

2014 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES

CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES FOR 2013-2016

2013 : Families Called to Love

2015 : Families Called to Justice

2014 : Families Called to Peace

2016 : Families Called to Hope

FAMILIES

Many Forms, Common Faith!

Called to Peace



INTRODUCTION

The *Christian Home Month Resource* is for family ministry leaders, Family Life Council chairpersons/coordinators, family leaders and Family Ministries teams in local congregations. It is designed to help local congregations develop and strengthen faith in the home, celebrate and support Christian families in their faith journey, and celebrate Christian Home Month. Although Christian Home Month is typically celebrated during the month of May, congregations may choose any month of the year to focus on the Christian home and its key role as a center for faith formation.

Congregations are more aware than ever of the need to support and strengthen families in order to create safe and nurturing environments. We see as God's desire a community where peace is the rule and not the exception. We encourage you to plan an annual Christian Home Month celebration as a way to look at the needs of the family. Families come in all shapes and sizes. As a collective unit, families can make tremendous differences in their congregations and communities as opportunities to meet God increase.

Our theme for 2014 is "Families: Called to Peace." It seems that peace is on the minds of all. We continue to be a nation

at war. We are a nation of violence which is present in our homes, schools, in media outlets. Although we may cry, "peace, peace;" sometimes there is little in our lives that reflect peace. And the absence of conflict doesn't necessarily mean there is peace. Peace is not the opposite of war. Although there may be no fighting in the home, it doesn't mean there is peace in the household. How do we achieve peace? How do we maintain a Christ-like focus when we feel besieged by a violent world and our own violent impulses?

Take a moment and read Psalm 85. Reflect on verse 10: "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." What comes to mind as you read these words? What would peace be like for your family and your congregation, as well as for the world? Pray for God's peace to be our reality.

We are praying for you as you address the issue of peace. We know that congregations are strengthened by families that aid those in need of peace. We are praying that your faith family be strengthened by the support we provide. We are honored to serve you.



WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

When celebrating Family Life Sunday, the following is suggested for use in worship.

For additional resources, consult the *United Methodist Book of Worship*.

Call to Worship:

Leader: We come together to praise God through whom all families on earth receive their life.

People: We come to celebrate and support families who practice peace in their homes and in their communities.

Leader: We come praying for families who feel no peace for themselves and cannot see God's peace in their homes or in the world.

ALL: Let us worship, trusting in God's love and mercy. Praise be to God!

Hymns: Choose which hymns best fit your worship service:

"Dona Nobis Pacem," *UMH #376*

"Take Time to be Holy," *UMH #395*

"Let There Be Peace On Earth," *UMH #431*

"Shalom to You," *UMH #666*

"I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry," *The Faith We Sing #2051*

"Walk With Me," *The Faith We Sing #2242*

"Here is Peace," *Worship & Song #3123*

Scripture Readings

Lectionary readings for the day may be used, or you may choose from the following:

Old Testament: Jeremiah 29:4-7

Psalter: Psalm 85, *UMH 8068*

Gospel: John 14: 23-27

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-16

Prayer for Families:

"Gracious God, who created the families of the earth, we commend to your care all of the families of this congregation, all of the families of this community, and all of the families of this world. We pray this day that each home may be a home where peace is practiced. We pray for those homes where there is no peace—where there is danger, violence, hurtful words, and unceasing activity. We pray for children, youth, and adults. We pray for parents, stepparents, foster parents. We pray for those who are single and those who are married. We pray for those in caring relationships and for those who feel they have no one who cares for and loves them. May your grace be present to all. Grant us wisdom to seek God's peace in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. Grant us courage to work for peace in our homes, in our communities and in our world. Grant us hope so that in times when we see only the mean actions of human to human, we remember your presence and the promise of peace. Amen.

A Litany for Families

Leader: Let us give thanks for our families

People: For families where children, youth and adults are nurtured to grow as God intended us to grow

Leader: Let us pray for our families

People: For families who struggle with abuse, with violence, with stress, and with no time to spend with one another.

