Peace with Justice Sunday
Youth Resources for this Special Sunday
“HACKS”
FOR THIS SERIES

• Consider using this resource the week before or the Wednesday before so that students can understand what Peace with Justice Sunday (PWJS) is before they take a special offering up. On PWJ Sunday, consider inviting students to worship with their families.

• The format of our youth worship service is in the form of a sermon. If you don’t do a “youth sermon” format, especially if you are in a smaller group context, feel free to break up the sermon with clarifying questions, including from the Small Group Guide.

• The end of the Small Group Guide encourages students to pick a social issue, and explore it with their small group. Consider using the following week to discuss the selected social issue and give resources to these groups.
Resources For The Weeks Leading Up To

Peace with Justice Sunday

To make the experience more meaningful for your youth group, we suggest leading up to PWJ Sunday with a teaser for a few weeks beforehand. Depending on the emphasis in your church and your context, here are three weeks of materials you can use for the teaser.

You can trade out any of the media by visiting the PWJS Pastor and Leader’s Kit.
**Youth Group Resources And Ideas for PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY**

**TWO WEEKS OUT**

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:**
In just two weeks, we are going to be taking a special offering, along with the rest of the United Methodist Church, for something called “Peace with Justice Sunday.”

**ONE WEEK OUT**

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:**
Next week is one of our “Special Sundays” in the United Methodist Church, where we take a special offering. Next week’s emphasis is on social justice. Here’s how our money will help:

Next week, I encourage you to bring money for this special offering, along with the church. At that time, we will also learn more about where our money goes.
WELCOME YOUR GROUP AS NORMAL! THEN SAY SOMETHING LIKE:
Each week we’ve had “teasers” for today, which is Peace with Justice Sunday. We’ll get more into that in a little bit. First, we’re going to start off with a game!
GAMES & ICEBREAKERS

OBJECT LESSON: Justice Towers
SUPPLIES: Ziplock or paper bags, assorted supplies
- You will need enough bags for each group. Each ziplock bag should have an assortment of items that students will build a tower with.
- Make sure that some bags have better items than others. Here are some examples of potential bags:
  - Bendy Straws
  - Jenga blocks
  - Paper
  - Pencils and tape
- Give each team a ziplock bag, and tell them they have five minutes to produce the tallest tower.
- As the activity goes on, students will speak up that the activity is “unfair.”
  SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *We did this activity to show that sometimes, things aren’t fair. And when it’s in your favor—it’s great! But sometimes the odds aren’t in your favor.*

TURN TO A NEIGHBOR (choose one):
- When is a time that someone has been unfair to you?
- Where have you seen this kind of unfairness—some people receiving a better beginning than others?
SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS

• Your Grace is Enough - Chris Tomlin
• This is Amazing Grace - Phil Wickham
• Brother - NEEDTOBREATHE
• Do Something - Matthew West
Today is another one of our Special Sundays in the United Methodist Church, a Sunday where we focus on a special cause and take up an offering for it. Today’s focus might seem a little abstract—“Peace with Justice Sunday.” My hope is that, as we talk about it more, that you will see just how important Social Justice is to the United Methodist Church.

The Methodist Church was started by a bunch of teenagers who wanted to get back to the roots of their faith. They met in small groups called “holy clubs,” studying scripture together. They always asked each other the question, “How is your soul?” People often made fun of their spiritual methods—which is actually how they got the name “Methodists.” Not only were they inwardly focused, but they were also outwardly focused. The emphasis of serving others was just as important as anything else, so John Wesley and his friends spent a lot of time visiting shut-ins.

When the United Methodist Church formed in the United States, it was because a few smaller denominations wanted to take a stand against slavery. They united together because it was important to them to stand up against injustices and better our world.

Which brings us to an important question… what does “justice” mean? In simplest terms, it means “fair behavior or treatment.” When we speak of justice, we often talk of social justice, which is “the concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society.” Or, in simpler words, using the institutions of society to make sure that individuals have all of their rights.

