

Reconciled to be Peacemakers in God's World

LEADERS' GUIDE



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



INTRODUCTION

For Peace in God's World is both a social statement of the ELCA and a kind of fervent prayer in a turbulent world fractured by human sin.

Prompted by the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the social statement sought to respond to the question “What does it mean to be a peacemaker today?” It was adopted at the 1995 ELCA Churchwide Assembly after careful deliberation throughout the church, guided by a 15-person task force of ELCA members with a variety of relevant expertise. It draws from theological and biblical sources to provide church teaching for Christian living and for this church’s corporate witness toward making peace in God’s world.

Though the social statement was adopted 29 years ago, *For Peace in God's World* (1996) is even more relevant in the age of global terrorism, including the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the growth of militarism at home and abroad. For this reason the study guide introduces users to the social statement with a focus more contemporary than that offered by the original guide in 1996.

This study guide helps groups hold a five-session discussion series that walks through key components of the statement and looks at them in our current context(s). It is intended for adult learners, though older teens might participate as well, especially if provided with a separate time for processing the material with the class leader or church staff. We begin by looking at the difference between earthly peace and God’s peace, then we reflect on the effects of the Cold War and the growth of terrorism and militarism. From there we look at our Christian role as peacemakers, which leads us to consider healthy aspects of world peace and cooperation. Finally we’ll review what it means to create a culture of peace, especially in our current digital age, and explore ideas that might bring this to fruition.

At the end of every session participants will find one or more concrete actions they can take to continue their personal engagement.

Healthy Communications

Besides opening with prayer, start the first session by asking participants to review and commit to the community covenant found below for this and every subsequent session. Consider posting these or similar covenants for the smooth functioning of the group in easy view of the participants (a printable covenant can be found below and at the end of the Session 1 guide.) The first session includes a blanket content notification, but please use your best judgment when planning for what may be high-intensity or, occasionally, even triggering discussions. Please also be keenly aware that discussions about peace (and its absence in our world and lives). Please be keenly aware that discussions about peace (and its absence in our world) can stir up both deep passion and deep pain, leading some to share excitedly and others to withdraw from conversation. We challenge you as leaders to invite your participants into spaces that are both safe and brave, centering the needs of the most vulnerable. Please reserve private time for your prayer before each session and set an example for participants, projecting humility and vulnerability yet also confidence in God’s peace and promises of justice. These conversations may be challenging, but they are also holy ground where we can encounter God in one another. We embark on them not alone but alongside Jesus, who promised to accompany us even to the end of the age.

Suggested Schedule and Structure of Sessions

Each session runs about 50 minutes, with an opening prayer and/or meditative activity, a video introducing one section of the social statement, a brief Bible study and time to discuss how the Bible reading and social statement might influence the lives of the participants. Class segments may be in a slightly different order depending on the session. You can extend the sessions to 80 or 90 minutes by using all the proposed discussion questions, singing the included hymn and including the activity suggested at the end of the session. This will especially aid participants who want to learn more about how to engage specific peacekeeping efforts in their day-to-day lives.

This Leaders' Guide is meant to be a buffet of selections from which to choose. Time is always an issue, so choices have to be made to suit the needs of your group. However, do give priority to the video session and discussion, since the video presents the core ideas of the social statement and talking together helps make those ideas “stick.” In the Leaders' Guide for each session you will find a suggested time schedule, structure and aids for preparation. Throughout there are suggestions in italics that offer helpful hints on shaping the sessions to meet the needs of your particular context. The core of each session is the 10-minute video by specialists who help unpack the key ideas. Each session's structured guide begins at the top of a page so that it can be easily printed. (There also is a Participants' Guide that can be printed each week.)

Leaders' Preparation and Materials

- Download the statement at: [ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/SocialStatements/Peace](https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/SocialStatements/Peace).
- Order bulk printed copies at: [ELCA Storefront](https://www.elca.org/Storefront).
- Provide each anticipated learner with a copy of the social statement and the learners' guide for the session. Have a couple extras should friends or visitors attend. These learners' guides list the major sections of each session and include the questions participants will be asked to discuss, along with the main points of the video presentations. They also include reading assignments and ideas that participants can pursue at home.
- Make sure there are enough seats in the room. Be sure to have more chairs than you expect to need for visitors and friends.
- Have on hand pens, colored pencils and markers, paper, a DVD player or laptop computer, an LED projector, screen, hymnals and Bibles. (The Scripture passages in the social statement and the Leaders' Guide use the New Revised Standard Version; if your community is accustomed to another biblical translation, use that or use the NRSV for one reading of a passage and the other translation for the second reading.)
- Identify Bible readers prior to each session and hand each a Bible with the reading already marked. They can also read from a Bible app on a phone or tablet if they have one. Be sure that they have the text they need for the session, and explain any directions of which they need to be aware. Check each session for specifics; e.g., sometimes it's helpful to have biblical text read more than one time and by more than one person.
- Download the video to a computer or other storage device rather than stream it “live” from the internet. It can be downloaded anywhere with reliable Wi-Fi internet access. This could be in someone's home, in a public library, etc. Then it can be played more reliably, from a computer or from a flash drive connected to a computer or monitor.

Leaders' Preparation and Materials (cont'd.)

- Check the screen and test the equipment so that the video is cued up when the session begins. The video can be shown via an internet connection should you need to do so. Just be sure it's a strong connection!
- Be aware that newer laptop ports sometimes do not match older LED projector ports. Check your equipment in advance of the first class to determine if an adapter is needed.
- In leading song, be sure to rehearse the song or enlist a musician ahead of time who can lead the group, either by ear or with piano or guitar.
- Prior to the class, read *For Peace in God's World*. Additional copies can be downloaded or ordered at [ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Peace](https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Peace).
- Remember to start each session by praying together and reviewing the community covenant.

Thank you!

Thank you for your commitment to leading these discussion sessions and equipping participants to engage *For Peace in God's World* with curiosity and faith and in their lived contexts! May God bless your leadership, and may your time together enable all participants to better understand God's peacekeeping call on their lives.

The following four pages are for you to print in order to tape up the group covenant for everyone to see during your sessions.

COMMUNITY

In order to promote healthy and
we covenant together that:

We will be honest and transparent
only for ourselves and not invalidate
possible, we will use “I” language, t
for our own thoughts and feelings.

If we are feeling reactive or defensive
shared, we will ask clarifying questions
of ... ?,” “How do you understand this
Is that what you intended?” We will s
each other.

We prioritize the voices of people of

Y COVENANT

and faith-filled discussion,

t about what we are feeling, speaking
ating the feelings of others. Whenever
through which we take responsibility

ive about something someone else has
ons such as “What’s your perception
is?,” or “What I heard you saying was ...
seek nonjudgmental clarification from

directly affected by a particular issue

We prioritize the voices of people of color, especially those who are systemically oppressed and whose emotions such as anger and sadness are often dismissed as overreactions to profound suffering.

We acknowledge that conflict and discomfort are part of the experience and that, to be effective, we must prayerfully lean into, rather than avoid, these experiences.

If we wish to share outside this sacred space about another person within it, we must do so with that person and those directly affected.

We seek, above all, to see one another as we are.



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directly affected by a particular issue,
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ve Christian peacekeepers, we must
void, these uncomfortable moments.

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e will first secure the consent of that
d.

another through God's loving eyes.

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SESSION 1: WHAT IS PEACE?

Welcome to Session 1 of the discussion sessions on *For Peace in God's World*, the 1995 social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regarding war, domestic and international security, and the Christian call to be peacemakers. The social statement can be viewed/printed [here](#).

The central aim of this first session is to explore the meaning of peace and set a theological and biblical foundation for further conversation. Participants will also be given action steps they can perform on their own to further their reflection and learning.

The major objectives of this session (also found in the Participants' Guide) are to:

1. Get an overview of the social statement and the plan for discussion.
2. Identify personal definitions and understandings of war and peace and compare them to the definitions and understandings in the social statement.
3. Reflect on the meaning of earthly peace.
4. Use biblical insights to compare earthly peace and God's peace.

Before You Gather

Read through the introduction and Session 1 of this Leaders' Guide. Read the social statement in its entirety and re-read pages 1-3 before the discussion. Watch Video #1 (linked in section V below). If possible, let participants know that the discussion sessions will involve reading content and watching and discussing a video and ask if there are accommodations they will need or barriers to accessibility or participation that you can help with (e.g. by reading written content aloud, providing transportation assistance/childcare, etc.). Identify readers for the Bible reading ahead of time and provide Bibles with the applicable pages marked. If you plan to sing the closing hymn, run through it to make sure you are confident leading it, recruit a confident and experienced song leader, or choose a video version for participants to follow. Ask participants to read the social statement's introduction and first section, "The God of Peace" (pages 1-3). Prepare copies of the Participants' Guide.

Supplies required:

1. A copy of the social statement for each participant.
2. A copy of the Session 1 Participants' Guide for each participant.
3. Bibles for each participant, with sections to be read marked for the readers.
4. Hymnals for each participant (or a printout of the hymn to be sung).
5. A sticky note and pen for each participant.
6. Easel/paper, blackboard or other large display tools and writing implements.
7. Optional: A printout of the community covenant (see Leaders' Guide Introduction), posted in an easily visible location.
8. A computer, USB drive or other storage device on which to keep the file for the video to be shown (linked below in section V).
9. A large TV, projector/screen or other devices to show the video during the session (be sure to have any necessary cables/dongles on hand).

