

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Leadership Old and New
Micah 3:1-12; 4:1-5; 5:2-5

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Let It Be Said of Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #597; CCLI #1855882

We Are an Offering, *The Worship Hymnal* #547; CCLI # 16220

We Are One in the Bond of Love, *The Worship Hymnal* # 387; CCLI #14459

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Leadership Old and New

Focal Text

Micah 3:1-12; 4:1-5; 5:2-5

Background Text

Micah 3-5

Main Idea

God's faithfulness punishes those who oppress his people and offers peace and salvation towards people who respond in faithfulness to him.

Questions to Explore

What are God's standards for a leader? What hope does God offer to those who suffer oppression?

Teaching Aims

Leaders will examine themselves and their leadership according to God's standards.

Learners will look in hope and expectancy to God's salvation and reign of peace.

Learners will place their faith in God's messiah.

Gathering together:

Let It Be Said of Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #597; CCLI #1855882

First thoughts: There are many models of leadership. Some favor an autocratic approach where a strong leader makes decisions and expects loyalty from his followers or employees. Others favor a democratic approach where ideas are valued from a wide variety of sources and consensus or agreement must be reached before new ideas are implemented. In church life, the servant leadership model sees the effective leader as modeling service to others before expecting followers to do the same.

Whatever the model of leadership employed, ethical behaviour is essential if the leader is to have faithful followers over time and in changing circumstances. Many poor leaders led the people of Israel. In Micah's day both political and spiritual leaders failed

to give the guidance which the people needed. They were selfish and looked out for their own needs before caring for the needs of others. Micah 3: 1 says ***Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel. Should you not know justice, you who hate good and love evil...***” It is hard to imagine a more serious charge against a ruler – you who hate good and love evil.

Our study today will consider what happened when rulers became so corrupt that God had to punish them and the people they ruled. We will ask what these verses have to say to us in the context in which we live today.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the "Teacher Preparation" for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the "Bible Study Plan" for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Leadership Old and New

Focal Text

Micah 3:1-12; 4:1-5; 5:2-5

Background Text

Micah 3-5

Main Idea

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Teaching Aims

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Learners will place their faith in God's messiah.

Introduction to your personal study:

Nothing makes people long for good leadership more than presently having bad leadership. A bad president, governor, or mayor in office makes the people long for a better one. A truly godly ruler will look to God for guidance and strength (1 Kings 3:5-9), seeking to live according to God's ways (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). God has standards he expects of all leaders of his people. Solomon stated, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). The only way true righteousness would rule is if God steps in and overrules the wickedness he sees in the

land. He would need to bring justice to the oppressed and install a ruler who would reign in righteousness and justice.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the **"Introduction"** article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

God's people were plagued with bad leadership almost throughout its entire history. There were very few bright spots along the way, but David, even with all of his faults, was probably the most godly king they ever had. Due to God's promise to David (2 Samuel 7:12-13), David's descendants continued to be the rulers over Israel, and over the southern kingdom of Judah when the nation split (1 Kings 12:6-17). Throughout Israel's sordid history the people longed for a time when they would experience the "peace" or "wholeness" that God promised them. Instead they were plagued with injustice and oppression.

In Micah's day Israel had a severe lack of good leadership. In this passage Micah spoke directly to those who were responsible for taking care of God's people but had severely failed at the task. He spoke to the "leaders and rulers" (3:1, 9, 11), "prophets" (3:5, 11), "seers and diviners" (3:7), and "priests" (3:11). Micah described their decadence with a seemingly endless list of vices and moral corruption. The political and judicial leaders perverted justice and the spiritual leaders perverted God's word. Elsewhere God reminded them of the kind of godly leaders he had raised up in the past, such as Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (6:4). God pointed to time when he would establish himself as the true ruler over his people and all nations, establishing justice and peace (4:1-5). In order to do this, God would replace Israel's corrupt leaders with his own ruler, God's chosen one from David's kingly line and even born in David's hometown (5:1-4). Under the rule of this chosen "messiah" peace would reign (5:5a).

Focusing on the Meaning:

"You who hate good and love evil" (3:1-12)

Part of God's plan of salvation for his people included punishing the leaders who were responsible for corrupting the community. He spoke of a time in the future when such judgment would take place (see v. 4, "then," "at that time"). In verses 1-4, he spoke specifically to those who were responsible for legal justice, and in verses 5-8 he spoke to the religious leaders, those who were responsible to preach and teach God's word, then in verses 9-12 he brought God's sentence of judgment on the wicked city of Jerusalem with all of its corrupt political and religious leaders, and even the announcement that the temple itself would be destroyed (v. 12).

