



practice discipleship
young adults of the de-md synod

Peace & Conflict

Curriculum Introduction

Introduction to Practice Discipleship:

Practice Discipleship is a ministry by, with, and for Young Adults in the Delaware-Maryland Synod. Our ministry brings about many gifts and we aim to be the hands and feet of God throughout our synod and the world! By creating spaces for intentional and purposeful relationships grounded in Christ we are able to practice our discipleship. We build brave spaces where we explore together what it means to be the people of God and we discern our call to discipleship by listening to each other, to the needs of the world, and to God.

Background, preparation and supplies:

We yearn for peace in a time of palpable polarization and populism; daily reports of violence in our communities and around the world; tensions within our homes, workplaces, congregations and communities; injustice, inequality and division. We hear God calling us to be peacemakers — but in the midst of all this unrest, peace feels farther and farther out of reach.

As a community of faith, guided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) social statement [For Peace in God's World](#) (1995), we developed this curriculum to explore: What is peace? How is it present in our lives? How is it absent? Who are the peacemakers that walk among us, and those that have gone before us? How are we called to be peacemakers in a broken world?

This curriculum often asks more questions than it provides answers and that is intentional. The curriculum aims to build comfort with the concept of peace as a process, complex and

inherently full of tension. Parts of the curriculum intend to offer a foundation and tools for creating peace processes in our own relationships and communities.

We hope that this curriculum is structured in a way that Young Adults can use, give, share and create space to have discussions about peace and conflict. Session 1 is designed to develop a shared vocabulary to talk about peace and conflict. Two short communication workshops introduce tactics to foster safe and productive conversation: nonviolent communication and active listening. Session 2 dives into portions of the ELCA social statement on peace, to explore what it means to make peace. Session 3 introduces well-known peacemakers and peacemaking organizations as a lens to explore our call to make peace, and Session 4 offers tactics and opportunities to get involved in peacemaking in our communities and in our world.

Space and time has been set aside to explore these concepts through individual reflection, small group discussion, conversation and examination of source material as a large group.

We encourage users to read through each session and its corresponding slide deck to prepare as well as identify supplies needed. Each session has suggested timings and questions listed however we empower users to adapt the sessions in ways that are most meaningful to them and the participants using this curriculum to practice their discipleship.

Supplies: *slide decks for Sessions 1-4, Bibles/copies of selected bible passages, items for meditation (e.g. paper & pens/markers/crayons, finger labyrinths, fidget spinners or tactile toys/puzzles), copies of the writings from selected peacemakers, printed copy of readings for final meditation*

Optional supplies: *copies of the ELCA social statement [For Peace in God's World](#), easel or whiteboard and markers (to record 'burning questions' throughout the sessions), notecards/sticky notes for key term definitions*

Other resources: *ELCA social statement [The Church in Society](#), [LWF Peacebuilders Training](#), [Living Lutheran study guide](#), ELCA [social message on Community Violence](#), ELCA social statement on [economic life](#)*

The Role of Leaders:

Session leaders are facilitators of discussion and spiritual exploration among the group. They should have previously engaged in discussion and exploration about the topics at hand: peace, conflict, violence, justice; the scripture, ELCA social statements and other writings used in this curriculum. They are not expected to (should not) provide authoritative answers to questions.

At A Glance: Session 1 - What is Peace?

The first session, “What is Peace?” aims to develop a shared vocabulary and context for talking about peace, justice, violence and conflict throughout the rest of the sessions. Participants will explore various definitions and conditions (including scriptural, social and personal) of *peace* and its opposite.

During Session 1, participants will begin to develop comfort with the group dynamic, and leaders should set the foundation for a safe space to share and process personal perspectives and experiences that will influence discussion throughout the curriculum.

Session 1 ends with an introduction to key principles of conflict resolution that will provide guidance throughout the discussion.

Supplies: *slide deck, Bibles/copies of selected bible passages, items for meditation (e.g. paper & pens/markers/crayons, finger labyrinths, fidget spinners or tactile toys/puzzles)*

Optional supplies: *easel or whiteboard and markers (to record ‘burning questions’ throughout the sessions), notecards/sticky notes for key term definitions*

Scripture in this session:

- *Micah 6:8-9*
- *Isaiah 54:11-15*
- *Ephesians 6:15*
- *Ephesians 2:13-22*
- *Revelation 21:1,4*
- *Genesis 4:3-12*
- *Amos 3:1-2, 9-10*
- *Matthew 10:34-39*
- *Romans 3:9-20*
- *Galatians 2:11-14*

At A Glance: Session 2 - What Does It Mean to be ‘Peacemakers?’

Session 2 introduces the 1995 ELCA social statement *For Peace in God’s World*. The session

focuses on how the Church defines its call as a peacemaking body, and explores the relevance of the role as well as the tension inherent in working toward peace on Earth.

Session leaders should familiarize themselves with the [ELCA's social statement *For Peace in God's World*](#) and the concept of peace as a restorative relational force in human society.

Supplies: slide deck, items for meditation (e.g. paper & pens/markers/crayons, finger labyrinths, fidget spinners or tactile toys/puzzles)

Optional supplies: easel or whiteboard and markers (to record 'burning questions' throughout the sessions), Bibles, copies of the Peace social statement

Scripture in this session:

- Luke 2:8-14
- Luke 12:49-53

At A Glance: Session 3 - Who Are the Peacemakers?

Session 3 explores the legacy of peacemaking figures in scripture and of more recent cultural peacemakers. The session ends by introducing the peacemaking tasks outlined in the 1995 ELCA social statement *For Peace in God's World*.

Session leaders should familiarize themselves with the [ELCA's social statement *For Peace in God's World*](#), the concept of peace as a restorative relational force in human society, and, briefly, the peacemakers and peacemaking groups identified in this session.

Supplies: slide deck, Bibles/copies of selected bible passages, copies of the writings from selected peacemakers, items for meditation (e.g. paper & pens/markers/crayons, finger labyrinths, fidget spinners or tactile toys/puzzles)

Optional supplies: easel or whiteboard and markers (to record 'burning questions' throughout the sessions)

Scripture in this session:

- Genesis 45:4-11
- Esther 3:13-14, 4:1-16
- Daniel 1:11-20
- John 16:19-33
- Acts 15:1-2, 7-11

- *Romans 5:1-10*
- *James 3:17-18*
- *Luke 12:15-21*
- *Matthew 22:34-40*

At A Glance: Session 4 - How Do We 'Go In Peace?'

Session 4 brings the ongoing discussion about peace and conflict to an open end, introducing opportunities and tactics for meditation and reflection as well as negotiation and mediation, concrete tools for peacemaking in daily life. It is a fast overview, but participants should feel some sense of closure and optimism, and some threads to follow for future exploration.

Session leaders should familiarize themselves with the [ELCA's social statement *For Peace in God's World*](#), Module 6 of the [LWF Peacebuilders Training](#), tactics for finding or making personal peace, and the processes of negotiation and mediation.

Supplies: *slide deck, Bibles/copies of selected bible passages, items for meditation (e.g. paper & pens/markers/crayons, finger labyrinths, fidget spinners), printed copy of readings for final meditation*

Optional supplies: *easel or whiteboard and markers (for "burning questions" list), post-it notes*

Scripture in this session:

- *John 15:9-19*
- *Matthew 18:15-17, 19*
- *John 14:27*



practice discipleship
young adults of the de-md synod

Peace & Conflict 2020

Session 1: What is Peace?

