

# 2022 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES



## Families: Many Forms, Living Faithfully! Called to Peace

The Christian Home Month resource is for family ministry leaders, ministry teams, and council chairpersons/coordinators in local congregations. It is designed to help local congregations develop and strengthen faith in the home and to 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.

## CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES 2021-2024

- 2021: Families Called to Love
- 2022: Families Called to Peace**
- 2023: Families Called to Justice
- 2024: Families Called to Hope

Our theme for 2022 is **Families Called to Peace**. This is an appropriate theme for the current context in which we find our daily lives. This past year, we have witnessed continued political tensions, racism, and social unrest. Children, youth, and young people might be concerned with the deep divisions in this country, disappointed at the disagreements, and witness to name-calling and loss of human respect. We continue to be a nation witnessing war abroad. We continue to be a nation of not just violent acts, but violent language, images, and culture. Although we may cry, “peace, peace,” sometimes there is little in our lives that reflects peace. The absence of conflict doesn’t necessarily mean there is peace. Peace is not the opposite of war. Just because there may be no fighting in the home doesn’t mean the household is peaceful. How do we achieve this thing called peace? How do we maintain a Christlike focus when we feel besieged by a violent world and our own violent impulses?

We know that as Christians, we are called to be peacemakers. We offer God’s peace to a world that is broken and hurting.

Take a moment and read Psalm 85. Reflect on verse 10. What comes to mind as you read these words? What would peace be like for your family? For your congregation? For the world? Record your thoughts—in words, in pictures, in sounds. Pray for God’s peace to be our reality.

Reflect on verses 1-3 as well. God’s wrath is not directed at people but at evil. In this passage, God’s wrath is removed because forgiveness has been given. God is not angry or wrathful by nature, but because of God’s love for us, God knows sin is not best for us; anything that keeps people from experiencing peace is at odds with God’s desires. What comes to mind when you reflect on these words from Scripture?

To begin addressing “Families Called to Peace” in your congregation, establish a

family ministry team, if you don’t have one already. Have the team pray for families in your congregation and community. Through prayer and discernment, ask team members to help the congregation identify ways families in the congregation and community could live more peacefully. Ask those recruited to pray intentionally for every family in the church during Christian Home Month. Ask them to lead the congregation in prayer for families in your community and to challenge the congregation to see where God is already acting in the community to advocate for peace.

Let Christian Home Month be the beginning of an intentional year for deepening our understanding of God’s peace and our ability to act for peace. During the month and throughout the rest of the year, provide programs, forums, parenting classes, worship opportunities, learning activities, and times of prayer for supporting families in their faith journeys.

# CALLED TO PEACE: WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

Here are some suggestions that may be useful in celebrating Christian Home Month or Family Life Sunday as part of a worship service. For additional resources, see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.

## ABBREVIATIONS

W&S = Worship and Song  
TFWS = The Faith We Sing  
UMH = United Methodist Hymnal

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

- Draw the Circle Wide 3154 W&S
- Let Our Earth Be Peaceful 3159 W&S
- Song of Hope 2186 TFWS
- I Sing a Song of the Saints of God 712 UMH
- Dona Nobis Pacem 376 UMH
- Take Time to Be Holy 395 UMH
- Let There Be Peace on Earth 431 UMH
- Shalom to You 666 UMH
- Make Me a Channel of Your Peace 2171 TFWS
- Peace for the Children 3125 W&S

## PRAYERS

### Call to Worship

Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who are weary, and I will give you rest."

We long for our souls to rest in the peace that Jesus gives.

Jesus also said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me."

We come today to learn from the God of all knowledge.

Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

*As we come to worship, let us cast our burdens on the Savior and find that he bears our burdens and lightens our load.*

**ALL: Jesus invites us to "Come." It is our joy to say yes to his invitation.**

— Constance Cherry, 2011 (*Worship & Song Worship Resources*)

Lord, make our hearts places of peace  
And our minds harbors of tranquility.

