

# Prayers and practices of nonviolence

*Peace Sunday Packet 2011*



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► **To read stories and historical accounts of nonviolence, and to explore more quotes, books, websites, and other resources on nonviolence, check out the Peace Sunday Supplement found on our website [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday)**

# Introduction

## The goal

The goal of this packet is to bring together prayers and practices that embody the nonviolent love of Jesus Christ. For Peace Sunday 2011 and beyond, we hope this packet inspires you to blend worship and public witness, prayer and peace advocacy, praise and protest against violence.

## Jesus is at the centre

Jesus is at the centre of our prayers and practices of nonviolence. Although he never uses the word “nonviolence” himself, we recognize themes of nonviolence in his ministry: loving enemies, overcoming evil with good, encountering injustice with compassion, preaching peace, and building relationships with others. The cross then becomes a focal point for our worship and a strong impetus for peace work. The cross reminds us forever that the ways of love are more powerful than the ways of violence.

## Go joyfully

Go joyfully as you explore the prayers and practices of nonviolence. Start with worship and praise, move into the practices of nonviolence, and finish with hope and a keen sense of God’s abundant blessings. This three-part movement is rooted in scripture, and it enables everyone to grow and flourish as followers of Jesus Christ. This journey includes everything from praying to educating, from welcoming to protesting, from creating to celebrating.

## Send us feedback

We welcome your feedback, questions, and comments. Please be specific.

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## Worship materials

Incorporate some of the following worship materials into your Peace Sunday service. You might also choose to adapt them for small group devotions, public witness events, training workshops, or other nonviolent actions held in conjunction with Peace Sunday.

### Visual images

- 1. Hand cut-outs:** Using different colours of paper, prepare a series of cut-outs in the shape of a hand (small, medium, and large). Write quotes from this packet on some of them. As a way of building interest and intrigue, post these hands on the walls of the church for several weeks prior to Peace Sunday, and print brief questions in your church bulletin such as, “What are hands for?” or “What did Jesus do with his hands?”
- 2. Two banners:** Create two large banners for the front of your sanctuary. Affix the banners onto T-shaped dowels so you can remove them from the wall and carry them into a public prayer vigil if needed. A few different ideas for the banners:
  - a. One banner features the word “power” and the other banner features the word “love”.
  - b. Each banner features the word “radical” but one banner tells of the roots/origin meaning of the word and the other banner tells of the leading edge/challenging meaning—see sermon idea #3 on page 13 for more explanation about the two meanings.
  - c. One banner depicts Jesus praying and the other banner depicts Jesus overturning the tables of the moneychangers. Both are true images of Christ, and they complement one another.
- 4. Worship table:** Assemble some of the following objects on a worship table at the front of the sanctuary: cross (reminder of Christ, symbol of the power of love over fear/death/hatred), pruning shears (alluding to Micah 4:1-4), towel (service as inherent to peacemaking), megaphone (tool of nonviolent crowd control), Bible (source of the gospel of peace), newspaper (awareness of current events), candle (symbol of solidarity or divine guidance), cellphone (tool of organizing and coordination), running shoes (alluding to Ephesians 6:15), a toolbox (see page 15 for how a toolbox can be utilized for children’s story #3).
- 5. Nonviolence timeline:** Create a large-format version of the “Nonviolence timeline” (see Peace Sunday supplement, available at [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday)) and display it prominently in advance of Peace Sunday. Post the timeline in such a way that you can remove it from the wall on Peace Sunday and bring it into the sanctuary. Place it on the worship table or find a creative way of adding prayers, stories, or pictures to show how we play a part in making history.

## Call to worship #1

Leader: Enter a place where the roots grow deep

All: *Where God is the source of love*

Leader: Enter a place where the roots grow deep

All: *Where Jesus is the peace pioneer*

Leader: Enter a place where the roots grow deep

All: *Where scripture is the place of beginning*

Leader: Come into a time when the Holy Spirit leads

All: *When worship and peacemaking are one*

Leader: Come into a time when the Holy Spirit leads

All: *When nonviolence turns the tables*

Leader: Come into a time when the Holy Spirit leads

All: *When hostilities are set aside for good*

Leader: Enter this place and come into this time

All: *We are here and now. And so is the Lord—here and now.*

## Call to worship #2

**Note:** Encourage people to lift up their arms for each response.

Leader: Still carrying the mundane things of everyday life, and also wanting to fully enter into worship and praise,

All: *We lift up our hands to Jesus. We lift up our hands to God.*

Leader: Still knowing the ways and the facts of our world, and also wanting something that surpasses knowledge,

All: *We lift up our hands to Jesus. We lift up our hands to God.*

Leader: Still listening to the news of violence and war, and also wanting to hear about a force more powerful,

All: *We lift up our hands to Jesus. We lift up our hands to God.*

Leader: Still doing our best to love one another, and also wanting to train ourselves to love in new ways,

All: *We lift up our hands to Jesus. We lift up our hands to God.*

Leader: Still carrying and knowing and listening and doing, and also wanting to fully enter into worship and praise,

All: *We lift up our hands to Jesus. We lift up our hands to God.*

## Call to worship #3

**Note:** Repeat three times—each time getting louder—then repeat one final time very quietly.

Leader: We wait for God

All: *We hope in God's word*

Leader: More than those who watch for the morning

All: *More than those who watch for the morning*

Leader: For with God there is steadfast love

All: *And with God is great power to redeem.*

Adoration transforms us; it gives us new reflexes and equips us to do God's work in difficult situations. And somehow, mysteriously, things change, too, on the earth and in the heavenly realm as the result of our worship. Worship is the motor of history; it is an engine for God's great project of peacemaking.

– Alan Kreider,  
Eleanor Kreider,  
and Paulus Widjaja

## Songs

Work with your music leaders to select songs that express peacemaking and nonviolence themes, or that correspond with the planned scripture passages. Look for some of the following songs in your church hymnal or do an internet search based on the title (or the full title plus the word “lyrics”). On the following page you will find an additional song text written specifically for Peace Sunday 2011.

