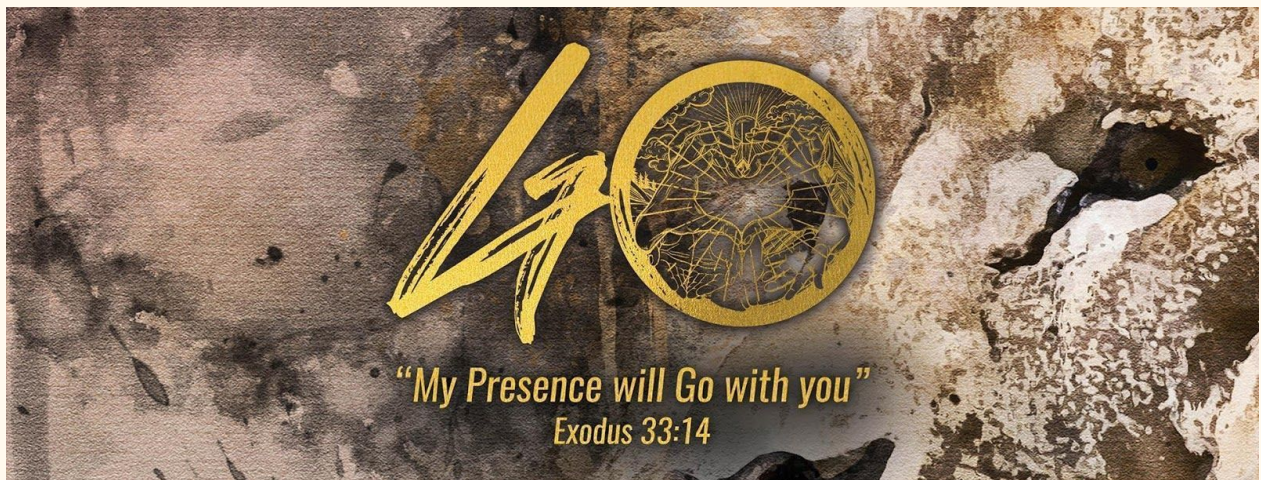


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# Ignite

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*“Lord, in this busy season please help us to be still. We want to open our ears to hear You, quietly preparing our hearts for the wonder of Your coming at Christmas. We confess that we often take for granted what You sacrificed in order for us to enjoy this relationship with You. We take time now to thank You again for being the Passover Lamb that gives us life. Amen.”*



# SERMON SUMMARY

**Note to Word Facilitator:** *The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.*

## Advent: Peace on Earth ...?

**Pr. Mike Ngui**

**Luke 2:8-14**

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

### Introduction

2020 - the year of the Covid-19 pandemic. The crowned virus has spread throughout the world, wave after wave, striking fear in people. There are fears of contracting the disease and the loss of livelihood. This is a war waged against our souls, attacking our vulnerable sense of peace. In this setting of unsettledness, surely *peace*, holds a fresh meaning to us.

The peace that the world often talks about is often sought after in conflicts and war. A need for a ceasefire to halt the constant hostility between factions. An end to our personal woes and struggles. Often temporary, this type of peace is shallow as it merely denies reality and avoids the uneasy truths of a situation. It is unreal when calmness on the surface masks the churning water beneath.

On the other hand, the peace that the psalmists and prophets of the Old Testament spoke about is *Shalom*. It is the peace that God intended for the world. One that denotes wholeness, though it demands that we be real with ourselves and others. One that through true listening and compassionate speech, brings forth healing, redemption, growth, life and abundance. One that is not about the absence of

conflict nor does it void us of the truth that we do live in a time of strife and pain. One that will keep us steady, stable, secure, sustained and sustainable. One that is open to all, that none should be left out.

Shalom is not a state of our minds, but a state of a right relationship with God which then positions us to have a right relationship with one another. God Himself made peace with the world long ago, through Jesus Christ.

## **BIG IDEA: Peace in our world is possible because God made it possible**

### **1 Peace is Found in Christ Alone: Trust Him! *Eph 2:14-18, Isa 26:3,4***

Sent by His father, Jesus Christ came to earth on a peace mission - that this peace with God can be made possible for us so that we can be at peace with God and that He is at peace with us. It's a simple fact, yet we often fail to realize that this basic truth forms the foundation of our relationship with God.