The United Methodist Church has a long history of concern for social justice. Wesley and the early Methodists expressed their opposition to slavery, smuggling, inhumane prison conditions, alcohol abuse, and child labor.
We believe that we have a role in social justice issues is because, well, God told us to.

- Isaiah 1:17 tells us, “learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, please the widow’s cause.”
- Proverbs 31:9, “Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”
- Micah 6:8, one of the most quoted, says, “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your Lord?”

If there’s one thing that God hates, it is when people are treated unfairly. Think about it: The Golden Rule is “Treat others the way you want to be treated.” And that Golden Rule originated from JESUS.

In fact, when a rich young ruler comes to Jesus and asks what he must do to be perfect in his eyes, Jesus tells him to give everything that he can in order to take care of other people.

If I haven’t given you enough evidence of God’s desire for his people to enact justice, I want to focus on the early Church with you.

READ ACTS 2:42-47 TOGETHER

The early Church was growing so much because they were working not only on the practice of going to church but also on the practice of being the church.

Social justice is so important to us, that we even have an entire book dedicated to it. It is called “Social Principles of the United Methodist Church.” In it, it highlights some of the areas that we believe the Church should be active in: women’s rights, refugees, immigrants, gun laws, the death penalty, slavery, war, education, right to vote, etc.

Social justice is important, and it’s something that some Christians get upset about because sometimes social justice gets political. In fact, some Christian leaders (not Methodist) put together a “Statement on Social Justice & The Gospel” earlier this year, stating that social justice and the
gospel of Jesus Christ are incompatible. Ironically, this statement shared several political opinions and isolated many groups: including women, the LGBTQ community, and racial minorities including immigrants and refugees. But we believe as Methodists that all people have value, not just white, straight, American men.

It can certainly be uncomfortable to talk about, but you should understand that the Methodist church, at its core, is inclusive and missional. It's part of what makes the Methodist Church so special. But being missional is uncomfortable. Being missional is sacrificial. It means giving up some of what you have in order to help other people—whether it’s your money or our time.

The impact of the Methodist movement on political movements is huge, and it’s something to be proud of! Methodism heavily influenced historical political movements, like the abolitionist movement, the temperance movement, women's suffrage, child labor laws, and the civil rights movement. And we continue to help today.

Today, as we take up our offering, I want to talk a little bit about the three main causes that this year’s donation will help:

• In Arizona border communities, the town is divided. Methodists will spearhead a peace ministry uniting those communities.
• In Liberia, Methodists will be equipped to implement our Social Principles.
• In Pennsylvania, students are educating their community about sex-trafficking at home and abroad.

Social Justice is key to who our Methodist Identity, and I hope that you can talk about this more in your small groups—how to make justice core to your faith, something that motivates you to put action to what you believe in.
CLOSING ACTIVITY & SONG: OFFERING

TAKE THE SPECIAL OFFERING
Place the offering basket at the front of the room, either on the altar or with you holding it. Play music and invite students to sing along.

SUGGESTED SONGS (Choose one or two):
- God of Justice - Tim Hughes
- Madly - Charlie Hall
- All the Poor and Powerless - All Sons and Daughters
- Rise Up - Andra Day

PRAY OVER THE OFFERING, AND DISMISS TO SMALL GROUPS
QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. As Christians, we’re not just supposed to go to church, but be the church. What do you think it means to be the church?
2. How do you define social justice?
3. Why is social justice a part of our faith?
4. What social justice issues are key to our faith?
5. What social justice issues do you feel uncomfortable talking about?
6. How might our faith influence or impact our politics?
7. Pick an issue from any of the ones we talked about—women’s rights, the LGBTQ community, refugees, immigrants, gun laws, the death penalty, slavery, war, education, right to vote. Research as a group the United Methodist Church role or doctrine in any of these areas. If you don’t have time to Google it in the group, talk about it through group text throughout the next week!
We are committed to making sure pastors and teams have everything they need for Special Sundays. We’ve created a variety of resources for this Special Sunday as well as the other five churchwide Special Sundays with offerings.

For more resources like this, visit www.umcgiving.org/PWJS.