

Commitment to Peacemaking



A Guide for Sessions and Congregations

In 1983, the 195th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) urged sessions and congregations to affirm a *Commitment to Peacemaking*, integrating peacemaking into the life and mission of the congregation. Since that time, more than 4,500 congregations in the PC(USA) have publicly affirmed a *Commitment to Peacemaking*. This resource will help sessions and congregations review their peacemaking ministries and decide whether and how to recommit to God's mission of peacemaking.

Use this resource for a daylong or overnight retreat for the session, peacemaking ministry team, or other group of adults or youth. It also can be easily adapted into three or four one-hour segments or many shorter segments for use at session meetings or other congregational gatherings. More time can be devoted to any of the sessions or activities.

Goals

- ✿ Reflect on the biblical call to peacemaking.
- ✿ Re-examine the PC(USA) *Commitment to Peacemaking*.
- ✿ Consider renewing the congregation's *Commitment to Peacemaking*.
- ✿ Develop strategies for future peacemaking ministry.

Scripture

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| ✿ Genesis 9:12–17 | ✿ Luke 10:25–28 |
| ✿ Isaiah 65:17–25 | ✿ John 14:25–27 |
| ✿ Micah 4:1–4 | ✿ Romans 12:14–21 |
| ✿ Matthew 5:1–12 | ✿ Ephesians 2:13–22 |
| | ✿ Philippians 4:4–7 |

Materials Needed

Copies of the *Commitment to Peacemaking*, Bibles, paper, pens, newsprint, markers, masking tape, candles and lighter, hymnals or song sheets, small colored stick-on dots (five per person, optional), copies of Planning Chart (to design action plans in Session 3 for peacemaking ministries)

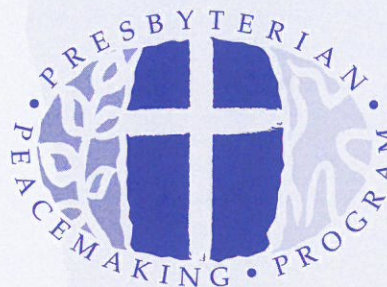
Advance Preparation for Participants (optional)

Provide each participant a copy of the *Commitment to Peacemaking*. Ask each participant to choose one of the eight areas of peacemaking identified in the *Commitment* (Worship, Prayer and Bible study, Peacemaking in families and in community living, Community ministries, Study and response to global issues, Global security, Making peace with the earth, Receiving the Peacemaking Offering) and consider these questions, writing brief answers:

- ✿ Is our congregation involved in peacemaking ministry in this area?
- ✿ If so, how? If not, why not?
- ✿ What would renewal of the *Commitment to Peacemaking* mean to our congregation's ministry in this area?

OR

Invite the participants to imagine a conversation with Jesus about the congregation's ministry in one area of peacemaking. Encourage the participants to write down reflections on this conversation.



Session Plans

Session 1 (Approximately 1 hour)

Goals

- ✿ Review the history of the congregation's peacemaking ministry.
- ✿ Uncover some of the influences that shape individual understandings of peace.
- ✿ Explore biblical images of peacemaking.

Advance Preparation for Leader

- ✿ Invite one to four person(s) with past experience of the congregation's peacemaking ministry to attend Session 1 and give brief (5- to 10-minute) reports on the history of that ministry.
- ✿ Write the Scripture references on newsprint and post.
- ✿ Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - "What understanding of peacemaking is presented in this passage?"
 - "What does it take to be this kind of peacemaker?"

Introduction – 5 minutes

1. Begin with prayer.
2. Explain that the session affirmed a *Commitment to Peacemaking* several years ago (give the date, if possible). In all of life, commitments require regular attention and periodic reaffirmation. The purpose of this study is to review how the congregation is living into that commitment; to reflect on new ways the congregation might live into that commitment, and to explore how renewing the *Commitment to Peacemaking* might strengthen the congregation's peacemaking ministry.
3. Provide an overview of the three sessions. Alert the participants that in Session 2 they will be asked to consider renewing the congregation's *Commitment to Peacemaking*.