It is important to recognize, as Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, that Christ is our peace. If we don't, we would end up relying on the circumstances in our lives or our personal accomplishments to have peace. If those things fail, we could end up being insecure all over again.

So, place your trust in Jesus and be assured that through His life, death, resurrection and ascension, we are secured in a relationship that has been restored with God. Build on the relationship. Put all your eggs in the Jesus basket and go all in for Jesus. He is our Prince of Peace and when God favours us, peace is our portion.

### **2. Peace is for Us: Receive It! *Rom 5:10-11, Rom 5:5, 1 Jn 4:9-11, Rom 14:19, Acts 2:44-47***

We are in the middle of Advent. A time of anticipation and waiting, as we are still living in the *not-yet* nature of the Kingdom of God. In the now, the shalom of God has not yet been experienced in all its fullness.

As we light the candle of peace, we are acknowledging that there is still darkness in our midst. We are reminded too that there is a light in us that shines in darkness.

While we wait in hope for Christ's second coming and for His light to shine in unexpected places, we can still experience glimpses of His shalom through our relationship with Him and the community of His Kingdom people, the church.

The basis of our reconciled relationships with God is His love. We are His precious children and He loves us dearly. When Jesus died on the cross for the atonement of our sins, it was not done to impose a truce on us. Rather, it was purely out of His love for us. God is for us. He is not against us.

On a broader scale, we can glimpse His shalom in the church. We need to recognize that the church is imperfect. Among us, exists darkness, fear and grief. We must be able to proclaim the light of God in hope, peace, joy and love that is both coming in its fullness and is already here, to those who are in need of healing from the brokenness in their lives.

Shalom is glimpsed as we live our lives in forgiveness, love, mercy and grace. As we have experienced God's love, we ought to extend love to others. We will then inevitably experience shalom in the church. Shalom prevails when kindness is experienced. When the needy's needs are met, when the marginalized widows, orphans and refugees are taken care of.

Today, we may only see a glimpse of a candlelight. Someday, we will be bathed totally in the brightness of God's eternal light. Meanwhile, don't sit around passively and wait for God to do something. We should instead strive to be the peacemakers that God wants us to be.

### **3. Peace is for Everyone: Share It! [2 Cor 5:18-20](#), [Heb 12:14](#)**

As Christ's ambassadors, we are to bring the ministry of reconciliation to those who have not known Him. We should take our shalom to a wider community - our extended family, neighbours, community groups, schools and institutions, the nation, even to the world at large. When God presents the opportunity for us to do so, seize it. Besides getting ourselves involved in our CG's Christmas projects or an ImpactNow initiative, here are a few other suggestions:

- ★ Don't engage in violence. Not just the physical type, but the one that involves our speech to others. Discipline and challenge yourself to speak only peace. Replace discouragement, insults, accusations, degrading and offensive words with encouragement, affirmation, appreciation and words that will build people up.
- ★ Where there is a need, meet it. Where there is a hurt, heal it.
- ★ Feed the hungry.
- ★ Give warmth to those who are cold.
- ★ Show hospitality to the homeless and lonely people.
- ★ Encourage humanity and be compassionate, to anyone that you may meet.

The world longs for the peace that only Christ can provide. No, it is not going to be easy to extend God's shalom to others. It may push us out of our comfort zones and it definitely requires our effort. As we work for peace, some of the tools that will be useful to us include asking ourselves if there is a need for forgiveness (whether we need to seek forgiveness or that we need to forgive others), evaluating if our speech has been harmful and hateful, and praying earnestly for peace in our relationships. Like it or not, we should pray for those who may have wounded and caused

disappointment towards us, those who are different from us and those whom we have boxed up as unforgivable people.

## **Conclusion**

During the early 1940s, German prisoners of war (POW) were sent to a farmland camp at Algona, Iowa (USA). In 1945, six POWs started to make half-life size figurines that depicted the nativity scene of Jesus Christ. They sourced for their own supplies, including wood, wire, cement, plaster and paint. They worked on it and completed their project in less than a year. In 1946, the camp was closed and the POWs returned to Germany. The figurines were donated to the town's community. Upon seeing the figurines, the town folks realized that while the POWs were enemies on the WWII battlefield, they were also brothers in faith.

As we approach Christmas, remember that Christ has broken down the dividing walls and barriers of hostility among us. There is no longer a separation in the body of Christ. We are no longer strangers but members of one family. Near and far, we can all be reconciled to God.

