

2018 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES



Families: Many Forms, Living Faithfully! Called to Peace

The *Christian Home Month* resource is for family ministry leaders, ministry teams, and council chairpersons/coordinators in local congregations. It is designed to help local congregations develop and strengthen faith in the home and observe Christian Home Month. Although Christian Home Month is typically celebrated during the month of May, congregations may choose any month of the year to focus on the Christian home and its key role as a center for faith formation.

Our theme for 2018 is: “Families Called to Peace.” It seems that peace is on the minds of many these days. As I write this, our nation has once again suffered through a horrendous school shooting. We continue to be a nation at war. And we continue to be a nation of not just violent acts, but violent language, images, and culture. Although we may cry, “peace, peace,” sometimes there is little in our lives that reflects peace. And the absence of conflict doesn’t necessarily mean there is peace. Peace is not the opposite of war. Just because there may be no fighting in the home doesn’t mean the household is peaceful. How do we achieve this thing called peace? How do we maintain a Christlike focus when we feel besieged by a violent world and our own violent impulses?

Take a moment and read Psalm 85. Reflect on verse 10: “love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. (NRSV). What comes to mind as you read these words? What would peace be like for

your family? For your congregation? For the world? Record your thoughts—in word, in pictures, in sounds. Pray for God’s peace to be our reality.

This downloadable PDF includes worship service resources, a retreat plan, and devotional activities for families as they foster a climate of peace in their homes. We trust you will find something in this resource that will inspire, encourage, and affirm you as you continue in the important work of family ministries.

To begin addressing “Families Called to Peace” in your congregation, establish a family ministry team. The first task of the team is to pray for families in your congregation and community. Through prayer and discernment, ask team members to help the congregation identify ways families in the congregation and community could live more peacefully. Ask those recruited to pray intentionally for every family in the church during the month of May (or whichever month you choose

CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES 2017-2020

2017: Families Called to Love

2018: Families Called to Peace

2019: Families Called to Justice

2020: Families Called to Hope

for Christian Home Month). Ask them to lead the congregation in prayer for families in your community and to challenge the congregation to see where God is already acting in the community to advocate for peace.

Let Christian Home Month be the beginning of an intentional year for deepening our understanding of God’s peace and our ability to act for peace. During the month and throughout the rest of the year, provide programs, forums, parenting classes, worship opportunities, learning activities, and times of prayer for supporting families in their faith journeys. As God intended, the home is a place for living in peace-filled ways and daily practicing the Christian faith.

Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton
Retired Staff, Discipleship Ministries

CALLED TO PEACE: WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

*The following helps are suggested for use in worship for celebrating Christian Home Month or Family Life Sunday as part of a worship service. For additional resources, see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.*

Call to Worship

Leader: We come together to praise God, who is the source of our life and our love.

People: We lift our voices in praise for God who loves us always.

Leader: We come to celebrate and support families who practice peace in their homes and communities.

People: We lift our voices in thanks for the peace we feel in our families.

Leader: We come praying for families who feel no peace within themselves or in their homes.

People: We lift our voices in sorrow for those who hurt because of the actions of others.

ALL: Let us worship, trusting in God's love and mercy. Praise be to God!

Hymns

(Choose which hymns most fit your worship service)

- "Dona Nobis Pacem," 376, *The United Methodist Hymnal (UMH)*
- "Take Time to Be Holy," 395, *UMH*
- "Let There Be Peace on Earth," 431, *UMH*
- "Shalom to You," 666, *UMH*
- "Blest Are They," 2155, *The Faith We Sing (TFWS)*
- "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace," 2171, *TFWS*
- "Peace for the Children," 3125 *Worship & Song (W&S)*
- "Let Our Earth Be Peaceful," 3159, *W&S*

Scripture Readings

Lectionary readings for the day may be used, or you may choose from the following:

- Old Testament: Jeremiah 29:4-7
- Psalter: Psalm 85, 806 *UMH*
- Gospel: John 14:23-27
- Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-16

Prayer for Families

Gracious God, who created all of humankind and showed us the importance of relationships with one another, we commend to your care all the families of this congregation, community, and world. We pray that each home may be a home where peace is practiced. We pray for homes where there is no peace — where there is danger, violence, hurtful words, and unceasing activity. We pray for children, youth, and adults, recognizing the importance of and the gift of every age as we grow. May your grace be present to all. Grant us wisdom to seek God's peace in our homes, communities, and world. Grant us courage to work for peace in our homes, communities, and world. Grant us hope for those times when all around us we see only the unkind actions of human to human. Remind us of your presence and promise of peace. We pray, always reminded of your love for us through your son, Jesus. **Amen.**

A Litany for Families

Leader: You created us to follow your vision. We thank you for your vision of the peaceable kingdom, as we seek to work for peace in our world.

