



## September Membership Resource

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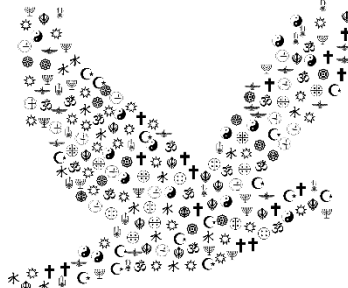
[www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org)  
(502) 429-0865

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## Peace, Peace, they say...



### About This Resource:

September 21, 2019 is the **International Day of Peace** (or “**Peace Day**”). The U.N. established this day in 1981 by voting unanimously on a new resolution to “[strengthen] the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.” The International Day of Peace has been celebrated on September 21<sup>st</sup> of every year since 2001. This year’s theme is Climate Action for Peace.

The International Day of Peace has evolved as the definition of peace has changed over time. In the beginning, “peace” was merely equated with cease-fire and absence of violence. In contrast, Peace Day today emphasizes peace education and promoting a culture of peace. The Culture of Peace News Network reports: “562 celebrations of the International Day of Peace from 127 countries [occurred] around the world [in 2017]. These included 128 events coming from most of the provinces and states in Canada and the USA. Next were the countries formerly part of the Soviet Union with 104. There were 96 events cited in 27 European countries, 81 from 29 African countries, 67 from 20 Asian countries, 58 from 16 Latin American and Caribbean countries, and 28 from 21 Arab and Middle Eastern countries.”

In honor of Peace Day this September, may we challenge ourselves and our communities to ask important questions about what peace truly means, as well as what peace looks like in our unique contexts. What is our Christian responsibility to fostering peace in our world, and how does Jesus’s example guide us in doing so? This resource invites you to meditate on these questions. It is divided into two parts, one that facilitates reflection and one that guides you in discerning how you might take action. Each section lasts approximately one hour, and you can opt to do it in one session or in two sessions over two weeks. You can also decide to follow these steps alone or with a small group.

#### **Resource Links:**

U.N. Page on International Day of Peace: <https://internationaldayofpeace.org/>  
International Day of Peace: <https://internationaldayofpeace.org/>



Wikipedia article on the International Day of Peace:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Day\\_of\\_Peace#1981\\_%E2%80%93\\_UN\\_General\\_Assembly\\_Resolution\\_passed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_of_Peace#1981_%E2%80%93_UN_General_Assembly_Resolution_passed)

Culture of Peace News Network: <http://cpnn-world.org/new/>

Wikipedia article on Culture of Peace: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture\\_of\\_peace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_peace)

Definition and resources on culture of peace: <http://www.culture-of-peace.info/copoj/definition.html>

Pope Francis' message for World Day of Prayer for Peace, January 1, 2019:

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2018/12/31/pope-francis-message-for-world-day-of-prayer-for-peace-on-1-january-2019/>

Master Peace website: <https://masterpeace.org/>



# Peace, Peace, they say...

## Part One: Reflection and Meditation (1 hour)

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### What you need:

- A pillar candle & matches
- Copies of Attachments A, B, & C
- Laptop and speakers
- A bible open to Jeremiah 6:14

### 1) Meditation (15 minutes):

Start by centering yourself and quieting your mind.

Light the candle.

Choose a piece of music that inspires calm and meditation. Find a comfortable place to sit and listen to the music. As you listen, pay attention to your breathing. Breathe deeply and slowly.

### 2) Welcome and Prayer (10 minutes):

If you are in a small group, welcome everyone with these or similar words:

In preparation for (or in response to, if you are engaging in this exercise after September 21) the International Day of Peace, we are taking time to reflect and meditate on the principle of peace. We will discern how our Christian faith informs our understanding of peace. We will also explore how we might foster peace through working toward justice.

On January 1, 2019 for the World Day of Prayer for Peace, Pope Francis used this image: “[Peace] is like a delicate flower struggling to blossom on the stony ground of violence.” He continued on to encourage Christians to take action for peace, clearly condemning politics of injustice and violence.

Together, may we consider how we can respond to this call. Let us pray together with the famous words of Saint Francis (see Attachment A):

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith  
Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light*



*Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console  
to be understood as to understand  
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Amen.*

**3) The International Day of Peace (10 minutes)**

Set up your laptop to watch the short promotional video (2'57") for the International Day of Peace: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=7&v=OZjbzYi8d5U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=OZjbzYi8d5U)

After watching the video, begin the conversation by asking these or similar questions. If you are engaging in this exercise individually, reflect on or journal about these questions.

1. How much do you know about the International Day of Peace?
2. Do you think it is important to set aside such a day? What is the impact of doing so?
3. How do you understand the promotion of a culture of peace? What would be an example of such a promotional work?
4. What biblical text comes to mind when you think about peace?

