



Kids Connexion

What do kids know?

We could ask this question, and others -

- Can children understand the complex terms of 'peace' and 'violence'?
- They're only children - what can they do?
- Why would we talk to children about violence? There's already enough in the world.

If there was ever a time for children to consider the concepts of 'violence' and 'peace', it is now. They are constantly faced with many situations where the reality of violence touches their lives. For example -

- Bullying at school
- Domestic violence in the home
- Real life violence in television news programs
- Computer and video games where violence is depicted as appropriate ways to solve problems
- Words of violence spoken between friends and family members

In fact, children are likely to be quite aware of the issues of violence in their lives. Discussion and activities in the church concerning these issues allows children to see the connections that can be made for peace from a spiritual perspective, where all people are valued because they are created in the image of God.



Peace is not the product of terror or fear.
Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.
Peace is not the silent result of violent oppression.
Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all.
Peace is dynamism.
Peace is generosity.
It is right and duty.

Oscar Romero

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Ways to involve the kids...

Everyone has something to offer...

As a reflection of a church community based on the inclusion of everyone, each using their own unique gifts and abilities, it is important to provide ways for children to participate. The creative activities offered in this section allow children to interact with adults while exploring peace and what it means to all of us. Encourage children to present their own ideas and to follow these ideas through.

Nurturing faith and good values in children involves...

- Belonging to a loving faith community, building relationships between young and old so that faith and life may be shared
- Learning about God (Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer) and exploring the Christian faith in many different ways, according to the many ways that children learn
- Participating in acts of compassion, service and justice - children and adults together

(from YACMU, Qld UCA Synod, website, www.yacmu.ucaqld.com.au)



Simply Sharing Week

Every year *force ten* produces a resource for Simply Sharing Week (16-23 June 2002). For 2002, the theme is *Road to Refuge*.

The resource kit provides activities for all ages, and seeks to raise awareness of the plight of refugees and displaced persons.

Violence is often a reality for people seeking refuge. This program offers churches, and children in those churches an opportunity to understand the importance of personal freedom and human rights.

Contact your state ecumenical office (see list included in this resource) to obtain a copy of the Simply Sharing Week Kit. Remember, these activities can be explored at any time of the year.

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Working with the United Nations

The United Nations has declared the years 2001-2010 *the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World*. The Manifesto 2000, created by UNESCO, outlines what we can do to work for a culture of peace. The six principles of the Manifesto ask us to pledge to respect all life, reject violence, share with others, listen to understand, preserve the planet, and rediscover solidarity.



UNICEF's work for the protection of the rights laid out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child encompasses these principles. For examples, look at: <http://www.unicef.ca/eng/unicef/lessons/peace/slideshow.htm>

How Sri Lanka educates kids for peace

Sri Lanka suffered from a civil war for many years. This struggle permeated the life of the whole country, including the education system: most schools became segregated along language lines, except for a few in urban areas. To help children learn non-violent ways of resolving disputes, the Government, with UNICEF's help, launched a programme called 'Education for Conflict Resolution' (ECR).

Although some techniques were innovative, many of the ideas of conflict resolution struck familiar chords in Sri Lankan culture. For example, the methods of conflict resolution present aggression and passivity as two extremes and suggest that a better, middle, way is assertiveness. ECR also incorporated meditation, though not for religious purposes; its aim, rather, is to calm and concentrate the mind to create a sense of inner peace. A typical lesson for primary schoolchildren, for example, would start with meditation, and then cover issues such as decision-making and conflict resolution. Role-playing is an important element and children are encouraged to express emotions through stories, songs and poetry.

How can we make space for children to find inner peace?

What stories, songs and poetry will we share?

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Telling stories...Learning from the Birds...

In Sri Lanka - the boy, the birds and the net

Education for Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka also encouraged school students to act out traditional stories with themes of peace and cooperation. In one such story, students pretend to be birds that have been captured by a boy with a net. When the boy goes home to find a sack in which to put the birds, they twitter with alarm at the prospect of being eaten and wonder what to do. Then one bird suggests that maybe they could fly away if they all worked together. The children then flap their arms like birds in flight and lift the net above their heads until everyone is free.