- Beauty for brokenness–*Words and music by Graham Kendrick*
- Christ be near at either hand–*Words and music are Irish traditional*
- Don't be afraid–*Words and music by John Bell*
- Down by the riverside–*Words and music are traditional gospel*
- Firstborn of Mary–*Words and music by John Bell*
- If the war goes on–*Words and music by John Bell*
- If you believe and I believe–*Words and music are Zimbabwean traditional*
- Jesus be the centre–*Words and music by Michael Frye*
- Jesus, help us live in peace–*Words and music by Gerald Derstine*
- Let there be light, Lord God–*Words by William Vories, music by Louis Bourgeois*
- Make me a channel of your peace–*Words by Saint Francis; music by Sebastian Temple*
- O power of love–*Words by Gerhard Tersteegen; music by Dimitri Bortniansky*
- Peace before us–*Words and music by David Haas*
- Praise the One who breaks the darkness–*Words by Rusty Edwards; music is traditional*
- Som'landela (We will follow)–*Words and music are Zimbabwean traditional*
- Sword into a ploughshare–*Words and music by Darryl Neustaedter Barg*
- The mountain of God–*Words and music by Phil Campbell-Enns*
- We are people of God's peace–*Words by Menno Simons; music by Johann Horn*

## Nonviolent worship music

As a way of nurturing creative reflection within the worship service, invite a few church members to prepare a musical expression of nonviolence. One musician or ensemble could represent one “side” and another musician or ensemble could represent the other “side” as if they are in conflict with each other. The first side plays their music (e.g. vigorous instrumental music that conveys a sense of anger or agitation), then the second side plays their music as an aggressive response to the first. This back-and-forth pattern gets interrupted by a third musician or ensemble that intervenes with a nonviolent musical response. This response might thoughtfully incorporate aspects of the first two musicians (i.e. compromise) or it could be a very surprising and disarming musical gesture that causes the first two musicians to abandon their aggressive tendencies in favour of a more respectful, musical call-and-response (i.e. dialogue). The intervening musician could motivate the other two musicians to put down their instruments (their “arms”) and join a peaceful song that includes everyone. Or one of the musicians could find a way of expressing *love of enemy* by the creative use of melody or harmony.

Prayer is the beginning and the end, the source and the fruit, the core and the content, the basis and the goal of all peacemaking.

– Henri Nouwen

To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.

– Karl Barth

## Song: “Radical Jesus”

*(Sung to the popular hymn tune “Blessed Assurance”)*

Radical Jesus, root of the vine,  
Source of the gospel, Saviour divine.  
We are your branches keeping your Word,  
In you abiding what we have heard.

### CHORUS

Give us your power, give us your love,  
Nonviolent Jesus Christ from above.  
Give us your power, give us your love,  
Nonviolent Jesus Christ from above.

Radical Jesus, activist Lord,  
You tell us firmly, “Put down your sword!  
Love one another—enemies, too.  
Forgive each other. Peace be with you.”

Radical Jesus, conflict was yours.  
But you declared a different “war”.  
“Fighting” with peace and waging surprise;  
Enemies prayed for, fools made wise.

Radical Jesus, teacher of peace,  
Deeper than knowing, wider than free.  
Wanting your Spirit, wanting your skill,  
Wanting the nerve to follow your will.

Radical Jesus, glory and praise  
We give to you with gladness today.  
Even the cross, Lord, salvaged by you,  
We follow humbly, living anew.

Because of our faith in Christ and in human kind, we must apply our humble efforts to the construction of a more just and humane world. And I want to declare emphatically such a world is possible. To create this new society, we must present outstretched, friendly hands, with hatred, without rancour—even as we show great determination, never wavering in the defence of truth and justice. Because we know that seeds are not sown with clenched fists. To sow we must open our hands.

– Adolfo Perez  
Esquivel

## Silence and noise-making

Times of silences can foster peace, calm, and rejuvenation—all surely necessary for the pursuit of peace. At the same time, the way of nonviolence also includes raising a ruckus and courageously interfering with the powers-that-be. Page 2 proposes two banners that depict Jesus as a quiet, prayerful Saviour and an angry, activist Saviour, and the juxtaposition of these two visual images expands our spiritual devotion to Jesus, and reminds us of the dynamic relationship between quietness and bustling activity within our lives as disciples of Jesus.

Are Christian peacemakers called to quietness and noise? Is this just another way of talking about a healthy cycle of action and reflection, or is it indicative of a more specific way that Jesus modeled faithfulness to God's calling? Can nonviolent resistance to violence and war include both thunderous protesting and quiet praying?

- Invite two people to read the same passage with two different voices—one voice can read quietly, gently, and reflectively, and then the other voice can read the same passage loudly, passionately, and forcefully. These two voices could read the entire passage one after the other, or they could alternate line-by-line.
- Prepare a dramatic enactment of Luke 19:41-48 in which one person depicts Jesus weeping and praying and another person depicts Jesus overturning the tables of the moneychangers. The two people take turns with their depictions, but eventually they either switch roles or depict Jesus praying and overturning at the same time (i.e. in the Temple which is to be a “house of prayer”).
- Encourage the entire congregation to weave together silence and noise-making as an integral component of their worship experience. Use the third call to worship on page 3 several times throughout the worship service, each time encouraging people to use their full voice range from whispering to shouting. For a simpler approach, take one phrase such as “Give us peace, O God” and then create an occasion during the worship service when everyone can repeatedly utter this phrase very quietly on their own (i.e. not in unison) and then another occasion when everyone can repeatedly shout this phrase very loudly (again, not in unison).