I. Welcome and Introductions (5 min.)

Greet participants and thank them for attending. Even if they know each other well, ask that they introduce themselves with their names, their pronouns, and why they are here. Let them know that because discussions of peace inevitably involve discussions of potentially traumatic content, they should feel empowered to care for themselves and one another as a first priority. They will receive all discussion questions in advance and should feel free to step away or to remain present for community care when potentially traumatic content is discussed. Let them know you are also available for individual conversation and care. Then explain in these or similar words that doing the work to be an instrument of God's peace in the world can bring up intense feelings:

As our time together progresses, we will delve into such hot-button topics as war, terrorism, police brutality and more. There will be times when we feel passionately and when we disagree. To enter into these intense discussions as a Christian community, we are all being asked to agree to a covenant that:

1. We will be honest and transparent about what we are feeling, speaking only for ourselves and not invalidating the feelings of others. Whenever possible, we will use “I” language, through which we take responsibility for our own thoughts and feelings.
2. If we are feeling reactive or defensive about something someone else has shared, we will ask clarifying questions such as “What’s your perception of ... ?,” “How do you understand this?,” or “What I heard you saying was ... Is that what you intended?” We will seek nonjudgmental clarification from each other.
3. We prioritize the voices of people directly affected by a particular issue, especially those who are systemically oppressed, and affirm that intense emotions such as anger and sadness are healthy and appropriate responses to profound suffering.
4. We acknowledge that conflict and disagreement are part of the human experience and that, to be effective Christian peacekeepers, we must prayerfully lean into, rather than avoid, these uncomfortable moments.
5. If we wish to share outside this sacred space things we have learned about another person within it, we will first secure the consent of that person and those directly affected.
6. We seek, above all, to see one another through God’s loving eyes.

Consider having these or similar covenantal promises for the functioning of the group posted somewhere in easy view of the participants (print covenant from Leaders’ Guide Introduction).

II. Present Participants With an Overview of the Five Sessions (2-3 min.)

Introduce participants to the discussion sessions with these or similar words:

This five-session discussion will guide us through an examination of the ELCA social statement *For Peace in God's World*. Each week we will examine a different question in light of the statement.

The first week we will ask	“What is peace?”
The second week we will ask	“What are our contextual realities today?”
The third week we will ask	“How are the church and Christians called to be instruments of God’s peace?”
The fourth week we will ask	“What are the components of international cooperation and peace?”
The fifth week we will ask	“What does it mean to foster a culture of peace and justice?”

The need for such a statement was recognized early in the life of the ELCA. Lutheran church bodies in the United States had spoken officially on war and peace since at least 1922, and each of the ELCA’s predecessor bodies had issued a statement outlining its beliefs about peace. Work on a statement by the new church body began in 1991, with a team composed of pastors, theologians, biblical scholars, international relations scholars, and a former four-star general. In 1994 a draft of the statement was released for input from individuals, congregations and other groups, and in 1995 a final version was adopted by the Churchwide Assembly. On page 22 of the statement you can read the specific resolutions related to it that the assembly voted to adopt.

Given the rise in armed conflict across the globe and an increasingly polarized domestic political landscape, many Christians are asking how they are called to think, pray and act with regard to peace, war and conflict. The 1995 social statement provides preliminary answers to these questions through an “ELCA lens.” By revisiting this crucial document in a new contemporary context, congregations and other groups are invited to ponder together how it applies to their lives today and, especially, what it means to be Christian peacemakers in a digital age.

In this first session we will examine what peace is and reflect on the similarities and differences between earthly peace and God’s peace. In subsequent sessions we will examine how individual Christians and Christian communities can become instruments of God’s peace, cooperation and justice on a local and international level.

III. Opening Prayer (1-2 min.)

O God, as we gather, help us to see the beauty of our unity in our diversity. May we live within your desire for us to be reconciled to you, the earth, and each other so that we come to know your peace. Amen.

IV. Introductory Activity (5 min.)

Using a blackboard or other large display, invite participants to brainstorm a list of words they associate with peace and one for those they associate with war or strife. Once the list is complete, invite them to share anything that strikes them as surprising or important and to contemplate what the opposite of peace is — is it all-out war? Is it the absence of all conflict? Something else? Let them know that it's OK not to have a firm answer now, and that we'll revisit these definitions later in the sessions. (Leader: Please retain this list for future use.)

V. Video/Discussion (15-20 min. | video is 9:30)

Introduce the video in these or similar words:

In this video the Rev. Carol Jensen, a member of the task force, provides a brief explanation of why the ELCA believes we need a new emphasis on the social statement and of its five sections: (1) “The God of Peace,” (2) “The Church, A Community for Peace,” (3) “In God’s World, A Faith . . .,” (4) “Political Responsibility,” and (5) “Tasks.” Rev. Jensen then describes “God’s resolve for peace, found throughout the Scriptures.” | *Video #1 can be viewed [here](#).*

You may not have time to discuss all these questions today. Prioritize authentic and faith-filled sharing over the number of discussion points covered. Invite participants to contemplate the remaining discussion questions between sessions.

1. In the video Rev. Jensen states that “the biblical narrative reveals God’s resolve for peace, beginning in the story of creation itself.” What aspect of creation or the creation story makes you feel most peaceful?
2. Rev. Jensen notes that “human ones are created in the image of God for life in community.” One of the most important roles in human community is that held by people who are responsible for peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Who are the best peacemakers or conflict resolvers in the public sphere today? Who are the ones you know personally? What about their peacekeeping is most notable/admirable to you?
3. *Optional:* For Christians, Jesus embodies God’s word. Rev. Jensen notes that “we see God’s resolve for peace as Christians most clearly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus called us to love our enemies. Jesus continually broke down the barriers that divided people by reaching out to those on the margins. Jesus submitted to death on a cross — confronting violence with the power of love. God’s resurrection of Jesus shows us that ultimately love will triumph and that one day God’s final reign of peace will come.” Is there a particular moment from Jesus’ life or aspect of his ministry that you feel best identifies Jesus as “God’s resolve for peace” come to life? (Leaders: *If your participant group is not yet biblically literate, come prepared with your own example to share and discuss.*)

VI. Bible Study (10 min.)

Ask someone to read the following passage from Psalm 85, presented in the New Revised Standard Version. If your community is accustomed to another biblical translation, use that or use the NRSV for one reading of a passage and the other translation for the second reading.

“Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him and will make a path for his steps” (Psalm 85:8-13).

Invite a second person to read the text again, then pose the following questions:

1. In the video Rev. Jensen explains that God’s resolve for peace is the underlying foundation for creation. In the Hebrew Scriptures this peace is most often described as “shalom.” But shalom denotes far more than a simple absence of war; it is a state of harmony with God and with all beings that transcends time and space, and in fact the Talmud teaches that Shalom is one of God’s names. Christian theologian Cornelius Plantinga describes shalom as “the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight . . . We call it peace but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight — a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.” When you imagine “the way things ought to be,” what first comes to mind?
2. When you think about God’s peace in both the heavenly kingdom and our day-to-day lives, what personal barrier keeps you from experiencing this peace? This might be a disconnected prayer life, a life full of stress, a tendency to leap quickly to anger, etc. Whatever prevents you from feeling God’s peace, take a sticky note, write on it a brief prayer for God’s help in removing this barrier and place the note somewhere you will see it throughout the week. (Also share it with the group if you are comfortable doing so.)
3. *Optional:* What does it mean to you that “righteousness and peace will kiss each other?” Though this is a powerful image, we might have trouble imagining what it means for our day-to-day lives. Have you ever encountered a situation that you felt exemplified this image? (*Leaders, please come prepared with at least one example to spur conversation if necessary.*)

VII. Review and Reflect (10 min.)

Give a few moments for participants to re-familiarize themselves with the social statement's introduction and first section, "The God of Peace" (pages 1-3), before inviting them to contemplate the following:

1. Has anything from the social statement, the video or the Bible reading affected how you think about what peace is?
2. How do the thoughts about peace you identified at the start of the session compare with what we've discussed today about God's desire for peace? How are they similar? How are they different?
3. *Optional:* What are you most looking forward to in the coming weeks of this study? Is there anything that you are feeling anxious about or not looking forward to?

VIII. Preparation for Next Week (2 min.)

Ask participants to prepare by reading the social statement's third section, "In God's World, a Faith ..." (pages 6-9; note that we are skipping section 2 for now, but participants may read it if they wish). Invite participants to explore the website of the [Lutheran Peace Fellowship](#) between now and next week.

IX. Closing Hymn and Prayer (5 min.)

Sing "O God of Love, O King of Peace" (ELW 749), optional. If your community is more familiar with the William Gardiner setting or some other one, use it or swap out this hymn for another. The participants should be comfortable enough with the music that it becomes a prayerful experience. Close the session with this prayer:

O God, as we scatter to serve you in our daily lives, help us to see the beauty of our diversity and our unity in your love. May we live within your desire for us to be reconciled to you, each other and the earth, so that we come to know your peace. Amen.

