

Sun, Dec 8 • Practicing Together



On this second Sunday of Advent, gather your people around the Advent wreath, and ...

LIGHT

Two purple candles on the Advent wreath. You will relight last week's candle representing hope and light a new candle representing peace.

PRAY

God of peace, we light this candle as we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son, the Prince of Peace. Surround us with the serenity of your presence. Open our hearts to you this Advent season, so when Christ arrives, we are ready to receive him. Amen.

DISCUSS

- How do you define peace? What does it look like? How do you get it?

READ - JOHN 14:25-29

The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*, which occurs over 250 times in the Old Testament. Though it is often translated with the English word *peace*, it means much more than happy days or a lack of conflict. The biblical understanding of *shalom* includes the concept of wholeness, completeness, and well-being. It is God's ideal for our lives ... the way he intended life to be before it was marred by sin.

Jesus' birth was the beginning of God's plan of redemption. As we wait for the fullness of God's restoration, we recognize that our well-being, our *shalom*, is in Jesus—and it is unlike anything our world can offer.

Another interesting aspect of the word *shalom* is that it was used by the Hebrew people as both a greeting and a farewell, as a blessing to the one being addressed.

READ - NUMBERS 6:24-26

Have each person in the group read the Scripture passage directly to someone else in the group. Make sure each person reads and is read to.

How did it make you feel to hear these words of blessing and peace read over you?

The words "make his face shine upon you" are a common Hebrew phrase expressing the idea of happiness. Close your eyes for a moment, and imagine the face of God turning toward you. When he sees you, his face lights up. The sight of you makes him happy!

PAUSE HERE FOR A FEW MOMENTS.

We serve a God who loves his children and wants them to know peace, or *shalom*, in its fullness. He wanted it so much that he sent his son to be our Prince of Peace.

Practicing Together

Reading

Digging

Listening

Seeing

Doing

Sun, Dec 8 • Practicing Together



WORSHIP

Read or listen to these songs. How have you experienced the peace (wholeness and well-being) that “passes understanding” through Jesus?

SILENT NIGHT

youtube.com/watch?v=z7jYvmY6Gfk

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR

youtube.com/watch?v=HusH56d-Omw

It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold.
“Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,
from heaven's all gracious king.”
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long.
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong.
And man at war with man hears not
the love song which they bring.
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
and hear the angels sing

O ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing.

For lo the days are hastening on,
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever circling years
comes round the age of gold
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world gives back the song
which now the angels sing.

Practicing
Together

Reading

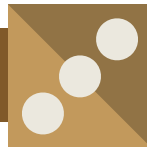
Digging

Listening

Seeing

Doing

Sun, Dec 1 • Practicing Together



READ - GALATIANS 4:4-6

Here Paul reminds us that we are no longer orphans, but we have been adopted as children into God's family. Parents who adopt a child from another country will travel far to bring their child home. In the same way, when the time was right, our Father sent his Son to bring us home. Being part of God's family is the essence of peace ... serenity ... wholeness.

PRAY

God of peace, during this Advent season, keep us from getting caught up in the busyness and chaos of the world around us. Help us slow down, so we may find wholeness and well-being in the Prince of Peace, your son, Jesus Christ. As we prepare for his coming, make us instruments of your peace in our homes, in our work, and in our world. Amen.

ACTIVITY FOR THE WEEK

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

Each day this week, do something kind for someone you do not know. As you do, pray for that individual to experience God's peace. Some ideas might include:

- Hold the door open for someone.
- Help someone with their groceries or return their cart.
- Let someone go ahead of you in line.
- Help a neighbor or elderly friend with yard work or Christmas decorations.
- Leave sticky notes with random compliments on mirrors in public bathrooms or windshields in a parking lot.
- Compliment someone.
- Pick up trash in your neighborhood or local park—you could even make it a "prayer walk"
- Pay for the order of someone behind you.

ANONYMOUS ACT OF KINDNESS

At least one day this week, consider doing a kindness for someone you know but disagree with or have conflict with.

- Leave their favorite treat on their desk or doorstep.
- Write an encouraging note.
- Pray that God would bless them. If you can't think of anything specific, use the blessing from Numbers 6:24-26

Practicing
Together

Reading

Digging

Listening

Seeing

Doing