

# PEACE POINTS

leaders' guide for a workshop or forum; and  
a resource for individual exploration. . .

Lutheran Peace Fellowship

Peace in our world • Peace in our nation • Peace in our neighborhoods • Peace in our homes • Peace in our hearts

## What is Christian Peacemaking?

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed... Live in harmony with one another... Do not repay evil for evil... If your enemies are hungry, feed them. Romans 12

For Christians the role of the peacemaker is rooted in our experience of a God who is peace, who gives us peace, and calls us to be about making peace with justice. Peacemaking is a specific way of living out Jesus' teachings and bearing witness to the presence of God.

The central elements of Christian Peacemaking – kindness, inclusive community, transformation, and justice – have strong Biblical roots. The life of Jesus and the early church embody these concepts and provide a new model for how we can live together. That model of discipleship is grounded in Jesus' resistance to violence and in his daily activities of touching, speaking, healing, and eating with everyone. It is crucial, for our own lives and for the world, that resistance to violence be joined with acts of healing, creation, and celebration.

Leader tips for a forum

or for individual use

### One Session . . .

Share the handout (over). Read aloud the Romans text (above) and the following three paragraphs, then break into small groups. Ask each group to read, discuss, and report back about one of the five biblical peace elements. Note what each concept adds to the gospel vision of peacemaking. Look for connections among them in processing 'The Call' as a large group.

### . . . or a Series

Spreading the topics over several sessions allows time for participatory activities and more discussion: one session on each of the five elements (or several per session). Discuss the bible verses and questions in small groups, or all together; use an activity to explore the insights in each (or several):

### Ideas for activities:

**Kindness, Compassion:** In pairs, share a time you were looked down on & how it felt. Share about a person *you've* looked down on; can you see good qualities/respect them now? Pray for them, for your strength in the future.

**Inclusive Community:** Share experiences of bridging differences. What skills are involved? Plan a meal with people you don't ordinarily get to eat with (e.g. people of a different community, faith, class, race, age).

**Transformation:** Discuss peer mediation and conflict resolution (e.g. with a peer mediator). Practice using "I Statements." Discuss in pairs, and share "Path of Hope" stories. Watch and discuss *A Force More Powerful* segment.

**Justice:** Discuss the Nashville segment of *A Force More Powerful* (below) and/or justice stories from the "Path." Write letters to a local paper, media, or your elected officials about an injustice in your community or world.

**The Call:** In pairs, share insights, possible next steps, and commitments in your journey. Hold a commissioning service for those who've gone through these steps, using a pledge of nonviolence (six versions at: [www.ipj-ppj.org](http://www.ipj-ppj.org)).

Many people neglect opportunities for peacemaking because they are caught in cultural myths and stereotypes. For example, Christian peacemaking is not weakness or passive submission, but at its best, persistent, disciplined, and at times courageous good will. It is active confrontation with conflict or evil that respects the humanity of the opponent and seeks both to end a threat or injury, and to achieve reconciliation with the adversary.

\*For full texts of the bible verses on the next page, see "Jesus Way of Shalom" on LPF's website. The site offers other engaging forum leaders' guides, relevant worship materials and great stories about peacemaking (e.g. from LPF's celebrated "Path of Hope"), at: [www.lutheranpeace.org](http://www.lutheranpeace.org)

"Peace Points" is a resource series from Lutheran Peace Fellowship that offers insights and tips to encourage youth and adults in their justice seeking and peacemaking.

**Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF)** is a community of Lutherans across the U.S. responding to the gospel call for us to be peacemakers and justice seekers. LPF offers a wide range of workshops, advocacy and program updates, education and worship resources, expertise and encouragement. . .

