

SPECIAL
SUNDAY

PEACE WITH JUSTICE

SERMON STARTER



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The people of The United Methodist Church®

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Though congregations may observe Peace with Justice Sunday at any time, they are encouraged to celebrate with a special offering on Trinity Sunday, June 12, 2022. This sermon starter is based on Romans 5:1-5 (NRSV) and may be adapted to fit the context of your congregation. Tie the fullness of this special Sunday with coordinated liturgy, offering talk and children's resources.

Greetings on this Peace with Justice Sunday! Peace with Justice Sunday is an appropriate time to consider how we are justified by faith to be peacemakers and justice builders. By partnering first with God, we can integrate authentic peace with justice into our walk with Christ.

(Preacher may start with an example from your own community or share this illustration):

For example, a ministry of First UMC in Kalamazoo, Michigan, called Helping Our Neighbors was able to respond to a practical need for their unhoused community.

"We need a reliable way to communicate with people and places that are essential for our safety and welfare," volunteers heard.

And through a Peace with Justice grant, Helping Our Neighbors launched a new ministry to provide a free cell phone and a year of unlimited free voice, text and data service for persons who qualify under a government program.

Justified by faith! First UMC was moved by their faith to offer grace to people who expressed a need for reliable communication tools.

Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans, "since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand."

Paul is pushing back on the Roman Empire's sense of lordship. The reign of God through Jesus is not



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brought about through power, violence or wealth but through peace with justice.

God sent Jesus to show us how to be Kingdom builders, a realm that looks very different from the political and hierarchal structures of empires and kingdoms; transcending Democratic and Republican parties; and so-called “liberals and conservatives.” True peace with justice comes through systems and practices that bring healing and wholeness to the fullness of God’s world.

In Christ, we find true peace that moves us to be justified—in right relationship with God and with God’s people and with all of God’s creation. It is not a passive peace but one that drives us to build up justice in God’s world. In right relationship, we are invited into holy and sacred partnership.

Justified by faith!

God’s prevenient grace is always available to us from the beginning of our lives. And as it becomes clear and more defined and we receive it, our lives begin to change from the inside out. Christ’s love becomes embodied when we are justified by grace to live out our faith.

God yearns to be closer to us because we are each part of God’s beloved creation. We are not alone in the messiness of this world. Sometimes the Spirit moves through us and strengthens us through crisis and hardship in ways we don’t even recognize—not in a way that glorifies suffering, but trusting that God is at work within us even and perhaps especially during those times when all feels lost.

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us,” Paul writes.

God’s love moves us to compassion as we witness the horrific events happening in the world right now.

God’s love sustains us through the sad and frightening situations in our personal lives.

God’s love creates a sense of forgiveness for those who have hurt us and allows us to ask for forgiveness from those whom we have hurt.

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us”



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God's love leads us to work together to liberate those who are experiencing injustice.

God's love has been poured into our hearts!

Hope is alive through God's love. Remember the shocking events that happened more than 2,000 years ago as the worst of our humanity killed the Son of God.

But Divine love cannot be killed.

The good news is that if God's love for us can even overcome the horrific killing of God's own Son, we have hope that the liberating creator will work through us to dismantle every system of oppression and bondage.

There is hope for us to build up God's kingdom, not only by our entry into eternal life, but in our life here and now. "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me!"

Today we are invited to stand up and declare peace with justice in places where economic disparity, environmental degradation, gender inequality, racism and xenophobia and illness and disease have taken hold. If we want peace, we must be committed to disrupting these conditions and systems that perpetuate injustice. In our justification of faith, we are bearers of hope to a world that is suffering.

On this Peace with Justice Sunday, justified by faith, may God's love that has been poured into our hearts, pour out with healing hope for a hurting world. Amen.