People: Help us recall your words of peace, O God.

Leader: You gave us Jesus to teach us ways to live in community with one another, not with violence, but with peace.

People: Help us follow the path that Jesus has shown, O God.

Leader: You created us to act in ways that help those around us know the true meaning of peaceful living.

People: Help us act upon your ways that lead to peace, O God.

Leader: For all families, bless us in our lifelong quest to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

People: Hear our prayer, O God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

For additional resources, see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. It contains prayers for the blessings of people at important times through the lifespan, as well as worship suggestions for *Festival of the Christian Home* and for *Mother's Day* and *Father's Day*.

CALLED TO PEACE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

FAMILY DEVOTION. Prepare a gathering place for family worship. Create a centerpiece on the table where you eat your meals or in another area of your home where you can gather as a family. Include a candle. Write this Bible verse or another of your choice: “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you...” John 14:27a (NRSV). Place it next to the candle. Include other items that remind you of God. During your time of devotions, follow this worship sequence:

- **Praise:** Praise God with a song, or simply start your time saying together, “We praise God.”
- **Prayer:** Use a family prayer or say the Lord’s Prayer. Hold hands as you pray.
- **Reading:** Read a Scripture passage of your choice, a short devotional passage from *The Upper Room Daily Devotional Guide*, or choose another devotion.
- **Reflection:** Ask each person to answer this question, “What was your favorite part of this Scripture or devotion? What have you learned in this Scripture or devotion? What actions do you think we need to take because of this Scripture or devotion?”
- **Sharing:** Ask family members to share joys, concerns, and prayers for themselves and others.
- **Blessing:** Use a hymn such as the *Doxology* or *Blest Be the Tie that Binds* to end your time together. Or use a simple dismissal, saying together, “God be with you” or “God’s peace surrounds you.”

FAMILY NIGHT. Set aside a regular time for sharing activities of family fun together. You could do the same activity each time (play board games, cook special treats, volunteer as a family in service to others, learn about people who live different lives than yours.) Or each Family Night could be planned by a different family member, with the activity based on agreed-upon criteria.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS. At dinner at least once a week, go around the table and ask each family member to name a peaceful experience or a way he or she acted as a peacemaker that day. Thank God for these peaceful experiences and for being able to share them with one another. Ask God to give peace and blessings to others (name the specific people in your life in need of peace).

STUDY SCRIPTURE TOGETHER. Some of the key Scripture passages that mention peace are: Isaiah 2:4-5; Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 34:14; Zechariah 8:16,19; Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 5:9; John 14:27; Romans 12:18 and 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 4:3. Ask one family member to read the Scripture. After they have heard the Scripture, ask family members to state what this Scripture made them think about related to living peacefully.

MAKE AN ACROSTIC USING THE WORD PEACE. Using each letter, list a word or a phrase that will help give peace in the family and in the world. For example:

Pray

Everyone is God’s child

Act to help others

Consider the feelings of others

Exercise patience

REFRIGERATOR REMINDERS. Post on the refrigerator a Scripture passage, line from a hymn or song, inspirational thought, or brief prayer. Change the passage each Saturday. Place the reminder at a level that all in the family can see when they open the refrigerator.

SCRIPTURE/PRAYER/THOUGHT FOR THE DAY CARDS.

Buy a spiral notebook of index cards; write a favorite Scripture verse, short prayer, or thought for the day on each card. Each day, turn over one of the cards to reveal a Scripture verse, short prayer, or thought for the day about peace to read aloud. Illustrate each card.

