

# Peace Cards

for

*A Season of*  *Peace*

Peacemaking begins with individuals and families, then quickly moves to our communities and the world. Peace Cards provide an opportunity for families to engage in practical and real conversations about peacemaking. Designed for a multigenerational time of sharing, Peace Cards encourage the whole family to share their perspectives, life experiences, and hopes about peace in their homes, community, and the world.

Keep the cards on the table where your family eats. At mealtime, draw a card and read the statement or question out loud. Give everyone an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas and let the conversation grow into actions. Peace Cards can be used anywhere and with anyone—at dinner time or family gatherings, during fellowship meals at church, or as icebreakers for study groups or in-depth conversations on long bus rides with youth. Use one card per day during the Season of Peace and let the conversations become avenues for peacemaking.

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## INTERVENING FOR PEACE

**Question:** You are at the grocery store and see a parent yelling at his/her young child. When you are in the parking lot, you see the same parent acting out of control—screaming at the child and spanking him. What do you do?

**Action:** Talk about reasons to intervene and not to intervene. Make a list of choices and phrases to use to calm a volatile situation.

**Prayer:** God of peace and calmness, we get frustrated and overwhelmed with each other. We know that screaming and hitting only make things worse. Help us to take control of our reactions. Help us to help each other respond with kinder words and gentler touch. Amen.

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## PEACE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

**Question:** Family members can get on our nerves—that's part of living together. How we respond can build up or break down a family. How can the phrase "use your words" help in family situations that frustrate you?

**Action:** Put a "use your words" list of phrases on the refrigerator as a helpful tool to calm tense situations at home when family members are frustrated with each other.

**Prayer:** Creator, you created us both to be unique individuals and to be in relationship. Sometimes our frustrations of living in community get the better of us. Help us to be more creative in lovingly addressing our frustrations with those we love. Amen.



## PEACE AT HOME

**Question:** Sometimes, violence at home can make it unsafe for the grown-ups to be in that home together, so one partner leaves for a safer place; mothers often take their children. It's a very scary time, especially for the children. How can we help a family struggling with domestic violence?

**Action:** Find out what resources in your area can help families affected by domestic violence. Collect toiletry items or children's books and deliver them to a shelter for these families.

**Prayer:** God, you intended our families to be places of love, support, and refuge, but they can also be places of violence, fear, and pain. Show us how to be arms of welcome, voices of love, and homes of nurturing embraces. Amen.

3



## PEACE IN THE FAMILY

**Question:** A friend at school has bruises on his arms and legs. He says his daddy beat him. What can you do? How can you help your friend?

**Action:** Make a list of adults you can turn to for help. Write the names and phone numbers down and put it in a safe place. Let young people know that if they are not being heard by their parents, there are other adults to turn to until their concern is heard and understood.

**Prayer:** Holy God, we are grateful for people who love us and care about us. Thank you for putting so many loving people in our lives. Amen.

4



## PEACE IN THE COMMUNITY

**Question:** Read Micah 6:8. What does "do justice" mean and how can we live that out?

**Action:** Think about things that aren't fair or just in your community, such as unequal wages, access to community parks and swimming pools, or representation on community boards. As a family, write a letter to your leaders (mayor or city or county councilmembers) expressing these concerns and ways to address them. Start "doing justice" to make a difference in your community.

**Prayer:** God of justice, we notice when things aren't fair. Give us confidence to speak up and to be your hands and feet to make our world more just for all. Amen.

5



## PEACE IN EVERY FAMILY

**Question:** In 1989, the United Nations adopted 54 principles that became the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, naming rights for every child in the world. What do you think some of those rights should be?

**Action:** One of the rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is freedom of expression. Think of ways you can use that right to share your ideas. Draw a picture showing what you think are important rights for all children.

**Prayer:** God of grown-ups and children, we often take our rights as people for granted. Help us to speak out when rights are being disregarded. Help us to call attention to injustices against other humans, and especially against children. Amen.

6



## HEALING AND PEACE

**Question:** In April 2015, the world learned of the devastating earthquake in Nepal. More than 5,000 people died, and more than 10,200 were injured. How can we respond to such a devastating event from thousands of miles away?

**Action:** Write a prayer for those affected by the earthquake and pray it with your family. Learn how people in Nepal live. Contact agencies such as Presbyterian Disaster Assistance or the Red Cross to find out how they are helping and how you can too.

