

**Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church**

**Sun, Nov 11, 2018**

**How Does God Make Wars to Cease? – Peace/Thanksgiving  
(Psalm 46)**



**He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth.  
He breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shield with fire.  
“Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth.”  
(Ps 46:9-10)**

[the image was painted by our granddaughter, Chloe Fergusson,  
when she was 5 years old]

**A lesson from the psalm**

The young soldier was dying in the arms of the chaplain in the mud of the battlefield during the First World War – in a whisper, forced from lungs ripped apart by shrapnel, the 20-year-old gasped, “Remember me!” – we sat in silence after Duff Crerar told that story as he opened the first annual colloquium of the Fallis Foundation here in this sanctuary yesterday – to preserve and enhance the peace-making legacy of the Lt Col George Fallis, minister of Canadian Memorial United Church and the catalyst in the construction of the Canadian Memorial Chapel in which the current congregation worships – Duff Crerar, a friend and colleague in Canadian church history, was our key resource person – thorough research on the attitudes and behaviours of the chaplains in WW1 – and, as we learned in the afternoon, still a very active teacher and advisor to the current corps of chaplains – different in their diversity and direction from those serving 100 years ago – but in both settings, the chaplains were determined to provide leadership in creating the conditions for peace – in the midst of the terrors and trauma of war, they held firm to the hope for peace – that, I deeply believe, is the torch thrown to us – learned something new and promising in the afternoon – Religious Leadership Engagement

**Provocative points to ponder – as always, too many to cram into one sermon**

- Israel is remembering two things in this psalm this morning, composed in the context of the wars that raged throughout the middle east with wave after wave of imperial invaders and defenders fighting for power and wealth – clash of identities formed by race, or privilege, or power – Israel often overrun, exiled, and enslaved – but in all of this, some remained faithful to the covenant God made with Abraham and Sarah – you were created to be a blessing to the whole of creation – that is the source of our call to make peace, not war – this psalm is remembering that calling – both a plea to God to strengthen them in that mission and a recalling among them of what it entails – knowing that this God of peace/shalom is the Creator and that he will make wars cease in the end – and he invites us to be part of that process – mysterious and unrealistic as it may be

## **Finding this in God's living Word, Jesus Christ**

- The movement that emerged from the resurrection of Jesus as this God's Christ modeled a way of being together that challenged the sources of wars in their time – in the face of national identities, they witnessed to the unity of all humans in Christ – in the face of economic exploitation, they witnessed to a equitable distribution of resources – in the face of military power and might, they witnessed to the power of love – hopelessly naïve? = only if you see reality in the frame of 'might is right' – but is that really where God's revelation in Jesus Christ take us – clearly, the answer is no – God's desire is for peace – his power will eventually make that happen – our hope is in humbly following the Triune God to that commonwealth

## **Your Notes**

## **Prayers of the people offering thanks, seeking help, and being awed**

*[The form and flow of thanks, help, and awe is taken from Anne Lamott's wonderful little book on prayer, **Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers** (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).]*