



**Mennonite
Church
USA**

Peace and Justice
Support Network

PEACE Sunday 2013

Romans 12:1-2, 9-21

Along with Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Church USA celebrates Peace Sunday the Sunday closest to the International Day of Prayer for Peace, which is Sept. 21. **However, you may use these materials any Sunday that works for your congregation.**

Introduction

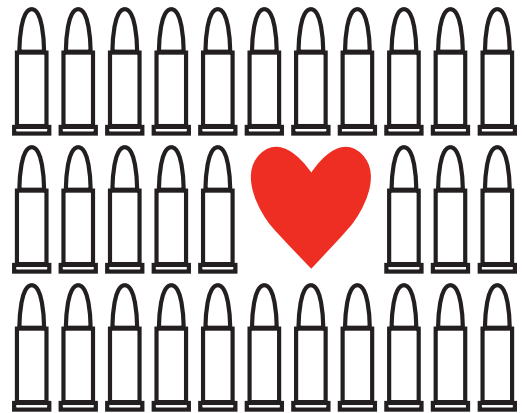
Wars and rumors of wars, drone attacks, mass shootings—the headlines of the day confirm that violence continues to be our culture’s favored reaction to conflict. But the tragic headlines don’t tell the whole story. Violence is written into our entertainment, our recreation, our politics. Violence isn’t an act or action—it’s a worldview that gains adherents through fear and propaganda.

This year for Peace Sunday, we look to Romans 12 for a picture of an alternative worldview, the worldview of peace and reconciliation that Jesus proclaimed. Citizens of God’s kingdom seek to love enemies, forego revenge, and overcome evil with good.

The apostle Paul encourages us in Romans: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world.” What does it mean not to conform to the pattern of violence so prevalent in our culture and national projection of military power? How can that pattern be overcome by good in our nations, our communities, our homes?

The cycles of violence that yield destruction are birthed by the powers and principalities of the world. God’s mission to bring peace and healing in the world relies on communities of men and women being faithful to Jesus and to each other, working for peace in countless ways, large and small. When these communities come together to seek God’s will, the world can be transformed.

The materials for Peace Sunday are a collaboration between the Peace and Justice Support Network, Mennonite Central Committee U.S., and members of Mennonite Church USA communities. We invite your community to join us in discerning together what it means to not be conformed to the pattern of this world, and instead join in God’s mission of peace through Christ.



Do not CONFORM
to the pattern of this world

Peace Sunday worship service

The intent of this order of worship is to celebrate the resurrection power of God at work in the church and world today. It is easy to see violence and fear and forget that transformation HAS and IS taking place. As citizens of God's kingdom, we celebrate where God is at work in our world.

*I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters,
by the mercies of God,
... do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.*

Gathering

Call to worship

L: We rejoice in hope, seeing signs of God's peace and justice.

P: We are citizens of God's kingdom.

L: We extend hospitality to strangers, participating in God's peace and justice.

P: We are citizens of God's kingdom.

L: We persevere in prayer, anticipating the fullness of God's peace and justice.

P: We are citizens of God's kingdom.

Invocation

O God ...

We gather with you,
having been shaped by your world view,
which frees us to claim that your peace and justice is for all the world.

We gather with you,
having been shaped by your world view,
which frees us to claim that your love is stronger than fear.

We gather with you,
having been shaped by your world view,
which frees us to move more deeply into community with friend and enemy.

Amen.

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 21: "All praise to our redeeming Lord"

Affirming our faith

Affirming our faith (in unison)

We believe it matters to love with mutual affection ...
like the love between Peter and Jesus.

We believe it matters to weep with those who weep ...
like Mary and Martha wept with Jesus.

We believe it matters to live in harmony with one another ...
like the reconciliation between Zacchaeus and the community.

We believe we are citizens of God's kingdom ...
experiencing God's peace and justice even as we wait for its fullness.