Learn more:

Resources

- [Lutheran World Federation](#)
- [ELCA Faith and Society](#)
- [ELCA Publicly Engaged Church](#)
- [ELCA social statement, *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*](#)

Articles

- ["War and Peace: A Review of Relevant Statements by Church Bodies Which Preceded the Founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America"](#)



SESSION 2: WHAT ARE OUR CONTEXTUAL REALITIES TODAY?

Welcome to Session 2 of the discussion sessions on *For Peace in God's World*, the 1995 social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regarding war, domestic and international security, and the Christian call to be peacemakers. The social statement can be viewed/printed [here](#).

The central aim of this second session is to compare the historical context of the statement and where we are today. Participants will also be given action steps they can perform on their own to further their reflection and learning.

The major objectives of this session (also found in the Participants' Guide) are to:

1. Review the Cold War and its effects on people in the United States, as the social statement was a product of this specific context.
2. Explore the effects of global and domestic terrorism on us today.
3. Explore how individual and communal contexts affect experiences of peace and conflict.
4. Discuss how to discern God's grace and presence in challenging times.

Before You Gather

Read through Session 2 of this Leaders' Guide. Read "In God's World, a Faith ..." on pages 6-9 of the social statement. Watch Video #2 (linked in section V below). Let participants know that the discussion sessions will involve reading content and watching and discussing a video, and ask if there are accommodations they will need or barriers to accessibility or participation that you can help with (e.g. by reading written content aloud, providing transportation assistance/childcare, etc.). Identify readers for the Bible reading ahead of time and provide Bibles with the applicable pages marked. If you plan to sing the closing hymn, run through it and make sure you are confident leading it, recruit a confident and experienced song leader, or choose a video version for participants to follow. Ask participants to read the social statement's third section, "In God's World, a Faith" (pages 6-9).

Supplies required:

1. A copy of the social statement for each participant.
2. A copy of the Session 2 Participants' Guide for each participant.
3. Bibles for each participant, with sections to be read marked for the readers.
4. Hymnals for each participant (or a printout of the hymn to be sung).
5. Optional: A printout of the community covenant (see Leaders' Guide Introduction), posted in an easily visible location.
6. A computer, USB drive or other storage device on which to keep the file for the video to be shown (linked below in section V).
7. A large TV, projector/screen or other devices to show the video during the session (be sure to have any necessary cables/dongles on hand).

I. Welcome and Introductions (2-3 min.)

Greet participants and thank them for attending. Do a reminder of names, pronouns and content notifications. Ask participants to take a moment to review the community covenant they agreed to in Session 1. In these or similar words, notify participants of what will be covered in this session:

Welcome to Session 2 of our discussions of the 1995 social statement *For Peace in God's World*. The central aims of this session are to compare the historical context of the statement and where we are today, and to identify how the specific contexts in which we live as individuals and communities inform how we approach our peacemaking work.

II. Opening Prayer (1-2 min.)

The times we live in can be challenging and even fearful, O God. Help us to see your presence among us, even amid conflict and strife, so that we might come to find our peace in you. Amen.

III. Introductory Activity (5 min.)

Invite participants to take a comfortable meditative/reflective posture. Lead participants in a brief meditation using these or similar words:

Breathe in, giving thanks to God the Holy Parent, who created you.

Breathe out, shaking off the stress of your day.

Breathe in, giving thanks to God the Son, who sets you free.

Breathe out, shaking off the weight of the sin that often prevents us from being peacemakers.

Breathe in, giving thanks to God the Holy Spirit, whose healing breath blows over all the earth, bringing justice, reconciliation and hope to all beings.

Breathe out, releasing all anxiety about our peacemaking work to come and welcoming in a spirit of faith, trust and love.

Allow 30-60 seconds of silence before moving on to the video.

IV. Video/Discussion (15-20 min. | video is 9:19)

Introduce the video in these or similar words:

In this video the Rev. Dr. José Rodríguez explains that the social statement was written as a gospel response to the after-effects of the Cold War and, even amid fear and terroristic threats, reminds us that God's love and promise will continue to define our lives. | *Video #2 can be viewed [here](#).*

You may not have time to discuss all these questions today. Prioritize authentic and faith-filled sharing over the number of discussion points covered. Invite participants to contemplate the remaining discussion questions between sessions.

1. If you were alive during the Cold War, what remembrances do you have about how it affected your life and faith? What perspectives from other people had the greatest impact on you during this time?
2. If you were alive on Sept. 11, 2001, what remembrances do you have about how it affected your life and faith? What perspectives from other people had the greatest impact on you during this time?
3. *Optional:* After World War II and the Cold War, the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction became a major way not only to attain power and domination but also to keep the peace. In the shadow of the devastating effects of the U.S. nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the position of many world powers was, as Dr. Rodríguez notes, that “peace was to be achieved by perfecting the instruments of war.” How does this position interact with / affect your views on the gospel call to be peacemakers?
4. Like all of society's ills, war and terrorism affect systemically marginalized people first and most profoundly. How does your social location impact your position as a peacemaker in the world?

V. Bible Study (10 min.)

Ask someone to read the following passage from John's gospel. Before doing so, remind participants that this passage is from Jesus' Farewell Discourse and is a promise of Christ's continuing activity and presence in our lives.

“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom [God] will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to [God], because [God] is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe” (John 14:25-29).

Invite a second person to read the text again, then pose the following questions:

1. What do you think Jesus meant by saying, “I do not give to you as the world gives”?
2. When/how do you most experience this holy peace that Jesus describes?

Bible Study (cont'd.)

3. *Optional:* Perhaps not surprisingly, immediately after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the first thing his followers did was argue. About whether they should keep quiet about what they had witnessed, and about what had actually happened. About whether being a Jesus follower was just for those who knew him when he was alive or if others could be invited into the community. About whether following Jesus was exclusively something Jewish people could do or if gentiles could be included too. The New Testament is thus full of letters from the apostle Paul and other early leaders instructing new communities of Jesus followers on how to think and behave. But the letter that ends the Christian Scriptures, the book of Revelation, is a letter from a Jesus follower named John (probably a different John from the one who wrote the Gospel we read earlier) that describes a vision he was given of God's final reign of peace, when mourning and crying and pain will be no more and the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations. What debate or conflict in the Christian community or the wider world do you most wish God's healing for today?

VI. Review and Reflect (10 min.)

Give participants a few moments to re-familiarize themselves with the social statement's introduction and first section, "The God of Peace" (pages 1-3) and its third section, "In God's World, a Faith ..." (pages 6-9) before inviting them to contemplate the following:

1. Looking back on the first section of the social statement that you read last week and the section that you read for today's class, what aspects do you believe are still relevant to us today even though the document was written in 1995?
2. What aspects, if any, do you believe are outdated or no longer speak to our lived realities?
3. *Optional:* Last week you identified one personal barrier to experiencing God's holy peace that you encounter and prayed frequently throughout the week for God to help remove that barrier. What was that process like?
4. *Optional:* Throughout the Gospels, Jesus instructs his followers over and over again not to be afraid. But he also knew well that the world can be a very scary place. Are there any spiritual practices you employ in your life that help you access God's peace and comfort when you are afraid? Are there any you are interested in that you would like to try?

VII. Preparation for Next Week (1-2 min.)

Ask participants to read the social statement's second section, "The Church, a Community for Peace" (pages 3-6). Invite participants who want to know more about global and domestic terrorism and how Christians might respond to read the ELCA's 2004 social message "Living in a Time of Terrorism," available [here](#), and watch the June 2022 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the rise of domestic terrorism [here](#).

VIII. Closing Hymn and Prayer (3-5 min.)

Sing “Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather” (ELW 530), optional. Sing along with a recording if your group are not confident singers, or swap out this hymn for another. The participants should be comfortable enough with the music that it becomes a prayerful experience. If you choose to replace it with another hymn, please choose a hymn from a BIPOC artist or tradition. Close the session with this prayer:

Lord of Life, you gather us from many cultures and contexts and bind us together in the wider context of your immense love. May we always seek justice in your name and continually find hope in your eternal promises. Amen.

Learn more:

Resources

- [ELCA social message, “Community Violence”](#)
- [“STRIVE for Justice and Peace in All the Earth”](#)
- [Lombard Mennonite Peace Center](#)
- [Franciscan Peacemaking](#)

Articles

- [“Two Decades Later, the Enduring Legacy of 9/11”](#)
- [“How 9/11 Changed Peacebuilding”](#)
- [“Conflict and Hunger: How the War in Ukraine Will Affect Food Security”](#) blog series from ELCA World Hunger



SESSION 3: HOW ARE THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIANS CALLED TO BE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S PEACE?

Welcome to Session 3 of the discussion sessions on *For Peace in God's World*, the 1995 social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regarding war, domestic and international security, and the Christian call to be peacemakers. The social statement can be viewed/printed [here](#).

The central aim of this third session is to discuss how the church on earth can contribute to earthly peace. Participants will also be given action steps they can perform on their own to further their reflection and learning.

