

**Idea for a Children's sermon (ages 2 to-7-year-olds) for the Prevention of Gun Violence.
Prepared for Swarthmore United Methodist Church, Pennsylvania**

1. Sit together in a circle
2. "Let us hold hands, close our eyes, take a deep breath, and silently feel the presence of God around us here this morning"
3. "You may open your eyes if you wish."
4. "Today is a special Sunday. We are going to pray to ask God's help in resolving arguments in peaceful and non-violent ways."
5. The Bible story this morning is "The Parable of the Lost Sheep." Matthew 18:12-14. Show picture of David taking care of his sheep from the Bible. KJV Read-to-Me Edition with 45 Bible Stories, Illustrations and Special Helps for Parents and Teaches of Children under Six, Holman Bible Publishers. Pg 255.
6. Story: And Jesus said, "A shepherd has 100 sheep, and one of them gets lost. The shepherd leaves the 99 and goes into the mountains seeking the one which is lost. And, when the shepherd finds it, he rejoices more for that ONE SPECIAL sheep, than for the 99 that did not go astray."
7. Questions:
 - Why does the shepherd go to seek the lost sheep?
 - Have you ever lost something special? (a blankie or special toy?) Did you try to find it? How did you feel when it was lost?
 - Why doesn't the shepherd just buy another sheep?
 - Have you ever been lost? How did you feel? Who came to find you? How did you feel when you were found?
8. Game: Have small sculpy or clay-shaped sheep with wool wrapped around each in a container. Use some different colored wools. Pass the container around and have each child choose one. Tell them to study their sheep by feeling it, smelling it, looking at it. The purpose is to get to know the sheep so that it can be identified among all the others. Gather the sheep in a paper bag. With everyone sitting in a close circle, dump the bag in the center. Now ask everyone to find their sheep. [If time... Once everyone has their sheep, ask them to tell the group what qualities helped them to identify it.] (Note: The point of the game is the idea is that each sheep is special and, if possible, the idea that each one of us is special. It can be difficult for children to think of themselves as unique.)
9. Closing prayer (with eyes closed and holding hands in a circle): Dear God, Thank you for loving each one of us. Help us to feel that each one of us is special. Help us to see that every person in our neighborhood is special. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Back story: There is that of God in each person. The recognition of this Light [Holy Spirit] in ourselves and in others makes us able to value each individual. This curriculum proposes to help children and adults value their individuality as well as their unity with others. The first section looks at each person's uniqueness. Children learn to value themselves and to enjoy the special qualities of others. Each person is special, to him/herself, to others, and to God. Respecting and valuing

ourselves and others does not, however, mean that conflict vanishes. The second section considers how our respect for others and for ourselves can be positive forces in the resolution of conflict. An awareness of the Light [Holy Spirit] that brings us together will help us solve problems peacefully and constructively.

Reference: "Walking Cheerfully" Unit I: a Community of individuals, self-esteem, affirming others;
Unit II: Shining the light on conflict, Walking in another's person's shoes, Walking the second mile;
Unit III: Gifts of the Spirit.

By Molly Haines, Judy Cunningham, Annie Valloton, Marta Harrison, Religious Society of Friends.
Modifications (closing prayer and sheep game....changed from oranges game) by LaDorna Pfaff