The glimpses of His shalom show us that there is possibility of wholeness in our lives. Where we are able, work for peace. For the things we once thought were unfixable, the peace of God can bring restoration.

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# **SERMON REFLECTION**

During last week's cell group meeting, the resounding response in our sharing about the hope in Christ was to trust in God. *Trust God. He is sovereign. Trust God. His promises are true. Trust God. He has seen us through difficult times before.*

Trust God. He is our peace. Yet, for many, this trust may waiver when faced with an unending stream of struggles, possibly shaken by a little mis-step, the 1° degree that has set us adrift from God.

## **Peace is found in Christ alone: Trust Him!**

The world works in the way where joblessness denotes uselessness, and that has made me feel like I was a failure for having lost my long-term job. I was restless when I lost my sense of direction and stumbled because I went ahead of God. I clung onto Him though, knowing deep down that I have an eternal hope in Him.

When I began to slow down and hear from Him again, I had better clarity about what is ahead. I began to appreciate this few months of rest and so I would schedule myself to have occasional outings with friends, attend baking or art and craft classes, dote on my nephew and nieces, or do a little Christmas shopping.

Regardless of how the world churns, or the hundreds of commentators on social media, or the private texts that appear on my phone, the most important person I should be communicating with, is God. In building my relationship with Him, I have learned that I can fully trust in Him.

**Peace is for us: Receive it!**

***We glimpse shalom in our own relationship with God.***

Just last Friday, I made a purchase through a mobile app, and regretted it minutes later. What followed the unease of my unthrifty act was the overplaying of 'why did I do that?' or 'oh God, forgive me for my lack of self control' in my head. Imagine the unnecessary stress I put myself into as I laid on a dental chair hours later. On my walk home, my mind was still flustered even though I knew God had forgiven me.

Suddenly, a patch of flowers caught my attention. They were so pink and pretty that I just had to whip out my phone to take a photograph. I realized at the moment that God was saying, "Snap out of your guilt already!" As I continued walking along the *lorong*, I took photographs of six other types of flowers in full bloom. How coincidental can that be but a divine message from God that told me not to worry too much about how He will provide for my present and future.

***We glimpse shalom in the community of God's people.***

For the past few months, the prayer requests that I have received more often than not touched on the need for healing from illnesses and the fears of retrenchment. I thank God that this year, other than the occasional antihistamine for minor allergic reactions, I did not have to see a doctor for a cough or sore throat. I thank God that having gone through the process of retrenchment myself, I am able to relate to others' in similar predicaments. There is nothing much I can do but to pray and to extend a virtual caring hug through words of encouragement and bible verses of God's promises to the people in need of His peace and assurances. I am blessed when some have expressed gratitude for answered prayers.

**Peace is for everyone: Share it!**

I don't have to go very far to find an example of a couple in my cell group that has been taking time to intentionally share God's shalom to their neighbours. It started out with the mere desire to go on morning brisk walks, and then to start a litter picking project. Soon, they have gotten to know many neighbours who are often up and about tending to their gardens. Sharing a similar interest in urban farming and exercise, they took the opportunity to form new friendships, catching up with their neighbours through community chats. They have even prayed for two pre-believing friends who have personal needs. In return, they have received little gifts like empty paint pails as a substitute to plant pots and a harvest of vegetables or fruit.

The effort to start extending God's shalom to others can begin in our Jerusalems. We only need to take that one step forward to make a difference in the world we live in.

*Shalom, and God bless!*

*Contributed by Wendy ML Tan*



# APPLICATION

## **Note to Word facilitator:**

*As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.*

## **Suggested Icebreaker Questions / Activities**

- Show a facial expression when you have peace. [On Zoom, you can capture an image of everyone and share it among yourselves.]

- What is your favourite music genre? What musical tones bring you to your feet every time?

### **Suggested Word Introductory Questions**

- What are the dominant tones in your life? Anxiousness, offences, emotional turmoil or positivity, hopefulness and peace?
- How do you differentiate between the peace that the world propagates and the perfect peace that is from God?

### **Suggested Questions linked to main point:**

#### **Peace is found in Christ alone: Trust in Him!**

- In facing a struggle, is God the first person you go to for help or is He ranked second or worst, that He is usually the last resort?
- How have you experienced God's peace in the midst of conflicts and chaos, not just at the end of them?
- Are all your eggs in the Jesus' basket or did you put some in other storages, just in case? Do you find it hard to fully trust in God? Why?

