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Prayer for PEACE in the new year

"Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." This opening line of a popular song aptly describes the deeply personal approach each of the following six writers is taking in thinking about world peace. And while the places they call home span five continents, they have one theme in common—their faith in the supremacy of God's love in human affairs.

Although diverse in their cultures and geographical locations, these spiritual thinkers agree that prayer to the universal divine Mind leads to practical, sustainable solutions to the most intransigent situations. The prayer they're talking about is not some hothouse daydream of Utopia. Rather, it's the prayer that comes from a faith in the healing, provable power of divine Love.

These writers are finding that through living God's love day to day—even in small and modest ways—personal, family, community, and, ultimately, world peace is becoming more evident. Without discounting the urgent needs of those caught up in war, violent circumstances, or the oppression of injustice, they each say in their own way that world peace is attainable—. . . and it always begins with me."

Consent to peace

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It was a warm summer's day. I was on my hands and knees in the garden, weeding. For a moment I paused to admire the sweeping views we had of a beautiful, tranquil valley. I loved our hillside home. Our street was peaceful. The neighbors were amicable. Everything around me seemed perfect.

Suddenly, violent yelling, followed by loud bangs, crying, and screams of pain, filled the air. I leapt to my feet. The disturbance was coming from the house next door. As I listened, I realized in disbelief that our young, newly married neighbor was physically attacking his wife. With a feeling of urgency I started to pray along these lines: "Dear Father, these are Your children. Your love is in their hearts. This means that they are calm and peace-loving. They are not violent people. Your harmony is present. You are keeping them from doing evil."

The screams and fighting continued, so I kept praying. Then the thought came strongly that I needed to take action right away to stop the violence. I ran indoors to the telephone, thinking I would call the police. Instead, I found myself opening the telephone directory and ringing the young man's parents. Although they'd never met me, they pleaded with me to go next door immediately. It would take them at least 30 minutes to drive over. Although I agreed, I was scared. What would I find? What would I say and do?

Then I recalled these words from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Right motives give pinions to thought, and strength and freedom to speech and action" (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 454). With all my heart, I accepted this statement. I asked God to help me be fearless. I reminded myself that this couple loved each other, and that God loved them. I knew that He could restore peace between them.

As I knocked on their front door, I could hear them screaming at each other. I prayed for courage, then knocked again. After some time, the husband opened the door. I told him how concerned I'd been for their well-being, that I'd called his parents, and that they were on their way over. We stared at each other. Then he started to cry. I went inside. There was upturned furniture everywhere and a huge hole in the living-room wall. He had a broken hand. His wife, who stood silently weeping, had a black eye and other bruises.

My heart went out to them. I put my arms around her. Then I embraced the husband. I offered comforting words, and I also prayed that God's tender love would heal their difficulties and bring them closer together. Soon his parents arrived. His mother was shaken. With tears in her eyes, she held my hands and thanked me.

Next day, the husband visited me and apologized for his violent outburst. He said he'd been deeply moved that I'd cared so much about them. My arrival had prevented him from doing something much worse. Ashamed of his actions, he promised that he wouldn't let anything like that happen again. And so far as I know, he never did as long as he lived next door to us.

I think of this incident often when I hear news reports about fighting and war. It reminds me to pray for peace—to get involved and not ignore conflict situations. After all, peace comes down to you and me. Nothing is going to change without the actions that our prayers impel us to take.

Here are some ways I pray for world peace:

- Affirm that God made everyone to want a stable, peaceful life; that it's normal and natural for all people as God's children to be peaceable—to live together in harmony.
- Remember that peace is a state of mind, not just an absence of hostilities. Right now neighbors can be good-natured, merciful, tenderhearted, kind. They can refuse to retaliate or react to provocation, anger, hate.
- Consent to peace—wholeheartedly believe that it can happen.
- Know that prayer is effective—that it reaches around the world, is powerful, and heals.

God gives us the strength and freedom to bring healing to our lives and thus our world. Even in the midst of fighting, our prayers can help neighbors make peace.