



Gazebo Photo by Community of St John Baptist Associate Linda Ochs, Clips from Event Video

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE EVENT
PRAYERS FOR PEACE
SEPTEMBER 21, 2023
CHESTER, NEW JERSEY

The [Church of Messiah Social Justice Team](#) partnered with [St Marks Mendham](#) and [The Community of St John Baptist](#) to offer a regional interfaith Peace Day Ceremony on September 21, the United Nations International Day of Peace. Speakers shared both history based on personal experiences and religious traditions and offered prayers of hope for the future. Musicians performed 3 peace songs: Let There Be Peace on Earth, From a Distance, and [The Peace Choir Song](#). The Event Program includes numerous [Peace Day Resources](#) offered by the United Nations. [View the full Event Video](#). [View the Event Program](#).

Deacon Frank Owens, [St Lawrence the Martyr of Chester](#), provided the opening remarks and offered this opening reflection.

Peace in my heart is my gift to the world. Today I envision a peaceful world. I imagine harmony and cooperation in the minds and hearts of all the people. Like a lake that has been momentarily impacted by movement. I see fear and anger dissipating ripples fading to the distant edges, and the water becomes still - calm bestills calm and peace flows. Compassion

fills every heart. I begin this form of work by searching within myself. Assembling resentments and judgements and unkindness. With compassion I forgive myself so as to soften the hardened portions of my heart. From this place I do not wish for peace as I am praying peace. As each heart opens to include others, peace will blanket the Earth.

Dear God, We thank you for this day. We thank you for this encounter - this encounter with you among each other. We thank you for this moment to come forward and send me and for all eyes as we invite others O Lord as we invite ourselves to join them not in judgment. We thank you for this moment. We continue to ask you to open up our hearts for change and become vulnerable to each other - where we find God. Amen

[Church of Messiah](#) Social Justice Team member Dave Sullivan shared the History of the UN International Day of Peace and presented the prayer Messiah offered this month during worship services. Each September 21 at noon the United Nations rings a bell created from coins donated by children from around the world.

We ask your prayers for our nation and all nations, for refugees fleeing climate change and war, for resources and land in conflict, for lawmakers, peacemakers, and informed citizens. We pray for redistribution of wealth for the poor and marginalized. Amen

Deacon Ray Chimileski, [St. Luke Catholic Church](#), Long Valley spoke of his 23-year outreach program serving homeless Veterans where he and others have stepped out to meet 'The Other.' He offered this prayer.

Let us go out and welcome the stranger. Let us clothe the naked. Let us feed the hungry and quench their thirst. Let us heal the sick. Let us visit the lonely. Let us shelter the homeless. God bless you. Amen

Janet Maulbeck, [Interweave](#) Executive Director reflected on the excerpts of JFK's Peace Speech shared by Messiah member John Pietrowski and reminded participants about the call for civic service and the call to action with analogies to meeting with the other by jumping into the river together. She offered this prayerful reflection about peacemakers.

Peacemakers know to jump in for action into the rivers of life and the tributaries of our world and live in it for change. Amen

Dr. Ali Chaudry, [Islamic Society of Basking Ridge](#) provided insight on how common themes of peace serve as a thread in all religious and cultural traditions, presented the [Stand Up for the Other Pledge](#) and offered this prayer.

O our God, Our Creator, Our Sustainer, who possesses love, compassion, forgiveness, bring peace to all of your people by showing us to love each other with a burden greater than our capacity to bear. Open our hearts and minds, so that all of humanity strives to develop your attributes of love. That you engrain in us that you made us. Teach us to care for each other in times of pain, suffering, and illness. Give us courage to embrace all our brothers and sisters and help us to reconcile with peoples of all colors, race, and religious identities. Let patience, perseverance, and prayer be our means to reach your highest ideals. Create in us bonds of genuine friendship where we can hold up each others' rights and stand up for justice. Even if it brings witnesses against ourselves, against our children, and against

our parents. Let not the nationalism of one nation be the cause of injustice to any other nation. Give us the courage to stand up for righteousness and help us to engage with people who are rich and powerful and who with compassionate hearts work for the stranger and less fortunate, the poor, the destitute, the hungry, and the homeless, of not only this country but all over the entire globe. Remind in us the highest values and a sense of responsibility to fight crime, drug abuse, and gun violence that are harming our youth and neighborhoods. O compassionate God grant spiritual guidance and blessing to all who have gathered here this evening to seek your love. Bless this country and people who live as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Bhuddists, and people of other faiths and no faith. O Lord show us how to work for the common good for all humanity and give us the wisdom to maintain peace and tranquility for the people of this great nation, The United States of America and for the entire world.

The Reverend Lorna Erixson, St Marks, shared about her experiences during The Troubles in Belfast and offered a prayer from [The Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation](#). The Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation works to prevent and transform political and inter-communal conflict and build peaceful, inclusive societies. The Center brings individuals and groups from around the world impacted by conflict together and helps them find pathways to reconciliation and sustained peace through facilitated dialogue, relationship-building, public discourse and shared learning. The Glentee Centre offers this [Prayer of Peace in Our Times](#).