



Mennonite  
Church  
USA

Peace and Justice  
Support Network

# PEACE Sunday 2012

*Contributed by*

*Pastor Mick Sommers,  
Ridgeview Mennonite  
Church, Gordonville, Pa.*

Along with Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Church USA celebrates Peace Sunday the Sunday closest to the International Day of Prayer for Peace, which is Sept. 21. **However, you may use these materials any Sunday that works for your congregation.**

## Agreeing and disagreeing in love

### Introduction

Peace Sunday comes this year in the midst of a national election season. Deciding how to participate, or to participate at all, in the political process can be a spiritual exercise when pursued through prayer and in discerning communities of faith. The result of that exercise will lead followers of Jesus to different conclusions. These differences need not lead to division in the body of Christ. With our ultimate allegiance to Jesus, the church at every level can continue engaging in God's mission of peace and reconciliation, even as we differ in how, or if, we vote.

This year, the Peace and Justice Support Network invites your community to consider "agreeing and disagreeing in love" together as a Jesus-centered response to a political process that too often seeks victory by creating and exploiting division. The church's faithful witness to Jesus will not be announced by voting for a particular candidate. Instead, it will be announced as we model together how to love one another even in the midst of difference.

## Sermon ideas

**1** Cynical or sincere? Our basic outlook on life and people has an immediate effect on the direction in which a conflict may head. In the body of Christ, it is vital that we believe that the motivations of the "other" are sincere and not assume that ulterior motives are at work. Can we ever agree to disagree if trust is not present?

**2** Where am I most comfortable with conflict? At home? Work? Political discourse? Sports rivalries? Church? We often say that we don't like conflict, but more than likely the truth is we don't like particular conflicts in particular settings. What are the factors that make some conflicts more threatening than others? Where do we locate the artificial lines between banal disagreements and conflicts where someone must be either on the right or wrong side of the issue?

**3** Love the sinner, hate the sin ... It's for her own good ... The purity of the church requires ... Myths and justifications abound when we seek backing for our own perspectives and biases. Philippians 1:9 says: "And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more (abound) with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best ..." How do we keep love for the other at the forefront when we disagree?

**4** We often key in on the Matthew 18:15-20 passage as a "how to" guide for working through conflict, while ignoring the broader flow of texts within which it is located. The teaching section begins with Jesus' concern for the least and lost, and closes with a description of forgiveness that exceeds what most would expect. These attitudes of humility and restoration then should permeate any confrontation or correction that takes place within the body of Christ.

## Ideas for children

**1** Bring in a rope and let the children line up to play tug of war against each other. (Let them enjoy the game for a time.) After they have had some fun, begin to move more players to one side or the other creating an unfair advantage. Ask them how the game changes when the teams are unequal. Was it fun? Would the game work if one side stopped pulling? Talk about how adults can get caught up in this tug of war game when we disagree. Is this a good way to work at solving disagreements?

**2** *The Butter Battle Book* written by Dr. Seuss, Random House 1984, demonstrates the consequences when two sides with different views ratchet up their attempts to "win." Offers good opportunity for discussing better ways to work at conflict.

**Agreeing and disagreeing in love**

*Commitments for Mennonites in Times of Disagreement*

"Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:

**IN THOUGHT**

- Accept conflict
- Affirm hope
- Commit to prayer

**IN ACTION**

- Go to the other
- In the spirit of humility
- Be quick to listen
- Be slow to judge
- Be willing to negotiate

**IN LIFE**

- Be steadfast in love
- Be open to mediation
- Trust the community
- Be the Body of Christ

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► Resources like this poster and a bulletin cover idea can be found at our website at:  
[www.MennoniteMission.net/PeaceSunday](http://www.MennoniteMission.net/PeaceSunday)

# Sample worship service

## Gathering

### Gathering hymns

- "Come and be light for our eyes,"  
*Sing the Journey*, No. 5
- "Come, now is the time to worship,"  
*Sing the Journey*, No. 9
- "Here I am to worship,"  
Tim Hughes
- "Holy Spirit, come with power,"  
*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 26

## Lighting the peace lamp

(Peace lamps are free. If your congregation doesn't have one, contact [peace@MennoniteUSA.org](mailto:peace@MennoniteUSA.org).)

God of peace, Christ of peace, Spirit of peace, You are calling us to be peacemakers—in our homes, in our church, in our community, in our world. Today, we light this lamp as a reminder of our calling.

## Call to worship

*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 671

## Prayer

*Sing the Story*, No. 143 (alter the pronouns from I to we, me to us, my to our)

## Passing the peace

"May the love of Christ fill your heart."  
"And be present between us."

## Praising

### Songs of praise

- "God of the Bible,"  
*Sing the Journey*, No. 27

- "He came down,"  
*Sing the Journey*, No. 31
- "God of many names,"  
*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 77
- "There's a wideness in God's mercy,"  
*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 145

## Offering

### Confessing

#### Call to confession

*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 696  
Or, *Sing the Story*, No. 132

## Hearing

- Scripture—Matthew 18, Galatians 6:1-5
- Children's time (see Ideas for children)
- Scripture—Philippians 2:1-11
- Sermon (see Sermon ideas)

## Responding

### Words of affirmation

*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 854  
Or, *Sing the Story*, No. 150

### Response songs

- "Will you come and follow me,"  
*Sing the Story*, No. 39
- "Give us clean hands,"  
Charlie Hall
- "This is a day of new beginnings,"  
*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 640

## Sending

*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 774

**3** Begin by asking a simple question of preference like, "What is your favorite color?" Move through some additional questions concerning school subjects or favorite toys, etc. We can have different opinions about these kinds of things, and it doesn't matter. Even grownups have different likes and dislikes.

But have they ever heard grownups arguing about something? How does it feel? Do the grownups sometimes get angry? What suggestions might the children have for how to help grownups disagree in a more positive way? (Sometimes we can be surprised by the insight of children.)

For peace and justice resources, or to join the Network, visit [www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace), or check us out on Facebook. For more information about PJSN, or to offer your responses to the Peace Sunday material, contact [Peace@MennoniteUSA.org](mailto:Peace@MennoniteUSA.org). **Your financial gifts are crucial for continuing to strengthen the vision of peace and justice in Mennonite Church USA. Thank you for your support.**

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