Speaking first to the legal rulers of the people (vv. 1-4), their responsibility was to administer "justice" among all of the people (v. 1). "Justice" is basically the act of restoring a state of *shalom* "peace/wholeness/right order," restoring things into their correct state. Justice involved any actions required to bring people and the land under God's holy character, bringing people into a correct relationship with God and each other. The prophet Isaiah said that justice would be the "measuring line" by which all would be evaluated (Isaiah 28:17). If justice prevailed in the land, those in danger would be rescued, those who are hurting would be helped, and those who had been wronged would be restored. Justice involved more than punishing the wrongdoers but also helping the innocent.

Israel's leaders fell far short in terms of justice. Instead, Micah saw rulers who "hate good and love evil" (v. 1). Instead of caring for the people, Micah described their actions in cannibalistic terms of feeding on the people (vv. 2-3). Because they offered no justice to others, they would find no solace in the Lord (v. 4; cf. Deuteronomy 31:17).

Next, Micah turned his sights on the prophets of Israel who were actually "false prophets" (vv. 5-8). These greedy and opportunistic preachers would preach "peace" to the ones who supported them and "war" against those who feed their mouths and line their pockets (v. 5; Jeremiah 23:9-32; 28:1-17). But these "prophets," "seers," and "diviners," those who supposedly received direct words from God, would no longer receive any message. God would no longer speak to them in visions, and having no word from the Lord, they would "be ashamed" among the people and lose their positions of honor (vv. 6-7).

On the other hand, Micah contrasted his ministry with those of the false prophets. God had directly sent him with a message, empowered by God's Spirit with a powerful message of "justice" (v. 8). Instead of preaching popular messages that would tickle the ears of his sinful audience, Micah was ***"to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin."***

Speaking to both the civil and religious leaders, Micah summarized the overall corruption found amongst the rulers of the people (vv. 9-12). They ***"despised justice"*** and ***"distorted everything that is right"*** (v. 9). They were guilty of bloodshed, wickedness, and dishonesty, while the priests and prophets were in service only for the money (vv. 10-11). Ironically, they still trusted in God's presence and blessing, misinterpreting God's patience and grace extended towards them as God's approval. They never believed that they would be susceptible to God's judgment (v. 11). Micah then pronounced God's sentence of judgment (***"therefore"***, v. 12). Jerusalem would fall and the temple mount would be destroyed. They trusted that the Lord was among them. He was. A holy God among sinful people requires that sin be punished.

"The law will go out from Zion" (4:1-5)

After having pronounced God's judgment on the rulers of Israel, and the announcement Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed, Micah pointed forward to a day when

God would establish himself as ruler over his people and over all nations. The temple mount, representing God's dwelling on earth, would once more be established "as chief among the mountains" where God would exalt himself over the nations (v. 1; Psalm 46:10). Peoples and nations would come willingly to worship him there and learn to walk in his ways (vv. 1-2, 5). They would be changed by the truth of his instruction, and God would bring peace among the warring nations, causing bloodshed to end (cf. 3:10). Instruments of death would be remade into implements promoting life, and nations will never again train for war (v. 3). Everyone will know peace, plenty, and security (v. 4), brought about by the unfailing promise of the Lord himself. Though presently outnumbered by unbelievers, faithful worshipers continue to follow God's rule and his ways, trusting him to work out his plan in history (v. 5). Until then they live in hope and expectancy when "the kingdom of this world" will become "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

"His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth" (5:2-5)

How would God bring about his rule and reign of peace among all individuals, peoples, and nations? He would replace Israel's wicked rulers with his own ruler (vv. 4-5a). Micah described a ruler who would be a descendant of David and would come from one of the smallest families of Judah, even David's hometown of Bethlehem (v. 2). He would be God's specially selected representative to rule over his people (v. 2, "for me"; 1 Samuel 16:1). His origins would be "from old" (literally, "from days long ago"), probably a reference to David's age centuries before (Amos 9:11; Nehemiah 12:46).

