



## Multi-age Children's Lesson

*(This lesson is intended to be done at the beginning of A Season of Peace early in September. For churches who are not yet meeting in person due to limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be opportunities to adapt some materials to be done virtually, and there is also a supplemental 'at-home' resource that would be ideal for sending to families in areas where churches are still practicing physical distancing.)*

### Lesson Objectives:

- *Reflect on the different definitions of peace and think personally about what peace means*
- *Connect the concept of peace to Jesus through scripture and song*
- *Help children identify as peacemakers*

### Resources needed:

- *Copies of Activity Sheet #1 and a selection of colored pencils, crayons, markers, etc. for each child*
- *A piece of instrumental music available to be played for the group on a CD, or via a digital method (something on your phone is fine--perhaps this Taizé piece: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxEAm2NQfgE>)*
- *Copies of Activity Sheet #2 and scissors and pencils/pens/markers for each child*
- *Items to create a peace tree—options include:*
  - *a large branch (or branches) and a vase or canister that branch(es) can be anchored into (perhaps in gravel, sand or with some sort of adhesive)*
  - *large craft paper or butcher paper roll to draw a tree on that can be adhered to a wall*
  - *An abstract tree crafted from wire, wood or other material (get creative!)*
- *Construction paper, pencils, string or yarn, hole punch*
- *Poster board or trifold for creating instructions*
- *Hymnals and Bibles*
- *Internet-connected device (such as a laptop, tablet, smartTV, or smartboard)*

### GATHER (15 minutes):

- *Give each child Activity Sheet #1 and some drawing supplies nearby, but ask them not to use these items yet. Tell the children that we are going to spend time in silence thinking*

about the word “peace.” Make sure that everyone knows what the word peace means by sharing this simple children’s dictionary definition:

- freedom or a period of freedom from public disturbance or war
  - a quiet and calm state of mind
  - agreement and harmony among people.
- Explain to the students that you will be spending some quiet time thinking about what the word peace means to them, and then walk them through this guided meditation:

- \*Note—leave a generous pause at the end of each sentence during your meditation. You can watch the participants for fidgeting to see how long you might want to pause, but allow time and space for this mediation. Ideally, this meditation should take about 3-4 minutes.

*“Bring your body to a comfortable position. Put your hands gently in your lap or on your knees. Close your eyes, or look down towards your hands so that you are not distracted by anything else in the room. Start to bring stillness to your body, and notice things--how are you sitting? Do you feel comfortable and relaxed? What is your breath like? Without trying to change anything, notice how you are breathing. Spend a moment getting used to the stillness and quiet. How does it feel to be still, and quiet? Some people call this feeling of stillness and quiet ‘peace’. Think about the word “peace.” Peace. Peace. Is it a word that you hear sometimes? Is it a word that you ever use to describe something? Try to bring a picture or a scene to your mind that describes peace. There are no right or wrong answers, so let your imagination create a picture of peace. Is there a color in your mind when you think of peace? Is there a shape? Do you see people or things? Do words or symbols come into your thoughts? (pause for 20-30 seconds) Take a moment to remember this image you have created in your mind. Now without talking or looking around, slowly begin to bring movement to your hands. Now slowly begin to bring movement to your head. Still without talking or extra movements, using the pencils and crayons in front of you, try to put the image of peace that came to mind for you on your paper. To help us keep focused and to hold the silence of our voices for a few more moments, I am going to put on some peaceful music, and when it’s over, you will have the chance to share your images if you would like.”*

- \*\*Choose a piece of instrumental music that would keep the peaceful atmosphere in the room. Look for a piece that is 3-5 minutes in length.
- Following the music, invite any students who would like to do so to share their drawings.

EXPLORE (25-35 minutes)

Connecting with Scripture (10 minutes)

Explain to the children—We have spent some time thinking about the word peace. Who remembers some of the definitions for that word? *(look for the three that were listed in ‘gathering’ above to be named.)* We also thought about what peace means to us, and many of you shared the beautiful pictures that you drew. We are at the beginning of a

time that our church has set aside as a season of peace. There are many ways to experience peace.

- You can experience peace in your self—meditation, like what we just shared, is one way to find some peace on your own.
- You can experience peace in relationship with others—getting along with classmates or siblings is a way to experience peace with others.
- You can experience peace in a community—I wonder if you can think of things that happen in your schools or here at church that encourage peace.
  - You can experience peace in the wide world—our goal is always for different countries to cooperate and work together for the good of the world. Sometimes we hear of places where there is conflict or war, but there are also a lot of ways that countries work together. I wonder if you can think of ways our world works together for peace.

