



Planting Peace

Week One: Planting the Seed of Peace

What comes to mind when you think about peace at Christmas? For those of us who feel overwhelmed by the busyness of the season, or who live with mental health challenges that can heighten anxiety, there is good news. Peace isn't an emotion we need to conjure up or a state of being we need to attain. It isn't even the absence of fear or anxiety.

Peace is God entering into our reality. At Christmas, we remember the moment when God stepped into human history to reconcile us to himself. In that little stable in Bethlehem, the seed of eternal peace was planted in the form of a baby named Jesus.

Watch Video

Hear Daniel Whitehead share a reflection on planting the seed of peace. [Click here to watch.](#)

Scripture Reading and Reflection Questions

1. When you hear the word "peace" what typically comes to mind? What do you think about the idea that peace is God entering our reality?
2. Read Isaiah 9:6. *"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (NRSVue).* The prophet Isaiah describes the arrival of peace when he speaks about the coming messiah. How is the promised saviour described?
3. At Christmas we remember the seed of peace that God has planted in this world: Jesus. His name, Emmanuel, means "God with us." As you remember that God is present with you today, whether you are flourishing or languishing in your mental health, what thoughts or feelings does this evoke?
4. Read John 14:27: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (NRSVue).* How is the peace of God different from the peace that the world can offer us? In what ways does this verse bring you comfort this season?

Prayer

Take a moment to pray, thanking Jesus for entering into our reality and being our true source of peace.



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Week Two: Tending the Garden of Peace

How can we cultivate peace in our communities? God, the faithful and loving Gardener, planted peace when he sent his Son into the world to reconcile humanity to himself. Now, he invites us to tend his garden with him, participating in his ongoing ministry of peace and reconciliation.

This means that as we wait for the ultimate global manifestation of God's peace, we can continue to look for opportunities to share the peace of Christ with those around us.

Watch video

Hear Daniel Whitehead share a reflection on tending the garden of peace. [Click here to watch.](#)

Scripture Reading and Reflection Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:9. *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"* (NRSVue). What do you think it means to be a peacemaker? What might that practically look like in your life?
2. As Daniel shares in the video, peace grows in the soil of presence and companionship. By practicing companionship and creating spaces of belonging in the Church, we are cultivating communities of peace. What practice of companionship can you engage in this Christmas season in your family and community? Remember that companionship is something we can all practice, wherever we find ourselves in our mental health journeys. Be encouraged that companionship is more about offering presence, rather than solutions.
3. As explained in session five of *The Sanctuary Course*, companionship includes accompaniment, which can involve both spiritual and practical support. Is there someone that you can be praying with and for in this season? If you have capacity, is there a way to offer support in an empowering way to someone in your community?

Prayer

Take a moment to pray, asking God to reveal to you where you can share his peace with those around you.



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Week Three: A Prayer for Planting Peace

There is a beautiful, timeless prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Lord, Make Me An Instrument Of Your Peace." We were inspired to adapt this prayer as we reflected on the mental health challenges present in our contexts and communities.

Watch Video

Hear Daniel Whitehead share a prayer for planting peace. [Click here to watch.](#)

Prayer

A Prayer for Planting Peace

(in the style of the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi)

By Lizzy Ojo Martens

Lord, as I reflect on the mental health challenges present within my community,
as well as my own lived experience,

I ask that you would make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is division, let me sow unity;

where there is stigma, belonging;

where there is unfamiliarity, awareness;

where there is sorrow, joy;

where there is silence or shame, light;

where there is isolation, inclusion and companionship;

where there is hopelessness, hope.

O divine Counselor grant that I may not so much seek

to be comforted as to comfort others,

and to speak as to listen.

For it is in giving that we receive,

And it is in your presence that we find peace.

Amen.

Continued

Questions

1. Read or listen through the prayer once more. Are there any lines of this prayer that particularly resonated with you? Why do you think they stood out to you today?
2. Is there anything else you would like to pray in addition to this? Are there any particular people, situations, or challenges that are on your heart this season?
3. Do you have any other prayers, rhythms, or practices that you would like to turn to as you think of cultivating peace this Christmas?
4. Consider if there is anyone you could share this prayer with to encourage them.