



Peace Sunday 2018

Introduction

As human beings, it is our natural tendency to classify and separate ourselves from those who are different from us. That classification and separation takes all forms: gender, age, race, ethnicity, education, socio-economic, religion ... and the list goes on. These classifications can cause discomfort, fear, and even harm depending on one's location and situation. Racial violence is still a difficult subject and a painful reality for many. Refugees and immigrants seeking safe places and ways to support and protect their families are rejected and deported back to their home countries because of fear of the foreigner.

Even during Christ's time, there were societal tensions, particularly between the Jews and the Samaritans, and the Jews and the Gentiles. Yet with Christ's birth, and later during his ministry, the outcast and the foreigners also received the good news. In Ephesians 2, Paul reminds us that through Christ's blood, the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile has been destroyed, and we are all now one humanity. We are no longer strangers to each other, but now joined together spiritually, forming Christ's new humanity. For this reason, let us continue to seek justice for the oppressed, and peace and reconciliation for those in conflict, so that all may know Christ and know God's love and peace.

In preparation for Peace Sunday 2018, take time to consider how God has called us to love and care for all people, for each one of us is a part of God's creation and Christ's new humanity. Who is the neighbor God is calling you to love and care for?

In addition, consider the video resource, *Jesus Wasn't White*, produced by Mennonite Mission Network. This video reminds us that racism is deeply rooted in our nation and impacts how we treat one another. This video might be helpful as you prepare during the week; it could be used in the worship service, or during the Sunday school hour. View the video on our website at www.MennoniteMission.net/JesusVideo.

Marisa Smucker
Church Relations Representative

Key texts

Ephesians 2:11-22
Luke 10:25-37
James 3:13-18

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. 23. **Please feel free to use these materials in their entirety or as individual elements on Peace Sunday 2018, or any other time.**

Worship materials

Call to worship

Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 661

Leader: We gather as pilgrims on a journey of faith.

People: *We come seeking the cloud of your presence as we travel the way.
We come seeking your pillar of fire to light our darkness.*

**All: *Shine in our hearts, O God, with the light of your love.
Make your presence known through Jesus the Christ. AMEN.***

Songs of praise

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

In Christ there is no East or West, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 306

Let there be light, Lord God, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 371

I bind my heart this tide, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 411

O day of peace, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 408

For we are strangers no more, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 322

Jesus help us live in peace, *Sing the Journey*, No. 52

Somos el cuerpo de Cristo, *Sing the Journey*, No. 64

The peace of the earth be with you, *Sing the Journey*, No. 77

Put peace into each other's hands, *Sing the Journey*, No. 87

(This song could be an option for use with communion.)

Whatsoever you do, *Sing the Story*, No. 52

Come to me, come to us, *Sing the Story*, No. 60

How can I say, *Sing the Story*, No. 117

Confession/words of assurance

(Based on James 3:13-18, NRSV)

Reader 1: *Who is wise and understanding among us?*

Leader: Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.

Reader 2: **And if we have bitter envy and selfish ambition in our hearts?**

Leader: Do not be boastful and false to the truth.

Reader 1: *This kind of wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.*

Reader 2: **For where there is envy and selfish ambition there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.**

Leader: But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

Leader, Readers 1 & 2: And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Children's story

Tell the parable of the Good Samaritan. Consider doing this as a drama, or using a video like the one posted here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbrDcbuYdX0.

Luke 10:25-37 NRSV

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷ He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him, and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Scripture reading

Ephesians 2:11-22

One in Christ

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Sermon suggestion

Either text, Luke 10 or Ephesians 2, can be used for the message. The key for this Sunday’s message is that through Christ we are made one, a new humanity where all belong. Our response to this is to love one another and care for each other regardless of our differences.

Benediction and sending song

May you seek wisdom from above so that you may make peace and show love with all you meet.

Go now in peace, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 429

Peace & Justice SUPPORT NETWORK

For peace and justice resources, or to join the Peace and Justice Support Network, visit www.PJSN.org, 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.

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