Verse 3 is difficult to interpret, but it most probably refers to the upcoming exile when Israel would lose their land to return decades later. Micah used the picture of a woman giving birth, like the exiles exiting the safety and security of their Promised Land, only to return once more. After that time, God would raise up his ruler who would "shepherd his flock" with God's strength and God's name (v. 4), much like his ancestor David (2 Samuel 5:3; 7:7). His people would live securely in his kingdom that would extend to the ends of the earth (v. 4; Psalm 2:8; 72:8). His rule would bring God's "peace" or "wholeness" as God has always intended (Isaiah 9:6).

Micah's prophecy of a future messianic king who would be born in Bethlehem became a major hope for the Jewish people. Some 1000 years after David ruled and some 750 years after Micah prophesied, the ruler was indeed born in Bethlehem. But this king was far more wonderful than any monarch of the past. Wise men from the east showed up in Jerusalem asking where "***the one born king of the Jews***" could be found (Matthew 2:1-6; John 7:42), and the religious leaders read to them from Micah's prophecy and pointed them directly to Bethlehem. The angels announced to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth, "***Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord***" (Luke 2:11).

Wherever hearts surrender to the rule of the Prince of Peace, former enemies become brothers and friends (Ephesians 2:13-18). Now we await the day when heaven and earth will be remade, when the new Jerusalem, the dwelling place of the Lord himself

will come down from heaven to remain upon earth, sin, sorrow, and death will be forever banished, and everything is created new (Revelation 21:1-5). As Micah prophesied, that will be "peace."

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

The key for understanding this passage is first to understand its time setting – centuries before Christ came. Israel was under a monarchy that had become thoroughly corrupt, and corruption found its way throughout the government and the local officials. The people were crying out in pain under such oppression (Isaiah 5:7). Into this setting God promised to bring justice for the people, which involved punishing the evildoers. He also promised a time of peace and prosperity in the future when his reign would be supreme. But that promise would only come about after much pain and suffering, then after that a future son of David would arise and rule to bring "peace" to God's people. When the "Prince of Peace" was born, his first message was ***"The time has now arrived, and God's kingdom has now come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*** (Mark 1:15).

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Leadership Old and New

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Micah 3:1-12; 4:1-5; 5:2-5

Background Text

Micah 3-5

Main Idea

God's faithfulness punishes those who oppress his people and offers peace and salvation towards people who respond in faithfulness to him.

Questions to Explore

What are God's standards for a leader? What hope does God offer to those who suffer oppression?

Teaching Aims

Leaders will examine themselves and their leadership according to God's standards.

Learners will look in hope and expectancy to God's salvation and reign of peace.

Learners will place their faith in God's messiah.

Connect with Life:

As the group gathers, ask them: What qualities do you believe would be exhibited in a good leader?

Follow with this: How impressed are you with your local leadership?

Also: How impressed are you with your national leadership?

Explain that God desires for people to experience "justice" and "good" rather than "evil."

State, As the righteous ruler of the universe, God punishes those who oppress others, but he also offers peace and salvation to those who place their faith in him.

Explain: Today's study will answer these two questions, "What are God's standards for a leader? What hope does God offer to those who suffer oppression?"

Guide the Study:

Introduce the passage by providing the information found in the "Background" section of the "**Teacher Preparation**".

Read for the group the **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study** section from the "**Teacher Preparation**".

Then ask the question, "What are God's standards for a leader?"

I. Corrupt Leadership (3:1-12)

State, Let's get a good picture of the quality of leadership in Micah's day."

Have someone read 3:1-4.

State, Micah addressed these verses specifically to the legal rulers of the people, those who were responsible to administer "justice" among the people.

Ask, How well were these administering justice (v. 1)?

Seek an answer: What did they 'hate' and 'love' instead (v. 2)?"

Read the following section taken from the teacher's notes.

"Justice" is basically the act of restoring a state of *shalom* "peace/wholeness/right order," restoring things into their correct state. Justice involved any actions required to bring people and the land under God's holy character, bringing people into a correct relationship with God and each other. The prophet Isaiah said that justice would be the "measuring line" by which all would be evaluated (Isaiah 28:17). If justice prevailed in the land, those in danger would be rescued, those who are hurting would be helped, and those who had been wronged would be restored. Justice involved more than punishing the wrongdoers but also helping the innocent.

Look for a brief discussion on this: What kind of word pictures did Micah use for how the leaders treated the people (vv. 2-3)?

Add: Based on how they treated others, how would God then treat them (v. 4)?

Have someone read 3:5-8.