Leader: Let us seek guidance for our families

People: For families who read the scripture, pray together, worship in the home and seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

ALL: O God, we are your children. Help us remember the messages of peace, of hope, and of love that those messages may be present in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. AMEN.



CALLED TO PEACE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

- **Remember your blessings, individually and as a family.** For a few nights each week, go around the dinner table and ask each family member to name a peaceful experience or a way he or she acted as a peacemaker in his or her day. Thank God for these peaceful experiences and for being able to share them with one another. Ask God to give peace and blessings to others. You can name specific persons in need of peace, such as people who are victims of abuse, of violence, of stress.
- **Schedule regular family nights.** These family nights could be once a week or once a month. When the chosen date arrives, check the family schedules; talk about ideas for future plans as a family; and discuss both joyful and stressful situations that have occurred in the home. In any family schedules often collide. When this happens it can be hurtful. Family members may respond with name-calling, loud voices, or angry silence. Regular family meetings help members of the family anticipate upcoming difficulties in treating one another with kindness. If there is some friction between certain people in the household, this meeting may be the best forum for family members to act as peacemakers. Let each family member involved in the dispute have his or her say. However, be sure to stick to the facts. The family can then help the parties involved develop a peaceful resolution to the conflict.
- **Care for the Earth.** If possible, recycle paper and aluminum in your home. God gave us charge over this world, and one charge is to keep it clean. We are much more at ease when we live in clean surroundings. When walking as a family, or when walking the family pet, carry a small plastic bag, which can be used to collect cans or trash as you walk.
- **Take the word PEACE and create an acrostic.** Using each letter, list words or phrases that will help give peace in the family and in the world. For example:

Pray
Everyone is God's child
Act (nicely)
Considerate (be)
Each one (do to each one as you would have each one do to you)
- **Give words of peace to one another daily.** In the Bible, the letters of Paul often begin with a word or a phrase that gives peace to those to whom he is writing. Read together the following passages to remind one another of Paul's words of peace: 1 Corinthians 1:3, Romans 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:16. During Christian Home Week, daily give a peace blessing to one another as you leave your home or return to your home at the end of the day.
- **Study scripture together.** Some of the key scripture passages that mention peace are: Isaiah 2:4-5; Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 34:14; Zechariah 8:16, 19; Jeremiah 29:7; Romans 12:18 and 14:19; Matthew 5:9; John 14:27; Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 4:3. Ask one family member to read the scripture. After hearing the scripture, ask each family member to say what that particular scripture means to them.
- **Establish a Family Covenant for Peace.** This covenant can be renewed every three months; however, the basic elements of the covenant stay intact. The promise of love, forgiveness, acceptance, truthfulness, growth, and witness is the basis of the covenant. This leads to peaceful living in the family.

FAMILY COVENANT FOR PEACEFUL LIVING

This covenant will be in effect from _____ (beginning date) to _____ (ending date)

In order that our family may be one that promotes peaceful living with one another, we promise one another to:

1. Seek God's presence through regular Bible study, reflection, and prayer together.
2. Love one another unconditionally—loving the person even while naming behaviors that might need to be changed by a person.
3. Be truthful to all members of the family.
4. Listen with respect to what one another has to say and speak our minds without yelling or blaming.
5. Spend time together eating as a family, playing as a family, and praying as a family.
6. Seek ways to be involved in service to the church and to our community.

Signed by: _____

ALL FAMILY MEMBERS SIGN THE COVENANT.



CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH PLANNING CALENDAR

2014

APRIL: Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in worship, in small group gatherings, with a church wide meal, and in homes. Ask families to bring to the church pictures and written statements about how they practice peacemaking at home and in their communities. Use these to create a bulletin board and put in the church newsletter and bulletin.

MAY: Carry out plans made for celebrating the Christian Home. Recognize women in the congregation—both those who are mothers in families and mothers in faith.

JUNE: Recognize men in the congregation—both those who are fathers in families and fathers in faith. Publish a devotional guide for families to use on vacation. Include scripture, meditations, and prayers.

JULY: Plan a service project that allows families to help in shelters that address abuse in the family or provide resources for anger management and creation of peace in the home. Recruit a leader and set up a Companions in Christ study group using the Upper Room study, *The Way of Forgiveness*.

