

Prayer for peace on May 8, 2025 in commemoration of the end of the Second World War 80 years ago

Hymn or instrumental music

Welcome

Few things are as remarkable and inspiring than the end of a war. May 8, 1945 marked the end of unimaginable suffering in Europe, although what followed was still very uncertain. But the hope of something new became tangible.

We commemorate the end of World War II and are painfully aware that there is still war today with all its horrors. We remember and pause in the name of the Lord, who was, is and will be peace.

Song

Prayer with Psalm 145, 1 – 13

A psalm of praise. Of David.

- ¹ I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- ² Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- ⁴ One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- ⁵ They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.^[b]
- ⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- ⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- ⁸ The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- ⁹ The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- ¹⁰ All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.
- ¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,

¹² so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does. [\[c\]](#)

Amen

Song (Suggestion: Laudate omnes gentes)

Commemoration

We remember May 8, 1945. 80 years ago, the World War II ended with the unconditional surrender of Germany.

We remember the immeasurable suffering caused by Germany.

Over 6 million murdered Jews. Persecution and murder of Sinti and Roma, of political opposition, of people with disabilities, homosexuals and many others who were denied the right to live by the Nazis. We remember intimidation, discrimination and violence.

We commemorate more than 50 million who have died, 35 million wounded and 3 million missing. We think of the horrors associated with war.

And we remember the failures of the German church during the Nazi era.

We also remember May 8 as the day of liberation for Jews and all those who were threatened with deportation. From today's perspective, May 8 is a day that opened a window of hope amidst all the destruction, hunger and misery at the end of the war. A hope for something new, for peace and for a life of togetherness within Germany and across national borders in Europe. But prospects looked very differently back then.

The prospects that opened up after the war were very different in East and West Germany and Europe. The end of the war is therefore also associated with the separation of Germany and Europe into two political entities.

We remember May 8 and are grateful that Germany today has good relations with our neighboring countries. For the possibility of reconciliation. We know that our friendship with today's Poland, France, the Czech Republic and many other countries that suffered from Nazi-Germany cannot be taken for granted.

We remember May 8, 1945 as the beginning of the German churches' confrontation with their responsibility during the Nazi era.

We remember the clear words of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948: “War is contrary to the will of God”

May 8, 1945 is also the day of liberation from Nazi ideology. The ideology that had been entrenched in people's minds for years did not suddenly disappear with the capitulation. But with May 8, the confrontation with the ideology's destructive nature could begin. Today we can see how deeply racist and anti-semitic attitudes are still present in our society. They are becoming louder again. We therefore also think of May 8 as a reminder of “never again”, as vowed by survivors in the liberated Buchenwald concentration camp on April 19, 1945.

While World War II remains unprecedented in its horror and brutality, there are still wars today that leave us stunned. Overall, armed conflicts are on the rise worldwide. We count the casualties and we know: Numbers are abstract. They cannot fully capture the horror. But behind every number is a human being. Someone who was loved, who had friends, who wanted to achieve something, who perhaps made music or liked to go dancing.

We live as followers of Jesus, who dedicated his life to the rejection of violence. We know about God's love for the weak. And we are sometimes at a loss and ask ourselves: how can we respond to the horrors and injustice of war?

Looking back, we can associate May 8, 1945 with a window of hope for peace. The window opened, economic ties between European countries developed, encounters between people became possible and youth exchanges were promoted. And then walls were broken down and unity between East and West was possible again.

Terrors roamed the south-east during and after those days. Wars on the European continent. Again. We remember those who fell victim to genocidal attempts with a hesitant West. With great effort Europe tried to overcome.

Today we speak of the “EU peace project”, of which May 9, Europe Day, is a reminder. The European peace bells ring out into the world, across borders: Let there be peace!

We associate May 8 with a window of hope for peace. We hold on to the hope for peace. Because we know about God's peace, as described by the prophet Isaiah, for example:

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest,

as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

(Isaiah 9:2-5, NIV)

We associate May 8 with a window of hope for peace. We have God's promise: every war will come to an end. We are part of God's peace movement on earth. In the Gospel of Luke, Zechariah sings that our feet will be guided into the path of peace (Luke 1:79, NIV).

Our hope for peace is therefore well-founded. God himself is peace and brings peace into this world - we celebrate this not the least every Advent, at the very beginning of the church year: God's peace is here.

That is why we hold on to the hope for peace among us humans in this world - and keep building for peace in good spirits.

Standing up for peace can take many different forms. Sometimes it may be very quiet, with comforting words to a fellow human being. Sometimes it is louder, when we contradict where words sow enmity, discrimination and hatred. Standing up for peace can also mean facilitating encounters with our neighbors in Europe. It can mean helping migrants to find their way in their new homeland. It can mean standing up for people who refuse to do military service for reasons of conscience. Or it can mean recognizing conflicts and helping to resolve them where they are still small. Most of you probably have ideas on how you can work for peace.

We remember May 8, 1945 and ask God for his peace, which is higher than all our reason.

Amen

Song

Intercessory prayer

Introduction

War is raging again in Europe. The Russian war of aggression has been raging in Ukraine for over three years. There seems to be no end to the atrocities.

War is raging again in the Middle East. The images of destruction are unbearable.

War is raging again in so many places in the world, of which many are not even talked about prominently. Is war really the last resort?

We are also concerned about the stability of states. In so many instances, borders get ignored and people's lives are put at risk.

We hope for diplomatic negotiations and pray for their success. The history of Europe shows that the most surprising events can come to light in the darkest hours.

So let us place our hope in the God of peace, who is so close to those who suffer and pray:

We pray for those who mourn the dead and injured.

For those in fear of persecution and hardship.

We pray, have mercy

For those who flee to escape with their lives,

and for those who are held hostage and have to fear for their lives.

We pray, have mercy

We pray for those who help people fleeing war, for all those who do not cast them out or reject them. For all those who reach out to people.

For those who critically confront the dangers of ever more repressive violence and are treated with hostility for doing so.

We pray, have mercy

We pray for all those who are hungry, homeless and without the necessary medical care. For all who live in misery, in repression and in hardship.

For those who thirst for justice and freedom.

We pray, have mercy

We pray for all those responsible in politics and society who are entrusted with the care of peace and order. For all those who are in the service of law and justice.

For those who bear political responsibility, that they may recognize and respect the value of human dignity and charity.

And yes, we pray for the perpetrators of violence. Fall into their arms, interrupt their murderous actions, awaken compassion and shame.



ARBEITSSTELLE

Gerechtigkeit
Frieden
Bewahrung
der **Schöpfung**

We pray, have mercy

We pray for all those who cannot forgive. For all those who have lost trust in people.

We pray for all those who strive for peace and justice: in their families and among friends, in their cities and countries in the dialogue between peoples, cultures and religions.

We pray, have mercy

We pray for those who are tired of living in war. Those who wish for a life in freedom, a life without hunger, suffering, death and pain.

We pray for people with helping hands, that they may not despair. That they will recognize the value of their help, whether on the ground in the war zone or here.

We pray, have mercy

We ask you in silence for everything for which we lack the words.

Silence

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Music (e.g. „*Hevenu schalom alejchem*“)

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