



40 DAYS OF PEACE

USPG Lent Appeal 2012



Lent study course



Anglicans in
World Mission



40 DAYS OF PEACE

This Lent, USPG is inviting churches to accompany us on a journey of peace.

In this booklet you will find material for a 5-week Lent study course that could also be adapted for sermons during Lent.

The aim of this course is to inspire congregations to consider what it takes to find peace in their own lives – and to become peace-makers in the world. And each week there is an opportunity for you and your church to renew your commitment to peace.

We also want congregations to be inspired by the peace work of Anglican Churches around the world – and for churches to make a generous donation to USPG to help sustain this vital work. There is a donation coupon in this leaflet – and you can order collection boxes and envelopes (call 020 7921 2200 or email enquiries@uspg.org.uk).

This Lent, we pray that the Prince of Peace will be our inspiration as we commit ourselves to seeking peace.

More resources – including daily meditations, a poster and PowerPoint – available at www.uspg.org.uk/peace



Jesus is the bringer of peace

'Peace' is derived from the Hebrew word 'shalom'. But what does it mean?

- Shalom (*Salaam, in Arabic*) means wholeness, fullness, totality, completeness. No part is missing. There is order and unity. It refers to good health, prosperity, a good harvest and fertility. In relationships, it doesn't mean the absence of war or discord, but the presence of goodwill and harmony. How do these descriptions of 'shalom' compare with your own understanding of the word 'peace'?
- In the light of our understanding of 'shalom', what does it mean that Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)? In what way was Jesus being a peace-maker when he cleared the Temple (John 2:13-22)?
- Something powerful happened during the first Easter. The bible passages are familiar to us, but let's look at them again in the light of 'shalom'. Take some time to read through Romans 5:1, Colossians 1:20 and Ephesians 2:13-20 – and suggest other texts. List all the qualities of peace – and list the outcomes of the Easter act of peace.
- At the beginning of our Lenten journey of peace, we can see that peace refers to something greater than being a peaceful or peaceable person. How does this change your concept of being a peace-maker or a 'shalom-maker'?

View from the world church

Anglicans in Zimbabwe have found themselves the target of an ex-communicated bishop (Dr Nolbert Kunonga) who is attempting to retain control of church property by evicting congregations, even tear-gassing and attacking them when they protest. The Rt Revd Chad Gandiya, Bishop of Harare, said: 'The church is growing in spite of all its hardships. What are challenges to us as a church have turned out to be God's opportunities for ministry.'

- Jesus called us to love our enemies (Luke 6.27-28). Imagine yourself into the shoes of Anglicans in Zimbabwe, and ask what it might mean for them to be 'peace-makers'.



Peace in our hearts

We all want to feel at peace, but why is this experience so rare?

- What causes you to feel either at peace or ill at ease? (Consider both internal and external factors.)
- Psalm 46:10 reads: 'Be still, and know that I am God!' Yet Blaise Pascal pointed out: 'All men's (sic) miseries derive from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone.' Why do you think we find it so hard to be alone with God?
- Our Lenten journey is hopefully taking us closer to shalom, or 'wholeness'. But what does this mean for the Christian – and how do we reach wholeness? Read John 12:24 and consider what is meant by the concept of 'dying to the self'.
- Thomas à Kempis said: 'First keep peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others.' What is the implication here for ourselves and our church (locally and nationally)?



View from the world church

Sri Lanka is recovering from a 25-year civil war that ended in 2009 having claimed more than 70,000 lives. With support from USPG, the Church of Ceylon is reaching out to war widows, many of whom have been left destitute. One woman told her support group: 'I am 20 years old. My father is ill. My mother doesn't want to look after me because she also has a small child. My mother-in-law doesn't want me in her house because her husband is no longer here to help her. I don't know what to do.'

- We all have times when we feel we are 'in the wilderness' – the very place where Jesus begins his Lenten journey. If you feel comfortable, share your experiences of trying to survive in the wilderness.



Peace with our neighbours

This week we look at areas of our lives where there is more need for shalom.

- Read Galatians 3:23-29. Reflect upon the meaning of this passage in the light of our understanding of 'shalom'. How can we apply this concept as a general principle to the different relationships in our own lives and community?
- Mother Teresa said: 'What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.' Why is it sometimes so difficult to be at peace with those who are closest to us? What practical ideas can you share for being a 'shalom-maker' in your personal lives?
- Do you agree that we live in a patriarchal society? The theologian Joon Surh Park writes: 'The submission of woman to man is not the created order of shalom but a telling sign of the fallen state of humankind.' What needs to change – in church and society – to bring 'shalom' between men and women?
- 1 King 5:12 suggest that shalom between nations and communities means more than an absence of war or conflict – it means a dynamic relationship of amity, alliance and cooperation. Reflect on what this might mean in terms of the church's relationship with: a) different faith communities, b) different ethnic groups in the community, c) the economic structures in society.

