

Peace Mural

Reflective prayer activity

Introduction

This activity is an opportunity to reflect on the impact of conflict around the world. It has been written for schools to use in response to emerging tensions and conflicts around the world that can feature in the news and may be a cause for concern and anxiety among children.

It is our hope that this reflective and prayerful activity will give space to the children and young people you work with to process their thoughts and feelings on unfolding conflicts and crises and the upsetting stories and images they might encounter. It is always worth considering the possibility that children in your community may have personal connections to conflicts and crises; this activity is designed for all children to participate in and is focused on prayers/reflections for peace rather than on the details of the conflict itself. Special sensitivity may be required by teachers, who know the context of their classrooms, so please do use your judgement and adapt as required.

The activity will offer space for children and young people at various points to reflect personally, with a view that they will write down or draw their responses on paper. Each child will need something to write/draw with, and four pieces of postcard-sized paper. At each stage of the reflection, there is an opportunity for the teacher to collect in their thoughts by passing round a bag or basket. If possible, keep each round of paper separate from the others.

We recommend that a member of staff uses the collected pieces of paper to create a Peace Mural using the themes:

- Things that have caused anxiety/how it might feel to be affected by conflict
- Things we can do to find inner peace and joy
- Visions for what a peaceful world would look and feel like
- Ideas of how we as a school community could be peace-makers in our own lives and communities.

If you have space on a display board, it may be useful to keep your Peace Mural on display in the days and weeks following an upsetting event or during an ongoing situation as an important reminder to the children in your school community. We feel it could be a useful tool to revisit, as concerns about conflict situations may continue to affect members of your school community. This exercise will also help you as adults to get an insight into the thoughts and feelings of the children in your care.

Reflecting together on crisis situations



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Note: We have written this as a prayer, but please feel free to adapt as appropriate for your context. There is another version of this – without faith framing – available on our website.

Where we have an invitation for everyone to respond in prayer together, please make clear that this is optional for children, who may want to sit quietly and respond in their own way.

Talk with pupils about the situation which you are going to think about during this time of reflection/prayer. Allow pupils a few moments to get comfortable and ready to listen quietly. Then use the following words to help them process their concerns and feelings:

Over the past days and weeks, we may have seen images and heard stories on the news that can cause us to feel upset and anxious about the future.

It is normal to feel worried or upset about sad situations – it helps to let us know something is wrong in the world around us.

When we keep our worries locked up inside of us, they can cause us harm by making us feel more anxious. When we share with others how we feel, it can help us lighten the feelings of worry or fear.

Lord God, you are the God of life, love, and peace. Let us come to you and share our worries and fear.

Invite the children to spend some time quietly writing or drawing things that have made them feel worried or sad or to imagine what it might feel like to be affected by violent conflict. Make sure to share that they shouldn't put their names on the paper for the whole of this activity.

When everyone has had a chance to reflect and put to paper their ideas and reflections, pass round a bag or basket for everyone to put their paper into.

Invite everyone who would like to respond together by saying,

'If you would like to use the following words as a prayer, please join with me but if you would rather simply reflect on what you have drawn or written then that is fine too.' **God bring your peace in our hearts.**

Every single person is unique, valuable, and worthy of love, care, and respect.

Every person has gifts, talents and ideas that fill us with the joy of life. When we share our gifts with the world, they can help bring a sense of peace and calmness to our hearts and enrich the lives of others around us.

Lord God, you made us in your own image; help us to feel loved and safe as we enrich our lives and the lives of others around the world through our gifts and talents.

Invite the children to spend time drawing or writing down the things they do that help to bring a sense of peace and joy.

When everyone has had a chance to reflect and put to paper their ideas and reflections, pass round a bag or basket for everyone to put their paper into. (Note: keep each round separate as this will help with creating the Peace Mural).



Invite everyone who would like to respond together, saying *'You can either reflect quietly to yourself how you might be a peace-maker or you can join with me in this prayer: God bring your peace in our hearts, and into the hearts of others who need peace.'*

When people lose their homes, their way of life - and sometimes their lives - to violence and conflict, it is a tragedy. Each loss is a loss to global community, a loss of wonderful gifts and talents, and a loss of cultures that enrich our wonderful world.

All those who feel sad in the face of violence and conflict, do not feel sad alone. We share our sadness with God who mourns the loss of people's lives and cultures – each person unique and wonderful.

We can join together, with God and communities everywhere, to build a better world that is peaceful, loving, diverse, and allows every person to live their wonderful and unique lives.

Lord God, help us to seek peace and show love to all people.

Invite the children to draw or write down their hopes for what the world can be – how would the world look or feel like if we were all at peace together?

When everyone has had a chance to reflect and put to paper their ideas and reflections, pass round a bag or basket for everyone to put their paper into.

Invite everyone who would like to respond together, saying *'You can either reflect quietly to yourself how you might be a peace-maker or you can join with me in this prayer: God, bring your peace in our hearts and help us to be peace makers who make the world a better place.'*

One of the impacts of war and conflict is that many people are forced to leave their homes and sometimes their countries behind. Many people don't want to leave their homes, communities and their favourite things behind, yet they have no choice to find safety somewhere else. People who have been forced to leave their home and move away due to conflict are called refugees.

It takes courage and bravery to leave behind everything you have ever known and to journey into other places that can feel very different, where you may not speak the language or know anyone. It also takes courage to welcome people into our communities who are strangers, to share what we have even when we are worried that we may not have all that we need. To open our homes and our communities to welcome, love and provide safety to people who have lost everything.

Lord God, you love and welcome all people into your great big family. Help us to show your welcome to people who have had to leave their homes and find safety elsewhere.

Invite the children to draw or write ideas for how we can welcome people into our communities, and how we can share what we have with people who have lost almost everything they ever had. When everyone has had a chance to reflect and put to paper their ideas and reflections, pass round a bag or basket for everyone to put their paper into.

Invite everyone who would like to respond together: ***God who welcomes all, help us to create safe spaces for people who need them and to share what we can.***

After the Activity



Following the activity, we recommend creating a display board either in the classroom if you did this as a class activity, or in shared space if you did it as a wider school activity. This display space is your Peace Mural. Our suggestion is that you map the display board across the four different reflection activities. It may be appropriate to have a member of staff create the board, taking the most appropriate reflections for display. However, if you have some mature and creative children you could create the display with a small group. Make the Peace Mural as colourful and vibrant as possible.

We sincerely hope that this reflection will help give voice to some of the concerns that children may be having, as well as an exercise that gives space to reflect, share, and ultimately help the children feel more at ease amidst the tension of conflicts around the world. .

