

2024 | CHILDREN'S LESSON

SEPTEMBER 8-OCTOBER 6

“For there shall be a sowing of peace ...” ZECHARIAH 8:12

Goals and Purpose:

- Children will explore the biblical concept of “sowing seeds of peace” to make a difference in the world, their neighborhoods, their relationships and themselves.
- Children will learn about the Peace & Global Witness Offering.
- Children will create seeds of peace with small projects that have the potential for future blooms.

Supplies

- copies of the **PGW coloring sheet** for each participant
- crayons, colored pencils or markers
- one copy of the **PGW puzzle**, printed and cut out (*use cardstock if possible*)
- copies of the **What is Peace Like** handout for each participant
- copy of the book “[What Does Peace Feel Like?](#)” or an internet-connected video play for the read-aloud version (*optional*)
- a puzzle piece for each participant (from an actual puzzle, or use the **PGW puzzle** or the **blank puzzle piece template**, cut out)
- newsprint or whiteboard, markers
- optional supplies, depending on your choices:
 - Peace Prayer Squares: copies of the **Peace Prayer Squares** handout for each participant, scissors
 - Seed Mosaics: a variety of seeds, beans and other natural elements; liquid glue; cardboard, posterboard or paper plates
 - Seed Balls/Bombs: potting or topsoil, non-toxic air-dry clay, native wildflower seeds, water, small bags or packets for transport, materials for making tags

Gathering (10–15 minutes)

As your group gathers, give each child a copy of the PGW coloring sheet to decorate. While the group colors, talk together about seasonal changes — particularly those they notice outside. What is growing? What is blooming or ripening? What is changing in gardens and trees and planters?

Invite them to add the colors they see outside to their coloring sheet.

Talk together about what is needed for seeds to grow into healthy plants. These might include good soil, an attentive gardener, the right amounts of rain and sunshine, careful tending, etc.

Hearing the Bible Story (5 minutes)

Using your own words, say something like:

We know that, in the right conditions, seeds can grow into healthy plants. Today we're going to explore how seeds of peace can grow in a similar way.

Assemble and show the **PGW puzzle** as you share words like these:

In the book of Zechariah, the prophet speaks to the people of God just after the exile — in a time when they are tired from the past and unsure about the future. They needed peace to grow! They had been removed from their city, Jerusalem, for close to 70 years. Their temple had been destroyed. Whole families had died. They had to start over with almost nothing but their faith. Zechariah says that God will be with them and will help them to grow and rebuild their families, the temple, their city and everything they need. God says:

For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew, and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. — Zechariah 8:12

We trust God to keep God's promises. Over time, the people in Zechariah's day learned to sow or plant seeds of peace that grew with God's help. When peace was needed again, they kept sowing and trusting God. Later, Jesus spoke about sowing seeds in some of his parables about how the kingdom of God grows. When we sow seeds of peace, we trust that God helps them grow and bloom into something beautiful.

Exploring Peace (20–40 minutes)

Use the following activities to further explore peace.

1. What is Peace Like?

Give each participant a copy of the handout **What is Peace Like**. Invite them to close their eyes and take some silent time to imagine peace. Ask for ideas for each of the senses. In their imaginations and experiences, what does peace smell like? Look like? Sound like? Taste like? Feel like? Let them write or draw their own ideas of what they imagine peace is like on the handout or combine their ideas into a larger group mural.

To go deeper, you can hear answers from children around the world by reading the book "[What Does Peace Feel Like?](#)" by Vladimir Radunsky or watching together this read-aloud video of the book: [Summer STREAM Series: What Does Peace Feel Like?](#)

Ask:

- If we want to grow something like a plant, flowers, or fruits and vegetables, where could we find seeds? (*at a store, inside the fruits or vegetables, after a plant has flowered, etc.*)
- After we have the seeds, where might we plant them? (*in containers, in a garden, wherever you need beauty or food, etc.*)
- If we want peace to grow, where could we find peace seeds to sow? (*allow for a variety of answers*)

We can't go to the seed store and ask for peace seeds. But we do know what peace feels like, what it looks and sounds and tastes and smells like. We can sow these seeds of what peace is like, wherever it is needed.

