

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways—
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
And if you ever doubt yourself, remember us, who love you well—
We know all the gifts you bring into the world each day.
So thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways,
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
—by Judy Fjell and Lisa Bregger

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent, and to come to the group one last time and say good-bye if I need to quit
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn

Covenant Groups

Peace



Mud Maid, The Lost Gardens of Heligan, Cornwall

Peace as a way of living, peace as a way of life.
What is peace? How does peace manifest itself in your life?
How is that peace shared?

Peace

Chalice Lighting

To face the world's shadows, a chalice of light.
To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth.
To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage.
To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace.
May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.
—Lindsay Bates

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Shared Readings

The first peace is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.
—Black Elk

Democracy is an objective. Democracy is a process. Democratization serves the cause of peace because it offers the possibility of justice and of progressive change without force.
—Boutros Boutros Ghali

You can't separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom.
—Malcolm X

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.

If there is peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.

If there is peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.

If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.

If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.
—Lao Tzu

In the hearts of people today there is a deep longing for peace. When the true spirit of peace is thoroughly dominant, it becomes an inner experience with unlimited possibilities. Only when this really happens, when the spirit of peace awakens and takes possession of men's hearts can humanity be saved from perishing.

—Albert Schweitzer

Peace cannot be achieved through violence; it can only be attained through understanding.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis
On which the world earth revolves—slowly, evenly, without
Rushing toward the future. Live the actual moment.
Only this moment is life.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek but that it is means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

Round 1: Words of peace.

Round 2: Guided meditation.

Round 3: Deep sharing from readings, homework, meditation.

Closing Words

All works of love are works of peace.
—Mother Teresa

Closing Song

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business

Homework for the next meeting.

Homework: Peace

Many world religions call for peace at the center of their teachings. From the Crusades through Jihad, not all world religions call for peace as an exclusive path toward freedom; how does that sit with you? As the call for peace continues to be heard in whispers and shouts through these difficult times, how do we peel back these layers and get on our paths toward our own truth?

I am but a humble explorer of the science of nonviolence. Its hidden depths sometimes stagger me as they stagger many fellow workers.

—*Gandhi*

We can no longer ignore the world because it is now knocking loudly on our door. As part of the Universal community it is our responsibility to first take care of ourselves, practice and embody peace, offering it to the world. The steps can be simple: treat our neighbors and ourselves with loving kindness.

—*Sandra Lee Shubert*

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

Bishop Oscar Romero

The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, one party or one nation. It must be a peace, which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world.

—*Franklin Delano Roosevelt*

I once was asked why I don't participate in anti-war demonstrations. I said that I will never do that, but as soon as you have a pro-peace rally, I will be there.

—*Mother Theresa*

It is not enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it is not enough to believe in it. One must work at it.

—*Eleanor Roosevelt*

We will not build a peaceful world by following a negative path. It is not enough to say we must not wage war. It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war but on the positive affirmation of peace. We must see that peace is a sweeter music, a cosmic melody that is far superior to the discords of war. Somehow, we must transform the dynamics of the world power struggle from the negative nuclear arms race, which no one can win, to a positive contest to harness human's creative genius for the purpose of making peace and prosperity a reality for all nations of the world. In short, we must shift the arms race to the peace race. If we have a will and determination to mount such a peace offensive, we will unlock hitherto tightly sealed doors of hope and transform our imminent elegy into a psalm of creative fulfillment.

—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

How is peace known to you? Is peace a noun or a verb, or is it both? Does the path to peace start most naturally as an action out in the world or within you . . . or both?

Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.

—*Albert Einstein*

War and peace start in the hearts of individuals. Strangely enough, even though all beings would like to live in peace, our method for obtaining peace over the generations seems not to be very effective: we seek peace and happiness by going to war.

—*Pema Chödrön*

Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace.

—*Buddha*

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms, their energy, while care will drop off like autumn leaves.

—*John Muir*

Nothing can bring peace but yourself.

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

We have to practice the cultivation of peace individually and in our relationships . . . Only this kind of practice will allow the flower of peace to take root in our families, in our communities, and in the world. Each one of us can draw from the wisdom of his or her own spiritual tradition—whether it is Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, or any other.

—*Thich Nhat Hanh*

Questions to Ponder

- Describe a time in your childhood when you felt at peace with yourself and your world, when you understood the balance of peace and freedom. What was that time like for you?
- What do you believe is the single most important factor that keeps us as a global community from committing to peace? What keeps people fighting?
- Some say there comes a time when war is the only solution. What or where is that bottom line for you?
- How do we build a community of love? Where does it start for you?

Leader's Guide: Peace

Preparation before the Meeting

Note: Due to the guided meditation, there won't be three minutes of silence (for this session only). The guided meditation takes a bit of preparation; reading the meditation out loud and practicing the pacing and a gentleness of voice is very helpful. It should take about 20 minutes.

Materials: Bring a flashlight so you can read the guided meditation when the lights are turned down.

Chalice Lighting (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting found in the bulletin.

