

Sunday Service Template for September 11th

1. MUSICAL OPENING BY _____

2. WELCOME AND INVOCATION BY _____

3. MUSICAL NUMBER BY _____

4. (Leader) STATEMENT & PURPOSE OF THIS ONENESS SERVICE:

A. Intro to a Season for Interfaith-Intercultural Celebration

As we enter AGNT's Season for Interfaith-Intercultural Celebration, (September – December), we are joining hundreds of task forces around the world in meaningful demonstrations of interfaith and intercultural understanding that form the foundations of the global peace-building to which we are so deeply committed.

Spiritual and religious belief systems shape worldviews that, in turn, determine cultural norms. We believe that discord between and among cultures is a symptom of human woundedness catalyzed by failed understanding. When compassionately understood, the diverse wisdom of our spiritual legacies gives rise to healing. WE DO have a hand in determining whether cultures evolve, or merely change.

Today, we're right in the middle of a planet-wide values shift. Its implications for religion, spirituality, inter-cultural healing and personal development are profound, indeed. At its very heart lie new understandings of peace and nonviolence, social / economic justice, human rights, and ecological sustainability.

Through Sunday Services, prayer gatherings, community events, and workshops focusing on interfaith communication and harmony, WE can Be The Change in this spiritual center and beyond. Everything we need to participate, as well as personal support and coaching, is available to us (FREE) on the AGNT website, www.agnt.org.

B. Anniversary of 9/11

On this day, which many will mourn as a tragedy that befell our nation, we join hearts with all those who lost loved ones on September 11, 2001 — and in the two still ongoing wars our nation has undertaken as a result. But while we join hearts with them, we must add, in the words of the members of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, “Our grief is not a cry for war.” It is instead a wake-up call to our responsibility and a kairos moment, a spiritual crisis by using which correctly we can actually use this painful memory as a turning point toward peace.

Story from a member of Families for Peaceful Tomorrow, Colleen Kelly:

I was at a conference at Fordham University last week entitled ‘Moral Outrage and Moral Repair – Reflections on 9-11 and its Afterlife’. The title interested me, as it seemed to accurately describe large portions of my existence this past decade.

My brother, Bill Kelly Jr. died in Tower 1. He wasn't supposed to be there. He didn't work at the Trade Center. Ironically, Bill's prior visit to Windows on the World was in December 2000 to receive an employee recognition award. Who knew that the one-day conference Bill was attending on September

11th, the conference he cajoled his boss into letting him attend, would be an event from which he would never return.

Moral outrage – certainly. At the fanatics that murdered my brother. At the twist of fate that led him to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. At a humanity that allows for violence as a way to make a point, state your case, right perceived wrongs. At anyone who dared rejoice in the agonizing smoke and fire.

Then confusion – at my country, now planning to bomb others a world away. Didn't we ... yes we just live through this? And how could we ... yes we ... be the cause of similar harm to others? Confusion also with my church. What is a just war exactly? And how does one truly live out the gospels; or are they just a collection of beautiful stories?

The Moral Repair will take a lifetime, and then some, I like to believe. Bill is gone; and safe; and no longer in pain. I also like to believe he is surrounded by love. My faith tells me so.

But I learned another lesson in moral repair at Fordham, from one of the speakers - a rabbi named Irwin Kula. He pointed out a truth that I desperately believe in – the most important and sacred value in our very fragile human lives is love. In the months following 9-11, Rabbi Kula became fascinated with the last words of those killed on September 11th. After reading a few stories in the paper, he began seeking out the last words and sentences of anyone he could find who was killed that day. And you know what he found? Not a single person said “Kill them.” “Get them back.” “Avenge my death.” No. Last words were not about hatred; they were sometimes about fear, but ultimately, and overwhelmingly, about love. “Tell mom and dad I love them.” “Tell the kids I'll miss them and I love them.” “Julie, it's bad, but know that I love you.”

So what do these last words tell us? I like to think they teach a lesson. There's a time for righteous moral outrage, just as there's a time for accountability, and justice. Peaceful Tomorrows helps with these vital goals. But in the end, it's about love, and my brother Bill. How much he loved and was loved. How much I miss him. And how much I want the world to be a place where last words are never the end result of political violence, but instead reflect a full life well lived.

SUGGESTED: MUSICAL NUMBER

C. Love Your Enemy Campaign

The Metta Center for Nonviolence, in Berkeley, CA, has launched a major campaign entitled “Love Your Enemy”. This campaign is an effort to reach out in two ways: to reconcile with someone with whom we have fallen out, and to have a respectful discussion with someone who disagrees with us about war.

“Love your enemy; do good to those that harm you, and pray for those that despitefully use you and persecute you.” (Mt. 5:44)

Martin Luther King once said, “I'm glad He asks us to ‘love our enemies,’ and not to like them: because there are some people I find it difficult to like” I can appreciate that! So what does Gandhi mean when he asks us to feel heart unity with them. It does not mean to accept anything they do, to put up with injustice at their hands: far from it. As Mohammed said to his companions one day, ‘the way to help an oppressor is to prevent him from oppressing’. It does not mean to overlook differences. It does mean that underneath all those differences — even differences of wealth or status — we want them to be truly happy. Not the smug satisfaction they might derive from feelings of superiority or acts of aggression; the deep happiness that

comes when competition subsides, jealousy and envy subside and we take satisfaction in the well-being of another. We want for them what we are striving to enjoy ourselves — the expansion of consciousness that comes from wanting the happiness of another.