Activity 1 – 15 to 30 minutes

1. Hear the report of the invited guest(s) as they share their memories of the congregation's earlier peacemaking ministry.

2. After each presentation, ask the presenter to light a candle and say: "God of Peace, your peacemaking ministry brings light into a broken world." The people respond: "Thanks be to God."
3. Close with a prayer or hymn (i.e., "Peace Is Flowing Like a River" or "Blest Be the Tie that Binds").

Activity 2 – 10 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of three or four.
2. Invite the participants to tell about a person or event that shaped the way they understand peace. Ask each person to share for 2 or 3 minutes in the small groups. Participants may choose to pass. As each person speaks, other group members will listen and refrain from commenting. This is an opportunity to understand the experiences that have helped shape us and given us different views. Remark that although we may have differences of opinion, we seek unity as we follow Jesus.




Activity 3 – 20 minutes

1. Assign each small group one of the following biblical passages:
 - Genesis 9:12–17
 - Isaiah 65:17–25
 - Micah 4:1–4
 - Matthew 5:1–12
 - Luke 10:25–28
 - John 14:25–27
 - Romans 12:14–21
 - Ephesians 2:13–22
 - Philippians 4:4–7
2. Invite each small group to read its passage aloud and discuss the following questions:
 - What understanding of peacemaking is presented in this passage?
 - What does it take to be this kind of peacemaker?
3. After 10 minutes, reconvene in the large group. Invite each small group to share one or two insights gleaned from its passage.



Closing Prayer – 1 minute

Session 2 (Approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes)

Goals

-  Re-examine and reconsider the *Commitment to Peacemaking*.
-  Renew the *Commitment to Peacemaking*.
-  Explore ways to live out the *Commitment to Peacemaking*.

Advance Preparation for Leader

-  Divide the room into four sections. Write each of the following statements on a separate sheet of newsprint and post one statement in each section:
 - Our congregation is already engaged in this ministry.
 - I think our congregation should be engaged in this ministry.
 - I do not think our congregation should be engaged in this ministry.
 - I am not sure if our congregation should be engaged in this ministry.
-  Write each of the eight areas of peacemaking (Worship, Prayer and Bible study, Peacemaking in families and in community living, Community ministries, Study and response to global issues, Global security, Making peace with the earth, Receiving the Peacemaking Offering) on a separate sheet of newsprint. The newsprint will be posted for Activity 4.

Introduction – 2 minutes

Begin with prayer. Review the purpose of this study and Session 1.

Activity 1 – 20 minutes

1. Distribute copies of the *Commitment to Peacemaking*. Point out that the 192nd General Assembly (1980) of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. affirmed in *Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling* that God's peace-giving is central to the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This document states that:
 - The Church is **faithful** to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking.
 - The Church is **obedient** to Christ when it nurtures and equips God's people as peacemakers.
 - The Church bears **witness** to Christ when it nurtures the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in the world.(The leader may write these three points on newsprint and post.)
2. Comment that Presbyterians undertake ministries of reconciliation and justice as a faithful response to God's call in Christ. The *Commitment to Peacemaking* is a tool to help Presbyterians engage individually and collectively in peacemaking ministries. Point out that the *Commitment* identifies eight areas in which Presbyterians may take part in peacemaking. Ask the participants to take turns reading aloud each of the eight areas of peacemaking ministry identified in the *Commitment*.
3. Explain that the room is divided into four sections. Each section represents a possible response to the eight areas of peacemaking ministry that the *Commitment* identifies. The four possible responses are:
 - Our congregation is already engaged in this ministry.
 - I think our congregation should be engaged in this ministry.
 - I do not think our congregation should be engaged in this ministry.
 - I am not sure if our congregation should be engaged in this ministry.

