

Prayer stations

Kinnecting with peace

Use these kinaesthetic prayer stations to help people engage with general prayer for peace to come to people, communities and nations in conflict. Each one details what if any equipment you need to get together in advance, instructions for setting up, and the text for the instruction signs you will need to display – (simply copy and paste these into a word document, enlarging the font so that the instructions are clear enough to read).

Used together, the stations should take 50-60 minutes to work round, but if you have less time you can obviously leave out a couple. You can use them within an intercessions slot, have them set up as an installation for a special service or day of prayer where people can come and go independently and/or use them individually as prayer or intercession responses.

Stations 2-8 can be worked round in any order but you need to make sure that station 1 is done first, and station 9 last.

You might also like to use mp3 worship tracks of songs celebrating God's heart for the nations and his power to bring peace to create a playlist or CD to play in the background as people are moving round the stations.

1. Soften our hearts

Equipment needed: a pot of play-dough (enough for each person to make a shape from) and a print-out of the 'For display' sign below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Soften our hearts

- Psalm 51:10 says "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."
- Spend a few moments thinking about the relationships in your life – family, friends, work colleagues... are any of these relationships struggling as a result of elements of conflict, whether openly expressed or not?
- Lift these to God, asking for him to help you with them, for him to re-create your heart and renew a right spirit towards those involved.
- Make a heart shape out of the play-dough, praying as you do that God will keep your soft towards him, towards those around you, and towards those caught in conflict around the world.
- Carry your heart with you to every station.

2. Conflict zones

Equipment needed: a world map, dove templates (such as the one provided at the end of this document) printed out onto plain paper, scissors, pens/pencils, information about current conflict zones (either printed out or available on a computer), a print-out of the For display sign below and (optional) a print out of the *Prayer for peace talks*, available at the end of the collection of peace prayers available at http://www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/written_prayers_interceding_for_peace_to_come_to_conflict_situations.pdf.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need. Find some information on current conflicts online and then print out the information for people to read – e.g. you might want to print out the list of current “major wars” from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ongoing_military_conflicts and then some specific and up-to-date information about some or all of these conflicts from either Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) or news sources such as www.bbc.co.uk
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Conflict zones

- The United Nations defines "major wars" as military conflicts causing 1,000 battlefield deaths per year. In 1965, there were 10 major wars; in 2003, there were 15, with as many as two dozen "lesser" conflicts also happening around the world. Today, most war-time victims are civilians, something that has changed significantly from the past. During World War I, civilians made up fewer than 5% of all casualties. Now, 75% or more of those killed or wounded in wars are non-combatants.*
- Africa, to a greater extent than any other continent, is afflicted by war. It has been marred by more than 20 major civil wars since 1960. Rwanda, Somalia, Angola, Sudan, Liberia, and Burundi are some of the countries most affected by serious armed conflict in recent years. *
- Have a look at some of the information laid out before you regarding current conflicts – focus on one or two countries which particularly touch your heart.
- Take a dove template and write out your prayer for peace to come for that nation.
- Place it upon the specific country on the world map, asking that as the prophet Zechariah declared, Jesus would “proclaim peace” to this nation (Zechariah 9:10).

* globalsecurity.org

3. Prince of Peace

Equipment needed: a download of the mp3 of Liz Baddaley’s song “Come Prince of Peace” (available at www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-songs) and something to play it on, headphones, a print-out of the story behind the song for “Come Prince of Peace” (www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/about-come-prince-of-peace.pdf), a print-out of the “Praying for oppressors” written prayer (www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/written-prayers-praying-for-oppressors.pdf), a pile of large stones (about fist-size) and a print-out of the For display sign below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need. Either burn a CD of the song, or download it into a computer. You need to be able to play it on something that you can plug headphones into so that people can listen to the song without disturbing others using the other stations.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:**Prince of Peace**

- Isaiah 9:6 says “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
- Put the headphones on and listen to the song “Come Prince of Peace”.
- Now read the About sheet for this song, and reflect on your own thoughts and feelings regarding those labelled as “oppressor”, “terrorist”, “dictator”, or “abuser”.
- Jesus said “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:43-45). Ask him to help you do this now as you picture those who are causing – or perpetuating – the suffering of others in today’s conflicts.
- When you are ready, pick up a stone in one hand and hold your soft play-dough heart in the other. Read the ‘Prayer for oppressors’ to help you ask God in his mercy to unclench your fist and keep your heart soft.

