Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

Peace & Justice

A Guide for Leadership Teams
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Peace & Justice

Throughout history, humankind has struggled against tyranny and aggression to find peace and justice. The Old Testament has many stories about evil invaders or leaders that the Israelites faced again and again. The Book of Psalms is filled with laments and praise for a God who can bring both peace and justice to the people: “For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his faithful ones” (Psalm 37:28), or “Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts” (Psalm 85:8). Jesus came with a new kind of peace and justice that many could not understand: “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” (John 14:27).

Peace and justice seem to always to be just out of reach. Just as the Berlin wall was dismantled in Germany, racial hatred brought a new wave of violence and injustices nearby. Many people, especially teens, feel helpless to be an instrument of peace and justice in the world. During this study, youth will look at ways they can nurture peace and justice in their own lives. By being aware of their own actions, youth can pass to others the peace that Jesus has given to them.

Introduction

Peace & Justice is one of a series of modules developed for Older Youth who are in senior high school. The curriculum is based on the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant found in The Book of Common Prayer.

The vision for the curriculum also includes the development of leadership skills for Christian young people. Youth need to be leaders of their own lives by following Christ’s example and making choices that are best for them.

The leadership of the group will come from a team that includes youth and adults. It is recommended that leadership teams of youth and adults meet in advance, perhaps on retreat, to choose and plan for the various areas of study.

This Guide

This guide contains nine sessions, seven of which provide maximum opportunity for choice. Two copies of the guide will be helpful in sharing responsibility for leadership. The first session, “Planning Our Study,” is designed as a planning tool for the remaining eight sessions. It begins with a “Point of Contact”—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis from The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833. The planning session begins, as do all other sessions, with prayer and the scripture study to focus the experience on the
presence of God in our hearts and God’s will for our lives.

The activities in Session 1 are designed to develop the leadership skills of communication, trust, and relationship. Specific help such as Steps for Planning and the Planning Reference Guide is included to facilitate the planning effort for all members of the leadership team. Because pre-planning is not always possible, the first session can also serve as a tool for involving all participants in the choices to be made.

At this time the group will choose youth leaders and develop plans for study of the other eight sessions. In this process, adults will serve as facilitators for youth-directed planning.

Sessions 2 - 8 examine the issues of Spirituality through these individual topics:

- Conflict
- Fairness
- Injustice
- Ethics
- Materialism
- Environmental Issues
- Apathy

Each session begins with prayer, scripture, and a Personal Story. The Personal Stories, written from the perspective of a young person, focus on the heart of the topic for that session. The group may select from a variety of themes and activities developed from those themes the ways in which they want to interact with the materials.

A study of issues and Scripture often leads to more than just awareness of an issue. Session 9 is designed to help youth bring together what they have learned and make decisions about the actions they will take in response. This may be done as individuals or as a group. The final activities include plans for liturgical celebrations, social action, and just plain fun.

Other Modules in the Episcopal Curriculum for Older Youth

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How to Use These Materials

1. DECISIONS ARE MADE BY LEADERSHIP TEAM

This curriculum is based on a model that requires a team of people to lead the sessions and the planning process. The assumption is that this team will consist of several teenagers who will take the key leadership roles and adults who will provide resources and support.

Each issue-based session develops three themes using a specific passage from the Bible as a focus for study. Suggestions for activities, discussion topics, and questions are provided for the three themes. Teams can decide to focus on one or two of the themes or take a broader look using all three.

The members of this team may change during the year as new issues are introduced or the needs of the group change. Leadership skills introduced throughout the module are for the whole group of youth and adults.

2. BUILDING A YOUTH-LED TEAM

The best way to function well as a team is to spend eight to ten hours together before the year begins. The team may decide to meet several times or go on retreat for this purpose. Here is a way to set up an effective team.

- Identify four to six teens who are leaders in school, church, and other settings. Choose two to four adults who are leaders but who also know how to follow.
- Spend time together getting to know each other and building community with one another. This can best be done in a retreat setting by sharing prayer time and meal times as well as planning times.
- Share faith stories in whatever way seems appropriate and comfortable.
- Review all of the materials in the chosen module and begin to make some plans about how best to use this resource. If time permits, it may also be a good time to make plans for future modules. Be aware that new leadership may emerge during the coming year.
- Decide on a plan and delegate responsibilities for planning, leading sessions, and communicating.
- Meet with the entire group, share your plans, and get their input.
- Finalize the plan and begin.
- Be prepared to revise your plan if circumstances change.
3. CORE COMPONENTS

Each session includes the same basic information. Optional activities and sections change as needed in response to the issue and themes. These components are:

- **Session design.** Three elements are essential for every session. 1) A beginning prayer, chosen from *The Book of Common Prayer*, is offered as a way to center the group’s time together. 2) The heart of the session is the three themes and activities that help the participants to gain deeper understandings of the issue. 3) The dismissal brings everyone together as the time ends and sends them out to do God’s work in the world.

- **Objective.** A learning objective is found at the top of page one of every session. The objective guides the team in determining what is to occur as a result of the time spent with this material.

- **Scripture.** With a note to “Begin here,” youth are asked to look at passages from the Bible that relate to the issue. Three different pieces of Scripture provide three different views of the issue. Most sessions include both Old and New Testament references.

- **Commentary.** Each passage from the Bible is briefly explained in a paragraph following the biblical quotation. Leaders who wish to know more may explore larger works such as *The Interpreter’s Bible*, a Bible commentary, or a Bible dictionary.

- **Personal Stories.** Except for the initial planning session, all of the sessions include a Personal Story. Typically it is a story of an experience that youth encounter as a part of their daily lives. In telling these stories to each other the youth will be able to examine their own experiences and be more aware of the feelings of others.

- **Questions.** Suggestions for questions to be used as discussion starters are offered throughout the sessions. An icon easily identifies the questions.

- **Skill Building.** Because a specific goal of these materials is to help youth recognize their strengths and improve their leadership skills, certain skills are emphasized in each session. These will be developed through the optional activities.
• Optional Activities. A goal of the Episcopal Curriculum for Youth is to offer a wide range of options that allow flexibility within groups and meet the needs of different types of groups. Leadership teams are invited to use their own creativity in choosing other games or activities they enjoy. The following options will be available throughout various sessions:

1. Creative activities to stimulate the artistic talents of teens.

2. Games to build trust and skills as well as explore issues.

3. Movies, TV Shows, and Print Media that illustrate the theme presented in today’s time.

4. Literature, books, and short stories, that develop the theme as well as those created by the individual members of a group.

5. Music from The Hymnal 1982 and from contemporary and Christian resources relevant to the topic.

6. Field trips to places that provide an enhancement of the theme.

7. Service projects that arise from the themes to carry the mission of the church beyond the walls of the classroom or the church.

8. Posters. A set of six posters representative of the themes within each issue are provided separately. The posters are designed to stimulate thoughts, discussion, and reflection on the various concepts.

4. SAMPLE SESSION

After the leadership team has met and the planned study of the module, the group begins to meet. A model for a session might look something like this:

1. Planning for a session. The leadership team has selected Theme 2 as the way they wish to approach Session 2. One or two members of the group are assigned to be leaders. They prepare for the group to participate in several of the discussions and activities for Theme 2. Any necessary speakers or other outside arrangements are made in advance.
2. **Begin with Prayer.** Starting together with prayer is a way to help
the group focus their attention. A prayer from *The Book of Common
Prayer* is printed above Theme 1. Leaders may use this prayer,
choose another, or compose one of their own. The prayer can be said
by one person, or everyone can pray together. This may also be a
time for sharing of any concerns of those present or for those absent.

3. **Scripture.** These materials are unique because they look at issues
through specific passages in the Bible. The leaders read the desig-
nated Scripture and use the questions to talk about the relationship
of the Scripture to the theme.

4. **Activities.** The group participates in one or more of the activities
furnished in the guide. The choice will depend on the interests of the
group and the time frame of the gathering.

5. **Preparing for Next Time.** A few minutes before the end of the
time, announce any coming events and give leaders for the next
session an opportunity to give a preview.

6. **Dismissal.** Just as the start of time together needs prayer for focus,
so does the closing. The participants share any concerns to be held
in prayer during the coming days and close with the “Dismissal,”
also printed above the beginning of Theme 1.

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5. **SOME GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION**

   A key to the effectiveness of these materials is to help the group learn
how to talk with one another about the issues that affect their lives and
faith.

   **Sharing of individual stories.** People are given the opportunity to
share the things that are important in their own lives. This will become
easier as the group members grow in trust for each other. Sometimes this
may be difficult or impossible for an individual. This person needs to be
allowed to pass if they wish.

   **Issues, themes, stories.** There are many interesting topics and
stories that serve as a “launching pad” for rich and deep discussion.
Choose those that will engage those who participate.

   **Active learning.** There are many opportunities for trips, visits, and
other activities to bring great energy into your study. Your team can
decide what works best for your group and plan times for these events
to take place.

**Speakers and guests.** There are many people in your community with fascinating stories. The team can find the right people who will have an influence on your group.

**Statement to the church.** Teens have valuable things to say about and to their church. This can be incorporated into the program around any issue that the members of your group feel moved to respond to.

Here are some simple guidelines that can be used to facilitate sharing and community building. It is a good idea to discuss these guidelines with your team and add or delete suggestions from your group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Make and commitment to all sessions (continuity).</td>
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<td>2. Include everyone, even yourself, in the conversation.</td>
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<td>3. Be real—be honest.</td>
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<td>4. Send “I” messages—share feelings.</td>
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<td>5. Talk about your own experiences.</td>
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<td>7. Listen, understand, but do not fix.</td>
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<td>8. Be specific.</td>
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<td>9. Respect confidentiality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Allow the Spirit, within and beyond, to work in this group.</td>
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6. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The setting where your session takes place is crucial to the success of your program. In short, the less it is like a classroom the more you will be able to facilitate learning, sharing, and growth. Pay attention to the environment you are providing, as this will have a great impact on the learning process. Consider three possibilities to create the desired environment.

- **The youth room.** One good alternative is a room at the church designated for young people and arranged with comfortable chairs, couches, etc. This provides a comfortable and inviting atmosphere.

- **Meeting in a home.** Holding meetings at someone's home near the church can be a great asset. This provides a casual, comfortable setting that usually enhances the process. This may cause some problems but it is well worth investigating. Also, people may be more open to making their homes available if it is done on a rotating basis. Don't rule out this possibility without carefully considering it.

- **Gathering in a restaurant.** A restaurant can provide a wonderful opportunity for a meal, fellowship, and learning. Often young people who wouldn't come to the church will feel comfortable in this setting. Of course, this will raise some financial considerations, but these are not impossible. You could also consider meeting at a restaurant on an occasional basis as a way of promoting outreach and for celebration.
For Members of the Leadership Team

A General Philosophy of a Teaching Ministry

God made all people with great intelligence, skills, talents, feelings, opinions, and ideas regardless of their age. All people are growing in their faith journey. Two key words in working with others are value and respect. Never assume that you know more than they do or that your or their experience in life gives either one more value. Instead, enter into a learning adventure, side by side. You will discover as much as you impart. You will be impacted as much as you impact others. Keep an open mind and heart to all that is said, felt, and shared; and experience God doing greater things than you could pray or ask for.

Who are Older Youth?

Volumes have been written on the lives of teens and adolescent development. The purpose here is to give the leadership team some keys about what young people are like. Youth who are on the leadership team may agree or disagree. A lively conversation about these issues will enhance the ability of the team to work together.

Characteristics of Older Youth:

- THEY LIKE TO HAVE FUN
  Fun is not the opposite of learning and should not be something to avoid. On the contrary, people learn best when they are having a good time. When they are having a good time, there is often chaos. Don't be afraid of a little commotion if most of the group is on task. Encourage each other to have fun in class and see how much you can learn.

- THEY HAVE SKILLS, TALENTS, AND ENERGY
  Teens are not empty vessels waiting to be filled up. They are people blessed with skills, talents, and intelligence. Draw upon the rich resources of the members of your group and know that there is much to offer, to share, and to teach to others. The energy of the group can deeply enhance the learning experience.
• THEY ARE PEOPLE IN TRANSITION
  Youth are in a transition stage of life. The essential element is change as a person moves from dependence to independence. The closer a person gets to graduation from high school, the more this reality will set in. Youth need freedom to make choices with adult support. Never underestimate the abilities of each other or the need for adult cooperation and support.

• THEY ARE SELF-RELIANT AND ACCOUNTABLE
  Most youth want to be self-reliant. By this point they have had enough experiences to form their own opinions and be able to make their own decisions. Of course, like everyone else, they will both succeed and fail. Encourage the group to take responsibility for the choices they select and hold them accountable to the agreements they make. Remember that everyone deserves input on decisions that affect his or her life.