Sow in our souls true love for you  
and for one another.  
and root deeply within us  
friendship and unity,  
and concord with reverence.

(continued)

So may we give peace to each other sincerely  
and receive it beautifully. Amen.

— Native American *Worship & Song Worship Resources*

### Benediction

Go forth from this place in peace.

Go forth knowing your faith is the assurance of things you hope for and the conviction of that which you have yet to see with your eyes.

Go down from the mountain top,  
setting out like Abraham, not knowing where God is leading.

Leave this service, not yet having received all the promise of God,  
but seeing them in the distance.

Press on in faith.

Step back into the everydayness of your life  
desiring to see God in heaven,  
not ashamed to be called God's people. Amen.

— Eugene Blair, 2008 (*Worship & Song Worship Resources*)

### Night Prayer

God of the peaceable kingdom,  
as night settles on your children,  
come into my darkness to be with me.

Let the night noises be no more dangerous  
than the gentle breeze, the chirping crickets,  
or the quiet murmur of a sleeping family.

Let peace bathe the land and soothe my soul.  
Let me grow happily old with good neighbors,  
and the sight of my grandchildren's children.

Let me count the stars from my own backyard,  
find the bliss of sleep in my own warm bed,  
and know myself cradled in your loving arms.

Beat the swords of war into the plowshares of prosperity,  
make the wolf lie down with the lamb, the lion with the calf,  
and let your blessed children play safely over the adder's den.  
Amen.

By Robert Ingram, 2011 (*Worship & Song Worship Resources*)

# CALLED TO PEACE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

**FAMILY DEVOTION:** Prepare a gathering place for family worship. Create a centerpiece on the table where you eat your meals or in another area of your home where you can gather as a family. Spend time together preparing the space that you will use for your family devotional time. Include a candle. Write this Bible verse or another of your choice: “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you...” (John 14:27a NRSV). Place it next to the candle. Include other items that remind you of God. During your time of devotion, follow this worship sequence:

- **Praise:** Give God praise with a song, statement of “We Praise God,” or motion to represent all honor and glory to be given to God. (NBA player Steph Curry gives God praise each time he scores a basket by patting his heart with his hand and then pointing toward heaven. This simple, yet powerful, motion speaks louder than any words used in a crowded NBA arena.)
- **Prayer:** Create a family prayer, use a familiar existing family prayer, or say the Lord’s Prayer. Hold hands as you pray.
- **Reading:** Read a scripture passage from this resource that reflects upon the word “peace.” Invite each family member to select a different passage each time you gather. 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; Matthew 5:9; John 14:27; Romans 12:18 and 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 4:3. Ask one family member to read the scripture. Spend time reading, discussing, and studying the passage together. Ask family members to state what this scripture made them think about related to living peacefully.
- **Reflection:** Reflect on the passage and wonder together:
  - What did you see as this scripture was read?
  - What did you hear as this scripture was read?
  - What actions can you take after hearing this scripture?
  - What do we learn about God from this passage?
  - What do we learn about peace from this passage?
- **Sharing:** Spend time sharing joys, concerns, and prayer requests that you have encountered as individuals and as a family.
- **Blessing:** End the time together with a blessing. Use a hymn such as the “Doxology,” or offer a blessing to each family member by saying phrases such as, “God be with you.” Using a small Chapstick, create the shape of a cross on your family member’s hand, while saying these words:

*God loves you.*

*Christ is with you.*

*The Holy Spirit moves through you.*

*As you share God’s hope with the world.*

**Family Night:** Set aside a regular time for sharing fun family activities together. You could do the same activity each time (play board games, cook special treats, volunteer as a family in service to others in your community, and learn about people who live different lives from yours). Another idea is for each family night to be planned by a different family member, with an activity agreed upon by all.