Let's think about where we might plant these seeds of peace.

2. Puzzle Pieces of Peace

Examine four places where seeds of peace might be planted using puzzle pieces to guide your conversation. Give each participant a piece of a puzzle. (If possible, the younger the children, the larger the pieces should be!) You can use the **PGW puzzle** printed and cut out, a puzzle from your classroom or from home, or use the **blank puzzle piece template** to print or glue on cardstock and cut out.

Share the instructions below to guide your conversation.

- Look at your puzzle piece and notice the parts that reach out. Where are the places out in the world that need peace — places it might be hard for us to reach?
- Notice the parts of your puzzle piece that have space waiting to be filled. Where are the places closer to home or in our neighborhood that need to be filled with peace?
- Try to fit your piece with another person's piece. (*It might not fit ...*) What are the relationships in your life that need peace?
- Now hold your piece and think about the peace you want or need in yourself.

Invite participants to choose one of the areas they considered and brainstorm more about it. What are the small pieces of peace that could be planted in order for peace to someday fully bloom in the areas they mentioned? For example, if peace is needed in places of war, what small seeds of peace could be sown there (*kind words, more medicines*)?

If you are using large enough blank puzzle pieces, participants might write or draw their ideas on the pieces as you talk. Or use the **blank puzzle piece template** to create a group seeds of peace puzzle filled with their ideas.

3. Engaging with the PGW Offering

Take a look at one of the Peace & Global Witness projects highlighted this season and explore how a big problem can be tackled with small seeds of peace.

Write the Big Problem on newsprint or a whiteboard where it is visible to the group:

- Big Problem: People struggling to pay for basic needs.

Ask participants to listen for small seeds of peace that can help the Big Problem as you share the following story:

The Presbyterian Church of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, knew that some people in their town had trouble paying for basic needs. One church member noticed that laundry was a problem because soap and machines at the local laundromat were expensive. So, the small church of 52 members started a program called “Fresh Start: Loads of Love” to help. Every two months, a group from the church brings snacks and rolls of quarters and spends time connecting with people in the laundromat. The pastor, Caroline Vickery, says, “We always go on the last Monday of the month since people ... are running low on money at the end of the month. We have had the opportunity to help a homeless family ... in a house with no electricity or running water and help a woman with cancer have clean bedding. ... We can go to a laundromat and give out quarters and bring coloring sheets and markers and give people a little bit of joy. When you do the laundry by yourself, it’s a chore. Instead, there’s a happy energy that makes the laundry sparkle when people start talking to each other.”

Ask:

- What small seeds of peace are being planted with Loads of Love?

Together on the newsprint or whiteboard, make a list of the small seeds of peace the participants notice in the story: quarters, snacks, coloring sheets, time, etc. Talk about how each of these items is small, but when shared, sown or planted, they can grow into a large expression of love and peace. These are seeds of peace sown in one neighborhood, but they can bloom in the individuals involved, their relationships and the world.

Share that the church in Pennsylvania received a \$500 gift from the Peace & Global Witness Offering of the PC(USA) to help with their project. One of the mottos of the PGW Offering is “When we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!” Share that the offering your church collects will help sow seeds of peace like this in your neighborhood, region and the world, making little seeds of peace go a long way.

If you like, have the participants turn the newsprint or mural into an illustration of the small seeds of peace they noticed blooming into something beautiful around the Big Problem.

Extend the Lesson: Plant Seeds of Peace

Choose from the following activities to plant seeds of peace, and/or send the ideas and materials home to further extend the learning.

1. Peace Prayer Squares

Use the Peace Prayer Square handout to make a tool for praying for peace. Print out one copy for each participant. Have them cut out, color and follow the folding instructions on page Use the prayer squares to pray for peace.

2. Seed Mosaics

Create an individual or a group mosaic using glue, seeds, beans and other natural elements. You might use a template like the PGW coloring sheet or a peace symbol. Or let children create a free-form mandala-like mosaic, or words of peace on posterboard or a paper plate. Where can your group share these mosaics as seeds of peace? Find more instructions and ideas:

- a pdf with materials and instructions: [Seed Mosaic](#)
- a YouTube video: [Seed Mosaics!](#)

3. Seed Balls/Bombs

Make small seed balls that can be shared and dropped in places where wildflowers can bloom.