Introduction to the session:

Welcome to our first full group discussion of the retreat! Throughout the following 4 sessions, we will be exploring the concept of peace: reflecting on our experience of peace (or a lack thereof) in the world, delving into examples of peace and conflict from the Bible, reflecting on resources from the national and global Lutheran Church and engaging in conversation with our peers gathered here.

To begin this discussion, Session 1 focuses on communally defining key terms and establishing a common language around peace that we can use throughout our conversations.

This session should last **1 hour 5 minutes**, followed by a **20-minute** conflict resolution workshop, **35 minutes** of small group discussion and **15 minutes** for individual reflection.

Background, preparation and supplies:

Session leaders should familiarize themselves with the [ELCA's social statement *For Peace in God's World*](#), the concept of peace as a restorative relational force in human society, and tactics for nonviolent communication and active listening.

Supplies: slide deck, Bibles/copies of selected bible passages, paper & pens/markers/crayons for personal reflection

Optional supplies: easel or whiteboard and markers (to record 'burning questions' throughout the sessions), notecards/sticky notes for key term definitions

Session outline:

1. **Introduction (10 minutes).** The session leaders should introduce the Peace & Conflict theme, and set expectations for the four sessions:
 - a. Peace & Conflict is a relevant topic in our times and relates to many areas of our lives - personal, professional, in our churches, relationships and communities.
 - b. Each session will introduce new concepts, and includes opportunities for small and large group discussion. After each session there will be breakout group discussion, followed by time set aside for individual reflection. All of these spaces are intentionally created so group members can engage with the content in different ways.
 - c. Session 1 aims to create a shared vocabulary for the conversation throughout all four sessions, and ends with an introduction to conflict resolution topics.
2. Peace & Conflict is not an easy topic; one major objective of the session is to explore discomfort and tension surrounding peace & conflict. It is important that all participants work to create a safe space for exploration, built on mutual respect and care.
3. Leaders should share that each session draws from scripture, Jesus' teachings, resources and writings from the ELCA, other theologians and thinkers in our world, and the experiences and perspectives of the group members gathered here. Session leaders are facilitators - not here to answer questions.
4. Introduce the threefold Word of God:
 - a. **God's Word is living.** We encounter it in the person, ministry, and ongoing activity of Jesus Christ.
 - b. **God's Word is proclaimed.** When we share the Gospel of Jesus with each other in any form, we understand God's Word to be coming to us in a new and life-giving way.
 - c. **God's Word is written in scripture,** collected in the Bible so that we can read it and better understand it and share it with others.
5. Invite the group to pray together, using the prayer provided, to start the session.
([Prayer source, ELCA](#))
6. **Defining Peace (15 minutes).** The next section guides participants in defining peace, conflict, scriptural and cultural understandings and attitudes.
7. Leaders should ask participants to write their own definitions of peace, considering

examples of peace in their own lives. The first round of this activity is individual; take ~2 minutes before moving on.

8. Leaders should ask participants to partner with another participant and come up with a shared definition of peace. If time allows, pairs can join to create a four-person definition.
9. After ~5 minutes, call the large group back together and ask groups to share their definitions/insight into their process of comparing and combining definitions. Ask participants to reflect on what their definitions and experiences have in common. Write common words/images on a whiteboard or easel if desired.
10. Remaining with the large group, leaders should ask participants: What is the *opposite* of peace?
11. Share some common/scriptural language to describe the opposite of peace. Ask participants: What feelings do these words bring up for us? What words are most comfortable?
12. Leaders should briefly introduce the 1995 ELCA social statement, *For Peace in God's World*, and note that session 2 will explore the statement in greater detail. For now, highlight the definitions from the statement:
 - a. **Final peace**, the peace of God's eternal reign - God's gift to humankind, the call to proclaim the Gospel of God's final peace, and work for earthly peace in our time here.
 - b. **Earthly peace** - relationships among people that are just, harmonious, and free from war.
13. **Scriptural definitions of peace (15 minutes)**. Begin to explore definitions of peace in the Bible by sharing words for peace in Biblical languages: *shalom* (Hebrew) and *eirēnē* (Greek). Note the contextual meanings in each language, and point out that 'peace' is also used as a greeting throughout the Bible.
14. Ask participants to break up into 5 groups. Depending on the group dynamics so far, mix up the large group by counting off to 5, or ask participants to form groups in their areas. (Note: If the group is larger than 30-35, consider breaking into 6 or 7 groups and assigning certain readings to multiple groups. The small groups should be small enough that all participants can voice their opinions.)
 - a. Assign each group a scripture reading:
 - i. Micah 6:8-9

- ii. Isaiah 54:11-15
 - iii. Ephesians 6:15
 - iv. Ephesians 2:13-22
 - v. Revelation 21:1,4
- b. Ask the groups to read among themselves and discuss the passage in the context of the discussion so far; questions are provided as a starting point.
 - c. After 6-8 minutes, call the large group back together and ask groups to share key takeaways from their discussions.

15. **Cultural definitions of peace (10 minutes).** First, introduce the dictionary entry in English. Then display the well-known statements/definitions of peace from the following leaders just long enough for participants to read. Invite volunteers to read each statement out loud if desired.

- a. Jane Addams: pioneer social worker in America, feminist, and internationalist active in the early 1900s; won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931
- b. Mahatma Gandhi: Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist, and political ethicist, who employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence from British Rule
- c. Martin Luther King, Jr.: American reverend and civil rights leader, who used nonviolent resistance to work toward equality for African-Americans
- d. Ronald Reagan: 40th US president and influential voice of modern conservatism
- e. Sheila Walsh: American contemporary Christian vocalist, songwriter, evangelist, author, inspirational speaker, and talk-show host
- f. Barack Obama: American attorney, 44th president and first African-American president of the United States

16. Leaders should ask the large group to reflect briefly on similarities and conflicts between these statements.

17. Transition into defining/exploring the opposite of peace, using the common construction of the previous peace statements: "Peace is not [this], but [that]."

18. Lead the group in exploring scriptural examples of non-peace **(12 minutes)**:

- a. Note that *Pax Romana* was peace in name (what people were experiencing in Biblical times) but wasn't actually peaceful; it was repressive and based on

- inequality.
- b. Ask participants to reform the same small groups to read about non-peace in the Bible. Assign each group one of the following passages and ask them to read and reflect in their small groups:
 - i. Genesis 4:3-12
 - ii. Amos 3:1-2, 9-10
 - iii. Matthew 10:34-39
 - iv. Romans 3:9-20
 - v. Galatians 2:11-14
 - c. After 6-8 minutes, call the large group back together and ask groups to share key takeaways from their discussions.
19. In the large group, ask participants to share examples of non-peace in their own contexts. **(8 minutes)** Leaders can choose to ask additional probing questions such as:
- a. What other manifestations of violence are there besides physical? Specific examples of sexual, emotional, psychological, spiritual violence? Can you think of other types?
 - b. In addition to harming our physical bodies, how else does violence damage an individual? Emotionally? Mentally? Spiritually?
 - c. Questions adapted from the [Living Lutheran study guide](#)
20. Show the pre-created list of examples of non-peace for reflection: Are there any examples not mentioned by the group? Are any of these surprising?
21. Ask for a volunteer to read the quote from the XIVth Dalai Lama. Pose a question to the group: How does this definition of peace compare to the definitions we have explored here? Does this change the way we approach peacemaking processes moving forward?
22. Leaders should acknowledge the 'cliffhanger' ending to this session, and feelings that peace is elusive or impossible.
23. Share the excerpt from the introduction to the peace social statement, as a foundation of the discussions planned for the upcoming sessions: exploring what it means to be called to be peacemakers, identifying and learning from other peacemakers, and talking about how we 'go in peace' as a community called by God.
- a. Outline immediate next steps for participants: a 5-minute break before

reconvening in the large group space for a short workshop on non-violent communication, followed by time for small group discussion and individual reflection.