To face the world's shadows, a chalice of light.
To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth.
To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage.
To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace.
May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.
—Lindsay Bates

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)

Ask group members to tell in one or two sentences: "How you are today?" Share information about absent members.

Shared Readings (5 min)

Go around your group, letting each person in turn read from the shared readings found in the bulletin until all the readings are finished.

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (55 min)

The truth of it is that if you really listen to another person, whether on the surface he is talking about the weather or predicting the outcome of the World Series or even preaching a sermon, if you really listen, you begin to realize that what he is really talking about is himself. He is saying, "Love me" or maybe "Hate me" or "Pity me," but always he is saying one way or another, "Listen to me. Know me."

—Frederick Buechner

Round 1—Words of peace (10 min): Spend a few moments writing synonyms for "peace" on the front of the bulletin. After all have finished, take turns going around the circle sharing the words.

Round 2—Guided meditation (20 min): Read the guided meditation at the end of this document.

Round 3—Deep sharing (25 min): Deep sharing from readings, homework, meditations, and thoughts on peace.

Closing Words (1 min)

All works of love are works of peace.
—Mother Teresa

Closing Song (1 min)

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Group Business (5 min)

Pass out the homework for next time.

Guided Meditation

During round 2, bring participants to a meditative posture, with eyes closed and lights turned down (use your flashlight so you can read the guided meditation). Read the guided meditation slowly, with a gentle, steady tone.

Tonight we gather in a circle to say, "There is peace." Peace is available to us here and now. When there is peace in my heart, I can share peace with my neighbor, and together we can change the world.

We shall journey into the Earth to touch her core of peace. Close your eyes and find comfort in your sitting body, with your feet flat on the floor.

Breathe simply and deeply. Pay attention to the breath as you inhale . . . as you exhale . . .

Set aside your daily cares during this time.

When a thought flows into your mind, breathe in deeply and let the thought pass, always coming back to the sound of my voice.

This is a time of peaceful relaxation.

As you settle down into your body, you experience a marvelous feeling of safety, and this helps you relax even more.

Relax your head . . . your scalp . . . your eyes . . . paying attention to your breath.

Take a deep breath in . . . hold it . . . and release it slowly, peacefully.

Stretch your arms and hands . . . relax the muscles.

Your spine is long and tall.

Stretch your legs and feet . . . relax the muscles.

Your spine is long and tall.

Take a deep breath in . . . expand your torso . . . and settle into an easy breathing rhythm.

Settle your weight into your sit-bones and rest in contact with the Earth.

Rest in contact with the Earth.

You are safe in your body and ready for a transformation in your consciousness.

Feel your weight in contact with the Earth.

Send roots of stability down and down and down.

Feel your feet sending even deeper roots.

Your sit-bones support your hips and torso.

Your muscles are relaxed.

Your body rests on your skeleton.

Your shoulders rest on top of your spine.

Nod your neck just slightly and find your skull as it rests atop your vertebrae.

The crown of your head is high and stable above your body.

You have become Mountain.

Spend time living as Mountain. Ages can pass with no changes that matter to you.

Trees have short lives compared to yours.

A blizzard is just a chance to gain a winter coat.

A torrent just makes you a little more round and smooth.
Your veins run with silver and gold.
Your deepest caverns hide beautiful gemstones.
Lightning may strike, but the vastness of the Earth quickly absorbs the energy.
If you remember some strikes of lightning, surely they have long since ceased.
As Mountain, you are safe and peaceful. Your breathing is a slow wind.
In between earthquakes, which sometimes do happen, you have a long, long time to settle.
As Mountain, you are safe and peaceful. Your breathing is a slow wind.
If there is anger deep inside, a volcano may sometimes erupt.
This is a normal part of your life as Mountain, but after the pressure is released a long period of quiet
will always follow.
If you remember a volcano, it was surely a long time ago.
As Mountain, you are safe and peaceful. Your breathing is a slow wind.
You are so vast and timeless that even a great sorrow can be felt and embraced without changing
your sense of balance.
As Mountain, you are safe and peaceful. Your breathing is a slow wind.

You have become Mountain, and as Mountain you are a facet of Gaia, the great goddess who
encompasses the Earth, the goddess whose body is the Earth itself.
As a part of Gaia, you share in her abundance. You are her abundance.
Gaia sings to you through long low vibrations of peace.
Gaia's song is peace . . . peace . . . peace.
Settle even deeper into the embrace of Gaia and feel her peace coming up through your body, which
is Mountain.
Gaia's song is peace . . . peace . . . peace.

Like a memory of long ago and far away, you remember your human body.
You can simultaneously experience the deep peace of Mountain and the restlessness of your human
thoughts.
You flicker between worlds, feeling the peace of Gaia and the challenges of being human.
You have a vision of carrying deep peace into your daily life, of living with a peaceful heart, of
speaking peaceful words.
Gaia will live in your heart and sing her song of peace.
Gaia's song is peace . . . peace . . . peace.

Now you feel some movement in your toes.
You prepare to walk again as a human on the Earth.
You remember your muscles and stretch them a little.
When you are ready, you open your eyes. Keep your gaze soft.
The world has changed.
Gaia's song is peace . . . peace . . . peace.