IDEA STARTERS FOR CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE TABLE OR AT ANY TIME:

- When Jesus said, “My peace I give to you,” what do you think he meant?
- Name a kindness you would describe as an act of peace. What other kindness could be described as an act of peace?
- Talk about an experience when you realized you felt peaceful.
- Which “random act of kindness” expresses for you a good example of offering peace to others?
- What is a word or action that you would give to each family member to show him or her peace?
- When you are angry at someone, what would be a peaceful way of telling that person what is bothering you instead of yelling or hitting?
- What are some times you’ve experienced peace at church – in Sunday school, worship, on retreat, or during a special program?
- Complete one of these sentences (and create your own)

God is with me when...

A person I know who practices peace is...

My favorite story about peace in the Bible is...

I would like to tell stories about Jesus to...

A favorite memory about church is...

The best time I have ever had at church was when...

If I preached a sermon, it would be about...

I like to be with my family when we...

CALLED TO PEACE: RETREAT MODEL

Planning for the Retreat

1. The congregation prays for the retreat, the participants, and the team that will plan the retreat.
2. A retreat planning team is created, made up of six to eight people in the congregation.
3. The retreat team meets and plans the retreat:
 - Chooses a date and secures a location.
 - Decides on the retreat schedule, including times for prayer and worship.
 - Prepares a budget.
 - Recruits leaders.
 - Arranges all food needs.
 - Plans an offering for an organization in the community that helps families in need.
 - Designs a flyer that includes a registration form and information about fees, dates, and location.
4. Publicity and promotion. Someone from the team prepares information and distributes it through the church newsletter, e-newsletters, worship bulletins, bulletin boards, and other avenues in the congregation. Regular notices with sign-up forms should appear beginning six months prior to the retreat and leading up to the week prior to the retreat.
5. The team collects the following supplies: songbooks/sheets; Bibles; a copy of *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, illustrated by Joani Keller Rothenberg along with other books on peace; board games; sports equipment; one poster board per small group; magazines; scissors; glue; modeling clay or play dough for each small group; one large paper bag for each small group each containing three sheets of construction paper, a roll of masking tape or painters tape, six markers of assorted colors, a skein of yarn, scissors, four paper plates, and six plastic cups.

Friday

4:00–6:00 P.M. – Registration

6:30–7:00 P.M. – Dinner (A served meal or bring-your-own-bag supper)

7:15–7:30 P.M. – Gathering Time. Share announcements and opening prayer. Sing familiar camp songs, favorite hymns, and praise choruses.

7:30–9:00 P.M. – Divide participants into “family” groups of four to six (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation). Ask group members to create a poster of a peaceful community, either drawing what they feel

needs to be included or using pictures from magazines or finding words that describe a peaceful community. Ask each group to decide on the three most essential features for a community to be a peace-filled place to live. Allow each group to present to the whole group what it created, including what the group considers to be essential for peaceful living. Make a list of all the essentials listed by every group. Note where there is agreement and where there are differing ideas.

9:00–9:30 P.M. – Read *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* to the group. After reading, ask for several people to share their thoughts and feelings about the story and what it had to say about peace. Lead the group in a time of prayer, sharing joys and concerns, and singing together.

9:30–10:00 P.M. – Snack and Game Time. Share snacks. Have board games available, music to listen to, and other activities for all ages. If the setting allows, have a campfire or take a flashlight walk.

Saturday

8:00–9:00 A.M. – Breakfast

9:00–9:30 A.M. – Morning Worship. Lead the group in singing, Scripture, and prayer.

9:30–10:30 A.M. – Ask the participants to reassemble in the same “family groups” as the previous night. Provide a Bible for each group. Distribute the paper sacks with the items prepared in them. Ask each family group to find Genesis 4:1-15 in the Bibles and read together what happened between Cain and Abel. Instruct the groups to use the items provided in the paper bags as props to retell the story either from the view of Cain or of Abel. Ask the groups to illustrate in their skits what brought hope or hopelessness to either Cain or Abel and what this says to us about peace.

10:30–11:00 A.M. – Break

11:00–11:30 A.M. – Ask the group to present their retelling of Cain and Abel. After each skit, ask the groups to name what was hopeful or not hopeful in each situation. Tell the groups that in the evening session, they will be looking at another Scripture passage that helps us look at God’s promise for peace.

NOON–1:00 P.M. – Lunch

1:00–5:30 P.M. – Afternoon Fun. Encourage naps. Provide walking/hiking trail maps, recreational/sports equipment, arts and crafts.

