

# A New Vision of Peacemaking: *and the doors it opens...*

The biblical word that we translate as “Peace” is *Shalom*. But this word, used so often by Jesus and his disciples, the prophets before and the early church after, means much more than our word “Peace.” It means “total well being” – ecological, physical, psychological, spiritual. This can be experienced only in community in which justice, nonviolence, universal hospitality, and mutual respect prevail.

The gospel calls the Church to work for the creation of such a community in all it does. That is also an apt description of LPF’s mission: to use every area of Christian life together – worship, education, fellowship, and action -- to teach how to foster *Shalom*, as well as how it can help us oppose war, violence, and injustice. *LPF seeks to share effective help in each area. For example:*



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**1. Worship** offers many opportunities to engender *Shalom* in our life together. LPF supplies thoughtful **Peace Prayers** and **Sermons**, full **Service Guides**, and a **Peace Calendar** to help make peace visible throughout the church year.

LPF’s 60-page “**Peace Worship Packet**” offers dozens of prayers, songs, litanies, sermon helps, and services.... Two LPF leaders wrote the first “Day of Prayer for Peace” bulletin insert used in more than 10,000 churches worldwide.

**2. Adult education, Sunday School, youth group:** The gospel calls us to educate and motivate one another to live lives of *Shalom* and to explore issues that call for action, like ending our perpetual wars abroad, those at home that fill our prisons, and other challenges like the ones in section 5, ⇒. LPF offers many tested, effective **Shalom resources**:

◆ LPF’s “**What is Christian Peacemaking?**” for example, explores a wide range of biblical texts on *Shalom* with results most people find eye-opening. Used by 600 congregations to date, it is one of ten group activities in LPF’s **PeacePoints** series: Each offers a discussion guide, handouts, and leader tips for effective use in your congregation or group. Other *PeacePoints* delve into “Just War, Just Peace,” “Conflict Education,” and other issues.

◆ “**What Brings Security?**” is a computer activity, freshly updated for 2013, that’s gotten raves for illuminating our deeply distorted U.S. military and social priorities. The result is an engaging, powerful, and easy-to-present adult or youth dialogue. A million people have used LPF computer activities!

◆ “**The Path of Hope**” offers inspiration from the lives of everyday people bringing change to their world through the power of nonviolence. This resource has touched tens of thousands of Lutherans at Youth Gatherings, Global Mission



Events, adult forums, etc. One popular version pairs a short, emotionally moving (and award winning) video segment with the power and broader range of examples in the Path of Hope.

What these and other LPF group activities have in common is that they are all participatory. They don’t tell people what to think but help them explore, discuss, and find their own way.

**3. In our fellowship:** Another great place to experiment with *Shalom* is in the way we interact, work together, conduct our meetings, address conflict, etc. While it can be challenging, it has great potential for exploring the meaning of *Shalom*, and for strengthening discipleship and leadership in our roles as family members and co-workers, neighbors and citizens.

LPF offers a variety of activities for nurturing and supporting more effective ways to do this: for example, our forums on “**How to Be a Bridge in a World of Walls**” and “**Conflict Education**.” Both offer insights and activities to help participants try out new skills, as well as examples of further resources and links.

**4. In our giving:** We can encourage financial support for peacemaking projects and organizations like LPF from both individuals and our congregation.

**5. In the world:** *Shalom*, if it is real, moves us to action. This can include **service work**, such as volunteering in a food bank, meal program, or shelter in our community. It should also lead to our speaking up about specific injustices and conflicts.

We can **advocate** for cutting U.S. military budgets, and more funding for education, the poor, ecological sustainability, and waging peace; for closure of military bases; support for Consciences Objectors; less violence in the media; more effective gun control... (And note that hunger and poverty are often causes and/or consequences of violence.) **Advocacy alerts, blogs, sample letters**, etc. from Lutheran Peace Fellowship, Lutheran Advocacy, and other sources can help.

There are many ways to encourage such action, e.g.: offering **prayers** on peace concerns; sharing **alerts** after worship; presenting an **adult forum** in our church; helping with an **advocacy table** for coffee hour to assist congregation members in communicating with elected officials. Such efforts, in turn, can lead to organizing a congregation **peace & justice group** that can sustain our efforts.

**Putting it all together:** We seek to challenge not just a particular war or conflict, but also the militarism that undergirds it. Similarly, we look for connections between computer game violence or returning veterans’ issues and the larger “culture of violence” in the U.S. Thus our core mission is to oppose war, violence, and injustice; to expose their primary causes; and to respond to the call to practice and share the way of Jesus, the biblical vision of *Shalom*, of justice and active nonviolence: our best hope for lasting change.