AUGUST: Have an “end of summer” ice cream social. Ask church members to bring school supplies that can be given to local schools for families who cannot afford to buy supplies for their children. Ask children and youth to bring their backpacks with them the Sunday before the start of school. Have a “Blessing of the Backpacks” as part of morning prayer.

SEPTEMBER: Hold a parenting class for parents and grandparents. Use the Upper Room book *Parents & Grandparents as Spiritual Guides: Nurturing Children of the Promise* by Betty Shannon Cloyd.

OCTOBER: Celebrate the Children’s Sabbath on the second Sunday of October. Call the Office of Children’s Ministries, General Board of Discipleship (1-877-899-2780, ext. 1762) for instructions on how to get resources.

NOVEMBER: Provide a bulletin insert with prayers for families to use in celebrating Thanksgiving. Plan needed resources for celebrating Advent and Christmas in the home. Provide a list of places needing volunteers and who would welcome families volunteering together for Thanksgiving celebrations for those who are without food and shelter.

DECEMBER: Offer an Advent workshop for families. Invite individuals to bring to the church one Advent/Christmas decoration they use in their home and talk about why this is important to them. Use the family devotional guide found at www.gbod.org/minister-to-people/families for lighting the Advent wreath and praying together at home.

2015

JANUARY: If you haven’t yet used the Covenant of Peace, invite families to do so as a New Year Resolution. Publish a list of “beat the winter doldrums” ideas. Include such ideas as playing a board game with the family; telling one another stories of ancestors; having a star-gazing night; picking a favorite Bible story and acting it out.

FEBRUARY: Hold a sweetheart banquet. Recognize anniversaries, engagements, and milestones in the lives of couples in the congregation. Plan a small group study on healthy relationships, using the Adam Hamilton study, *Love to Stay*, available from www.cokesbury.com.

MARCH: Provide a Spring Break day of service in your community. Determine a project that can be done with children, youth, and adults. Encourage families to participate together for the day of service. The Sunday prior to the day of service, pray for all who will participate. The Sunday following the day of service ask one or more families to report to the congregation on what was done in service to your community.

APRIL: Provide resources for families to observe Holy Week and Easter in the home. Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in May. Call the Leadership Ministries Division, General Board of Discipleship (1-877-899-2780, ext. 7141) and request any new resources available for support of family ministries.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MINISTRIES WITH FAMILIES

The Christian Home Month Resource, published annually by The General Board of Discipleship, is designed for leaders of family ministries. Available on the GBOD website, print copies are also available from:

**Leadership Ministries Division
General Board of Discipleship**
P.O. Box 340003
Nashville, TN 37203-0003
Phone (toll-free):
877-899-2780, Ext. 7141
Fax: 615-340-7011
E-Mail: mnorton@gbod.org

*Additional resources for
Family Ministries are available
online at www.gbod.org.*

RETREAT MODEL: CALLED TO PEACE

1. **The congregation prays for the retreat**, the participants, and the team that will plan the retreat.

2. **A retreat planning team is created**, made up of 3-5 people in the congregation.

3. **The retreat team meets and:**

- Chooses a date and location
- Decides on the study to use
- Designs and plans the retreat
- Prepares a budget
- Secures a location
- Recruits leaders
- Plans times for prayer and worship
- Plans food or arranges with the location to handle food needs
- Plans an offering for an organization in the community that has as its mission helping families become places of peace rather than violence
- Designs a flyer, or announcement, including registration form and information about fees, dates, and location



4. **The team prepares for publicity and promotion.** Someone from the team prepares information and distributes it through the church newsletter, e-newsletters, worship bulletins, bulletin boards, and other avenues in the congregation. Regular notices, with sign-up forms, should appear beginning six months prior to the retreat and leading up to the week prior to the retreat.

5. **The team collects supplies needed for the retreat.** Those needed if following this retreat model: songbooks/sheets; Bibles; board games; sports equipment; camera(s); one poster board per small group; magazines; scissors; glue; modeling clay/play dough for each small group; and one large paper bag for each small group containing 3 sheets of construction paper, masking tape, 6 markers, a skein of yarn, scissors, 4 paper plates, 6 plastic cups, and one copy of the book, *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace*, by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, illustrated by Joani Keller Rothenberg (ISBN# 1-58023-123-3).

