

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
The First Sunday in the Season of Peace
September 5, 2021
Proverbs 18:4, 20; Psalm 19
“Three Lines in a Circle” by Rev. Sue Trigger

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Proverbs 18:4, 20 (NRSV) Harold Frye
 The words of a person’s mouth are deep waters, a bubbling stream, a fountain of wisdom. Words satisfy the soul as food satisfies the stomach; the right words on a person’s lips bring satisfaction.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Psalm 19 (CEB)
 Heaven is declaring God’s glory; the sky is proclaiming his handiwork. One day gushes the news to the next, and one night informs another what needs to be known. Of course, there’s no speech, no words— their voices can’t be heard— but their sound extends throughout the world; their words reach the ends of the earth. God has made a tent in heaven for the sun.

The sun is like a groom coming out of his honeymoon suite; like a warrior, it thrills at running its course. It rises in one end of the sky; its circuit is complete at the other. Nothing escapes its heat.

The Lord’s Instruction is perfect, reviving one’s very being. The Lord’s laws are faithful, making naive people wise. The Lord’s regulations are right, gladdening the heart. The Lord’s commands are pure, giving light to the eyes. Honoring the Lord is correct, lasting forever. The Lord’s judgments are true. All of these are righteous! They are more desirable than gold—than tons of pure gold! They are sweeter than honey—even dripping off the honeycomb! No doubt about it: your servant is enlightened by them; there is great reward in keeping them.

But can anyone know what they’ve accidentally done wrong? Clear me of any unknown sin and save your servant from willful sins. Don’t let them rule me. Then I’ll be completely blameless; I’ll be innocent of great wrongdoing. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Video 1 Three Lines in a Circle

This year, each week of A Season of Peace has a theme that invites us to think creatively about peacemaking. The theme for this week is Peace Through the Written and Spoken Word. If you are interested in the daily devotions – check your mid-week announcements or to the GCPC.org online worship page for today.

When I think of peacemaking through the written and spoken word, my first thought goes to the Bible and church. The Bible gives us a wealth of teaching about peacemaking. This morning, I want to think about another sourceⁱ of learning about peace. I haven't done a storybook Sunday in a while, so I was really excited to learn that A Season of Peace begins with a brand new children's book. Michael Long has written books for all ages on civil rights and peacemaking in mid-century America, but he's never written a book for children like "Three Lines in a Circle." The story is based on the birth of the peace symbol in England. I'll let Michael tell you about it.

Video segment 2

It's really remarkable that the peace symbol became a global symbol of peace. It tells us something important about the power of images that are given a story. In a couple weeks we'll be looking at the power of visual art in peacemaking, today, we want to focus on the story, the written and spoken word.

I want you to think of a story that you have read or heard that made an impact in your life. The fact that you remember the story shows you how powerful the written and spoken word can be in your life. When I graduated from High School, the associate pastor for youth gave me a book of parables. I still have the book today. The parables were not biblical parables, but contemporary stories that taught the truths of the Bible. I read those parables over and over again trying to understand them and discern meaning from them. That book played a role in shaping my beliefs and values. The written word is powerful.

Michael Long was inspired to write a book about peace for children because he understands the power of the written word. He's going to tell us why he decided to write Three Lines in a Circle.

Video segment 3

Peace is for all of creation. What an important lesson for children to learn. Grace Covenant is a Presbyterian Earth Care congregation. We take seriously the importance of caring for God's creation. We understand that God entrusted this world to our care. How do we know that? Through the story of creation that we have been studying in worship and Sunday school. Through the written and spoken word we learn that Adam and Eve were asked to care for the animals. When all is well with creation, there is peace.

Thinking about peace this way encourages to realize that peace is more than a social movement or political campaign. Peacemaking can happen in many ways. Once more, Michael will explain.

Video segment 4

This comment was made in response to the question, "What has writing taught you about peacemaking?" Through his process of writing this book as well as the other books he's written, he's learned that peacemaking doesn't only happen through protest. That's great news for

anyone who isn't comfortable protesting. Then he gave a wonderful list of ways we can do the work of peacemaking: You can take up a pen, sit down at your computer, pick up a pen, a paintbrush, plant gardens, bake bread. There are so many ways we can work for peace in the world. After all peace comes with the hungry are fed, the thirsty are given a drink, the naked are clothed, the sick are cared for. The path to peace involves all of us caring for others.

This congregation is very well equipped for the work of peacemaking. As I read the list of ways you can do the work of protesting, I invite you to say the name of someone you know in the congregation who is an advocate for peace through this method. Peacemaking can happen by taking up a pen (Harold Frye, Nelson Townsend, Twila Dell), sit at a computer, pick up a pencil, paint brush, plant gardens, bake bread, serve in a peacemaking organization, care for the sick, clothe the naked, and lastly – protest. God has given us many gifts that can help us to work for peace to the world. When we use these gifts to raise our voices and give attention to those who are on the margins of society, we are working for peace.

In the Season of Peace devotion for Tuesday, Michael Long imagines peace saying, "For me, peace is the impossible dream that is worth chasing and worth fighting for nonviolently. It's that time and place when we are no longer violent toward one another and it's that time and place where social justice will reign supreme. Given those two characteristics, I'm no quite so sure we will ever get there...but I also believe the evidence in our families and our communities and our nations does give us evidence that we can establish peace."

I believe we can, and I believe that the written and spoken word, particularly the Word of God, will lead us there if will follow. May it be so.

ⁱ A Season of Peace resources, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/season-peace/> Peace and Global Witness Offering.

ⁱⁱ Long, Michael, **Three Lines in a Circle: An Exciting Look at the Peace Symbol**, Flyaway Books, Flyawaybooks.com, Louisville Kentucky, 2021.