

Sharing the Peace

At our recent 'Worship Reflection' event the question was raised as to why we share the Peace and what does it actually mean?

We pass the Peace for several reasons, many of them Biblical.

For instance, we do it because Jesus told us to. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:23-24), Jesus said, "*if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there, you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.*" Passing the Peace is a way for people in the Church to be reconciled to one another before making their offering at the Altar. It is for this reason that the Peace always comes before Communion.

We also pass the Peace because at the Last Supper, Jesus said "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you*" (John 14:27), and later when He Himself appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, He greeted them by saying, "*peace be with you*" (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 26). Just as Jesus shared His peace with us, so we should share peace with one another (Luke 10: 5-6; Jesus' instructions to His disciples as He sent them out). It was also, it seems, the practice of the early Christian community (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). These Scriptures suggest that in the very early Church, "*Grace to you and peace*" was the way Christians greeted one another.

Celebrating the Peace is within the Anglican Tradition. It can be found in the Book of Common Prayer but as a verbal statement rather than an actual exchange between individuals.

(Continued on the reverse.)

Today within most of our services many of us shake hands or hug perhaps without thinking about what the symbol means. The Peace calls us to go deeper. The Peace always comes after the Prayers of the People and the Confession and Absolution. We are called to prepare ourselves to go to the Altar: to pray for those we've hurt, and those who have hurt us; to confess the sins we need to confess, and to receive God's forgiveness; and then to be reconciled, one with another, as a symbol of our new life in Christ. We can then, truly, go to the Altar with clean hands and a ready heart, and receive the gift Christ makes available to us all: His body and blood given in love for us.

(N.B. At this time with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation please follow Government and Church guidelines with regards personal contact with another individual)



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