Jesus lived a life of action. He practiced public, provocative, creative nonviolence, with regular acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. He was a one person crime wave, breaking every law that violated God's law of peace. He organized the poor in Galilee and walked to Jerusalem in a campaign of active nonviolence. He entered the corrupt Temple, turned over the tables of the money-changers, drove out the cattle, and declared the place as house of prayer. He did not hurt or kill anyone, but he took dramatic, direct action for justice. For this deed, he was arrested, tried, tortured and executed. As his followers, every one of us has this same vocation of active nonviolence.

– John Dear

## **Readers' theatre: "What is nonviolence?"**

**Voice 1:** What is nonviolence?

**Voice 2:** It is a strategy for social change that rejects violence.

**Voice 3:** It is a philosophy of active peacemaking.

**Voice 2:** It is a spiritual discipline.

**Voice 2:** It is a pragmatic choice based on what works.

**Voice 2:** It is an active response to violence.

**Voice 3:** It is a force more powerful than violence.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** Why are we talking about nonviolence during a worship service?

**Voice 3:** Because God's will is for peace.

**Voice 2:** Because God calls us to turn swords into ploughshares.

**Voice 3:** Because God is the source of power.

**Voice 2:** Because God is the source of love.

**Voice 3:** Because God is love.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** Did Jesus ever say anything about nonviolence?

**Voice 2:** Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

**Voice 3:** Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

**Voice 2:** Jesus said, "Do not be afraid."

**Voice 3:** Jesus said, "Put down your sword."

**Voice 2:** Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek and go the second mile."

**Voice 3:** Jesus said, "Love your enemies."

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** How do Christians walk the talk of nonviolence in everyday life?

**Voice 2:** By working for justice.

**Voice 3:** By trusting in God rather than trusting in weapons.

**Voice 2:** By rehearsing creative and disarming ways of responding to a crisis.

**Voice 3:** By actively and publicly resisting war.

**Voice 2:** By building relationships with those who are supposed to be enemies.

**Voice 3:** By training for love.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** Don't people already know enough about love?

**Voice 2:** The nonviolent love of Christ surpasses knowledge.

**Voice 1:** Does that mean people will never really understand nonviolence?

**Voice 2:** It means that nonviolence is rooted in the mind, but also in the heart.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** What is nonviolence?

**Voice 2:** The way of Jesus.

**Voice 3:** A force more powerful than violence.

**Voice 2:** The way of love.

## Flipchart theatre

Two people stand at the front, each with a flipchart. They take turns writing words or phrases in response to each other (and speaking the words they write), finally ending with an agreement of some kind. The flipchart paper appeals to both oral and visual learners, and it leaves a record of the conversation for people to ponder afterward. Choose either the left-hand script or the right-hand script, or create your own.

### *Large-scale situation*

Person A writes: “nonviolence”

Person B writes: “naive”

A: faithfulness

B: effectiveness

A: God’s peace

B: peace in the real world

A: God’s peace is real

B: But you only refuse

A: Refuse?

B: To fight.

A: We fight differently

B: How?

A: People power

B: Sounds good but

A: Organized love

B: But will it work?

A: Not about results

B: Tell that to Rwanda

A: What?

B: Tell that to Libya.

A: Pray for Libya.

B: Is that all?

A: And nonviolence.

B: As if

A: Think Gandhi 1930

B: Well

A: Think Egypt 2011

B: So?

A: Train for nonviolence

B: Who?

A: You and me

B: Your peace, my peace

A: God’s peace

B: peace in the real world

A: Both

B: OK

A: Both nonviolent

B: Hopefully

A: nonviolence

B: nonviolence

### *Small-scale situation*

Person A writes: “nonviolence”

Person B writes: “naive”

A: faithfulness

B: effectiveness

A: God’s peace

B: peace in the real world

A: God’s peace is real

B: But what about the street?

A: Street?

B: What if mugged?

A: Mugged?

B: If attacked?

A: No fight, no flee

B: Doormat?

A: No

B: Then what?

A: Surprise

B: What?

A: Respect

B: As if

A: Disarm

B: Really?

A: De-escalate

B: Sounds good but

A: It can work

B: Not always

A: Neither violence

B: So how?

A: Training

B: Who?

A: You and me

B: Your peace, my peace

A: God’s peace

B: peace in the real world

A: Both

B: OK

A: Both nonviolent

B: Hopefully

A: nonviolence

B: nonviolence

## Readers theatre: “Yours are the hands”

**Disciple:** I am a Christian disciple. My name is (insert real name).

**Saint:** I am a Christian saint from the 16th century. My name is Teresa of Avila.

**Jesus:** I am the Word-made-flesh. My name is Jesus.

*(pause)*

**Disciple:** These are my hands.

**Saint:** Yours are the hands.

**Disciple:** What can I do with these hands?

**Saint:** Yours are the hands. No hands on earth but yours.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I use my hands for criticizing. I point my finger at others.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I washed the feet of my disciples.

**Saint:** Yours are the hands.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I use my hands for fighting. I turn my hands into fists.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I touched the eyes of a blind person and gave them sight.

**Saint:** Yours are the hands. No hands on earth but yours.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I use my hands to make money. I grab as much as I can, and I hold tight.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I multiplied loaves of bread so that everyone had enough to eat.

**Saint:** Yours are the hands. No hands on earth but yours.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I use my hands to protect myself from those who are different. I lock the door of my house. I lock my car.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I touched healed a person who was suffering from leprosy.

**Saint:** Yours are the hands. No hands on earth but yours.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I use my hands to thump the Bible. I point to the places in scripture where God tells people to fight wars.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and found the place where it talks about good news for the poor and release to the captives.

**Saint:** Yours are the hands. No hands on earth but yours.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I use my hands to obey the authorities. I salute. I offer my allegiance.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I swung a whip to drive the animals out of the temple, and I overturned the tables of the moneychangers.

**Saint:** Yours are the hands. No hands on earth but yours.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I clench my hands because some situations require violence.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I taught people to love their enemies and to overcome evil with good.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I throw up my hands because there is no other force more powerful than violence.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I conquered the powers of fear and hatred.