24. **Nonviolent Communication & Active Listening Workshop (25 minutes).** Leaders should introduce these two tactics, and the current exercise, as tools for creating safe space for productive conversations and conflict resolution. Note that these tactics may be used during conversations throughout the curriculum, and remind participants that language is important.
25. Moving through slides 33-36, leaders should define nonviolent communication and describe circumstances where it is best used.
26. Introduce the four steps of nonviolent communication, and ask participants to practice the model in pairs, perhaps using examples from their own lives.
27. Bring the group back together and check in that the tactic makes sense and is useful.
28. Leaders should introduce active listening, its use and the four steps to active listening. Model two types of interactions:
 - a. A conversation not using active listening (e.g. appear disengaged, interrupt, misinterpret, 'pile on' or commiserate)
 - b. A conversation using active listening – making sure to include all four steps
29. Ask participants to practice active listening in groups of 3. The groups will rotate so that each member has an opportunity to speak for 2 minutes, with each listener taking 1 minute to paraphrase, clarify and summarize what the speaker shared.
 - a. A speaker, who will share a situation in their life where they want to make peace
 - b. A listener, who will use the four steps to listen actively, paraphrase, clarify and summarize
 - c. An observer, who will provide feedback for the listener
30. After about 10 minutes, call the large group back together and ask for any final questions, clarifications or reflections on the communication tactics.
31. **Small Group Discussion (35 minutes).** Session leaders should introduce the breakout conversation topics on slide 45, and the purpose of small groups: to allow space for all voices in the conversation, explore different kinds of questions and build deeper connections among a more intimate group. Divide participants into smaller groups of 6-7 people. These small groups will stay together for all breakout discussions.

- a. Session leaders should also emphasize the importance of individual reflection time: to take a different approach to personal exploration, and make space for introverts and extroverts in the discussions. Suggest using the time to meditate, journal, reflect – individually or in pairs if desired.
 - b. Invite groups to find a space to meet, take a photo of the small group questions and individual reflection questions, and move into discussing what each individual is bringing to the topic.
32. After **35 minutes**, session leaders should circulate among the small groups to move into individual reflection (**15 minutes**). Consider playing meditative music to change the tone.



practice discipleship
young adults of the de-md synod

Peace & Conflict 2020

Session 2: What Does It Mean To Be ‘Peacemakers?’

Introduction to the session:

The Peace & Conflict curriculum explores the concept of peace: reflecting on our experience of peace (or a lack thereof) in the world, delving into examples of peace and conflict from the Bible, reflecting on resources from the national and global Lutheran Church and engaging in conversation with our peers gathered here.

Picking up the feeling from Session 1 that peace is elusive, Session 2 introduces the 1995 ELCA social statement *For Peace in God’s World*. The session focuses on how the Church defines its call as a peacemaking body, and explores the relevance of the role as well as the tension inherent in working toward peace on Earth.

This session should last **1 hour 20 minutes**, followed by **35 minutes** of small group discussion and **15 minutes** for individual reflection.

Background, preparation and supplies:

Session leaders should familiarize themselves with the [ELCA’s social statement *For Peace in God’s World*](#) and the concept of peace as a restorative relational force in human society.

Supplies: slide deck, paper & pens/markers/crayons for personal reflection

Optional supplies: easel or whiteboard and markers (to record ‘burning questions’ throughout the sessions), copies of the Peace social statement

Session outline:

1. **Introduction (5 minutes).** The session leaders should pick up the conversation where Session 1 ended: with tension, the feeling of peace being elusive, out of reach. Read the room: if the group is amenable and time allows, invite a quick debrief or reflection of Session 1 and lingering feelings/tension/questions for the following sessions.
 - a. Explain that Session 2 is a quick introduction to the 1995 ELCA social statement, *For Peace in God's World*. Alert participants that the session is somewhat dense, and deals with some big topics; they should expect to end the session with unresolved questions. Remind participants that part of the peacemaking process is to name tension and work through it in community.
 - b. Ask participants to hold questions about what it means to be 'peacemakers' - individual or as part of a Church body.
2. **Meditation on Scripture (5 minutes).** Leaders will read **Luke 2:8-14** twice. The first time through, ask participants to simply listen; the second time, ask participants to reflect on and/or name words, phrases or thoughts that stand out.
3. **Introducing the Peace Social Statement (5 minutes).** The next section guides participants through the first three sections of the ELCA social statement *For Peace in God's World*. The QR code is provided in case participants would like to read along with the full text; printed copies may also be provided. It is not critical for participants to read along.
4. Leaders should briefly share the historical context leading up to the writing and approval of the social statement on peace. It is not necessary to have a deep understanding of the timeline, but highlight several recognizable events, e.g. the end of the Cold War and Apartheid, Rodney King riots in the US, NAFTA signed, Rwandan genocide, and the world population, violent crime and unemployment in 1995.
 - a. Point out that in this time of many wars ending, beginning or ongoing around the world, the question that brought about this statement was the moral question of just war vs. pacifism.
5. Move quickly into the first section of the social statement: The God of Peace. The definition of peace here is founded in Genesis 1:27, that all humans are created in the image of God, and made for relationship. **(10 minutes)**
 - a. Sin is the breaking of relationships, between humans and God, and among humans. Broken relationships are the opposite of **earthly peace**.
 - b. The Gospel of peace (embodied in Jesus' presence in the world) promises that broken relationships among humans and God will be healed. This is the promise

of God's **final peace** - beyond anything humans can create on Earth, but accessible through God's love for us.

- c. (Slide 10) At this point leaders should check in briefly with the group and recall the definitions from Session 1 of **earthly peace** vs. **final peace**. Consider asking for reactions to both types of peace, whether one or both feel accessible to the group, and what questions still remain. This could be a short discussion, depending on time, or may be presented as questions to hold.
6. Section 2 introduces the role of the Church as a peacemaking body. **(10 minutes)**
 - a. In a world of broken relationships, tension and conflicts, the Church is called to proclaim and celebrate the Gospel of peace - God's promise.
 7. The social statement identifies four ways the Church is called to be a faithful presence for peace: a disturbing presence, a reconciling presence, a serving presence, and a deliberating presence.
 - a. The Church is called as a **faithfully disturbing presence** to name injustice and speak truth.
 - b. The Church is called as a **reconciling presence** to build and repair broken relationships, counteract dualistic 'good vs. evil' narratives and proclaim God's promise of peace for all people. True reconciliation is dependent on the faithful naming of injustice.
 - c. The Church is called as a **serving presence** to "hold power accountable, advocate justice, stand with those who are poor and vulnerable, provide sanctuary and meet human need."
 - d. The Church is called as a **deliberating presence** to lift up diversity of thought and perspective, create safe spaces to discuss and work together as a cohesive body committed to working for earthly peace. This might mean redefining what peace means, over and over again! The commitment of deliberation is to raise all voices for a shared vision. It depends on a foundation of mutual respect among differences.
 8. (Slide 18) Leaders should invite deliberation on sections 1-2 of the social statement, reflecting on the faithful presence of the Church in making peace. This conversation may happen in smaller groups with others seated nearby if the group needs a change of scene. **(10-12 minutes)**
 9. Section 3 **(15 minutes)** of the statement asks, *What does this peacemaking vocation look like in the world?*

- a. As peacemakers in community, we fulfill our call in many different contexts and communities: within geographic and political bodies, social circles, commitments and communities. Leaders should ask participants to consider their role as peacemakers in their own contexts.
- b. Point out that each set of personal contexts differs, which means approaches to peacemaking will also differ. Peace does not necessarily mean everyone agrees! But the Gospel of peace provides a common context and goal for deliberation.