Commitment to Peacemaking

Responding to God's Covenant, _____ now commits itself to peacemaking. In fulfilling this commitment, we will do peacemaking through:

WORSHIP: provide worship that expresses the reality of God's peace giving;

PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY: encourage prayer, Bible study, and spiritual disciplines that nurture and deepen the spiritual life of the community and equip people to share the gospel message of peace to the world;

PEACEMAKING IN FAMILIES AND IN COMMUNITY LIVING: create opportunities for people of all ages to develop peacemaking skills such as conflict resolution, mediation, or nonviolence training that will help them grow as peacemakers in their families, in the congregation, and in the community;

COMMUNITY MINISTRIES: work with and support ecumenical and interfaith partners and other bodies in their pursuit of social, racial, and economic justice, to confront racism and all other forms of prejudice, and to respond to people in communities, local, national, and worldwide, who are caught in poverty, hurt by unemployment, or burdened by other problems;

STUDY AND RESPONSE TO GLOBAL ISSUES: support human rights and economic justice efforts in at least one area of the world—through presbytery partnerships and sister countries;

GLOBAL SECURITY: study global security concerns, work for worldwide arms control, and support alternatives to military solutions to international and civil conflicts;

MAKING PEACE WITH THE EARTH: protect and restore the environment through study, advocacy, and individual and corporate lifestyle commitments;

RECEIVING THE PEACEMAKING OFFERING: support financially the churchwide peacemaking effort by receiving the Peacemaking Offering and through other means.

The [Session] or [Other entity within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)] will provide leadership and support in its commitment to peacemaking. It will appoint a member of the committee to be the contact with other regional peacemaking committees and with the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program to receive and distribute information and resource materials that will help us to fulfill this commitment.

Report your renewal of the Commitment to Peacemaking to: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, 100 Witherspoon Street, Room 3231A, Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Moderator/Chairperson

Date

Clerk/Secretary

Date

Listserv

The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program produces a monthly read-only e-newsletter for congregations that have affirmed the *Commitment to Peacemaking*. Subscribe at www.pcusa.org/peacemaking.

Resources

Commitment to Peacemaking—PDS: #24-358-07-016; free.

Introduction to the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program — PDS: #70-270-03-003; free.

Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling—PDS: #OGA-88-047; \$1.50.

Order these resources from Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS) by calling 800-524-2612 or going online at www.pcusa.org/marketplace.

Contact the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

Call

888-728-7228, ext. 5788

Write

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program
100 Witherspoon St., Room 3231A
Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396

Bookmark

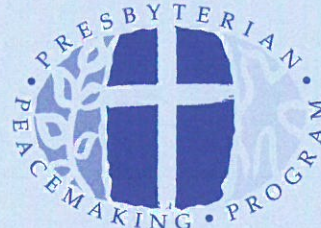
Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Web page
www.pcusa.org/peacemaking

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Blog
<http://presbyterian.typepad.com/peacemaking>

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

A Ministry of the General Assembly Council
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Supported by your generous gifts to the Peacemaking Offering



Session Plans

Session 3 (Approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes)

Goals

- ✦ Explore ways to implement the *Commitment to Peacemaking*.
- ✦ Envision the future as a peacemaking congregation.
- ✦ Develop action plans for peacemaking ministry in the next year.

Advance Preparation for Leader

- ✦ Post the newsprint lists of ideas for implementing peacemaking in the eight different areas of the *Commitment to Peacemaking* that were created in Session 2.
- ✦ Type the Planning Chart for use in Activity 3 into a full-size sheet of paper and make copies.

Introduction – 2 minutes

Begin with prayer. Review the previous sessions.

Activity 1 – 20 minutes

1. Invite the participants to walk around and look at the lists posted on the newsprint or ask volunteers to read each list aloud.
2. Ask the following questions:
 - What common threads do you see?
 - Which ideas can be combined?
 - What new ideas would you like to add?

Make the suggested changes, checking that the participants agree with the revisions.