**Disciple:** Sometimes I stick my hands in my pockets because there's nothing I can do.

**Jesus:** With these hands, I showed the world that I had risen from the dead.

**Disciple:** There's nothing I can do.

**Jesus:** I lifted up my hands and blessed my disciples.

**Disciple:** What can I do?

**Saint:** Christ has no body now but yours—no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, the eyes, the feet. Christ has no body now but yours.

## Readers theatre: Matthew 5:38-48

**Voice 1:** Hear these words from Matthew chapter 5 verses 38-48...

**Voice 2:** ... along with some commentary.

**Voice 1:** You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer.

**Voice 2:** Let’s stop there for a moment. I remember coming across a Bible that translated Jesus’ words like this: “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Is that going to get us anywhere? Here’s what I propose: Don’t hit back at all. If someone strikes you, stand there and take it.” (The Message) Is that really what Jesus meant? Sounds like some kind of doormat theology.

**Voice 1:** Good point. It’s interesting because in most English Bibles, there’s a Greek word that is translated as “resist”, but at the time of Jesus that word actually referred to a specific form of military, armed resistance. So if that’s true, then Jesus was actually saying something more like this: “When you are face-to-face with violence, don’t respond with violence.”

**Voice 2:** Instead, respond with nonviolence. And then Jesus gives three examples of how to do just that.

**Voice 1:** Here’s the first one: “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.” What does Jesus mean by that?

**Voice 2:** At the time of Jesus, superiors could deliver a backhanded slap against inferiors. Given that the cultural reality of that time prohibited the use of the left hand for such things, Jesus’ instruction to turn the other cheek forces the superior to use their right hand to punch or hit the other person with an open hand, thereby insinuating an equal power relationship. It would have been a surprising way for an underdog to claim their dignity and transform the power dynamics.

**Voice 1:** So instead of a violent reaction, Jesus advocates a nonviolent response.

**Voice 2:** Exactly. We see the same thing in the second example that Jesus gives. “If anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well.” What’s going on here?

**Voice 1:** At the time of Jesus, most people wore two garments: an outer garment made of wool and an inner garment made of linen. To sue for the outer garment was well within the law. For the defendant to also give the inner garment would leave that person naked, thus shaming the one who is suing. In that context, the one who looks upon nakedness is shamed.

**Voice 2:** So this is another example of a surprising, unexpected, and nonviolent way of turning the tables on injustice.

**Voice 1:** Yes, and we’ll see the same thing yet again when Jesus says, “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.”

**Voice 2:** It’s another example of turning the tables. At the time of Jesus, the Romans were the occupying force, and it was permissible for Roman soldiers to force people to carry their pack for a mile, but no more. To voluntarily take the pack for a second mile upsets the power imbalance and creates a difficult situation for the Roman soldier who is now seen as contravening their own law.

With one hand we say to an oppressor, “Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honour the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life... [T]hen the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised out-stretched—maybe with love and sympathy, but maybe not—but always outstretched with the message that, “No, you are not the other; and no, I am not the other. I won’t let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making now... Like it or not, we are part of one another.

- Barbara Deming

- Voice 1:** So with these three examples, it seems that Jesus didn't mean to say, "Don't resist at all". Instead, he advocates resisting violence with creative actions that humanize the other, transform power dynamics, and open up new possibilities for change.
- Voice 2:** Maybe that helps us in our reading of the next section where Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of God in heaven."
- Voice 1:** If you're face to face with someone who is acting violently or aggressively, and you decide to do the unexpected thing by turning the cheek, giving your cloak, or going the second mile, you're going to need some unexpected love inside of you!
- Voice 2:** And not just regular love. As Jesus goes on to point out, this is not just the kind of love that you have for those who love you. This love is deeper than that.
- Voice 1:** Or maybe instead of deeper, we can think of it as love that is more mature. After all, at the end of the passage when Jesus says, "Be perfect, therefore, as God is perfect" some Bible scholars point out that instead of "perfect", a better translation of the original Greek would be "mature".
- Voice 2:** So Jesus is saying that we should love our enemies, which is a mature kind of love.
- Voice 1:** The way I think of it, Jesus is telling us to grow up and love the way that love was meant to be loved.
- Voice 2:** Love the way that God meant people to love. Nonviolent love. Love that heals the world. Love that is a force more powerful than violence.
- Voice 1:** Seems very hard to do.
- Voice 2:** That's why love needs training. We need to be trained for love.
- Voice 1:** Then we disciples should return to the classroom.
- Voice 2:** I think we've got it right here (gesturing to the sanctuary and the worship service as a whole).
- Voice 1:** And here (pointing to Bible).
- Voice 2:** Alright, then. Turn the cheek, give the cloak, go the second mile, and love the enemy.
- Voice 1:** Let's work at this stuff some more.

This readers' theatre is based on the biblical scholarship of Walter Wink. For more in-depth reading of Matthew 5, check out his book *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* as noted in the Peace Sunday Supplement, available at [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday)

Jesus' Third Way is not natural. We have not been prepared for it through millions of years of conditioning for flight or fight responses. We do not come to these things by virtue of a sunny disposition but by conversion, practice, imagination, and risk. Nonviolent training needs to become a regular and repetitive component of every change-oriented group's life; it is not a last minute strategy that can be donned at will like an asbestos suit.

