Worship Service Theme: Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE

Helpful Elements:
Christmas hymnal and sing-along recordings
Purple table covering
Advent stand and electric candles
Advent banner
Nativity scene (separate table)

Welcome: Welcome! My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Today is the second Sunday of Advent. The word "advent" comes from the Latin word "adventus," which means "arrival" or "coming." Advent is the season before Christmas when the church remembers and celebrates the coming of Christ to Earth and looks forward to his return in glory.

(Turn on the candles of Hope and Peace – or have someone in the front row "light" them.)
Last week, we lit the first **PURPLE** candle of hope, remembering the hope that Christ brought into the world. Today we light the second **PURPLE** candle of peace, remembering the peace that Jesus brought into the world. Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening prayer: God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells among us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells among us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells among us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the center, the focus of our lives

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always, and particularly during this Advent season. We pray in your holy name. Amen.[1]

Hymns:
Joy to the World
O Come O Come Emmanuel

First reading: Isaiah 55:12-13
12 You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.
13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briers the myrtle will grow.
This will be for the Lord's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure forever.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:
It Came Upon the Midnight Clear
We Three Kings

Second reading: John 14:16-17, 26-27. This is Jesus speaking to his followers.
Jesus said, **16** "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, **17** even the Spirit of truth … [who] dwells with you and will be in you. …. **26** the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. **27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

[1] http://faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm

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Hymns:
Angels We Have Heard on High
O Little Town of Bethlehem

Interactive Homily: Let's talk more about peace.

- What does it take to live a peaceful life? What makes life peaceful?
    - Inner calm and well-being.
    - An outer lack of violence, a spirit of cooperation and togetherness.
- The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, means "whole or completeness" – God's perfect plan for people and creation, inside and out.
    - Shalom = Peace with each other; peace with God; peace with all people.
- I wonder why you think peace within ourselves and peace in the world is often so hard to achieve?
    - Worry, anger, strife, disrespect, envy.
    - Injustice and other brokenness chip away at our wholeness.
- Did you know that "peace" is mentioned more than 400 times in the King James Bible? Let's think of some situations where peace is mentioned in the Bible.
    - What do the angels say at Christ's birth?
        - "Glory to God in the highest, and … *peace* on earth, good will to all people."
    - What is Jesus sometimes called? "The Prince of …. Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)
    - In the passage we read from the gospel of John, Jesus promises "my peace I leave with you; not as the world gives."
    - The apostle Paul also wrote of God giving us "peace that passes understanding" (Philippians 4:7).
    - Paul also wrote that "[Jesus] himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14).
- Sometimes it can feel like peace is impossible – but peace is a promise from God, and we, as people of faith, are called to be peace*makers*. We have God's own Spirit within us to bring peace to the world.
- What can we do here and now to foster God's peace in ourselves and for the world?
    - Choose to believe God's promises about peace. God's peace, wherever it happens, is a miracle!
    - Choose peaceful thoughts and peaceful actions. What are examples of peaceful thoughts and actions?
        - Gratitude instead of complaining

        - Kindness instead of harshness
        - Gladness for others instead of envy
    - Know and celebrate God's LOVE for you! Soak yourself in God's love every day – read his promises, sing songs of his love.
        - In the words of Henri Nouwen, Catholic priest and writer: "Nothing is more important in peacemaking than that it flow from a deep and undeniable experience of love. Only those who know deeply that they are loved and rejoice in that love can be true peacemakers."
    - As we embrace and saturate ourselves in God's love, that flows out into peacemaking.

… Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the peace of God, that we would be peacemakers as we live in God's love.

(Silent Prayer) … Lord, in your love and mercy, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:
Lord's Prayer: 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 evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:
Go Tell It on the Mountain
Away in a Manger

Third Reading: Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem By Maya Angelou **[this is a long poem; bracketed sections may be omitted]**

Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes
And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.
Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche
Over unprotected villages.
The sky slips low and grey and threatening.

[We question ourselves.

What have we done to so affront nature?
We worry God.
Are you there? Are you there really?
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?**]**

Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.
The world is encouraged to come away from rancor,
Come the way of friendship.

[It is the Glad Season.
Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner.
Flood waters recede into memory.
Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us
As we make our way to higher ground.**]**

[Hope is born again in the faces of children
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.
Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all things,
Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.**]**

In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
We hear a sweetness.
The word is Peace.
It is loud now. It is louder.
Louder than the explosion of bombs.

[We tremble at the sound. We are thrilled by its presence.
It is what we have hungered for.
Not just the absence of war. But, true Peace.
A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies.
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.**]**

We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas.
We beckon this good season to wait a while with us.
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.
Peace.

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Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.
We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,
Implore you to stay awhile with us.
[So we may learn by your shimmering light
How to look beyond complexion and see community.**]**

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.
On this platform of peace, we can create a language
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.
At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ

[Into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.
We shout with glorious tongues the coming of hope.
All the earth's tribes loosen their voices to celebrate the promise of Peace.**]**

We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Non-Believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace.

We look at our world and speak the word aloud.
Peace.

We look at each other, then into ourselves
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation:

Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul.

Hymns:
Silent Night
O Holy Night

Fourth Reading: Peace, from *Spiritual Literacy*, by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat[2]

In marked contrast to [human] history, the wisdom traditions challenge us ... to practice peace.

[2] pp. 348-349

We begin in our homes with how we treat those who are nearest and dearest to us. As the Jesuit peace activist John Dear tells us, “Violence occurs when we forget and deny our basic identity as God’s children, when we treat one another as if we were worthless instead of priceless.”

Nobel Peace Prize recipient Mother Teresa brings to mind what is at stake here: “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

Hymn:
Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)
The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymns:
Hark the Herald Angels Sing
We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Extra Material:

Ephesians 2:13-19
But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility **15** by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. **17** And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. **18** For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. **19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.