10. Introduce a concise new definition of peace: difference in unity.

- a. This requires respect for differences - real, respectful acknowledgement of differing perspectives; empathy; and interest in learning about each other and coming closer to understanding.
- b. This must be founded on acknowledgement of common humanity, a sharing in the Gospel of peace.
- c. Peace may feel elusive - because sin is so present for us. But there is hope! In spite of the human tendency to break relationships, God continues to work through people!

11. On that hopeful note, leaders may choose to invite participants to *share peace with one another!* Leave time for all participants to greet each other, if practical **(5 minutes)**.

12. Gather the group back together to introduce the final section for this session, considering the time in which we live. **(15 minutes)**

- a. Leaders should restate that humans live in community. The [world's population](#) in 2020 (Jan. 18, 2020) is 7.76 billion... +77% in 25 years! There is richness in this community, and also complexity; we are increasingly interconnected, and have more access and connectivity.
- b. At the same time, we are more connected to communities that are very different from ours, and we are more polarized - we identify more strongly with our closest communities.
- c. Leaders should break down the pros and cons of each side of this coin:
 - i. Integration (interconnectedness) allows us to connect with and learn from each other. It also threatens inequality and domination at a very grand scale: "too big to fail."
 - ii. Particularity means we have very deep relationships within our closest communities; but it also threatens polarization and conflict: "divide and

conquer.”

13. Leaders should note that there are several sections of the social statement that have not been covered, but that the overview is pausing at this stage for reflection and conversation. Ask participants to identify and discuss (in large or small groups, depending on energy level) feelings or instances of tension in the statement so far.
 - a. Slide 29 includes some examples if the conversation needs a jumpstart. Not included on this slide is the line from section 3.B: “In spite of human enmity, God continues to work through people.”
 - b. Ask participants to reflect on their feelings toward this tension. What purpose does it serve?
14. To wrap up this part of the discussion, read the quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*: “There is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.” (Another version of this sentiment: “If the wind isn’t in your face, you’re going the wrong direction.”)
 - a. Note that Session 2 intentionally concludes without resolution; remind participants this is part of the process, and we are working through this together as a community of moral deliberation.
15. Leaders should introduce the breakout conversation topics and scripture reading (**Luke 12:49-53**) on slide 33, invite participants to gather in the same small groups as after Session 1, and remind the group of the purpose of small groups: to allow space for all voices in the conversation, explore different kinds of questions and build deeper connections among a more intimate group.
16. After **35 minutes**, session leaders should circulate among the small groups to move into individual reflection (**15 minutes**). Consider playing meditative music to change the tone.



practice discipleship
young adults of the de-md synod

Peace & Conflict 2020

Session 3: Who Are the Peacemakers?

Introduction to the session:

The Peace & Conflict curriculum explores the concept of peace: reflecting on our experience of peace (or lack thereof) in the world, delving into examples of peace and conflict from the Bible, reflecting on resources from the national and global Lutheran Church and engaging in conversation with our peers gathered here.

Session 3 explores the legacy of peacemaking figures in scripture and of more recent cultural peacemakers. The session ends by introducing the peacemaking tasks outlined in the 1995 ELCA social statement *For Peace in God's World*.

This session should last **1 hour 15 minutes**, followed by **35 minutes** of small group discussion and **15 minutes** for individual reflection.

Background, preparation and supplies:

Session leaders should familiarize themselves with the [ELCA's social statement *For Peace in God's World*](#), the concept of peace as a restorative relational force in human society, and, briefly, the peacemakers and peacemaking groups identified in this session.

Supplies: slide deck, Bibles/copies of selected bible passages, copies of the writings from selected peacemakers, paper & pens/markers/crayons for personal reflection

Optional supplies: easel or whiteboard and markers (to record 'burning questions' throughout the sessions)

Session outline:

1. **Introduction (5-10 minutes).** The session leaders should start with reflection, by asking participants what feelings, questions and thoughts are lingering. How is the group impacted by the tension at the end of Session 2?
2. The session leaders should introduce the objectives of Session 3, building on the concepts of peacemaking from Session 2:
 - a. Look at peacemakers living out their call to work toward earthly peace
 - b. Explore models for peacemaking in our world
 - c. Identify peacemaking groups
 - d. Introduce peacemaking tasks identified by the ELCA
 - e. Remind participants that it is important to name tension throughout the discussion as part of our deliberation (peacemaking) process
3. To kick off the discussion, leaders should ask participants to name or identify peacemakers. These could be biblical or cultural figures, or even personal acquaintances.
4. Ask participants to break up into 6 groups, joining those sitting nearby. Assign each group a scripture reading and ask them to read the scripture passage together and discuss the questions shown on slide 5:
 - a. Genesis 45:4-11
 - b. Esther 3:13-14, 4:1-16
 - c. Daniel 1:11-20
 - d. John 16:19-33
 - e. Acts 15:1-2, 7-11
 - f. Romans 5:1-10
5. **After 7-10 minutes,** leaders should call the group back together and ask the groups to share the peacemaker identified in their passage, and key points of their discussion.
6. Leaders should ask a volunteer to read John 16:32-33 on slide 6. Invite the group to think about, and possibly discuss briefly, the tension in Jesus' characterization from the end of session 2, as a divider, and as a peacemaker here. What is Jesus saying about

peace as a process, and about earthly and final peace?

7. **Three dimensions of earthly peace (10 minutes).** Leaders should recall the framework for deliberation in the Church, and the attention to the relationship between God's Word and God's world. Introduce the three dimensions of human society that are part of building earthly peace: culture, economics, and politics.
8. Briefly introduce scripture passages and snippets from ELCA social messages for each dimension of society, with references to be provided:
 - a. Cultural peacemaking:
 - i. James 3:17-18
 - ii. [ELCA Social Message: Community Violence, 1994](#)
 - b. Cultural peacemaking:
 - i. Luke 12:15-21
 - ii. [ELCA Social Statement: Economic Life, 1999](#)
 - c. Political peacemaking:
 - i. Matthew 22:34-40
 - ii. [ELCA Social Message: Community Violence, 1994](#)
9. Leaders should ask the group for brief reflection on these three areas, and any questions.
10. **Peacemakers in God's World (20 minutes).** Ask participants to keep in mind the three dimensions of human society and earthly peace during the next section.
11. Show slide 13 with 18 pictures of people associated with peace. Leaders may ask the group if any faces look familiar. Ask participants to reflect on how 'peacemakers' are defined and recognized, for example Nobel Peace Prize winners or world leaders, and discuss how some of the key figures worked for peace culturally, economically and politically. (About 5 minutes)
12. Briefly recognize the most recent Nobel Peace Prize winner (2019): Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia since April 2018.
 - a. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for his important work to promote reconciliation, solidarity and social justice, and initiate important reforms that give many citizens hope for a better life and a brighter future.

