

Peace & Global Witness

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like a stranger? Perhaps you were new to a school, or joined a new sports team, or even been a visitor to a new church. What was it like to be a stranger? How did people make you feel? What made you feel welcomed?

Have you ever traveled to a country where people spoke a different language? What was it like to try and communicate? If you don't know the language or the customs, do you think it would be difficult to live in another country or become a new citizen? Why?

Paul claims that the church is much bigger than a building. In fact, the church includes believers from all over the world who claim Christ, as the foundation of their beliefs. As a result of our beliefs in Jesus, we are not strangers but brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Paul claims the church should be a place that welcomes all believers. The church doors should be wide and tall. People of various sizes and shapes and skin color are welcome. Some are old, and some are young. Some speak unfamiliar languages or wear unique clothes from different countries. But what makes us all a family is our belief in Jesus.

Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians, *"So then, you Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are new citizens together with God's people and members of the family of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone."* (Ephesians 2:19-20)

Optional:

(Hold up the cross from the sacristy). The life, death and resurrection of Jesus are what unite us as Christians. We remember Christ's love and his teachings. He healed with words and through his actions. He cared about the strangers and the outcasts. He forgave others, and he prayed fervently to God. Christ offers us forgiveness and new life.

Like the vertical arm of the cross, we keep our focus on God, embodied in Jesus and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Like the horizontal arm of the cross, we extend our hands to others in building right relationships with our neighbors.

Minute for Mission

As members of the global church, we are called to build up the body of Christ. Paul writes, *"You Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are new citizens together with God's people and members of the family of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone"* (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Please view these videos to determine the appropriateness for use in your congregation. Some images may be disturbing to your group.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: The Crisis in Syria (5 minute video)

<https://vimeo.com/159226190>

Peace & Global Witness *(continued)*

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: Syria Situation (3.14 minute video)

<https://vimeo.com/195647328>

Facts about the Syrian refugee crisis *(from the World Vision website)*

- 13.5 million people in Syria need humanitarian assistance due to a war that began in 2011.
- 5 million Syrians are refugees, and 6.3 million are displaced within Syria; half of those affected are children.
- Children affected by the Syrian refugee crisis are at risk of becoming ill, malnourished, abused or exploited. Millions have been forced to quit school. View these photos to see life through the eyes of Syrian refugee children.
- Most Syrian refugees remain in the Middle East, in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Slightly more than 10 percent of the refugees have fled to Europe.
- Peace negotiations continue despite an inconsistent ceasefire.

The Presbyterian Giving Catalog opens with these words: “As Presbyterians, we are a people rooted in the grace of Jesus Christ. It is our gratitude for God’s grace that moves us to join in God’s mission in the world, with ministries of love and justice, reconciliation and peace.”

Kitchen Kit (\$25)

Food requires preparation, and families who have lost everything in a disaster often lack the basic tools needed to cook a meal. A kitchen kit contains cooking pots, utensils, bowls, cups and spoons.

Supplies for Displaced Students (\$30)

Provide the opportunity of education to students who have lost everything. With a gift of school supplies, three students living in a Lebanese refugee camp can be empowered through learning.

Refugee Food Basket (\$50)

Followers of Christ are called to show love and kindness toward those less fortunate. Extend a caring hand with a basket of food and essential supplies for a refugee family.

Winter Heating Fuel for Refugees (\$60)

Winters in Syria can be harsh and last 3–4 months. Meanwhile, fuel continues to be scarce for refugees still awaiting immigration.

Emergency Life Pack (\$125)

Give a lifeline to those struggling to survive. The people you will help are in dire need of support. The crucial pack contains a tarpaulin, two blankets, two jerry cans for water, high-protein biscuits and soap.

Peace & Global Witness *(continued)*

Suggested Songs from the Presbyterian Hymnal

Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation (417, Henry Thomas Smart)
Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation (416, Henry Purcell)
Called as Partners in Christ's Service (343)
In Christ There Is No East or West
Let There Be Peace on Earth (Sy Miller and Jill Jackson)
Communion hymn: Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

Passing of the Peace

What does peace mean to you? (provide a moment)

Peace is the elimination of fear, the healing power of God. Peace may be achieved through the granting or receiving of forgiveness. Peace is the assurance and confidence of God's abiding and steadfast love. Peace is a love of God that feeds the soul.

When we extend our hands in the passing of the peace, we are making a visible sign of reaching beyond the divide to our neighbor,

as we say, "peace be with you,"
and respond, "and also with you."

Think about the meaning of peace that you are sending.

Litany for World Communion

When churches and homes are destroyed because of bombs or natural disasters,

Christ's foundation stands.

When God's children flee their countries in terror of violence, warfare and destruction,

Christ's foundation stands.

When God's children cross treacherous waters in search of friendly lands,

Christ's foundation stands.

When God's children find closed borders and hostile people,



CHILDREN'S SERMON

Peace & Global Witness *(continued)*

Christ's foundation stands.

When we remove the obstacles and walls that silence the cries or blind us to the needs of our neighbors,

We build on Christ's foundation.

When we welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ, saying, "You are no longer foreigners or strangers but are fellow citizens with God's people and members of his household" (Eph. 2:19),

We build on Christ's foundation.

When we open our church doors and extend our hands in peace to all people,

We build on Christ's foundation.

When we are filled with the Spirit of God and offer our gifts to heal wounds, restore relationships and build up the body of Christ,

We become the church.

May we seek to forgive, restore and renew the places in the body that are broken. Help us to build on Christ's foundation. Inspire us with your love and gifts of the Spirit, that we may be the church in the world.

Amy Roberts-Paeth received an M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary and holds a Masters in Curriculum Studies from DePaul University. She has developed curriculum as Director of Youth Ministries and as a Logos Ministries and Sunday School Teacher.