

“PEACE, BE STILL”

A Process for Youth and Youth Leaders In the Event of War

“... Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be Still!’ Then the wind ceased and there was dead calm...”

Mark 4:35-41

Preparation:

- A candle and matches.
- Art Supplies (crayons, watercolors, papers, clay or playdough, pastels, paints, beads, pipe cleaners, pens, markers, writing papers)
- Newsprint and Tape
- A CD player
- A copy of the Windham Hill CD “State of Grace” (optional)
- Copies of the lyrics of the song Be Still My Soul (from the above CD) (a handout for each participant or in bookmark format – see below)
- Volunteers to take on various elements of the process / liturgy, copies of the liturgy for volunteers and / or everyone
- Chairs or furniture in a circle with the candle in the middle. Art supplies nearby.

Leadership:

This process works well with youth and youth leaders taking on the various “leader” roles listed in each element of the process. Some of the language and style might be unique or new to your group. This is a quiet and contemplative approach to group prayer and conversation. Reading through the entire process will be most helpful for you and your leaders. It might be helpful to have a team prepared in advance. This could be your youth leader team. This could be a team of youth. It could be a blend of youth and adults. It is possible to invite volunteers as a part of the actual process (with no advance preparation). When you gather and first sit down together – explain the process to the group, highlighting the various leadership roles (marked “leader” in each element of the process), pass out papers so that they have the process in hand. It might, however, help the “climate” of contemplation to have your team ready beforehand.

Background:

“Peace, Be Still” is a process of prayer and reflection that is an adapted form of The Liturgy of Discernment. The Liturgy of Discernment is a “movement” of contemplation, silence, prayer, study, reflection and discernment. It utilizes very simple elements to move a group through a particular issue, agenda or gathering. The seven elements are: Ritual, Relating, Receiving, Ruminating, Reflecting, Responding and Returning. The goal of the Liturgy is not to “accomplish” anything, it is not to “teach” or educate. The Liturgy of Discernment is about making space for God, seeking God’s direction through prayer (both praying the scriptures, individual prayer, group prayer and silence). The Liturgy of Discernment is one of many contemplative resources offered by the Youth

Ministry Spirituality Project (YMSP) – a youth ministry project funded by the Lilly Foundation, San Francisco Theological Seminary and Youth Specialties. The Presbyterian Church is one of twelve mainline denominations participating in this project. “Peace, Be Still” uses the basic movement of the Liturgy. Because it is adapted for a youth group setting for a very particular occasion (in the event of going to war) there are several additional elements included. We are grateful to the YMSP for their generous gift of this process as well as their commitment to encouraging contemplation and prayer for young people. For more information about the Project, The Liturgy of Discernment and other details about young people and spirituality, visit the web site: www.ymsp.org

Some New Language ...

As you move through this process you might encounter a few new terms or practices:

- Cross Talk – Often you will see the phrase “no cross talk.” This is simply an encouragement to not talk when someone else is sharing their ideas, thoughts, or reflections. Our tendency is to want to jump in, debate, console, agree, or just rush to get our idea out there. Holy listening means that we are truly listening to the other person. NOT composing what we’ll say next, NOT thinking of the next “most brilliant” thing to say ... simply listening.
- Movement – this is opposed to a program! A program most often has a definite outcome, goals, objectives, measurable endings. A movement simply asks the participants to MOVE through steps. In this case the participants are moving through the Liturgy of Discernment. The outcome is simply to BE with God and each other in prayer.
- Liturgy of Discernment – Liturgy is a term referring to a set order of prayers or practices. Discernment, in this case, is seeking God’s presence and possible direction. The Liturgy of Discernment is an ordered (meaning it stays pretty much the same in its order) process of seeking to be with God and a community of people in prayer.

Ritual

Recognizing God's presence among us
A time of silence. A simple acknowledgement. A Christ candle is lit.

Group Process: One person can either be appointed or volunteer to light the candle when the leader is finished. Silent prayers are offered around the Christ candle.

Roles and Words for Ritual

Leader: *"It is time to gather as the people of God. A God who is with us at this moment. In silence, let's spend a few minutes acknowledging that God is with us. That God has been with us. That God goes before us – even as we are just now gathering. Even as we face a time of uncertainty. Even as it feels as though God is far away."*

Silence 1-2 minutes where group members talk with God. Some may choose to offer silent prayers. Others might find it helpful to say silently, over and over, *"God – you are here. God – you are here. ."* It is helpful for the leader to invite folks into silence and to suggest the prayer phrase.