4. Remembering well

Equipment needed: a tray of wet sand, wooden lollipop sticks, a few Remembrance Day poppies (if you can get them), red colouring pencils, glue, scissors, pens/pencils, print-outs of the poppy template at the end of this resource and a print-out of the For display sign below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made. If you have them, push the Remembrance Day poppies into the wet sand so that they stand up and create the start of a field of poppies.

For display:**Remembering well**

- In the sea of mud caused by the devastation of the First World War in Northern France and Belgium, the poppy remained, flowering each year and bringing hope and reassurance of restoration to come. For this reason, the poppy has become a symbol of remembrance for those who have died in conflict.
- Take a poppy template – colour in the front of it, reflecting on the fact that every minute two people are killed in conflicts around the world. *
- Then, turn your poppy over, and pray for those left behind – ask that God would meet them in their grief and bring comfort, hope and community as they struggle to get used to life without their loved ones.
- Glue your poppy to a lollipop stick, and place it into the tray of sand with the other poppies – as you do so, speak out these words of Jesus: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5: 4).

* www.bbc.co.uk (One Day of War)

5. Blessed are the peacemakers

Equipment needed: a means to play (with sound/headphones the 1-minute video by the United Nations about peace-keeping available at www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/peacekeeping.shtml), a print-out of the For display sign below and a stack of cards/post-it notes with the following titles written on them (one title per card/post-it note):

- United Nations member countries
- United Nations General Assembly
- United Nations peacekeeping soldiers
- Negotiators
- Lawyers and Advocates
- Brave men and women on the ground
- Foreign Office staff and Diplomats
- Non-Governmental Organisations and Charities
- Red Cross
- The Church

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Blessed are the peacemakers

- Watch the video from the United Nations on “What is peace-keeping?”
- Jesus said “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” and in James 3:17-18 it says “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.” Reflect on how these scriptures match up (or not) with what you’ve just seen.
- Now pick up the pile of organisations/people groups who are involved in international peace-keeping – lay them out in a circle in front of you.
- Pray this Celtic circling prayer * based on the fruits of the Spirit over these peace-keepers, picturing as you do so God’s love encircling them all:

Circle them Lord, let hope be their lens, let despair be exiled.

Circle them Lord, let perseverance be their passion, let slip roads to the wide path be closed.

Circle them Lord, let love be their reason, let hate be a stranger.

Circle them Lord, let joy be their comfort, let sadness be no more.

Circle them Lord, let peace be their aim, let conflict be resolved.

Circle them Lord, let patience be their reward, let striving have no hold.

Circle them Lord, let kindness be their priority, let busyness be no excuse.

Circle them Lord, let goodness be their filter, let negativity not cloud their view.

Circle them Lord, let faithfulness be their goal, let doubt be powerless to defeat them.

Circle them Lord, let gentleness be their resolve, let slick words be silenced.

Circle them Lord, let self-control be their delight, let excess lose its attraction.

Circle them Lord with your fathering love, so that as they bring your peace, they may be called your children.

- Before you leave this station, take some time to consider whether there's anything God might be laying on your heart to do to be part of making peace after today – (for example to support a charity working on reconciliation work or to commit to continue to pray for peace makers on an ongoing basis).