## DO HOLY WORK TOGETHER

### Count Your Blessings

Remember your blessings, individually and as a family. Eat dinner together as a family. During the past year, most families have discovered family mealtime has become a time for deep meaning and to grow in relationship with one another. Make dinnertime worth the effort and spend time together offering and receiving the peace of God. Go around the table and ask each family member to name a peaceful experience or a way he or she acted as a peacemaker that 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 (name the specific people in your life in need of peace).

### Make an Acrostic Using the Word ‘Peace’

Using each letter, list a word or a phrase that will help give peace in the family and in the world. For example:

**P**ray

**E**veryone is God’s child

**A**ct to help others

**C**onsider the feelings of others

**E**xercise patience.

Use this during your family’s sharing time around the table.

### Take a Moment of Silence

Take two minutes in total silence. Hear these words, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). “Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace—in peace because they trust in you (Isa. 26:3).

- Were you able to experience some sort of peace in the two minutes?
- Where did your mind take you? What natural setting seems peaceful to you? Why is that place peaceful for you?
- What destroys your peace? What encourages it?

### Random Reminders

Post a scripture passage, line from a hymn or song, inspirational thought, or brief prayer in random places around the house. Have each individual family member take a turn and select a different passage each week. Place the reminder somewhere that all in the family have the opportunity to “find” the reminder.

# CALLED TO LOVE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

## Conversation Around the Table *(Read and pray together)*

Read John 14:27 from the NRSV translation:

*27 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.*

Have a conversation as a family using these guiding questions.

- When Jesus said, “My peace I give to you,” what do you think he meant?
- Name a kindness you would describe as an act of peace.
- What other kindness could be described as an act of peace?
- Talk about an experience when you realized you felt peaceful.

## Intentional Acts of Kindness

Wonder together as a family what is meant by the phrase, “intentional acts of kindness.”

The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*. It means more than the absence of conflict. It implies a positive state of well-being. Three attitudes help create this state of well-being: self-acceptance, positive hope for the world, and confidence in the future.

Discuss this positive hope for the world within your family.

- Which “intentional act of kindness” expresses for you a good example of offering peace to others?
- What is a word or action that you would give to each family member to show him or her peace?
- When you are angry at someone, what would be a peaceful way of saying to that person what is bothering you instead of yelling or hitting?
- What are some times you’ve experienced peace at church—in a small group, worship, on retreat, or during a special program?

Identify people in your community who need to experience *shalom* (someone who has just lost a family member, someone struggling in school, someone new to your community, someone who can no longer drive a car, someone who is sick, someone who just lost a job, someone who is fighting with another).

Come up with a plan to demonstrate *shalom* to those neighbors that you named. Be intentional in transforming the language of *shalom* into action!

The peace Jesus offers is different.

The peace our world promises is conditional. This notion of peace is based on achievements, successes, and accomplishments—and is only possible if people dodge suffering or loss.

The peace Jesus offers is radically different. It is peace in the midst of suffering, in the midst of the storm. At the Last Supper, Jesus repeats those words found in the Gospel of Luke when he reminds us, “Do not be distressed or fearful.”

People long for a world of peace and a sense of personal and internal peace.

- Why do you think people long for peace?
- Why do you think peace is so difficult to obtain?
- How is biblical peace different from the peace the world offers us?

Discuss as a family.

## Finish the Sentence

Another way to create a conversation is to play a simple game of “finishing the sentence.” Complete one of these sentences (or create your own) to describe peace in your life:

*God is with me when...*

*A person I know who practices peace is...*

*My favorite story about peace in the Bible is...*

*I would like to tell stories about Jesus to...*

*A favorite memory about church is...*

*The best time I have ever had at church was when...*

*If I preached a sermon, it would be about...*

*I feel peace in my family when we...*

## “Peace” of Paper Journal

Buy a small spiral notebook; write a favorite scripture verse, short prayer, or thought for the day on each page. Have the entire family contribute. Each day forward, turn over one of the pages to reveal a scripture verse, short prayer, or thought for the day about peace to read aloud.

Spend time in prayer and discussion with the entries in the journal.