**Prayer:** God, don't let us sit idle when others are suffering. Energize us to reach out in love to those suffering inconceivable hardships. Open our hearts and purse strings to those in need. Amen.

7



## KNOW JUSTICE, KNOW PEACE

**Question:** May 2015 was Baltimore's deadliest month in years, after protests over Freddie Gray's death in police custody. Some say this violence is due to frustrations between citizens and police. How can we express our outrage at injustices so that people don't respond with guns and violence?

**Action:** How can we call attention peacefully when we see unjust systems? Make a collage of pictures and words with peace-filled responses.

**Prayer:** God, we are outraged when people are not treated fairly. We don't understand why systems target some groups due to an attribute that sets them apart. We are all created in your image. Help us to imagine a world of peace and justice, and guide us as we strive to reach that goal. Amen.

8



## PEACE FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

**Question:** What does racism mean? Where do we see racism in our daily lives?

**Action:** Think about ways we respond to racism in our daily lives. Talk about ways to respond if someone tells a racially insensitive joke or excludes someone based on the color of their skin. As a family, determine ways you can be more inclusive and can be more active in standing up to racial injustices in your community.

**Prayer:** God, you created each of us in your image, yet we tend to only see how different we are from one another. Give us new eyes to see the beauty you created in each of us. Give us new hearts to love one another just as we are. Amen.

9



## LOVE, HATE, AND PEACE

**Question:** Maya Angelou once said, "Hate, it has caused a lot of problems in the world, but has not solved one yet." Do you believe that this quote is true? Why or why not?

**Action:** Prayer is a natural outpouring of love. With your family complete the "Love Thy Neighbor" prayer and pray it together. Love thy \_\_\_\_\_ neighbor. Filling in the blank with words like "worried, frightened, angry, etc.," make a love-thy-neighbor list and pray it as a family.

**Prayer:** God of love, you want us to love, not hate. You expect us to show compassion, not hostility. This isn't easy to do when we are angry about injustices. Help us to love our neighbors and to solve our conflicts with love. Amen.

10



## PEACE FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

**Question:** You are at school and a kid is yelling at another kid using racial slurs. A group has gathered to watch the altercation. What can you do?

**Action:** Your principal asks you to address the student body during the morning announcements. It is a great opportunity to address this situation. What will you say to your peers? With your family's help, write your announcement.

**Prayer:** God of the voiceless, it isn't OK for us to be silent when we see people being mistreated. It isn't OK for us to be silent when we hear cruel words hurt others. Give us courage to be your voice of calm, compassion, and righteousness. Give us courage to speak up and say, "This is not OK." Amen.

11



## NONVIOLENCE AND PEACE

**Question:** What would our community look like if there were no violence? What would fill the pages of our newspapers?

**Action:** Look at your daily newspaper. Count how many articles mention violence or guns. Rewrite the story headlines for a world of peace instead of violence. What would the news be about then?

**Prayer:** God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, it is hard for us to imagine a day without violence and destruction. Help us to imagine how beautiful that world would be. Help us to live toward the reality of living in a peace-filled world. Amen.

12



## PEACE WITHIN EACH INDIVIDUAL

**Question:** A friend tells you he's known he's gay since he was a child. He wants to tell his parents and pastor but is afraid they won't accept him. How can you show your friend God's love and compassion?

**Action:** We talk about being [Big Tent] churches where everyone is welcome. Would everyone feel welcome at your church? As a family, talk about how we make sure people feel welcome in the house of God regardless of sexual orientation.

**Prayer:** Creator, help us to truly be a welcoming community where everyone belongs. Help us to set aside fears of differences to find our common ground. Open our hearts and minds to truly be a welcoming community of faith. Amen.

13



## PEACE AND WELCOME

**Question:** We've all grown up being taught not to talk to strangers. Yet Scripture tells us to welcome the stranger. (Romans 12:13, Matthew 25:35-40) What does that mean, and how can we do it?

**Action:** Look around your church and community. Who feels welcomed, and who might not? Write the words ALL ARE WELCOMED in chalk on your church's sidewalk or parking lot. Be a welcoming presence to all. Volunteer to greet on Sunday morning so you can welcome all to worship.

**Prayer:** God of hospitality, we've all had times when we felt like strangers or were uncomfortable in a new situation. Help us to recognize that feeling in others and to welcome them into every facet of our lives. Amen.

14



## PEACE AND DISAGREEMENT

**Question:** In the US, guns kill an average of 31,000 people per year. Children account for 2,800 of those deaths from gun violence ([www.Bradycampaign.org](http://www.Bradycampaign.org)). What can we do [and what can our children do] to change these statistics?

