

The Thomas Mass is a Lutheran worship liturgy designed for contemplation, prayer, and questioning. It is named for the Apostle Thomas because of his questions in faith. The bulk of this service is an Open Phase during which worshippers are invited to participate in different worship stations as they feel compelled. This particular Thomas Mass has been developed by the Rocky Mountain Synod's Peace Not Walls committee. The service may be adapted for use throughout the year in various worship settings.

** recommends that congregation stand*

Peace Not Walls Thomas Mass

Accompanying peacemakers in the Holy Land, becoming aware of the lives our brothers and sisters live, and advocating for God's justice in the world.

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." - Colossians 3:15

Gathering

**Litany*

Leader: God of all creation, you have formed us in body, mind, and spirit.

All: You have made us to care for your world, to love one another.

Leader: You have called us together for worship and send us out in peace.

All: But peace is often hard to see, hard to feel, hard to do.

Leader: We are filled with unrest, with distrust, with sin.

All: We have walked in darkness; but you are our light.

Leader: You remain steadfast in your love for us.

All: You give yourself in the life of Jesus Christ.

Leader: You shed light on the way of peace.

All: Lord God, let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, make us members of the one body, calling us to peace. Let us give thanks.

**Song (ELW308 O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright; ELW310 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise; ELW318 Alleluia, Song of Gladness)*

**Greeting*

Leader: May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

**Prayer (ELW page 76; or use the Prayer of the Day)*

Leader: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, which you have given us in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

All: Amen.

Word

Reading: Colossians 3:1-16 is appropriate for any day. Other Epiphany readings suggested: Isaiah 60:1-6 or Matthew 2:10-12 (Jan 6), Psalm 29 or Luke 3:15-22 (Jan 13), Isaiah 62:1-5 or 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (Jan 20), Nehemiah 8:1-3/5-6/8-10 or 1 Cor 12:12-31 (Jan 26), Jeremiah 1:4-10 or Luke 4:21-30 (Feb 3), 1 Cor 15:1-11 (Feb 10), Luke 6:1-17 (Feb 17), Luke 6:27-28 (Feb 24)

A reading from Colossians chapter 3

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³ for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your¹ life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.¹ ⁷ These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.¹ ⁸ But now you must get rid of all such things -- anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive¹ language from your mouth.

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. ¹¹ In that renewal¹ there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! ¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord¹ has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ¹ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

Reader: Word of God, Word of Life!

All: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 85 (sung or spoken)

Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

⁸ Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

⁹ Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰ Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

¹¹ Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

¹² The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

¹³ Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

Reader: Word of God, Word of Life!

All: Thanks be to God!

Meditation (a short—3 minute—reflection to guide participants from scripture into the Open Phase.)

Sample:

What is peace? Is it a frame of mind—a brief moment of serenity? Is it a context—a place, a way of life, specific to a particular people? Is it an ideal—something people strive for? Is it something you do? Is it something that just happens? Is it even possible? A Thomas Mass is a type of worship designed for such questions. The mass is named for Thomas, the disciple who doubts and questions whether Jesus is raised from the dead. Today’s mass embraces questions of how peace can rule in our and in the Holy Land. You are invited to visit various stations during a time of Open Space. The stations are designed by an ELCA ministry called Peace Not Walls. The ministry is described as such:

“We are a church that rolls up our sleeves and gets to work. We do God’s work in the world — restoring and reconciling communities. The ELCA is working for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel through our campaign, Peace Not Walls. Through accompaniment, advocacy and awareness-raising, Peace Not Walls connects ELCA members to our companions and promotes dignity, full respect for human rights, healing and reconciliation. With our Palestinian Lutheran companions, we also accompany Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims working together for peace with justice.” (<https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Peace-Not-Walls>)

As you meditate and participate in the stations today you will learn about some difficult realities of life for our neighbors and siblings in the Holy Land. Remember the call from scripture, “Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.” (Colossians 3:13-15)

Open Phase (begin with short hymn or soft music and continue with silence.)

[The congregation is invited to spend the next 20-30 minutes participating in any or all of the stations: Graffiti the Wall, Words in Action, Life Without Water, Living with Appropriation, Prayers for Peacemakers, and Communion.]

Special Music (ending the Open Phase)

Suggested Comment from Leader: As we are gathered here and sent into the world, it is okay to sit with the uneasiness of unrest in the Holy Land. Continue to contemplate and meditate on the things you've learned today. Consider your own actions for peace and continue to pray.

**Sharing the Peace*

Leader: May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: And also with you

Worshippers share greetings of peace with each other.

Offering

**Offertory Response (hymn or prayer)*

Holy Communion *(If not part of the Thomas Mass)*

**Thanksgiving*

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is indeed right...so with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven we praise your name and sing the unending hymn:

**Sanctus/Holy, Holy*

**Words of Institution*

Pastor: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it,
and gave it to his disciples saying,

**All: Take and eat. This is my body given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.**

Pastor: Again, after supper, he took the cup,
gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying,

**All: This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.**

Pastor: Remembering Christ's death, resurrection and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

**The Lord's Prayer*

Pastor: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray,

**All: 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,
and the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

Pastor: The table is set.

Song (Lamb of God or other hymns are sung during communion)

**Blessing*

Leader: May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you, keeping you in his grace and in his peace.

All: Amen

Sending

**Prayer of St. Francis (or another prayer or benediction)*

Leader: Let us pray,

All: Lord make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Song (ELW313 O Lord, Now Let Your Servant; ELW546 To Be Your Presence; ELW 579 Lord, You Give the Great Commission)

Commission

Leader: Go in peace, serve the Lord!

All: Thanks be to God!

PEACE NOT WALLS THOMAS MASS STATION IDEAS

“GRAFFITI THE WALL” STATION

Art is one of the many great gifts bestowed upon creation by God. Ever since construction began on the separation wall in the Holy Land people have imprinted upon it works of art in peaceful protest to the unjust treatment of God’s children. We invite congregations to join in this act by painting their own peaceful protests on a representation of the wall.

“WORDS IN ACTION” Station

Through the grace of God we are called and freed to faithfully love and serve our neighbor. In service of our neighbors in the Holy Land we join our voices with theirs by advocating for justice through leaders in our nation. The idea of legislating peace is an oxymoron, therefore we seek a change toward peace through the leaders of corporations who willingly, and/or inadvertently contribute to the human rights violations happening daily in the Holy Land.

“LIFE WITHOUT WATER” STATION

In some areas of the Holy Land such as Gaza, the West Bank, and even in Eastern Jerusalem water is dangerously scarce due to damming of natural rivers, failing water treatment systems, and lack of infrastructure. We often take clean water for granted because it’s always there when we turn on the tap, but that’s not the case for many residents of the Holy Land.

“LIVING WITH APPROPRIATION” STATION

All around the West Bank Israel has built and continues to build settlements in Palestinian territory. By building these settlements and connecting them with Israeli controlled roads, Israel is appropriating land away from Palestine and setting the stage to isolate some Palestinians from their families, and even basic necessities for life.

“PRAYERS FOR PEACEMAKERS” STATION

It has become normal to only hear news from the Holy Land when it pertains to acts of violence and the deterioration of peace, but it’s also important to hear about those who tirelessly work towards peace between peoples and states. Today we not only learn about the stories of some of these peacemakers in the Holy Land but pray for their continued strength and resolve.

COMMUNION STATION

We commune in remembrance of Christ, and in so doing remember the whole body of Christ, near and far as we contemplate the great commandment to love our neighbor.