* adapted from <http://www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/written-prayers-circling-prayer-to-bring-upward-and-outward-focus-in-challenging-situations.pdf>

6. Child of conflict

Equipment needed: a few Bibles (ideally in a variety of translations) and a print-out of the For display sign below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Child of conflict

- UNICEF specifies several potential major impacts on children who are caught up in armed conflict in their country*:
 1. Death or injury to children.
 2. Death or injury to a care-giver (parent, guardian, sibling).
 3. Forced displacement from home or country.
 4. Reduced or blocked access to basic services, including education and healthcare.
 5. Recruitment or use of children by armed forces or armed groups.
 6. Attacks on schools or hospitals.
 7. Rape or other sexual violence against children.
 8. Abduction of children.
 9. Denial of humanitarian access to children.
- In addition, many children are deeply traumatised by what they have witnessed or experienced during conflict. The Children and War Foundation say that many children experience traumatic symptoms or post-traumatic stress disorders including nervousness, anxiety, fear of going outside, withdrawal, depression, crying easily, not wanting to play, loss of interest in the things they usually enjoy, irritable and quick to anger, temper tantrums, restlessness, problems concentrating, problems sleeping, nightmares, flashbacks, an unhealthy fascination with war games and rapid mood changes. **
- Cup your play-dough heart in the palms of your hands – pray for the protection and healing of all children caught up in conflict.
- If you find it helpful, read Psalm 91 and pray this Psalm over every child in a war-zone who is frightened or hurting today.

* http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58011.html and http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_57997.html

** <http://www.childrenandwar.org/resources/common-reactions-of-children-after-war-and-disaster/>

7. Far from home

Equipment needed: a large print out of the footprint image at the end of this resource (large enough for people to stand on), a print-out of the poem "If I could" at the end of this resource, a print-out of the meditative prayer for

refugees and internally displaced people from

http://www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/written_prayer_for_refugees_based_on_psalms_126.pdf and a print-out of the For display sign below. (If you want to expand this section/topic, you could also include one or more of the prayer stations from our Walking with refugees resource, available at <http://www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/prayer-stations-walking-with-refugees.pdf>)

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Far from home

- In 2013, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) stated that there were over 43.7 million refugees and internally displaced people around the world who have had to flee their homes under threat of conflict, violence and persecution. 80% of these are women and children. *
- Imagine being the mother of a sick and hungry child and having to decide between risking your life staying in a conflict or leaving behind everything in search of safety.
- Take off your shoes, and step onto the footprints on the floor – try to imagine what it would be like to be in this position. What would you do? How would you feel having lost your home and forced to flee? Ask God to help you handle these emotions.
- Now read the poem “If I could” as you stand in the footprints and reflect on the sentiments of helplessness, empathy and enduring hope expressed in this poem.
- Finally, pray through the meditative prayer for refugees and internally displaced people, taking your time to lift each line to God and asking for his protection and rescue for all who are far from home today.
- (Put your shoes back on before moving on to the next station).

* <http://www.worldrefugeeday.us>

8. Healing our lands

Equipment needed: small bits of sponge (or cut-up bits of a large sponge!), a bowl of water, print outs of a few images of land devastated by war / battlefields / mud-filled trenches and a few images of bountiful, green, lush land, a print out of a story from an organisation working to fund peace promoters in a country in the midst of reconstruction such as Sierra Leone, and a print-out of the For display sign below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Healing our lands

- Revelation 7:16-17 says “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”
- Pick up a piece of dry sponge – feel its coarseness and how dry and barren it is. Look at the images of land destroyed by war. Imagine what it must be like for the people of this nation to look out on this, and feel the pain of all that has been lost.
- Read the story of the work of peace promoters and reconstruction in a nation once torn apart by war.
- Dip your sponge into the bowl of water, allowing it to fully soak up as much water as it can – as you do so, pray for God’s living water to bring healing and restoration to nations battered and devastated by war.
- Now look at the pictures of healthy and abundant land, and gently lift the sponge up over the bowl and squeeze out the water – thank God that he is at work renewing and restoring – and bringing hope and light to places that once knew extreme darkness.

9. Left with peace

Equipment needed: a large cross and a print-out of the For display sign below.