– Walter Wink

## Sermon ideas

- 1. From praise to practice to joy:** Explore a Christian approach to nonviolence by following this three-part biblical progression:
  - **Worship and praise:** Psalm 130:5-7—We are waiting, thirsting, and yearning for God, especially in the face of realities that cry out for redemption—e.g. the brokenness, loss of life, and overall destruction caused by violence and war. Nonviolent love is a response to these realities, and so we worship God whose love is steadfast. Implicit here is the idea that we do not worship the gods of war, violence, and militarism.
  - **Practicing and training:** Matthew 5:38-48—We know that God is the source of love and redemptive power, but we yearn to walk the talk. God sends Jesus into the world as the complete and definitive walking of the talk. Among the many ways he embodies love, he teaches and practices a very specific way of loving enemies. Instead of striking back with violence (fight) or running away (flight), Jesus tells his followers to engage violence with a different approach – a third way – that involves disarming, surprising, and overcoming violence with the force of love. This nonviolent love requires training and discipline. See readers’ theatre on Matthew 5.
  - **Hope, joy, and abundance:** Ephesians 3:16-21—As with Psalm 130, this passage contains the words love and power, suggesting something about the connection between an inner spirituality of nonviolence and the outer, practical tools of nonviolence. Through both his ministry and his Easter victory over the powers of violence and death, Jesus proves that love is the most powerful force. We take hope that Christ’s work of nonviolence continues in us as His followers. We feel joy that the Holy Spirit blesses us with power in our inner being (you may also want to reference 2 Timothy 1:7). We give thanks that, even though the realities of violence and war sometimes feel overwhelming, God will accomplish abundantly far more than we can imagine.
- 2. Swords into ploughshares:** Use Micah 4:1-4 as the basis for a sermon on nonviolence and disarmament. What does it mean for many nations to receive disarmament instructions from God? Does this mean that the peacemaking and nonviolence of God should be intelligible to those who are not from our faith tradition? How does this passage shed light on the broader biblical theme of “do not be afraid”? Is this only a pie-in-the-sky dream, or is there some practical way for us to live out this vision in today’s world?
- 3. Getting radical:** The word radical has two different meanings. On the one hand, radical comes from the Latin words radicalus and radix which refer to the roots or the origin of something. On the other hand, radical can describe something that is revolutionary, challenging, risky, and far-reaching. Explore the place where the prayers and practices of nonviolence come together both with a firmly-rooted tradition and with leading edges. You may want to include something about the early Anabaptists of the 16th century whose peace beliefs emerged from this combination of returning to the roots of the Bible and Jesus’ teachings, and courageously breaking away from what they saw as overly conservative and limiting traditions of the time. How can we get radical as a whole church?

I submit that the ultimate religious question today is no longer the Reformation’s “How can I find a gracious God?” It is instead, “How can I find God in my enemy?” What guilt was for Luther, the enemy has become for us: the goad that can drive us to God. What has formerly been a purely private affair—justification by faith through grace—has now, in our age, grown to embrace the world... There is, in fact, no other way to God for our time but through the enemy, for loving the enemy has become the key both to human survival in the age of terror and to personal transformation. Either we find the God who causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, or we may have no more sunrises.

– Walter Wink

4. **Divine obedience and civil disobedience:** Explore one or more of the following stories involving people obeying God rather than human authorities: Jesus overturning the tables of the moneychangers (John 2); Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16); Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3); Puah and Shiphrah (Exodus 1). When governments ask us to support policies or practices that perpetrate violence against people or the environment, how can we adhere to God's calling to be nonviolent peacemakers? Knowing that we should obey God above all others, can we be OK with nonviolent actions that land us in prison because they happen to contravene civil laws? Can we think of noncooperation with violence and conscientious objection as Christian spiritual disciplines? How can we practice these spiritual disciplines as church communities?
5. **The Lamb's War:** Some people find it helpful to think of nonviolence as fighting without weapons, or fighting with different weapons. The New Testament provides the basis for a "Lamb's War" in which the Lamb (Jesus) fights and prevails against the powers of violence, evil, and death. The book of Revelation describes Jesus as a lamb that prevails even though it is slaughtered (e.g. Revelation 5 and 7). How can it be that a meek, little lamb—a killed lamb no less—can be worthy to receive power and might and glory? Is this a justification for a theology of passive non-resistance? Or do we see ourselves as followers of the Lamb who fight very forcefully but with powerful weapons other than violence? Does Ephesians 6:10-17 provide clarity for how we should fight the Lamb's War?
6. **Stories of bystanding and intervening:** Consult the stories in the Peace Sunday Supplement, available at [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday) and then write a sermon that weaves together several of these stories with scriptural reflections on how we as Christians are called to intervene non-violently in situations of violence and injustice (rather than be passive bystanders). Another approach would be for two people to prepare the sermon as a dialogue. One person describes some of their experiences as a nonviolent Christian peacemaker (or as a Christian who missed some opportunities to non-violently intervene), and the other person clarifies the personal stories by sharing theological reflections or questions. Still another idea would be to prepare a very short set of reflections on Christian nonviolence, and then take half of the sermon time for small group discussions among those gathered – i.e. "I've shared some thoughts about Christian nonviolence. Now let's talk together. Turn to one or two people beside you and share about a time when you witnessed someone intervening to prevent violence, or perhaps a time when you remained a bystander in a situation of violence."
7. **Yes and no:** Begin with some reflections on the word nonviolence. It is a word that seems to be a negative word—a "no" word—and yet theorists and practitioners of nonviolence clearly demonstrate that nonviolence is very active. Compare nonviolence to the term wireless technology which, although negative sounding, refers to a very powerful way of communicating. Other similar words: nonfiction, nonpartisan, nonprofit, nonverbal, etc. Clarify the meaning of nonviolence by framing it within a Christian theology of the cross. As the tool of execution at the time of Jesus, the cross was a symbol of state-sanctioned murder. Yet Jesus transformed this symbol into a symbol of love, peace, and redemption. How can this be? How can nonviolent action transform violence with as much vigour as the cross transformed sin and death? Can nonviolent Christian peacemaking include a vocational yes (peacebuilding) as well as a vocational no (resisting violence and militarism)?