If you can find a big enough net, perhaps you could try to enact this story too?

In Australia - the brolga, jabiru and emu

An Aboriginal myth which might also be enacted to help explore conflict and reconciliation is the story of the brolga, the jabiru and the emu...

'A long time ago, brolga and jabiru were sisters; they lived on the mud flats and near lagoons. The emu, their cousin lived over the hills, in the high country. One day, the emu decided to visit her cousins. When she came to the top of the ridge she saw dust on the plains below. Realising that her cousins were fighting, she ran down the ridge as fast as she could, and got between them to stop them. Just then, one of her sisters swung her yam stick and accidentally hit the emu across the back. The emu's blood got on the neck of the brolga and the legs of the jabiru. To this day, indeed, the brolga has a red neck and the jabiru red legs; and the emu has a hump on its back.

So too, Jesus, our peacemaker, carries scars on hands, feet, and side.'

Perhaps you can also relate this story to such Biblical passages as John 20.26-9, Romans 5.8-11 and 1 John 1.7?

(from Pastor George Rosendale 'Aboriginal Myths and Customs: Matrix for Gospel Preaching')



Look at the birds of the air... Matthew 5.26

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Making Cranes for Peace

THE STORY OF SADAKO SASAKI

Every year many thousands of people around the world fold paper cranes as an expression of hope for a world at peace, where non-violent means are used to resolve conflicts, and where people can live without fear. For most of these people, the origin of the paper crane as a symbol of peace probably lies with the story of Sadako Sasaki.

Sadako was just two years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. While she suffered no immediate injury, the effects of her exposure caught up with her some ten years later and she fought a courageous battle with leukaemia.

During her treatment she began to fold a thousand paper cranes (senbazuru) so that her wish for good health would come true. She died before completing her task. Her fellow students folded the remainder of the thousand cranes which were buried with her.

'I will write peace on your wings and you will fly all over the world'

Sadako's courage and faith inspired her friends, and students from across the world, to raise money for a memorial to the children who were innocent victims of the atomic bomb.

Each year children and adults from all over the world fold a thousand paper cranes to be taken to the Children's Monument in the Peace Park in Hiroshima. The cranes are placed at the foot of the monument where the inscription reads: 'This is our cry. This is our prayer. Peace in the world.'

Following this practice, paper cranes are now sent to a number of other peace parks and monuments around the world. There are also opportunities to send just one folded crane. Whether one or a thousand, all are folded with the same wish for peace.

(This is an extract from the 1000 Cranes For Peace Network Website. Please visit <http://rosella.apana.org.au/~mlb/cranes/index.htm> to find out more about their work. And visit the Sadako Sasaki website for more details of her story and how a 12 year old girl inspired millions of people around the world in the pursuit of peace: <http://www.sadako.org>)

Flying Doves with the Joey Scouts

The Australian Joey Scouts in Tasmania also have a great site with ideas for peace activities – including templates and instructions for making doves:



Check out their website at <http://australianjoeyscouts1.4t.com/peace/index.html>

