

Pax Christi - Peace Sunday 2023

Activities and Prayers for Children



Here we offer a range of activities and prayers that could be used in the family, with a group, or as part of a liturgy for children on or around Peace Sunday. The themes include: celebrating difference, thinking about what peace is and how we build it, and celebrating the gift of creation. Try one, or a couple, and let us know how it worked and how you improved the activity!

Activity 1 Difference is good - protect it!

To explore similarities and differences in a safe and supportive way

What to do

Sit the group in a circle. Have one less chair than people. One person stands in the middle and calls out instructions. All the people who belong to that group change places, including the caller. The person left standing calls out the next instruction.

Examples

All change those who

... have green socks

... have two siblings

... like pop music

... have a pet

... have dark hair

... like pizza

... have lived somewhere else

... speak another language.

Children can add their own.

Talk about

What did it feel like belonging to groups that were called out?

What did it feel like being left out of some groupings?

Do we all have to belong to the same groups all the time?

What are the good things about being in different groups?

What are the things that make us unique?

How could we celebrate being a community but also all being different and unique?



Activity 2 What is peace?

This activity encourages children to think of what peace is and how we can build it.

You will need

blank pieces of paper and pens/pencils a Bible

What to do

Ask the young people to think of as many words about peace as they can. Ask them to share the words with the group.

Give everyone two small pieces of paper. Invite them to reflect on when they feel at peace and write it on one of the small pieces of paper. Ask them to bring it to the front of the room and lay it down.

Read the Beatitudes. Discuss what Jesus might be telling us to do and what it might mean to be a peacemaker. Then ask everyone to reflect on what they could do to be a peacemaker, write it on the second piece of paper and lay it next to their first bit of paper.

The bits of paper could be collected in a basket and presented as part of the Offertory during Mass.



Activity 3 Banner activity

This activity encourages young people to think about what is important to them and shows how they can share their voice.

You will need

Envelopes

String

Felt-tip pens or colouring pencils

What to do

Ask the children to get into pairs. Give them 5 minutes to talk to their partner about the issues around them that they care about or think need to be changed. Get the children to share them with the group.

Explain that they will be creating a banner to share their thoughts with others. Discuss banners or posters they have seen that were trying to spread a message, and what was good about them.

Hand out the envelopes. Explain that they will use these envelopes to create their banner. The children should write a message, slogan, or draw a picture about one of the issues that they care about. Use the side of the envelope that does not have the flap.

Once the children have completed their designs, attach the envelopes to the string by placing the string underneath the flap and then sealing the envelope. (You may also want to use some sticky tape to make sure it is secure.) All the envelopes together create the banner.

You may want to present it to the congregation or place it somewhere for people to see. You could also use social media to share it with your local Justice and Peace group, diocese or MP.



Activity 4 Caring for creation

To help children think about the importance and beauty of creation

You will need

Song words or a Bible
Pieces of paper in the shape of leaves

An outline of a tree on a large piece of paper

What to do

Take the group outside. Ask them to close their eyes and just listen to what they can hear for a few minutes. Ask them to open their eyes and think about a piece of nature they can see, perhaps a flower, the sky or a bird.



Sing together either a song they know about creation or read a part of the creation story (Perhaps Genesis 1:11-13, 20-25).

Give the children a paper leaf and put the outline of the tree in front of them. Ask them to think how they can show they care for creation and live in peace with it. Invite each child to stick their leaf on the outline of the tree and share with the group how they can care for creation.

Activity 5 Sharing peace stories

To help children see different ways that people have worked for peace and share these stories

You will need Pens or colouring pencils, paper

What to do

Ask the children if they know anyone who has been a peacemaker. Ask if they know any saints who have worked for peace or if they can give examples from their own lives.

If you have time beforehand, you could set them a task of asking their family members for examples of local peacemakers or you could invite a member of the parish to share their story. The Pax Christi office would be happy to see if we can link you with a local peacemaker, or could provide examples from our resources.

Ask the children how they could share the stories they have heard. Could they write story, a song, make a poster or draw a picture? Encourage them to choose a way to share the story and then present it to the group.

Activity 6 Peace Poems

To encourage children to creatively explore what peace is.

You will need Pens or colouring pencils, paper

What to do

Ask the children to create a list of words that they think are related to peace (similar to activity 2, you could use the same list).

Using these words, encourage the children to write a peace poem. They don't need to use all the words. Depending on their age, they could do this independently or you could provide a structure.

An example could be an acrostic poem of the word 'peace' or repetition of the phrase 'Peace is...' for each line with different words added.

Write the poem on a piece of paper and decorate it. This could then be used to create a display.

Words from Pope Francis

'We ought to esteem and encourage all those young people who work for a more just world, one that is careful to safeguard the creation entrusted to our stewardship.' Pope Francis, World Peace Day Message 2022

'...be artisans of peace, around you and within you; ambassadors of peace, so that the world can discover the beauty of love, of living together, of fraternity and solidarity.' Pope Francis, to the Pilgrimage of young people from Belgium, 2022

Prayers

Jesus, you ask us to love our enemies
and pray for those who bother us.
And you showed us how to do it.
But it is so hard to do
and it means that no matter what happens,
I must respond with love, with peace.
It means that I must look more honestly at myself,
and take others as they are,
without passing judgment.
It means I must try to bridge gaps and
break down barriers rather than make them.

Teach me to see good in others.
Give me an understanding heart that helps me see
the one whom I thought to be an enemy as a friend.

adapted from Families Caring: Parenting for Peace and Justice Network, USA

Dear God
When we look around at our world
we sometimes see fights and wars.
Help us to try to bring peace to every situation.
Help us to take one small step for peace today, in
the way we treat each other, our families, friends,
our earth. Help us to be really involved in making
peace. Amen

Dear God
We thank you for giving us your peace.
Help us to spread peace at home and at school
by loving and caring for one another
even when we don't agree.
Help us to spread peace
by sharing our time with those
who are lonely and who need a friend.
Help us to spread peace
by thinking and praying for
children who have no food
or who are frightened and live in fear.

Let us pray every day for peace
for our families, our friends and ourselves.

A Child's Prayer for the Earth

Thank you for the sun, the sky,
for all the things that like to fly,
the shining rain that turns grass green,
the earth we know, the world unseen,
the stars and night and once again,
the every morning sun, Amen.

From: Prayers for Creation: An Eco-schools Resource, 2008



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For more resources for children visit:

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/primary-schools/>

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/advent-christmas/>

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/secondary/workshop-resources/>