• THEY LIKE MAKING CHOICES
  Youth can and do make good decisions. Our gift to others is to help them to develop their abilities to make good decisions and to treat them as capable human beings.

• THEY NEED TO BE HEARD
  One of the best tools you can provide for members of the group are opportunities to speak out and be heard, and to listen to others with respect. It is important to set the example not by what you say but by what you do. Your ability to listen to others and respond to their ideas and comments will be a model for developing good listening skills. Being heard for even a moment can be a powerful experience. This is true for people of any age.

• THEY WANT TO BE VALUED AND SIGNIFICANT
  How you treat the people in your group is much more important than what is taught. If all members feel important and significant, they are more likely to learn something. It is also crucial to pay attention to how the members of the group treat each other. The atmosphere of the classroom can inspire or destroy the whole experience. Encouraging all members of the group to treat themselves and others with extraordinary respect is one of the most important lessons to teach.

• THEY ARE LOOKING FOR A FAITH OF THEIR OWN
  Teenagers are seeking their own opinions, values, and faith. Identity comes from becoming your own person. Youth often reject much of their parents’ faith. This is an important sign that new values and a
stronger faith are being formed. Embrace the searching process and affirm the importance of the ability to question, doubt, and think. Your response to doubts will encourage or discourage others’ journeys to spiritual knowledge. You can’t teach faith but you can grow together in your knowledge and love of the Lord.

**RELATIONAL MINISTRY**
This curriculum is based on building relationships in three ways. Be constantly aware of the importance of these three dynamics of relationships.

1. The first, and most important, is the relationship between each person and God. This should be an ongoing focus in whatever is taught, discussed, or explored.
2. This second is the relationship between young people and adults. The adult's role is not that of teacher but rather one of “mature friend.” One-to-one relationships take on special significance in this model.
3. The third is the peer relationship. How the members of the group treat each other enables or destroys the building of a caring community.

**OWNERSHIP**
If youth are going to be truly involved in a program of learning, they must have a sense of ownership. The wise teen will learn how to share the program and build a sense of ownership together with the adults. This process can be improved and simplified by the formation of a team in the beginning with youth taking responsibility for leadership roles.

**Who Are The Adults?**
Adults who work with youth are more than teachers. To foster effective teaching and learning among youth, the Church needs adult leaders who are grounded in their own faith and identity as Christians. Effective leaders are excited about growing and learning and enjoy working with youth in a team relationship. They have high energy, genuine enthusiasm, and a passionate interest in youth.

Youth can have input into which adults are selected for the leadership team. Seek out people who care about youth, have a strong faith, and are committed to the program. Adults who want to be kids or who don’t keep commitments are not effective over time. The following points should be carefully considered as leadership teams are formed.
Characteristics of Effective Adult Leaders:

- **THEY ARE ROOTED IN THEIR FAITH AND COMMITTED TO JESUS CHRIST**
  
  Who adults are speaks loudly to teens. They don't have to be biblical scholars or perfect Christians. It also doesn't mean that they no longer have any doubts or are at the end of their own spiritual journey. Good leaders have a strong relationship with God and are comfortable with their faith.

- **THEY ARE WILLING TO BE A PART OF A TEAM**
  
  For some adults working with teenagers as they grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord is an overwhelming task. It is essential for teens to understand the sense of responsibility that comes with this task. Wise teens know that they are only part of a teaching team and that adults are accountable to other people in the church who may or may not care about the activities of young people. Adults need to be able to let go of their need to be in charge and still have the ability to use their gifts as part of the team.

- **THEY ARE FUN AND ENJOY BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**
  
  Adults should be able to relax and enjoy their time with youth. Effective adults know how to have fun and to share joy with young people without giving up expectations of them. Adults must find their own balance of fun and seriousness. Affirming joy and excitement with group, however, is essential for the adults' full participation.

- **THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT PEOPLE THAN FACTS**
  
  The *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* provides an excellent base of information to learn more about God, Scripture, and the Church. The sessions incorporate this learning with the issues that Affect young people's lives. Effective adults are aware of issues that are unique to their groups and look for ways to include these ideas in the work of the group. Adults should give priority to what youth are thinking and feeling.

- **THEY HAVE A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP**
  
  Adults are committed and consistent. Steadfastness of faith and commitment to the class will make a real difference in the long run. Leaders should focus on the overall success of the program and not on any one moment, hour, or week.
A Final Word

Remember that this is a process of growing in the knowledge and love of the Lord. There will be ups and downs, successes and failures, joys and frustrations. Often you will never know the impact you have made on another person’s life. So much happens intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually in individuals’ lives that they themselves are not aware of the people who have had an impact on them. Trust in each other, trust in yourself and, most of all, trust in God.

For More Ideas


Objective

Youth will be able to plan a study of peace and justice issues that relate to their lives.

A Prayer attributed to St. Francis

Lord make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
   where there is injury, pardon;
   where there is discord, union;
   where there is doubt, faith;
   where there is despair, hope;
   where there is darkness, light;
   where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
   to be understood as to understand;
   to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
   it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
   and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer, p.833
Prayer
Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Begin Here: Study Scripture

A. Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.

Hebrews 12:14-15

Commentary: The Letter to the Hebrews was written to persuade Jewish Christians to remain firm in the faith. Striving for peace in the Christian community requires effort so that all may see the grace of God. The overall message of Hebrews is to be steadfast, persevere and have faith in God.

B. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Amos 5:24

Commentary: The shepherd Amos was called by God to preach to Israel at a time of great national wealth. Justice for the poor had dried up. God used Amos to call the corrupt Israelites to dispense justice as reliably and evenly as a flowing river or face the consequences of destruction.

Questions
♦ Discuss the phrase in the Hebrews passage “pursue peace with everyone.”
♦ Can we have peace if others do not?
♦ What is the “root of bitterness”? What roots of bitterness can you identify in our world? In your life?
♦ How is Amos’ time similar or different from our own time?
♦ What does the image of justice say about the effects of justice?
♦ What was it like for a poor shepherd to preach justice to a rich and powerful nation?

Point of Contact

A Prayer attributed to St. Francis
Read and discuss the “Prayer attributed to St. Francis” on the previous page or on p. 833 of The Book of Common Prayer. Think about this prayer as you work with the questions about the scripture passages.
• What does it mean to be an instrument for God?
• Have you ever thought of yourself as an instrument for God? In what way?
• What does it mean to be an instrument of God’s peace?
• How would the words be different if the prayer began, “Lord make me an instrument of your justice”?
• Write a new prayer that begins with “Lord make me an instrument of your justice.”

Activities

I Am An Instrument
Give each person a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Ask participants to write the words “Peace” and “Justice” at the top of the sheet. Think of qualities that make people instruments for God’s peace or God’s justice, such as reconciler, thoughtfulness, or an advocate. Participants can work in pairs or small groups if they wish. Bring in several dictionaries to help stimulate thought.
• Discuss the words you found.
• What do they mean for you?
• How do they help promote peace and justice?
• Display the sheets for reference throughout your study of Peace and Justice.

Images of Peace and Justice
Amos uses the image of a stream of water to describe justice. What is your image?
Before the meeting collect newspapers, magazines, scissors, glue, several large sheets of poster board and other art materials such as yarn, glitter, and stickers. Label the poster board either peace or justice or use both words. Find pictures that reflect the themes of peace or justice and arrange them in a collage in the boards.
• Talk about the images and pictures that were selected or created.

Working For Peace
Create a poster entitled “Working for Peace.” Begin by attaching drawings or photographs of group members. You will need paper and drawing materials such as markers, crayons, and pencils or an instant. Add props that relate to images in the St. Francis prayer, such as:
• Seeds for sowing love,
• A candle for light,
• A musical instrument, or
• Other implements of peace
Choose a theme or quality from the St. Francis prayer for each person. Place the items on the poster board with names under the picture. Discuss individual themes and the overall picture the group presents. Leave the poster up during your study of Peace and Justice.
Steps for Planning

Note: If you made the “Working for Peace” poster, find a way to include photographs or drawings of participants who may not have been at the planning session or who joined the group late.

1. Provide copies of the Planning Reference Guide on the next page for each member of the group. Review the themes for Sessions 2 through 8. Session 9 will be used to reflect back on your study of Peace and Justice. Divide the sessions among individuals or small groups as evenly as possible. Allow enough time for groups or individuals to review their sessions and answer the questions on the Guide.

2. Discuss the topics for each session.
   - Which topics have the greatest interest?
   - Do you want to cover every session?
     On a piece of newsprint, rank the topics in order of interest and priority.

3. Display and discuss the six posters in the packet. Decide how, when and where they will be used.
   - Poster 1: Conflict
   - Poster 2: Fairness
   - Poster 3: Injustice
   - Poster 4: Ethics
   - Poster 5: Materialism
   - Poster 6: Apathy

4. After choosing the topics and the order you will be studying them, select leaders to coordinate the planning and leadership for each week. The coordinator does not have to be the leader. The responsibilities should be shared among the group. Encourage members to volunteer for sessions which interest them.

5. Pass out copies of the sessions to those who have agreed to be coordinators. On a sheet of newsprint, create a calendar of with names of sessions, dates, and coordinators. The group should discuss field trips, speakers, movie nights, or other projects that may take more time. Put these on the calendar also, and assign at least one person to coordinate special events. Make copies for each member of the group, or post it where all can refer to it.

6. During the planning process, give individuals a chance to comment on the results. At key points ask the group to comment on the process.
   - How does everyone feel about the decisions we have made?
   - Can everyone live with them? If not, how can we change before going any further?

7. Discuss accountability for the group and selected leaders.
   - What if someone can not make the meeting? How are replacements found?
   - Who makes changes after the planning meeting?
   - What happens if someone does not follow through?
   - Are reminder calls necessary?

8. Planning Hints:
   - If you decide to explore various peer mediation models in Session 2, ask the group to help locate different models. Find at least two.
   - If outside trips are planned be sure to get parent permission slips approved for transportation.
   - If trips to shelters, detention facilities or half way houses are planned, allow enough lead time to contact staff to coordinate tours, proper staffing, and supervision.

9. Evaluate the planning session:
   - How well do we work together?
   - Were we good listeners? Did each person have a chance to participate?
   - Was everyone comfortable with the decisions that were made?
   - What did we learn?
Questions

♦ What surprises you in this session?
♦ What ideas do you like in this session?
♦ Which scriptures and themes would you want to focus on?

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<td>In the Midst of Enemies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Galatians 2:11-14</td>
<td>Be Wise in What Is Good</td>
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Peace & Justice

Conflict

Objective
Youth will be able to discuss ways of solving conflict in a positive way.

Personal Story
In our school we always have some kids who are “wanna be’s.” You know—kids who want to be included in a certain group, but aren’t.

Ronnie and LaChelle were wanna be’s. Ronnie was quiet, serious, and always using big words. And she had a temper! LaChelle was wild and funny. She was game for anything. They were always getting into it with each other. They were also competing to be in our group. We loved to egg them on.

One day at school, we found out that Ronnie liked this boy name Jerrod. He was weird, but we thought the whole thing was cute. Ronnie was so sensitive about it. So we talked and laughed about it and teased Ronnie a little.

LaChelle was sitting on a desk as people started coming into class. Jerrod was already in the room when Ronnie walked in. Ronnie looked kind of funny. We were all saying, “Look at Ronnie—looking all shy.”

Next thing we know, LaChelle yells out in front of everybody, “Hey Ronnie, why you want to look all serious? You know you won’t get no play from Jerrod with that serious face!”

The room went dead silent. Everyone looked from LaChelle, who was laughing, to Jerrod and then to Ronnie. Jerrod shook his head and turned away. Slowly Ronnie put her books down on her desk and walked over to LaChelle. Someone said, “Watch out, here she comes with her big words.”

LaChelle turned her head just in time to get a face full of Ronnie’s fingernails as Ronnie tried to grab LaChelle’s hair with both hands. She pulled LaChelle right off the desk and down on the floor. Then they really got into it. Skirts, nails, and curses were flying everywhere!

The teacher pulled them apart, and both were sent home. We didn’t mean for this to happen. I guess we pushed a little too hard.

SESSION 2

Scripture
Psalm 27:11-14
Romans 16:17-19
Galatians 2:11-14

Skill Focus
Conflict
Forgiveness
 Prayer
O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the Human Family
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 In the Midst of Enemies

Begin Here: Study Scripture

Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.
Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.
I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!

Psalm 27:11-14

Commentary: Psalms are prayers in the form of songs. This is a prayer expressing trust that God will protect the writer from enemies and violence. This passage is the lament section of Psalm 27, but it ends on a positive note. Although the enemies appear strong, listening to God’s teaching will provide a way out for the psalmist.

Questions
♦ Are there people in your life who are your enemies?
♦ Why does the psalmist seek a level path? Is there a level path in your life?
♦ What does it mean to wait on the Lord? Was there a time in your life when you waited on the Lord?
♦ A lament in an expression of sorrow or regret. What lament would you share with God?

