

# Peace on the Move





This final session in our Promise of Peace series explores how God's peace never stays still. Through the story of the Magi we discover that peace is always on the move, crossing borders and cultures and drawing unexpected people towards Jesus. While Herod clung to a false peace built on control, the Magi followed God's light with courage and openness. Their journey reminds us that encountering Jesus redirects our steps and sends us back into the world, carrying his peace. As we pray for Salvation Army territories across the globe, we join this movement of peace and learn to carry Christ's hope into our own communities.

# You will need:

- Large sheets of paper
- Coloured pens or felt-tips
- List of selected Salvation Army territories
- Website links or printed information about each territory
- Devices for the young people to take part in online research (optional)



### Say:

Today we are beginning with a quick journey around the world. Christians across the globe celebrate the coming of Jesus in all kinds of creative and beautiful ways. I am going to read out a Christmas tradition and your task is to guess which country it comes from.

# Leader's notes:

If the group are struggling to guess the country, then you can give them clues to help.



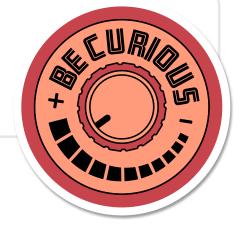
- Which country celebrates Christmas with bright star-shaped lanterns called parols that light up the streets and homes? The Philippines - The parol is a traditional star-shaped lantern that symbolises the star of Bethlehem and is displayed throughout the Christmas season.
- Which country celebrates Ganna on 7 January with white clothing and a special church service? Ethiopia Many people fast the day before Ganna and break their fast early on the morning of the seventh. Traditional white garments called shamma or netela are worn, and families later share a festive meal that often includes Doro Wat, a spicy stew.
- Where do communities act out Mary and Joseph's journey in a celebration called Las
   Posadas? Mexico This nine-night celebration involves processions, songs and re enactments of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter. It is practised throughout Mexico
   and some parts of Central America.
- Where do people celebrate St Lucy's Day (also called Lucia Day) with crowns of candles and sweet saffron buns? Sweden - St Lucy's Day is celebrated on 13 December with candlelit processions led by a girl wearing a white gown, a red sash and a wreath of candles on her head. Families also bake saffron buns called lussekatter to bring light into the darkness of the winter season.
- Which country has a tradition of hosting a huge Christmas meal called Ceia de Natal often shared late at night with family and neighbours? Brazil - Families gather for a large festive meal late on Christmas Eve, often beginning around 10 or 11 at night after church services. The feast includes dishes such as turkey, rice, farofa, fruit and desserts, and is one of the biggest celebrations of the season.

It is amazing how the same story is celebrated in so many different ways around the world. The Christmas story has moved across languages, cultures and continents. Today's passage introduces the moment that journey begins. Long before the message of Jesus reached the world, God drew some unlikely visitors towards the light of his Son.



#### Ask:

Which Christmas celebration from across the world would you most like to take part in? Explain your choice.







As we reach our final Promise of Peace session, we discover that the Christmas story does not stand still. God's peace is always on the move, reaching across borders and cultures and drawing unexpected people towards Jesus.

#### Watch:

English ESV - Matthew 2:1-23 - Lumo Project Films (Stop at 2:16) www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuhR6B-z0Bc

# Say:

Matthew introduces the travellers as simply 'wise men (magoi') from the East'. They are outsiders to Israel's story, yet they are the first to notice that God is doing something new.

#### Read:

- <sup>2</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'
- (Matthew 2:1-2)

#### Ask:

- What question did the Magi ask and what journey did it send them on?
- Have you ever felt God nudge you to explore or move forward through a question that needed an answer? Share your experience.

#### Read:

- <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:
- 6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."
   (Matthew 2:3-6)

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#### Ask:

- What differences do you notice between Herod and the Magi in these verses?
- What do these reactions show us about the difference between the world's peace and God's peace?



Herod hears the same news the Magi heard, but he responds with fear and intimidation. His version of peace depends on power, reputation and keeping everything under his control. The Magi's response to the news of the Prince of Peace is different. They are searching, open and willing to be led by God.

