

PEACE

24/7

Empowering Youth to Be Ministers of Peace and Justice



**Rediscover
Your
Creative
Soul**

photo by Sheryl Magee, used by permission

Become Aware

Think back to when you were a young child. Take away all the video games, the television, the movie videos, and the electronic toys. Now, what are your favorite memories? Chances are it involves family and friends, along with laughter, silliness, closeness, a little mystery of the unknown, and a whole lot of wonderful creativity.

It is academically acknowledged that young children learn through creative play. But as we grow older, the privilege of creative, playful learning is substituted with more mature—much more measurable—forms of education. Quantifiable knowledge is expected to come from books and teachers. And creativity? The gift is often lost. You have heard the saying, “use it or lose it.” For many people, this is exactly what happens to their ability to creatively play and explore. For others, creativity is channeled into very specific skills—usually some form of art or music, and sometimes writing.

It is not uncommon to hear an adult say, “I’m just not creative!” I believe that creativity is a gift given to every individual. It is the part of us created to experience, to explore, and to

imagine. It is what allows us to grow and learn, to change, and to accept new possibilities. The creative spirit is within each of us! All you have to do is watch young children at play to see how inherent it is within our beings.

The creative spirit within us is God’s way of saying, “You are a partner with me in the future of this world.” A perfect world is not handed to us on a platter. God expects us to do our part to make this a better place. We are called to build the kingdom. Our future is dependent on those who are willing to recognize creative possibilities for themselves, for others, the universe, and the problems of our world.

You have the gift. How will you use it to make this a better place for all to live?

Lynda Roberson, editor PEACE 24/7

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Acknowledge Responsibility

Make a list of things at church that you wish were different: worship? classes? music? people? What changes would you like to see? Now ask yourself, “How will any of these things ever change if I never let people hear or see my creative ideas?”

Do you still feel like an infant when it comes to understanding what it means to be a peacemaker? If so, remember what Jesus said about God revealing the knowledge through the infants. Listen to God’s voice as it speaks through the creativity of your soul.

If not you, then who? You’ve heard the question many times, but as a disciple of Christ, you are specifically called to claim your place among those seeking to make peace a reality. Discuss what it means to move forward with a spirit of adventure, openness, and searching. How does joy and laughter, playing and singing fit into accomplishing this task?

Psalm 19:1–4 NRSV

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Matthew 11:25 NRSV

Jesus said, “I thank you . . . Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.”

Mark 10:14 NRSV

“Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

Romans 12:2 NRSV

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Doctrine and Covenants 161:1b

Be faithful to the spirit of the Restoration, mindful that it is a spirit of adventure, openness, and searching. Walk proudly and with a quickened step. Be a joyful people. Laugh and play and sing, embodying the hope and freedom of the gospel.

Acquire More Understanding

Let the Little Ones Teach

Arrange to visit a daycare. Talk to the little ones. Listen to what they say, and watch what they do. Let yourself discover with them. Embrace the world of wonder, enthusiasm, and endless possibilities that they live in every day.

Still Playing?

Ask at least four adults the following questions.

- When was the last time you let yourself really play?
- Do you consider yourself creative?
- What is your favorite childhood memory?
- If you could do anything, what would it be?

Compare their answers to your own. How might their responses change the way you approach life?

Clues from Nature

Take time to learn the possibilities of creativity from nature. Look for the following clues and more. Make a list of all the signs of God's creativity that you find.

- birds building nests
- squirrels at play
- flowers that change color each day
- a butterfly
- snowflakes—each one is different
- people's noses
- a turtle's protective shell
- the songs of birds
- shapes in the clouds

Speak only when spoken to

a square peg will never fit into a round hole

elephants can't fly

boys don't play with dolls

girls shouldn't get dirty

don't mix with "those" people

Rules for Creativity

The difference between a child who is creative and an adult who is creative is often the fact that the child knows no rules. However, eventually someone breaks the news that they must color within the lines and elephants can't fly. What are some of the "rules" you have been taught through the years that now govern your creativity? How have these rules impacted your willingness to be creative?

Creative Solutions

The power of creativity can benefit every part of our lives. To be a disciple of Christ seeking to impact peace in a world that is usually anything but peaceful requires an enormous amount of creativity. Practice some creative problem solving. Read the goals and facts below, then create alternative ways to reach the goal that consider peace and justice issues of all involved.

- Goal: sixteenth birthday party
facts: no money
twenty friends
cold weather
- Goal: school security
facts: several school bullies
public humiliation
kids afraid
attendance down
- Goal: interfaith peace rally
facts: Christian and non-Christian faiths
best rally location: school gym
not all faiths interested
- Goal: family night
facts: kids—9, 13, and 16, mom, step-dad
kids visit dad every other weekend and Tuesday
parents work
kids involved in soccer, basketball, music, and church



Take Action

- Try to find one new, creative expression in nature each day, then add it to your list.
- Awaken your creativity in *old* ways. Explore things you have long since let go: play with building blocks, finger paint, sing a nonsense tune, build a sand castle, play leap frog, swing on a swing set, slide down a slide, go to the zoo, find shapes in the clouds, or write a poem.
- Awaken your creativity in *new* ways: read a new type of book, create your own original food dish, and eat something you have never tried before. Try your hand at a new skill like painting, sewing, or sculpture. Make a point to visit places in your community that you have heard about but never seen. Take a walk in a direction you have never gone before.
- Awaken your creativity with a *twist*. Find ways to turn ordinary chores into play. Create new games by twisting old rules with new. Change the style of a favorite song just by twisting the beat.
- Ask children to lead songs, games, and storytelling.
- Volunteer at a daycare center or children's hospital to keep your passion for creativity alive.
- Make a point each day to express yourself creatively. Write in a journal or draw in a sketchbook. Use photography to capture the creative vision you see.
- Find time each day to remove yourself from distractions like the television, radio, Internet, and other things that think for you. Remember your partnership—let yourself be creative with God.

Become an Advocate

- Sponsor neighborhood fun nights that teach kids about God through creative experiences.
- Sponsor sidewalk drawing contests on the church parking lot and sidewalks. Encourage people of all ages to enter. Encourage families to enter together.
- Make puppets or other toys that encourage creative play to give to children's hospitals and daycare centers.
- Collect large appliance boxes to be shared with children for creative play.
- Help raise money, plan, design, and build a playground in your neighborhood that encourages the creative spirit in people of all ages.
- Encourage leaders to seek creative ways for worship, study, and problem solving. Volunteer your creative ideas!