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**Recommended resources:** Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be*, and Michael Nagler's *The Nonviolence Handbook* include many insights, stories, and examples of peacemaking. "Campaign Nonviolence" has sparked thousands of local nonviolent vigils, protests, workshops, etc. in its annual Sept. "Week of Actions" and offers other fine campaigns, resources, trainings... ([www.campaignnonviolence.org](http://www.campaignnonviolence.org)). *A Force More Powerful* features six 24 min. video segments (ideal for forum use) on the spirit and power of nonviolence, featuring Gandhi, civil rights, S. Africa, etc. as examples ([www.aforcemorepowerful.org](http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org)). Sojourners' website is rich with insight, resources, and commentary from a Christian perspective ([www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)).

# What is Christian Peacemaking?

Jesus offered us, through his words and his actions, a new way of living together. Some people call this “The Kingdom of God,” others call it “Jesus’ Third Way,” or “Jesus’ Way of *Shalom*.” Whatever words you might use, there are several key elements which are outlined below. It is important to remember that these components are most powerful when they are lived together. Read and discuss the bible texts in each section; use the questions that follow to explore them further.

1. **Kindness, Compassion:** Act out of love, not vengeance. Be generous and hospitable to all. Find ways to get along with one another. Love your enemies, not just your friends. Look for the good in any opponent. Be willing to forgive and seek forgiveness. II Kings 6:20-23; Matthew 5:43-48, 6:14-15, 7:1-5; Luke 6: 20-36; Romans 12:3-5, 16-18, 14:1, 13, 19; 1 Peter 3:8-18. What is hard about being kind to those who are different or looked down on? What is hard about forgiving people? Talk about a time when you have been forgiven or have forgiven someone else when it was difficult.

2. **Inclusive Community:** Respect the dignity and humanity of all people, regardless of race, gender, age, class, or rank. Welcome all to the table. Work to make equality a reality for everyone including those who are vulnerable and the social outcasts. Recognize every person as your neighbor, and love them as you love yourself. Psalms 82:1-4, Isaiah 58:1-12; Micah 3:1-5; Matthew 25:35-46; Luke 3:11, 14:7-11, 22:24-27; Acts 4:34; Galatians 3:28. Who are the outcasts in your school, your community? What are ways people exclude others? What are ways you can act to include people who are not necessarily your friends? How can you help one another in this challenge?

3. **Transformation:** According to the dictionary, “transform” means “to change the nature or function of.” We are called to change the nature of conflict; witness to the truth that violence causes more violence, hate deforms and love transforms; be willing to suffer for the truth rather than inflict suffering. Micah 4:3-4; Isaiah 65: 18-25; Matthew 26:52; Romans 12:14-21. How are violence and conflict different? Is conflict always bad? What are times when you have seen someone’s violent reaction cause more violence? Brainstorm ways potentially violent situations could be handled in a nonviolent way.

4. **Justice:** Be willing to resist conditions and laws which are unjust and/or humiliating. Do so in a way that can win the opponent’s understanding and friendship, rather than defeat or punish the opponent. Exodus 1:15-21; Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 5:38-42. Respect legitimate authority (governments and police), but understand that as a Christian, you are ultimately responsible to a higher power. John 8:23; Romans 12:2. What are some laws right now that are unjust? Brainstorm examples of people resisting oppression using nonviolence. What are some ways to resist oppression or humiliation and still win your opponent’s understanding and friendship? What do you risk by opposing injustice? What do you gain?

The followers of Christ have been called to peace....And they must not only have peace but *make* it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods.... His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce hatred and wrong. In so doing, they overcome evil with good and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer from his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. A Lutheran youth leader, pastor, and writer, Bonhoeffer was jailed and eventually killed for his opposition to Hitler and assistance to Jewish people.

## 5. The Call

What are the challenges of Christian Peacemaking? Why can it be difficult? If it is so hard, why should we choose non-violence? How is Christian Peacemaking more effective and meaningful when these five elements are combined? What is the source of our strength? What is our calling as Christians in conflict situations? These texts can help: Psalms 10:17-18; Psalms 34:14; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. What are some ways you might live out the Call to Christian Peacemaking in your life? What changes in you would make the biggest difference? What are lessons and skills we can learn from nonviolent movements? How might we be more effective working with others in this calling?