

STORIES OF PEACE

PEACE POD PARTICIPANT GUIDE

The aim of the *Peace Pods* is to create a sacred space of trust for sharing *Stories of Peace* and *Peace Pod Prayers* within the pod and with the wider congregation, which means that each participant and the group as a whole will be asked to offer **and** receive, listen **and** tell.

Each pod gathering should begin and end with prayer, engaging the deepest meanings of our lives and exploring our connection with each other in relationship with God. You can make use of the prayers you find in *Peace Pod Prayers* (attachment #1) and examples found in **ACTS of Prayer** (attachment #4), but try always to be open and inviting to the movement of the Spirit.

It will be important to start on time, close on time, and honor the 90-minute commitment. This is a part of building respect and trust.

The First Gathering focuses on getting acquainted, building trust, reviewing and owning your *Peace Pod Covenant* (attachment #2).

- Welcome

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.

- Gathering Prayer
- Share briefly (one or two sentences) a personal hope you have for these gatherings.
- Review and discuss *A Peace Pod Covenant* (attachment #2).

Are there any commitments that will be challenging for you?
Would you add anything?

- Review *Ten Commandments for Good Listening* (attachment #3).

Which of the listening commandments may be challenging for you?

- Getting to know one another. Where have you seen God moving?
- For next time... Prepare to tell the story (in 5 minutes or less) of a meaningful experience of Peace UCC. Who was involved? What happened? When? Where? How has that experience shaped your relationship with the church?
- Parting Prayer

The Second Gathering builds on the first, devoting nearly all of its time to sharing *Stories of Peace*. Each member of the pod will be encouraged to share a story, speaking in the first person, not making an argument but offering a meaningful experience of Peace United Church of Christ. All participants will commit to receiving what is shared and honoring the person who shares it. (Refer back to *Ten Commandments for Good Listening*.)

- Welcome

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.

- Gathering Prayer

- Share briefly...

If Jesus were to show up in Santa Cruz today, where do you suppose we would see Jesus? How would we recognize Jesus? What would Jesus be doing?

- Share *Stories of Peace*. Each member of the pod is invited to share their story in five minutes or less. Each story is followed by one minute of silence (strictly observed). The silence is followed by a designated responder who attempts to reflect the essence of the story in 2 minutes or less. Each participant who has shared a story and received a response then has a minute to say how they feel heard.
- For next time... Prepare a *Prayer for Peace* which can be shared in 3 minutes or less. See attachment #4, **ACTS of Prayer**, for some ideas of how you may want to shape your prayer. The aim is to offer an honest prayer to God that also calls to the depths of the other *Peace Pod* members.
- Parting Prayer

The Third Gathering invites all participants to offer a *Prayer for Peace*. All prayers will be received with openness and respect for the person who offers it.

- Welcome

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.

- Sharing *Prayers for Peace*. Each member of the pod is invited to share their *Prayer for Peace*. This should unfold as a continuing stretch of prayer, each *Prayer for Peace* followed by one minute of silence for reflection (strictly observed). Prayer followed by silence continues until all have had a chance to share.
- Vision and collaboration. Members of the pod are invited to share aloud anything they heard that they would adopt or fold into a prayer or prayers that could be offered for the whole of Peace UCC. The facilitator will record everything in which the pod agrees that it should be sent on to Pastor Dave for including in the Prayers of the Church.
- Parting Prayer. Each *Peace Pod* member is invited to offer a brief benediction.