FRIDAY

4:00–6:00 p.m. **Registration**

6:30–7:00 p.m. **Dinner**

(A served meal or bring-your-own-bag-supper)

7:15–7:30 p.m. **Gathering Time.** Share announcements and Opening Prayer. Sing familiar camp songs, favorite hymns and praise choruses.

7:30–8:30 p.m. **Divide participants into “family” groups of four to six people** (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation). Ask each group to come up with a poster of a peaceful community, either drawing what they feel needs to be included or using pictures from magazines. Ask each group to decide on the three most essential features in each community to be a peace-filled place to live. Ask each group to talk about their community, including what they consider to be essential for peaceful living.

8:30–9:00 p.m. **Read a children’s book that speaks of peace.** One possibility is *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso; illustrated by Joani Keller Rothenberg (ISBN# 1-58023-123-3). Lead the group in a time of prayer, sharing joys and concerns, and singing together.

9:00–10:00 p.m. **Snack and Game Time.** Share snacks. Have board games available, music to listen to, and other activities for all ages. If the setting allows, have a campfire or take a flashlight walk.

SATURDAY

8:00–9:00 a.m. **Breakfast**

9:00–9:30 a.m. **Morning Worship.** Lead the group in singing, scripture, and prayer.

9:30–10:30 a.m. **Ask the participants to reassemble in the same “family” groups as the previous night.** Provide a Bible for each group. Distribute the paper sacks with the items prepared in them. Ask them to turn to Genesis 4:1–6 and read together what happened between Cain and Abel. Ask each team to portray either Cain or Abel, making up a skit to illustrate what brought hope or hopelessness to either Cain or Abel.

10:30–11:00 a.m. **Break**

11:00–11:30 a.m. **Ask each group to present their skits on Cain and Abel.** After each skit, ask the group to name what was hopeful and what was not in each situation. Announce that during the evening session the group will be looking at another scripture passage that helps us look at God’s promise for peace.

Noon–1:00 p.m. **Lunch**

1:00–5:30 p.m. **Afternoon Fun.** Encourage naps. Provide walking/hiking trails maps, recreational/sports equipment, arts and crafts.

5:30–6:30 p.m. **Dinner**

6:30–7:30 p.m. **Ask the participants to reassemble in their “family” groups.** Distribute Bibles. Ask each group to read Ephesians 4:17–32. Distribute to each group play dough or clay. Invite each group to create symbols of the peaceful living together that they hear in the scripture.

7:30–8:15 p.m. **Gather the group together** and allow each family group to share the symbols of peace they have created.

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2014 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

8:15–8:30 p.m. Break

8:30–9:00 p.m. Lead the group in sharing and praying about their joys and concerns. Ask those who wish to name a song, or a scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that helped them understand God's peace.

9:00–10:00 p.m. **Snack and Game Time.** Recruit volunteers to plan the ending worship service for Sunday. If weather permits, go outside for star gazing or a campfire.

SUNDAY

8:00–9:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:00–10:00 a.m. Closing worship

10:00–11:00 a.m. Clean up and Journey Home

CALLED TO PEACE: CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Reprint the Family Devotional Times material in your church newsletter or place it on your web site. List one suggestion a month that details how families can study and practice peace. Ask families who followed the suggestion to write about their experience.

Create a "We Did It!" column in your newsletter or on your web site and feature what families are doing to practice peace in their home and in their community.

Plan a family fun time at church. Include a meal and use the time to make prayer cards with prayers of peace to place on their table at home.

Encourage families to adopt the Family Covenant for Peaceful Living and carry out the practices for at least a month. Suggest a starting day for all in the congregation to participate. As part of worship, ask those who intend to live the covenant to stand. Pray for all who are taking the covenant. On the ending date, ask all who lived with the covenant to stand. Recognize each by name and join in singing the Doxology to voice your thanks to God for their commitment.