Activities

A Model for Conflict
Collect several different kinds of peer mediation models. These are available at most libraries or from guidance and counseling offices at your school. If possible find at least two different models. Describe them to the group, then invite the group to identify the similarities and differences among the models. Write them on a piece of newsprint. Discuss the pros and cons of each.
♦ What kind of situations does each address?
♦ What are the goals of the models?
♦ What is valued in each model?
From the models you have explored, create a peer mediation process that will work for your group. Share it with other groups in the church.

Handling Conflict
Reread the personal story. Discuss it together as one group or divide into smaller groups. Use the following questions to guide your discussion. If you break into groups, be sure each has a set of questions.
• What is happening in the story?
• What are the problems?
• Who are the players in this conflict?
• Does the story relate to situations you have experienced or heard about?
• What makes you lose your temper?
• How did the desire to be accepted affect the outcome?
• Have you known someone who desperately wanted to be a part of a group? What happened?
Create a role play about the conflict in the Personal Story, a conflict you create, or one you have experienced or know about. In the role play demonstrate different solutions to the conflict. For example, a person from the “in” group steps forward and intervenes before the conflict intensifies. Afterward, talk about ways to control conflict that arises in the group, at school, or other places, such as sporting events.

That Tears It!
Examine and discuss the Resource Poster No. 1, Conflict. Identify the images in the poster and how they relate to conflict.
• What is happening to the heart?
• What are the people doing?
• What is the role of the other images?
• Where is God?
At the top of a sheet of paper write, “My Life.” Make two columns underneath: label one “What tears it apart; and the other, “What brings it back together.” Work individually or in groups to make the lists. When everyone is finished, share and discuss them.
• What are the similarities?
• Where are the differences?
• Where is God?
Use the prayer on this page to ask God to help you keep your life whole.
2 Be Wise in What Is Good

 Begin Here: Study Scripture

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil.

Romans 16:17-19

Commentary: In Romans Paul writes about the gospel and its power to save humankind. In this passage, he warns Christians to be observant and to avoid teachers who promote themselves instead of the gospel of Christ. He earnestly urges them to use wisdom in deciding what is good and to remain innocent of evil that is a part of the world.

Questions

- What does it mean to be wise in what is good?
- How do you know what is good?
- Why is flattery a problem?
- What does it mean to avoid those who cause dissension and offense?
- How can you be innocent of evil?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Can you be a person who causes dissension if you do nothing?
- How did the “in” group escalate the conflict?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.

- How does deception tear people apart?
- How does God help us reach out to others?

Activities

Flattering Words

As a group or in groups of three or four, make a list of quality any person may have. Next to each quality, write a flattering statement.

Select one of the lists at random. Divide into two groups. Tell everyone that a person described in the selected list has just been named CEO of a major corporation. Ask one group to use the qualities from the list to write a press release about this person. Ask the second group to write a release using the flattering statements that is being prepared by a person who wants to impress the boss.

- What is the difference between the two press releases?
- What is the effect of flattering words?
- Can flattery actually be demeaning? How?
- Does flattery sometimes mask true gifts? How?

Quickly name all the qualities you associate with Jesus, and write them on a piece of newsprint. Ask each person to look at the list and identify one quality to live up to. Ask God to help you follow Christ’s example.

Finding Wisdom

Brainstorm several scenarios of situations where there is potential for conflict. Remember that sometimes confrontations are necessary for personal safety; and avoiding this kind of conflict might lead to bigger problems. For example:

- You see a friend shoplifting.
- You see a friend pouring alcohol into the punch at a party.
- Friends suggest that you hitchhike to get home

Act out the scenarios, and then discuss the situations.

- Has this ever happened to you?
- What did you do? What do you wish you had done?
- What is the difference between confrontation and conflict?

Close by asking God to help you recognize and be wise in what is good.

Speaker

Invite a speaker to talk to the group about conflict management, anger management, or crisis intervention. Afterward, discuss ways to use what you have learned in your own life and to help others. Share this information with others in your church by writing an article for the church newsletter or making a presentation to a group of younger teens.
3 Calling Friends to Account

Begin Here: Study Scripture

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Galatians 2:11-14

Commentary: In Galatians, Paul asks Peter (also called Cephas) if he believes Gentiles must become good Jews before they can become Christians. Peter had been wavering between both sides of this issue. Paul confronted Peter about the hypocrisy and inconsistencies of his behavior that had hindered the spread of the gospel.

Questions

♦ Can you think of examples of inconsistent behavior among your friends?
♦ Have you ever had to call a friend to account? What happened?
♦ Who are you accountable to?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ Did anyone in the story need to be called to account?
♦ Do you feel any responsibility for your influence on others?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.
♦ Which images in the picture relate to friends helping each other?
♦ Can calling a friend to account cause conflict?

Activities

Listen to the Beat

Bring in a CD player and at least five examples of popular songs, perhaps from the Top 10 listings. Listen to the songs and ask each person to record on a sheet of paper what the song is calling you to do. Share the lists and discuss the following questions:

- Who is speaking? Who are they speaking to?
- Should this performer be responsible for the influence of their music?
- Could you imagine people acting out suggestions from the songs?
- Does music and other media contribute to conflict?
- What can you do about it?

Listen to the song “What If” by Reba McEntire.
- What do the lyrics say we should do?
- Who is responsible for changing things?

Think about a friend who may be doing something harmful. Ask God to help you call this person to account.

God Calling us to Account

Read the Baptismal Covenant in The Book of Common Prayer on p. 304. On a sheet of newsprint, list the expectations of the Covenant about belief and behavior. Discuss how God calls us to account.

Next look at a Prayer for the Candidates said by the congregation at baptism on p. 305. Note that in the Service of Baptism, the covenant is renewed by all present. List and discuss the responsibility of the community to each other and those being baptized.

Find a place in the room or somewhere nearby where you can be alone. Spend some time thinking about yourself and your friends. Identify at least one time when you didn't call a friend to account.

- What were the consequences of your inaction?
- What kept you from acting?
- What do we promise to do in the Baptismal Covenant?
- What would you do differently the next time?

Come back together as a group to ask God to help you live up to the promises of the covenant, especially in the way you treat your friends.

Liturgy

Plan a liturgy for your group to renew the terms of the Baptismal Covenant (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 304-305). Rewrite the promises in your own words. For example, “We will love our neighbors by holding them to account,” or “We will strive for peace by not encouraging conflict among our friends.” Think about using art or drama as part of the liturgy. For example, use some of the role plays suggested in this session in place of a homily. If you have an offertory, consider using the sentence at the bottom of column one.

Offertory Sentence

If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 376
Objective
Youth will be able to compare what is fair in the eyes of the world and in God's reign.

Personal Story
Miss Lilly is an old lady who hangs out at our church. She shows up whenever people gather, but she never attends the church service. She just hangs out in the parish hall, eats whatever is sitting out, and drinks coffee.

One Sunday, I arrived early, and Miss Lilly was there too. I was real nervous being alone with her and looked for something to do. Miss Lilly was shuffling around where the coffee and cakes would be set out.

Suddenly Miss Lilly turned to me. She said, “Hey girl, you scared of me? I see you running around here like you own the place, talking all the time. Now, you ain't got a word to say. Come here and help me.”

I reluctantly followed her, wondering what she wanted. What was she up to? She led me to the back door of the building where her old shopping cart, full of junk, was wedged in the door. “Here, help me get this in,” Miss Lilly ordered.

I asked her, “Why don’t you just leave this thing outside? I don’t think anybody is going to bother it.”

Miss Lilly’s mouth opened in disbelief, and she looked at me with suspicion on her face. I had made her angry. “No girl, this here is all I got in the world. You help me get this right now!” So Miss Lilly and I struggled together to pull the cart inside.

Soon she was telling me about all the things in the cart. They held many memories for her. She always kept her important things right with her. We talked more, and the parish hall filled with people. The room also filled with her memories.

She spoke about her childhood. She wondered about some of the terrible things that had happened in her life. She talked about losing her home and then her family. She had children somewhere. Her life seemed hard. It was hard to find a safe, warm place to sleep. It was hard to find food. It was hard to find people who understand her and whom she can trust.

I looked around at the people who had come in. Most of them kept their distance from Miss Lilly and me. I don’t think anyone there was worried about getting enough to eat today or wondered where they would sleep tonight.

Why did so many bad things have to happen to one person? I don’t have any answers, but I’ll never treat Miss Lilly the way I used to.

Scripture
- Ezekiel 33:17-20
- Matthew 20:8-16
- Acts 20:33-35

Skill Focus
Fairness
Trust
Prayer
Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our [gifts], and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the Right Use of God’s Gifts
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 827

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Is God Just?

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Yet your people say, “The way of the Lord is not just,” when it is their own way that is not just. When the righteous turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, they shall die for it. And when the wicked turn from their wickedness, and do what is lawful and right, they shall live by it. Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is not just.” O house of Israel, I will judge all of you according to your ways!

Ezekiel 33:17-20

Commentary: After Jerusalem fell to Babylon, the Israelites in exile accused God of being unfair. Even in a national crisis they failed to see the reality of their plight. The prophet Ezekiel replies that God does not act unjustly. If God judged the people only on God’s standards of justice, no one could hope to live. Instead, God’s justice is cushioned by mercy and forgiveness. Israel must accept responsibility for its current situation.

☐ Questions
♦ What is the way of the Lord?
♦ What was the law of life that Ezekiel was trying to get across?
♦ Why is this message difficult to accept?

Option: Discuss Resources Poster No. 2.
♦ Look at the different images of fairness in the poster. Is life fair?
♦ Is God’s justice the same as ours? How is it different or the same?

☐ Activities

God’s Judgment?
Read the personal story or ask a volunteer to tell it. Divide into groups and discuss the following questions:

- What assumptions do you sometimes make about people like Miss Lilly or other people you encounter?
- What can the person telling the story give to Miss Lilly?
- If you were Miss Lilly, what would you want people to know about you?

In pairs, take the roles of the narrator and Miss Lilly and interview each other. Have you ever thought about poverty from the homeless point of view?

- Identify one activity you could do as a group to help people like Miss Lilly. For example, you could meet at the church one Saturday to fix casseroles for a soup kitchen. Or, you could volunteer to help clean a homeless shelter. If your church works with the homeless in some capacity, find out how you could be more involved.

Where is God?

Bring in newspapers and news magazines from the previous week. Divide into two groups. Ask the first group to look for articles of miraculous events or good deeds. The second group will look for stories and pictures about crime or tragedy.

- Discuss the articles in each category with the entire group. Refer to Resource Poster No. 2 as you talk about fairness of situations
  - Why do some people have so much and other have so little?
  - Why do miracles happen for some and not others?
  - Why are prayers answered differently?
  - What does God have to do with this?

- Write brief prayers to address each of the situations in the articles and pictures. Combine them into a Prayers of the People that can be used during your study of Peace and Justice.

Going Out

Learn more about the penalty phase of justice by visiting a local jail or detention center, gathering information about the penal system in your state, or inviting a speaker to talk to the group about the penal system. Share and discuss what you learn and impressions you had. As you gather information, reflect on two questions:

- What does God have to do with the penal system?
- How does God’s justice differ from human justice?

- If there is a prison ministry program in your community, find out how you could be involved.

Hint: Personal contact with prisoners should be avoided. However, you can support the ministry by writing anonymous cards, preparing baked goods, or through prayer.
2 The First Shall Be Last

Begin Here: Study Scripture

“. . . When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Matthew 20:8-16

Commentary: This passage contains the final scenes from the parable called the Laborers in the Vineyard. Workers hired early in the day complain because they are paid the same as those hired late in the day. The parable tells of the willingness of the landowner to keep an agreement. Sometime God’s actions do not fit human ideas of fairness.

Questions

♦ What do the workers want?
♦ Is this situation fair?
♦ What is the message Jesus is trying to give to his followers?
♦ Has anything like this ever happened to you? What did you do about it?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ Did Miss Lilly do anything to deserve being homeless?
♦ Did others in the church work harder than Miss Lilly?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.
♦ Look at the different staircases. Some of the figures can run up steps, while others face difficult climbs. How are these like life?
♦ Why do some people have it easy, while others have to fight for everything they get?

Activities

The Laborers in the Vineyard

Read the entire parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard found in Matthew 20:1-16. Discuss the parable using the questions. Invent a contemporary version of the parable that addresses the issues Jesus raised.

♦ Who are the workers?
♦ Who is the boss and the manager?
♦ What kind of work will they be doing?
♦ How much pay are they given?

Ask each person to create an artistic rendering of the new parable. It can be a drawing, poetry, rap song, short story, or improvisation. After everyone has shown his or her work, go back and compare your creations to the original parable.

♦ Did you capture the same ideas Jesus did?
♦ Does this story seem fair or unfair?

