

For me, peacemaking isn't about calming others or avoiding disagreements. It is about letting the Lord work on my own heart first. In a tradition that looks to the Prince of Peace, I'm learning that the Spirit gently pushes against anything that feels like contention, not just in what I say but in the motives beneath my words. I used to think peace meant keeping things quiet and smooth, but I've come to see that real peacemaking is more active than that. It is not simply about sidestepping conflict. It is about doing the slow work of repair and right relationship. Peace without honesty turns into pretending, and honesty without kindness turns into combat. Christian peacemaking asks me to hold both together. When I choose to "renounce war and proclaim peace" within myself first, other people start to look less like opponents and more like fellow travelers trying to figure out life under God. That inner shift feels small and almost hidden, but it changes how I participate in every space I'm in.

Because words shape the atmosphere of a conversation, I try to practice peace in small ways I can carry with me. I pay attention to my tone, slow down before responding, and check my intentions. Sometimes I start with a short prayer, so I'm not speaking out of irritation or pride. I try to ask a couple of honest questions before offering any critique. I repeat back what I think the other person means, say something like "So what I'm hearing is..." and then share my perspective. When I feel myself bracing, I try something like, "Something I might be wrong about is..." to soften my own posture. And if I mess up, I try to repair it right away by saying, "I value you. Let me try that again."

A little while ago in class, these habits shifted the tone of a discussion. I paused long enough to gather myself, made sure I truly understood the other person's point, and then disagreed in a clearer, calmer way. The conversation remained honest—there were tense moments—but it didn't slide into an argument. When small practices like these happen repeatedly, they gradually reshape the spaces we are in. At home, in church, in school, and online, where outrage so often gets rewarded, a different rhythm starts to feel possible: patience instead of pride, reconciliation instead of resentment, curiosity instead of caricature. Over time, these habits create environments where people can breathe a little easier. Personal formation becomes something others can feel, not just something I think about privately.

At the same time, I don't think Christlike peace glosses over real harm. It doesn't ask hurting people to stay quiet or carry abuse for the sake of keeping the peace. Forgiveness and reconciliation aren't the same, and reconciliation requires safety, accountability, and time. Sometimes the most peaceful thing you can do is set a boundary that protects the dignity of everyone involved. Being honest about that keeps the possibility of future healing alive rather than shutting it down. This is where peacemaking becomes bigger than just me or my relationships. It pushes back against the polarization and suspicion running through American culture. It asks families, congregations, classrooms, and other communities to try out restorative practices that make repair feel possible again. My hope isn't that conflict disappears—that feels unrealistic—but that, with the Lord's help, conflict can become a place where grace shows up. A place where people are changed. A place where connections get rebuilt instead of broken. For me, peacemaking starts with a covenant, grows into daily habits of speech and listening, and eventually becomes a quiet kind of public witness. It is a way of living that stays steady even when the cultural winds around me are swirling.