RELATING

Checking in with each other. Attending to HOW we are. HOW we feel as we come together.

Listening to each other – silently praying for one another as each person speaks.
No problem solving, editing, or cross talk.

Roles and Suggestions for Relating

Leader: *"HOW we are when we come together really matters. How we feel. What's going on outside of this room. What's in our lives, our hearts? What we're NOT feeling sometimes? What we're worried about, happy about, confused about? Today we're talking about being "at war" – knowing that as a nation, we are in a hard and terrible situation with another nation. Using the question "HOW ARE YOU?" – talk about how you are? How are you feeling as we sit down together today / tonight. Talk about whatever you need to talk about. How do you feel? What's happening that affects YOU and YOUR presence with this group."*

RECEIVING

Attending to the word of God through reading of Scripture (Lectio Divina)
This is a form of prayer!

Group Process: Depending on the size of your group you can move through this piece of the liturgy in either a whole group manner (3-10 people) with each person checking in – one at a time or for larger group (12 or more) have them share in pairs or trios then do a sampling of the whole group for some responses.

About this type of Bible Study: Lectio Divina or “Holy Reading” is a simple method of hearing the Word and then “noticing” what stands out to you, what shimmers for you or what catches your attention (positive or negative). In this process you might try having the reader read the passage slowly. Using slight pauses in between phrases or thoughts. The passage is read two times with a brief time of silence in between the two. The silence allows the young people time to make a mental note about what they are noticing. The same reader reads the passage aloud one more time (some people prefer to read even a third time). Allow a few minutes of silence after the second reading. Make sure the young people understand that the silence will be more than just a few seconds. It might be helpful to offer these simple suggestions and thoughts before you begin the reading (you might also consider handing out these questions to the group to consider as they reflect in silence):

- This kind of scripture “reading” is not about complicated historical or theological study and reflection. It is simply about noticing what the text has to offer you in a particular moment – on a particular day.
- Don’t work too hard to come up creative, brilliant or thought provoking observations. Simply let the story wash over you. See what you notice “hanging” in your mind – catching your attention.
- Play with the words and images. Where does your mind wander with these words? Do you find yourself thinking of other experiences that were similar or not similar? Do your reflections take you to another thought or experience?
- What might be the “kernel” of wisdom or education that God’s Spirit is drawing your attention to? Is it something that connects with the war? Peace? Fear? Something in your life or in the shared experience of the group?

** Receiving is simply about receiving. It is not a group or shared experience YET. It is for participants to spend in silence ... praying the scriptures, hearing God’s word, RECEIVING God’s word into their individual situation. Sharing and group work come next in the process.

Mark 4:35-41

“On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

RUMINATING

Now we share our individual reflections we had during the receiving portion.

What did you hear? What did you notice?

Listening to the “fruits” of prayer in each other.

Another time of simply listening. No debate or cross talk.

Group Process: The leader simply invites the group to share their “noticings” with each other. Again – consider your group size as you did in relating. Encourage the participants to allow brief silence in between each other’s reflections.

REFLECTING

Thinking as a group. What have we heard and shared?

What patterns have you noticed among us?

What pieces do WE not want to lose?

What is GOD’S call to us?

What’s in the middle of us today / tonight?

Group Process: There are several tangible ways you can facilitate this element of the liturgy. It is helpful and powerful to have some sort of visual reminder of this portion – newsprints with statements, pictures, murals, paintings, chalkboard illustrations, you name it! Here are several ways you can capture the thoughts of this section:

- Have a variety of art supplies and writing supplies on a table. You might include paints, colored pencils, pastels, clay, watercolors, paper, crayons, pens, journals, large sheets of paper, poster board. Encourage participants WHO FEEL INSPIRED AND / OR COMFORTABLE to make visuals of what they hear. Post these around the room.
- Have a local artist (someone from the youth group, community, or congregation) listen to the dialogue and illustrate what they are hearing. This visual (whether it be a painting, sculpture or drawing) is posted in the room.
- Using markers and newsprint simply record the “Group Call” as it is identified from the participants. Post this sheet or sheets in a prevalent spot in the room.
- Pass out notecards and pens. Have participants write down what they think the group call is. Spend some time having those who feel comfortable share what they heard. Post these cards on the wall or bulletin board.