**Action:** Count the number of times you read about guns in the newspaper. Write a letter to your senator or congressperson about your concerns regarding guns and the lives they are destroying in our communities.

**Prayer:** God, whose love is stronger than any weapon, wrap us in your loving arms. Shield us from harm and melt our hearts of hatred. Help us to bandage each other's wounds with forgiveness and compassion. Amen.

15



## EMBRACING GOD'S PEACE

**Question:** In June, nine members of a Bible study group were shot and killed at a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina. The victims' families expressed their anger and grief and also told the young man arrested for the crime he was forgiven. How can we respond to this tragedy?

**Action:** Send a picture, letter, or poem to the members of Emanuel AME Church (110 Calhoun Street, Charleston SC 29401) to express your condolences. Pray for peace for Charleston and our nation.

**Prayer:** God, we know your heart was the first to break at the violence in Charleston. Let our prayers for peace and healing be more than words—may they consume hatred and cover the world with justice, and love. Amen.

16



## PLAYING AND PRAYING FOR PEACE

**Question:** How can we make working for peace and justice a part of our daily work and play?

**Action:** Draw a hopscotch board, and write a short prayer for peace in each numbered square. Pray the prayers as you move through the different squares.

**Prayer:** God of peace, how do we put peacemaking at the forefront of everything we do? God of justice, how do we make our actions models of justice and fairness? God of compassion, how do we treat each other with compassion and kindness even when we are angry with each other? Guide us in our work and play so that we are known as your children—peacemakers, justice doers, and compassionate people. Amen.

17



## THE IMAGE OF GOD AND PEACE

**Question:** What is a child of God, and what does it mean to be a child of God?

**Action:** Make a poster listing all of the attributes of children of God. Example: We are children of God. Short, Tall, Serious, Silly, Happy, Worried . . . At the bottom of the poster, write "created in the image of God and embraced by God's love." Does it make you think of people differently when you see each of them as a child of God?

**Prayer:** God of us all, we are your children created in your image and embraced by your love. That changes everything. Thank you. Amen.

18



## PEACE AND STEREOTYPES

**Question:** You hear that a young man was arrested for shoplifting. What are your images of him, his background, his reasons for shoplifting? What influences how you see him? How can we change the assumptions we make about individuals?

**Action:** Write down 20 things you have in common with this person. Discuss ways we can see how we're alike before we judge ways we're different.

**Prayer:** Holy God, you made us each unique, different, and special, and you made us the same with feelings, hopes, and dreams. Help us to cherish our common ground so our differences don't become barriers to understanding and friendship. Amen.

19



## BUILDING BLOCKS OF PEACE

**Question:** What do you need to become a peacemaker on a daily basis?

**Action:** Write "Take What You Need" in big letters in the middle of a piece of paper. At the bottom, cut two-inch-long strips to make about twelve pieces of fringe attached to the bottom of the paper. On the strips write the things you need to be a peacemaker. (Example: patience, acceptance, understanding) Hang the paper on your refrigerator so family members can tear off what they need.

**Prayer:** God of peace and justice, we want to be peacemakers for you, but sometimes our resources are depleted. Grant us more of all the things we need to be better servants for you. Amen.

20



## PEACE BE WITH YOU

**Question:** What are you concerned about in your community or the world? Who needs your prayers for peace and justice?

**Action:** Write each of your concerns on a Popsicle® stick or strip of paper. Place the concerns in a bucket or cup and label it "Prayers." Place it on your table, and encourage family members to draw a concern and pray for that issue.

**Prayer:** God of mercy, sometimes we get overwhelmed and we need help praying for all that we are worried about. Guide us in our prayers for our concerns and for the concerns of others. Though sometimes we hear only silence, remind us that even in silence you are at work in our world. Amen.

21



## PEACE IS AS PEACE DOES

**Question:** What are some ways we can show we care about the people we live in community with?

**Action:** Write signs of love on Post-it® notes and place them on a door in your house. Some signs of love might be "walk the dog," "be patient," "pick up trash," "hug someone," etc. Write as many signs of love as you can think of. When you walk by the door, grab a note and do it.

**Prayer:** God of big and small things, remind us that little signs of love and compassion can make a big difference in how we live with each other. Help us remember that holding hands and unloading the dishwasher are huge signs of love. Remind us that our small actions can make a tremendous impact on those around us. Amen.