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Children's story ideas

1. Lead the children in repeating this prayer (based on Ephesians 3:16-21):  
“God, give us strength and power. Jesus, fill us with your love forever and ever. Amen.” After repeating several times, introduce these actions: Arms extended in a wide hugging posture for the first sentence, and then hands crossed over heart for the second sentence. After practicing these actions while repeating the sentence several more times, lead the children in standing up and facing the adults. Although you tell the children that they will lead the adults now, likely you will remain the leader for the whole congregation doing the prayer together.
2. Start with an activity involving two partners (prepared in advance) who face each other and clasp hands. There is an imaginary line on the floor between them. On the count of three, each tries to get their partner to their side of the line. First, they pull against each other but it doesn't work. Ask the children why it isn't working. Ask for ideas about a different way of accomplishing the task. Eventually, have the two partners demonstrate how they can quickly accomplish the task by using their grip to swing each other around and switch places. Use this as a basis for talking about the difference between competition and cooperation, and what it means to find creative solutions to conflict. In another version of this, the two partners face opposite directions while standing inside a hula hoop. An apple is placed in front of each partner. On the count of three, they try to get their apple as quickly as they can. Again, the cooperative response is most effective.
3. Prepare a toolbox in advance that features a large hole in the backside (made out of a cardboard box, or a real toolbox that gets permanently altered). Stick your arm through the hole so that it's hidden inside the toolbox, and hold the toolbox with your other arm in a natural way (you could even wear an altered shirt with a fake arm to replace your real arm that's hiding inside the toolbox). Tell the children that you have a nonviolence toolbox, and ask them what kinds of tools they think are inside. Open up the toolbox and demonstrate some of the tools that don't work (e.g. your hand emerges from the toolbox as a fist or as a pointed finger). Talk about some of the tools that Jesus taught us to use (e.g. a hand ready to shake someone else's hand, an open hand, a hand that says, “Stop!” to a bully, etc.). Talk with the children about what kinds of tools we can put in the nonviolence toolbox.
4. Invite three people to prepare a short skit depicting a situation of bullying, and make sure these actors are OK with ad-libbing. Read Matthew 5:9, and then say, “Let's think about how to be a peacemaker.” The three actors present their skit and at the end, ask the children to describe what just happened. Encourage them to use the word “bullying” in order to be accurate. Have the children identify the people in the skit who acted as bully, bullied, and bystander. Then ask the children how the bullied or the bystander could have acted differently in order to prevent the bullying in the first place, or to stop the bullying once it was happening. Have the actors try out several scenarios based on the children's suggestions. Finish with a reminder about Matthew 5:9, and pray for God's guidance as we try to be peacemakers.
5. Prepare paper cut-outs of hand shapes (or of human figures using their hands in positive ways). Talk with the children about how we can use our hands for peacemaking and nonviolence rather than for hurting others. Help the children to trace their own hands on paper and then add words or drawings of peace inside the hands. Tape these hands onto the pulpit.

## **Declaration of citizenship**

Christian worship sometimes involves the recitation of a creed that clarifies the nature of God or the character of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Issues of violence and nonviolence present an interesting opportunity to declare our “citizenship” as part of worship, in contrast to the kind of allegiance we might feel asked to make to the “gods” of violence and war.

Print the following declaration on small cards (or, in keeping with some of the other visual imagery, on hand-shaped papers) and then distribute these cards on the chairs or pews of your sanctuary. At the appointed time, invite people to speak the text, sign their name to it, bring it to the front, and place it in a basket as a gift offering. It can be a powerful experience to make such a commitment, especially if others make the commitment at the same time.

### **Declaration of citizenship**

*I affirm that I will be faithful and bear allegiance to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and to the Holy Spirit who moves us toward love, and that I will faithfully observe the peacemaking call of God and fulfill my vocation as an ambassador of reconciliation and as a citizen of the nonviolent Reign of God.*

You might want to point out that this text is based loosely on the “Oath of citizenship” used in citizenship ceremonies in Canada: “I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.”

## **Commissioning or blessing**

In advance, invite several church members to prepare a simple blessing prayer such as, “May God give you strength and power as a peacemaker, and may you be filled with the nonviolent love of Jesus” (derived from the Ephesians text in sermon idea #1 on page 13) or to get ready to offer more spontaneous blessing prayers.

During the worship service, provide an open invitation for people to come forward for encouragement and a blessing for the path of nonviolence. Emphasize that God’s blessing extends to all people regardless of whether or not they choose to come forward. With instrumental music in the background, people can choose to come forward and receive a blessing from those who prepared prayers in advance. Depending on your tradition, you can also include laying on of hands and/or anointing with oil.

End by reiterating that God’s abundant blessings are for all people regardless of their peace commitment or level of experience with nonviolence. Give thanks to God for the way of nonviolence and for the more mysterious guidance offered by the Holy Spirit.

## Passing the peace

Invite people to stand up and greet each other with one of the following:

1. **Traditional:** “May the peace of Christ be with you.”  
Response: “And also with you.”
2. **Alternative:** “May the nonviolent love of Jesus be with you.”
3. **Alternative:** “May the love and power of the nonviolent Christ be with you.”
4. **Alternative:** Distribute pens and small slips of paper in advance. Each slip of paper should have a peace prayer or blessing printed on one side. At the appointed time, invite everyone to quietly write a peace blessing, write a thought about nonviolence, or draw a picture of peace on the blank side of the paper. If they cannot think of anything to write or if they do not feel like writing, that is alright because each slip of paper already has a message on one side. Invite everyone to stand and – in a spirit of quietness and generosity—offer their paper to someone else, accompanied by a handshake. Everyone can greet several people in this way, thus making all the papers pass hands several times before everyone sits down and reads the message on the paper they ended up with.

## Prayer of confession

Yes.

We confess our sins. We own up to our limitations.

We want to be honest about the clash between our words and our actions.

We speak about peacemaking and then we remain passive in the face of war.

We speak about justice and then we allow poverty to keep going on and on.

We speak about reconciliation and then we talk behind another’s back.

We speak about forgiveness and then we withhold forgiveness for others.