View from the world church

Christians in Pakistan have faced persecution – because Christians are a minority group and because some view Christianity as an American/western religion that is in opposition to Islam. But despite this, Bishop Mano Rumalshah, of the Church of Pakistan, which receives support from USPG, is able to say: 'The ultimate aim of Christian service is to proclaim the message of peace to friends and foes, leading all people towards reconciled relationships, which is God's ultimate purpose for us all.'

- When we are in a conflict situation, there is often a clash between the values and wishes of ourselves and others. When is it right for Christians to take the initiative in peace-making, regardless of whether the other party may wish to respond?



Peace-makers need skills

This week we're going to try some practical activities to build up our peace-making skills.



- **Learning to listen.** Many conflicts arise because people don't listen! Let's try an activity. In pairs, take it in turns to talk uninterrupted about any topic for a minute – then the other person repeats back what you said. Then reverse the roles. In the group, share what it's like to hear your words repeated back accurately – or inaccurately! Discuss tips for how we can become better listeners – and how we can show that we are listening.
- **Seeing things from another perspective.** We're going to hold a debate with a difference on the hot topic of pacifism. However, each person should make a stand for the opposite of their usual perspective. The aim is not to 'win' the debate but, afterwards, to share any new perspectives that you have gained.
- **Gathering all the information.** Sometimes we hold an opinion or take a stand based on limited information. Let's choose another hot topic for a discussion, such as the conflict in Israel/Palestine or the Occupy movement outside St Paul's Cathedral. As a group, list what you know about the topic you have chosen. Afterwards, reflect on how much you have learned – and whether this has changed your view.

View from the world church

In the Amazon, the Anglican Church – supported by USPG – is campaigning against illegal logging and the destruction of the traditional homelands of indigenous peoples. Some campaigners even risk their lives: in the last 30 years, more than 800 people have been murdered because of their attempts to defend the rainforest and its people against unscrupulous big business. One Anglican campaigner said: 'All we can do is join those who suffer the consequences, and let the world know what is going on.'

- **Taking action.** Having listened and built up our understanding, we might want to take action. This story from the Amazon introduces the concept of shalom between human beings and the natural world. What actions could you and your church take to support shalom with the environment – locally and globally?



The cost of being a peace-maker

As we approach Good Friday, we consider how the journey of peace can lead to the ultimate sacrifice.

- Read John 15:12-15. Around the world, peace-makers are putting their lives at risk. Share stories of Christians and others who have faced severe hardships for the sake of shalom. What can we learn from these stories?
- Thinking locally, in what concrete ways can your church be a sign of God's reconciling peace through Jesus Christ?
- Thinking globally – both personally and as a church – consider your response to the following statement by Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug: 'If you desire peace, cultivate justice, but at the same time cultivate the fields to produce more bread; otherwise there will be no peace.'
- In some ways, the ultimate sacrifice is to give over our life to the working of the Holy Spirit – to 'die to self' or 'let go and let God', as the saying goes. In the light of this study, consider what you've have learned about shalom and how you will move forward – personally and as a church.

View from the world church

In the Philippines, over 1,200 human rights advocates have been killed in the last ten years after standing up for the poor. USPG is backing the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) which has blamed the government for ignoring the plight of the poor, while allowing international businesses to strip the Philippines of natural resources and destroy rural land. Fr Rex Reyes Jr, of NCCP, said: 'A violation of human rights anywhere is a violation of human rights everywhere.'

- Each week we have looked at the plight of vulnerable and marginalised communities around the world, including persecuted Christians. As a church group, consider what definite actions you can take to support human rights – whether locally or globally – this year.



Renew your commitment to peace

Each week, use the following pledge personally or collectively, as a prayer or as a solemn commitment.

Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace.

You call us to seek shalom in our own lives
and the lives of those around us:

This we now do.

In this broken world, guide us
and give us strength to bring shalom
into our personal lives,
into our church and community,
into our nation
and globally, among people of different faiths and backgrounds.

We pray for a healing of the broken shalom that exists
between men and women,
between rich and poor,
between the powerful and the disempowered, and
between human beings and Creation.

Lord Jesus, you gave us your peace.
Give us openness to embrace this peace,
hope to experience it in our own lives,
and courage to share it throughout the world.

Amen



Make a donation to support vital peace work

Please use the response coupon in this booklet to make a donation to USPG. Your gift will make a massive difference to marginalised communities around the world.

Here are examples of work USPG is supporting:



- Care for widows who survived civil war in Sri Lanka



- Health work in the West Bank, Palestine



- Inter faith dialogue in Pakistan



- Support for persecuted Anglicans in Zimbabwe



- Campaigning for human rights in the Philippines



- The opposition of illegal logging in the Amazon, Brazil



- Care for marginalised communities in Egypt

USPG: Anglicans in World Mission is a faith-based development and mission organisation that supports Anglican Churches around the world in their work alongside marginalised and vulnerable communities.



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