**4) Building peace (15 minutes):**

Using the comparison between a culture of war and violence and a culture of peace and non-violence (see table in Attachment B), look at both lists and reflect on each of them, asking the following questions:

1. Do you think you live in a culture of war and violence, or a culture of peace and non-violence? What are the signs around you that point to one or the other?
2. Which one of these elements, in either column, surprise you?
3. Pick one element in each column and give examples from your context to illustrate each of them.
4. What would you add in the right column (culture of peace and non-violence)?
5. Which column does Christian faith promote? Do you see examples of Christians promoting war and violence?

CULTURE OF WAR AND VIOLENCE	CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE
Belief in power that is based on force	Education for a culture of peace



Having an enemy	Understanding, tolerance and solidarity
Authoritarian governance	Democratic participation
Secrecy and propaganda	Free flow of information
Armament	Disarmament
Exploitation of people	Human rights
Exploitation of nature	Sustainable development
Male domination	Equality of women and men

Source: <http://www.culture-of-peace.info/copoj/definition.html>

Conclude this discussion (or reflection if you are alone) by reading Jeremiah 6:14 and 7:1-8:

**‘Peace, peace,’ they say,  
when there is no peace.**

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Stand at the gate of the LORD’s house and there proclaim this message:

“Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!’ If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.”

—New International Version (NIV)

### **5) Prayer (10 minutes):**

Invite everyone to share Pope Francis’ Prayer for Peace that was inspired by Saint Francis’ words (see Attachment C):

**Reader 1:**     *Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!  
We have tried so many times and over so many years  
to resolve our conflicts by our own powers  
and by the force of our arms.*

**Reader 2:**     *How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced;  
how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered,  
how many hopes have been buried.  
But our efforts have been in vain.*

**Reader 3:**     *Now, Lord, come to our aid!*



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*Grant us peace, teach us peace, guide our steps in the way of peace.  
Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say:  
“Never again war! Never again violence!”  
“With war and violence everything is lost!”  
Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.*

**Reader 4:** *Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love,  
you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters.  
Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace;  
enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister.*

**Reader 5:** *Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us  
to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace,  
our trepidation into confident trust,  
and our quarreling into forgiveness.*

**Reader 6:** *Keep alive within us the flame of hope,  
so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and  
reconciliation.  
In this way may peace triumph at last,  
and may the words of “division”, “hatred” and “war”  
be banished from the heart of every man and woman.*

**Reader 7:** *Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands.  
Renew our hearts and minds,  
so that the word which always brings us together will be “brother and  
sister,”  
and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam!*

Pause.

Extinguish the candle.



## Part Two: Discernment and Action (1hour)

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### What you need:

- A pillar candle & matches
- Copies of Attachment A & D
- One large piece of paper & markers
- Laptop and speakers

### 1) Gathering (10 minutes):

Light the candle.

If you are in a small group, welcome everyone with these or similar words:

In response to God's call to build a world of peace, it is our responsibility as Christians to name our participation in a culture of violence and to find ways to build peace. Promoting a culture of peace can happen in our community, in our context, and in our daily life. May we discern ways to take action for peace. Let us us pray first, reciting again the famous words of Saint Francis (see Attachment A):

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith  
Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console  
to be understood as to understand  
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Amen.*

### 2) Discernment (30 minutes):

Split the group into pairs (you can also do this activity alone) and hand out a copy of the "8 Action Areas" published by the UNESCO to build a culture of peace (see Attachment D).





Invite each pair to go over the 8 Action Areas. Then have each pair identify actions already taking place in their communities and/or actions they could add to the list. Keep in mind the theme of this year's International Day of Peace, which is Climate Action.

After 20 minutes, bring everyone together and invite each pair to share one action per area.

Write them down on a big piece of paper.

### 3) Commitment (15 minutes):

As a group (or by yourself), look at the list you came up with.

Choose one action from the list that calls to you more specifically. Consider your strengths and interests, as well as your connections and network.

Ask the following questions:

1. Where/to whom do I bring this idea?
2. What do I need to implement it?
3. Who would be impacted?
4. How does this action contribute to a larger culture of peace?
5. How do I understand this action in relation to my Christian discipleship?

Commit to working towards this change, one small step at a time!

### 4) Blessing (5 minutes):

Conclude with the following blessing:

**May God be our strength and walk with us  
as we work towards a more just and peaceful world.**

*“The LORD bless you  
and keep you;  
the LORD make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the LORD turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.”*

—Numbers 6:24-27, New International Version (NIV)

Extinguish the candle.

**Bring the conversation about peace and nonviolence to your community, sign up for our 8-week program, *Cultivating Nonviolence, Harvesting Peace*. Visit our [page](#) and to learn more!**



## Saint Francis' Prayer Attachment A

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith  
Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light  
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console  
to be understood as to understand  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Amen.