Scripture reading: Romans 12:1-2, 9-21

Children's time

Share a story of justice/peace from your congregation.

An Eighth Street Mennonite Church example: Our church gives families who don't have homes a place to sleep. They come for one week at a time ... four different times a year. They don't have a place to live when they come at the beginning of the week ... and usually they still don't have a place to live at the end of the week before they go to a different church to sleep.

We don't fix the problem that they don't have a place to live. BUT we join God's justice and peace by giving strangers a safe place to sleep, some good food to eat, and space to play and relax.

We are citizens of God's kingdom. God is working with us and the families who stay in our church.

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 407: "We are people of God's peace"

Sermon seed

We celebrate the peace and justice of God's kingdom that is on earth now ... even as we extend the invitation to participate in this peace and justice more fully. The sermon could include current examples of God's peace and justice that are transforming our world today, ... and name the areas that are still in need of God's transformation. Paul's words to the church at Rome have been acted on for 2000 years ... even as we seek to fulfill them.

Responding

Sing the Story, No. 1: "Praise the One who breaks the darkness"

Offering and offertory

O God ...

We bring these gifts as a sign of our desire to spread your peace and justice everywhere. Our giving reminds us of the ways we have already been transformed ... and that the world is also being transformed.

Amen.

Prayer of the community of faith

Highlight God's activity in the midst of this gathered body of Christ.

Sending

Sing the Journey, No. 32: "If you believe and I believe"

Benediction

L: We go, rejoicing in hope, seeing signs of God's peace and justice.

P: We are citizens of God's kingdom.

L: We go, extending hospitality to strangers, participating in God's peace and justice.

P: We are citizens of God's kingdom.

L: We go, persevering in prayer, anticipating the fullness of God's peace and justice.

P: We are citizens of God's kingdom.

Prepared by Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street Mennonite Church pastoral team), Kevin Farnwald (Eighth Street Mennonite Church pastoral team), and Rachel Nolt (Silverwood Mennonite Church pastoral team).

Prayer of Confession

Dear God,

In a time of endless war
when high-tech weapons from our communities
spill the blood of your children in far away places
Too often, O God, we have closed our eyes

In a time of endless war
when the cries of pain from wounded warriors
and the sighs of grief from war torn families rise to the heavens
Too often, O God, we have closed our ears

In a time of endless war
when words of truth need to be spoken
to the powers that wield the sword of war,
Too often, O God, we have closed our mouths

God of light, open our eyes
God of healing, unstop our ears
God of truth, loose our tongues

God who feeds our enemies and gives them drink
renew our minds so that we are not overcome with evil,
but enlivened to share the breadth of your love.

Amen

By Titus Peachey, Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Ideas for responding to worship with action

- Encourage high school or adult Sunday school classes to participate in a “penny poll” to reflect on U.S. federal budget priorities (see materials online at www.mcc.org/FearNot/world/pennypoll).
- After the worship service, provide postcards for members to sign, urging legislators to change government spending priorities (available free in late summer from your local MCC office). Consider organizing a group from your church to your Member of Congress’s local office to deliver the postcards (see tips on making in-district visits, at washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/in-district-meetings1.pdf).
- Discuss starting a voluntary gas tax in your community (see voluntarygastax.org). Consider voluntary service with Mennonite Mission Network or Mennonite Central Committee:
 - www.MennoniteMission.net/Serve/Pages/Home.aspx
 - Serve.mcc.org

Additional resources

Additional Peace Sunday resources, including alternate worship options, sermon seeds, children’s stories, and prayers for peace, can be accessed at www.MennoniteMission.net and www.mcc.org/fearnot.

For peace and justice resources, or to join the Network, visit www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace, or check us out on Facebook. For more information about PJSN, or to offer your responses to the Peace Sunday material, contact Peace@MennoniteUSA.org. **Your financial gifts are crucial for continuing to strengthen the vision of peace and justice in Mennonite Church USA. Thank you for your support.**