

Talking to Children About War

As we watch the horrific tragedy of the invasion of the Ukraine, our children cannot help but be aware of it.

Children's Disaster Services staff offer these helps for talking with children about Ukraine

Lisa Crouch, associate director of Children's Disaster Services, a program within Brethren Disaster Ministries, has offered some helps and hints for talking with children about the situation in Ukraine:

Children may see or hear things on the news or at school that bring awareness to the situation in Ukraine. They may experience some anxiety, fears, and concerns. Other children may not. I think the following situational tips are important and can be applied in many types of disasters when children are involved:

- Let the child lead the conversation—if they don't bring it up, that is okay. Don't force conversation.
- If they do bring it up, listen to them closely, ask a few questions to gain an understanding of what they know.
- Use that basis of understanding to validate their feelings.
- Really listen, attempt to soothe or calm fears, but never dismiss their feelings as invalid.
- When explaining, try to use simple terms that are age-appropriate for your child. Avoid words like "bombing" and "invasion." Every child is different, and older children may be okay with those terms. But younger children may just need to know that sometimes countries fight, and there are a lot of adults trying to make it better.
- Usually a child's primary concern is "are we safe?" Try to reinforce to them a feeling of safety and that the conflict is happening far away from here.
- Avoid watching the news with your child present—this will only increase fears and misunderstanding.
- Reach out to support systems if you or your child are having a particularly difficult time. Sometimes leaning on a friend is the best support, but

also know that it is okay to ask for professional help as well.

Since 1980, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) has been meeting the needs of children by setting up childcare centers in shelters and disaster assistance centers across the nation. Specially trained to respond to traumatized children, CDS volunteers provide a calm, safe, and reassuring presence in the midst of the chaos created by tornados, floods, hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural and human-caused disasters. Find out more at www.brethren.org/cds..

Ghost Guns



Ghost guns are untraceable firearms that can be assembled from parts or kits sold online without a license, and purchased without a background check. The guns are untraceable because the parts have no serial numbers or other identifying information that can distinguish one from another. This also means they cannot be tracked from manufacturer to seller to purchaser, and in the event they are used in a crime, to the user. "Because they're as easy to buy online and build as a piece of furniture, ghost guns have become the weapon of choice for all sorts of prohibited purchasers, including domestic abusers, sex offenders, white supremacists, terrorists—and even children." (Shannon Watts. "Ghost Guns Are Real Guns. Now They'll Finally Be Treated as Such." *Newsweek*. 4-14-2022). They are relatively easy to assemble, but no less deadly than 'regular' guns. Some are made with 3-D printer technology. While the 3-D printer versions are often capable of firing only one shot, one shot is enough to kill.



3-D Printed Gun

In 2016, the ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives) recovered around 1,750 ghost guns involved in criminal investigations. In 2021, the number jumped to

20,000. Of the 45,240 ghost guns recovered between 2016 and 2021, 692 of them were involved in homicide or attempted homicide investigations.

New rules went into effect in August that will close some of the loopholes that have allowed ghost guns to be sold without regulation. Serial numbers will now be required on parts as will background checks for purchasing them. In short, ghost guns will now be treated like what they are – guns.

Additional Sources: Monique Beals. "What Is A Ghost Gun, and Why Is the Administration Concerned?" *The Hill*. 4-12-2022.

"Ghost Guns". "3D Printed Guns". Wikipedia.

A Dangerous Sign of the Times

The U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) reports that more guns were confiscated from people at airports in 2021 than in any year in our history. 5,674 guns were stopped by agents at airport checkpoints. 85% of them were loaded.

The Women of Afghanistan Face a Perilous Future

When the Taliban took control in Afghanistan a year ago, they promised the rights of women would be protected. The reality on the ground now, a year later, is far different. The evidence is clear and growing, that the Taliban is increasingly limiting the rights of women and imposing arbitrary and harsh punishments, without any due process, including imprisonment and torture, on women for an ever-changing list of reasons. 'Infractions' include leaving their homes without a male relative's permission or doing so without a male relative. Women have lost control of nearly all aspects of their lives. They are barred from most work outside the home. Girls are now denied education beyond the sixth grade. Women who were in leadership roles before the Taliban took over, and women who speak out for their rights are imprisoned, often without anyone, including family knowing where they are or why. Women who are detained for any reason face torture, and sexual abuse including rape. Women who have been detained say, it leaves their reputation and dignity tarnished because the community assumes they were raped. . . Women who peacefully protest the Taliban are harassed and beaten.