RESPONDING

Out of our listening and our prayer we do our work. In this case it is to pray.

Group Process: Allow as much time as you need for prayers. In the event of going to war the most important “activity” we can do with young people is to encourage them to pray, to allow them to express fear, anger, idealism, and hope. The trend in youth ministry is often to PROGRAM after a catastrophic event or critical situation. While there may come a time when you need, as a group, to explore the idea of war, the theology of peace, etc... the encouragement at this time is to come together, attend to each other, attend to the feelings that are swirling, and ultimately, to pray. This is our most important responsibility at this point!

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Song and Reflection “Be Still My Soul”**

PRAYER

Encourage the participants in your group to pray as they feel most comfortable. Here are some ways to pray:

- Partner Prayers. Appoint a leader to say the opening and closing sentences of the prayer and then to invite the partners to begin to pray. Partner prayer is done in a back and forth rhythm. The leader encourages the partners to pray ONE thought at a time. As they finish each thought they say: *“God, in your grace.”* And the

other partner says “*You hear our prayers.*” This goes back and forth until they have each exhausted their requests or prayers.

- Group Prayers. Have someone open and close the prayer and invite others to pray aloud their desires, concerns, fears, hopes. After each person completes their thought they should say “God, in your grace...” and the response from the group is “You hear our prayers.”

SONG AND REFLECTION

*For this element of the liturgy it would be helpful for you to include a piece of music – something to linger in the ears and hearts of the group as they begin the movement back into “the world.” A wonderful piece would be a contemporary version of the hymn “**Be Still My Soul.**” This song is found on the CD **State of Grace** – A Windham Hill owned piece. You can find **State of Grace** by going to www.windham.com or by checking at your local music store or larger bookstore. “Be Still My Soul” is track #7 on the disc. The text aligns beautifully with the passage from Mark used earlier in the liturgy / process.

The lyrics to the song are included in this document. It is recommended that you pass out copies of the lyrics to each person. You might try creating bookmarks using the lyrics, a computer, card stock and a copy machine. Encourage the participants to carry the bookmarks with them and use them in their journals, schoolbooks, Bibles or reading materials to remind them of Christ’s words to the disciples “...be still”

Leader: *God speaks to us in all kinds of ways. Listen to the words of this song. What do you need to hear – YOU. Today / Tonight?* (Pass out the lyrics or bookmarks as you are speaking. Play the song when you are ready.)

When the song is over. Allow a few moments of silence. Ask the participants the question “*What did you notice? What did you need to hear?*” Invite them to share their noticings with the whole group.

RETURNING

Offering ourselves, our prayers and our efforts to God.

Group Process: The leader or someone appointed / or volunteer should “return” the group with a simple prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Sample Prayer: *O God, we might not understand the ways of the world. We might continue to feel fear, and doubt, and confusion. We might feel that our prayers for peace are hanging “out there”, bouncing around, not helping anyone or anything. We hear the words of our leaders, our parents, our friends, the paper, the reporters ... we seek to understand. We hear the word WAR and we simply wonder what we are supposed to think? To do? To feel? We might even wonder where you are, O God. Are you waiting to move? Are you disturbed? Are you hoping for something new from your children? O God – we pray. We wait. We talk to you tonight. But we know that you have heard, that you love us, all of us, deeply. Thank you for the gift of this group,*

for the opportunity to stop, be still, step out of the storm, reach out to you. We know it is your peace that that we need. That the world needs. In the name of your son – the calm in the midst of the storm – Jesus. We pray. Amen.

Adapted for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by Gina Yeager – Associate for Youth Ministry. Louisville, Kentucky. March 2003.

BE STILL MY SOUL

Be Still My soul the Lord is on they side
Stand calm within the storm of grief and pain
Trust in thy God to order and provide
Through every change his faithful light remains
Be still my soul the restful peace within
Through trying times leads to a joyful land

Be still my soul the wind and waves shall know
The voice who ruled them while he dwelt below
Torment and doubt have slipped into the past
All dark and mysteries shall shine at last
His burning sun shall melt the ice of fear
Lift up your heart his soothing voice to hear

Be still my soul when light you cannot see
That trembling skies speak to the fear in thee
The face of God illuminates the night
Unending peace and trust in perfect light
Be still my soul when tears fall from above
You are divine eternally in love

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Public Domain (lyrics and tune)

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