



# Peacebreak: A Calendar of Peace and Justice

## OVERVIEW

This activity helps the young teens gain a faith-based perspective on human history by creating a calendar that highlights momentous occasions in which peace or justice has “broken out,” and celebrating the lives of the people who have worked for a just world.

### Suggested Time

This strategy should be done over a period of time to allow for research and development of the calendar. You will need 45 to 60 minutes to plan the format and distribution of tasks, time to gather dates and names, and 60 to 90 minutes to create the calendar.

### Group Size

This strategy can be done with any size group.

### Materials Needed

- ☀ a variety of historical resources, such as books, movies, and artwork
- ☀ newsprint and a marker
- ☀ supplies for creating a calendar, such as poster board, scissors, and colored markers

## PROCEDURE

*Preparation.* Gather a variety of historical resources from a local library and the Internet. Accounts and depictions should span a wide timeline of human history. Display these items in the gathering space.

Label the top of a sheet of newsprint, "Both sides of the story." Draw a line down the middle of the paper.

1. As the young people arrive, invite them to browse the historical items that you have displayed in the gathering space. Then lead the group in a discussion of the following questions:



What kinds of historical events and people are most often depicted in the media?

What is your favorite historical movie or story? Why?

If you could live at any other time in history, what era would you choose? Why?

If you could be a historical figure from the past, who would you be?

What are some important historical dates that you have memorized?

On the newsprint you have prepared, categorize the young people's responses according to the themes they highlight. List events such as outbreaks of war, destruction, disasters, invasion, and famine on one half of the paper, and outbreaks of peace, missions of mercy or relief, and declarations of justice, equality, and human rights on the other.

2. Point out that history is told most often as a story of domination, exploitation, or destruction. Introduce the idea of a calendar that commemorates the other side of the human story. Invite the young people to do their own research into human history, gathering information on events such as peace movements, the endings of wars, declarations of human rights, and the activities of great peacemakers. Explain that they will create a one-year calendar that includes a brief description of each event on the day of the year when it occurred or is commemorated. You might want to use the following examples to give the young people an idea of the scope of the calendar. Note that countless other dates and events might be included.

☉ *1 January.* The International World Day of Peace is celebrated.

☉ *8 May.* The Second World War in Europe ended on this day in 1945.

☉ *2 October.* Mohandas K. Gandhi, "the Mahatma (Great Soul) of India," was born on this day in 1869.

☉ *11 November.* On this day in 1918, the armistice that ended the First World War was declared in France.

☉ *18 December.* On this day in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, abolishing slavery.

Discuss the format of the calendar. It could be a monthly wall hanging, a twelve-month poster, a timeline poster, or even a weekly listing that gets published in the parish bulletin or posted on the school bulletin board.

Consider assigning the young people to small groups working on individual months or periods in history. Encourage them to use all the resources they can find, such as materials from the public and school libraries, articles from the Internet, almanacs, and peace and justice publications. Let them know how much time they will have for the research. Designate a working period that allows them to study their topic in some depth without losing focus, perhaps one to two weeks.

3. After the young people have completed their research, lead the group in compiling the calendar. Provide the necessary materials and supervise the participants' work.

4. When the calendar is done, gather the group and note the following points in your own words:



A number of people have been inspired throughout history to dedicate their lives to the pursuit of justice and peace. This challenges the validity of a history that overemphasizes war and destruction, and presents a perspective of history rooted in our faith that God's love is active in our human story.

5. Conclude with a brief prayer service focusing on giving thanks for the men and women who work tirelessly for peace and justice, and asking for God's help in becoming one of those people. You might include a litany of the people named in the calendar, with each name followed by the invocation, "Pray for us."

## ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ⊙ The calendar could work well as a yearlong project in which the young teens research dates each month and complete the calendar as the year progresses.
- ⊙ If the calendar is done creatively, it could be printed or reproduced as a fundraiser for youth service events or agencies that the young teens have sponsored.
- ⊙ Distribute copies of the calendar among the young teens to use with their families or in their schools.
- ⊙ Display the calendar in the youth room, parish hallway, church entryway, or school lobby, to serve as a visual aid for justice education.
- ⊙ Select excerpts from the calendar and publish them in youth newsletters or the parish bulletin.

**SCRIPTURAL  
CONNECTIONS**

- ☉ Isa. 52:7 (How beautiful are the feet of the messengers of peace.)
- ☉ Jer. 29:11–14 (The plans I have for you are for peace, not disaster.)
- ☉ Amos 5:24 (Let justice flow like a river.)
- ☉ Matt. 5:9 (Blessed are the peacemakers.)
- ☉ 1 Cor. 14:33 (God is a God of peace.)
- ☉ 2 Cor. 13:11 (Live in peace.)