

## Researching Religious Peacemakers

**Note:** This lesson is modeled on Teaching Tolerance’s [Researching Religious Extremism](#). It can be used in conjunction with that lesson or on its own. It is intended for students in grades 6-12.

**Overview:** Our media culture ensures that students are exposed to endless stories of violent extremists who commit atrocities in the name of religion. By exposing students to positive voices of faith, you can counteract the dominant media coverage that feeds into stereotypes and risks breeding antagonism.

**Introduction:** There are two big ideas for students to take away from this activity.

- In every religious tradition, you can find courageous individuals who are motivated by their faith to work for peace and justice.
- Peacemakers who act in the name of religion don’t make the front pages as often as violent extremists who act in the name of religion. But their work has important and lasting effects.

### Essential Questions:

1. What is a peacemaker?
2. Who are examples of peacemakers from different religious traditions? How are these peacemakers motivated by their faith to work for peace and justice?

### Procedure:

#### Step One:

1. Decide how you want students to work. This activity can be done individually, with a partner or in small groups.
2. Decide what you want the product to be. It can be kept simple using the graphic organizer at the end of this lesson, or you can have students showcase their research by creating slideshows, writing essays or designing informational brochures or posters.
3. Select a number of religions that you want students to learn about. (For example, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Taoism, Confucianism and Sikhism.)

## Step Two:

1. Spend time developing a definition of peacemaking. You can use Tanenbaum's [Peacemakers in Action Network](#) to guide the discussion. Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers* are selected according to the following criteria:
  - a. **Religious Motivation.** *Their peacemaking has been fueled by teachings from their religious traditions.*
  - b. **Armed Conflict.** *They are dedicated to stopping violent conflict and to sustaining peace in war torn countries.*
  - c. **At Risk.** *They have jeopardized their life or freedom in the pursuit of peace.*
  - d. **Locally Based.** *They are closely connected to the conflict situation "on the ground," at the local level.*
  - e. **Relatively Unknown.** *Despite the significant impact of their efforts, they have generally gone without the recognition and support they deserve.*
2. Assign students a religion to research and ask them to identify a modern-day peacemaker motivated by that religion. The peacemaker may be someone famous (like Malala Yousafzai) or relatively unknown (like most of Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers*). Be sure that students choose contemporary figures rather than historical figures.
3. Provide students with copies of the graphic organizer (below) and Tanenbaum's [World Religions Fact Sheet](#).
4. Arrange time for students to conduct their research in the classroom, in a computer lab or library, or as homework. To help students identify modern-day peacemakers, you may wish to guide them to the following websites:
  - a. Tanenbaum's [Peacemakers in Action](#)
  - b. The official website of the [Nobel Peace Prize](#)
  - c. The website of the [Norwegian Nobel Committee](#)

## Step Three:

1. Have students conduct research in the four areas of the graphic organizer.
2. Have students present their findings to the class.
3. Allow time for discussion.
4. Take notes on knowledge gaps and misconceptions that you need to address in future lessons.
5. Allow time for students to reinvestigate ideas that surfaced during the discussion.
6. Build the two big ideas (at the start of this activity) into your assessment to check for student understanding.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Researching Religious Peacemakers

What religion are you focusing on? \_\_\_\_\_ What peacemaker have you identified? \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Record your research notes and findings in the graphic organizer below. Keep a list of your sources on the back of the page.

<p><b>1. Basic facts and information about this religion (e.g., how many people practice it, where it is practiced, what are its central beliefs).</b></p>	<p><b>2. Identify a prominent contemporary peacemaker within the religion who is motivated by religious faith to work for peace and justice. Describe this peacemaker's mission and work.</b></p>
<p><b>3. What challenges and dangers has this peacemaker encountered?</b></p>	<p><b>4. What techniques, methods and approaches has this peacemaker used? What has this peacemaker achieved?</b></p>