22



## HEALING AND PEACE

**Question:** Talk about all the reasons you think someone might be homeless. Is this a justice issue?

**Action:** Gather small toiletry items, nonperishable snack foods, socks, gloves, etc. Place them in a closable plastic bag. Keep the bag in your car, and if you see a homeless person, offer it to them. Learn about the needs of the homeless in your community and find ways you can make a difference.

**Prayer:** God of love, help us to slow down and notice the people living on the streets, parks, and shelters in our community. Help us hear their stories and get to know them. Help us find ways to be compassionate and helpful without being patronizing. Amen.

23



## PEACE THROUGH LOVE

**Question:** "Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky." (Psalm 85:10-11) What do these verses mean to us as we try to live as peacemakers?

**Action:** Use a clothesline to create a prayer wall in your home. Write prayers asking for help moving our world to a time of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace. Hang the prayers on the clothesline. Add to the prayer wall during the week.

**Prayer:** God, you love us as we are but know that we can do better. Ignite the fires of justice in us that move us toward a world of peace. Mold us into the peacemakers you created us to be. Amen.

24



## VISUALIZING PEACE

**Question:** What does peace feel like?

**Action:** Draw a picture of what peace feels like. Include in the picture your family, neighbors, school, community, and church. Would everything look different if it felt like peace all the time?

**Prayer:** God of peace, we know that peace is more than the absence of war and violence and discord. We know that peace is a feeling, a way of being, a way of living. Helps us to begin to create the world that feels like peace by the little things we do. Amen.

25



## RISKING THEIR LIVES FOR PEACE

**Question:** Who are first responders? How are first responders peacemakers?

**Action:** Find a way to say thank you to the first responders (police, firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics) who bring peace to chaotic situations in your community. Bake cookies for them, clean up brush or snow around fire hydrants, or place a huge thank-you card outside their building.

**Prayer:** God who are always there, when we cry out to you, you send first responders to our rescue. They step into harm's way to reach out with a comforting hand. We pray for their safety. We thank you for the gifts you have given them that they so generously share to bring peace and calm to the frightening times in our lives. Amen.

26



## POLITICS, RELIGION, AND PEACE

**Question:** Should politics and religion be separate? Should your religious beliefs influence your political beliefs? Why or why not?

**Action:** On a piece of paper, mark one column “political beliefs” and another “religious beliefs.” Talk about the things you believe in. Which column does each belief fit in? Does one set of beliefs influence the other? Do any contradict each other? Does looking at them this way make you want to reexamine any beliefs?

**Prayer:** God who created us as complex individuals, we live that complexity every day. Sometimes it’s hard to make our hearts and minds work together or to stand up for our beliefs. Give us confidence to defend what we know is right. Amen.

27



## PEACE THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING

**Question:** In the days after the murder of nine members of Emanuel AME Church, a lot of conversation focused on the Confederate flag flying over the South Carolina statehouse. People had very different views on what it stood for. Did flying that flag over the statehouse perpetuate an unjust system or honor history?

**Action:** When good things happen, place a note about them in a jar. When sad things happen, read the notes as reminders that God is good and is with us during the bad times.

**Prayer:** God of us all, we don’t always see things through the same eyes. Help us to be kind to one another even when we disagree. But don’t let us keep quiet over what is hurtful and divisive. Amen.

28



## LIVING PEACE THROUGH OUR ACTIONS

**Question:** Nelson Mandela said, “No one is born hating another person . . . People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” How can we teach people to love?

**Action:** Fill a box with cards naming kind or loving acts. (Examples: Call your grandmother. Rake leaves in your neighbor’s yard. Invite the new kid to eat at your table.) Draw a card and perform the kind act. In a bad mood? Draw two cards!

**Prayer:** God, who know us well and love us anyway, help us to love each other. Retrain our minds and hearts to love. Give us hearts of acceptance and patience. Amen.

29



## PEACE BEGINNING WITH ME

**Question:** A beloved peace hymn begins, “Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.” But how do we begin with ourselves?

**Action:** Find a quiet place, turn off the lights, sit down, focus on your breathing. Listen for God’s guidance. Think of ways you can change to bring peace to the world, ways to advocate for peace and stand up for the oppressed. Ask God to help you on this journey.

**Prayer:** God, you created us loving and kind, yet we get off track. It’s easier to see changes others need than those we need. Give us energy for the journey of change to become peacemakers. Let our journey inspire others so that, together with your help, we can change the world. Amen.

30