The major objectives of this session (also found in the Participants' Guide) are to:

1. Discuss our biblical and theological identity as the church on earth.
2. Explore the categories the social statement identifies as the calling of the church.
3. Identify the concepts behind just/unjust war and explore obstacles to peace for us as peacemakers in our contemporary world (sin).
4. Consider what it means to be a peacemaker as a Christian citizen.

Before You Gather

Please read through Session 3 of this Leaders' Guide. Read the second section of the social statement, "The Church, a Community for Peace" (pages 3-6). Watch Video #3 (link in section V, below). Let participants know that the discussion sessions will involve reading content and watching and discussing a video and ask if there are accommodations they will need or barriers to accessibility or participation that you can help with (e.g. by reading written content aloud, providing transportation assistance/childcare, etc.). Identify readers for the Bible reading ahead of time and provide Bibles with the applicable pages marked. If you plan to sing the closing hymn, run through it and make sure you are confident leading it, recruit a confident and experienced song leader, or choose a video version for participants to follow. Ask participants to read the social statement's second section, "The Church, a Community for Peace" (pages 3-6).

Supplies required:

1. A copy of the social statement for each participant.
2. A copy of the Session 3 Participants' Guide for each participant.
3. Bibles for each participant, with sections to be read marked for the readers.
4. A copy of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for each participant.
5. Hymnals for each participant (or a printout of the hymn to be sung).
6. *Optional*: A printout of the community covenant (see Leaders' Guide Introduction), posted in an easily visible location.
7. A computer, USB drive or other storage device on which to keep the file for the video to be shown (linked below in section V).
8. A large TV, projector/screen or other devices to show the video during the session (be sure to have any necessary cables/dongles on hand).

SESSION 3: HOW ARE THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIANS CALLED TO BE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S PEACE?

I. Welcome and Introductions (2-3 min.)

Greet participants and thank them for attending. Do a reminder of names, pronouns and content notifications. Ask participants to take a moment to review the community covenant they agreed to in Session 1. Greet participants and thank them for attending. In these or similar words, notify participants of what will be covered in this session:

Welcome to Session 3 of our discussions of the 1995 social statement For Peace in God's World. In this session we will discuss how the church on earth, both as individuals and as communities, can contribute to earthly peace.

II. Opening Prayer (1-2 min.)

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to be expressions of your love in the world, both as individual members of your body and as your whole body, the church. Empower us to share your love and peace with all whom we encounter. Amen.

III. Introductory Activity (5 min.)

Invite participants to take a comfortable meditative/reflective posture. Introduce St. Francis' Peace Prayer, letting them know that, though most scholars today do not believe that St. Francis of Assisi himself wrote the prayer, it does exemplify the principles that undergirded his work. Read through the prayer three times. The first time, invite participants to simply listen in silent meditation. The second time, invite them to identify a word that speaks to where their faith is today. The third time, invite them to identify a word that speaks to where God is calling their faith to go tomorrow. After the third reading is complete, invite participants to share their words.

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;
and 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,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

IV. Video/Discussion (15-20 min. | video is 11:54)

Introduce the video in these or similar words:

In this video Dr. Ryan Cumming will discuss the ways in which the church is called to serve as a witness to God's holy peace in the here and now. | *Video #3 can be viewed [here](#).*

You may not have time to discuss all these questions today. Prioritize authentic and faith-filled sharing over the number of discussion points covered. Invite participants to contemplate the remaining discussion questions between sessions.

1. How has war touched your life? For example, have you or a loved one served in the armed forces? Has someone you know been wounded or injured in war? Have you worked in a defense industry or participated in a protest against a war?
2. When have you been afraid of war? How is your faith impacted by the ways in which war has touched your life?
3. On a national or global level, do you observe or experience the church acting in ways that are antithetical to our call to promote peace? How about on a local level? What are some specific ways that you observe or experience the church acting as an instrument of peace on a national or global level? How about on a local level?

V. Bible Study (10 min.)

Ask someone to read the following passage from Luke:

“Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ [Jesus] said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ [The lawyer] answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ And [Jesus] said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ But wanting to justify himself, [the lawyer] asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ [The lawyer] said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise’” (Luke 10:25-37).

Bible Study (cont'd.)

Invite a second person to read the text again before asking for responses to the following questions:

1. A bit of historical context is necessary to understand the importance of the story frequently referred to as “The Good Samaritan.” At the time, hatred between Jews and Samaritans was fierce and long-standing, its origins stretching all the way back to the days of the patriarchs. Jacob (Israel) had 12 sons, whose descendants became 12 tribes. Joseph, his favorite, was despised by the other brothers, and they attempted to kill him.

However, God intervened and saved Joseph’s life as well as those of the entire clan. Before Jacob died he gave Joseph a blessing in which he called him a “fruitful bough by a well,” predicting the fertile land where Joseph’s sons would eventually settle. It is this land that eventually became Samaria. Eventually Israel divided into two kingdoms, and the northern kingdom established its capital in Samaria. In 722 B.C., Assyria conquered Israel and took most of its people into captivity. The invaders then brought in gentile colonists to resettle the land. The foreigners brought with them their pagan idols, which the remaining Jews began to worship alongside the God of Israel.

Meanwhile the southern kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon in about 586 B.C. Its people, too, were carried off into captivity. But 70 years later a remnant of 43,000 was permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem. The people who now inhabited the former northern kingdom — the Samaritans — vigorously opposed the repatriation. By the time of Jesus, the monotheistic Jews of the southern regions detested the mixed marriages and worship customs of their northern cousins, considering them ritually unclean. So the “Good Samaritan” was a figure who was widely reviled by local people.

How does knowing this history impact your understanding of this story? What aspects of the Samaritan’s behavior speak to you of peacekeeping?

2. In this story Jesus makes a principled stand for a definition of “neighbor” that includes people whom the religious authorities least expect. What people least expected by religious and social authorities today do you believe the church is called to treat as neighbors?
3. *Optional:* Jesus teaches the lawyer that the Samaritan man in the story was the one truly behaving like a good neighbor and instructs him, “Go and do likewise.” How do you interpret that, and in what ways do you see yourself living that out, now and in the future?

VI. Review and Reflect (10 min.)

Give a few moments for participants to re-familiarize themselves with the social statement's second section, "The Church, a Community for Peace" (pages 3-6).

1. The just war theory describes the justification for a war that prevents greater harm. It includes:
2. being based on a just cause, being waged with right intention and having a reasonable chance of success. In all cases a just war is waged to protect the innocent. For Martin Luther, discussions of war and peace were not mere hypotheticals — he lived in a period of significant armed conflict, in particular the fight against the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the Peasants' War, which was, in many ways, a direct result of the reforms that Luther and his followers instituted. His opinions on war are complex, sometimes conflicting, and infused with raw emotion, sometimes even racial and religious hatred. Though he did come to believe that just war was possible, he also believed that citizens could be conscientious objectors if asked to do something that violated their standards. Do you believe just war is possible? Are your standards for assessing just war the same as those named in the social statement?
3. Read through the baptism rite in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, focusing on the baptismal promises made by the person being baptized (or their parents on their behalf), their baptismal sponsors and the gathered congregation. Where in the rite do you see/experience God's peacekeeping work, and where do you see/experience the call for us to be peacekeepers in God's name?

VII. Preparation for Next Week (1-2 min.)

Ask participants to read section 5C of the social statement, "A Politics of Cooperation" (pages 17-20). Invite participants who want to know more about diverse Christian responses to war to read a Veteran's Day sermon by a former soldier and current ELCA pastor [here](#), Mark Twain's "The War Prayer" [here](#) and a reflection on the faith of Secretary of State Colin Powell, who was also a four-star general and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [here](#).

VIII. Closing Hymn and Prayer (3-5 min.)

Sing "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" (ELW 632), optional. Let participants know that this hymn is based on Psalm 91, called "The Soldier's Psalm" because of an oft-repeated tale of U.S. soldiers in World War I who were instructed by an officer to pray the psalm daily and who subsequently survived several vicious battles with no casualties. The story has since been disproven, but the psalm retains its reputation as a prayer of protection for soldiers.

Let participants know that the following litany was written in the week after Sept. 11, 2001, by the Rev. Karen Senecal for use by the congregation of Judson Memorial Church, New York City, which is located in Greenwich Village not far from the site of the World Trade Center. It was used again in a Service of Lamentation held on March 20, 2003, the day after the start of the Iraq war. The collection of hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) on which the litany is based was contributed by Sufi Shaikh Kabir Helminski, cofounder of the Threshold Society.

Closing Hymn and Prayer (cont'd.)

One: What actions are most excellent? To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured.

All: We acknowledge that we have been tempted to seek only our own good, hear only our own truth, and acknowledge only our own suffering. Let us start along the road to justice and peace by holding the pain of our siblings as if it were our own. We pray that no more children are lost to indifference and violence.

One: Kindness is a mark of faith, and whoever has not kindness has not faith.

All: We pray for the courage to transform this beautiful planet into a place where people are not tormented by wars and not torn apart in senseless divisions. Together we will find the strength to resist hatred by our caring. Help us remember that it is our hands that shape the earth.

One: The exercise of religious duties will not atone for the fault of an abusive tongue.