Of course this means, and Jesus and Gandhi and every world teacher knew full well that it meant, we have to have the faith that God so ordered the world that, despite appearances sometimes, my fulfillment can never require the compromise of your fulfillment — indeed mine positively requires yours. Martin Luther King said this so beautifully: “I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be; and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.”

By retraining our understanding, by learning to see the world in this light, by lifting ourselves up on the inspiration of these great figures, we can experiment with this kind of love; we can begin putting the toughest, and the most inspiring call of Jesus into practice.

Metta provides some discussion points on their website that you may find helpful. The “Love Your Enemy” campaign also recommends that we try five practices to prepare ourselves. They have invited people around the world to make these part of their lives and to make a special effort in this season. www.mettacenter.org

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5. PEACE AND RECONCILIATION AMONG THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM

A. INTRO

From modest beginnings in the land of Ur, Abraham (Abram, Avraham, Ibrahim) came to be revered as the one of the most influential religious figures of all time. God, tradition has it, promised Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars; and today he is regarded as “father” by as many as 3.5 billion followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

There can be no doubt about the significance of Abraham for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Revered for his faith, patience, sacrifice, selflessness, and commitment, and for his response to the call of God, the prophet is beloved by believers in the three most influential Middle Eastern traditions. Known as the “Abrahamic” or “Abrahamite” religions, the three derive from ancient Semitic traditions associated with Abraham, who is described in their sacred scriptures – the Hebrew Bible (what Christians call the Old Testament), the New Testament, and the Qur’an.

Jews, Christians and Muslims all trace their origins through Abraham and profess strong monotheistic faith in Abraham’s God. In fact, most adherents of the three faiths associate Abraham with the very origins of monotheism. Jews have emphasized that God chose Abraham as one who was willing not only to listen to God’s call but also to struggle with God. Christians have emphasized Abraham’s giving up the known for the unknown. Muslims have stressed Ibrahim’s submission to God.

Many parallels exist among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditional accounts of Abraham, All agree that Abraham was a prophet, a human voice for divine communication with the human community. All agree that his life journey was a pilgrimage in service to God, long before Abraham himself was aware of its significance.

The first and most important prerequisite of interfaith is faith. It is only out of the depth of involvement in the unending drama that began with Abraham that we can help one another toward an understanding of our situation.

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, “No Religion is an Island”

B. INTERFAITH VIDEO MEDITATION ON Forgiveness

(View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04LUdoLUB_Q)

C. POWERPOINT PRESENTATION: Inspiring Respect through Omni-local Initiatives

(DOWNLOAD PRESENTATION & SCRIPT FROM THIS PAGE: <http://www.agnt.org/9-11>)

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7. MAKING A DIFFERENCE: MEDITATION

How can we, as individuals, one person at a time make a difference in this large world? We can do this in three specific ways on a daily basis. The first way is personally. An example of this would be : smiling, believing, dreaming, and caring. The second way would be interpersonally, and an example of that would be: praising, listening, cooperation, and accountability. The third way would be through your community. An example would be: advocacy, action, commitment, and celebration. You see, through one person at a time, we create one peace at a time. One peace at a time creates a peaceful family, a peaceful community, and ultimately, a peaceful world. Now we are going to take a few minutes to go within and create a personal vision for peace and reconciliation. What does peace mean to you? Is it a word that you hear, or is it a living, breathing entity with a heart and soul of it's own? Is it passive or active? Think about it as you move through your life. How can I, one person make a difference?

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8. TOOLS & ACTIONS: Season for Interfaith-Intercultural Celebration & Love Your Enemy Campaign

Today we dedicate ourselves to turning a national tragedy into the start of a new path for our country, and we build this intention in our everyday lives, our families, our communities, our nations, and on our planet. Take these last moments to consider the many ways in which you, yourself, can Be The Change. To start, consider whether it feels right for you that, to initiate or re-inspire your commitment today, you will visit AGNT'S Website. Some of you might be inspired there to find ways to become involved--as an individual, or by taking leadership for a group connected with this spiritual center.

REMINDER: TO LEARN ABOUT THE SEASON FOR INTERFAITH INTERCULTURAL CELEBRATION, go to: www.agnt.org

We will know that, for those who do not wish to participate in this way, you will find your own unique ways in which your own special capacities can be engaged in creating a culture of heart unity so that humankind can learn to love enemies and by doing so turn them into friends. At the very least we will do this, as MLK said, in such a way that "...we will not relinquish our privilege to love."

REMINDER: TO LEARN ABOUT THE LOVE YOUR ENEMY CAMPAIGN, go to: www.mettacenter.org

9. Closing Prayer/Meditation PARTICIPATORY READINGS OF PEACE PRAYERS FROM THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

OPTION a) In advance of service, invite members of staff, Board, congregation, friends to participate in these readings

OPTION b) Arrange formally for representatives from other faith communities to join service and read prayers

A. Christian Prayer for Peace

"Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS, for they shall be known as the Children of God. But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To those who strike you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from those who take away your cloak, do not withhold your coat as well. Give to everyone who begs from you, and of those who take away your goods, do not ask them again. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

B. Jewish Prayer for Peace

God of all connections with all things; we have given ourselves to sacred coalition with You in the Repair of the world. As You make peace there, let there be peace among us, among all peoples, changing the world one person at a time. Amen.

C. Muslim Peace Prayer

In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful. Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us and made us into tribes and nations, that we may know each other, not that we may despise each other. If the enemy incline towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God, for the Lord is the one that hearth and knoweth all things. And the servants of God, Most Gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility, and when we address them, we say "Peace."