- b. The prize is also meant to recognize all the stakeholders working for peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia and in the East and Northeast African regions.
 - c. Abiy Ahmed Ali is the first Ethiopian to be awarded a Nobel Prize. He worked with the President of Eritrea to make a peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea.
 - d. This year's prize is also the 100th Nobel Peace Prize.
13. Ask participants to get back together in the same 6 small groups, and give each group a copy of the selected writing from one of the 6 peacemakers. (The writings may also be provided digitally if technology is available.)
 14. The small groups should read together and discuss the questions on slide 16. After **about 7 minutes**, call the large group back together and ask each group for key takeaways from their peacemaker and the small group discussion.
 15. Leaders should summarize that the selected figures are examples of what peacemaking looks like in God's world, and can provide models for us in our calling to work toward earthly peace.
 16. Ask for a volunteer to read the excerpt from the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and share with the group that Otto Frederick Nolde, a Lutheran writer and political leader, contributed to the formation of the UN after World War II.
 17. **Peacemaking Tasks (20 minutes)**. Leaders should introduce the final section, and ask participants to hold the question: *How are we called to make peace?*
 18. Ask for volunteers to read the excerpts from the ELCA Social Statement, [*The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective, 1991*](#) (slides 19-20).
 19. Introduce the three categories of peacemaking tasks from the [*ELCA's Peace social statement*](#): A Culture of Peace, An Economy with Justice, A Politics of Cooperation. Acknowledge to the group that this will be a very fast overview of the tasks, and that the objective of reviewing the tasks is to understand the ELCA's position in the 1995 statement.
 20. Read the tasks in each category, and ask the group for examples, questions or reflection on the tasks listed. Some guidance and examples/definitions:
 - a. A Culture of Peace:
 - i. "A dynamic vision of difference in unity" - having dialog with others even if we don't agree, and being willing to learn from each other.
 - ii. "Counter and transform attitudes that encourage violence." - learning

about inequality, discrimination, violence and microaggressions, and understanding how certain systemic issues impact certain communities more than others.

- iii. “Will to resolve conflicts peacefully” - using nonviolent communication, active listening, and the problem-solving tactics we will learn in session 4.

b. An Economy with Justice:

- i. “just arrangements to regulate the international economy” - advocating for trade policies and agreements that are fair for all parties; purchasing fair trade and equal exchange products; buying locally
- ii. “Revitalize aid” - making sure relief funding gets to the people who need it most; responsible donating
- iii. “economic conversion” - moving from military to civilian markets; disarmament

c. A Politics of Cooperation:

- i. “structures of common security” - alliances; holding our criminal justice systems accountable
- ii. “arms control and reduction” - advocating for policies of deescalation
- iii. “participatory and accountable political structures” - promoting governmental structures and fair elections where citizens have a voice
- iv. “nonviolent action” - including nonviolent communication, what are alternative ways to resolve conflicts?
- v. “care for the uprooted” - refugees (reference [Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service](#)) and those impacted by disasters and illness (reference [Lutheran World Relief](#))

21. Remind participants that we are called to make peace in community. Briefly note some global and local groups whose missions are to work toward cultural, economic and/or political peace, including the ELCA.

22. Leaders should introduce the breakout conversation topics on slide 28, invite participants to take a photo of the small group questions and individual reflection questions and gather in the same small groups as after Session 1. Remind participants of the purpose of small groups: to allow space for all voices in the conversation, explore different kinds of questions and build deeper connections among a more

intimate group.

23. After **35 minutes**, session leaders should circulate among the small groups to move into individual reflection (**15 minutes**). Consider playing meditative music to change the tone.



practice discipleship
young adults of the de-md synod

Peace & Conflict 2020

Session 4: How Do We ‘Go In Peace?’

Introduction to the session:

The Peace & Conflict curriculum explores the concept of peace: reflecting on our experience of peace (or lack thereof) in the world, delving into examples of peace and conflict from the Bible, reflecting on resources from the national and global Lutheran Church and engaging in conversation with our peers gathered here.

Session 4 brings the ongoing discussion about peace and conflict to an open end, introducing opportunities and tactics for meditation and reflection as well as negotiation and mediation, concrete tools for peacemaking in daily life. It is a fast overview, but participants should feel some sense of closure and optimism, and some threads to follow for future exploration.

This session should last **1 hour 5 minutes**, followed by **10 minutes** of final meditation and intentional gathering, and closing worship.

Background, preparation and supplies:

Session leaders should familiarize themselves with the [ELCA's social statement *For Peace in God's World*](#), tactics for finding or making personal peace, and the processes of negotiation and mediation.

Supplies: slide deck, Bibles/copies of selected bible passages, items for meditation (e.g. paper & pens/markers/crayons, finger labyrinths, fidget spinners), printed copy of readings for final meditation

Optional supplies: easel or whiteboard and markers (for “burning questions” list), post-it notes

Session outline:

1. **Introduction (3 minutes).** The session leaders should set a meditative tone for participants to *go in peace*. Acknowledge the work of previous sessions in identifying language for doing the work of peace, naming and navigating conflict. Let participants know that this final session will include resources for finding support in peacemaking, tactics for problem-solving and facilitating peace in communities, and meditation and reflection to establish a sense of personal peace in all participants, as well as self-identification of takeaways and action items for peacemaking in various communities.
2. **Finding Personal Peace (7 minutes).** Leaders should acknowledge that when peace feels particularly elusive, or we feel alone in wanting to build peace, or we are not in a safe space, we cannot always start implementing the kinds of peacemaking strategies we have discussed. Remind participants that we can hold peace and conflict in tension; it doesn't have to be one over the other. Sometimes beautiful things can happen in the midst of conflict, because we learn about ourselves and about each other and we need to work through the peace process.
3. Introduce several strategies, and brief discussion if desired, for participants when they find they are not in a safe space, not empowered to influence peace, feeling personal/relationship/career unrest, etc. Give personal examples when possible.
 - a. Self care & peace practices, e.g. meditation apps, yoga classes, certain spaces or times away from digital devices; be intentional
 - b. Personal peace practices may include setting a particular boundary or creating small milestones; e.g. gamify your life!
 - c. Find a community; start small! e.g. start a practice of staying in close touch with one or two close friends
 - d. Connect with a support professional, including BetterHelp
 - e. (Slide 5) Be mindful of crisis points or dangerous situations; know your risk factors and set up an emergency plan. Keep important numbers and lifelines at easy access.
4. Remind participants that peacemaking is not an individual activity. Discuss upcoming events and ways to stay in touch with the community: Huddles, Brunch Church, Peace Week, dinner church/pub theology, game nights... Participants may choose to offer

additional opportunities for peacemaking in community.

5. **Meditation and Scripture (15 minutes)**. Leaders should transition the mood to meditation. Ask for volunteers to read each of the following slides, a [meditation on peacemaking by Henri Nouwen](#). Invite participants to use meditation materials (e.g. paper, pens and markers; finger labyrinth; tactile items) as desired, and encourage quiet in the space. Linger on each slide approximately 60-90 seconds; let the words sink in.
6. (Slide 12) When the entire meditation has been read, introduce the question: What does it mean for us to “give our lives in the service of peace”? Note that we are probably not called to be crucified! And that’s ok. Invite participants to reflect individually or in pairs/very small groups for about 3 minutes: What ARE we doing with Jesus’ gift? What does peacemaking mean for us?
7. Ask for volunteers to read each of the following slides, **John 15:9-19**. As with the previous meditation, linger on each slide 60-90 seconds and allow for meditation.
8. Introduce the questions on slide 17 for large group reflection and discussion.
9. **Principles of Conflict Resolution (12 minutes)**. Leaders should quickly introduce the problem solving approach (slides 18-20). Note that this is a “crash course” to a much more comprehensive training, and resources will be linked in the curriculum when it is distributed.
 - a. Mention the [Lutheran World Federation Peacebuilders Training](#):
 - i. Tool designed to be used globally to facilitate local conflict resolution and peacebuilding training
 - ii. Developed by a global LWF team with input from youth from various contexts and faiths during the first Peace Messengers Training of Trainers in Israel/Palestine in September 2017
10. Quickly review the 5 principles of conflict resolution (slides 22-26). Invite participants to discuss the questions on slide 27 in small groups with those around them.
11. **Negotiation and Mediation (28 minutes)**. Leaders should then introduce negotiation and mediation: two concrete conflict resolution tools that we can use to constructively deal with conflict in our daily lives. Through these tools, participants will:
 - a. become aware of their own behavior in conflict situations,
 - b. learn how to confront conflict with a problem solving approach, and
 - c. discuss the importance of good communication for handling conflict.