Present the following questions to the group:

What kind of leaders did Micah address here?

What determined if they would preach a good message or a bad one (v. 5)?

Would God continue to speak to and through them (vv. 6-7)?

How did Micah contrast his ministry to the false prophets of his day (v. 8)?

From where would his 'power' to prophesy come?

Was Micah concerned that his message be popular?

Why would he be interested in calling attention to the sin of the people?

Have someone read 3:9-12.

Seek an answer: What did the leaders and rulers of the people do (v. 9)?

Have the group look through verses 10-11 and verbally share all of the charges against the leaders.

Have them look at the last half of verse 11 and ask: In spite of the wickedness present, what did the people believe would happen or would not happen from God?

Follow with this: What would be their punishment (v. 12)?

II. God's Ideal Rule (4:1-5)

Have someone read 4:1-5.

Point out: This message of hope immediately follows God's message of judgment on the wicked rulers and the announcement that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed.

Explain: Jerusalem and the temple represented God's presence among his people (1 Kings 9:1-5).

Ask: Even though Micah announced that Jerusalem and the temple mount would one day be destroyed, was God finished with his purpose for the temple?

Continue: Who would be welcome to worship there in the future (vv. 1- 2)?"

Have them look carefully at verses 2-3.

Present these questions:

Who would actually be ruling from the temple mount, an earthly ruler or God himself?

What would happen to warring nations under his rule?

What pictures did Micah use in verses 3-4 for peace, plenty, and security?

Now have the group look once more at verse 5.

Question the group: What is the present spiritual situation of the nations?

Add: What will the faithful continue to do until God works out his plan in history?

State: Until God's plan of peace is ultimately fulfilled, we are to live in hope and expectancy when **"the kingdom of this world"** will become **"the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever"** (Revelation 11:15).

III. God's Ideal Ruler (5:2-5)

Explain that God would bring about his ideal rule over the earth by replacing the world's wicked rulers with his own ruler (vv. 4-5a).

Have someone read 5:2-5a.

Ask: Where would this ruler be born (v. 2)?

Also add: Who else came from this town (1 Samuel 16:1, 12-13)?

Point out like the prophecy regarding David's kingship, this new ruler would be specially selected as God's representative to rule over his people (v. 2, "for me"; 1 Samuel 16:1).

Tell them: The origins "from old" (literally, "from days long ago") is probably a reference to David's age centuries before (Amos 9:11; Nehemiah 12:46).

Be prepared to explain that verse 3 most probably refers to the upcoming exile when Israel would lose their land to return decades later.

Ask, "What other characteristic like David would this new ruler have (v. 4)?

Encourage an answer: How far would his rule extend (v. 4)?

Also: What would his rule bring to the world (v. 5a; Isaiah 9:6)?"

Read the following concluding statement taken from the teacher notes:

Micah's prophecy of a future messianic king who would be born in Bethlehem became a major hope for the Jewish people. Some 1000 years after David ruled and some 750 years after Micah prophesied, the ruler was indeed born in Bethlehem. But this king was far more wonderful than any monarch of the past. Wise men from the east showed up in Jerusalem asking where "the one born king of the Jews" could be found (Matthew 2:1-6; John 7:42), and the religious leaders read to them from Micah's prophecy and pointed them directly to Bethlehem. The angels announced to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Wherever hearts surrender to the rule of the Prince of Peace, former enemies become brothers and friends (Ephesians 2:13-18). Now we await the day when heaven and earth will be remade, when the new Jerusalem, the dwelling place of the Lord himself will come down from heaven to remain upon earth, sin, sorrow, and death will be forever banished, and everything is created new (Revelation 21:1-5). As Micah prophesied, that will be "peace."

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

As last week, present the group with the following questions that need application to each person.

In light of what we have studied in God's word today:

What does God want me to *believe*?

What does God want me to *do*?

Is there a *promise* here I need to claim?

Is there an *example* I need to follow? Or to avoid?

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Leadership Old and New **Micah 3:1-12; 4:1-5; 5:2-5**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Your Idealistic Goals

Young people are often very idealistic. Adults who work with young people – teachers, coaches, youth leaders in churches – often feel that this idealism is God's good gift to humanity. Adults often lose the idealism of youth as they face the challenges of living in the world of bills to pay, jobs to do and dreams not yet realized.

List some of the idealistic goals you have as a group. If you were in charge what would you do? If you had the resources, what would you accomplish? What do you want to tell the older people in your world? If you were the leader, how would you lead your country, your school, your church?