Look at the creations while you ask God to help you deal with fairness in your life.

The Great Debate

Select one of the following topics for a debate. Choose one that the group is interested in and that you can easily find information about on the internet or at the library.

Affirmative Action  The Disabilities Act
Welfare Reform  Health Care
Scholarships  Other Subjects

Hint: If possible, ask the group at an earlier session to tell you which topics interest them the most.

Bring in background materials on the topic you select. Narrow the topic to one sentence. For example, Resolved: the Disabilities Act gives everyone equal access to facilities and the workplace. Form three groups. Group one argues for the issue, group two argues against the issue, and group three serves as judges. In narrowing the topic, consider these questions:

♦ What are the policies attempting to address?
♦ What are the advantages and disadvantages to the policy?
♦ Does the policy benefit the intended populations?

Give each group time to prepare a five minute statement on the issue. While groups one and two prepare for debate, group three prepares decision making criteria. After the debate and the judges’ decision, discuss the exercise.

♦ Did you change your mind about this issue?
♦ Was it difficult defending a stance you disagreed with?

Consider sharing your debate with another group in the church.

Who is First and Last in Pay?

Research which jobs in the United States get the highest salaries. This information is available through the internet or from a library. Share your findings with the group and discuss the fairness of wages.

♦ What do high paying jobs have in common?
♦ What kinds of skills or education do they require?
♦ What do your findings say about society’s values?
♦ How does this kind of information effect your career choice?

Make a poster to display the information you gathered. Share it with a group of adults to get their reactions.
3 Giving of Ourselves

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

“. . . I coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothing. You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Acts 20:33-35

Commentary: The Book of Acts is the story of the Christian community after the resurrection of Jesus. It links the gospel story with the work of the apostles. In this farewell letter to the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul reminds them of his selfless work among them. His own work is an example of Jesus’s message that giving is more rewarding than receiving.

☐ Questions
♦ How were Paul’s actions an example of Jesus’ words?
♦ What does it mean to covet the belongings of others?
♦ What do you covet that others have?
♦ Who are considered the weak in our society?
♦ How do you support the weak?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ What did the church give to Miss Lilly?
♦ What did she give the people in the church?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.
♦ Where in the poster are figures giving of themselves for others?
♦ How can you help someone overcome an unfair situation?

☐ Activities

More Blessed to Give

The saying of Jesus quoted in the scripture passage is not found in any of the gospels. It is, however, in keeping with the teachings of Jesus. Ask the group to share their experiences of helping or giving to others. Talk about these experiences.

• Do you need to be involved in a service project to help others?
• Is it harder to give something, such as your time, to a sibling than to a friend or a stranger?
• How do you feel about yourself when you give to others?
• How did Jesus’ actions support the saying found in Acts?

During the meeting time or in the next week, write a brief story or poem or draw a picture about the experience you shared with the group. Compile the stories, poems, and drawings into a booklet. Photocopy the book for the group, and share it with others in the church.

Personal Inventory

Give each person a plate and a number of tokens. Use pennies as tokens or cut colored index cards into smaller pieces. Ask the group to take a personal inventory of everything they own, including shoes, jackets, CDs, tapes, jeans, jewelry, computers, and sports equipment. Pass out “price lists” or write a list on a chalk board or poster. For example, jeans: 1 token; tennis shoes: 2 tokens; CDs: four tokens.

Ask each person to place tokens on his or her plate to “pay” for the items in the inventory. If you run out of tokens, bargain with those who have tokens left. Or, you may have to give up some of your inventory. If you still have tokens, you can “buy” items from another person.

• How did you decide what to give up or to “buy”?
• Did you have things others coveted?
• How will losing some of your belongings change your life?

Ask each person to look over the inventory and think about how possessions or the desire for things can control their lives. Identify one possession to give up for a week that will make a difference in your life. For example, give up computer games for a week to find out how much time you spend playing them. Share your discoveries with a partner.

What’s In It for Me?

Plan a work day with proceeds to go to a charity selected by the group. Advertise in the church newsletter or on a community bulletin board that youth will be available on this day to do odd jobs for pay. During the planning session talk about the question, “What is in this for me?”

If possible, ask someone to capture the workers on film, either still photos or video. Show the pictures or the video when the group gets together to discuss the experience.

• Was the experience what you thought it would be? Why or why not?
• What was in it for you?
Peace & Justice

Injustice

Objective
Youth will be able to identify injustice in their community and the world.

Personal Story
I live in a big city that has its share of problems. My parents decided to live in the city instead of the suburbs because they like being close to the action.

I have always gone to public schools. I realized that some of my classmates lived very differently than I did, but we managed to get along. My mom and dad had always been active in the PTA, and helped with fundraisers to buy more books and other supplies for the schools.

Now that I’m in high school, I go to a special school for the arts. It’s great. We have terrific teachers who spend a lot of time after school helping us in our music, fine arts, or drama.

Occasionally I visit some of my friends from junior high who went to other schools. I have one friend who made the junior varsity football team. He invited me to a game one Friday night. His team was playing an away game against a school in a nearby suburb.

I couldn’t believe this place. They had their own small stadium, with lights, a running track, several baseball fields, and even more lacrosse and field hockey fields. My friend’s team practiced in a rough, grassy area behind the school that didn’t even have lines or goal posts.

Later I performed at a school that was just a few miles from my house, but in the county. This place had its own library! Whenever I do research, I have to go to the downtown branch of the city library.

Walking down the halls, I noticed that their lockers actually have doors and locks. Most of ours are don’t. I was surprised that I didn’t have to go through a metal detector to get in, and there was more than one entrance. At our school, security doors can be used in an emergency, but there’s only one way in.

The other thing that’s different is the textbooks. Everybody seemed to be carrying around at least three or four books. In the city schools, there are only enough books to be used in the classroom. No one ever gets to take one home, and sometimes these are so old, they fall apart in your hands.

Why should kids who live a few miles apart have such different schools? Did we do something to deserve this?

SESSION 4

Scripture
Deuteronomy 16:18-20
Matthew 5:38-48
Psalm 51:10-13

Skill Focus
Relationships
Forgiveness
Prayer
Look with pity, O heavenly Father, upon the people in this land who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us. Help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors. Strengthen those who spend their lives establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all. And grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the Oppressed
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 826

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Just Judges

Begin Here: Study Scripture

You shall appoint judges and officials throughout your tribes, in all your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall render just decisions for the people. You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

Commentary: In this passage Moses is stressed by the overwhelming burden of dealing with the problems and arguments of the Israelites. Moses is directed by God to appoint others who will assist him as judges. These people are to be wise, understanding and experienced. They will administer justice fairly and equally.

Questions
♦ What is fairness and equality?
♦ Is what is fair for one person always fair for another?
♦ What are the qualities you would look for in a person who is called to judge a situation you might be involved in?
♦ Are Christians held to a stricter code of justice than society at large? How?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 3.
♦ What do the hands represent?

Activities

Who Are They?
Reread the Personal Story.
♦ Are the differences among the schools described in the story fair? How could this happen?
♦ Is the writer of the Personal Story judgmental toward others? List how.
♦ How could the writer become a fairer more impartial judge? Is that possible?

Write on a piece of newsprint or a chalkboard the words “CITY,” “SUBURB,” and “RURAL.” Answer the following questions for each area and write them down.
♦ Who lives there?
♦ What are the schools like?
♦ What are the houses like?
♦ What is fun to do there?
♦ What should you be aware of?
As you look at the list draw a line through any statement that can not be backed up by fact, such as everyone in the city lives in an apartment. Or, schools in the suburbs have all the athletic equipment they need. How are the statements judgmental about the people or the places?

Here Comes the Judge
Give each person a piece of paper and crayons or markers. Ask the group to draw a picture of a person who judges them. It could be a teacher who gives grades, a parent who decides curfews, a coach who imposes penalties for missed practices, or a peer who always looks down at clothes others wear. Fold the paper in half, and on one-half of the back, list the ways the person’s judgment is unfair. On the other half list just as many ways that the person is fair. For example, a person who judges people by their clothes uses unfair criteria for friendship, but is fair because all people are judged the same way.

Divide into pairs and share what you have written. Discuss ways to be non-judgmental about others.
♦ Do you ever do the same thing you find unfair in others?
♦ How can God help us see the good in people?
Make a commitment to be less judgmental during the week. Think about a person you have trouble getting along with and list the reasons why you don’t like him or her. Now list good things you know about that person. Pray together that God will help you see the good in others.

Courthouse
Plan a trip as a group to visit a court in session. Follow up with a discussion about the judge’s actions in the court room.
♦ Did the judge seem fair and impartial?
♦ If there was a decision made, was it a fair and just one?
♦ If your group did not hear a decision, how would they judge the plaintiff based on what they saw and heard?
2 Turning the Other Cheek

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:38-48

Commentary: The ancient Hebrew law on retaliation—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—was designed to thwart escalating acts of revenge, not to justify it. Jesus teaches people not to retaliate at all, a radical idea that confused his listeners. Jesus cites several examples in which a person is to respond to evil with kindness and compassion. It was important for those who were to be the “children of God” to know that the expectation for their behavior was set at a higher standard.

☐ Questions

♦ What do your instincts tell you to do when someone hurts you? What did Jesus say to do?
♦ Does being a Christian mean that you always have to back down?
♦ Why does God make the sun and rain fall on both good and evil people? Is that fair?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

♦ According to scripture, how should the narrator react to the injustices he finds?
♦ What is the difference between turning the other cheek and standing up for your rights?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 3.

♦ Does the scripture passage change your understanding of the images in the poster?

☐ Activities

Pray for Our Enemies

“A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” from Session 1 says, “Where there is hatred, let us sow love...” Draw a plowed field on a poster board. Ask the group to identify places where there is hatred in the world, the nation, and the community. For example, in the Middle East, or fighting among friends, or between political factions. Write the places on round pieces of paper and put them “in the dirt.” Then draw plants coming from the “seeds” and label the results of sowing love. For example, hatred in the Middle East could be changed into peaceful co-existence.

• Can love really change deep seated hatred?
• Is there something or someone you hate? Could love make a difference?

Give each member of the group several pieces of paper. On each piece, ask them to write the initials of an “enemy.” Fold the papers several times and place them in a basket. Gather the group in a circle and pray for the people whose initials are in the basket. Use the prayers on pages 815-816 in The Book of Common Prayer or write your own prayers for this purpose.

When Wants Collide

Most conflict happens when the desires of two different people, communities, or nations collide. The resolution of the conflict can be peaceful or disastrous as in the case of war. In war it is often the poor and innocent who suffer the most.

Conflict can often be solved by peaceful means. The first step in resolving conflict is similar to the last question asked in “The Baptismal Covenant” (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 305): “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” The answer is: “I will with God’s help.” Knowing that each person has worth in God’s eyes is the first step toward resolving the problem.

Divide the group. Ask each team to write down three scenarios that have potential for conflict. For example, you are driving down the road and another car cuts in front of you. Using the rules for Charades, one team acts out the potential conflict while the other team offers solutions that respect the dignity of all the individuals involved. Afterward, talk about the situations and the difficulty of finding a solution that respected all those involved.

Watch a Movie

Watch one of the following movies: My Cousin Vinny, To Kill a Mockingbird, or Philadelphia. Discuss the movie in light of the scripture passage.

• In what ways were the characters judged?
• Which individuals in the story could have made a difference by “turning the other cheek”?
• Which characters did?
3 Changing Myself

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Psalm 51:10-13

Commentary: This psalm describes the importance of repentance and the individual’s need to rely on God for strength. Change requires a great deal of commitment, as anyone who has tried to break a longstanding habit has learned. The psalm reassures us that with God’s help, all things are possible.

☐ Questions
♦ Have you ever tried to break a bad habit by yourself? What happened?
♦ Is there something in your life that blocks your relationship with God? What can you do about it?
♦ Have you ever experienced the “joy of salvation”? What was that like?
♦ In what ways does the holy spirit sustain us?

☐ Activities

Pushing Away
Display Resource Poster No. 3 of the artist’s interpretation of injustice. Invite the members of the group to write down what they believe the poster is saying about injustice. Share the results in small groups or all together.
• How were the ideas different?
• In what ways were they alike?
• What does this poster say about the difficulty of change?
• Is it easier to “push someone away” by the way we treat them than it is to really get to know them?
• Separation is one of the themes of the poster. How is this portrayed by the artist?
Talk about symbols of injustice and change. Create your own posters that illustrate ways that you can work toward changing injustices that are in your schools, community, and the world. Display the your artwork where other people in the congregation will see it.

Listen With Your Heart
One of the ways to bring about change in yourselves is to listen to others. We may think we listen accurately, but we often hear what we want to hear or simply misinterpret what another person is saying. Listening to what others are really saying takes practice.