We speak about nonviolence and then we fill ourselves with images and stories of violence

We speak about being generous and then we act like misers.

We speak about saving the earth and then we contribute to the fumes and litter.

We speak about God and then we trust in ourselves alone.

Yes, we regret many things.

Nevertheless, we know you are the merciful and forgiving God.

Will you give us the ministry of peace again even though we make mistakes?

Will you give us the vocation of nonviolence again even though we mess up?

We open our hands and we try to disarm our hearts.

Because you are the God of love.

Yes, you are the God of love. AMEN.

## **Nonviolent communion prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace,  
After you proclaimed the Kingdom of God,  
After you announced good news to the poor and oppressed,  
After you gave sight to the blind and cures for the sick,  
After you blessed the peacemakers and the merciful,  
After you prayed for God's will to be done on earth,  
How could they take you to the cross?  
Why did you let them take you to the cross?  
Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace,  
On the eve of your crucifixion you gave a new commandment:  
To love as you loved.  
That is remarkable because you took love all the way.  
You refused the protection of the sword,  
You loved your enemies,  
You prayed for God to forgive those who were killing you,  
You remained steadfast even to the point of death,  
And then you transformed the cross itself.  
With your body, you blunted violence and turned it into redemptive power.  
With your blood, you created this new covenant:  
Follow my way of nonviolent love and I will be with you,  
Follow the way of the cross and I will show you again that love prevails  
over violence.  
Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace,  
When we share the bread and the cup,  
We share in your refusal to use violence,  
We share in your way of dealing with enemies,  
We share in your nonviolent victory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace,  
You feed us at the communion table,  
You teach us with the bread and the cup.  
Thank you for this way of remembering you.  
AMEN.

## **Hands and communion**

Integrate the imagery of hands into the communion service itself. Focus attention on the traditional ways in which we use our hands for communion—breaking the bread, holding the cup, and distributing the elements to those gathered. As a symbol of how communion unites all Christians within the body of Christ, plan an additional component at the end of the communion service where everyone holds hands for a final prayer. Alternatively, offer communion at the front of the sanctuary so that small groups can come up and stand in a circle, participate in communion, and then hold hands around the circle for a thanksgiving prayer before returning to their seats so that the next group can come up, and so on.

## **Prayer of urgency**

Loving God,  
Why do people hurt and abuse and kill each other?  
Will there ever be an end to war and hatred?  
When will your kingdom come?  
Loving God,  
Yours is the way of active nonviolence.  
Yours is the Holy Spirit that overcomes violence with a more powerful force.  
Loving God,  
We need your Holy Spirit –  
Now.  
AMEN.

## Prayer

by Kate Compston

Take our hatreds: make them into handshakes  
Take our prejudices: make them into peace-offerings  
Take our arguments: make them into alliances  
Take our battles: make them into bonds  
Take our misunderstandings: make them into music  
Take our divisions: make them into dances  
Take our schisms: make them into songs.  
AMEN.

## Intercessory prayers for nonviolence

by John Dear

Leader: That we might become people of Gospel nonviolence, who allow God to disarm our hearts of the violence within us, that we might be nonviolent to ourselves and to every person we meet for the rest of our lives, we pray:

*All: God of Peace, hear our prayer.*

Leader: That we might practice nonviolence as Jesus did, come to understand his creative nonviolence, and obey his commandments of nonviolence: “put down your sword,” “be as compassionate as God,” and “love your enemies,” we pray:

*All: God of Peace, hear our prayer.*

Leader: That we might come to know and worship God as a God of peace and nonviolence, who “makes the sun rise on the good and the bad, and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust,” that we might become peacemakers who help end war and create a culture of nonviolence, and so, fulfill our vocations to be the beloved sons and daughters of the God of peace, we pray:

*All: God of Peace, hear our prayer.*

Leader: For the church, that it might be a global community of Gospel nonviolence, that it might never bless violence or justify war again, that it might support and bless nonviolent campaigns for justice and peace, and that it might always teach, practice and model the nonviolence of Jesus, we pray:

*All: God of Peace, hear our prayer.*

Leader: For an end to war, poverty, starvation, racism, sexism, executions, torture, abortion, nuclear weapons, global warming and violence of every kind, we pray:

*All: God of Peace, hear our prayer.*

Leader: For the coming of a new generation of peacemakers, for new teachers, prophets, apostles, champions and saints of Gospel nonviolence, who will help the world turn from violence to nonviolence, who will lead us to reject war and nuclear weapons, reconcile with one another and create a new culture of peace and nonviolence, we pray:

*All: God of Peace, hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of peace, thank you for hearing our prayers, all the prayers in our hearts and all the prayers of the whole human race, and we offer them in the name of the nonviolent Jesus. AMEN.

## Prayer

*by Pace e Bene*

Spirit of God,  
you hold us in Your embrace.  
Your presence burns through this world,  
transforming it.  
You hold us in Your embrace.  
You call us to confront the mystery of evil.  
You hold us in Your embrace.  
You call us to live the astonishing mystery of good in the face  
of the mystery of evil.  
You hold us in Your embrace.  
Be with us as we experiment with your nonviolence.  
You hold us in Your embrace.  
Give us the strength to break the rules of war,  
to move from the war zone to the house of love.  
You hold us in Your embrace.  
We are grateful for You and for each other.  
You hold us in Your embrace.  
You hold us in Your embrace.  
You hold us in Your embrace. AMEN.

## Benediction

*by Mary Ann Ebert*

Spirit of tempest and flood, of growth, life and healing, blow through us.  
In the name of Jesus, the risk-taker and liberator, who calls us by our names,  
May we read the signs of the times.  
May we choose with wisdom where to direct our energies, yet with willingness  
to suffer  
May we affirm and encourage each other in sisterhood and brotherhood,  
respecting each other's beliefs, honouring each other's words and actions,  
recognizing each other's truth  
May the trusting, sharing, suffering, rejoicing, uncontainable love which we find  
within the very nature of God embrace us and send us forth.  
AMEN.

