



# Seeking Peace

## PARTICIPANT STUDY GUIDE: VI

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### Bringing Peace Home

#### Rationale

THE THREADS OF PEACE AND JUSTICE are finely woven throughout the Bible in its emphasis on prophecy, wisdom, and reconciliation. This session empowers participants to add their voices to the tradition of faithful action on behalf of peace.

#### Objectives

- to relate the themes generated by the group regarding global peace and security to local issues of peace and justice
- to empower participants to work for peace in their local communities through the use of prophetic messages, wise counsel, and reconciling practices
- to connect and affirm the multiple ways in which one can work for peace locally and globally
- to connect the Biblical traditions of prophecy, wisdom, and reconciliation to historical Christian figures

#### Outcomes

- participants will discuss the diversity of ways in which they can work for peace in the spirit of Christian prophecy, wisdom, and reconciliation
- participants will gain knowledge of Christians who have gone before them in this work
- participants will gain inspiration to work within their local communities for peace



Women  
of Faith  
in Action



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**Women of Faith in Action** is a program of **WAND Education Fund** that seeks to reorder national priorities — away from militarism toward peace and real security. We do this by educating women of faith and engaging their voices and values in the political process.



**WAND EDUCATION FUND**

This curriculum is endorsed by the Peacemaking Committee of the Atlanta Presbytery. It has been promoted by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, National Council of Churches, and Church Women United.

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**These materials are made possible by  
the generous support of:**

Colombe Foundation  
Ford Foundation  
Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
Rockefeller Financial Services  
Stewart R. Mott Charitable Trust  
Mary Laney Reilly  
Ruth Schmidt  
Carol J. Tveit Clarke

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## EXERCISE 1

# U.S. in the World

## Opening Prayer

We walk, Lord, guided  
as pilgrims,  
With confidence that your presence  
gives us life,  
And is stronger than the weariness of the road.

When we walk, Lord,  
We know that you keep your promises,  
That a seedling of hope  
Has sprung up in the midst of a dry people.

We walk, Lord, with our hands empty,  
Seeking to be filled with your presence.  
We go full of poverty to be enriched. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

—*Youth and Migration Program of the  
Mexican Episcopal Commission  
on Youth Ministry*



## Drawing Questions

How do you see the relationship between the U.S. and the world?

## Mutual Invitation —Instructions

*The facilitator will share her/his drawing, then invite a participant to describe her/his drawing. This participant may either pass or speak, then will invite another participant to share.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>E.H.F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), pp. 79-88.

<sup>2</sup>Barbara Ballenger, Ed., *Prayer Without Borders* (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2004), 12.

<sup>3</sup>Robert R. Wilson, "Prophet," *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, Paul J. Achtemeier, Gen Ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 885.

<sup>4</sup>Shelly Nielsen, "Sojourner Truth: Mini-Unit," [www.teacherlink.ed.usa.edu](http://www.teacherlink.ed.usa.edu) July 2005.

<sup>5</sup>Susan B. Anthony House, "Biography of Susan B. Anthony." August 2005, [www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/biography.html](http://www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/biography.html).

<sup>6</sup>American Atheists, "Susan B. Anthony." August 2005, [www.atheists.org/Atheism/roots/anthony](http://www.atheists.org/Atheism/roots/anthony).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Helen Prejean, [www.prejean.org](http://www.prejean.org). July 2005.

**EXERCISE 2**

# The Span of Peacemaking

## Prophecy: Speaking Truth to Power

### Facilitator Introduction

Prophecy is one avenue for the work of justice and peace. But it is not for everyone. Prophets are often controversial, bringing stark messages from God to an unjust or unfaithful community. Prophets make use of a variety of tools to get their messages across. They are powerful preachers, ethical philosophers, raving ecstasies, isolated mystics, and even political analysts.<sup>3</sup> **Most prophets, however, are boundary figures, who stand between the sacred and secular worlds and speak truth to power, regardless of outcome.** We will now turn to a Biblical prophet, Nathan, then to a more recent prophet, Sojourner Truth, to explore prophecy as an avenue for Christian peacemaking.

### Narrative Summary

King David became the second king of Israel and built a powerful dynasty. In this text, God sends Nathan, a prophet in David's court, to speak the truth about David's actions. Nathan rebukes David for his affair with Bathsheba, the daughter of one of his advisors, while her husband Uriah was fighting against the Ammonites. David had ordered Uriah to be sent onto the front lines of the battle, where he was killed. David then married Bathsheba, who became the mother of Solomon, the next Israelite king.

### Read 2 Samuel 12:1-10

But the thing that David had done displeased God, and God sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As God lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too lit-

tle, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of God, to do what is evil in God's sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."

### Discussion Questions

1. How does symbolic story-telling function for Nathan, and how might we make use of it today?
2. Is prophecy purposeless if it does not successfully prompt repentance?

