

PEACE Sunday 2016

These materials are a collaboration of the Peace and Justice Support Network and members of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors Network: June Mears Driedger, Marlene Kropf, Laura Lehman, Sandy Wenger.

Key texts

Mark 1:29-39

Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11

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. **Please feel free to use these materials in their entirety or as individual elements on Peace Sunday 2016, or any other time.**

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

Introduction

There's always more to do—another committee to serve on, another book to read, another project to complete ... as Jesus calls us to follow him on an active, vigorous journey.

What if, in the midst of our activity, we miss a critical part of following Jesus? What if, in our eagerness to serve, we neglect the things that give us the strength we need for the journey?

In the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark, we see Jesus very much engaged in the world, healing and teaching. One can imagine the intensity of his days as the crowds began to build. Jesus had enough work to keep him busy from morning until night—and beyond.

But Jesus knew what was needed to sustain his work.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. —Mark 1:35-39

Jesus shows us that the importance of this quiet, still time with God is paramount when the journey is the most challenging and the demands are most numerous.

On this Peace Sunday, Sept. 18, we invite you to explore the nourishment and necessity of time spent with God. Our kinetic, deadline-driven world can make us believe that time spent on things that don't appear to be “productive” is wasted.

Don't believe it! Our peacemaking, our justice-seeking, our communities of faith will flourish when we carve out these quiet, still times alone with God. Jesus knew what was needed for his kingdom work. As we follow his path to places of great need, to relationship with those who cry out for peace, we also must follow his path to Holy time, time alone with God.

“Be still, and know that I am God!” writes the psalmist. We hope these materials will help you and your church toward that stillness and that recognition.

Worship ideas

Call to worship

(based on Psalm 46:8-11)

Leader: Come, behold the works of the Lord!
People: **Yes, we behold!**
Leader: God makes war cease around the world!
People: **Yes, we behold!**
Leader: God breaks the bow, and shatters the spear!
People: **Yes, we behold!**
Leader: God burns the shields with fire!
People: **Yes, we behold!**
Leader: God says, "Be still, and know that I am God!"
**ALL: The Lord of hosts is with us;
The Lord God is our refuge. AMEN.**

Songs of praise

(Select an appropriate number of songs for your church.)

"God of our strength" *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 36
"I sing the mighty power of God" *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 46
"Asithi: Amen" *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 64
"I'll praise my Maker" *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 166
"O God, our help in ages past" *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 328
"O sing to the Lord" *Sing the Journey*, No. 12
"God is our refuge and strength" *Sing the Journey*, No. 26
"Calm me, Lord" *Sing the Story*, No. 45
"I will come to you in the silence" *Sing the Story*, No. 49

Still, by Hillsong

None but Jesus, by Hillsong

Here, by Kari Jobe

Rest in you, by Hillsong

Along with songs of praise, Psalm 46 could be read responsively by the congregation.

See additional resources in the Peace Sunday section on our website at www.PJSN.org.

Prayer of confession

Leader: O God, our hearts are restless, until we rest in you.
We forget to pray, to ponder,
we neglect our love for you.
People: **(Singing, vs. 1-2) "Open, Lord, my inward ear" *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 140**
Leader: We forget that you are our refuge and strength;
we create false refuges, and make idols of counterfeit strength.
People: **(Singing, vs. 3-4)**
Leader: We ask for your forgiveness,
grace,
mercy,
and love.
People: **(Singing, vs. 5)**
Leader: We thank you for your love, for your healing, for your joy, and for your peace.
Our hearts are filled with gratitude.
ALL: AMEN.

Song of assurance

“There is a place of quiet rest” *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 5

Scripture reading

Mark 1:29-39 and Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11

Reader 1: Where do we find peace?

Reader 2: Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Reader 3: Now, Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.

Reader 1: Where do we find peace?

Reader 3: Jesus came and took Simon’s mother-in-law by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

Reader 2: Where do we find peace?

Reader 3: That evening, at sundown, people brought to Jesus all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door.

Reader 2: Where do we find peace?

Reader 1: And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Reader 3: Where do we find peace?

Reader 2: In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him.

Reader 3: Where do we find peace?

Reader 1: When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”

Reader 2: And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

All: *Where do we find peace?*

Reader 1: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear; though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Reader 2: “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth.”

Reader 3: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

All: *Where do we find peace? The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Children’s time

Children’s time could be an experience of quiet or centering prayer: a walking meditation, or praying with clay, or a finger labyrinth (<http://www.relax4life.com/finger-labyrinths.html>). It could be followed by a prayerful song for peace, such as “Calm me, Lord” (*Sing the Story*, No. 45).

Sermon

A homily inspired from the Scriptures featuring Mark 1 and Psalm 46 would be appropriate. A homily that focuses on the rhythm between Jesus’ inner life and outer life would also be appropriate.

Peace and Justice Support Network

For peace and justice resources, or to join the Peace and Justice Support Network, visit www.PJSN.org, 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.

Your financial gifts are crucial for continuing to strengthen the vision of peace and justice in Mennonite Church USA. Thank you for your support.

Another element that could be blended into the sermon or stand at the center would be interviews with two or three community members. The interviews could focus on practices that sustain them spiritually and help fortify them for active engagement.

An additional option would be to introduce the congregation to one or two spiritual practices. *See the Spiritual Practices Guide on our website at www.PJSN.org.*

Prayers of the people

Leader: Spirit of Peace, you dwell within us and accompany us by day and by night:
in quiet moments spent alone with you,
in every friendship shared with others,
and in compassionate actions spreading the love of Christ in the world.
We give thanks for your faithful presence.

We pray for inner peace for all people:
fortitude and calm in times of stress or turmoil,
courage and enduring faith in seasons of challenge,
patience and wisdom in the midst of questions and confusion.

ALL: *We pray for ourselves ... (worshippers may add their own requests)*

Leader: We pray for peace in all our relationships:
harmony and faithful love in our families,
affection and tender care among friends,
and generous compassion across every barrier
of age, class, gender, race and nationality.

ALL: *We pray for those near to us ... (worshippers may add their own requests)*

Leader: We pray for peace in the world:
freedom for enslaved and suffering people,
meaningful work and opportunities for those in poverty,
the end of unrest and violence in places of strife and war.

ALL: *We pray for those far away ... (worshippers may add their own requests)*

Leader: We pray that God's vision for justice may prevail in every land,
for the love of Christ Jesus to fill each heart with joy,
and for the wisdom of the Spirit to guide our paths in the way of peace.

ALL: *AMEN.*

Benediction

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 4:7

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Peace and Justice
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