## Instrument of Peace

Read the following prayer to the entire family. Then spend some moments pondering the words of this prayer while playing the worship song created around this prayer from St. Francis of Assisi ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leWRHSqUp6U&list=RDLleWRHSqUp6U&start\\_radio=1&rv=leWRHSqUp6U&t=10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leWRHSqUp6U&list=RDLleWRHSqUp6U&start_radio=1&rv=leWRHSqUp6U&t=10)).

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

# CALLED TO LOVE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

## Lyrics

*Where there is hatred, let me bring love*

*Where there is doubt, let me bring faith*

*Where there is falsehood, let me bring truth*

*Where there is pain, I'll comfort you*

*Where there is silence, let me sing praise*

*Where there's despair, let me bring hope*

*Where there is blindness, let me bring sight*

*Where there is darkness, let me bring light*

*And with these words I speak*

*Grant that I may not so seek*

*To be heard but to hear*

*To be consoled but to console,*

*Not to be seen, but to see*

*To be loved but to love*

*For when we give love, we will receive*

*When we forgive love, we'll find reprieve*

*It is in dying we'll be released*

*Make me an instrument of peace*

Discuss what you felt as you heard the words to this song. Being an instrument of peace means that you are a peace provider. How can you provide peace?

Choose one day this week to practice being an instrument of God's peace. Look for situations mentioned in the words of this prayer song. Seek to bring love and provide peace in those situations.

You can repeat this same activity with your family while watching other YouTube videos and reflecting on the lyrics. Other suggestions could be "It is Well" by Chris Rice (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HLyhEdh92E>), or the more child-friendly and upbeat "Peace Like a River" by Listener Kids (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7it5W1FVtTs>).

## **BE PEACE**

This past year, there have been multiple examples of trauma and conflict in society by groups or individuals. Becoming a peace provider means loving one another and forgiving those who do not accept us as peace providers. Spend time talking about the hard issues found in the news today. Read together stories from the media; then ask, "How would God want us to act in this situation? What would 'providing peace' look like in this situation?" As a family, decide what actions you might take to be peace to others. Discuss whether it is easy to be a peace provider. Why is peace-providing difficult work?

The familial discussion around being an instrument of peace can lead to a powerful conversation about being a peace provider in your community and about doing acts of social justice. Spend time with the recommended books and have meaningful family discussions about issues of violence, racial relations, and traumatic events in the world.

## **FAMILY PRAYER**

God, we give you thanks because you have done and continue to do amazing things! Thank you for offering so many examples of peace providers from the Bible for a better world during these difficult days. There is no greater example than Jesus. Help each member of our family follow you and be peace for ourselves and for all our neighbors. Amen.

# CALLED TO PEACE: RETREAT MODEL

## Planning for the Retreat

1. The congregation prays for the retreat, the participating families, and the coordinating team.
2. A retreat planning team is created that is made up of six to eight people from the congregation. This team should be equally knowledgeable in online technology (just in case you need to shift the retreat to that format) and in-person leadership.
3. The retreat team meets and plans the retreat:
  - Chooses a weekend to offer the retreat. If the location is not the church, the venue should be secured.
  - Decides on the retreat schedule, including times for prayer and worship.
  - Prepares a budget.
  - Designs a flyer that includes a registration form and information about fees, dates, and location.
  - Recruits leaders. Provides Safe Sanctuary training for all leaders involved with the event.
  - Plans all food menus and suggestions.
  - Creates an offering opportunity for an organization in the community that helps families in need.
  - Promotes the retreat using social media, including the church website and Facebook page.
4. 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. Registration for the location may be needed and completed for those families attending the retreat.
5. The team collects the following supplies: songbooks/sheets; Bibles; a copy of *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Illustrated by Joani Keller Rothenberg) along with other books on peace (see resource list); board games; sports equipment; one poster board per small group; magazines; scissors; glue; modeling clay or play dough for each small group; one large paper bag for each small group each containing three sheets of construction paper, a roll of masking tape or painters tape, six markers of assorted colors, a skein of yarn, scissors, four paper plates, and six plastic cups. Keep all supplies in paper bag, prepared to distribute to family groups during the retreat.