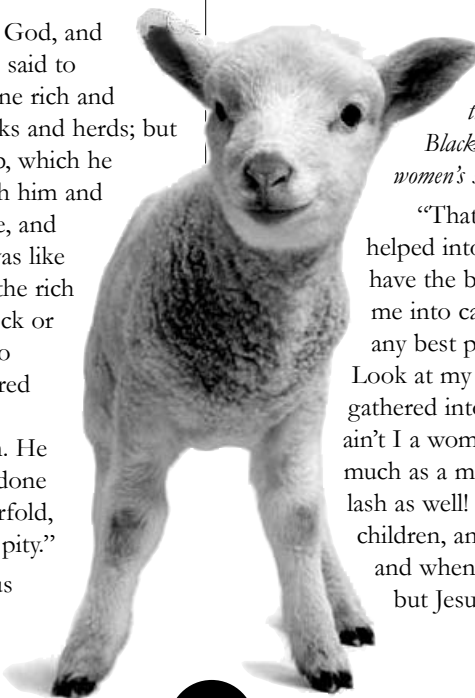
## A 19th Century Prophet: Sojourner Truth

### Background

Sojourner Truth was born into slavery as Isabella Baumfree in 1797 in Hurley, New York. At the age of 9, she was separated from her parents. She was sold several times, married, and had many children while enslaved. She eventually fled slavery. After being called by God, she left New York on June 1, 1843 with a new name — Sojourner Truth — to travel and preach truth to power, regardless of consequence. She never learned to read or write, but quoted often from the Bible and was a powerful speaker and preacher. She fought for the abolition of slavery and women's rights. She helped freed people find homes after the Civil War.

*In her passionate efforts to broaden conventional notions of womanhood to include poor and Black women, she offered the following words at a women's suffrage conference in 1851:*

"That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man — when I could get it — and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne 13 children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?"<sup>4</sup>



## EXERCISE 2, continued

### Writing Question

Prophets are boundary figures who stand between the sacred and secular worlds and speak truth to power, regardless of the outcome. Describe prophetic action that you have witnessed or taken part in.

### Wisdom: Transforming the System

#### Facilitator Introduction

Another way in which Christians can pursue justice and peace is by seeking wisdom. **Wisdom is the pursuit of ethical living through knowledge of the world and passionate trust in God.** Wisdom is observing and exploring creation — from the life and death cycle of the seasons to the work ethic of the ant — in order to unlock knowledge. Given the mystery and complexity of God’s creation, seeking wisdom requires humility and patient discernment. While a prophetic approach may work outside of unjust systems to challenge them, the pursuit of wisdom may call us to transform unjust systems from the inside with humility and patient discernment.

#### Narrative Summary

Esther’s story opens with Queen Vashti being summoned to appear before the Persian King (her husband) and his officials during a 7 day banquet filled with lavish food and drink. Vashti refuses, and her royal position is stripped from her. After a kingdom-wide search takes place, Esther, a young Jewish woman, becomes the next Queen, though she keeps her Jewish identity a secret. Haman, one of the king’s officials, plots to destroy all the Jews after Esther’s uncle, Mordecai, refuses to bow to him. Mordecai learns of Haman’s plot and calls upon Esther to go to the king on behalf of her people. Esther is persuaded, and she fasts with the Jews for 3 days before taking action. Risking her life, she approaches the king in the inner court without being invited. The king holds out his scepter to her, the sign that she will not be killed, and she invites the king and Haman to a banquet she has prepared. On the second night of the banquet, Esther pleads for her people and reveals Haman’s plot.



### Read Esther 4:13-16; 7:2-4

Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” Then Esther said in

reply to Mordecai, “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish...”

On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition — and the lives of my people — that is my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated.”

#### Discussion Questions

1. What did Esther risk in working within an unjust system?
2. What were Esther’s strategies in delivering her people?

### A Wise Woman: Susan B. Anthony

#### Background

Susan B. Anthony came from a Quaker family with a long history of activism. She advocated for the abolition of slavery, women’s labor organizations, and a woman’s right to vote. When she was growing up, anti-slavery Quakers met at the Anthony family farm almost every Sunday. Anthony began to organize meetings, make speeches, and distribute information. She organized a women’s league to support amendments to outlaw slavery and establish the full citizenship of Blacks and women. She campaigned for co-education and raised \$50,000 to ensure the admittance of women to the University of Rochester, even putting up the cash value of her life insurance policy to meet the deadline. The University was forced to uphold its promise to admit women with this funding. Anthony campaigned vigorously for a constitu-

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**EXERCISE 2, continued**

tional amendment to give women the vote. She appeared before every Congress from 1869 to 1906 to advocate for this amendment. The 19th Amendment, also known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, gave women the right to vote in 1920.<sup>5</sup>

**Wise words from Susan B. Anthony**

“I pray every single second of my life; not on my knees, but with my work. My prayer is to lift women to equality with men. Work and worship are one with me.”<sup>6</sup>

Susan B. Anthony’s observation on the wisdom of the created order: “As no particle of matter is ever destroyed, I have a feeling that no particle of mind is ever lost. I am sure that the same wise power which manages the present may be trusted with the hereafter.”<sup>7</sup>

**Writing Question**

What wise groups or individuals do you know that have worked to transform unjust systems from the inside out?

