



## Peace Sunday

*"Fear not, for I am  
with you."*

— Isaiah 41:10

### Peace Sunday 2010

Along with Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Church USA celebrates Peace Sunday the Sunday closest to the International Day of Prayer for Peace, which is Sept. 21. However, you may use these materials any Sunday that works for your congregation.

### Fear not

Fear is a natural and recurring human experience. Already in the third chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve are afraid of God and hide after eating the forbidden fruit. Moses is afraid of public speaking. Pharaoh (a mighty ruler) is afraid of the plagues. Zacchaeus is afraid to come down from his sycamore tree for tea with Jesus. The disciples are afraid of the storm through which Jesus is sleeping. In Paul's letters we read of an early church living in a constant state of fear. Today, fear is the currency of politics, war, advertising and, all too often, the late local news. Governments fear the thought of fear and use fear to protect themselves from further fear. We are scared of terrorism (which is fear), death, economic failure, heights, being alone, spiders, public speaking and, routinely, what other people will think. Fear has become so prevalent in our society that in a New York Times end-of-the-decade review, the "fear of the year" was listed, along with the blockbuster movies, fashion statements, and popular foods and colors.

Fear—whether constructed internally or externally—divides us from just and peaceful relationships with ourselves and others. Though it can sometimes draw us to a closer relationship with and deeper faith in the Lord when it inspires a sense of awe as that ancient "fear of God," the Lord is regularly the means of overcoming these divisive fears. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:18-19).

We as followers of Christ must be cognizant of how we and others use fear—intentionally or otherwise—for personal, economic and other gains. Fear cannot be avoided; it's how our Creator wired us. However, it can be recognized in a productive manner, rather than allowing it to debilitate. God was quite intentional when we were made scared from day one (startle reflex), but the gift of Christ's love

Likely you've heard the story of the man who fell off a cliff. He was lucky enough to catch a ledge with his fingertips on the way down. He yelled out, "Help! Is anyone up there? Save me!" A voice came from a cloud, "I am the Lord your God. I will save you." "Thank goodness!" the man replied. "I am the Lord your God. Let go of the ledge and I will save you." The man thought about this a moment, then shouted, "Is there anyone else up there?"

equips us with all the tools we need.

The Peace and Justice Support Network chose "Fear Not" because fear is a universal emotion that affects interpersonal relationships, church life, politics, and so many other facets of daily life. Media outlets lay down a blanket of vague danger when plugging an upcoming broadcast or headlining an article, politicians cultivate fears of every stripe for virtually every issue—and why not? Manipulating such a basic instinct is a most efficient way to reach our core, adjust our knobs, and push our buttons. Knowing how fear affects us as individuals, congregations and nations is key to realizing how we can better be agents of God's peace in the world around us.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

## Sample worship service

### Gathering

Gathering songs

- "God of grace and God of glory," *HWB 366*
- "Here in this place," *HWB 6*
- "Here, O Lord, your servants gather," *HWB 7*
- "Our God is an awesome God"

### Lighting the peace lamp

*(Peace lamps are free. If your congregation doesn't have one, contact KristaM@MennoniteUSA.org.)*

God of peace, Christ of peace, Spirit of peace; You are calling us to be peacemakers—in our homes, in our church, in our community, in our world. Today, we light this lamp as a reminder of our calling.

## Call to worship

*HWB 663*

### Prayer

*HWB 696 (or Sing the Story 173, 174)*

### Passing the peace

"May the peace of Christ be with you."  
"And set you free from fear."

### Praising

Songs of Praise

- Be Bold
- When peace, like a river, *HWB 336*
- I know not why God's wondrous, *HWB 338*
- Jesus loves me, *HWB 341*
- Obey my voice, *HWB 163*

### Offering

Consider taking a special offering for your congregation's local peace work and the Peace and Justice Support Network (PJSN) of Mennonite Church USA. PJSN is mostly self-supporting, and welcomes your financial support to carry out the vision of promoting peace and justice within the church. <http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/budget/invite.html>

### Confessing

Call to confession (see litany on back page)

### Hearing

- Scripture—Isaiah 41:9-13
- Children's time (below)
- Scripture—1 John 4:7-21
- Sermon (see Sermon Seeds)

### Responding

Words of affirmation: *HWB 711* or *Sing the Story 182*

Response songs

- "My life flows on (how can I keep from singing?)," *HWB 580*
- "We Shall Overcome"
- "Healer of our every ill," *HWB 377*

### Sending

*HWB 764 (or 742) or Sing the Story 176*

## Sermon Seeds (ideas for preaching)

1 What is fear? What is good and what is bad about it? Where does God come in? How did people in the Bible deal with fears?