There are so many themes of peace in the church. Jesus was called ‘the Prince of Peace,’ and the Bible is full of examples of people or groups seeking peace. Let’s focus on a verse from one of the letters that Paul wrote to early churches. As the early church was learning and growing, Paul often wrote letters of advice, encouragement and support to those churches. The verse we are about to read comes from one such letter. It is in fact, his signing off—where you might sign a letter saying, “Sincerely” or “With Love”, Paul signs off on his letter with these words, which are almost like a blessing. He writes, “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in all ways.” (2 Thessalonians 3:16

Some suggested questions (feel free to use any or all of these or come up with your own):

- When you think of the Lord giving you peace, can you imagine what that would feel like? Using your body, show what the Lord’s peace might feel like.
- What times do you think it would feel good to have the Lord’s peace?
- What are some ways you might feel the Lord’s peace?
- Are there people or places that you wish could feel the Lord’s peace?
- How might you help bring the Lord’s peace to others?

Craft: Messengers of Peace (10 Minutes)

- Using Activity Sheet #2, have children pair up (ideally, one older and one younger child) to create two sheets (one for each child) of ‘Peacemaker Notes’.
  - Each sheet has 4 shapes (2 hearts, 2 doves) on which to create “Peacemaker Notes.”
  - Cut out shapes (having older children help younger children if needed) and write on the front of each shape, “May the Lord give you Peace” and on the

back of each shape, “at all times in all ways.” Then color and decorate however you would like (you may have older children write, and younger children add decoration if you have pre-writers in your group).

- Instruct the children to hide the peacemaker notes for people to find. This could be done in the church, in the child’s home, or even mailed to members of the church or shut-ins—be creative about how you will spread peace in this season!

#### Group Activity: Creating a Peace Tree (15 minutes)

- As part of the season of peace, you may want to create a peace tree for your congregation. The idea behind a peace tree is that you will have the tree displayed in a central area in your church (perhaps the narthex, fellowship hall, central foyer or other high-traffic area) so that people can add messages of and prayers for peace during the season of peace. You may want to encourage your worship leadership to incorporate those messages and prayers into the liturgy for World Communion Sunday, or for a dedication of the Peace and Global Witness offering.
  - \*\*to see a model of this, read [this article](#) about a prayer tree created by Myers Park Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC.
  - \*\*Note: This activity could be adapted for home use if your congregation is not meeting in person by September. Some ideas include the creation of a tree as listed below, or even taking a tree in your yard or on the grounds of your church (similar to what was done at Myers Park in the article above) and making a community tree appropriate for physical distancing.
- Explain to the children that you will work together to create a tree on which people will be invited to add messages and prayers of peace. The children can be divided into three groups, or all could work all together in whatever way fits your setting and the number of participants you have. The suggested activities if you choose to divide are:
  - Tree Creators: This can be a good job for children of all ages. This group will use materials to create a tree--this might involve branches or sticks being bound together with yarn or string and anchored into a sturdy container, outlining a tree on a large sheet of roll paper, or any creative way of crafting a tree that your group would like to do.
  - Prayer Card Creators: This can be an especially good job for younger children. This group will create a large quantity of sheets of paper for people to write prayers on. If you have a 3D tree, this may involve hole-punching and adding string or yarn to cut out hand-prints, die-cuts (Perhaps using the model from Activity Sheet #2) or simple squares of paper. If you have a roll paper-drawn tree, this could be gathering Post-its® or shapes of paper and tape or stickers to attach messages and prayers to the tree.

- Direction Creators: This is an ideal task for older children in your group. This group will work together to write up directions for engaging with the Peace Tree. Things to be sure to include:
  - Why: Explain that we are in ‘A Season of Peace,’ and as part of that, we want to help others share messages of and prayers for peace.
  - How: How people can add prayers (be sure that as you describe this, you are sure to have all the needed items such as pens, paper, tape and yarn available.)
  - When: How long will the tree be up?
  - What: What will be done with prayers? Will they be shared in worship? In a prayer group?
  - Who: Tell people which class has created this wonderful project!

#### Closing (10 minutes)

Share that your church will be receiving the Peace & Global Witness Offering on World Communion Sunday (Sunday, October 4, 2020). This offering supports peacemaking efforts around the world, in our region and even right in our own communities (if you have information on where your middle-governing bodies or congregation’s offering go, share those details with the children). Invite the group to watch [this video](#) of people who have been involved with peacemaking efforts funded by this offering singing the hymn “This is My Song” (found in [‘Glory to God ’#340](#)). If you have hymnals available, invite the children to follow along with the words.

At the conclusion of the video, you can invite the children to share their reflections, or simply close with this prayer or a prayer of your own:

*“O God of all creation, we bring our prayers of peace to you this day.  
May we follow the Lord of peace as we seek to be peacemakers in  
your world. As we give you our hopes and dreams for peace, we pray  
for those people around this world whose hopes and dreams are joined  
with ours, that our whole world might know your peace in our lives and  
on the earth. Amen.”*

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