



# PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY

## HERE I AM. SEND ME. SMALL GROUP GUIDE

*How do the social justice concerns that Jesus highlights in Matthew 25:31-46 affect your community? Explore the Faith and Facts cards to develop a peace with justice-based response to issues that are important to your congregation.*

A week or two before the small group meets, **identify social justice concerns** that are important to your community or about which people want to learn more about The United Methodist Church's position. Download and print (or project on a screen) the corresponding Faith and Facts card(s). You may also order a package of them: <https://store.umcjustice.org/#!/Faith-&Facts-Cards/c/12681533/offset=0&sort=normal>



### TAKE TURNS READING MATTHEW 25:31-46

### Matthew 25:31-46, NRSV

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;

35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39

And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[a] you did it to me.'

41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."



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Watch this video that explains why social justice is important to United Methodists:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHjcg-N9c1M>



### **Discuss the differences between mission/charity and peace with justice.**

- What concerns does your church address through relationship building and charity?
- What concerns does your church address through advocacy and creating systemic change?

### **Discuss where in your community Jesus would spend most of his time.**

- Hand out the Faith and Facts card(s) that you will be focusing on.

### **Ask a different person to read the facts in each section:**

- What does the Bible say?
- What does The United Methodist Church say?
- What do the facts say?
- What do you say?

Discuss how your small group can work for justice through the community, your annual conference and the world. Determine at least one action you will take as a group that will be completed before you meet again.



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Close by saying Our Social Creed together:

### **OUR SOCIAL CREED**

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God's handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.

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## HERE I AM. SEND ME. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### DISCUSSION TOPIC: PEACEBUILDING FOR CHILDREN'S SAKE

#### INTRODUCTION

"War is not healthy for children and other living things," was an iconic anti-war slogan during the Vietnam War era coined by Lorraine Schneider.

As the most vulnerable among us, children are the least involved in war and conflict yet often are some of the most affected. Those who survive carry deep physical and psychological scars throughout their lives. Even when children are not in the middle of the violence, they can be affected by redistribution of resources to support military spending, the loss of a parent, or forced migration to flee violence. We see the violence of the world spilling into the culture of schools in the United States where children routinely practice what to do if there is a mass-shooting situation.

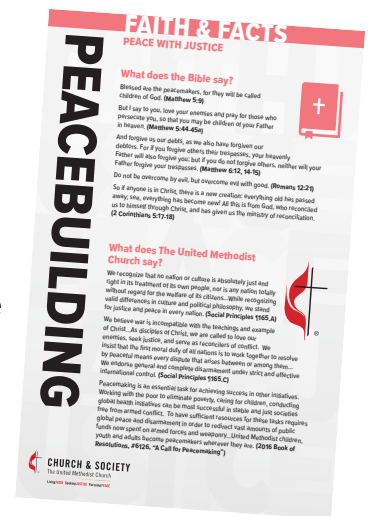
Following Jesus does not carry any illusion of worldly security. His way is risky. His way is often counterintuitive. His way is love and peace that isn't the way of the powers and principalities of the world.

It is important to remember that Christian non-violence is not passive. The way of Christ is one of actively creating peace.

Peace building is intrusive to our comfortable false security. It disturbs the status quo as it begins to unveil the peaceable Kingdom, the beloved community and the very realm of God.

Download and print (or order) Faith & Fact Cards about Peacebuilding: [HTTP://www.umcjustice.org/documents/29](http://www.umcjustice.org/documents/29)

Ask different people in the small group to each **read one of the Scripture readings** on the Faith and Fact Card under the heading "What does the Bible say?"



**"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD."**

**Matthew 5:9**



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Watch this video about how war and conflict affects children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Jerusalem United Methodist Church in Lubumbashi, DRC created a justice and peace ministry to address the issues through advocacy, education, and creating systems for healing.



Ask participants to write down points in the video that stand out to them <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lPhXYsq4Q0>

### ASK QUESTIONS

- What touched your heart in this video?
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- What are some of the underlying situations that led to children being victimized?
- What are some of the strategies that Jerusalem UMC is taking to address injustice and build peace?

Ask different people in the small group to each **read one of United Methodist statements about peacebuilding** on the Faith and Fact Card under the heading “What does The United Methodist Church say?” After each statement, discuss the implications for this guiding principle.

Identify places in the world and your local community where children are directly or indirectly affected by war and violence.

Read “What do the facts say?” and “What do you say?” and begin to develop a resolution statement for your church or annual conference that addresses violence by developing a process for peacebuilding in your local community or in the world.



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### PRAY

From self-righteousness that will not compromise,  
and from selfishness that gains by the oppression of others,  
O Lord, deliver us.

From the lust for money or power that drives us to kill,  
O Lord, deliver us.

From trusting in the weapons of war,  
and mistrusting the councils of peace,  
O Lord, deliver us.

From hearing, believing, and speaking lies about other nations,  
O Lord, deliver us.

From suspicions and fears that stand in the way of reconciliation,  
O Lord, deliver us.

From words and deeds that encourage discord, prejudice, and  
hatred; from everything that prevents us from fulfilling your promise  
of peace, O Lord, deliver us. Amen.

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