The humanitarian crisis in the country, caused by Taliban mismanagement and the economic impact of having their resources frozen by the west,

is adding to the difficulties the country is facing. A major earthquake in June, which killed over 1,000 people and left many more homeless, has added to the misery. The west is trying to bypass the Taliban and help the earthquake victims, but that is difficult. Women will undoubtedly bear the worst of this crisis because their needs and voices are being ignored and marginalized. The loss of their voices and skills to the society that refuses to accept and value them, is incalculable.

We Are Called To Be In Constant Prayer

That does not mean we are just to send up an unceasing stream of "I need" requests or even a constant outpouring of thanks for what God has done for "me" – though sharing needs and giving thanks should be part of our prayer life.

Prayer should also include something else. Prayer is how we stay in touch with God by **listening** to his leading, and **seeking his guidance** for living our lives. These parts of prayer, we should be doing constantly!

Praying constantly, includes keep our eyes and ears open to the world around us. God may guide us to our calling through everyday encounters.

Pray for the grumpy person on the sidewalk, or the screaming child who (along with the voice of an angry parent), can be heard all over the store. Pray when a siren sounds. Pray over the news of a flood, famine, shooting, conflict, etc. Pray for the people involved, and for opportunities to help them where you can. Always give thanks for good news.

Also pray for discernment, patience, an open mind, and empathy when divisive issues arise, or apparently unresolvable problems bring misery to people near or far away. Does God have in mind ways in which you can make a difference?

There is a world out there which we are both responsible for and dependent upon. When our comfort or stubbornness is contributing to suffering for others, pray for help to change. Do not forget, others share our stubbornness and desire for comfort since all of us share a common human nature.

It is likely that efforts to make a difference and bring peace will only work if they are rooted in prayer.

How Do We Channel Anger & Fear?

We seem to be in a time when many people are angry and having trouble channeling that anger constructively. For some, years of oppression or poverty (or both) have stoked the fires of anger and hopelessness that can make taking matters into one's own hands seem appealing, justified, or the only option. Others believe they are 'entitled' and have a special status. If people feel entitled and believe their status is threatened, their resentment can be a powerful motivator to do anything to preserve their "special status". In both cases, a sense of desperation can lead to poor, even destructive choices. A key factor is what motivates the actions chosen.

A critical need is to have a strong moral compass, a sense of community, and a Jesus inspired desire to work for the common good. When that is lacking, it can be easy to forget that we are called to be our brother and sister's keeper. When action is only anger and entitlement fed, violence and destruction are the result. Unfortunately, it is easy for someone, driven by their own motives and with a bit of hutzpah, to channel the anger and frustration of others into destructive actions that meet their own personal ends. An individual motivated by such personal ends does not usually consider the welfare of others when making choices. It is inevitable that other people will get hurt, including the people whose anger and frustration have been channeled into fueling the driven individual's quest in the first place. On the other hand, when people channel their frustration and even anger into pulling together, to seek, and then work for changes that will benefit everyone, growth and stronger communities can result. Jesus does not call us to ask, "what's in it for me", he calls us to ask, "what is God calling me to do with and for all of us." Pray for his leading and accept his call to action!

Did you know: nonviolent protests are twice as likely to succeed as armed conflicts. It takes only 3.5% of the population. When such a handful gets actively and peacefully involved in calling for change, change always comes!

See the article: "Are We Peaceful?" *Peace Advocate News* Vol. 13:3, Summer 2020.

Peace Seeds

Are you sowing any seeds of peace as part of your daily routine? There are many 'peace