3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Leadership Old and New Micah 3:1-12; 4:1-5; 5:2-5

Beginning the Service:

Sing **We Are an Offering**, *The Worship Hymnal* #547; CCLI # 16220

Offering:

Praying for the World:

Spread throughout the southeast coast of Madagascar, the Antesaka (An-tay-sah-kah) are a group known for their warm hospitality. Their villages are open to outsiders, yet the Antesaka are isolated by the physical difficulty of reaching where they live. In spite of the presence of some churches, the more than 1 million Antesaka demonstrate little knowledge of the Gospel. They are a people steeped in darkness and superstition; efforts to avoid taboos and gain peace through ancestor worship dominate their lives. Pray they would come to know the Prince of Peace and only true provider.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

How Peace Becomes Possible *Ephesians 2: 13-22.*

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Jesus Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

It is easy to ask whether the peace promised by Micah and brought into reality by the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus is forever out of our grasp. The author of the Bible study background and study wrote "Now we await the day when heaven and earth will be remade, when the new Jerusalem, the dwelling place of the Lord himself will come down from heaven to remain upon earth, sin sorrow, and death will be forever banished and everything is created new (Revelation 21:1-5). As Micah prophesied, that will be 'peace'."

The Ephesians passage which we have read speaks of a peace which has in fact been realized. The church which Paul is describing in this passage has brought together Jews and Gentiles.

The Hebrew word for peace (shalom) means much more than an absence of hostility, like an armed truce; instead it connotes well-being and security at every level. The wall which separated the Gentile – the non-Jew and women – from the Court of the Men which was in the inner part of the Temple at Jerusalem no longer exists.

Jesus came to abolish the law in the sense that it served as a means of being related to God. Through Christ's death on the cross, two groups – Gentiles and Jews – could be reconciled. They could experience shalom – a relationship which promoted well-being and security at every level. They could experience peace. Christ's purpose was to embrace the disparate sections of humanity in that saving deed and reconcile people, without distinction, to God to kill the hostility which up to that point in history had kept them apart and at war.

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

This is not a description of the world at large, but a description of the church. We are ***fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.***

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We live in a world which is torn apart by war. Ethnic differences lead to the killing of fellow citizens, neighbors, and long-time friends. Religious differences ignite warfare. The desire for power continues to incite people to desire land which is not theirs.

We pray for peace, but the reality is that peace is not a hopeful prospect in the world in which we live.

But in the smaller world in which we live, peace can reign. And the small world to which Paul refers in this Ephesians passage is the church. Members of the body of Christ – local groups called churches – can be joined together and become a holy temple in the Lord. Shalom – well-being and security at every level – is a possibility.

It does not come easily and automatically. There must be an understanding that each one who is a part of the body belongs to Christ and is precious to Him. The irritating, talkative person who annoys me belongs to Christ and is precious to Him. The person who interprets Scripture differently from me belongs to Christ and is precious to Him. The noisy, disruptive child belongs to Christ and is precious to Him. This perspective helps us to live peacefully with those who are different from us.

This church is ***built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*** The apostles and prophets left a heritage of the stories and teachings of Christ. They gave their lives to tell a hostile world of the loving, peaceful Messiah. They were divinely inspired to record the teachings of Jesus and the early church. These are the Holy Scriptures which guide our daily life and our

corporate relationships. However, large or small the body we call church may be, we depend on Scripture to guide us. We look to Jesus as the chief cornerstone of our church. A cornerstone is the first stone set in a masonry-construction thus determining the way in which all the other stones will be set. Jesus is the One who directs and determines how a church relates to one another, what ministries it will involve itself in, how its resources will be spent. No decision is made which does not conform to the will of Christ as the church can best understand it. ***In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.*** With Christ as the cornerstone determining the way in which we relate to one another, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. This is not referring to a physical building, but to relationships to others which encourage, build up, teach, bear burdens, enjoy fellowship, and honour God.

Call to Commitment:

He Himself is our peace. This is the promise and the hope of individual Christians and of the church. We can live in this world torn by strife when we experience peace within our hearts which comes from our relationship to the Saviour. We can be encouraged in our daily walk with the Lord as we live in peace with those fellow believers in the church of which we are a part.

Concluding the Service:

Sing **We Are One in the Bond of Love**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 387; CCLI #14459