5:30–6:30 P.M. – Dinner

6:30–7:30 P.M. – Ask the participants to reassemble in their “family groups.” Distribute Bibles. Ask each group to

CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

read Ephesians 4:17-32. Give each group play dough or clay. Invite each group to create a symbol or symbols of the peaceful living together that they hear in the Scripture. Ask each group to go back to the story it chosen regarding the church or a church member.

7:30–8:15 P.M. – Gather the groups together and allow each family group to share the symbols of peace it created.

8:15–8:30 P.M. – Break

8:30–9:00 P.M. – Lead the groups in sharing and praying about their joys and concerns. Ask those who wish to name a song, or a Scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that helped them understand God’s peace and how we can share God’s peace with others.

Sunday

8:00–9:00 A.M. – Breakfast

9:00–10:00 A.M. – Closing Worship

10:00–11:00 A.M. – Clean-up and Journey Home

- For congregational planners, reprint the “Family Devotional Times” material in your church newsletter, or place it on your website. List one suggestion a month. Ask families who followed the suggestion to write about their experience (or tell you about it). Create a “We Did It!” column in your newsletter or on your website and feature what these families did in following through with the suggestions.
- Plan a family fun time at church. Include a meal, and use the time there to make the refrigerator reminders or Scripture/prayer/thought day cards.
- Encourage families to adopt the “Family Covenant for Peace” and carry out the practices for at least a month. Suggest a starting day for all in the congregation who want to participate. As part of worship, ask those who intend to live with the covenant to stand. Pray for the families. On the ending date, ask all families who lived with the covenant to stand. Recognize each family by name and join in singing the Doxology to voice your thanks to God for their efforts.

FAMILY COVENANT FOR PEACEFUL LIVING

Create a covenant together as you promise to grow together as a family in peaceful living. Every month, take time to ask, “How have we lived into our covenant?” Celebrate how you have shown God’s peace to one another. Then make any changes that might be needed for the next month.

This covenant will be in effect from _____ (*beginning date*) to _____ (*ending date*).

In order that our family may be one that promotes peaceful living, we promise one another to:

1. Spend time eating, playing and praying together.
2. Listen with respect to what one another has to say and speak our minds without yelling or blaming.
3. Look for ways family members promote living together peacefully and name these in family times of Bible study, reflection and prayer.
4. Learn about organizations that address violence in the home, such as programs addressing abuse in the family; food pantries or home-building projects that help care for families in need; community services that provide for the needs of children when intervention is needed because of violence. As a family, choose a way to offer service to one of these places.
5. Seek out stories of peace at church, in the newspaper, on the internet, at school, at work, at home and tell these stories to one another.

Signed by: _____

(All family members sign the covenant.)

CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH: PLANNING CALENDAR

2018

APRIL: Begin plans for observing Christian Home Month in worship, in small-group gatherings, with a churchwide meal, and in homes. Ask families to bring to the church pictures and written statements about how they practice peace at home and in their communities. Use these to create a bulletin board and put in the church newsletter and bulletin.

Celebrate Easter. Create a flower cross. Make a large cross covered with chicken wire. Invite families to bring flowers from their yards or gardens or provide flowers at church on Easter Sunday. Invite children, youth, and adults to place the flowers on the cross, using the chicken wire to hold them in place. After worship, place the flower cross in front of the church building as a sign of God's love at Easter.

Observe the Festival of God's Creation on April 22. Join with others in your community to plant trees, clean up a park, or other community-wide projects.

MAY: Carry out plans made for celebrating the Christian home. Recognize women in the congregation who are mothers in families and mothers in faith.

Celebrate Pentecost Sunday. Invite congregation members to wear red on May 20. Make a Pentecost bulletin board, including a poster or drawing of a large tree. Ask individuals and families to add to the tree the names of those in their congregations who have helped the church grow.

Observe Peace with Justice Sunday on May 27 using resources provided at <https://www.umcjustice.org> by the General Board of Church and Society.

JUNE: Honor graduates of high school and college with prayer in worship. Invite those who are willing to write a statement about what the church has meant to them as they have grown.

Publish these in your church newsletter or in another church publication. Recognize men in the congregation who are fathers in families and fathers in faith. Provide a devotional guide for families to use on vacation. Include Scripture, meditations, and prayers.