seeds' we need to decide to plant in these days of division, fear, and frustration. Guarding our tongues when disagreements arise; remembering to love others as we love ourselves; treating others, even the most exasperating of people, as we want to be treated; rejecting 'us or them' thinking; putting ourselves in the shoes of the people we struggle to understand; accepting even enemies as people God created – just like us. Hopefully, we have planted more peace seeds than we are aware of because we plant many without thinking about it. They are seeds we plant in the manner of our living, in the ideals that undergird the decisions we make, the words we chose, the ways we respond to people and situations we face, and every time we put the needs of others before our own. We plant peace seeds because, like other kinds of skills we learn (walking, riding a bike, sewing, carpentry, etc.), peacemaking skills can become so much a part of us that we use them without needing to think about it. When these peace seeds become part of the core of our being and are producing fruit, we are following in the footsteps of Jesus. This does not mean peacemaking becomes easy or conflict and struggle go away. Especially when differences cause us to feel threatened, our brain's fight or flight self-preservation tendencies kick in and we need to be very intentional about calling on our peacemaking skills! As with other skills, peacemaking skills can get rusty when we are out of practice. They become part of us when we daily study Jesus' teaching and practice them regularly. Jesus blessed all peacemakers and called us to be among them. Plant peace seeds in yourself and in others. The fruit will be extraordinary for all of us!

A sign of Hope

In the year 2020 the number of known executions in the world decreased by 26.7%. This is the lowest number of executions in one year for 10 years. 23 U.S. states and two-thirds of the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty.

Worship Resources

Make Praying for Peace Part of Your Worship

When we pray for the people in need in our world, we are praying for peace. Peace is not just the absence of war, it is Shalom – living in harmony

with each other and with God's creation. Shalom means health, safety, tranquility, wholeness, and rest – the welfare and prosperity of all. Praying for the needs of others is an important first step in loving people as God calls us to. Next steps include using our time, talents, and resources to help others when disaster strikes, offering comfort in times of need, and working for change when the suffering of others comes from discrimination, persecution, exploitation, or abuse. When shalom does not exist for everyone, no one is fully at peace!



Remember in prayer:

1. **People dealing with COVID-19.** The pandemic continues. Long COVID is a sometimes-debilitating reality for a growing number of people. Continue to remember the sick and those caring for them.
2. **Ukraine:** Pray for Ukrainians living with the daily horrors of war. Pray for the millions of Ukrainians who are displaced – including 8 million still living as refugees in foreign lands. In Ukraine, there are food shortages and the risk of epidemic disease due the loss of infrastructure and adequate health care. Remember, in Russia, not everyone supports Putin's war despite intense pro-war propaganda & government control of the media. There are Russians willing to risk openly protesting the war. More than 15,000 protestors have been arrested so far. Pray for them as well.
3. **People living with racism, bigotry, or prejudice.** We are reminded daily that we have not learned Jesus' lessons about how to treat each other, or the lessons from our past about the destructive power of fear and hate. Pray for those who live with the reality of racism. Pray for all of us when we do not understand or acknowledge the ways we may play a role in continuing it, especially where efforts are underway to deny the problem by attempting to keep people from reading & learning its role in our history.
4. **All those dealing with natural disasters. Among them:** Much of the world experienced periods of excessive heat this summer. In the U.S., drought continues in some of the west and south. Fires continue to burn in the west. South Africa, Brazil, Australia, India, Italy, and Bangladesh have had serious flooding. The flooding in Bangladesh and India has left millions homeless and at least 100 dead. More

than 1,000 people have died in an earthquake in Afghanistan. Major heat related wild fires have burned in Spain, Greece, Croatia, Portugal, England, and France.

5. **Those consumed by hate** and willing to use violence to get their way.
6. **Places where political corruption and drastic economic inequality have led to unrest and violence** – continue to remember South Africa, Ecuador, Colombia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Argentina, the Philippines, Brazil, Syria, Afghanistan, and Thailand where desperation is growing among the people who have lived with corruption and economic crisis, and violence for years.
7. **People without the freedom to voice their views, raise issues or voice objections when they disagree with their leaders.** Also pray that all people remember free speech is not a license to engage in hate speech that promotes discrimination or violence.
8. **Victims of gun violence & for those willing to commit such senseless acts.** The incidents of gun violence are increasing, especially where guns are easy to get.
9. **Refugees & those displaced by violence** especially during the pandemic, & especially children. Remember those exploited by human smugglers, or politicians.
10. **All people in this world who live with war.**
11. **Girls & Women** facing daily abuse & violence.
12. **The people of Haiti.** Political unrest, kidnapping for ransom & human rights abuses are rampant there. Kidnapping for ransom is worse in Haiti than anywhere else in the world. Even so the U.S. continues to send families & children seeking asylum back to Haiti where their safety is far from certain. **Kidnapping for ransom is a growing problem in a number of countries including Nigeria.**



Look for Peace & Reconciliation Resources on the Northern Ohio District Website.
For access go to: www.nohcob.org

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