Supplies needed: potting or topsoil, nontoxic air-dry clay, native wildflower seeds, water, small bags or packets for transport, materials for making tags (*optional*). Combine the soil, clay and seeds (in a ratio of roughly 5-3-1). Add water as needed as you form into 1-inch balls. Let these dry, then share with tags or instructions to “sow seeds of peace!”

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Close with a prayer in your own words, or use words like these:

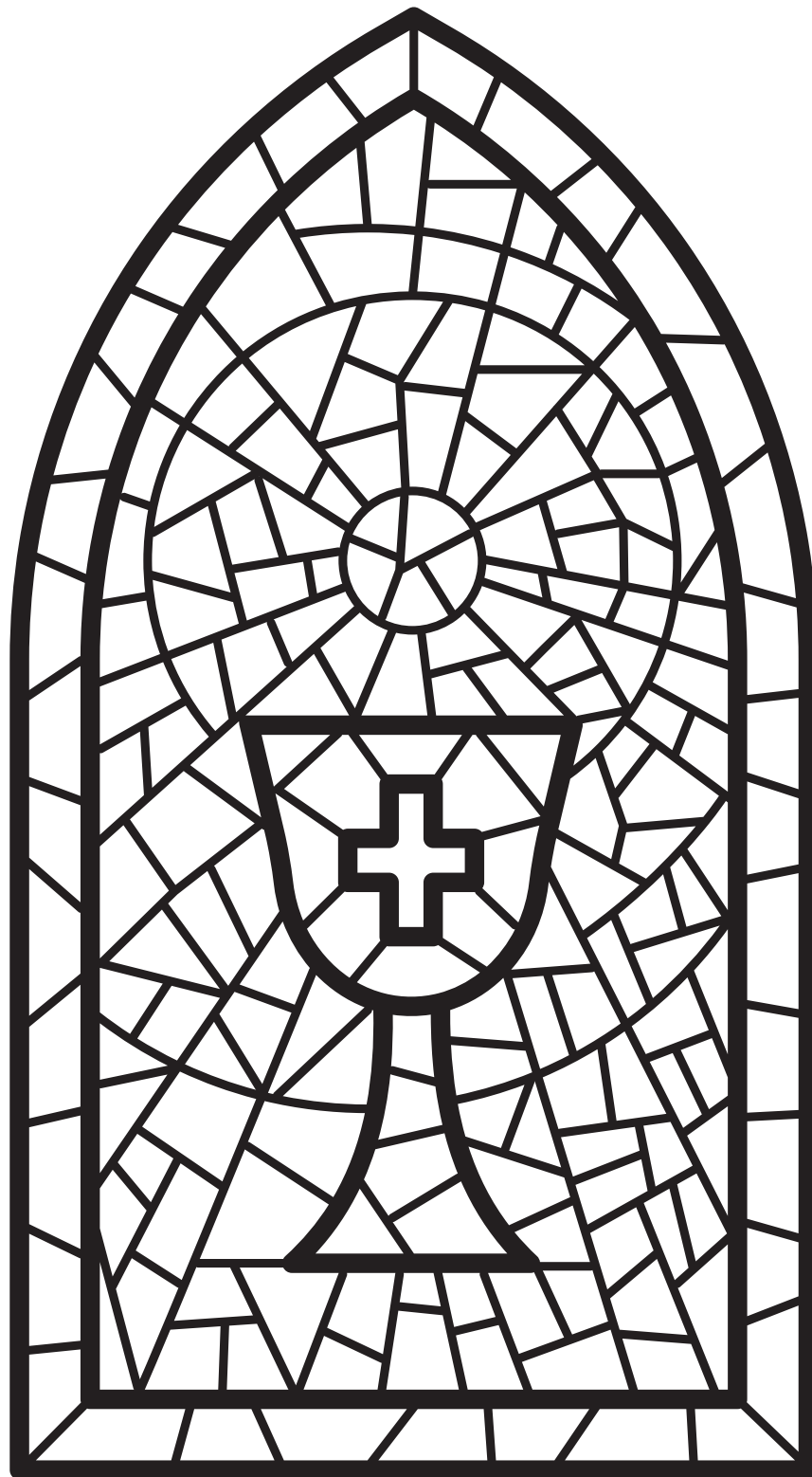
God of all Creation,
you make the smallest seeds grow and bloom into beautiful plants.
You make peace and love grow
in all the puzzling places that need it.
Help us see where peace is needed —
in ourselves, in our relationships, in our neighborhood
and across the world.
Teach us to sow seeds of peace,
and trust that you can make them grow.
We pray in the name of Jesus, who was called the Prince of Peace.
Amen.

