

Encouraging *Shalom* in the Congregation: a resource guide

It helps to begin by examining the word we translate as "Peace." The word used by Jesus and his disciples, the early church after, and the prophets before means more than our word "Peace." *Shalom* fully included our concepts of justice, welcoming community, wholeness....

The place of *Shalom* in the Gospel is suggested by the fact that the first word of Easter is 'Peace.' It is spoken by Jesus in every account after the Resurrection. This broader concept of Peace can make a big difference in every part of our life together as a church, from worship, bible study, and discussion, to our meetings, stewardship, and activity in the world.

1. In worship: There are many ways to lift up and engender *Shalom* in worship. To help, Lutheran Peace Fellowship offers a Peace Litany, service guides, "Peace Points," and a Peace Calendar. LPF also developed a 60-page "**Peace Worship Packet**" with dozens of prayers, songs, litanies, sermon helps, and complete services. The ELCA and other web sites offer further resources; LPF has links to many of them on the '**Day of Prayer for Peace**' page of our web site. Consider also using books like *Call to Peace* by Jim McGinnis.

2. In adult education, Sunday School and youth group: The gospel calls us to educate and motivate congregation members to live lives of *Shalom* and expand the areas of life in which they explore and find the power of *Shalom*.

LPF offers scores of tested, effective *Shalom* resources for adult and youth group use including our "**PeacePoints**" series of a dozen activities each of which offers discussion guides, handouts, and leader tips for effective use. Various ELCA units offer many resources, as do ecumenical and interfaith sources such as the World Council of Churches and Bread for the World. Among many helpful resources for discussion is a concise book, *Beyond Guilt*, by George S. Johnson (signed copies are available from LPF).

Encouraging *Shalom* does not mean telling folks what to think or how to vote in sermons or adult education (which neither matches our values nor is very effective). Rather, *Shalom* encourages us to offer space for moral deliberation and discernment for members to discover for themselves how they might respond to the gospel call to *Shalom*.

3. Activity in the world: We can help our members join and learn from service activities in their communities and workplaces. Most communities offer volunteer opportunities at food banks, meal programs, shelters, housing projects, etc. We can sponsor participation in such projects through our youth group, women's or men's group, church council, etc. We can also encourage participation in advocacy activity of Lutheran Advocacy, Lutheran Peace Fellowship, Bread for the World and other effective faith-based groups. Here are a few links in each of these areas:

www.elca.org/advocacy www.elca.org/youth
www.lutheranpeace.org www.elca.org/hunger
www.bread.org www.thriventbuilds.com

With both service and advocacy efforts, we should also look for ways in which members who participate can share what they experience and learn with the broader congregation.

4. In our giving: We can encourage support for *Shalom* activities, projects, and organizations through contributions of individual members and as congregation. For example, Lutheran Peace Fellowship and other *Shalom* groups and projects can be made part of our congregation's benevolence.

5. In our gatherings and meetings. One great place to discover and experiment with *Shalom* is in the way we interact, work together, and conduct meetings. While this can be challenging, it offers great rewards as a place to explore *Shalom* and strengthen discipleship in our life.

LPF offers a variety of activities to highlight and encourage effective ways to do this, for example, our workshops on "**Conflict Education**" and "**How to Be a Bridge in a World Full of Walls**" at www.lutheranpeace.org. See also LPF's resource guide on conflict education for more possibilities.

Resources on the meaning of *Shalom*:

a. LPF offers an exploration of *Shalom's* biblical grounding in its 'PeacePoints' activity, "**What is Christian Peacemaking**." The first session is developed in a more detailed resource, "**Jesus' Way of Shalom**" which offers a leaders guide, discussion handouts, and a closing litany.

b. A useful overview is the essay "**Shalom! The Potential of a More Faithful, More Effective Approach to Conflict and Violence**." It concludes with an annotated bibliography on virtually every aspect of the subject.

c. AugsburgFortress offers a fine, brief book, designed for discussion entitled *Public Church*, by Cynthia Moe Lobeda.



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