Divide into pairs. In each pair one person tells the other something that happened to them during the past few days. After the first person has finished, the second person must repeat the story. If the second version was one hundred percent accurate, the listener gets ten points for “good listening.” Take away one point for each fact that is wrong. Repeat the activity reversing the teller and the listener. As a group, talk about the experience.
• Did you disagree about what was said?
• Would it have helped to take notes? Why isn’t this practical?
• Have you ever been part of a group or class who listened to the same person but had entirely different versions of what was said? Why did that happen?
• Are you sometimes too busy thinking about something else or what you want to say instead of listening?

Read a poem or play a song that most of the group probably has not heard. When you are finished, ask several people to tell you about what they just heard. Compare their memories with the actual words. Ask God to help you listen with your heart this week when a friend or family member has something to say.

What Do I Want to Be?
Send the group on a scavenger hunt around the church or in the local neighborhood. Ask them to find three items that represent what they are now and three items that represent what they hope to be. When everyone returns, invite those who wish to share what they found and what it means to them. Pray for each person, asking God to help him or her become closer to God.

Change What We Can
Make bookmarks out of gift wrap, paper, markers, and clear plastic adhesive covering. Copy or have each person write the prayer in the box on a plain piece of paper approximately 2 inches by 8 inches. Glue the prayer to a backing of gift wrap slightly larger that the paper. Cover with clear plastic adhesive paper. Pass out the prayers at a worship service, or take them to a nursing home to be placed on food trays for residents.

Serenity Prayer
God, grant us the serenity to accept what cannot be changed, the courage to change what can be changed and the wisdom to know the difference.

—Reinhold Neibuhr
Objective
Youth will be able to define ethics and the role it plays in issues of peace and justice.

Personal Story
Sometimes I get such mixed messages from my parents. They expect me to do what they say and not what they do. Our last confrontation resulted in my being grounded for a month. I don’t think what I did was such a big deal. I did the same thing they have done more than once.

Whenever school interfered with a family vacation, the vacation always came first. When I was younger, mom would tell my teachers, and they gave me assignments in advance. They were usually happy that we had a chance to go somewhere.

Now that I am in high school, it’s a different story. About the only way to get an excused absence—which means you can make up assignments and tests when you get back—is to be sick or have a doctor’s appointment. The teachers and administrators aren’t very helpful if you miss school for a vacation.

That hasn’t meant that we’ve missed any trips. When we get back, my mom just writes a note that says I was sick. That way we can visit theme parks when they aren’t very crowded and get cheaper plane tickets. I certainly don’t see anything wrong with telling a few “white” lies every now and then to make life more fun.

Several weeks ago, three friends and I decided we needed a well-earned break from school. We had suffered through a research project and finished up a round of exams. We wanted to give ourselves a little reward for our hard work.

We had a great day. We decided to go downtown because no one who knew us would see us. We even visited an art museum, one of my friend’s favorite places. We got back home about the same time school let out.

Each of us carefully forged a note from a parent that said we had been sick. We all dutifully turned in our notes at school the next day. However, the assistant principal thought it strange that four good friends would be out the same day. She called our parents, and before lunch we were all called to her office.

We were suspended for a day, but that wasn’t the worst of it. My mother cried, and I was grounded. I still don’t see the big deal. We didn’t do anything bad on our day off. We just lied about one little note.

I’m supposed to think about what I did. I realize that lying is wrong, but people seem to do it all the time. Is it okay to lie if you don’t get caught? What am I supposed to think about?

SESSION 5

Scripture
Romans 2:1-4
Romans 12:14-18
II Peter 1:3-7

Skill Focus
Choices
Ethics
Prayer
O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Judging Others

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. You say, “We know that God’s judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth.” Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Romans 2:1-4

Commentary: Paul emphasizes in his letter to the Romans Jesus’ condemnation of those who judge others. Paul’s words are specifically pointed towards hypocrites who have committed similar offenses. He is angered by the arrogance and superiority of those he is addressing who seem to assume they are above judgment. He also makes clear that God’s acts of kindness are not to be taken for granted. Repentance is still the responsibility of an individual.

☐ Questions
♦ Why does Paul seem so angry?
♦ Sometimes the reason we can see faults so clearly in others is because we have similar flaws. Think back on a judgment you recently made about another person. Do you also see yourself?
♦ Are you quicker to judge people you don’t like than those you do like?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ Should the mother judge the writer for doing something the mother had also done?
♦ Is there any difference in what the mother and narrator did?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.
♦ Light changes the picture from top to bottom. How can understanding yourself change the way you look at others?

☐ Activities

Convince Me
Ask the group to create several scenarios that involve ethical choices, such as the one described in the Personal Story. Other examples might be taping music from a borrowed CD, keeping money when a clerk gives you incorrect change, or not leaving a note after denting a car in a parking lot. Divide into three groups. Select an issue, and randomly assign one group to defend the action, another to condemn it, and a third to listen to the debate. Give the groups time to plan their strategy. After debating one issue, select another, but change the assignments. Use at least three issues to give everyone a chance to perform all three tasks. Talk about the experience afterward.
• Did you change your mind about any of the issues?
• Have you had similar debates among friends or with yourself?
• Were you too quick to judge an action before you knew all the facts?

Using the prayer on this page, ask God to help you confront others only “with mutual forbearance and respect.”

Judging Others
During the week, cut out random pictures of people from a newspaper or magazine. Remove the cutlines and paste them on a separate piece of paper. Randomly number the pictures and cutlines. Spread the pictures out and give everyone a copy of the cutlines. Ask group members to match the description to the picture. Hint: Be sure to keep a master copy with the correct answers.

Share the results and explain the reasoning behind the matches. Check the answers with the master copy. Talk about how mistakes are often made when we judge people on looks alone.

Look at the scripture passage again.
• Is it ever okay to judge another person?
• Are judgments sometime necessary for personal safety?

Make a commitment to refrain from judging others within and without the group. Help each other with a gentle reminder that God expects us to return to others the love, patience, and kindness that we have received from God.

Copyright Laws
Taping a new song off the radio or copying a borrowed CD may be breaking the law. Visit a library or go on the Internet to explore copyright laws for music, videos, and books. Talk about your findings.
• Why do we have copyright laws?
• Who benefits from them?
• What are the penalties for breaking them?
• Does anybody really care?

Prepare a pamphlet for your church about the correct use of copyrighted materials. Make enough copies for Sunday school teachers, choir members, youth leaders, vestry members, and others who may use videos, music, or books at the church.
2 Bless Those Who Persecute You

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:14-18

Commentary: Paul describes harmony as an essential characteristic for the followers of Jesus. Jesus had taught that retaliation is not the Christian response for those who have been mistreated. When Jesus was asked the limits of forgiveness by Peter, he said that his followers are expected to forgive seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:22). Paul goes on to tell the people in the church in Rome that they should live “peacefully with all” and associate with the “lowly,” or people less fortunate.

☐ Questions
♦ What is your first response to someone who hurts you?
♦ What does Jesus say to do?
♦ How can you protect yourself from a true enemy?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.
♦ Who brings light into our lives?
♦ Does retaliation or revenge provide relief?
♦ If you are unable to forgive someone, who suffers more—you or the person you can’t forgive?

☐ Activities

Forgiveness
Read and discuss the scripture passage. Focus on the verses about not repaying evil for evil. Pass out paper and pens or pencils to each person. Ask the group to separate and work individually. At the top of the paper, write the name of someone who gives you the most grief in your life. Fold the paper lengthwise. On the left side list the grievances you have with this person. For example, they lied to you, or they encouraged others to tease you. On the right side of the paper, write down your response to that person’s actions. Give participants enough time to complete the lists. Ask them the following questions to be answered silently.
• Did you ever respond with forgiveness? If so, what happened?
• Does your anger at this person keep the pain he or she inflicts more intense?
• Is there a way you could forgive this person? How?
• Does God expect us to always turn the other cheek?
Collect the papers. If possible, put them in a container that is fireproof. As they burn, pray that you can learn to forgive as God has forgiven you.

Pain in the World
If possible, tape a newscast during the week that highlights a situation in which an individual or group somewhere in the world or nation is being persecuted. Also bring in newspapers, magazines, and an atlas.
Play the tape and then look through the newspapers and magazines for other examples of persecution, such as the abuse of human rights, ethnic fighting, or the refusal to allow aid to reach people who are starving. Share the stories and discuss the situations. Look in the atlas to pinpoint the locations of the places in the stories.
• Are there any similarities in the situations you found?
• Where is the light or hope in these situations?
• When you looked at the papers did you find situations in your community or city that have the same dynamics?
• Where is God in these places?
• Are we supposed to forgive atrocious acts?
Ask each person to choose a story and work in small groups to write short prayers for each of the situations you identified. Put all the prayers together as a Prayers of the People that could be used in a worship service for your group or the church.

Movie Night
Watch the movie Dead Man Walking. The nun portrayed in the movie is based on a person who lives and works with prisoners in Louisiana. She has written a book about her work and the power of forgiveness. Documentaries have also been made about this woman and the prisoners and victims she has ministered to.
After watching the movie, discuss the characters and their feelings for one another.
Hint: This movie is rated R and contains violence and strong language. Make sure it is appropriate for your group. Many of the issues about forgiveness can be seen in the last fifteen minutes. This portion of the film is less objectionable.
3 God’s Ethics

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love.

II Peter 1:3-7

Commentary: The Second Letter of Peter begins with a description about how faith should be lived out. The starting point for God’s call is to move away from the desires and distractions of the world. There is a higher calling which is provided by God’s divine power, or God’s grace and goodness, that will enable individuals to live a full life. The writer provides a framework for Christian living that begins with goodness and ends with love.

☐ Questions
♦ How do you live out your faith?
♦ Does faith take work, or does it just happen?
♦ Which promises of God are most important to you? Why?
♦ Are God’s and humankind’s ethics the same? Should they be?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ Where does the rationale that the writer gives for her actions break down?
♦ Does God call us to a higher ethical standard?

☐ Activities

A Different Perspective
Look at the symbols the artist used in Resource Poster No. 4 to explore the idea of ethics.
♦ How did the artist use light and darkness?
♦ Why is the central figure an eye?
♦ The symbol of light is repeated in the eye. What does it mean to you?

The scripture passage provides a framework for a full life of faith. Look at the words and how one idea leads to another like stepping stones in a path. What other images can you find in the reading from II Peter?

Design your own poster, sculpture, story, poem, or other art that captures this theme. Work individually or as a group.

Afterward talk about the creations.
♦ Why did you use certain images or symbols?
♦ How did you narrow the topic?
♦ Did others in the group see things in your work you hadn’t seen?
♦ Display the works in the meeting place, or another area of the church.

Forced Choice
Before the meeting, write down a list of situations in which participants will have to choose between two possible responses. For example, copy someone’s homework, lie about my age to attend a movie everyone else has seen, ride in a car with more people than seatbelts, or tell a friend my parents won’t let me go out when I’m really doing something with someone else.

Ask the group to stand in the middle of the room. Designate one side as “would do” and the other side as “would never do.” Everyone must choose one or the other. No one can stand in the middle.

Afterward, talk about the exercise.
♦ Was it frustrating not to have a “gray area” for extenuating circumstances?
♦ Did you want to explain your response?
♦ Does God’s ethical code have gray areas?
♦ Are any issues ever black and white? Which ones?
♦ In the Personal Story, the narrator just did something parents had done. Does that make it all right?

Look at the list of words in the scripture passage that are to be used to support faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. Could these same attributes be used to help you decide what to do in certain situations? Write down the words and put them in a place you will see them each day.

Code of Ethics
Using the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and Jesus’ summary of the Law (Matthew 22:34-40). Write a code of ethics for your group and a personal code of ethics for your life.
♦ How easy or difficult was this task?
♦ How hard will it be to be true to the code as a group? As an individual?

If appropriate, share your code with other groups in the church who are setting norms and standards.
Objective
Youth will be able to name ways that materialism controls their lives.

Personal Story
Sean came to our high school when he was a junior from a small town in another state. It’s hard to break into a new group in the best of circumstances, but everything seemed to be against Sean.

The first day of school he wore a pair of jeans that fit his waist and had narrow legs. His shirt was something my dad might wear from one of those catalogues. I had never seen anybody wear shoes like his—black lace-ups. He also had on a jacket from his old school which was not cool at all. To top things off, Sean talks funny. He doesn’t have a lisp or anything, but he just sounds funny.

I knew that teachers would ask someone to show Sean the ropes the first day, and I prayed it wouldn’t be me. I think God plays with us sometimes, because I was tapped to give Sean a tour of the building and show him where his locker was.

When we were away from the others, I found out Sean wasn’t so bad after all. He really wanted to fit in and be a part of a group. He had never been popular at his old school, and he hoped that this would give him a new start.