Instructions for setting up:

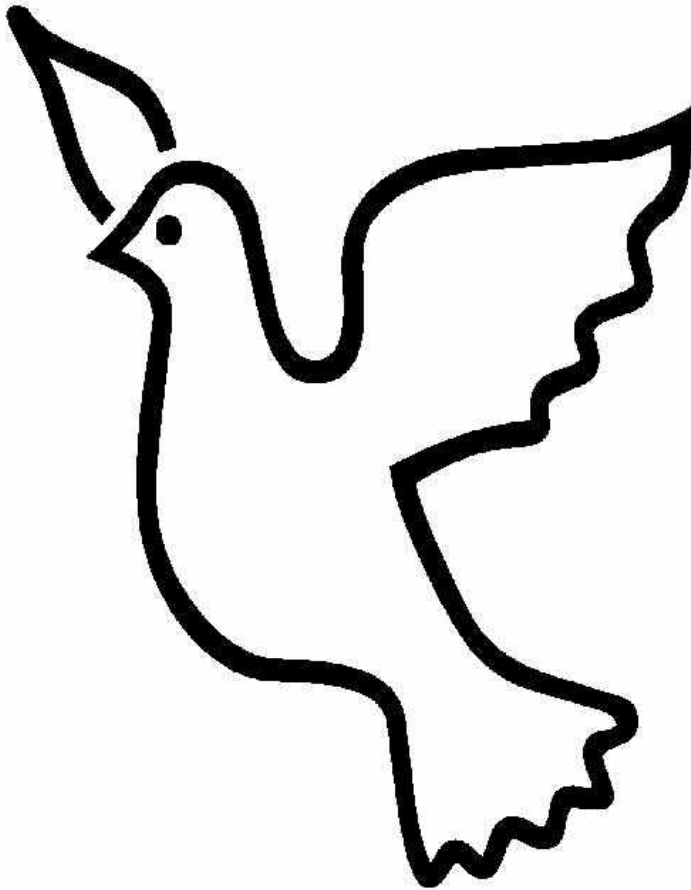
1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

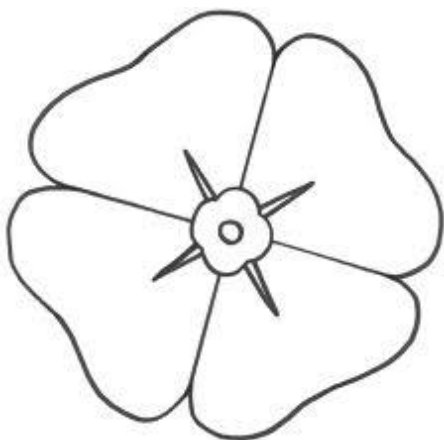
Left with peace

- In John 14:27, Jesus says “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”
- As you reflect on these words and what they mean for you and for nations struggling with conflict, place your play-dough heart at the foot of the cross and leave it there.
- Ask God to help you give him any burdens you have felt today concerning the peace of the world – for you to know his power and majesty over all nations, and his care for all his children – and for you to take away his peace in your heart as you leave.

Dove template for station 2 (copy and print onto A5 paper or fit 2 on A4 paper):



Poppy template for station 4 (copy and print a number onto A4 paper):



Footprint template for station 7 (copy and print as large as you can):



Poem “If I could” for station 7:

If I could

If I could sit with you
in the remains of war
as the smoke claws at your lungs
and the child lies, still, in your arms -
if I could weep a hundredth part of your tears,
then what would be your gain?

If I could turn with you
in that dark moment of unknowing,
the not wanting to know -
'what is left of my home,
where my child, once cried, and laughed,
and was loved?'

If I could bear the smallest part of your fear,
then what would be your gain?

If I could walk with you
down broken roads that lead to nowhere near,
across the fields so torn by war
there is no yield – there is no food
to soothe the aching wound of life -
if I could lend my strength to you for one more step
then what would be your gain?

The years that fed your disbelief,
of missile strike and screaming grief,
and hope that dims to dark and bleak -
if I could lift these years from you I would.

But 'if I could' is emptiness
so far from you: a wilderness
of all I cannot do.
Yet still I hope -
yes, still I hold your hope for you.

© Sarah Parkinson, 4th September 2013 (<http://journey.thesanctuarycentre.org/2013/09/13/if-i-could/>)
originally written for Syria.