

## Encouraging *Shalom* in the Congregation: a resource guide

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

The place of *Shalom* in the gospel is conveyed by the fact that the first word of Easter is 'Peace,' spoken by Jesus in every account after the Resurrection. The broader concept of Peace can make a big difference. Indeed, the gospel calls us to embody *Shalom* in each part of our lives together: from worship, bible study, and meetings, to discussion, giving, and action.

**1. In worship:** We can look for ways to engender *Shalom* in worship. Lutheran Peace Fellowship offers several well-regarded resources including a Peace Litany, PeacePoints leaders guide, bulletin inserts, and a Calendar of events. LPF also has crafted a 60-page "**Peace Worship Packet**" with dozens of prayers, songs, litanies, sermon helps and complete services. ELCA and other web sites offer further resources; LPF has links to many of them on the '**Day of Prayer for Peace**' page of our web site. Consider as well devotion books like ***Call to Peace***, by Jim McGinnis.

**2. In adult education, Sunday School and youth group:** The gospel calls us to educate and motivate congregation members to live lives of *Shalom* and expand the areas of life in which they explore and find the power of *Shalom*.

LPF offers tested, effective *Shalom* resources for adult and youth group use including our "**PeacePoints**" series of 12 activities, each of which offers a discussion guide, handouts, and leader tips for effective use. For example, **What is Christian Peacemaking** leads a group through the biblical meaning of *Shalom* with handouts of outstanding texts, and a wonderful litany. A concise, useful exploration is the 5 pg discussion essay, "**Shalom!**" followed by a rich and helpful annotated bibliography on many aspects of the subject.

Each of these resources embodies an important insight: that our *means* of education match the *message* of *Shalom*. This doesn't mean telling folks what to think (or how to vote!) in adult education or sermons. (That neither squares with our values, nor is it very effective). Rather, *Shalom* encourages us to *provide space* for moral deliberation and discernment, and *engaging discussions and bible stories for members to discover how they might respond* to the gospel call for us to be peacemakers and justice seekers.

**3. Activity in the world:** We can help our members join and learn from projects and service activities, as individuals in their communities and workplaces and as a congregation through projects of our youth, women's or men's groups, Sunday School, worship committee, council, etc. *Each can regularly share, and urge support for activities* of ELCA Advocacy, Lutheran Peace Fellowship, Bread for the World, and other reliable, faith-based sources of action in the world.

There are often effective, responsible sources of volunteer involvement available such as food banks, meal programs, shelters, etc. We can also find ways for members to share in the congregation what they're observing and learning. A few good links: [www.elca.org/advocacy](http://www.elca.org/advocacy) and other parts of the ELCA website; [www.facebook.com/lutheranpeace/](https://www.facebook.com/lutheranpeace/) [www.lutheranpeace.org](http://www.lutheranpeace.org) [www.thriventbuilds.com](http://www.thriventbuilds.com) [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) [www.campaignnonviolence.org](http://www.campaignnonviolence.org)



**4. In our giving:** You can encourage support for *Shalom* activities, projects, and organizations through contributions of individual members and as congregation. Lutheran Peace Fellowship and other *Shalom* efforts can become valued parts of your congregation's benevolence offerings.

**5. In our gatherings and meetings.** One great place to discover and experiment with *Shalom* is in how we interact, work together, and conduct meetings. It isn't always easy, but offers great rewards as a place to explore *Shalom* skills useful in our families, workplaces, churches, as citizens, etc.

LPF offers a variety of activities to highlight and encourage effective ways to do this, for example, our workshops on "**Conflict Education**" and "**How to Be a Bridge in a World Full of Walls**" (see the LPF website). The resource guide on "Conflict Education" describes a variety of possibilities.

### Other Resources on the Potential of *Shalom*:

a. Over 700 congregations have used "**Jesus' Way of *Shalom***" or "**What is Christian Peacemaking**" exploring the biblical roots of *Shalom*. Others have used the "**Shalom!**" essay (at left), or our five **Women's Resources**. Our "**Path of Hope**" offers 150 stories of *Shalom* in action throughout history & across the globe.

b. **Campaign Nonviolence** is an exceptional ecumenical source of training, witness and action. Well over 300 faith groups across the U.S. offer a wide variety of enriching *Shalom* education and advocacy activities in the annual Sept. "**Week of Actions**."

c. Superb books for discussion: ***Resisting Structural Evil*** and ***Public Church*** by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda; ***The Powers That Be*** by Walter Wink; ***Courage to Think Differently*** and ***Beyond Guilt*** by George Johnson; Richard Deats on Gandhi and King; as well as books by Joan Chittister, John Dear, Mary Evelyn Jegen, Michael Nagler, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jim Wallis, etc.