All: We pray, without ceasing, that our words become actions that give life the shape of justice.

One: God is a unity and likes unity.

All: Help all persons to be able to not merely see the similarities between all people, but to feel less fear in the differences. If this can be our focus, perhaps our goal may be not for homogeneity, but for a true and joyful diversity.

One: Anyone of you who sees wrong, attempt to undo it; and if you cannot, then speak against it with your tongue; and if you cannot do either, then abhor it in your heart, and this is the least of faith.

All: Every human life is precious to God and the human community. Each human path of faith is a sacred journey within life.

One: One is true who protects neighbors both present and absent.

All: We pray for all who have no sense of safety in their daily lives. We consider the hatred we witness and participate unwittingly in, and we pray for more than fear and tolerance to dominate people's thoughts and motivation in these trying days.

SESSION 3: HOW ARE THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIANS CALLED TO BE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S PEACE?

Learn more:

Resources

- [“Christian Approaches to War” handout](#)
- [Nonviolent Peaceforce](#)
- [Ploughshares Fund](#)
- [The Carter Center](#)
- [Veterans for Peace](#)
- [Peace Not Walls](#)
- [ELCA social message, “Human Rights”](#)
- [Luther’s Small Catechism](#)
- [Luther’s Large Catechism](#)
- [The Book of Concord \(for purchase\)](#)
- [“Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved”](#)

Articles

- [“War and Peace: A Review of Relevant Statements by Church Bodies Which Preceded the Founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America”](#)



SESSION 4: WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND PEACE?

Welcome to Session 4 of the discussion sessions on *For Peace in God's World*, the 1995 social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regarding war, domestic and international security, and the Christian call to be peacemakers. The social statement can be viewed/printed [here](#).

The central aim of this session is to discuss some of the healthy aspects of a politics of world cooperation and peace. Participants will also be given action steps they can perform on their own to further their reflection and learning.

The major objectives of this session (also found in the Participants' Guide) are to:

1. Discuss the meaning of international cooperation.
2. Reflect on what the statement says about arms control and reduction.
3. Consider means of nonviolent/pacifist action to protest violence and injustice.

Before You Gather

Read through Session 4 of this Leaders' Guide. Read section 5C of the social statement, "A Politics of Cooperation," on pages 17-21. Watch Video #4 (linked in section V below). Let participants know that the discussion sessions will involve reading content and watching and discussing a video, and ask if there are accommodations they will need or barriers to accessibility or participation that you can help with (e.g. by reading written content aloud, providing transportation assistance/childcare, etc.). Identify readers for the Bible reading ahead of time and provide Bibles with the applicable pages marked. If you plan to sing the closing hymn, run through it and make sure you are confident leading it, recruit a confident and experienced song leader, or choose a video version for participants to follow. Ask participants to read section 5C of the social statement, "A Politics of Cooperation" (pages 17-21).

Supplies required:

1. A copy of the social statement for each participant.
2. A copy of the Session 4 Participants' Guide for each participant.
3. Bibles for each participant, with sections to be read marked for the readers.
4. Hymnals for each participant (or a printout of the hymn to be sung).
5. *Optional:* A printout of the community covenant (see Leaders' Guide Introduction), posted in an easily visible location.
6. A selection of recent newspapers (ensure that there is a strong Wi-Fi signal and easy access to any needed passwords for participants who will be checking news on their phones).
7. A computer, USB drive or other storage device on which to keep the file for the video to be shown (linked below in section V).
8. A large TV, projector/screen or other devices to show the video during the session (be sure to have any necessary cables/dongles at hand).

I. Welcome and Introductions (2-3 minutes):

Greet participants and thank them for attending. Do a reminder of names, pronouns and content notifications. Ask participants to take a moment to review the community covenant they agreed to in Session 1. In these or similar words, notify participants of what will be covered in this session:

Welcome to Session 4 of our discussions of the 1995 social statement *For Peace in God's World*. The central aim of this session is to discuss some of the healthy aspects of a politics of world cooperation and peace.

II. Opening Prayer (1-2 min.)

O God, open us to the power and possibility of daring relationships with you, each other, and with your beloveds throughout our communities, our nation, and the world. Empower us to support one another as we seek to be and to build peace. Amen.

III. Introductory Activity (5 min.)

At the time the social statement was written, there were an estimated 23 wars across the world ("war" being defined according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, which describes it as a state-based conflict or dyad which reaches at least 1000 battle-related deaths in a specific calendar year) Invite the participants to flip through the newspapers or a news app/site on their phones until they come across a story of war or some other large armed conflict that weighs heavily on them. After they all have found one, invite them to take a comfortable meditative/reflective posture. Give a few moments of silence, then invite each participant to speak the name of the conflict in turn. After they do, pray in these or similar words:

God of freedom and giver of life, pour out your spirit upon the people of _____.
Inflame our hearts with a passion to take action for peace and justice.

When all have shared, and if you feel so moved, offer a brief prayer summarizing the needs you have heard. You may also simply allow time for silent contemplation.

IV. Video/Discussion (15 min. | video is 10:10)

Introduce the video in these or similar words:

In this video Dennis Frado, director of the Lutheran Office for World Community and the main representative for the Lutheran World Federation at the United Nations, discusses how international cooperation contributes to God's intention for peace and introduces specific measures that Christian communities can support and facilitate to promote that cooperation. | *Video #4 can be viewed [here](#).*

You may not have time to discuss all these questions today. Prioritize authentic and faith-filled sharing over the number of discussion points covered. Invite participants to contemplate the remaining discussion questions between sessions.

Video/Discussion (cont'd.)

1. Prior to watching the video, what did you know/think about the United Nations (UN) and its relationships with the ELCA and Lutheran World Federation?
2. What new information did you learn about the UN and/or its relationships with the ELCA and Lutheran World Federation?
3. Mr. Frado notes in the video that “the United Nations — first by adopting its charter in 1945, but since then through its various structures — has been the conceptual basis upon which international cooperation has been built, beginning after the devastation of World War II.” Because of the ways in which Lutheran theology informed and sometimes empowered the rise of Nazi ideology, many Lutherans around the world feel a particular call to the work of international peacekeeping (though it bears noting that the Lutheran World Federation did not repudiate Martin Luther’s hate-filled writings on Judaism and the Jewish people until 1983, with the ELCA following suit in 1994).

More recently, many Lutherans, especially here in the United States, have expressed a particular call to the work of anti-racist peacekeeping in the wake of Dylann Roof’s brutal murder of nine African Americans in Charleston, S.C., in 2015. Roof, a cradle Lutheran, sat in a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church for almost an hour and argued with congregants about Scripture before opening fire in hope of igniting a race war. Since that time many Lutherans in the U.S. and around the world have debated whether Christianity in general, and Lutheranism in particular, promotes bigotry and sectarian violence. Does your personal understanding of Lutheran history and theology shape your call to peacekeeping in particular ways? If so, how?

4. *Optional:* The social statement calls for reducing weapons of mass destruction and banning land mines and biological and chemical weapons. It also calls for treaties and agreements eliminating these weapons. Frado notes that the United States is one of 33 member states (out of the current 193) that have not yet ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. In addition the U.S. has not ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Though the U.S. has ratified the United Nations International Chemical Weapons Convention treaty, efforts to eliminate chemical weapons stores in accordance with the treaty have largely stalled, and the U.S. continues to regularly employ chemical weapons as a domestic policing tool. These stances by the U.S. are hotly debated both here and around the world. What are your views on these controversial stances, and how are those views informed by your faith?

V. Bible Study (10 min.)

Ask someone to read the following passage from Isaiah:

“In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!” (Isaiah 2:2-5).

Invite a second person to read the text again, then pose the following questions:

1. Many people, when they first read Scripture in earnest, are surprised to find that the Bible contains so little content about what life will be like in the coming kingdom/kin-dom of God. But what it does contain is astoundingly powerful. Here, in this vision from Isaiah, we learn of God’s promise of a day when all the people of the world will stream before God’s mountain for Torah, holy instruction. What is one question you hope God answers, or one topic you hope to learn more about, in that time?
2. Isaiah’s vision promises that war will no longer exist when God’s reign is fully expressed. But it does say that God will continue to “judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples.” What do you think this mediating and arbitrating work might look like? How might this inform your own peacekeeping work?
3. *Optional:* The vision of formerly armed combatants beating their swords into plowshares is one of Scripture’s most enduring images. This image has been brought to life on several occasions by people seeking to work for peace in tangible ways:
 - After World War II, military surplus armored vehicles were sometimes converted into agricultural vehicles.
 - Several anti-war musicians have played guitars made from military surplus weapons, including Jamaican reggae star Peter Tosh.
 - Over 20 years the Megatons to Megawatts Program successfully converted 500 metric tons of fuel from Soviet-era nuclear warheads into fuel for nuclear power plants.
 - Nitrogen mustard — developed from the chemical weapon mustard gas, which was deployed in World War I — became the basis for the world’s first chemotherapy drug, mustine.
 - The Caliber Collection is jewelry made from recycled gun parts, with the proceeds used to fund future gun buyback programs.

What is the most powerful kind of positive transformational relationship you have ever seen or experienced?