12. Before introducing the tools, ask participants what associations they have with the terms. In the large group setting, briefly discuss how common associations like negotiating for a car, a raise or a home purchase fit into the definitions of peace throughout the sessions.
 - a. In all of these scenarios, negotiation defines what our relationships are going to look like. In what ways do these everyday examples fit into the categories of peace we have discussed: economic, social, political? Complex and multi-layered?
13. Ask a volunteer or volunteers to read **Matthew 18:15-17,19** (slide 30). Note that this is an example of a conflict resolution process in scripture:
 - a. First verse is negotiation.
 - b. Second verse is mediation.
 - c. Third verse brings into play the peacemaking communities in facilitating earthly peace.
 - d. The final line references an angle on final peace.
14. Move quickly through slides 31-38: the definition, contexts, basis, and 3 phases of negotiation processes.
15. Spend a few minutes in large group discussing the questions about negotiation on slide 39.
16. Move quickly through slides 41-48: the definition, principles, and 5 stages of mediation processes.
17. Spend a few minutes in large group discussing the questions about mediation on slide 49.
18. In preparation for the transition to worship, leaders should close the conflict resolution session by asking participants to consider how these tools, or parts of the processes, might apply in different scenarios of their lives. Note that there will be future opportunities to explore conflict resolution and peacebuilding further throughout the year.
19. **Final Meditation and Gathering (10 minutes)**. Leaders should introduce the process for moving into the worship space: Have volunteers stationed with the [short readings](#). The group will move from one station to the next as each reading is read. Invite the group to move from one station to the next as each reading is read. Take a few moments of personal reflection at each station. At the final station, worship will begin.



practice discipleship
young adults of the de-md synod

Appendix:

Session 3 & 4 Additional Resources

Nobel Lecture

Leymah Gbowee, December 2011

Early 2003, seven of us women gathered in a makeshift office / conference room to discuss the Liberian civil war and the fast approaching war on the capital Monrovia. Armed with nothing but our conviction and \$10 United States dollars, the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign was born.

Women had become the “toy of war” for over-drugged young militias. Sexual abuse and exploitation spared no woman; we were raped and abused regardless of our age, religious or social status. A common scene daily was a mother watching her young one being forcibly recruited or her daughter being taken away as the wife of another drug emboldened fighter.

We used our pains, broken bodies and scarred emotions to confront the injustices and terror of our nation. We were aware that the end of the war will only come through non-violence, as we had all seen that the use of violence was taking us and our beloved country deeper into the abyss of pains, death, and destruction.

The situation in Liberia in those war years indeed re-affirmed the profound statement of Nobel Laureate, the late Dr. Martin Luther King when he said, “Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem; it merely creates new and more complicated ones”. The women’s Mass Action Campaign started in one community and spread to over 50 communities across Liberia.

We worked daily confronting warlords, meeting with dictators and refusing to be silenced in the face of AK 47 and RPGs. We walked when we had no transportation, we fasted when water was unaffordable, we held hands in the face of danger, we spoke truth to power when everyone else was being diplomatic, we stood under the rain and the sun with our children to tell the world the stories of the other side of the conflict. Our educational backgrounds, travel experiences, faiths, and social classes did not matter. We had a common agenda: Peace for Liberia Now.

We succeeded when no one thought we would, we were the conscience of the ones who had lost their consciences in their quest for power and political positions. We represented the soul of the nation. No one would have prepared my sisters and I for today – that our struggle would go down in the history of this world. Rather when confronting warlords we did so because we felt it was our moral duty to stand as mothers and gird our waist, to fight the demons of war in order to protect the lives of our children, their land, and their future.

There are many examples globally of such struggles by women. I believe that the prize this year not only recognizes our struggle in Liberia and Yemen. It is in recognition and honor of the struggles of grass roots women in Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Tunisia, in Palestine and Israel, and in every troubled corner of the world.

So allow me to pay tribute to some of the giants in women's continued struggle to be free and equal. This prize is a tribute to:

- Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), for their courage in the face of arrest and torture, for remaining the voice and face of the suffering people of Zimbabwe;
- The Women of Congo, who have endured some of the worst acts of men's inhumanity to women. The World is well aware that the you still endure the horrific sexual violence that is the nature of the endless and senseless war in DRC;
- Women of Acholi Land in Uganda who in the face of the so-called Lord's Resistance Army's continued torture and rape remain advocates for peace and justice;
- Women of Afghanistan and many other places on earth where in the 21st Century women can be raped and still go to jail or sometimes be subjected to honor killing – this prize is a tribute to your cry for justice, freedom, and equality. ...

This prize could not have come at a better time than this; a time when global and community conversations are about how local community members and unarmed civilians can help turn our upside-down World, right-side up. It has come at a time when unarmed citizens – men and women, boys and girls – are challenging dictatorships and ushering in democracy and the sovereignty of people;

Yes! It has come at a time when in many societies where women used to be the silent victims and objects of men's powers, women are throwing down the walls of repressive traditions with the invincible power of non-violence. Women are using their broken bodies from hunger, poverty, desperation and destitution to stare down the barrel of the gun. This prize has come at a time when ordinary mothers are no longer begging for peace, but demanding peace, justice, equality and inclusion in political decision-making.

I must be quick to add that this prize is not just in recognition of the triumph of women. It is a triumph of humanity. To recognize and honor women, the other half of humanity, is to achieve universal wholeness and balance. Like the women I met in Congo DRC over a year ago who said "Rape and abuse is the result of larger problem, and that problem is the absence of women in the decision making space". If women were part of decision-making in most societies, there would be less exclusive policies and laws that are blind to abuses women endure.

In conclusion let me again congratulate the Nobel Committee for awarding the Peace Prize to us three women. By this act you affirm that women's rights are truly human rights and that any

leader, nation or political group that excludes women from all forms of national and local engagement is setting themselves up for failure.

Let this recognition serve as a renewed compact between women and World leaders, that commitments made to women through various UN and other global institutions' resolutions will be pursued with greater commitment and vigilance;

Let this be a renewed compact that the integrity of a woman's body and the sanctity of women's lives will not be subsumed under male-invented traditions;

To women of Liberia and sisterhood across West Africa who continue to band together to respond to crisis in our sub region; to women in Asia, the Middle East and the World: As we celebrate our achievement through this recognition let us remind ourselves that victory is still afar. We must continue to unite in sisterhood to turn our tears into triumph, our despair into determination and our fear into fortitude. There is no time to rest until our world achieves wholeness and balance, where all men and women are considered equal and free.

And, finally, Liberian women: thank you for making our country proud. Thank you for sitting in the rain and under the sun. This is your prize. This is our prize. The world used to remember Liberia for child soldiers but they now remember our country for the white t-shirt women. Who would have ever thought that Liberian women would have been among faces of women's global victory, but you did it. So thank you!