## Friday

**4:30–6:00 P.M.** – Registration

**6:30–7:00 P.M.** – Dinner (A served meal or have each family provide their own).

**7:15–7:30 P.M.** – Gathering Time. Share announcements and opening prayer. Sing familiar camp songs, favorite hymns, and praise choruses. Teach the group “Let There Be Peace on Earth” (UMH, 431) and “It is Well” (UMH, 377).

**7:30–9:00 P.M.** – Divide those gathering in person into “family” groups of four to six people (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation). Ask group members to create a poster of a peaceful community, either drawing what they feel needs to be included or finding words that describe a peaceful community. Groups could even act out to demonstrate their imagery. Ask each group to decide on the three most essential features for a community to be a peace-filled place to live. Allow each group to present to the whole group what it created, including what the group considers to be essential for peaceful living. Make a list of all the essentials listed by every group. Note where there is agreement and where there are differing ideas.

**9:00–9:30 P.M.** – Read *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Author), Joani Keller Rothenberg (Illustrator) to the group. After reading, ask for several people to share their thoughts and feelings about the story and what it had to say about peace. Lead the group in a time of prayer, sharing joys and concerns, and singing together.

**AFTER 9:30 P.M.** – Snack and game time. Spend time together playing board games and winding down for the evening. If the setting allows, take a short flashlight walk or gather around a firepit. Close by leading the group in a time of prayer, sharing joys and concerns; then sing together.

## Saturday

**8:00–9:00 A.M.** – Breakfast

**9:00–9:30 A.M.** – Morning Worship. Lead the group in singing, scripture, and prayer. Begin a responsive prayer by inviting each participant to recite a verse about “peace.” Encourage participants to memorize those verses. Each time a participant recites a verse, the group will respond with “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). This encourages everyone to reflect/meditate on each verse recited.

**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 bags with the items prepared in them. Ask each family group to find Genesis 4:1- 15 in the Bibles and read together what happened between Cain and Abel. Instruct the groups to use the items provided in the paper bags as props to retell the story either from the view of Cain or

of Abel. Ask each group to create a skit. Advise each family to talk through what members will do and what imagery they see in the scripture text and what imagery comes from their life before moving into creating the skit. Ask family groups to reflect back to the previous night's reading of the book *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Author), Joani Keller Rothenberg (Illustrator). Have the book available for the groups to look through while doing this activity. Remind the groups to illustrate in their skits what brought hope or hopelessness to either Cain or Abel and what this says to us about peace.

**10:30–11:00 A.M.** – Break

**11:00–11:30 A.M.** – Ask the groups to present their skits about Cain and Abel. After each skit, ask the groups to name what was hopeful or not hopeful in each situation. Tell the groups that in the evening session, they 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: Play "I Spy in the Neighborhood." Go on a family walk on the grounds of the retreat location. If the location is your church, pay particular attention to the area nearby. Point out things you notice for the first time. Spice it up with a game of "I Spy." While families are walking, have them look for items from the list below. Take photos with a phone camera to share with the retreat families later in the evening.

#### **I Spy Checklist:**

- Something flying in the sky
- A nut
- An insect
- Something blue
- A clover
- Water (lake, creek, pool, puddle)
- A smooth stone
- Something red
- Another person with the same brand shoes as you
- Something with a wheel
- A bird
- A telephone line/pole
- Something white
- A critter with four legs
- Flowers blooming
- A sign other than a stop sign
- A flagpole
- Something that reminds you of the peace of God.

#### **Peace Stones**

While outside, take some time to ask everyone at the retreat to find a small smooth stone. Once retreat participants have found the stones, have them affix a symbol of peace. Encourage participants to carry the stones with them for remainder of retreat.