#### **Peace is for us: Receive It!**

- Describe or illustrate how God shows you His love. [For example: visions, nature, music composition, art pieces, friends]
- Fill in the blanks: " \_\_\_\_\_ " is an indicator of God's peace in my life.
- Are you experiencing peace even when God doesn't seem to be answering your prayer?

#### **Peace is for others: Share It!**

- Name something that you will do this Advent / Christmas season as a means of creating and conveying shalom to others.
- Has your CG decided on an ImpactNow project this Advent / Christmas season? What are the ways that you can participate or help out in the project? If your CG has not decided on what to do. Take time to brainstorm about it together.

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**Question Bank***(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

1. Do you need peace in your life or does it not matter to you?
2. Do you only recognize the occurrence of peace at certain points in your life? How long did that peacefulness last?
3. How would you measure God's peace in regards to His will in your life? What if



His will is not what your heart desires? [For example: What if God wants you to remain single? What if God wants you to remain in Malaysia and not migrate overseas? What if God wants you to leave home and be a missionary abroad?]

4. How are you investing in your relationship with God? Are you giving it your all to Him or is He just a hedging - a 'just-in-case' insurance for your tough times when everything else fails?
  5. What is holding you back in experiencing the fullness of God's peace? Are there people that you need to forgive and reconcile with? [It could be within the CG. Be cautious in handling any untoward situations among members.]
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## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



Photo by Annie Spratt from Unsplash

### Story of the week...

*In this season of Advent, we will be reflecting on the One who brought us Hope, Peace, Joy & ultimately, Love. A video podcast is released each week for four consecutive weeks leading to Christmas. This week's theme is PEACE and being featured is Dr. Ginelle Low, Head of Covid Operations Room, HKL. When the country went into lockdown in March 2020, Dr. Ginelle Low was appointed Head of the Covid Operations Room at HKL. She relates her experience in leading the team at the height of the pandemic.*

Watch the podcast [here!](#) Better still, share it with others that you think will be inspired by Dr Ginelle's story!

Note: Videos will be posted on [dumc.my/chats](#) every Sunday at 12am (for the duration of Advent).

This 4-part [video podcast](#) is put together by Darren Ong and Team

*"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."*

- Maya Angelou

If you or your CG member(s) has a story to share related to today's Word or any other story that speaks of His goodness or of IMPACTNow, **share their/your story** [\[HERE\]](#)

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# PRAYER

**Note to CGL:** You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

**If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 2 Chron 7:14 (NKJV)**

**Just as we proclaim the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, we are called to stand in the gap and plead for the Lord's mercy and grace.**

Our nation, with its fragile political and economic structure needs a miraculous turn-around, to save the state from the worsening economic downturn and health challenge.

The number of cases of COVID-19 may soon rise to outstrip what our medical teams are able to cope.

Pray for the Lord's mercy and grace. Remember especially Sabah, Selangor and Putrajaya.

Uphold our government and the cabinet. It is my prayer that many statesmen will rise up to sacrificially lead in these tumultuous times.

Pray with the guidelines below:

**COVID-19** - Medical staff and Caregivers to be able to cope with the increasing cases worldwide.

**COUNTRY** – Prime Minister & Cabinet Members to put the nation's interest foremost on their agenda.

**CHURCH** – Psalm 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? The church to be agents of hope and peace and also to return to be a House of Prayer.

**COMING of the LORD** – “Only hold fast what you have until I come” Rev.2:25

- NECF -



## OTHER RESOURCES

Below are some links to resources for you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!

## FEATURED

*In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!*



### Methodist Prayer

[methodistprayer.org](http://methodistprayer.org)

Methodist Prayer is based on Daily Prayer, the Church of ...

Prayer & Spirituality

Website



### Following Christ in a Pandemic: Philip Yancey

59 minutes

[biologos.org](http://biologos.org)

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, "science" has be...

Philip Yancey

Social Concerns

Christian Living

Video Clip



### The Psalms Dare Us to Bring Our Whole Sel...

Short

[christianitytoday.com](http://christianitytoday.com)

Praying the Psalter can give shape to the river of our emo...

Tish Harrison Warren

Prayer & Spirituality

Christian Living

Article

## OTHER RESOURCES

*Discover a host of other resources curated for you here!*



## DUMC STORIES

*Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!*



