the weary, and to those without power He increases might.

As we go forth as ambassadors for Him, as though God were making His appeal through us,
So that we may have sufficiency, from every grace and abundance.

The Lord will guide you continually; He will satisfy your soul in dry and barren places.
He will strengthen your bones, and you shall be like a well-watered garden.

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