3. Hold an energy vote on the ideas. Give each participant five small colored stick-on dots, each representing an “energy dollar.” Tell the participants that they each have five energy dollars to spend on the ideas for which they have the most energy. Explain that this is not a question of which ideas they “should” choose; it is a matter of identifying the ideas for which they have the most energy. They can divide their energy dollars among several ideas or invest them all on one idea.
4. After the participants have voted, take a new sheet of newsprint and write the ideas in order of the number of energy dollars given to them. Those without votes can be set aside but may be revisited later.

Activity 2 – 15 minutes

1. Ask each participant to choose an idea from the new list that he or she wants to explore further. Small groups will form around each idea. Ideas not selected by a small group can be set aside and revisited later.
2. Ask each group to think about where they would like the congregation to be with this idea in five years. Provide each group with newsprint to record the notes from the brainstorming session.
3. Ask each small group to develop headlines for a local newspaper or Web site story related to the idea five years in the future. Example: “First Presbyterian Church Draws Record Crowds for Interfaith Symposium on Peace.”
4. Ask each group to share their headlines and ideas with the whole group.

Activity 3 – 30 minutes

1. Ask the same small groups to use the Planning Chart below to design an action plan for the next year that will start the congregation working toward this goal/headline.
2. Give each group copies of the chart below to design the action plan.
3. Invite each small group to share its action plan with the whole group.

Planning Chart

Peacemaking Goal:

Who? (person[s] responsible):

What? (action to be taken):

When? (due date):

To whom? (will you report):

Closing Prayer – 1 minute

4. Name each of the eight areas of peacemaking ministry identified by the *Commitment to Peacemaking* (Worship, Prayer and Bible study, Peacemaking in families and in community living, Community ministries, Study and response to global issues, Global security, Making peace with the earth, Receiving the Peacemaking Offering). As each area is named, ask the participants to move to the section of the room that best corresponds with their feelings about that area of peacemaking. After each move, ask a few volunteers to explain briefly why they responded as they did.
5. After all eight areas of the *Commitment* have been considered, invite the participants to return to their seats. Discuss the activity using the following questions and note the responses on newsprint:
 - Where did you observe the most agreement?
 - Where did you observe the least agreement?

Activity 2 – 20 minutes

1. Discuss the following questions:
 - How has the *Commitment to Peacemaking* impacted the congregation's ministry?
 - How has the congregation's ministry been different as a result of the *Commitment to Peacemaking*?
 - What changes would you recommend to the *Commitment to Peacemaking* to reflect the congregation's ministry?
2. Lead a discernment prayer in which the leader mentions each of the eight areas of peacemaking one at a time and the participants offer prayers, either silently or aloud, for God's direction in that area.

3. Discuss next steps to be taken. These could include reaffirming the *Commitment to Peacemaking* (if the session is taking part in this study), deciding to recommend that the session reaffirm the *Commitment to Peacemaking* (if the participants are a group other than the session), holding an event to remind the congregation of the *Commitment*, focusing ministry in one area of the *Commitment*, or whatever steps the group deems appropriate.

Activity 3 – 40 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of three or four.
2. Post the sheets of newsprint with each area of peacemaking ministry (Worship, Prayer and Bible study, Peacemaking in families and in community living, Community ministries, Study and response to global issues, Global security, Making peace with the earth, Receiving the Peacemaking Offering) in separate stations around the room.
3. Ask each small group to begin at one of the stations. Invite each group to brainstorm peacemaking ministries for the congregation in that particular area. Each group should list all of its ideas on the newsprint.
4. After 10 minutes, ring a bell or make an announcement for the groups to move to the next station, leaving the newsprint behind. The groups do not critique ideas of previous groups but add new ideas or develop ideas of previous groups, continuing to build the list. Have the groups move to three or four stations, depending on the time available for this activity. Keep the newsprint for Session 3.

Closing Prayer – 1 minute