

# 2016 Peace Cards

for



Peacemaking begins with individuals and families, then quickly moves to our communities and the world. Peace Cards provide an opportunity for families to engage in practical and real conversations about peacemaking. Designed for a multigenerational time of sharing, Peace Cards encourage the whole family to share their perspectives, life experiences, and hopes about peace in their homes, community, and the world.

Keep the cards on the table where your family eats. At mealtime, draw a card and read the statement or question out loud. Give everyone an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas and let the conversation grow into actions. Peace Cards can be used anywhere and with anyone—at dinner time or family gatherings, during fellowship meals at church, or as icebreakers for study groups or in-depth conversations on long bus rides with youth. Use one card per day during the Season of Peace and let the conversations become avenues for peacemaking.



## PEACE IN THE WORLD

**Question:** Where do you see peace in your world today?

**Action:** Make a peace garden with rocks. Color or paint rocks writing words of hope, peace, and love. Create a little garden with the rocks. People can take a rock if they need it or add one if they have something positive to share.

**Prayer:** God of the World, sometimes all we see are the bad things in our world, but peace, hope, and love are all around us. Help us to make these things grow like a garden. Help us to nurture them so that they are a larger part of your world. Amen.



## DANCE IT OUT

**Question:** Sometimes we don't feel peaceful. What things make you feel frustrated or angry and get in the way of feeling at peace?

**Action:** Dance it out! Pick a song for your family to use to dance out frustrations or anger. Make a family pact that everyone will join in if a family member needs to dance it out.

**Prayer:** Lord of the Dance, you have created us to do amazing things, to express ourselves through our emotions, our words, our actions, our bodies. Sometimes we don't like the feelings we are having. Help us to find constructive ways to deal with those feelings. Help us to find safe places to share and to dance them out so that nothing gets in the way of feeling loved by you. Amen.



## MAKING A BETTER WORLD

**Question:** What things would you like to change to make our world better?

**Action:** Create a “Jar of Change.” Write “Jar of Change” on an old jar. This month, don’t spend any coins—place them in the jar and save them to help change the world. Decide as a family where your money will go. You might give it to someone in need or to support a mission of your church or an agency that works for change in your community.

**Prayer:** God of Change, we like things to stay as they are, comfortable and familiar. Don’t let us be satisfied with the way things are. We need to be agents of change and improvement. Please take these few coins and multiply their use as an offering to you. Amen.

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## PEACE IN THE FAMILY

**Question:** Living in a family isn’t easy. We aren’t always considerate to each other. What are some things you do that get in the way of good relationships in your family?

**Action:** Have a family bonfire. Write down the things that we do that get in the way of our family relationships. Burn these words as a symbol of confessing our sins. As the words disappear, you are given a second chance to be a peace-filled family.

**Prayer:** God of Wind and Fire, we aren’t always at our best with those we love most. Help us change our ways. As the fire burns, remind us that you give us second chances. Help us feel your forgiving embrace, reminding us that we can do better. Amen.

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## PEACE AND THE PACE OF LIFE

**Question:** We live in a fast-paced world of schedules and commitments. Our schedules leave little time to nurture our inner selves. What are you and your family members giving up to keep up with these commitments? Talk about the sacrifices you make as an individual and family.

**Action:** As a family, take 30 minutes as a silent retreat. No cell phones, computers, televisions, or conversations—just quiet. Find a place to be still and quiet and let your focus move from the outer world to your inner world. Be still and listen.

**Prayer:** God of Patience, we try to squeeze you into a few moments, but it’s difficult to find the time. Thank you for always being there for us. Help us to make you a priority, to find the quiet and stillness to be closer to you. Amen.

5



## HOSPITALITY AND PEACE

**Question:** Hospitality is a way to help people know they are welcomed. When company visits, you prepare to make them feel at home. As a church, how can we make all people feel more welcomed?

**Action:** If your church doesn’t have greeters on Sunday morning, offer to start that ministry so that people are welcomed as they enter the church. If we bring a new enthusiasm to our hospitality, people who wonder if the church will accept them may truly feel welcomed in God’s house.

**Prayer:** God who welcomes the stranger, help us open our doors and our arms to welcome those who don’t think they belong. Help us to be the voice of compassion, acceptance, and hospitality, welcoming all your children. Amen.

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## OBSTACLES TO PEACE

**Question:** Many things keep our world from being filled with peace. What gets in the way of peace at home? In our schools? At work? In our communities? In our nation and our world? What are some ways that we can alleviate those obstacles?

