

A PEACE SABBATH SERVICE

Developed by the Peace and Justice Working Group of Toronto Conference
For use on Peace Sabbath or other times

Purpose of the Peace Sabbath Service in our Churches

- 1) *The General Council adopted the “Peace Sabbath” at its 1982 meeting and urged congregations to participate as a means of witnessing to the Prince of Peace in an age when world peace is threatened.*
- 2) *“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood.” (Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).*
- 3) *The followers of the Prince of Peace should show by their living a true passion for peacemaking.*

THEME: CHILDREN – IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

GATHERING

Call to Worship

Leader: “Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called God’s children.’ “ (Matt. 5 v.9)

All: “We are children of God. We will praise and serve the God of Peace”.

Hymn: Come in, come in and sit down – Voices United 395

Prayers: Gather children around a table with paper and pencils to write their own peace thoughts or prayers for peace. (To give the children more time to think of what they want to write these could be done the week before). They can be stuck on a large drawing of a rainbow or a piece of blue paper representing a river. The children can read their prayers or have an adult read them aloud.

Response: “Rise up, children of God
Let God’s life rise up in you
Blessed be the work of your hands
An offering of soul for the world”

Hymn: He’s got the whole world in his hands - Red Book 84

Passing the Peace (Be sure the children understand and participate in this as they are encouraged to pass the peace around the congregation)

Young People’s Time Part 1

Explain the symbolism of the rainbow, a bow between the sky and Earth. It is used currently to symbolize the need for people of all colours, genders, sizes, talents to cooperate. Ask where they have seen this symbol.

Hymn: I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart. (Sung with clapping and stamping)
(Children leave for their groups during the last verse)

THE WORD OF GOD

Readings: Mark 10 v. 13, 14, Psalm 34 v. 12-14, Romans 14 v. 17-19

(Since the readings are short all could be read with a time for meditation between. The readings are chosen with children in mind so they could be read when the children are in the service or later in their own groups)

Hymn: It only takes a spark VU 289 or I’ve got peace like a river VU 577

Sermon: Topic taken from the theme of listening to children and from current concerns. The sermon could also be a dialogue between an adult and a young member. This decade has been designated by the World Council of Churches The Decade to Overcome Violence.

RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE

Prayers of the People

Use the reading 'All the Children of the World' and prayer on page 127 or 'What Do We Want to Tell the Children?' on page 130 of *Reaching for Rainbows*.

The Lord's Prayer VU 910 or VU 960 if sung.

The New Creed VU 918

Offering of our Life and Work

Solo offering music Let there be peace on Earth, 122 or Where have all the flowers gone, 106, in *Spirit of Singing: Songs for Building Community*.

All: "God of all peoples and God of all places, we present these offerings that they may be used to build a world of peace. With them we offer our various ministries, that each of us may be part of your answer to the needs of the world. Amen."

Young People's Time Part 2

The children return from their groups with what they have made. They have an opportunity to talk about their creations and their future plans with the congregation.

Hymn: If I had a hammer, 98, or When I needed a neighbour –Spirit of Singing, 600.

Benediction

Go now in peace – VU 964. (Sing as a round.)

An alternative benediction is found in *Listening for the Soul* page 185-6 A New Pastoral Care Ritual. which involves all the young people. See Resources.

Notes

1. Since the theme of this service is about listening to children the activities are geared to guiding children to express their thoughts. The teacher needs to be a listener at the same time all these activities are going on. If the children want to spend time talking about their fears and hopes around peace instead of doing the activities that should be the teachers' priority.
2. Coloured stick-it papers could be distributed with the church calendar so that the whole congregation can contribute peace prayers to the rainbow as well as the children.
3. The date that has been planned for the Peace Sabbath in 2003 is October 26, the closest Sunday to United Nations Day, October 24. The service could also be used for November 23, Children's Sunday or near December 10, Human Rights Day.

Suggested Church Group Activities

- 1- Make Peace Christmas cards, candles or lanterns.
- 2- Make Peace booklets shaped like a dove.
- 3- Play cooperative games. See Resources.
- 4- Collect war toys and glue together to make a peace sculpture.
- 5- Role play ways of stopping an argument that is getting out of hand or a fight.
- 6- Make a banner for the church.
- 7- Make peace bookmarks for seniors or parents.
- 8- Make styrofoam peace symbols for the church White Gift Service Christmas Tree.
- 9- Purchase a button-maker and make Peace Buttons for the congregation.
- 10- Bake dove cookies and give or sell at Coffee Hour to raise money for peace work.
- 11- Make a bulletin board display of the youth's stories, pictures, poems, etc.
- 12- Prepare a Peace Play for the congregation.
- 13- Make a Peace Calendar (put in dates of peace events) or a Peace Collage.
- 14- Make Peace T-shirts with markers.
- 15- Do a Peace theme word search game.

Some activities will take more time than is allotted for this service. For example:

- 16- Plant a peace garden and harvest the vegetables for the local Food Bank (This obviously would take many weeks and advance planning.)
- 17- Do a video or slide show of the youth doing peace activities
- 18- Hold a Peace Fair to highlight learnings about peace.
- 19- Show a film: *Toys, Neighbours, or Top Priority* (NFB 1-800-267-7710)
- 20- Invite a guest to talk about her/his experiences in peace walks or as a refugee.

Resources

Mandate, May 2001 Special Edition, Children: Is Anybody Listening?

Reaching for Rainbows by Ann Weems (available from the UCC Book Room)

A Manual on Nonviolence and Children New Society Publishers – Cooperative games.

Spirit of Singing: Songs for Building Community Wood Lake Books

www.celebratingpeace.com - excellent ideas for children.

www.africafiles.org (youth and children)

For children's excellent resources from the United Nations contact United Nations Publications, Department of Public Information, Room DC2-0853, Dept. D 181, New York NY, 10017, 1-800-253-9646 or 212-963-8302 (3489 fax), publications@un.org Also United Nations Association in Canada 1-613-232-5751

Listening for the Soul by Jean Stairs (Augsburg Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2000)

Speaker: "We bless these children with the elements common to our lives. They are gifts of God for the people of God – rock, wind, flame and water." (The leader passes a rock to the group). "Hold, feel and rub this rock. This rock is a piece of our earth. We can stand on rock. It is as solid as you are. May you always stand on solid ground. We pray God's blessing upon you, for you are gift for the world."

Children: "We walk with God."

Speaker: (blowing gently on each person's head). "We are surrounded by air. It can blow softly and strongly. May it stir your soul to run, fly, hide, sing and breathe. We pray God's blessing upon you, for you are gift for the world."

Children: "We walk with God".

Speaker: (lighting a candle and holding it up) "The light from this flame shines before you. In its light we see how precious you are. May you be given light to guide you and show you what is right. We pray God's blessing upon you for you are gift for the world."

Children: "We walk with God."

Leader: (dipping her hand in a bowl of water she touches each child's eyelids) "This water is cool and cleansing. As a deer pants for water, so your soul longs for God. May God alone be your heart's delight and may you see the things God sees. We pray God's blessing upon you, for you are gift for the world."

Youth: "We walk with God."

Leader: "May our God who made rock, air, flame and water bless us all as we grow in spirit and truth. Amen."