## Two Cultures Attachment B

<b>CULTURE OF WAR AND VIOLENCE</b>	<b>CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE</b>
Belief in power that is based on force	Education for a culture of peace
Having an enemy	Understanding, tolerance and solidarity
Authoritarian governance	Democratic participation
Secrecy and propaganda	Free flow of information
Armament	Disarmament
Exploitation of people	Human rights
Exploitation of nature	Sustainable development
Male domination	Equality of women and men

Source: <http://www.culture-of-peace.info/copoj/definition.html>



## Pope Francis' Prayer for Peace Attachment C

- Reader 1: Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!  
We have tried so many times and over so many years  
to resolve our conflicts by our own powers  
and by the force of our arms.
- Reader 2: How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced;  
how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered,  
how many hopes have been buried.  
But our efforts have been in vain.
- Reader 3: Now, Lord, come to our aid!  
Grant us peace, teach us peace, guide our steps in the way of peace.  
Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say:  
“Never again war! Never again violence!”  
“With war and violence everything is lost!”  
Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.
- Reader 4: Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love,  
you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters.  
Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace;  
enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister.
- Reader 5: Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us  
to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace,  
our trepidation into confident trust,  
and our quarreling into forgiveness.
- Reader 6: Keep alive within us the flame of hope,  
so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and  
reconciliation.  
In this way may peace triumph at last,  
and may the words of “division”, “hatred” and “war”  
be banished from the heart of every man and woman.
- Reader 7: Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands.  
Renew our hearts and minds,  
so that the word which always brings us together will be “brother and  
sister,”  
and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam!



## 8 Actions Areas-UNESCO Attachment D



### **Toward Building A Culture of Peace: 8 Action Areas**

As defined by the United Nations, the Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations (UN Resolutions [A/RES/52/13](#) : Culture of Peace and [A/RES/53/243](#), "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace"). For peace and non-violence to prevail, we need to:

#### **Foster a culture of peace through education**

by revising the educational curricula to promote qualitative values, attitudes and behaviours of a culture of peace, including peaceful conflict-resolution, dialogue, consensus-building and active non-violence. Such an educational approach should be geared also to

#### **Promote sustainable economic and social development**

by reducing economic and social inequalities, by eradicating poverty and by assuring sustainable food security , social justice, durable solutions to debt problems, empowerment of women, special measures for groups with special needs, environmental sustainability...

#### **Promote respect for all human rights**

human rights and a culture of peace are complementary: whenever war and violence dominate, there is no possibility to ensure human rights; at the same time, without human rights, in all their dimensions, there can be no culture of peace...

#### **Ensure equality between women and men**

through full participation of women in economic, social and political decision-making, elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, support and assistance to women in need,...



### **Foster democratic participation**

indispensable foundations for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security are democratic principles, practices and participation in all sectors of society, a transparent and accountable governance and administration, the combat against terrorism, organized crime, corruption, illicit drugs and money laundering...

### **Advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity**

to abolish war and violent conflicts we need to transcend and overcome enemy images with understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all peoples and cultures. Learning from our differences, through dialogue and the exchange of information, is an enriching process...

### **Support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge**

freedom of information and communication and the sharing of information and knowledge are indispensable for a culture of peace. However, measures need to be taken to address the issue of violence in the media, including new information and communication technologies...

### **Promote international peace and security**

the gains in human security and disarmament in recent years, including nuclear weapons treaties and the treaty banning land mines, should encourage us to increase our efforts in negotiation of peaceful settlements, elimination of production and traffic of arms and weapons, humanitarian solutions in conflict situations, post-conflict initiatives...

*"Since wars begin in the minds of men,  
it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed"*  
Constitution of UNESCO, 1945

*Source: <http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/>*



**A few ideas to consider:**

*Area #1:*

Do you have a child in school? Does the school have any activity around culture of peace? Can you imagine organizing something?

Could you suggest to your congregation a Sunday School session dedicated to the culture of peace?

Do you belong to a book club or can you start one and read relevant books around building peace?

*Area #2*

Are there groups in your neighborhood/town, fighting for economic justice? Is there a project you can join?

Are there community gardens? Or groups working towards food justice? Can you suggest planting a garden at your church or community center?

*Area#5:*

Any group in your context working for voters' rights? Can you volunteer?

Can you join a group to foster voter's registration?

*Area #6:*

Is there an interfaith association in your community? Do they offer the possibility to have exchanges between diverse religious groups? Can you host one?

*Area #8:*

Can you organize an event for the International Day of Peace? Can you suggest a special service or vigil?

Is there any event happening in your town/city for the International Day of Peace? Can you join or volunteer?