### Read:

- <sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'
- <sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- (Matthew 2:7-11)

### Ask:

- What choices show that the Magi are listening to God rather than to Herod?
- How did they discern the right path to take on their journey? Where did they place their focus?

### Say:

King Herod tried to manipulate the Magi; but they found their peace in the guidance of God rather than submitting to political pressure. They continued following the star until it led them to Jesus.

# Read:

- <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.
- (Matthew 2:12)

# Ask:

- Why do you think meeting Jesus caused the Magi to choose a different road?
- How does God redirect our lives in peaceful but courageous ways?

# Say:

Jesus does not leave us where he finds us. His peace moves us, shapes us and guides us into a new way of living. The Magi travelled across cultures and borders, carrying their worship, their gifts and ultimately God's peace back into their world. In the same way, God places his peace in us so it can move through our lives and our communities.





# Leader's notes:

If the young people would like to see how the rest of the story unfolds, watch the remaining part of the clip together.

# Watch:

English ESV - Matthew 2:1-23 - Lumo Project Films (Start at 2:17 - stop at 4:21) www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuhR6B-zOBc

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#### Leader's notes:

Today's Sound Check invites the young people to explore different parts of the global Salvation Army and create peace-themed artwork that reflects the needs and hopes of those communities.

The Salvation Army has 58 territories across more than 130 countries. As there are so many, choose four to eight territories for your group to focus on. Select a spread across different continents so the young people gain a global picture. Divide the group into smaller teams and allocate each team a territory.

You can prepare basic information in advance or allow them to use the website link provided to explore their allocated territory. The International Headquarters website has information about the different expressions of The Salvation Army's mission across the world: www.

# saluationarmy.org

Here are eight territories from across the globe you can use as a starting point:

- Kenya West Territory
- India South Eastern Territory
- Japan Territory
- South America West Territory
- Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands Territory
- USA Western Territory
- The Netherlands, Czech Republic and Slovakia Territory
- Mozambique Territory

Once the teams are formed and territories allocated, you can guide them through creating a peace-themed artwork to share with the group.



In the story of the Magi, we discover that God's peace is always moving. It crosses borders, reaches new cultures and draws people we might never expect towards Jesus. Today we are going to join that movement by turning our attention to the wider world and the global Salvation Army family.

In your groups, you are going to explore one Salvation Army territory and create a peace prayer artwork for that area. This will be a spider diagram or creative piece of art that shows the peace needs of your territory and what you would like to pray for. You can include words, images, symbols, Bible verses or short prayers.

Take a few minutes to explore what life might be like in your allocated territory. Think about what brings people peace and what might stand in the way of it. Then create your artwork together.

### Leader's notes:

Give the groups time to complete their artwork, and afterwards invite each group to share their creation. Take photos of the artwork and share them with the group afterwards so they can be used as personal prayer prompts throughout the week.



#### Ask:

We have seen that God's peace moves into surprising places. What difference do you think it makes when we stop and pray for God's peace in parts of the world we may never visit?



### Leader's notes:

This Selah is a guided time of quiet prayer. Encourage the young people to focus on the peace artworks created in the Sound Check and to pray both for the territories they explored and for peace within their own communities.

# Say:

We are going to be part of God's movement of peace as we pray for the territories across the world. Look at the peace artworks around the room. Choose a territory, a word or an image that stands out to you. Hold it before God and ask him to move his peace into that place and into the lives of the people who live there.



#### Leader's notes:

Allow a moment of quiet.

# Say:

As you pray for peace across the world, take a moment to think about your own community too.

- Where do you long to see God's peace moving here?
- Who needs courage, comfort or hope?
- Ask God to move his peace through your life, your friendships and the places you go every day.

# Say:

The Magi carried God's promise of peace back into their own country. As we pray, we join that journey. God's peace is still on the move today and he invites us to be part of it both across the world and where we live right now.



# Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

#### Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you are taking away from this series about the promise of peace found in Jesus?

# Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.