In a week, Sean had really changed. He showed up with new name-brand jeans that were stylishly baggy and big. He had managed to find T-shirts with the logos of cool bands. He had gotten rid of the black leather shoes, and now had designer athletic shoes. But the best thing was his jacket. I had longed for the exact same one, but I couldn’t afford it myself, and my parents made it clear they wouldn’t spend that much money.

Sean told me his parents had lent him the money to buy the new clothes. He had to work at a fast food restaurant to pay them off. I began to rethink my options.

Several weeks later I was listening to the radio news and the announcer said that a high school student had been shot for refusing to give his jacket up. He had gone to a movie with some of his new friends. It was Sean. As they left the theater, two guys approached them and told Sean to hand over the jacket. He refused.

I don’t know why he didn’t just give them the jacket. I guess it was just too important and too expensive. I’ve decided that I don’t want any jacket that bad.

Scripture
Genesis 25:27-34
Matthew 4:1-11
Luke 12:13-21

Skill Focus
Influences
Independence
Prayer
Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Proper 20
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 234

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Selling a Birthright

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture
When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” (Therefore he was called Edom.) Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Genesis 25:27-34

Commentary: The concept of immediate gratification seems to be as old as the human race. Esau is hungry and wants to eat immediately. His shortsightedness and desire to obtain what he wants, keeps him from seeing the long term implications of turning over his birthright to his brother Jacob.

The long term rivalry between these two brothers is heightened by the hasty decision on the part of Esau that allows Jacob to become the beneficiary of God’s promise to Abraham.

☐ Questions
♦ Have you ever given something up that you later regretted? What happened?
♦ What would you be willing to “sell a birthright” for? Clothing? A car? Your own room?
♦ Where was God in this exchange?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ What was Sean willing to risk his life for? Was it worth it?
♦ Who else was affected by Sean’s death?

☐ Activities

Looking In Our Boxes
Look at Resource Poster No. 5. In the poster, a figure is weighed down by the boxes of possessions chained to his feet. Talk about the poster and the symbolism of the different images.
- What does the window represent?
- What kind of things are holding the figure back?
- Do you have possessions that hold you back?
- Ask the group to think about the last question individually. Think about the way you spend your time and how much possessions dictate the use of your time. For example, do you have to work twenty hours a week to pay for gas and insurance on your car? Pass out paper and crayons or markers. Draw an open box on the paper and fill it with possessions that chain you down or claim your time. If you are comfortable doing so, share your drawing with a partner or the group.
- Gather the drawings and put them on a plate at the front of the room or the middle of a circle. Say together the prayer on this page or one of your own to ask God to help you regain control of your possessions.

Jacob and Esau
The passage for this theme is only a portion of the story of Jacob and Esau. Their story begins at Genesis 25:24, continues through Genesis 27:45. It picks back up in Genesis 32:3 through Genesis 36:8. Tell the story of the brothers in your own words. Discuss the story and how the event in the passage escalated their separation.
- What happens to the relationship between Jacob and Esau?
- How did Esau’s impulsive act and Jacob’s manipulation of his brother destroy their trust?
- Have you ever lost a friend or been alienated from a sibling over a possession? What happened?
- Select one or more scenes from the story of the two brothers and act them out. Be sure to include Rebekah and Isaac. Afterward, discuss the situations and the emotions that the characters might have felt. Individually or as a group pray for similar experiences or feelings you may have had.

Movie Night
Watch a movie about the power of possessions, such as Scrooge, based on Charles Dickens’ tale of the spirit’s visits to Ebeneezer Scrooge. Discuss the way the grasp for material items completely change a person’s nature.
- Did Scrooge’s accumulation of money make his life easier? Why?
- What did he lose?
2 Temptation

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Matthew 4:1-11

Commentary: Perhaps the opposite of temptation is discipline. The devil’s efforts to entice Jesus are foiled through Jesus’ discipline and obedience to God. Each temptation gives Jesus another opportunity to say “no” to something that may seem appealing, yet is not the will of God. Jesus consistently demonstrates his loyalty to God’s will despite concerns for safety or even practical needs.

☐ Questions

♦ The devil carefully chose the temptations for Jesus. What are the main temptations in your life that go against God’s will?
♦ How do you say no to temptation? Does it always work?
♦ Have you ever said no to temptation and then faced ridicule by your peers? Who were the angels who came and “waited” on you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

♦ How was Sean tempted?
♦ Who played the role of the devil in Sean’s temptation?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 5.

♦ What are the temptations in the picture?
♦ Are these things necessarily bad?
♦ How do good things become harmful?

☐ Activities

Auction

During the week, make of list of items, activities, and attributes that youth value. In the Personal Story, for example, Sean valued name brand clothing, going to the right places, and being cool. If possible, include things that are important for people in your group, such as travel, making a sports team, getting a letter jacket, or getting a date to the prom. List these items on poster board or find objects that represent each item.

Give each person the same amount of play money. Allow some time for participants to look at the entries and decide which items they want to bid on. Gather the group together, and begin the bidding. Continue until the money runs out or all items have been bought. Discuss the experience and why certain items were selected.

♦ Why were some items so desirable?
♦ How did you decide how to spend your money?
♦ How did it feel to not get an item you wanted?
♦ How do these things tempt us?

Write a prayer as a group about resisting temptation and following God’s will. Make sure everyone has a copy of the prayer to put someplace where they will see it during the week.

Facing Temptation

Read the scripture passage and discuss it, using the questions provided. Divide into three groups, and assign each group one of the temptations. Ask the groups to change the setting to the present with young people the ones being tested by the devil. Then write a public service announcement for television or radio to warn others of this temptation.

If possible, bring in a video camera and tape the announcements. Afterward, talk about temptations the group has faced.

♦ What role does the media play in making temptations enticing?
♦ Where can you go for help?

Show the taped announcements to another group in the church. Share with them some of the things you discussed.

What’s It Worth?

Plan a field trip to explore the cost of temptation. Divide into two groups. Give each person a piece of paper with $50 written at the top. Send one group to a mall, and another to a discount store. Ask each group to decide what to buy to get the most out of their money. On the paper, describe the items “purchased” and the total cost, including tax.

Come back together and compare the lists.

♦ Who got more for their money?
♦ Would you rather have one name brand item or several things?
♦ Where would you go if this was your clothing budget for the year?
3 Controlled by Possessions

Begin Here: Study Scripture

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

Luke 12:13-21

Commentary: One of the basic truths of life is laid out in the parable of the rich fool: You can’t take it with you. The story of the rich man is prompted by the question of a younger brother who appears to be jealous over his older brother’s share of the inheritance. Jesus makes it clear that he will not get involved with settling their dispute. Jesus looks deeper into the complaint at the real issue—greed. He chastises both for making their possessions more of a priority than their faith.

Questions

♦ The person who questioned Jesus obviously thought he was addressing the issue of fairness. Was he surprised by Jesus’ answer? Why?
♦ Have you ever been so worried about receiving a fair share that you couldn’t enjoy what you did get? What happened?
♦ What else could the rich man have done with his abundance of crops?
♦ Does getting more make you lose sight of what you already have?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

♦ How was Sean controlled by possessions? What was the ultimate cost?
♦ What else could he have done to gain acceptance at his new school?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 5.

♦ In the passage, the rich man finally reaches a point where he can “relax, eat, drink, be merry.” The scene outside the window symbolizes what we miss when we are controlled by possessions. If you had been the artist, what would you have put in the window?

Activities

Wants vs. Needs

Give each person a piece of paper to be folded in the middle, lengthwise. On one side, write the word “Want,” and on the other, “Need.” On the “Want” side, ask them to list everything they would like to have—like a Christmas wish list. For example, a portable CD player, their own television, a computer of their own. On the other side, list everything they need to survive, such as food, shelter, or clothing.

Share the lists with the group.

♦ Are there any items on your need list that others put on their want list?
♦ Are your wants reasonable?
♦ Why are some things so important?

Write the word need on a chalk board or newsprint. List non-material items the group feels they need. For example, a friend who sticks by you or God’s presence. Silently look at the list and find one thing you don’t have that you would like to have. Pray for this need in your life.

Cost of Living

Bring in the classified ads and the inserts from one or more Sunday newspapers. Divide into groups and give each a different assignment. Ask one to plan inexpensive but nutritious meals for one day. Using grocery ads, find out how much it would cost to buy everything needed to make the meals. Another group could look at car ads to find how cheaply they could buy a car for basic transportation. Another group could make a clothing budget for a family of four based on prices they find in ads. Another could look at apartment rentals.

Afterward, let the groups share their findings. Based on their research, compute the income a family of four would need. Compare this figure with the amount a person can make who earns the minimum wage. Discuss problems people face in providing basic needs.

♦ Do you take the things you have for granted?
♦ What have you “stored in a barn” that you could share with others?

Write a Prayers for the People for those in your community who don’t have enough money to provide their basic needs.

Rummage Sale

As a group, explore ways you could help people in need in your community. For example, hold a sale of used clothing and household items at your church. Advertise the sale at social services offices, community centers, and subsidized housing projects. Involve the entire church in the collection of used items. You may want to involve another group to help you with the sale.

Divide up the tasks of collecting the items, advertising the event, setting up the sale, and selling. Make arrangements with another organization that will take items you do not sell. Also decide what to do with the proceeds of the sale. Afterward, talk about what you learned.
**Objective**
Youth will be able to relate the control God gave humankind over the environment with responsibility for God’s creation.

**Personal Story**
Since she has been a little girl, Elizabeth has spent every summer living with her grandmother in an isolated sea coast town. The town is small, and even though lots of people come here during the summer months, it is a quiet town.

Elizabeth and her grandmother enjoy going for long walks. Even though her grandmother is getting older, they are still able to walk together. They try to walk every day along the beach. They often time their walks so that they can see the dolphins swimming. The dolphins swim close to shore twice a day when they are feeding, jumping and splashing. Elizabeth and her grandmother watched these dolphins often. Dolphins are her favorite animal, and she has pictures of leaping dolphins all over her room.

One hot summer day Elizabeth and her friend visited a local state park. They had ridden their bikes all the way there to look at the displays. She was shocked to read about dolphins. She had never realized how many dolphins were killed every year from the plastic rings around soft drink six-pack containers. Dolphins swimming and playing often die of suffocation because they get their noses caught in the rings. These rings are invisible in the water and can catch on the dolphins’ fins or be swallowed.

Elizabeth could not contain her anger and sorrow. She knew that her family had regularly thrown out those plastic rings. Her family and friends did not litter directly on the beach, but other people did. The pictures of the dying and injured dolphins made her sad and stayed in her head, haunting her for days.

After they rode home, Elizabeth confronted her grandmother and the rest of her family. Her brothers thought she was being silly, but her grandmother listened to her. She handed Elizabeth a pair of scissors and told her to get to work.

Elizabeth and her friend went out to the trash cans and rummaged through them to find the plastic rings. They cut them up with the scissors. They had to dig through lots of garbage and found all the rings they could.

Later they told their other friends what they had done. At first they all laughed. Elizabeth got mad but quickly realized that she couldn’t convince them by shouting.

Every day on her walks with her grandmother she keeps her eyes open for the plastic rings. She has a little pair of scissors in her pocket and uses them whenever she finds one. The tourists carelessly leave lots of trash on the beach.

Elizabeth has made it her special mission to do something to save her dolphins. Her friends don’t laugh at her any more. Some of them have even begun collecting the rings themselves.

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**SESSION 7**

**Scripture**
- *Genesis 1:29-31a*
- *Psalm 23*
- *John 6:5-13*

**Skill Focus**
Communication
Responsibility

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*Episcopal Curriculum for Youth—Peace & Justice: Session 7*  
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Prayer
Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us fellow workers in your creation: Give us wisdom and reverence so to use the resources of nature, that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the Conservation of National Resources
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 827

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 God’s Creation

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Genesis 1:29-31a

Commentary: Genesis relates the story of the beginning of the world. It is one of two accounts of creation in the Bible. This story helps to answer the questions: “Where did we come from?” and “Why are we the way we are?” This passage provides an insight into the heart and mind of the creator. There is an understanding that people will use creation for their needs while also honoring and respecting all of the created order.

☐ Questions
♦ Is there an implicit responsibility for humankind in this passage?
♦ Is God still creating things today? What are they?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ How did Elizabeth honor and respect the created order?
♦ What could you do to restore order to God’s creation?

☐ Activities

Beginnings
The word “genesis” means beginnings. Ask each person to remember the first time they became aware of the environment. For example, a family trip to the beach might have made someone aware of the beauty of the ocean, or a scouting trip might have opened another’s eyes to the beauty of a forest or desert area, or a tree planting project in elementary school might have helped another see the importance of plants. Talk about the different experiences.
• How do your experiences influence how you see nature?
• Have you done anything to preserve God’s created order? What was that like?
• What could you do to restore God’s creation?
Ask each person to write down a part of God’s creation that is most important to him or her. This can be a place, a creature, or plant life. Underneath, write down one thing you can do to keep this thing good or restore it to goodness. Write a prayer thanking God for the beauty of the earth and asking God to help you honor creation.