2 How is fear used and manipulated by the media, the government, or our brains? When do we overlook key pieces of information or opportunities because we are distracted by something triggering what are actually physical reactions?

3 Fear limits creativity and often leads to a narrow “fight or flight” response. How does a right-and-wrong discussion exclude the nuances of good and bad in many different positions, even stopping dialogue and interaction from ever beginning?

4 How does fear impact interpersonal relationships? Examples might include helping the victim of an accident (fear of being sued), sticking up for someone unpopular (being excluded), or stopping a verbally or physically abusive situation (fear of being hurt). Then extrapolate this impact to nations and terrorism.

5 How does fear keep us from acting as Christians, as representatives of God’s love, as peacemakers and justice seekers?

6 How do we triumph over fear? Can we act despite our fears? What is the relationship between fear and faith? How does the support of the Christian community/congregation give us a foundation for facing our fears? Retell the amazing stories of God’s deliverance—from your life, from lives of people in your congregation, from history, from the Bible.

## Ideas for children

- *Don't Be Afraid: Stories of Christians in Times of Trouble*, by Rebecca Seiling and Cindy Snider; a companion to *Beyond our Fears*. Inspiring stories of Christians who responded faithfully when faced with crisis will help children understand that they can call on God in all situations. The book includes discussion guides for simple children’s story preparation. *Don't Be Afraid* is available to order at 1-800-245-7894 or <http://store.mpn.net/productdetails.cfm?PC=1181>.
- Turn off the lights for a children’s story about being afraid of the dark, and use the PJSN peace lamp for the light of God that keeps us from being afraid—OR—have children write their fears on paper and have an adult burn them, to show how faith can dispel the darkness
- Use as a bulletin insert for children the drawing and coloring activity sheet available at <http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/psunday10>.

## Reading resources

On climate change—“Perfect love casts out fear,” *Sojourners* magazine, December 2009, p. 20.

Additional resources available on the PJSN Web site:

- Word pictures for overheads, bulletin covers, bulletin boards.
- Children’s page.
- Ideas for Sept. 19 lectionary texts.
- Past Peace Sunday worship resources.
- All the other resources we couldn’t fit on this piece of paper!



For peace and justice resources, or to join the Network, visit [www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace), or check us out on Facebook. For more information about PJSN, or to offer your responses to the Peace Sunday material, contact Tim Huber, 722 N. Main St., Newton, KS 67114-1819; 1-866-866-2872, ext.34386 (toll-free); [TimH@MennoniteUSA.org](mailto:TimH@MennoniteUSA.org). Your financial gifts are crucial for continuing to strengthen the vision of peace and justice in Mennonite Church USA. Thank you for your support. Tim Huber, editor. Susan Mark Landis, assistant editor. Cynthia Friesen Coyle, designer.

Fear binds us and limits us.

**When we function out of fear we allow circumstances and people to control us.**

When the disciples covered in the upper room, they were full of fear.

**And Jesus stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."**

We are people of God's peace.

**We are people of God's love.**

Love shatters fear and releases us to take risks.

We love

**Because we are loved**

### Words of assurance

Know this: You are the beloved of God, who did not give you a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline." (II Timothy 1:7)

### Bible litany Isaiah 41:9-13

**Leader:** I called you from the earth's reaches,

**People:** I did not reject you, I chose you.

**Leader:** Fear not, because there is nothing to fear;

**People:** Do not panic, do not be dismayed,

*All: For I am your God.*

**Leader:** I will strengthen you, I will help you,

**People:** I will uphold you with my righteousness.

**Leader:** Those against you will be as nothing,

**People:** Those who oppose you will vanish.

**Leader:** For I am the LORD your God,

**People:** Who says to you, do not fear, I will help you.

*All: Do not fear. I am with you.*



**Mennonite  
Church  
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Peace and Justice  
Support Network

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### Litany confessing our fear

We confess that we are a fearful people.

**We find it easier to fear strangers than to entertain them.**

We fear the unknown

**As much or more than the known.**

We fear the creation that surrounds us

**Though the lilies of the field haven't a worry.**

We fear violence.

**We confess that we are more likely to pass by on the other side than bind up wounds.**

We fear insecurity.

**We confess that we save up for tomorrow rather than share today.**

We fear vulnerability.

**We confess that our words hurt and sting more than heal and help.**

Fear causes us to freeze

**When we as people of God's peace are called to action.**

Fear causes us to flee

**When we as people of God's peace are called to stand with the persecuted.**

Fear causes us to fight

**When we as people of God's peace are called to love.**

Fear keeps us within our safe havens

**But we know you call us to greater things.**