JULY: Plan a fix-up day at church and invite families to help with projects of beautification for the church and the church grounds. Host a "Movie under the Stars" night on the church grounds for families in your community. Select a movie that promotes peace in the world through its story and message.

AUGUST: Have an "end of summer" ice cream social. Ask church members to bring school supplies that can be given to local schools for families who cannot afford to buy supplies for their children. Pray in worship for teachers and for students as they begin a new school year. Have a "back to school" Sunday and invite all students to bring their backpacks to worship. Bless the backpacks, students, and teachers as they begin a new school year.

SEPTEMBER: Hold a short-term study for adults. Use the book, *The Road to Peace: Writings on Peace and Justice* by Henri Nouwen, edited by John Dear.

Celebrate Grandparents Day. Host a dinner and honor the older adults in the church. Involve the children and youth in serving dinner, providing entertainment, and visiting with the older adults.

OCTOBER: Celebrate Children's Sabbath on October 14. Use resources provided by Children's Defense Fund <http://childrensdefense.org>. Host a fall festival for your community, and include both fun and service opportunities for children, youth, and adults.

NOVEMBER: Provide a bulletin insert with prayers for families to use in celebrating Thanksgiving. Plan needed resources for celebrating Advent and Christmas in the home. Provide a list of places needing volunteers and who

would welcome families volunteering together for Thanksgiving celebrations for those who are without food and shelter.

DECEMBER: Offer an Advent workshop for families. Invite individuals to bring to the church one Advent/Christmas decoration they use in their home and talk about why this is important to them. Provide a devotional guide for lighting the Advent wreath and praying together at home.

2019

JANUARY: If you haven't yet used the "Family Covenant for Living Together in Peace," invite families to do so as a New Year's resolution. Publish a list of "beat the winter doldrums" ideas. Include such ideas as playing a board game with the family; telling one another stories of ancestors; having a star-gazing night; picking a favorite Bible story and acting it out.

FEBRUARY: Celebrate marriage ministries on the Sunday nearest Valentine's Day. Recognize anniversaries, engagements, and milestones in the lives of couples in the congregation.

Plan a Peace Dinner and Fellowship Time. Use the book, *What Does Peace Feel Like?* Divide attendees into groups with each group creating a poster or banner around one of the five senses and peace as illustrated in the book.

MARCH: Sponsor a pancake dinner on Tuesday, March 5, before Ash Wednesday on March 6; or encourage families to make pancakes together at home. Observe Ash Wednesday on March 6. During Lent, begin Covenant Discipleship groups with children, youth, and adults. Offer a churchwide study on prayer, and together write prayers that focus on peace in our homes, our communities, and our world. Print these in your church bulletin; include them in your church

newsletter; and post them on your Facebook page.

APRIL: Celebrate Easter Sunday on April 21. Hold an Easter egg hunt after worship for all children in attendance.

Observe Earth Day by having an inside and out clean-up day at the church.

Begin preparations for observing Christian Home Month 2019: Families Called to Justice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: RECOMMENDED READING

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, illustrated by Joani Keller Rothenberg
- *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams, illustrated by LeUyen Pham
- *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr, illustrated by Ronald Himler
- *Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children's Holocaust Memorial* by Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand & Peter W. Schroeder
- *Paper Clips*, DVD
- *Growing Everyday Disciples: Covenant Discipleship with Children* by Melanie Gordon, Susan Groseclose, & Gayle Quay

YOUTH BOOKS

- *Everyday Disciples: Covenant Discipleship with Youth* by Chris Wilterdink (Discipleship Resources, 2016)

ADULT BOOKS

- *The Road to Peace: Writings on Peace and Justice* by Henri Nouwen, edited by John Dear
- *Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go* by Adam Hamilton (This study includes, in addition to the book, a Leader's Guide and a DVD for use with small groups)
- *Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love* by William H. Willimon
- *Disciples Making Disciples: A Guide for Covenant Discipleship Groups and Class Leaders* by Steven W. Manskar

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MINISTRIES WITH FAMILIES

The Christian Home Month Resource, published annually by Discipleship Ministries, is a manual designed for use by leaders with families. Additional resources, ideas, and suggestions for Christian Home Month 2017 and family faith formation can be found online at:

<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries>

Discipleship Ministries | Website: UMCdiscipleship.org Toll Free: (877) 899-2780 Email: info@UMCdiscipleship.org