Here's how to make a peace stone. (Borrowed with permission from [www.Leanne-Hadley.com](http://www.Leanne-Hadley.com).)

#### *Simple Directions to Make Holy Listening Stones*

##### Supplies:

- Stones
- Permanent Markers
- Mod Podge

##### Steps to Make:

1. Try to find a smooth, clean stone. You could also purchase stones (pre-polished from a craft store in the floral department. These are used to put in vases etc.).
2. Using a permanent marker, draw the symbols of peace (the traditional peace symbol or something that represents peace to the individual) on the rocks and let them dry well.
3. Place a small dab of "Mod Podge" on each stone and let it dry. (If you skip this step, the symbols will rub off the rocks. It is very important! We have tried finding spray but have not had any luck.)

Use the completed stones as a constant reminder of the theme for this retreat.

Encourage outdoor recreation. Provide suggestions/supplies for outdoor family activities such as corn hole, volleyball, croquet, sidewalk and driveway chalk art, basketball, football, bike rides, or walks on the retreat grounds.

**5:30–6:30 P.M.** – Dinner. Allow each participant to help in the preparation of the meal.

**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. Use a translation that is understood by diverse ages. Invite each family group to use modeling clay, Legos®, paper, and markers to create a symbol or symbols of the peaceful living together that they hear in the Scripture.

**7:30–8:15 P.M.** – Gather the full group together and allow each family to share the created art, group members' thoughts, and the symbols of peace created. Discuss how to execute a plan to be peace providers both in the congregation and their community.

**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. Recite again, "Your word is a lamp to my

feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105) with scripture verse recall. Ask those who wish to name a song, or a second scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that helped them understand God’s peace and how they can share God’s peace with others.

## 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

### Prayer for Christian Home Month Families

Gracious God, who created all of humankind and showed to us the importance of relationships with one another, we commend to your care all the families of this congregation, community, and world. We pray that each home may be a home where love is felt. We pray for homes where, instead of love, hurt, abuse, and suffering abide. We pray for children, youth, and adults, recognizing the importance of and the gift of every age as we grow. May your grace be present to all. Grant us wisdom to know where there is no love, courage to act out of love for others, and peace to trust in your grace. Help us to live so that the commandments of love for you and love for others are shown in the ways we live together. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

# CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

For congregational planners, reprint the “Family Devotional Times” material in your church newsletter, or place it on your website. List one suggestion a month. Ask families who followed the suggestions to write about their experience (or tell you about it).

Create a “We Did It!” column in your newsletter or on your website and feature what these families did in following through with the suggestions.

Plan a family fun time at church. Include a meal and use the time there to perform the Random Reminders, Peace of paper journal, or post the P-E-A-C-E acrostic in various locations in the church.

Encourage families to adopt the “Family Covenant for Peace” and carry out the practices for at least a month. Suggest a starting day for all in the congregation who want to participate. As part of worship, ask those who intend to live with the covenant to stand. Pray for the families. On the ending date, ask all families who lived with the covenant to stand. Recognize by affirmation each family by name and join in singing the Doxology to voice thanks to God for their efforts. You could establish the tradition used on the retreat by saying “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). Use worship bulletins as a place to provide a weekly reminder of the Covenant for Peace.

## FAMILY COVENANT FOR PEACEFUL LIVING

Create a covenant together as you promise to grow together as a family in peaceful living. Every month, take time to ask, “How have we lived into our covenant?” Celebrate how you have shown God’s peace to one another. Then make any changes that might be needed for the next month.

This covenant will be in effect from \_\_\_\_\_ (*beginning date*) to \_\_\_\_\_ (*ending date*).