Source:

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2011/gbowee/26169-leymah-gbowee-nobel-lecture-2011/>

Fanø Address: The Church and the Peoples of the World

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1934

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and unto his saints" (Psalm 85:9). ...

Peace on earth is not a problem, but a commandment given at Christ's coming. There are two ways of reacting to this command from God: the unconditional, blind obedience of action, or the hypocritical question of the Serpent: "Yea, hath God said...?" This question is the mortal enemy of obedience, and therefore the mortal enemy of all real peace. "Hath God not said? Has God not understood human nature well enough to know that wars must occur in this world, like laws of nature? Must God not have meant that we should talk about peace, to be sure, but that it is not to be literally translated into action? Must God not really have said that we should work for peace, of course, but also make ready tanks and poison gas for security?" And then perhaps the most serious question: "Did God say you should not protect your own people? Did God say you should leave your own a prey to the enemy?"

No, God did not say all that. What He has said is that there shall be peace among men – that we shall obey Him without further question, that is what He means. He who questions the commandment of God before obeying has already denied Him.

There shall be peace because of the Church of Christ, for the sake of which the world exists. And this Church of Christ lives at one and the same time in all peoples, yet beyond all boundaries, whether national, political, social, or racial. And the brothers who make up this Church are bound together, through the commandment of the one Lord Christ, whose Word they hear, more inseparably than men are bound by all the ties of common history, of blood, of class and of language. All these ties, which are part of our world, are valid ties, not indifferent; but in the presence of Christ they are not ultimate bonds. For the members of the ecumenical Church, in so far as they hold to Christ, His Word, His commandment of peace is more holy, more inviolable than the most revered words and works of the natural world. For they know that whoso is not able to hate father and mother for His sake is not worthy of Him, and lies if he calls himself after Christ's name. These brothers in Christ obey His word; they do not doubt or question, but keep His commandment of peace. They are not ashamed, in defiance of the world, even to speak of eternal peace. They cannot take up arms against Christ himself – yet this is what they do if they take up arms against one another! Even in anguish and distress of conscience there is for them no escape from the commandment of Christ that there shall be peace.

How does peace come about? Through a system of political treaties? Through the investment of international capital in different countries? Through the big banks, through money? Or through

universal peaceful rearmament in order to guarantee peace? Through none of these, for the single reason that in all of them peace is confused with safety. There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared. It is the great venture. It can never be made safe. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to mistrust, and this mistrust in turn brings forth war. To look for guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means to give oneself altogether to the law of God, wanting no security, but in faith and obedience laying the destiny of the nations in the hand of Almighty God, not trying to direct it for selfish purposes. Battles are won, not with weapons, but with God. They are won where the way leads to the cross. Which of us can say he knows what it might mean for the world if one nation should meet the aggressor, not with weapons in hand, but praying, defenseless, and for that very reason protected by "a bulwark never failing?"

Once again, how will peace come? Who will call us to peace so that the world will hear, will have to hear? so that all peoples may rejoice? The individual Christian cannot do it. When all around are silent, he can indeed raise his voice and bear witness, but the powers of this world stride over him without a word. The individual church, too, can witness and suffer — oh, if it only would! — but it also is suffocated by the power of hate. Only the one great Ecumenical Council of the Holy Church of Christ over all the world can speak out so that the world, though it gnash its teeth, will have to hear, so that the peoples will rejoice because the Church of Christ in the name of Christ has taken the weapons from the hands of their sons, forbidden war, and proclaimed the peace of Christ against the raging world.

Why do we fear the fury of the world powers? Why don't we take the power from them and give it back to Christ? We can still do it today. The Ecumenical Council is in session; it can send out to all believers this radical call to peace. The nations are waiting for it in the East and in the West. Must we be put to shame by non-Christian peoples in the East? Shall we desert the individuals who are risking their lives for this message? The hour is late. The world is choked with weapons, and dreadful is the distrust which looks out of all men's eyes. The trumpets of war may blow tomorrow. For what are we waiting? Do we want to become involved in this guilt as never before? ...

We want to give the world a whole word, not a half word — a courageous word, a Christian word. We want to pray that this word may be given us, today. Who knows if we shall see each other again another year?

Source: The Bonhoeffer Reader, Edited by Clifford J. Green and Michael DeJonge, Fortress Press, 2013

Letter in Response to Attacks and Threats on the Jewish Community

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, February 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

These famous words attributed to the German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller have been on my lips in recent days: “Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew. ... Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.”

In the face of anti-Semitism, we are called to speak out – as an expression of our love of neighbor and as our faithful response to the love of God in Jesus. In doing so, we become ambassadors of hope in the face of despair, imitators of Christ.

Our Jewish neighbors are once again living under threats, fearful for their safety and security. Over the weekend, a Jewish cemetery in St. Louis was desecrated, and on Monday, another wave of bomb threats was made to Jewish community centers across the country. This was at least the fourth round this year alone. As Christians, we affirm that Jews remain “beloved of God” and that an attack on them is an attack on those whom our God – the one God – has called “my people.”

In many places, with leadership from across this church, we are reaching out and showing up with our Jewish neighbors, often with ecumenical and inter-religious partners. We can and should continue and expand these important ministries of presence.

There is also the critical long-term work. As a church, in our 1994 Declaration to the Jewish Community, we have pledged “to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry, both within our own circles and in the society around us.” This will not happen quickly. It will take concerted efforts to correct “the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred” and to seek deeper mutual understanding and cooperation between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community. We have many excellent resources to aid us in these complicated but necessary tasks.

So, let us continue to speak out, to reach out, to show up, and to root out this deadly bigotry of anti-Semitism. For the courage to do God’s will, and for the peace of our Jewish neighbors, we pray.

In peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

God Is Not A Christian: And Other Provocations (Excerpt)

Desmond Tutu, 1989

They tell the story of a drunk who crossed the street and accosted a pedestrian, asking him, "I shay, which ish the other shide of the shtreet?" The pedestrian, somewhat nonplussed, replied, "That side, of course!" The drunk said, "Shtrange. When I wash on that shide, they shaid it wash thish shide." Where the other side of the street is depends on where we are. Our perspective differs with our context, the things that have helped to form us; and religion is one of the most potent of these formative influences, helping to determine how and what we apprehend of reality and how we operate in our own specific context.

My first point seems overwhelmingly simple: that the accidents of birth and geography determine to a very large extent to what faith we belong. The chances are very great that if you were born in Pakistan you are a Muslim, or a Hindu if you happened to be born in India, or a Shintoist if it is Japan, and a Christian if you were born in Italy. I don't know what significant fact can be drawn from this — perhaps that we should not succumb too easily to the temptation to exclusiveness and dogmatic claims to a monopoly of the truth of our particular faith. You could so easily have been an adherent of the faith that you are now denigrating, but for the fact that you were born here rather than there.

My second point is this: not to insult the adherents of other faiths by suggesting, as sometimes has happened, that for instance when you are a Christian the adherents of other faiths are really Christians without knowing it. We must acknowledge them for who they are in all their integrity, with their conscientiously held beliefs; we must welcome them and respect them as who they are and walk reverently on what is their holy ground, taking off our shoes, metaphorically and literally. We must hold to our particular and peculiar beliefs tenaciously, not pretending that all religions are the same, for they are patently not the same. We must be ready to learn from one another, not claiming that we alone possess all truth and that somehow we have a corner on God.