Creation Stories
Bring in books from the library or explore the Internet for creation stories from different peoples and cultures. In addition to the Bible, look at Greek and Roman mythology, or African, Celtic, and Native American myths. Divide into groups to explore different resources, then report findings to the larger group.
• What are similarities and differences in the stories?
• What is unique from each culture?
• How important is the environment or nature in the stories? What is the role of humankind?
Make a poster that shows the similarities and differences of the stories. Be sure to include the creation stories from Genesis. Use the poster to present your findings to another group in the church.

Museum Visit
Visit a local historical society, a natural history museum, or cultural museum. Look for different understandings of creation and the role of humans from the past.
• How did original inhabitants view the environment?
• When were steps first taken to preserve the environment?
• Did misuse of resources result in problems later on?
• What can be learn from looking at the past?
2 Strength from the Environment

Begin Here: Study Scripture

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name’s sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.  

Psalm 23

Commentary: Psalm 23 is a song expressing a person's faith and confidence in God's protection. The poetry of the words draws a moving picture of God's tender loving care. Like a caring shepherd, God provides for our protection, food and shelter. All that we need is provided within creation.

Questions

♦ In the Bible, God is often depicted as a shepherd taking care of his sheep. What image or person would you use today as a symbol of protection?
♦ Which part of the Psalm do you find most comforting?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

♦ Where did Elizabeth and her grandmother find peace?
♦ Do you have a place that comforts you? What is it like?

Activities

Reading the Psalms

Listen to Bobby McFerrin's song that is based on Psalm 23 or read it slowly several times while playing quiet music in the background. Ask the group to close their eyes and imagine other ideas or concepts for God.

- What images did you have?
- Are their more appropriate images than a shepherd for you?
- Which part of the Psalm was most comforting?

Read Psalm 23 from other translations of the Bible, in The Book of Common Prayer, p. 612-613, and in The Hymnal 1982, 645, 663, and 664. Do the images change with different translations? Decide as a group which version is your favorite. Write the words on posterboard and decorate it with images or colors that characterize God's protection and comfort.

Picture a Caring God

Ask the group to name objects, places, or people that mean comfort or caring to them. Spread out a large sheet of butcher paper and make a mosaic of the group's images of these things. Images could be in the form of a poem, a word, a drawing, colors, or symbols. Next, add images of a loving, caring God. Talk about your creation when it is completed.

♦ Could some of the first images be used for the second theme?
♦ Was anything left out? What is it?
♦ What images come from nature or from your daily lives?
♦ How does God show love for us?
♦ Do you find God’s love in creation or other people?

Cut around each person’s contribution to the mosaic. It is not necessary to identify the author or artist. Put all the pieces in an envelope to be used at the conclusion of your study of Peace and Justice. Close by rereading Psalm 23.

Engaging Creation

Plan to spend some time together outdoors. Choose a local, park, arboretum or other natural setting. Set aside one or two hours of quiet time to reflect on the setting. Use this time to meditate, write in a journal, take photographs, draw, or make music. Remember to take nothing but memories and leave nothing but footprints. Give each person a copy of the Psalm 23. When the group reconvenes, share your experiences.
3 Saving for Later

Begin Here: Study Scripture

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. “Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

John 6:5-13

Commentary: In the passage from John, Jesus is teaching near the Sea of Galilee where a large crowd gathers. These people have traveled to hear Jesus and are hungry. Many had come from long distances. Most had not brought provisions, and there was no place to buy food. In this miracle story, Jesus takes compassion on their needs and feeds everyone present. He then directs his disciples to gather all that is left so that nothing is lost. In this story, Jesus shows not only his compassion and love, but also the need to take care of all that has been given by God.

Questions
♦ Did the people expect Jesus to feed them?
♦ Has God ever done something for you that you didn’t expect? How did you respond?
♦ Have you ever thrown out a gift from God? What was it?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ How did Elizabeth find a way to save God’s gift of the dolphins?
♦ How can you save something for others to use or enjoy later?

Activities

Tourists
Bring in items that people travel with, such as raincoats, bottles of water, clothing, packages of crackers, and pillows. Pass out the items to half the group who will be the vendors. Ask them to price the items fairly. Give the other half enough play money to buy some items, but not all. The “tourists” can work together to buy things, and the vendors can reduce or raise prices based on demand. After the tourists have bought at least one item, change the scenario slightly. For example, the airplane is going to be three hours late, or the weatherman has just changed the forecast, and it will rain for your entire three-day hike.

Afterward, talk about how the tourists had to save for later to meet changing needs.
♦ Had you saved any money to meet new situations?
♦ Did you work with others to save together?
♦ Have you ever needed something on a trip you didn’t have? What did you do?
♦ How would you have responded to Jesus’ gift if you had been in the crowd?
♦ Would you have given up your leftovers or hidden them to be used later?

Gathering the Leftovers
Find out what your school cafeteria, local restaurants, or grocery stores do with food they cannot sell. Is there an organization that distributes leftover food to homeless shelters or other agencies?
♦ Why did Jesus bother with gathering the leftovers?
Could he have just performed another miracle later?
♦ Why should you worry about saving things if you have the means to get more?
♦ How do your actions affect others?

Make a commitment to save for later by reusing leftovers or taking smaller amounts. Find ways your group can promote or help an organization that distributes leftover food. Write a prayer thanking God for the things you have and asking God’s help in taking good care of them.

Project Mother Earth
Start a recycling program at your church if one does not already exist. For example, work with the office staff in finding ways to recycle paper. Decorate a box large enough to contain paper and find an appropriate place to leave it. Talk to those who clean the church about making containers available for recyclable items such as aluminum. Assign members of the group responsibility for picking up recycled materials on a regular basis. If possible, make posters to advertise your recycling efforts to encourage people in the church to join in.
Objective
Youth will be able to describe the effects of apathy on themselves and others.

Personal Story
As soon as George got to high school, he made a name for himself by stealing small stuff like erasers, pens, and other people’s hats. In school he always plays it cool and tells every one he doesn’t care about anyone or anything. He acts like nothing bothers him and laughs at people who show their feelings.

George has lots of clothes and an after school job. He has money and lots of friends. When he comes to class, he never brings erasers or pencils, so he just takes them from others. He usually ends up getting in a fight with the kid he’s stolen from. The argument continues over who is going to keep the item. It goes on and on.

George doesn’t bother to simply ask to borrow the pencil or eraser. The worst part is that the other kids don’t seem to care as long as he isn’t taking their stuff. They just look the other way and say, “That’s George!” The problem is, George takes my stuff all the time.

It really gets to me that no one seems to care about anything. Nobody cares that George is stealing my stuff. I don't have a lot of money, and he does. When I tell people that it makes me angry that he steals from me they think I'm a baby and take things too seriously. I have decided to never show my feelings to anyone.

It makes me sad. I started high school with a positive attitude and tried to get good grades. But why should I bother? Nobody seems to care about George’s stealing, and I get in trouble when I come to class “unprepared” without my pens, pencils, and stuff. The teachers get irritated when you keep asking to borrow supplies, and they treat me like a big pain. I know that George steals just to make me mad so he can laugh at me. I try not to give him or the other kids the satisfaction.

When someone like George doesn't respect you or your belongings, it hurts your feelings. Apathy can hurt people who don’t deserve to be hurt. The people George steals from have learned not to trust other people anymore.

Because of George’s attitude, his friends have started behaving like they don’t care about anything either. They laugh at people who talk honestly in class and make fun of anybody who tries to do something to help someone else. Doing nothing has affected everybody.

SESSION 8

Scripture
Psalm 142:4-7
Zachariah 7:11-14
Matthew 25:42-45

Skill Focus
Communication
Relationships
Prayer
Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his Name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

For Social Service
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 260

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Surrounded by Apathy

Begin Here: Study Scripture

Look on my right hand and see—there is no one who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for me.
I cry to you, O Lord;
I say, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.”
Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low.
Save me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.
Bring me out of prison, so that I may give thanks to your name.
The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.

Psalm 142:4-7

Commentary: This psalm of David is a plea for God to stop persecution from others. It is a reminder of how painful it is to be ignored and how difficult it is to feel good when a person feels unloved and unnoticed. Even people in the Bible who were close to God sometimes felt unwanted, pushed away, and ignored. Just as the writer complains to God, all people can bring their complaints to God.

Questions
♦ Have you ever felt that no one noticed you? What did you do?
♦ How can God help when others don’t seem to care?
♦ Do you ever feel like you’re in a prison when others ignore you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
♦ How did the reactions of his classmates affect George?
♦ Have you ever been on the outside? What was that like?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 6.
♦ Which part of the poster represents the psalmist? Where is God?

Activities

Olympic Pity Game
After reading and discussing the scripture passage, ask each person to think of one complaint to take to God. Nothing is too important or too trivial. Ask for three to five volunteers to act as judges at a table at the front of the room. Each judge is given cards with numbers from one to ten. The complainant makes his or her case—the more pitiful and dramatic the better. Afterward, the judges give a score for artistry and credibility. Give everyone a chance to make a case and be a judge.
Talk afterward about the experience of complaining and how it feels when someone listens.
• Does it help to put a complaint into words?
• How do you feel when no one seems to care?
• Could you sometimes be a better listener?
Make a complaint box, and ask each person to write one or more complaint and put them in the box. At the end of class, each participant can draw one complaint from the box (ask them not to take their own). Make a covenant to pray for that person and their complaint until you meet again.

Talking Circle
In many Native American traditions, the circle is the primary symbol of the community. When important issues need to be discussed and decisions made, the group convenes in a circle. When important idea are shared, everyone around the circle keeps silent while other people are talking. To facilitate the quiet and the importance of listening, an object, such as a feather, is passed from person to person as they take their turn speaking. When they are finished, they pass it on. Everyone in the circle gets a chance to speak; if a person has nothing to say the feather is silently passed to the next person.
Use this technique to discuss the scripture, Personal Story, poster, or to listen to each others’ complaints. A small cross could be used instead of a feather.
• How did it feel to speak when everyone was listening?
• Did you learn more by actively listening?
• Did some people who are often quiet have more to say?
Use the same technique to pray for issues you are facing as a group or as individuals.

Movie
Watch the movie Norma Rae and talk about what happened when Norma Rae complained about working conditions.
• Who listened to her?
• Who couldn’t hear what she had to say?
2 Refusing to Hear

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear. They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. Just as, when I called, they would not hear, so, when they called, I would not hear, says the Lord of hosts, and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and a pleasant land was made desolate.

Zechariah 7:8-14

Commentary: In the day of rebuilding Jerusalem’s temple, Zechariah speaks to the Israelites who have returned from exile in Babylon. They wonder if they should keep ancient rituals. Should they continue fasting for the old temple Babylon had destroyed? The prophet reminds them why the old temple fell: Their ancestors failed to live out God’s law. Zechariah teaches that rituals do not honor God if people are apathetic about justice and the needs of the poor.

☐ Questions

♦ Why did the people turn their backs on God?
♦ Have you ever ignored something or someone even though you knew it was wrong to do so? What happened?
♦ The people made their hearts “adamant” or unbending so they wouldn’t have to listen. What do you do when you don’t want to hear something?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

♦ How did the narrator’s classmates turn a “stubborn shoulder”?
♦ What was the result of their apathy?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 6.

♦ Who are the people who are covering their ears in your life?
♦ When do you cover your ears when you should be listening? What can you do about it?

☐ Activities

Ear and Mouth Game

The goal of the game is for the mouth to be heard by the ear. Select one person to be the mouth and another to be the ear. The rest of the group, except the person who will be the ear, stands in a circle around the mouth. The person who is the ear stands outside the circle. Mouth is given an phrase to communicate to ear while the people in the circle make all sorts of noise to keep ear from hearing.

Give everyone a chance to be the ear and mouth, depending on the size of the group. Discuss distractions the group has when trying to listen to God.

• Is it hard to find time to talk to God?
• What do you do when other ideas pop in your head?

Ask the group to sit quietly for five or ten minutes to talk to God. Remind them that conversation is a two-way street—they need to listen as well as talk. Don’t get bogged down with distractions; they happen to everyone. End the silence with the prayer at the beginning of this session or another of your choice.

Active Listening

Give everyone a pencil and paper and go outside if weather permits. Sit and listen for five or ten minutes, writing down everything you hear. Come back inside and compare lists.

• Why do people hear different things?
• What distract us and diverts our attention?
• What keeps you from hearing one another? Your family? God?

Reread the scripture. Several people in the group might act out the scripture as a role play or in mime form, without words. If you wish, update the scene and make it appropriate to your life.

• Who is Zechariah in our world?
• Who are the Israelites?
• What freedoms are being abused?