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

1. Spend time eating, playing, and praying together.
2. Listen with respect to what one another has to say and speak our minds in truth without yelling or blaming.
3. Look for ways family members promote living together peacefully. Share these during family devotional time.
4. Learn about organizations that address violence in the home, such as programs addressing abuse in the family; food pantries or home-building projects that help care for families in need; community services that provide for the needs of children when intervention is needed because of violence. As a family, choose a way to offer service to one of these places.
5. Seek out stories of peace at church, online, at school or work, and at home. Tell these stories to one another.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_

*(All family members sign the covenant.)*

# CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH: PLANNING CALENDAR

## 2022

**MAY:** Carry out plans made for celebrating the Christian home. Recognize women in the congregation who are mothers in families and mothers in faith. Recognize graduates of high school and college with a prayer in worship. (Remember that some may have celebrated this milestone last year virtually or without ceremony). Creatively include those as well this year. Invite those graduates to name someone who helped them learn how to provide peace to others.

**JUNE:** On June 5, Pentecost, have a “wear red” day and recognize those in the congregation who model the love of God. Recognize men in the congregation who are fathers in families and fathers in faith. Create a social media devotional guide for families to use on vacation or at home. Include scripture, meditations, and prayers. Allow church members to contribute by sharing their stories of random acts of kindness. Observe Peace with Justice Sunday on June 12 using resources provided by the [United Methodist Church](#).

**JULY:** Plan a service project that allows families to help someone in the community who continues to be affected by the economy. Ask church members to bring school supplies that can be donated to local schools for families who cannot afford to buy supplies for their children. Provide other intentional acts of kindness that promote peace in your community.

Recruit a leader and set up a brief summer adult study of *Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go* by Adam Hamilton.

**AUGUST:** Host a “Movie under the Stars” night on the church grounds for families in your community. Select a movie that promotes peace in the world through its story and message. Pray in worship for teachers and for students as they begin a new school year.

Have a “back to school” Sunday and invite all students to bring their backpacks to worship. Bless the backpacks, students, and teachers as they begin a new school year. Create a caring card ministry and deliver cards to a local hospital or nursing-care facility.

**SEPTEMBER:** Hold a parenting class on *It Takes a Church to Raise a Parent* by Rachel Turner to help parents and grandparents reflect on their spiritual lives and how they guide their children.

Celebrate Grandparents Day on September 11 by hosting a dinner and honor the older adults in the church. Involve the children and youth in serving dinner, providing entertainment, and visiting with the older adults.

**OCTOBER:** Celebrate the Children’s Sabbath during the weekend of October 14-16. Use resources provided by the [Children’s Defense Fund](#).

Sponsor a “trunk or treat” or fall festival in your community. Invite church members to decorate their cars, park in the church parking lot, and distribute treats. Offer a free hot dog/chili dinner beforehand. Include activities and service opportunities for children, youth, and adults.

**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 that would welcome families volunteering together to help those who are without food and shelter during the holiday. Participate in Samaritan’s Purse Operation Christmas Child. Fill a shoebox (or two) with love to neighbors around the world. National Collection Week is November 14-21. See <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child>.

**DECEMBER:** Offer an online 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 (during children’s moments in worship). Provide a devotional guide for lighting the Advent wreath and praying together at home. Invite families to create Chrismsons to hang in the Hanging of the Greens service at church or at home on their family tree.

## 2023

**JANUARY:** If you haven’t yet used the “Family Covenant for Peaceful Living,” invite families to do so as a New Year’s Resolution. Publish a list of “beat the winter doldrums” ideas. Include such ideas as playing a board game with the family; storytelling of family ancestors; having a stargazing night; picking a favorite Bible story of peace and acting it out.

**FEBRUARY:** Have a daddy-daughter dance the Friday before Valentine’s Day for the entire community. Celebrate marriage ministries on the Sunday nearest Valentine’s Day. Recognize anniversaries, engagements, and milestones in the lives of couples in the congregation.

Plan a Peace Dinner and Fellowship Time. Use the book, *Can You Say Peace?* by Karen Katz as a guide. Divide attendees into groups, with each group creating a poster or banner around a theme of peace as illustrated in the book.

Encourage families to have pancakes the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday (February 22), remembering that with Ash Wednesday, we begin Lent and a time of study and self-denial. Use the Lent resources found at <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>.