**Action:** Find some sand or dirt and write the obstacles that get in our way of peace. Talk about each obstacle and, as you come up with ways to eliminate one, erase it in the sand. Use your ideas to make changes in your home, community, and world.

**Prayer:** Holy God, we wish change was as easy as erasing sand, but it isn't. Use this symbolic gesture to empower us to make changes, to make a difference. Empower us to be agents of change in your world. Amen.

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## SMALL ACTS OF PEACE

**Question:** What things make you smile?

**Action:** If someone smiles at you, it's almost impossible not to smile back. Kindness grows. Today we will pay it forward. Smile at a stranger, pay for one's lunch at the drive-thru, donate books to a school, or give the school social worker a gift card to help a family in need. Do something kind with no expectations of return. You may never know how, but the gift will grow like a smile.

**Prayer:** God of us all, our small gestures can multiply when done in your name. A smile can turn into laughter. A donated book can turn into an escape from loneliness. A gift card can be a bridge of hope until the next paycheck. Grow our small acts of kindness into gifts from you. Amen.

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## PRAYING FOR PEACE

**Question:** When you pray for peace in our world, what situations, people, and places do you pray for, and why?

**Action:** Create a prayer tree. With each prayer for peace, tie a ribbon to a tree. Leave extra ribbons beside the tree with instructions for others to tie their prayers to the tree.

**Prayer:** God of peace and justice, sometimes the only thing we know how to do is pray. Hear our prayers, O Lord. Grant us peace and mercy. Let your children feel the prayers that surround them, and let them know they are not alone. Amen.

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## PEACE AND OUR ELECTIONS

**Question:** Election season is a good time to reflect on what issues matter to us. What do you look for in candidates who will work for peace and justice? What issues do you expect them to address?

**Action:** Pray for all of the candidates. Pray that God's guidance will surround them as they move us toward a more peace-filled world. Make a yard sign with no name but with the peacemaking attributes a candidate should have.

**Prayer:** God above all parties, help our candidates move to higher ground where name calling and rudeness fade away and help us move to higher ground as well. Grant wisdom to the voters, and surround our elected officials with your wisdom and guidance. Amen.

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## THE THINGS THAT MAKE FOR PEACE

**Question:** If you lived in a peaceful world, what would it look like at home? At school? In our nation? In the world?

**Action:** Make a list of things that you need in order to create peace in your home, community, or world. As a family, pick several of those and make them happen. Do what others don't believe can be done—create peace.

**Prayer:** God of Peace, it takes someone to make the first step. Push us out of our comfort zone. Give us courage to speak out against injustices. Give us strength to do what is right. Give us determination to continue to work for peace. Amen.

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## WELCOMING ALL PEOPLE

**Question:** Part of creating a peace-filled world is creating places that welcome all people. How do we welcome strangers and outcasts? How are we shutting doors that make individuals feel unwelcomed? Whom are we leaving out?

**Action:** This week, sit in a different place during worship. Greet those around you and get to know them. As you leave, tell them you enjoyed worshipping with them. If you recognize visitors in your congregation, welcome them and invite them back.

**Prayer:** God who calls us by name, we all know what it feels like to be a stranger in a new place. Help us to knock down barriers that keep us from connecting with one another, to create places of open doors and open arms that welcome all. Amen.

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## IN THE NEWS

**Question:** Look at a newspaper or the TV news. What are some of the stories you find? Is it easier to find stories of peace and justice or violence and injustice? Why do you think more negative than positive news is shared?

**Action:** Rewrite today's news for the "Peace and Justice Chronicle" or "I-witness Peace and Justice Newscast." Change the stories. How could people intervene to change the outcome of the news? Share the new "news" with your family.

**Prayer:** Holy God, one small act of kindness or courage can change the world. One person standing up for another can change a life. Help us to be the one. Amen.

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## THE INJUSTICES AROUND US

**Question:** What types of injustices do you see on a daily basis? Where do you see them? Who is being hurt by these injustices? What can you do to stop injustice and raise awareness?

**Action:** On sticky notes write "Today I will . . ." and add things you can do to raise awareness or stop injustices. Put them on a door or on the mirror in your bathroom. Pick one each day to live out.

**Prayer:** God of justice, we can make a difference. Make us passionate when we challenge injustice and uncomfortable when we remain passive. Amen.

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## MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

**Question:** We've all missed opportunities to stand up for others. When have you missed a chance to reach out to someone? What was happening in the situation? What kept you from reaching out or standing up for that person?