Prepared by the Rev. Rev. Julie Coffman Hester. Julie is a pastor and writer in North Carolina who has served in faith formation with all ages for 30 years. Her current ministry focuses on writing curriculum and resources and teaching workshops on writing as a spiritual practice and writing through grief. You can find her at juliehester.com.



QUESTIONS?

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We are there



PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

WHAT IS PEACE LIKE?

Write or draw what you think peace smells, looks, sounds, tastes and feels like.

SMELL

SOUND

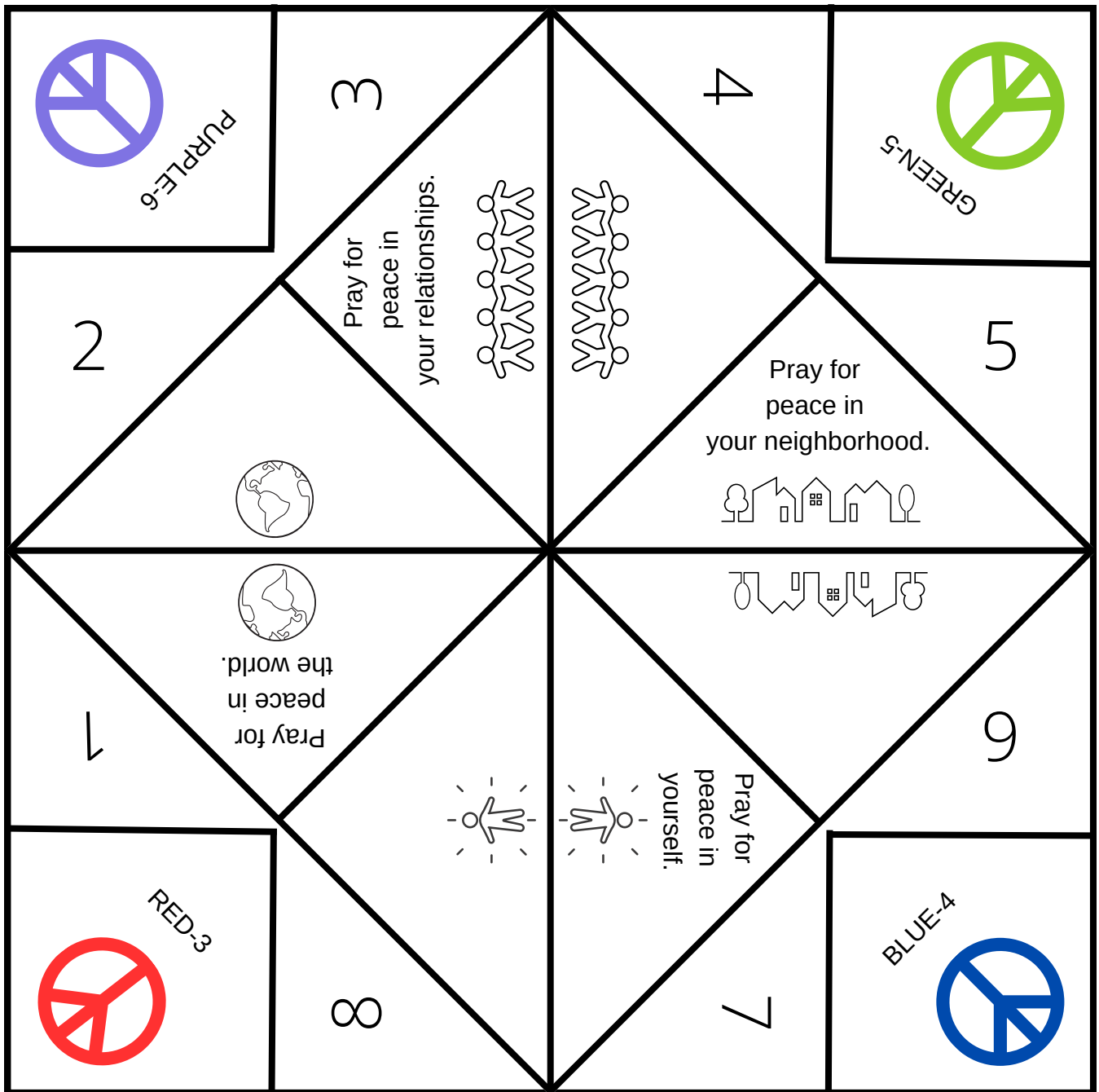
FEEL

TASTE

LOOK

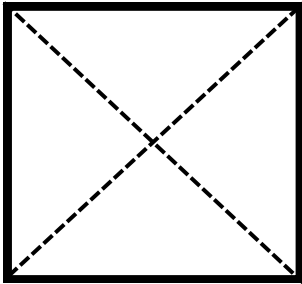
Prayer Square for Peace

Write your own prayers for peace in the triangles next to numbers 2, 4, 6, 8. Color and cut out your square. Follow the instructions to fold and use your prayer square.