VI. Review and Reflect (10-15 min.)

Give participants a few moments to re-familiarize themselves with section 5C of the social statement, “*A Politics of Cooperation*” (pages 17-21), before inviting them to contemplate the following:

The social statement calls for employing nonviolent means to protest violence and injustice. Since the statement was written, there has been increasing conversation about whether true nonviolence is possible in a deeply violent society, and about the differences between pacifism and nonviolence and between types of nonviolent philosophy and theology.

Pacifism is generally defined as opposition or resistance to war, militarism and violence. Pacifists generally reject just-war theories.¹

Peace churches are Christian denominations that explicitly advocate pacifism. The term “historic peace churches” refers specifically to three church traditions: the Church of the Brethren, the Quakers (Religious Society of Friends) and the Mennonites (and other Anabaptists, such as the Amish, Hutterites and Apostolic Christian Church). The historic peace churches have, from their origins in the 16th century, always taken the position that Jesus was himself a pacifist who explicitly taught and practiced pacifism, and that his followers must do likewise. Pacifist churches vary on whether physical force can ever be justified in self-defense or protecting others.

Confusingly, the term **nonviolence** is sometimes used to refer to the personal practice of seeking to not cause harm to others under any condition, centered around the ancient Sanskrit principle of *Ahimsa*. Other times it is used to describe the overarching principle of not wishing for or prioritizing violence.² Within this second definition there are several key varieties of nonviolent philosophy, such as apocalyptic nonviolence, which seeks to extricate creation itself from the machinations of death, and realist nonviolence, which emphasizes that humans are always participating in violence as a consequence of living in society and must constantly make decisions about what causes the least harm.³

There are also many peace-seeking Christians who push back against the principles of pacifism and nonviolence, arguing that such principles frequently promote bigotry and support the wishes of the state and ultimately prove ineffective. Prominent anarchist scholar Peter Gelderloos argues that nonviolence is generally advocated by privileged people who “expect oppressed people, many of whom are people of color, to suffer patiently under an inconceivably greater violence, until such time as the Great White Father is swayed by the movement’s demands or the pacifists achieve that legendary ‘critical mass.’”⁴

1. Do any of these positions align with your own beliefs? If so, which? If not, what are the key points of resonance or disagreement?

1 Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The Peace Movement in Britain, 1914-1919* (University of Wales Press, 1976).

2 Gene Sharp, *Sharp’s Dictionary of Power and Struggle: Language of Civil Resistance in Conflicts* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

3 David Cramer and Miles Wertenz, *A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence* (Baker Publishing Group, 2002).

4 Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (Boston: South End Press, 2007).

VI. Review and Reflect (cont'd.)

2. *(If time allows, screen the 4:38 min. video linked below.)* The anti-racist ministry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is widely known around the world, but his anti-war ministry is far less known. You can view a brief summary of Dr. King's work in protest of the Vietnam War [here](#) and listen to his seminal speech "Beyond Vietnam — A Time to Break Silence" [here](#). Are there any current wars or armed conflicts that you feel called to respond to today? Are there domestic conflicts to which you likewise feel called? How about personally contentious relationships?
3. The social statement lists several specific actions and approaches that can be used to bring about just and peaceful change when facing oppressive systems. Education about nonviolence is one type of action advocated. Another call is for personal and conscientious participation in nonviolent action toward greater justice. The statement also calls for pastoral support for both those who participate in armed combat and those who conscientiously take nonviolent action for peace.

The statement and video also emphasize the importance of peaceful civic involvement, such as:

- Volunteering with nongovernmental organizations that expose injustice.
- Advocating for environmental justice, the preservation of fundamental freedoms or the promotion and protection of other human rights.
- Community organizing.
- Networking for the common good.
- Humanitarian assistance to the victims of war and conflict.

The impact individuals can have on these peacekeeping measures is significant, yet the potential impact that entire congregations, synods and denominations can have is immense. Are there items on this list in which your congregation excels? What are some next steps you could take to widen your impact? Are there items to which you feel God might be calling the congregation now? What are some next steps you might take together to discern this?

VII. Preparation for Next Week (1-2 min.)

Ask participants to read the fifth section of the social statement, "Tasks" (pages 13-23). Invite participants interested in learning more about the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to listen to his 1961 speech at the first triennial gathering of the Luther League [here](#).

VIII. Closing Hymn and Prayer (3-5 min.)

Sing the African American spiritual "Down by the Riverside," available [here](#) (optional). Close the session with this prayer:

Mighty God, continue to stir us up with your Spirit that we might live, united as seekers of your rebellious peace, in a fragmented world where complacency so often reigns. Amen.

Learn more:

Resources

- [“Tasks for Making, Building, and Keeping International Peace”](#) handout
- [Lutheran Office for World Community](#)
- [Faith Action Network](#)
- [Nonviolent Peaceforce](#)
- [Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum](#)
- [ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Ministries](#)
- [ELCA Care for Returning Veterans](#)
- [ELCA Muslim Relations](#)
- [ELCA Jewish Relations](#)
- [ELCA Resolution on Conflict in the Middle East](#)
- [ELCA social message, “The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict”](#)
- [ELCA Inter-Religious Policy Statement](#)

Articles

- [“World War II’s Spiritual Legacies”](#)
- [“Reinhold Neibuhr and the Second World War”](#)
- [“The Reformation at 500: Grappling With Martin Luther’s Anti-Semitic Legacy”](#)
- [“Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community”](#)
- [“Why Did Luther Want the Qur’an to Be Published?”](#)
- [“Faith-Based Advocacy With Today’s U.S. Government”](#)
- [“Ukraine: Lutheran Churches Around the World Call for Peace and Support”](#)



SESSION 5: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOSTER A CULTURE OF PEACE AND JUSTICE?

Welcome to Session 5 of the discussion sessions on *For Peace in God's World*, the 1995 social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regarding war, domestic and international security, and the Christian call to be peacemakers. The social statement can be viewed/printed [here](#).

The central aim of this session is to focus on the values involved in creating a culture of peace and justice. Participants will also continue developing action steps they can take in the days, weeks and months ahead to live out their calls as peacemakers.

The major objectives of this session (also found in the Participants' Guide) are to:

1. Reflect on how we might seek unity in diversity in our contemporary context.
2. Seek understanding on how peace promotes respect for human rights.
3. Consider how peace and economic justice are related.
4. Reflect on the major lessons taken from participating in these sessions and possible next steps within the congregation.
5. Consider means of non-violent/pacifist action to protest violence and injustice.

Before You Gather

Read through Session 5 of this Leaders' Guide. Read "Tasks," the fifth section of the social statement (pages 13-23). Watch Video #4 (linked in section V below). Let participants know that the discussion sessions will involve reading content and watching and discussing a video and ask if there are accommodations they will need or barriers to accessibility or participation that you can help with (e.g. by reading written content aloud, providing transportation assistance/childcare, etc.). Identify readers for the Bible reading ahead of time and provide Bibles with the applicable pages marked. If you plan to sing the closing hymn, run through it to make sure you are confident leading it, recruit a confident and experienced song leader, or choose a video version for participants to follow. Ask participants to read the fifth section of the social statement, "Tasks" (pages 13-23).

Supplies required:

1. A copy of the social statement for each participant.
2. A copy of the Session 5 Participants' Guide for each participant.
3. Bibles for each participant, with sections to be read marked for the readers.
4. Hymnals for each participant (or a printout of the hymn to be sung).
5. *Optional:* A printout of the community covenant (see Leaders' Guide Introduction), posted in an easily visible location.
6. A sticky note and pen for each participant.
7. Easel/paper, blackboard or other large display tools and writing implements.
8. A computer, USB drive or other storage device on which to keep the file for the video to be shown (linked below in section V).
9. A large TV, projector/screen or other devices to show the video during the session (be sure to have any necessary cables/dongles on hand).

I. Welcome and Introductions (2-3 min.)

Greet participants and thank them for attending. Do a reminder of names, pronouns and content notifications. Ask participants to take a moment to review the community covenant they agreed to in Session 1. In these or similar words, notify participants of what will be covered in this session:

The central aim of this session is to focus on the values involved in creating a culture of peace and justice. We will also continue developing action steps we can take in the days, weeks and months ahead to live out our call as peacemakers.

II. Opening Prayer (2-3 min.)

Adapted by Mother Theresa and the Jainist monk Satish Kumar from a mantra in the Hindu Upanishads, the World Peace Prayer was designed for people of all languages and beliefs. Since its publication in 1981, it has spread around the globe and appeared in the prayer books and hymnals of many faiths, including Jewish, Catholic, Anglican, Hindu and Muslim resources. Each day at noon people of all faiths, and of no professed faith, recite it, seeking each day to generate a wave of hope around the globe:

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace.
Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe. Amen.

III. Introductory Activity (15 min.)

Introduce the video in these or similar words:

Last week we spoke about the anti-war ministry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He developed his theories on war and peace through his study of Scripture and of such great thinkers as Martin Luther, Mohandas (Mahātmā) Gandhi and, most particularly, Thích Nhất Hạnh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, peace activist, prolific author, poet and teacher. King nominated Nhất Hạnh for the Nobel Peace Prize and introduced his work to the U.S. Nhất Hạnh eventually became known as the “father of mindfulness” and a major influence on peace movements around the globe. In this video he explains how people can begin to cultivate internal peace even as they experience anger. Take a listen and contemplate how you might utilize his wisdom in your life this week.