**MARCH:** Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in May. Host a mother-son tea and get together for the community. Plan a family (or church family) spring break retreat at one of the United Methodist Church Camps and Retreat Centers. For more information and list of locations visit the UMC CRM website, <http://umcrm.camp>.

Offer a churchwide study on prayer, and together write prayers that focus on peace in our homes, our communities, and our world. Print these in your church bulletin; include them in your church newsletter; and post them on social media.

**APRIL:** Begin plans for observing Christian Home Month in worship. Ask families to post photos to social media about how they provide peace to one another at home and in their communities. Welcome spring. Hold a family workday at church. Invite those of all ages to come and clean areas of the church that might not have been cleaned for a while. Sort through toys and supplies in the nursery and children's ministries areas of the church, removing those that are broken or no longer useable.

Easter is April 9. Celebrate Easter in new creative ways, such as creating a flower cross. Make a large cross covered with chicken wire. Invite families to bring Easter flowers from their yards or gardens to church (or provide flowers at church). Encourage everyone to place the flowers on the cross, using the chicken wire to hold the flowers in place. Place the flowered cross outside for the community to see as a sign of God's love celebrated at Easter.

Observe Earth Day on April 22. Join with others in your community to demonstrate God's love with creation care. Creation care is an essential part of discipleship. Raise your family's awareness of our responsibility to care for God's creation.

Begin preparation for observing Christian Home Month 2023: Families Called to Justice.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: RECOMMENDED READING

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- *Amazing Peace* by Maya Angelou. (Schwartz and Wade. 2008).
- *Can You Say Peace?* by Karen Katz. (Square Fish. 2016).
- *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams, illustrated by LeUyen Pham. (Candlewick. 2010).
- *I've Got Peace in My Fingers* by Susan Salidor. (Sideline Ink Publishing. 2019).
- *Maybe God Is Like That Too* by Jennifer Grant (Author), Benjamin Schipper (Illustrator). (Sparkhouse Family. 2017).
- *Paulie Pastrami Achieves World Peace* by James Proimos. (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. 2009).
- *Peaceful Heroes* by Jonah Winter. (Arthur A. Levine. 2009).
- *Something Happened in Our Park: Standing Together After Gun Violence* by Ann Hazzard PhD (Author), Marianne Celano PhD (Author), Marietta Collins PhD (Author), Keith Henry Brown (Illustrator). (Magination Press. 2021).
- *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin (Magination Press, 2019).

### YOUTH BOOKS

- *Everyday Disciples: Covenant Discipleship with Youth* by Chris Wilterdink (Discipleship Resources, 2016).

### ADULT BOOKS

- *Disciples Making Disciples: A Guide for Covenant Discipleship Groups and Class Leaders* by Steven W. Manskar (Discipleship Resources, 2016).
- *Growing Everyday Disciples: Covenant Discipleship with Children* by Melanie Gordon, Susan Groseclose & Gayle Quay (Discipleship Resources, 2016).
- *Growing With: Every Parent's Guide to Helping Teenagers and Young Adults Thrive in Their Faith, Family, and Future* by Kara Powell (Baker Books, 2019).
- *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* by Kara Powell (Baker Books, 2016).
- *Scrambled Starts: Family Prayers for Morning, Bedtime, and Everything in Between* by Jenny Youngman (Upper Room Books, 2015).
- *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* by Kara Powell and Chap Clark (Zondervan, 2011).

## RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MINISTRIES WITH FAMILIES

The Christian Home Month Resource, published annually by Discipleship Ministries, is a manual designed for use by leaders with families. Additional resources, ideas, and suggestions for Christian Home Month 2021 and family faith formation can be found online at:

<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries>

Discipleship Ministries | Website: [UMCdiscipleship.org](http://UMCdiscipleship.org) Toll Free: (877) 899-2780 Email: [info@UMCdiscipleship.org](mailto:info@UMCdiscipleship.org)