Jesus often said, “If anyone with ears listen.” He realized that many who heard his words did not understand his message. Read Matthew 13:13-17, and ask God to help you hear and understand the gospel message.

Listening Training

Invite someone from your church or community who works as a counselor with youth to give a training session on active listening. Find out what good listeners look for, and how to take into account body language and other signs people use. Invite your parents or another group in the church to the training session.
3 Ignoring Christ

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

. . . for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

Matthew 25:42-45

Commentary: In this passage from Matthew, just a few days before he is crucified, Jesus is instructing people how to live. It is a time for Jesus to share honestly with his disciples, to be specific about how his followers are expected to act towards others. They are called to care for the sick, the hungry and those in prison—exactly the people whom society ignores. These people will help Christ’s followers to see and know Jesus.

☐ Questions

♦ Where can you find Jesus today?
♦ How are you supposed to treat outcasts? How do you do that without becoming an outcast yourself?
♦ How can a teenager do all the things that Jesus talked about?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

♦ What would Jesus expect the narrator’s classmates to do in this situation?
♦ What could the narrator do to change things?

☐ Activities

Picture of Apathy

Discuss the images in Resource Poster No. 6 after reading the scripture passage.

• Where is Christ in the picture?
• When you ignore the needs of others, what are you saying to Jesus?
• Do you sometimes feel that your friends or family ignore your needs? What do you do?

Mother Theresa said that if you seek comfort and solace, you will not find either. But, if you give another comfort and solace, you will find both. Read the scripture passage that precedes Matthew 25:42-45, beginning at verse 35. Individually or as a group, create a new poster that reflects giving instead of turning away. Or, rewrite the Personal Story by adding a person who steps forward instead of being apathetic.

Collage of Faces

Bring in magazines and newspapers to cut up. Find pictures that represent three groups of people: those who are listened to, those who need to be heard, and those who no one is listening to. While the group is looking for pictures, listen to the title song from the rock opera Tommy by the Who, about the need to be seen, heard, and touched by others. Make a collage of the pictures by type. Discuss the reasons you put the pictures in each category.

• Why are the characteristics of people in each group?
• Why are some people almost always heard? Why are others always ignored?
• What does this have to say about the way we value people? Does Jesus use the same distinctions?

As a group, compose prayers for the people who are depicted in the collage. Look at p. 148 or p. 836 in The Book of Common Prayer for ideas about what to include in your prayers. Give everyone a chance to copy the prayers that are written. At the close of the session, make a commitment to say one of the prayers during the next week.

Neighborhood Survey

Set aside several hours to make a neighborhood survey. Begin at your church or another place in the community and take a walk. Each person should have a pad and pencil to note the different things they observe about the neighborhood. Look at the people who are there as well as the surroundings. After about an hour, meet back at the church. Share what you wrote down.

• Who was there that you hadn't noticed before?
• What was there that you hadn't noticed before?
• Could you see more by walking instead of driving by in a car?

Come up with an action plan to address one of the hidden issues or needs that you identified from your survey. Identify others in your church that could help you deal with this need.
Objective
Youth will be able to list ways they can have an impact on peace and justice issues individually and as a group.

Personal Story
Sarah had lived most of her life in the city. She liked everything about it. Although her parents had moved several times, she always had lived in racially mixed neighborhoods in a working class environment. When Sarah was in ninth grade her parents moved to the suburbs to be closer to jobs in office parks outside the city.

Sarah knew that the commute was too expensive, and to keep jobs the family had to move. This meant Sarah had to go to a new school in a very different environment. It was a predominantly white school, and everyone seemed to have more money than she did. They put a lot emphasis on clothes and cars. None of her classmates have to work after school, and yet they still have lots of ready cash.

Church had always been important to her parents, so they spent several months looking for the right church. At first they were uncomfortable in the little church they chose, even though the people tried to be friendly. Sarah made a few friends with the other girls who were in the youth group. They didn’t look down on her too much.

Sarah even looked forward to an overnight youth retreat in an inner city church. The group was to work with others on a neighborhood project during the weekend. She was excited about going back to the city.

After the group arrived at the church, things went from bad to worse. Sarah was part of a small group that had been assigned to paint the kitchen and living room of a woman’s house in the neighborhood. They dragged buckets, paint, ladders, and supplies the five blocks to the house. After setting up the tarps and ladders, she noticed the woman was sitting in the kitchen looking sad.

Sarah went in and talked with her. The people in charge of the project had chosen the paint without consulting her. She didn’t like any of the colors. Sarah relayed the information to the others who said the woman had her nerve—she should be grateful that her house was getting painted.

Sarah then went to the adult leaders who also ignored her. They had worked hard to make the arrangements and wanted to keep to the time schedule. Sarah finally took some money she had brought and walked to a nearby hardware store. With her own money she bought the color the woman wanted for the kitchen, one that matched her pans and spoons.

Sarah went back and painted the kitchen by herself. No one came to help her. One of the other youth even called her obnoxious. Sarah wasn’t sure she had done the right thing, but the hug the woman gave her felt right.

SESSION 9

Scripture
Hebrews 12:14-15
Amos 5:24

Skill Focus
Fairness
Ethics
Prayer
Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquillity your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

For Peace
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 258

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Begin Here: Remembering Scripture

A. Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.

Hebrews 12:14-15

B. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Amos 5:24

Connect with the Personal Story
Briefly discuss the reality of good intentions.
♦ Has someone ever tried to help you without asking you what you really needed? What did it feel like?
♦ Have you ever planned something for others but failed to get their input? What happened?
♦ How can you avoid a situation like the one described in the story?

Questions
♦ Which issues in your study of Peace and Justice seem most relevant?
♦ Can young people do anything about peace and justice?
♦ Where do you need to begin working for peace and justice? At home? At school? In the community?
♦ Is it difficult to “pursue peace with everyone,” especially those who are not “peaceful”?
♦ Who do you know that is a model for living in peace?

RESPONDING ACTIVITIES
The chart at the end of this session summarizes outreach activities suggested in Sessions 2 through 8. Select one or more of these activities to enhance peace and justice at your church and in your community. Participants may also want to respond individually or as a group to this study of Peace and Justice.

Individually
Working in small groups or alone, consider ways you can respond to the issues of peace and justice. Share your ideas and record them on newsprint. Ask participants to select one or more to carry out on their own. Possible responses are:
♦ Volunteer to be a peer mediator in your school or community. Get involved with training and recruiting other mediators if you already participate.
♦ Find out how you could be involved in working on a crisis hotline.
♦ Commit to one aspect of caring for the earth. For example, stop using Styrofoam, cut up plastic rings used to package six-pack beverages, or always recycle aluminum cans.
♦ Make a commitment to be a better listener. Be ready to listen to friends and family members without adding your own stories or comments.
♦ Keep a journal about things people say to you or that you observe before making judgments. See if your opinions are less judgmental when you reflect on them rather than making them in haste.

Group
Think of ways the group can respond to issues raised about peace and justice. Write all the ideas down, and then select one or more for the group to do. Possible responses include:
♦ Look back at the words from the letters in “peace and justice” you used to describe qualities that promote both themes. Would you change some of the words or add new ones? Use ideas from the words or what you have studied to write a statement about the group’s understanding of peace and justice.
♦ Start a garden sharing project. Find a suitable piece of land in the neighborhood and work with others to plan a garden. Your church might offer a small plot for this use. Involve younger children and older members of the congregation who can share their gardening knowledge. Work together to make a place of beauty for the community.
♦ Many communities have an Adopt-a-Highway program to keep roads free of litter. As a group commit to a section or road where you will pick up litter on a regular basis. Involve others from your church and school.
Follow up on Session 3 by planning an auction for a homeless shelter or soup kitchen in your area. Approach parish members and businesses about donating goods and services. Plan a simple meal to precede the auction with soup and sandwich or spaghetti. Display brochures and other images of the group for which the money is being raised.

Participate in a waterway cleanup. Many communities sponsor these events at ponds, rivers, and streams. Contact officials at state parks or local environmental groups. Coastal communities also schedule days to plant dune grass, count birds, or other activities.

☐ Celebrate!

Art
- Display the photographs, notes, or drawings made during the time you spent outdoors in Session 7 at a coffee hour or other fellowship function at your church.
- Put the peace poster made during Session 1 where everyone in the church can see it. Be sure to add pictures of participants who joined the group later.
- Make a collage or banner for Earth Day to kick off the recycling project at your church. Display the artwork in a prominent place.
- Use the collage made in the planning session at a worship service or a liturgy you plan.
- Make a display about peace and justice using the collage showing the opposite of apathy made in Session 8.

Liturgy
- Use the liturgy prepared for your group in Session 2 about renewing the terms of the Baptismal Covenant. Invite others in your church.
- Develop a liturgy to honor St. Francis. Use the prayer attributed to him as the focal point.
- Use the prayers at a worship service that were written in Session 3 about people in news articles who experienced miracles and tragedies.
- Distribute pieces of the mosaic that were cut up in Session 7. Put the pieces back together and read together Psalm 23.

Community
- Share the peer mediation model you developed in Session 2 with other groups in your church. Help them change it to meet their needs.
- If you made the copyright pamphlets as suggested in Session 5, Theme 1, the artwork from Theme 3 could be used at a display table at a church function where the pamphlets are distributed.
- Share the code of ethics based on the Ten Commandments written for Session 5, Theme 3 with other groups in the church who are setting norms and standards.

Fun
- Plan a day on a body of water—rafting, canoeing, or swimming. Take a picnic lunch, planning ahead about trash disposal.
- Throw a party for the people who hired you to do odd jobs in Session 3. Show the videos or pictures taken of people in the group who participated in the work day. Explore the possibility of expanding the work program into the summer.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Individual Response: Make a covenant to work toward peace and justice at school and church and in your community. If you decide to do something specific from the list on the previous page or your own ideas, write it down and keep it in a place you will see often, such as the inside of your locker or on your mirror. Think about the steps you need to take to accomplish this activity or goal.
- Do you need help to complete this activity or meet your goal?
- Can you identify someone in the group, the church, your school, or community who can help you?

Group Response: Review the list of ideas the group developed as ways to respond to peace and justice issues. Decide which ideas the group is most interested in. You may decide to undertake one longer project or select several short-term activities. Take into consideration other commitments individuals in the group may have. Talk about the tasks necessary to complete the project you select. Estimate how much time each task will take, and ask participants to take responsibility for seeing that each is done. If you decide to work on a project that involves others in the church or community, discuss who you want to work with and how to get other groups involved.
- What kind of activity or project did the group select?
- Can every person participate who wants to?
- Can you identify people outside the group who can help you finish the project?

Celebrate: Ask for volunteers to work on an appropriate liturgy response to your study of peace and justice. Use the ideas on this page or develop your own. The group may wish to complete an activity from a previous session suggested in the Celebrate sections that you didn’t do earlier. Select someone to put together art displays or to make banners and posters. If you decide to spend a day on a body of water, be sure to get appropriate permissions and adult drivers. If you have a party, ask participants to volunteer to send out invitations, prepare food, make decorations, and clean up afterward.
- Does the celebration you selected include everyone in the group?
- Do you want to invite others who helped you in your study of peace and justice to your party?
## MOVING AHEAD

### Peace & Justice

**Outreach Activities for Sessions 2-8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Suggested Outreach Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Share the peer mediation model created by the group with others in the church.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Write an article for the newsletter or make a presentation about managing conflict or anger.</td>
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<td>Share the peer mediation model created by the group with others in the church.</td>
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<td>Write an article for the newsletter or make a presentation about managing conflict or anger.</td>
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<td>Identify a group project to help the homeless.</td>
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<td>Find out how the group could be involved in a prison ministry.</td>
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<td>Share research about salary disparities with an adult group in your church.</td>
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<td>Distribute booklets of personal reflections about helping others.</td>
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<td>Raise money for a charity by doing odd jobs.</td>
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<td>Display posters about injustice in the church or community.</td>
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<td>Give out bookmarks of the “Serenity Prayer” to church members or residents of a nursing home.</td>
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<td>Prepare a pamphlet about copyright laws for your church.</td>
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<td>Write a prayers of the people addressing the needs of those being persecuted.</td>
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<td>Share artwork created by the group about ethics.</td>
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<td>Prepare a sample code of ethics for groups at your church.</td>
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<td>Make a public service announcement to ward others about temptations.</td>
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<td>Write a prayers of the people for those who live in poverty in your community.</td>
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<td>Plan a rummage sale to help those in need of inexpensive household items and clothing.</td>
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<td>Present your findings about creation stories from other cultures.</td>
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<td>Find ways your group can promote or help an organization distribute leftover food to homeless shelters or other agencies.</td>
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<td>Start a recycling program at your church.</td>
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<td>Invite your parents to hear a speaker discuss active listening.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Make an action plan to address hidden needs discovered in your community survey.</td>
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