Access the video [here](#). After watching it, invite participants to share any insights.

IV. Video/Discussion (20 min. | video is 10:42)

Introduce the video in these or similar words:

In this video the Rev. Amy Reumann, ELCA director of advocacy, discusses how peace is connected to justice and human rights and reviews strategies that churches can use to cultivate a culture of unity in diversity. | *Video #5 can be viewed [here](#).*

Video/Discussion (cont'd.)

You may not have time to discuss all these questions today. Prioritize authentic and faith-filled sharing over the number of discussion points covered. Invite participants to contemplate the remaining discussion questions between sessions.

1. In the video Rev. Reumann notes that the church is called to be “a disturbing presence,” uncovering injustice and denouncing harmful beliefs and actions, but that she is “sometimes approached by Lutherans who are concerned about getting involved in advocacy because they are worried that talking about social issues and speaking up about public policy would be divisive or disruptive to the peace in their congregations. Some state that the church should ‘stick to the gospel’ and not wade into affairs outside of our concern.” Though this congregational “peace” is temporary and illusory, we might be tempted to prioritize it over the more significant and longer-lasting peace that God instructs us to seek. How do you respond when concerns over “niceness” or expectations around “keeping the peace” threaten to derail important conversations and peacekeeping work? If this is something you struggle with, identify a role model who excels at navigating these uncomfortable situations.
2. Peace and economic justice go hand in hand because inequality tends to fuel conflict. Because of this, nurturing a culture of peace means focusing on root causes of inequality such as: low living wages, unequal educational opportunities, ableism, systemic racism, the prison system and oppression based on gender or sexuality. Where do you see or experience these issues in the life of this congregation and/or the surrounding community? What people are most directly affected? Make a plan to reach out to them so you can offer an apology, a listening ear and your willingness to hear what they need from the community to experience equity and justice.
3. *Optional:* Rev. Reumann notes that promoting human rights is a critical foundation for peace and that Lutherans have done so by advocating for just immigration policy and providing aid and care to refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum-seekers. In particular Lutherans are known around the world for their work through Lutheran World Relief, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the ELCA’s AMMPARO program (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities). What do you know about the history of immigration in your family? In your congregation? What next steps do you believe God is calling your congregation toward in its peacekeeping work with the people named above?

V. Bible Study (5 min.)

Today's Bible study has a different format from previous sessions. Ask someone to read the following passage from Colossians, inviting participants to take a comfortable meditative/reflective posture as they listen and allow God's word to wash over them:

“Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:14-17).

Invite a second person to read the text again. This time, invite participants to identify a word or phrase that stands out to them. Instruct them to write it down on a sticky note and to place the note somewhere they will see it frequently throughout the week, as a reminder of God's presence in their life.

VI. Review and Reflect (10-15 min.)

Give a few moments for participants to re-familiarize themselves with section 5 of the social statement, “Tasks” (pages 13-23), before inviting them to contemplate the following:

1. The social statement lists several specific actions and approaches that can be used to bring about just and peaceful change when facing oppressive systems. It advocates education about nonviolence. It calls for people to personally and conscientiously participate in nonviolent action for greater justice and for pastors to support both those who participate in armed combat and those who conscientiously take nonviolent action for peace.

The statement and video also emphasize the importance of peaceful civic involvement, such as:

- Fostering a dynamic vision of difference in unity.
- Promoting respect for human rights.
- Countering and transforming attitudes that encourage violence.
- Strengthening the will and ability to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Insisting that peace and economic justice belong together.
- Supporting just arrangements to regulate the international economy.
- Revitalizing economic assistance to poorer nations.
- Evaluating carefully the balance between legitimate security needs and other priority uses of government revenues and reducing military expenditures whenever necessary.
- Strengthening international cooperation.
- Improving structures of common security.
- Giving high priority to arms control and reduction.

Review and Reflect (cont'd.)

- Controlling and reducing the arms trade.
- Advocating for participatory and accountable political structures within nations.
- Encouraging nongovernmental organizations and their work for peace.
- Encouraging and supporting nonviolent action.
- Caring for the uprooted.

The impact that individuals can have on these national and international peacekeeping measures is significant; the potential impact of entire congregations, synods and denominations is immense. Are there items on this list at which your congregation excels? What are some next steps you could take to widen your impact? Are there actions to which God might be calling the congregation now? What are some next steps you might take together to discern this?

2. *Optional:* In the first session you brainstormed a list of words you associate with peace and words you associate with war or strife. Take another look at the list. Is there anything on it that you have reconsidered or want to revisit?
3. In her role Rev. Reumann often experiences people asking for guidance on how to reach out to one another across the differences exposed by deep political polarization. She reminds us that we are called to be peacemakers who listen to one another and seek understanding, because in doing so we participate in God's shalom and desire for the wholeness of humanity.
4. Despite political polarization and social division, there is still a great yearning to listen, to understand, to connect with the divine spark that exists in all people and the entire created order. How has your participation in these discussion sessions affected your interest/ability to honor diversity while holding firm convictions?
5. Brainstorm how, over the next week, the next month or the next six months, you will implement at least one thing you learned in our time together in (a) your personal life, (b) your work / school / other sphere of influence and (c) here in the congregation. Schedule a meal with your fellow learners approximately six months from now to discuss how you're progressing with these goals and offer each other support and encouragement.

VII. Evaluation

Distribute evaluation handout.

VIII. Sending Liturgy (5-7 min.)

Leader: Let us pray ...

All: O God, you are the Alpha and Omega of peace. Through your Holy Spirit you have called us to live now into the extraordinary peace of your coming kingdom. Empower us to be your representatives in the world, building peace in our church, our communities, our world and ourselves. Amen.

Leader: We give you thanks, O God, for the gift of your creation, intended from the start to be experienced in communion with you.

Participants: Yet we recognize our human sinfulness, which separates us from you and each other.

All: We are thankful for the reconciling gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was sent to repair the rift between us.

Leader: We give you thanks, O God, for the gift of your church on earth, created to recognize our unity in diversity.

Participants: Help us, as your church and as individuals, to be your reconciling, serving and unifying presence here on earth.

All: We celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, which makes us yours and unites us in Jesus' name.

Leader: Help us to recognize our responsibility to be peacemakers, as individuals and as your church on earth.

Participants: Help us to do this work in the world and in our hearts, and to foster a culture of peace in our communities and throughout the world.

All: We live in an age seemingly dominated by hate, injustice, war and suffering, yet we trust you to fulfill your divine promises of eternal peace. We thank you for allowing us to participate in enacting these promises, and we celebrate the diversity that reflects your love. Unite us now and always in grateful joy and active hope as we make our way through the world together. Amen.

Sending Liturgy (cont'd.)

Ask two people to read Psalm 46, alternating verses.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. ‘Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.’ The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psalm 46:1-11).

Sing “We Shall Overcome” (This Far by Faith 213), optional. Mark one another with the sign of the cross (with or without holy water).

All: Empowered by the Holy Spirit, let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Learn more:

Resources

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service](#)
- [ELCA social message, “Immigration”](#)
- [Lutheran World Relief](#)
- [Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs](#)
- [ELCA AMMPARO](#)
- [ELCA social message, “Government and Civic Engagement in the United States”](#)
- [Plum Village](#)

Articles

- [“Called to Be a Daily Peacemaker”](#)
- [“White Niceness As the Enemy of Black Liberation”](#)
- [“Lutheran Legacy of Peacemaking Series”](#)
- [“What Is the ‘Exchange of Peace’?”](#)

Resources Specifically for Youth

- [Lutheran World Federation Peace Messengers Training](#)
- [Lutheran Youth Ministry As Peace Education](#)
- [Lutheran Youth Organization Peace Statement](#)
- [“Lutheran Youth Continue to Focus on Peace in 2022”](#)
- [“Montessori Peace Corner — Powerful Way to Resolve Conflicts”](#)
- [“Pillars of Peace: Tips for Peacemaking in the Early Childhood Classroom”](#)
- [Bread Houses Network](#)

Bonus Activity

Consider organizing a Peace Sunday in your congregation, involving your pastor, Sunday school, worship and music committee, social ministry committee, Women of the ELCA chapter and other groups.

Potential activities include:

1. Planning an intergenerational Sunday school hour focused on peace.
2. Picking a Sunday when one or more lectionary texts relate to peace. Ask the pastor and worship committee to emphasize peace in the prayers, hymns and sermon.
3. Have one or more members of the discussion group provide a “Temple Talk” on what they learned (this can also happen outside the context of your Peace Sunday).
4. Invite local residents (especially those of other faiths) to attend and speak about their need for peace and their own peacemaking work.
5. Organize a coffee hour and peace fair after worship, inviting your youth group, Sunday school, social ministry committee, Women of the ELCA chapter and other groups to contribute a display about peace.
6. Highlight specific opportunities for peacemaking activities. You may wish to invite community groups working for peace.