**Action:** Make a "Take What You Need" jar. Write words of encouragement that can help you take advantage of chances to reach out to someone in need. Place the words in a jar. When you need strength, take what you need from the jar. Let the words empower you to show compassion to others.

**Prayer:** God of love, it isn't always easy to reach out on behalf of others. It feels like we are putting ourselves in harm's way. Help us let your presence strengthen us to be a voice for the voiceless. Amen.

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## IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

**Question:** We're all created in God's image, yet all have different interests and opinions, skin colors and religious views, talents and struggles. It's easy to see our differences, though we're more alike than different. How can we celebrate differences instead of letting them create barriers to relationship?

**Action:** Everyone in your family is unique. Write down 20 things you have in common with all of them. Try to think deeper than sharing an apartment or last name. How do the things you have in common unite you as a family? Try this with neighbors or friends.

**Prayer:** God of us all, we see our relatively small differences instead of the huge amount we have in common. Help us find our common ground and celebrate the differences that make us unique. Amen.

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## GOD CALLING

**Question:** You answer your phone and God says, "I'm worried about your community. I need you to be a peacemaker." Then God hangs up. Now what are you going to do?

**Action:** Think of a place in your community that needs comfort and peace. Ask the leaders there what they need. Make a plan to meet those needs. Create ways to let your community know about the needs through fliers, social media, or talking to people.

**Prayer:** God of peacemakers, our job isn't easy. Open our ears and hearts to truly hear the voices around us. Open our creative energies to what your children can do to make our communities better for all. Amen.

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## THE LOVE OF GOD

**Question:** Where did you see the love of God today?

**Action:** Sometimes we don't feel loveable, but God loves us anyway. Sometimes we forget that we are loved until someone smiles at us or lends us a helping hand. Think of ways you can remind people they are loved by God. Compliment a friend, share a hug, invite someone new to sit with you at lunch, or tell someone "God loves you just the way you are." Be creative and sincere.

**Prayer:** Loving God, help us to share your love with others. Help us to be kind and loving. Help us to reflect your love in our interactions with others. Amen.

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## FINDING MY VOICE

**Question:** For a group project, your teacher puts you in a group with kids who have been mean to you on the bus. You've always just avoided them; now you have to work with them. What can you do?

**Action:** Sometimes it's hard to find our voice when situations take us by surprise. It's easy to retreat and avoid, but that doesn't really help. Write down phrases you can say in uncomfortable situations and put them in an envelope labeled "Finding my Voice." Use the phrases to help you engage with others in a new and different way.

**Prayer:** God who hears us all, sometimes in the stress of new situations, we can't find words. Help us to find strong, gentle words to help manage difficult situations. Help us to use our voice to say "I'm sorry" or "I need help." Amen.

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## SCREEN-FREE NIGHT

**Question:** What things do you like to do with your family? Share memories of fun things you've done in the past and dreams of things you'd like to do. What makes these times so special? What do you like the most about doing things with your family?

**Action:** It's a screen-free night! Turn off the phones, television, and computers, and do something as a family. Cook dinner. Play a board game. Read a book. Sing karaoke. Have a concert. Have a family kickball game. Have fun with your family.

**Prayer:** Loving God, we get so busy that we forget to have fun with those around us. Help us to pause and put our loved ones first. Help us to laugh and play together. Help us to be a family. Amen.

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## CARING FOR THE EARTH

**Question:** We are caretakers of the earth. What things can we do to take care of our environment? What does taking care of the earth have to do with peacemaking?

**Action:** Do something for the earth. Plant a tree or a flower pot. Rake leaves and compost them. Pick up trash along the highway. Ride a bike instead of riding in a car. Clean the debris from a storm drain. Do something to make the earth a little better.

**Prayer:** Creator of all things, what a wonderful world you have entrusted to us. Help us to breathe in its beauty and stand in awe of its wonder. From mountains to oceans to starry nights, you have created it all. Help us to care for your creation. Amen.

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## THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE PEACEMAKERS

**Question:** How do your friends know that you are a peacemaker?

**Action:** Use social media to share why you are a peacemaker. Share quotes about peace, and encourage your friends to join you in putting peace first. Make a door sign and hang it on your front door, or put different quotes on signs and post them on the doors in your home.

**Prayer:** God of peace, it is exciting to be a part of a cause. As we share this enthusiasm and joy with others, let them find a place to belong and contribute in this journey. Let there be peace on earth. Amen.

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## REACH OUT

**Question:** Think of Bible stories where someone reaches out to help others. What do you like best about the stories? Are you surprised by who is helping? How are we like Jesus when we reach out to someone else?