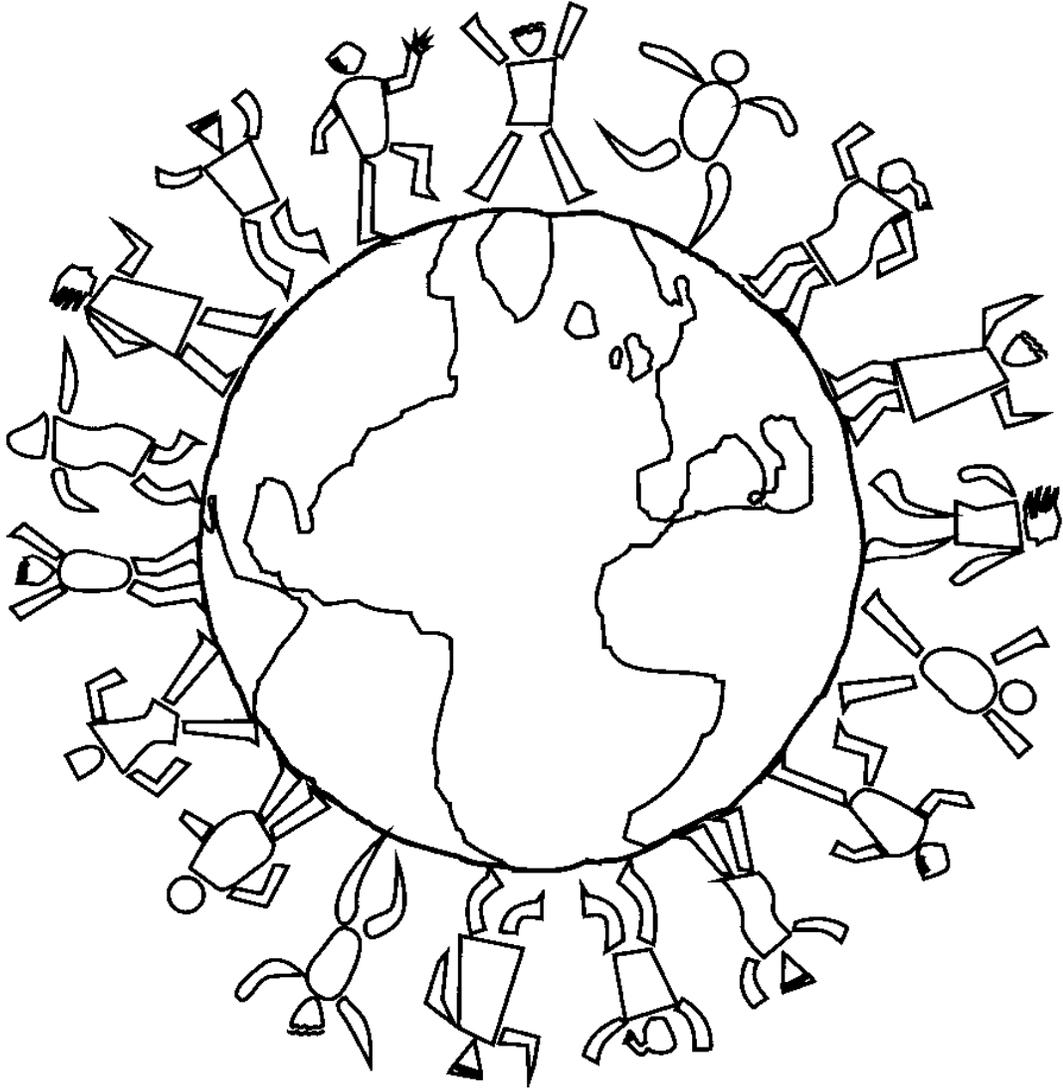
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INCREASE



THE PEACE!

This poster for colouring-in is one of many such downloadable resources for children, young people and adults from the Peace and Justice Support Network of the Mennonite Church USA, available free for non-profit use, at:

<http://peace.mennolink.org/resources.html>

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Some creative ideas



Give Peace A Hand

(In 2001 the Refugee Sunday National Poster Competition had this as its theme)

Create a wall of hands in your church.
Draw around lots of people's hands.
Get lots of people to write a wish for peace or a prayer for peace on the hands.
Attach them to your wall of hands.

Peace Survey



Conduct a survey - ask other kids and adults in your church, "What is peace?"
Record their answers.
Produce an information sheet with the answers you collected (don't forget to include what you think peace is too!).
Give the information sheets out to people in your church.



Postcards for Peace

Collect some postcards - you can get free postcards from cafes.
Write a message of peace on the back of a postcard.
Send the postcards to - a friend, a member of your church, a member of your family, a politician, the Prime Minister of Australia.... there's lot more possibilities....

Peace Poster Competition



Hold a poster competition with the theme, Decade to Overcome Violence - Give Peace a Hand.
Invite everyone to enter.
Display all the posters in your church - use them for a worship service with peace as its theme.
Don't forget - everyone's a winner, so have something small to thank everyone who enters.

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