The tasks will be too large.  
We will fail. So we will come  
back to the worshipping  
church, bringing our  
brokenness and new stories  
of God's grace. And the cycle  
will continue. This cycle of  
worship is essential for a  
culture of peace: it heals  
us, energizes us, and keeps  
us on course. It links God's  
love with our lives and with  
God's world in a swirl of  
new creation. Worship is not  
quarantine: it is the heart and  
soul of a culture of peace  
involved with God's world.

– Alan Kreider,  
Eleanor Kreider,  
and Paulus Widjaja

## Learning and action

### *Nonviolence training workshop*

Contact MCC Canada or your provincial MCC office and ask for the names of potential workshop facilitators who can lead nonviolence and peace workshops in your church or community. There are a variety of other organizations that offer nonviolence training workshops on an ongoing basis (look through some of the organizations listed in the Peace Sunday Supplement, available at [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday)).

### *Prayer meeting*

Organize a “Prayers for Peace” meeting for a weekday evening and invite not only your congregation but other community members as well. Select a variety of biblical passages, prayers, and quotations from this Peace Sunday Packet and reproduce them on larger sheets of paper so that they can be posted on the wall and read easily from a slight distance. You could also find some books that include photos of Christian peacemakers in action, and place these books on a table with bookmarks at the pages with these photos. Once participants have arrived, invite them to choose a prayer, biblical passage, quotation, or photo that speaks to them in some way. Invite people into small groups to share what they chose and why they chose it. Finish with enough time for extended prayer, either using some of the printed prayers or more spontaneous prayers for peace. You could focus this prayer time on current events by bringing in some newspapers and then inviting participants to lead prayers for peace in light of situations of conflict and violence described in the newspapers.

### *Nonviolence working group*

Invite five or six people to form a nonviolence working group. This group could read nonviolence-related books or articles, propose some nonviolent actions or campaigns to your congregation for possible action, and could be charged with preparing one or more components of your Peace Sunday worship service.

### *Neighbourhood nonviolence*

Convene a group of community members and representatives from a variety of faith traditions and social service organizations on the topic of “neighbourhood-based nonviolence response teams”. Test the idea of training for and implementing a team of volunteers that can be called upon to reduce violence during crisis situations in your local community.

### *Imagination exercise for a nonviolent world*

This activity was devised by long-time peace researcher Elise Boulding who worked tirelessly to document the history of nonviolence—what she called the “hidden side of history”. In a workshop setting, lead participants through the following three steps: (1) Each person quietly spends time imagining a peaceful and nonviolent world in detail. (2) Each person continues individually to describe their peaceful and nonviolent world by drawing pictures and/or writing descriptive phrases on paper. Then people get into small groups to share and discuss their pictures and descriptions. (3) Each person returns to a quiet space to identify one step they can take—one thing they can do to move the real world toward their vision of a peaceful and nonviolent world—and then write this one step on a sheet of paper. To bring closure, everyone can place their sheets into a basket as a collective offering.

### *Theological book club*

Convene a book club in which you read and discuss individual chapters from a specific book on Christian nonviolence such as Mast and Weaver’s book *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* or Dear’s *Put*

*Down Your Sword* (see the Peace Sunday Supplement, available at [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday)). For one of your sessions, invite a local theology professor or biblical scholar to offer another perspective to supplement the cumulative wisdom of your group.

### *Peace sculpture*

Commission a local artist or sculptor to prepare a peace or nonviolence sculpture that gets installed at your church on Peace Sunday. Perhaps it could be a new stained glass window that indicates a commitment to peacemaking or a sword-into-ploughshare sculpture that gets installed on the front lawn of your church as a message to the community. How can your church's commitment to peace be made public and obvious?

### *Interfaith conversation*

Organize a meeting of leaders from a variety of faith traditions in your area, with the specific invitation to share with one another about your respective spiritualities and experiences with peacemaking. This event requires sensitive and skilful facilitation in order to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect, listening, and learning.

### *Department of Peace*

Learn about and support the Canadian Department of Peace campaign. Mennonite Central Committee is one of the organizational partners for this movement to establish an official Department of Peace within the Canadian government. Find the Department of Peace website in the Peace Sunday Supplement, available at [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday).

### *Peace pole*

A peace pole is a monument that displays the message, "May Peace Prevail on Earth". Since the beginning of the peace pole movement in the 1950s, more than 100,000 peace poles have been installed in places around the world. Install a peace pole outside your church building on Peace Sunday. Invite people to gather around the peace pole for a prayer of blessing.

### *History of nonviolence discussion*

Use the Nonviolence Timeline or one of the video segments from the "Force More Powerful" video series (see Peace Sunday Supplement, available at [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday)) as a basis for a Sunday School discussion about the history of nonviolence. Invite people to bring their own information and stories about nonviolent action. You could discuss historical examples of when nonviolence "works". How do you define effectiveness? Can effectiveness be integrated with an understanding of faithfulness, or do these need to be separate?

### *Peace coffeehouse*

Organize a peace coffeehouse and give specific instructions to a variety of musicians and storytellers to prepare material that relates directly to peace and nonviolence themes. Invite the surrounding community and make it an opportunity to share some excitement about alternatives to violence.

### *Art contest*

Launch an art, video, and music contest for youth. Invite creative entries in a variety of peace-related categories, and work toward a celebratory event where all the entries are presented.

► **To read stories and historical accounts of nonviolence, and to explore more quotes, books, websites, and other resources on nonviolence, check out the Peace Sunday Supplement found on our website [canada.mcc.org/peacesunday](http://canada.mcc.org/peacesunday)**

The unarmed Christ wants his community, the church, to be a community of creative, loving nonviolence. The greatest challenge before us at this terrible moment in history is finally to take Jesus at his word—to put down the sword and become a church of nonviolence, a people of nonviolence.

– John Dear



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