**Action:** Make cards for people in your church, especially for those who are sick, lonely, or grieving. You can mail them to individuals you know who are hurting or take them to the pastor(s) or deacons to use while making pastoral visits.

**Prayer:** God of comfort, don't let us forget when your children are hurting. Help us remember the sick, the lonely, the frightened, the grieving. Help us reach out with words of kindness and prayers of love. Help us find ways to comfort one another. Amen.

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## CONFLICTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

**Question:** People today spend a lot of time on social media. If you have a conflict with someone on social media, how should you deal with it?

**Action:** Draw a circle and in it write the word "conflict." Draw spokes from the circle; on them, write choices and strategies for dealing with the conflict and names of people who can help and how. When dealing with a difficult situation, use these strategies to help you manage the situation.

**Prayer:** God of love, we don't always act kindly. We hide behind online façades, but behind them are real people with real feelings. Help us be kind. Remind us that we're not alone in dealing with difficult situations. Help us reach out to you and to those who care about us. Amen.

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## PEACE AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS

**Question:** During election years, we're exposed to many positions and behaviors. We may worry that a candidate can move us in non-peaceful directions. We campaign, share our views, and vote, but finally, the political process selects our leaders. What issues are most important to you? What most concerns you about our political process?

**Action:** Place a lighted candle on your porch tonight and pray for our political process. Ask your neighbors to do the same.

**Prayer:** God of us all, we pray for our current and potential leaders. Give them wisdom and compassion. Help them to be a positive voice for the voiceless, to lead with integrity. Help them to strive for peace in our communities and world. Amen.

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## PEACE AND THE MILITARY

**Question:** When we think of peace, we often think of those who serve in our armed services and their families. What do you think a military family thinks about peace?

**Action:** Write a thank-you letter to someone in the military serving away from their family or do something for veterans in your community. Thank them for working for peace in our world. You can send letters through the USO or look up other organizations.

**Prayer:** God of peace, we pray for peace in the world. We pray for peace in our families and communities and between countries. Help us to imagine and work for a world of peace. Amen.

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## PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN

**Question:** Peace means different things in different situations. How is a peaceful moment for a family in Sudan different from one for your family?

**Action:** Our Presbyterian partners in South Sudan have asked us to pray for their peace and security. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in South Sudan, and two million displaced. We can't imagine the horrors they have experienced. Have a family prayer vigil. Ask your church to include the South Sudanese in all its prayers. Pray without ceasing for peace and security for the people of South Sudan.

**Prayer:** God of peace, we pray for our brothers and sisters in South Sudan that they may have courage and safety and comfort. We pray that peace may embrace your children in South Sudan. Amen.

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## THOSE WHO HAVE NO PEACE

**Question:** How would it feel if you never experienced a moments of peace for months on end?

**Action:** It's hard to experience peace if you're worried about safety, hunger, and shelter. Many families live in refugee camps, women's shelters, or other temporary housing. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is ready to help. Make a "Gift of the Heart Kit." Ask your church to help, and mail the kits to Church World Service. Kit and mailing instructions are found on the website <https://pda.pcusa.org/page/kits/>.

**Prayer:** God who helps us in times of need, we can't imagine the atrocities some of your children face. Let our gifts remind them that others care. Don't let us forget the needs of others. Amen.

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## LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR

**Question:** Read Matthew 22:37b-39. What does it mean to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind, to love your neighbor as yourself? Who are your neighbors? How do we love them as ourselves?

**Action:** Cut out paper hearts. In each one, write down a way to love your neighbors. You could make a meal for new parents, sweep the walkway of an older adult, or fold the laundry without being asked. Tape the hearts to a window. Use them as a reminder of ways to show love to those around you.

**Prayer:** God of love, the love you wrap us in helps us to love others, but sometimes we let our needs get in the way. Center our hearts, souls, and minds on loving you. Open our hearts to love those around us without barriers or judgment. Amen.

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## CREATING PEACE

**Question:** How do you create peace in your world?

**Action:** Make a peace collage. Cut out pictures from magazines that make you think of peace. Glue them onto a piece of paper or onto the pages of a notebook. Use these reminders of peace as encouragement for you to work for peace on a daily basis.

**Prayer:** God of us all, sometimes the task seems impossible. Peace in our world sounds like a good idea but it doesn't seem like it could ever happen. Encourage us when we feel we're trying to accomplish the impossible. Show us where our efforts make a difference. Give us strength and courage to never give up. Make us your peacemakers. Amen.

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