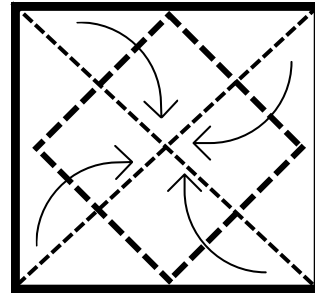
Instructions

1



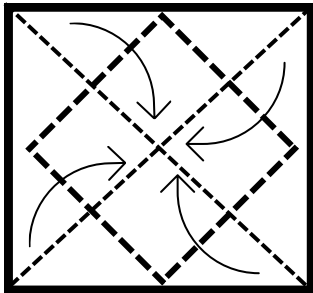
With pictures face down, fold on both diagonal lines. Unfold.

4



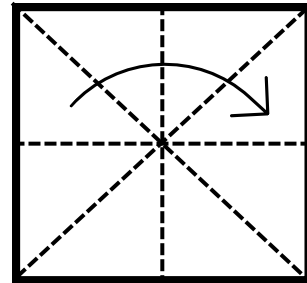
Once again, fold all corners to the center.

2



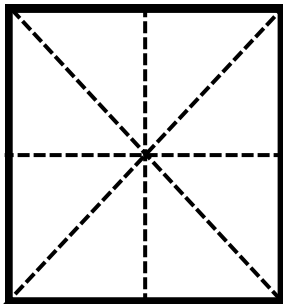
Fold all four corners to the center.

5



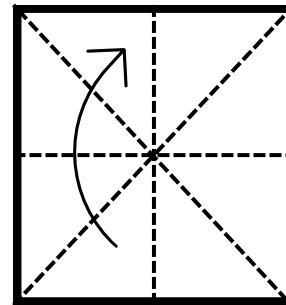
Fold paper in half and unfold.

3



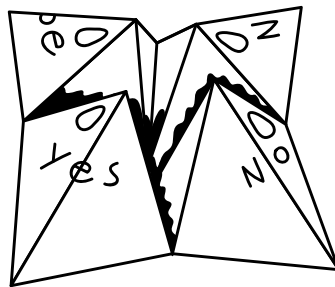
Turn paper over.

6



Fold in half from top to bottom. Do not unfold.

7



Slide thumbs and forefingers under the squares. Move the prayer square back and forth to play. Choose a color, and move the square as you spell out each letter in the color name.

Choose a number and move the square that many times.

Choose a number, open to read the prayer suggestion inside, and pray for peace!

Try playing and praying with a friend!