Historically, Christian approaches to the issue of war have fallen into three categories: holy war or crusade, pacifism and just war. The crusade approach is based on the conviction that God sanctions war when the enemy represents great evil. A crusade war is therefore viewed as a struggle between good and evil, and in the pursuit of total conquest, any means may be justifiable. This approach to war is viewed by the ELCA and most Christian churches as incompatible with Christian teaching.

For Peace in God's World continues the historic Lutheran perspective on justifiable war though it acknowledges the concerns about its viability in the modern age. The statement raises up the important witness of pacifists in the church today. Just war doctrine and pacifism are complex but the following chart seeks to make some rudimentary comparisons between the two approaches.

Just War and Pacifism: Contrasting Approaches to War

(Source: *War: A Primer for Christians* by Joseph L. Allen, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991. Allen offers a concise description of the just war teaching as well as other options Christians have followed.)

Theological/Biblical Basis

Just War: God's creation is beset by persisting and often destructive conflicts in human life. It is wrong to kill to save one's own life; it is our duty to act to help other people.

Pacifism: Jesus teaching, life and death show us the way of Christian love. In particular, Jesus instructed his followers not to resist an evildoer (Mt. 5:39) and to love their enemies (Mt. 5:44).

Historical Notes

Just War: A doctrine developed by Ambrose and Augustine in the late fourth and early fifth century after the Roman Empire had become officially Christian and faced external threats. The criteria for justifiable war were further developed by Thomas Aquinas and others in the late Middle Ages.

Pacifism: Pacifism was the predominant position of the Christian church until 312 CE and the end of Roman persecution of Christians. Since then, pacifism has persisted as a distinctive strand in Christian ethics, within Roman Catholicism and within the Protestant tradition in the historic peace churches (e.g., Quakers, Mennonites) as well as in other denominations.

Core Convictions Held in Common

All people are of worth in God's sight, including our enemies. A Christian approach to the issue of war must be guided by our understanding of Christian love and the duty placed upon us by such love. The presumption in a conflict situation is always that disputes should be settled peaceably.

Core Convictions That Are Different

Just War: Wars may be justifiable if they are fought by a rightly constituted authority for the purpose of protecting people and restoring a just and peaceful order in society. Such wars must meet certain criteria (see below), precluding revenge and requiring mercy to the defeated.

Pacifism: War cannot be an expression of Christian love and is incompatible with being a follower of Jesus. "Pragmatic" pacifists emphasize that nonviolence achieves better results than violence in conflict situations. "Witness" pacifists insist that Christian refusal to use power violently is a required witness to the love of Jesus Christ.

Critique

Just War: The just war criteria are applied infrequently prior to war and are used as a rationalization for government action. The just war criteria can no longer be met because of the destructiveness of modern weaponry.

Pacifism: "Pragmatic" pacifists do not recognize the depth of human sin. "Witness" pacifists have defined what constitutes Christian love too narrowly; they do not engage in the give and take of politics concerning war and peace.

Just War Criteria

Criteria for resorting to warfare are:

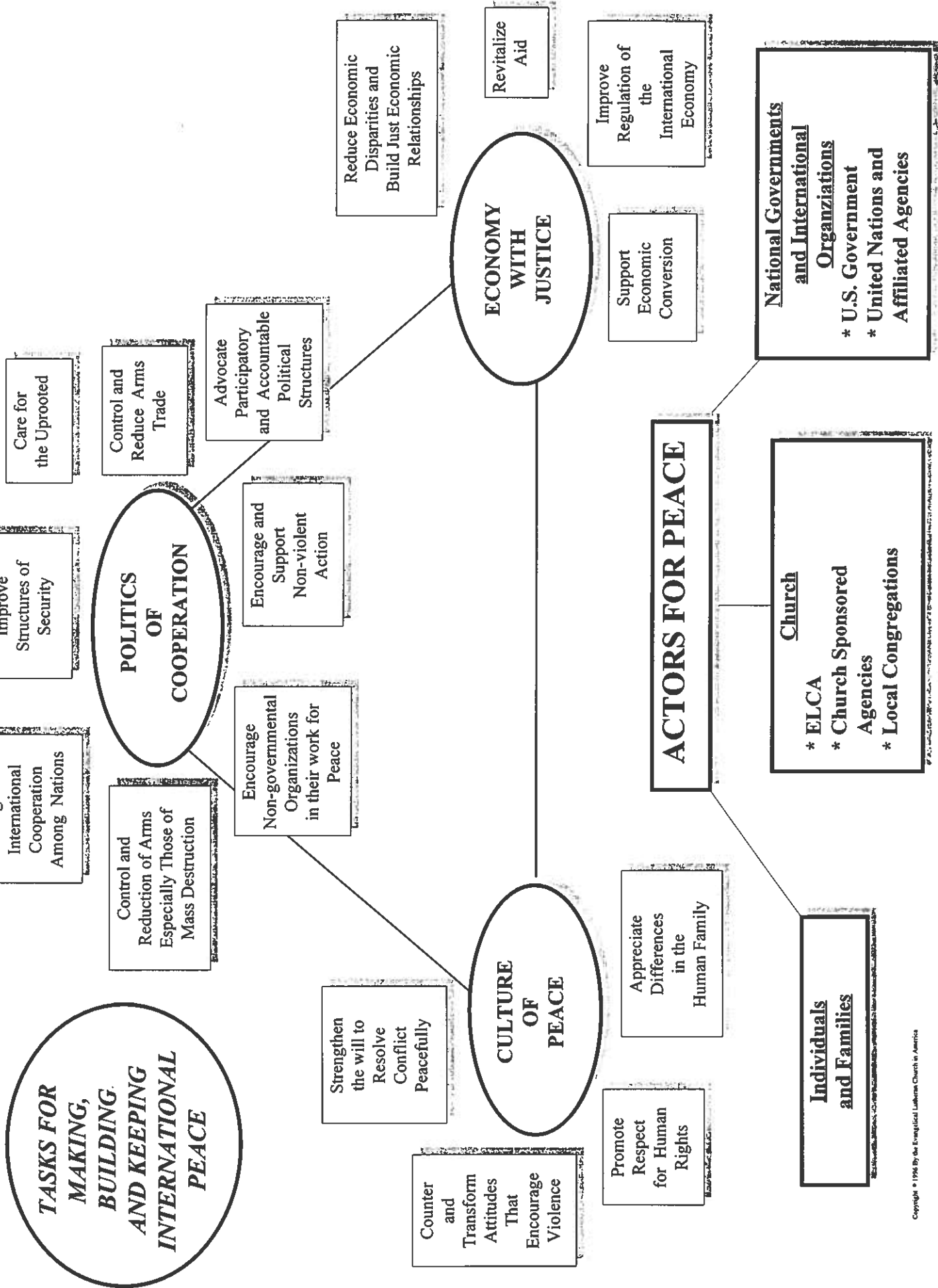
- 1. Justifiable Cause**
Justifiable causes are to protect people from unjust attack, to restore rights that have been wrongly taken away, and to defend or reestablish a just political order.
- 2. Legitimate Authority**
Decisions to employ military measures must be made by those who have legitimate authority in a nation or the international community.
- 3. Last Resort**
Before resorting to war, all peaceful alternatives must first be exhausted.
- 4. Declaration of War Aims**
Those who decide to use military force must make known what their proposed action is meant to accomplish.
- 5. Proportionality**
Is the probable good to be attained and evil avoided greater than the anticipated evil effects of military action or inaction? A reasonable calculation of probably consequences must be made.

- 6. Reasonable Chance of Success**
A case must be made that the military means chosen will likely accomplish the stated aims. The use of military force should never be a futile act.
- 7. Right Intention**
War must not be waged for reasons of hate or revenge. War should never be an end in itself, but a means to bring a just peace.

Just war criteria for conducting war are:

- 1. The Principle of Discrimination**
This principle prohibits direct and intentional attacks on noncombatants.
- 2. Proportionality**
Within the limits set by the principle of discrimination, military action must be conducted so that objectives are achieved by the least destructive means possible.

In considering the possibility of revolution in situations of structured injustice, some Christians use a version of the just war criteria. The criterion of "legitimate authority" is interpreted to refer to an organization that convincingly represents the people.



Please help us to evaluate this course by completing this form. Draw a circle around the number that most closely describes your assessment of each:

5=strongly agree 4=agree 3=neutral 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree

The study of For Peace in God's World:

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Helped me become acquainted with the contents of the ELCA social statement <u>For Peace in God's World</u> . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Presented the material in the statement in a manner that made it clear and accessible to me. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Deepened my awareness of the biblical and theological basis for our calling to be peacemakers. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Helped me to better understand the relationship between God's gift of peace through Jesus Christ and our work for earthly peace. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Helped me think about this calling to be a peacemaker as a person of faith, as citizen, and as a member of my congregation and the ELCA. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Increased my understanding of the many dimensions of making, building and keeping peace in the world today. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Provided an atmosphere of mutual listening and respect For diverse points of view. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Gave me and others in the group an opportunity to think for ourselves and form our own conclusions. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Gave me ideas for specific ways I can work for international peace through my congregation or as a citizen. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Provided an opportunity for members of the group to express support for one another in our various choices related to peacemaking. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. Stimulated members of our group to further learning and action. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |