

A New Vision of Peacemaking, and the Doors it Opens...

It helps to begin with the meaning of the word we translate as "Peace." The word used by Jesus and his disciples, by the prophets before, and the early church after, *means more than our word "Peace."* *Shalom* fully includes our concepts of justice, mutual respect, welcoming community, wholeness. . . .

The place of *Shalom* in the gospel is conveyed by the fact that the first word of Easter is 'Peace.' It is spoken by Jesus in every account after the Resurrection. The gospel calls the Church to work for the creation of such a community in all that it does – an apt description of LPF's mission, to foster *Shalom* in each part of Christian life together: worship, education, fellowship, and action. We seek to share effective assistance in each sphere:



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1. Worship offers many opportunities to encourage *Shalom* in our life together. LPF supplies thoughtful **Peace Prayers** and **Sermons**, full **Service Guides**, a **Calendar** of *Shalom*-related events to help make peace visible throughout the church year.

LPF's 60-page **Peace Worship Packet** offers dozens of songs, prayers, litanies, sermon helps, and services.... Reflecting this emphasis, LPF leaders wrote the first "Day of Prayer for Peace" bulletin insert used in more than 10,000 churches worldwide.

2. Adult education, Sunday School, and youth groups: The gospel calls us to educate and motivate one another to live lives of *Shalom* and to explore issues that call for action, like ending wars abroad, conflicts at home that fill our prisons, and other challenges like those cited in section 5 (*at right*). LPF offers many tested, effective ***Shalom* resources**. For example:

◆ LPF's **What is Christian Peacemaking?** helps groups explore a wide range of biblical texts on *Shalom* with results that most people find eye-opening. Used by 600 congregations to date, it is one of 12 LPF **PeacePoints**. Each has a discussion guide, handouts, and leader tips for effective use in forums or groups. Others delve into "Just War," "World Hunger," "Conflict Education" and other issues.



◆ **What Brings Security?** is a computer activity that's gotten raves for examining U.S. options for addressing global conflict and violence. The result is a powerful, engaging, easy-to-present adult or youth discussion. A million people have used LPF computer activities!



◆ LPF's **Women's Initiative** responds to the need for clear, popularly written aids with tools for exploration and action. This project's widely-praised resources include: "Stopping Violence Against Women and Girls," "Nurturing Peace: Gifts of Women," "Women's Path of Hope," "Being Mary and Martha for Peace," a "Video Gallery," and "Inspiration from Women."

◆ LPF's **Path of Hope** offers insights and inspiration from everyday people throughout history and from around the world ↗

who brought about needed change through nonviolent action. This exhibit, resource, and 12 activities have touched tens of thousands of Lutherans at Youth Gatherings, adult forums, etc.

What these and other LPF group activities have in common is that they are all participatory. They don't tell people what to think but help them explore, discuss, and find their own way.

3. In our fellowship: Another great place to experiment with *Shalom* is in the way we work together, interact, conduct our meetings, address conflict, etc. While it can be challenging, it has great potential for exploring the meaning of *Shalom*, and for strengthening discipleship and leadership in our various roles as family members, co-workers, neighbors, citizens...

LPF offers a variety of activities for supporting and nurturing more effective ways to do this, e.g. forums on **Conflict Education** and **How to Be a Bridge in a World of Walls**. Each shares insights, creative ways to approach conflict, encouragement to try out new skills...

4. In our giving: We can encourage financial support for peace projects and groups like LPF from friends, our congregation, and by designating LPF for Thrivent Choice Dollars.

5. In the world: *Shalom*, if it is real, moves us to action. This can include **service work**, such as volunteering in a food bank, meal program, or shelter in our community. It should also lead to our speaking up about specific injustices and conflicts.

We can **challenge** hunger and poverty which are frequently causes or effects of violence; **advocate** for cutting unneeded military spending, and for increased funding for education, the poor, ecological sustainability; **call** for reducing violence in the media; reining in the misuse of drones; offering support for Conscientious Objectors; effective gun control.... **Advocacy alerts, blogs, sample letters**, etc. from Lutheran Advocacy, Lutheran Peace Fellowship, and other sources can help.

There are many ways to encourage such action, e.g.: offering **prayers** on peace concerns; presenting an **adult forum** in our congregation; sharing **alerts** and helping with an **advocacy table** during coffee hour to assist church members in communicating with elected officials. Such efforts, in turn, can lead to developing a congregation **peace and justice group** that can sustain our efforts.

Putting it all together: We seek to challenge not just a particular war or conflict, but also the militarism that undergirds them. We look for connections, e.g. between returning veterans' issues or computer game violence and the larger "culture of violence" in the U.S. LPF's core mission is to oppose violence and injustice; to expose their root causes; and to respond to the call to practice and share the way of Jesus, the Biblical vision of *Shalom*, of justice and active nonviolence: our best hope for lasting change.

For further information on these and many more activities, resources, and links: www.lutheranpeace.org You can click to our Facebook page and blog from there to stay current. Lutheran Peace Fellowship, 1710 11th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122 ♦ 206.349.2501 ♦ lpf@ecunet.org ♦ coordinator.ggersmehl@hotmail.com