

PEACE POINTS

Lutheran Peace Fellowship

Peace in our world • Peace in our nation • Peace in our neighborhoods • Peace in our homes • Peace in our hearts

What is Christian Peacemaking?

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed... Live in harmony with one another... Do not repay evil for evil... If your enemies are hungry, feed them. Romans 12

For Christians the role of the peacemaker is rooted in our experience of a God who is peace, who gives us peace, and calls us to be about making peace with justice. Peacemaking is a specific way of living out Jesus' teachings and bearing witness to the presence of God.

The Biblical word *Shalom* means more than just peace or kindness. It includes the concepts of justice, inclusive community, wholeness. The life of Jesus and of the early church embody these concepts and provide a new model for how we can live together. That model of discipleship is grounded in Jesus' own resistance to violence and in his daily activities of touching, speaking, healing, and eating with everyone.

Leading One Session . . .

Read aloud the Romans text (above) and the introductory paragraphs, then break into small groups. Give each group one or two texts from each of the five areas (handouts in 1-session version of this resource). Ask each group to read, discuss, and report back a word or phrase for each element of *Shalom* they found in their texts. How would our congregations behave if this is what we meant when we share the peace or say "Peace be with you."

. . . or a Series

Spreading the topics over several sessions allows time for participatory activities and more discussion. We suggest spending one session on each of the five elements. Discuss the bible verses and questions (over) in small groups or all together; use an activity to apply the insights in each concept.

Ideas for activities:

Kindness: In pairs, share a time you were looked down on. Then think about a person you look down on. Journal about what you see as their good qualities. Pray for these people as individuals. Share your insights.

Justice: Discuss the Nashville segment of *A Force More Powerful* (see below) or stories of peacemaking (right). Write letters to your local paper and/or elected officials about an injustice in your community or world.

Inclusive Community: Share experiences of bridging differences. What skills are involved? Plan a meal with people you don't ordinarily get to eat with (e.g. people of a different community, faith, class, race, age).

Transformation: Discuss peer mediation and conflict resolution. Have a peer mediator from your youth group or school share their skills in a workshop. Practice using "I Statements" when talking with each other.

The Call: Hold a commissioning service for youth who have gone through these steps; use a pledge of nonviolence (six versions at: www.ipj-ppj.org).

It is key, for our own lives—and for the world—that resistance to violence be joined with acts of healing, creation, and celebration.

Many people neglect opportunities for peacemaking because they are caught in various myths and stereotypes. For example, Christian peacemaking is not weakness or passive submission but rather a kind of persistent, disciplined, and often courageous good will. It is active confrontation with conflict or evil that respects the humanity of the opponent and seeks both to end a threat or injury and to reconcile the adversary.

*For full texts of the bible verses on the next page and a peace litany, see the Peace Points page at: www.LutheranPeace.org which also offers great stories about peacemaking (e.g. from LPF's celebrated "Wall of Hope")

"Peace Points" is an activity series of Lutheran Peace Fellowship that offers practical ideas and leadership tips to help encourage youth and adults in our justice seeking & peacemaking.

Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF) is a community of Lutherans across the U.S. and around the globe responding to the gospel call to be peacemakers and justice seekers. Founded in 1941, LPF offers workshops, a newsletter, education and worship resources, expertise, and encouragement.

For more information:

www.lutheranpeace.org
Lutheran Peace Fellowship
1710 11th Ave., Seattle,
WA 98122 (206) 720-0313
lpf@ecunet.org
lpfyouth@gmail.com

Recommended resources: Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be*, includes many stories and examples of peacemaking in this popular summary of his pathbreaking book, *Engaging the Powers* (Augsburg Fortress). LPF offers engaging, participatory workshops on peacemaking skills for youth and adults, a rich spectrum of resources, and Leadership Training in Peacemaking intensive workshops. *A Force More Powerful* features six half-hour video segments on the spirit and power of nonviolence, using Gandhi, civil rights, Denmark, South Africa, Chile, etc. as examples (to order a copy, and free information: www.aforcemorepowerful.org). Helpful commentary on current events from a Christian perspective: www.sojo.net.

What is Christian Peacemaking?

Jesus offered us, through his words and his actions, a new way of living together. Some people call this “The Kingdom of God,” others call it “Jesus’ Third Way.” Whatever words you might use, there are five very important parts which are outlined below. It is important to remember that these parts are most powerful when they’re lived together. Read and discuss the bible texts in each section; use the questions that follow to explore them further.

1. Kindness: Act out of love, not vengeance. Be generous and hospitable to all. Find ways to get along with one another. Love your enemies not just your friends. Look for the good in any opponent. Be willing to forgive and seek forgiveness. II Kings 6:20-23; Matthew 5:43-48, 6:14-15, 7:1-5; Luke 6:20-36; Romans 12:3-5, 16-18, 14:1, 13, 19; 1 Peter 3:8-18. What is hard about being kind to those who are different or looked down on? What is hard about forgiving people? Talk about a time when you have been forgiven or have -[forgiven someone else when it was difficult.

2. Justice: Be willing to resist conditions and laws which are unjust and/or humiliating. Do so in a way that can win the opponent’s understanding and friendship, rather than defeat or punish them. Exodus 1:15-21; Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 5:38-42. Respect legitimate authority (governments and police), but understand that as a Christian, you are ultimately responsible to a higher power. John 8:23; Romans 12:2. What are some laws today that are unjust? Brainstorm examples of people resisting oppression using nonviolence. What are ways to resist oppression or humiliation and still win your opponent’s understanding and friendship? What do you risk and gain by opposing injustice?

3. Inclusive Community: Respect the dignity and humanity of all people, regardless of race, gender, age, class, or rank. Welcome all to the table. Work to make equality a reality for everyone including those who are vulnerable and the social outcasts. Recognize every person as your neighbor, and love them as you love yourself. Psalms 82:1-4, Isaiah 58:1-12; Micah 3:1-5; Matthew 25:35-46; Luke 3:11, 14:7-11, 22:24-27; Acts 4:34; Galatians 3:28. Who are outcasts in your school, your community? What are ways people exclude others? What are ways you can act to include people who are not necessarily your friends? How can you help one another in this challenge?

4. Transformation: According to the dictionary, transform means “to change the nature of or function of.” So... Change the nature of conflict. Witness to the truth that violence causes violence, that hate deforms and love transforms. Be willing to suffer for the truth rather than inflict suffering. Micah 4:3-4; Isaiah 65:18-25; Matthew 26:52; Romans 12:14-21. How are violence and conflict different? Is conflict always bad? What are times when you have seen a violent reaction cause more violence? Brainstorm ways potentially violent situations could be handled in a nonviolent way.

The followers of Christ have been called to peace....And they must not only have peace but *make* it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods.... His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce hatred and wrong. In so doing, they overcome evil with good and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer from his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. A Lutheran youth leader, pastor, and writer, Bonhoeffer was jailed and eventually killed for his opposition to Hitler and assistance to Jewish people.

5. The Call

What are the challenges of Christian Peacemaking? Why can it be difficult? If it is so hard, why should we choose non-violence? How is Christian Peacemaking more effective and meaningful when these five elements are combined? What is the source of our strength? What is our calling as Christians in conflict situations? These texts can help: Psalms 10:17-18; Psalms 34:14; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. What are some ways you might live out the Call to Christian Peacemaking in your life? What changes in you would make the biggest difference for those around you?