We should in humility and joyfulness acknowledge that the supernatural and divine reality we all worship in some form or other transcends all our particular categories of thought and imagining, and that because the divine — however named, however apprehended or conceived — is infinite and we are forever finite, we shall never comprehend the divine completely. So we should seek to share all insights we can and be ready to learn, for instance, from the techniques of the spiritual life that are available in religions other than our own. It is interesting that most religions have a transcendent reference point, a *mysterium tremendum*, that comes to be known by deigning to reveal itself, himself, herself, to humanity; that the transcendent reality is compassionate and concerned; that human beings are creatures of this supreme, supra mundane reality in some

way, with a high destiny that hopes for an everlasting life lived in close association with the divine, either as absorbed without distinction between creature and creator, between the divine and human, or in a wonderful intimacy which still retains the distinctions between these two orders of reality.

When we read the classics of the various religions in matters of prayer, meditation, and mysticism, we find substantial convergence, and that is something to rejoice at. We have enough that conspires to separate us; let us celebrate that which unites us, that which we share in common.

Surely it is good to know that God (in the Christian tradition) created us all (not just Christians) in his image, thus investing us all with infinite worth, and that it was with all humankind that God entered into a covenant relationship, depicted in the covenant with Noah when God promised he would not destroy his creation again with water. Surely we can rejoice that the eternal word, the Logos of God, enlightens everyone – not just Christians, but everyone who comes into the world; that what we call the Spirit of God is not a Christian preserve, for the Spirit of God existed long before there were Christians, inspiring and nurturing women and men in the ways of holiness, bringing them to fruition, bringing to fruition what was best in all. We do scant justice and honor to our God if we want, for instance, to deny that Mahatma Gandhi was a truly great soul, a holy man who walked closely with God. Our God would be too small if he was not also the God of Gandhi: if God is one, as we believe, then he is the only God of all his people, whether they acknowledge him as such or not. God does not need us to protect him. Many of us perhaps need to have our notion of God deepened and expanded. It is often said, half in jest, that God created man in his own image and man has returned the compliment, saddling God with his own narrow prejudices and exclusivity, foibles and temperamental quirks. God remains God, whether God has worshippers or not.

This mission in Birmingham to which I have been invited is a Christian celebration, and we will make our claims for Christ as unique and as the Savior of the world, hoping that we will live out our beliefs in such a way that they help to commend our faith effectively. Our conduct far too often contradicts our profession, however. We are supposed to proclaim the God of love, but we have been guilty as Christians of sowing hatred and suspicion; we commend the one whom we call the Prince of Peace, and yet as Christians we have fought more wars than we care to remember. We have claimed to be a fellowship of compassion and caring and sharing, but as Christians we often sanctify sociopolitical systems that belie this, where the rich grow ever richer and the poor grow ever poorer, where we seem to sanctify a furious competitiveness, ruthless as can only be appropriate to the jungle.

Source: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/god-is-not-a-christian_b_869947

Letter from a Birmingham Jail (Excerpt)

Martin Luther King, Jr., April 1963

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God consciousness and never ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber. I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to

do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity....

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides -and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist. But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

Source: https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

Amnesty International's 2019 Ambassador of Conscience Award: Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future Movement *Acceptance Speech, June 2019*

This award is for all of those millions of people, young people around the world, who together make up the movement called Fridays for Future. All these fearless youth fighting for their future. A future they should be able to take for granted. But as it looks now, they cannot.

With our business as usual we are currently on track for a world that could displace billions of people from their homes, taking away even the most basic living conditions from countless of people, making areas of the world uninhabitable for parts of the year. The fact that this will create huge conflicts and unspoken sufferings is far from secret, and yet the link between the climate and ecological emergency and mass migration, famine, violations of human rights, and war is still not clear to many people. The changes and the politics required to take on this crisis simply doesn't exist today. That is why every single one of us must push from every possible angle to hold those responsible accountable and to make the people in power act and to take the measures required.

We, who together are the movement Fridays for Future, we are fighting for our lives. But not only that: we're also fighting for our future children and grandchildren, for future generations, for every single living being on earth whose biosphere we share, whose biosphere we are stealing, whose biosphere we are ruining. We are fighting for everyone. For you. For the people living in areas in the world that are already suffering the consequences from the first stages of the climate and ecological emergency. People who breathe toxic air, who drink contaminated water, who have to flee their homes because of climate and environmental related disasters. Indigenous communities whose lands and waters are being destroyed. People whose food and water supply is being threatened by environmental related catastrophes: stronger and more frequent droughts, rainfalls, storms, or melting glaciers.

Whole nations are now literally being left in ruins or disappearing underneath rising sea levels. People are dying. And yet, so many of us keep looking away. The world has never seen a threat to human rights of this scope. So said the UN human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, during ...recently, during UN, UN civil rights council in Geneva, referring to the climate crisis. She said: 'The economies of all nations, the institutional, political, social, and cultural fabric of every state, and the rights of all your people and future generations will be impacted.' This is exactly the clarity we need now from governments and the people in power.

Right now the world's emissions of greenhouse gases keep rising, rapidly. The destruction of natural habitats are continuing at horrendous speed despite all the beautiful words and

promises from our leaders. We are still moving in the wrong direction with unimaginable pace. It may seem impossible to pull the emergency brake, and yet, that is what we have to do.

But right now I think there is an awakening going on. Even though it is slow, the pace is picking up and the debate is shifting. This is thanks to a lot of different reasons, but it is a lot because, because of countless of activists, and especially young activists. Activism works.

So what I'm telling you to do now is to act, because no one is too small to make a difference. I'm urging all of you to take part in the global climate strikes on September 20th and 27th.

And just one last thing: see you on the streets!

Transcript source:

<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/9/19/1886336/-Greta-Thunberg-s-speech-upon-accepting-the-Amnesty-International-Ambassador-of-Conscience-Award>

Peace and Conflict, Session 4: Final Meditation Readings

“Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.”

John 14:27

“The elusive quest to build earthly peace is multifaceted, and for us belongs in a context that extends far beyond our own efforts and time.”

ELCA Social Statement: For Peace in God’s World, 1995

“Our faith active for peace begins and ends with God, the alpha and omega of peace. Living still in a time when hate, injustice, war, and suffering seem often to have the upper hand, we call on God to fulfill the divine promise of final peace.”

ELCA Social Statement: For Peace in God’s World, 1995

“‘Give God no rest’ (Isaiah 62:6-7) until that day when ‘the wolf and the lamb shall feed together.... They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord’ (Isaiah 65:25).”

ELCA Social Statement: For Peace in God’s World, 1995

“‘Give God no rest’ until that day when the nations ‘shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more’ (Isaiah 2:4).”

ELCA Social Statement: For Peace in God’s World, 1995

“We await the fulfillment of God’s promise of eternal peace, not in resignation, but in grateful joy and active hope, for our time and place are also God’s. God, who makes earthly peace possible, calls us to gather in worship.”

ELCA Social Statement: For Peace in God’s World, 1995

“Baptized into Christ, we hear the Gospel and share Holy Communion, the foretaste of the peaceful feast to come. The Holy Spirit sends us into our everyday communities to be agents for peace. We are called to pray, and to live, for peace in God’s world.”

ELCA Social Statement: For Peace in God’s World, 1995

“We do the liturgy and we disperse, trusting that the peace of God in Christ Jesus, ‘which surpasses all understanding’ (Philippians 4:7), goes with us and prepares us to be peacemakers.”

ELCA Social Statement: For Peace in God’s World, 1995