**Reconciliation: Right Relationship**

**Introduction by Facilitator**

Another avenue for the pursuit of peace and justice is the path of reconciliation. **Reconciliation is transforming, or healing, broken relationships with self, community, the Earth, and God.** Peace requires reconciliation between individuals, people of differing races and economic levels, and nations. Reconciliation acknowledges that all human beings are children of God. Reconciliation asks us to expand our definition of “neighbor” to include even our perceived enemies.

**Narrative Summary**

At the last supper with his disciples, before he was betrayed, arrested, and killed, Jesus disclosed that Judas would betray him and Peter would deny him 3 times that very evening. Later that evening, after a violent confrontation with a unit of soldiers who came to arrest Jesus, Peter denies knowing Jesus 3 times. After the resurrection, Jesus appears to the disciples and pointedly asks Peter 3 times if Peter loves him.

**Read John 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:4-8, 15-17:**

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter

in. The woman said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

\* \* \*

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

**Discussion Questions**

1. How does Jesus’ reconciliation with Peter acknowledge the pain of betrayal while offering the grace of forgiveness?
2. In the midst of their reconciliation, Jesus asks Peter to “feed my sheep.” How can reconciliation extend beyond those reconciling to transform the world?

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## EXERCISE 2, continued

### *A Reconciler: Sister Helen Prejean*

#### Background

Helen Prejean was born on April 21, 1939, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She joined the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Medaille in 1957. Sister Helen began a prison ministry in 1981 when she dedicated her life to the poor of New Orleans. She has witnessed five executions in Louisiana and educates the public about the death penalty by lecturing, organizing, and writing. **She founded a victim's advocacy group in New Orleans and counsels families of murder victims as well as death row inmates.**

Sister Helen says that her biggest reward has been “visiting and praying with the victims’ families, and being with human beings who are considered the scum of the earth and having the privilege of them looking at your face at the last moment of their lives...I am sustained by prayer and by listening to the Spirit of God and God’s capacity to be present in love. The role of the religious community is to reconcile what seems irreconcilable ...we are lovers of justice and lovers of human beings.”<sup>8</sup>

#### Writing Question

Reconciliation is the transformation, or healing, of broken relationships with self, community, the Earth, and God. Describe the ways in which you have seen reconciliation take place in your community or family.

#### Mutual Invitation — Instructions

*The facilitator will share one of her/his responses to the writing questions on prophecy, wisdom, or reconciliation with the larger group. The facilitator will then invite a participant to share. This participant may either pass or speak, then will invite another participant to share.*



## EXERCISE 3

### *Taking Action: An Open Letter to the Congregation*

#### Instructions

*Just as the New Testament contains many letters to new congregations offering advice on tough issues of their day, write an open letter (as individuals or as a group) to your community of faith, offering advice for Christian peace-making. Seek out the opportunity to publish the letter on the website, in the bulletin, or to read from it during worship.*

#### *Closing Prayer*

**One:** God of peace, we pray for the women and men gathered here who, in the midst of a violent world, walk another path.

**All: God of mercy, where there is violence, let us sow peace.**

**One:** We pray for all who have chafed under and challenged the yoke of violence against women. We pray for those who have prophetically acted against the violence in which they were raised.

**All: God of mercy, where there is oppression, let us sow justice.**

**One:** We pray for the people of this nation who have led children out of slavery and harbored survivors of violence. We pray for those who affirm that we stand in need of one another and cannot live or love in isolation.

**All: God of mercy, where there is fear, let us sow hospitality.**

**One:** We pray for women all over the world, the women of many cultures and traditions who encounter life on the periphery of power, for women who lay their hands upon the wound of suffering. We pray for the many men around the world who know the burdens of poverty, joblessness, and alienation from family.

**All: God of mercy, where there is devastation, let us sow hope.**

**One:** We pray for those in the death grip of war who bear the brunt of fundamentalist violence yet speak still and comforting words to children. We pray for the young men and women on the front lines of war who must kill or be killed.

**All: God of mercy, where there is hatred, let us sow love.**

**One:** We pray for Palestinian and Israeli women planting seeds of peace, for Sudanese women seeking refuge for their children, for Honduran women working ceaselessly for access to clean water. We pray for Iraqi men rebuilding war-torn communities, for Rwandan men telling the truth about genocide, for Cuban men touching the diseased.

**All: God of mercy, where there is brokenness, let us sow reconciliation. Amen.**

—Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss