

## Lead-in or Gathering Activity

This exercise is designed to be a preface to all the other activities. It includes a few moments of meditation and reflection to help participants calm their spirits and focus on the topic “Peacemaking Begins at Home.”

If you are planning to do more than one activity at a time, you may wish to recognize all the components of the Family Pledge for Nonviolence that you have chosen to highlight at that time.

### Supplies:

- Copies of the [Family Pledge of Nonviolence](#)
- A candle and some matches
- A watch with a second-hand

**Approximate time:** 3-5 minutes

### Leader’s Notes:

Invite everyone to gather in a circle. If you are including very young children, you may want to have them sit cross-legged in a circle or in a circle of chairs to help them keep their bodies quiet during this activity.

Refer to your circle as a circle of peace. Explain this circle is a symbol of equality and respect because no one is higher or more significant than anyone else.

Light a candle in the center of the circle and offer the following prayer.

Jesus, you call us to be a peaceful people, but our bodies, minds, and souls are often troubled and sometimes angry. Calm us and help us to bring peace to those round us. Amen.

Ask the group to pause for a moment of silence. Clock 30 seconds. This is not long, though it may seem to be for some participants. It is intended to be an exercise in calming ourselves to be aware and available to God’s work.

Recruit volunteers to read one of the seven phrases highlighted in the Family Pledge for Nonviolence. Invite them to read one statement at a time, pausing between each one. Then, use one of the following “Today we will seek...” statements to set the context for the activity or activities you have chosen to do at this time.

L: “Today we will seek...”

Statement #1: To Respect Self and Others - To respect myself, to affirm others, and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behavior.

Statement #2: To Communicate Better – To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

Statement #3: To Listen - To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others’ feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.

Statement #4: To Forgive - To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another; to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

Statement #5: To Respect Nature - To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

Statement #6: To Play Creatively – To select entertainment and toys that support our family's values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny or acceptable.

Statement #7: To Be Courageous – To challenge violence in all forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

All: With the help of God and each other, we will do it. Amen.

Bring closure to this exercise by introducing the activity associated with the statement(s) you will be highlighting.