

Peace Ministry

A Handbook for Local Churches

Daniel L. Buttry

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Peace Ministry: A Handbook for Local Churches

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Dedicated to
faithful peacemaking pastors:

*Steve and Mary, George, Gail, Nancy, Paul,
Dick, Tim, Lucius, Steve, Bruce, Craig,
Reid, Charles, Mac, Jeanne, Juan, Roy, Bill,
Jeff, Martin, Jim, Stan and Kim, Reaves,
Ernie, and many others.*

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National Ministries, the home mission agency of the American

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Introduction

Peacemaking Ministry

“Blessed are the peacemakers,” Jesus proclaimed in the Beatitudes, “for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Being a peacemaker is a positive activity. Peacemaking is action that is intentionally taken for the purpose of bringing relationships torn by conflict into a condition of genuine reconciliation. Peace doesn’t just happen; it is made. People get involved in the complexities and anguish of conflict and must find the threads from which to weave a new bond of justice and harmony.

Peacemakers are called children of God, for by their work they are reflecting the very nature of the One called the God of peace (see Romans 15:33; 16:20; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). God in Christ engaged in the work of reconciliation and then entrusted the Christian community with the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The reconciliation is forged between God and humanity, between estranged human beings, and between humanity and the entire created order (see Ephesians 2:14-16). When Christians engage in peacemaking and the ministry of reconciliation, we are partners in a central work of God in the world.

The local congregation is a particular manifestation of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:27), so it is appropriate for the local congregation to be a locus for peacemaking ministry. As a gathered

community of believers, the local church can give flesh to the work of Christ through its witness and action for peace. Peacemaking is not to be surrendered to the realm of politicians, diplomats, and activists; it is to be embraced as a component of the mission of the local church, too.

Conflict affects every dimension of our lives, from interpersonal relationships to international affairs. Wars rage between nations, but they also can rage within our homes. From violence in our streets to violence on our TV screens, we live our conflicts in ways that destroy both our morality and the lives of other human beings. Even when another human's life is not taken, conflict can erode away our personal well-being through fear, rage, bitterness, and stress.

Peacemaking ministry needs to address the full scope of human conflict. We need to minister peace to the wars between nations and the wars between spouses. We need to bring the ministry of reconciliation to conflicted ethnic groups in our communities and conflicted nationalities around the world. We need to speak God's word of peace to the powers that rule the nations and the powers that rule our own hearts. Such peacemaking ministry will touch our inner lives, our close relationships, our lives in our communities, our nation, and our world.

This book can serve as a handbook for peacemaking ministry in the local church. Common elements of congregational life, such as worship, Christian education, and church finances, can become vehicles for peacemaking. The congregation's peace objectives can also be a springboard for mission. Different churches will come to different understandings of God's particular call to them about the ministry of peacemaking. Some churches will act in risky ways that put them at odds with the surrounding culture, while others will risk taking the first steps of getting members to consider Christ's call to peacemaking. No one congregation will be able to do all the peacemaking activities in this book, for that would be both a human impossibility and a dilution of the concentration that is necessary to accomplish anything worthwhile. Whatever the scope and emphasis of your church's peacemaking ministry, this book aims to provide ideas and guidance on how to expand and deepen the spirit and work you and your sisters and brothers undertake for peace in Christ's name.

Reading this book from cover to cover is hardly necessary. Instead of being written as a book you can't put down till you are done, it was written to be a book you will want to pick up again and again. Maybe you will want to look at only one or two chapters at a time, but that is the nature of a handbook. Each chapter focuses on a major aspect of congregational life or a form of peacemaking ministry. In addition to suggesting ideas, the chapters offer stories of the experiences of specific congregations who have developed creative ways to put their convictions into action. There is some overlap of various chapters in order that each can function as a self-contained unit. Some chapters will deal with the dynamics that are unleashed in a congregation and community when people in the church seriously pursue peace efforts. A number of appendices are provided at the end of the book for reference on other resources and organizations involved in peace issues.

Most of the examples are drawn from American Baptist churches, but some stories are included from churches in other countries who have faced their own contexts with special creativity and courage. For those readers who are not Baptists, their own traditions are most likely rich with stories of peacemaking ministry as well. We would all benefit from hearing those stories so we can learn from one another. I trust the stories shared from our American Baptist branch of God's family will help encourage those from other traditions as they seek to be faithful to Christ in light of their own heritage.

Throughout the book I've had local church peacemakers from across the country share their stories and experiences so that more voices than mine can be heard. These first-person accounts are set apart in italics.

Though this book is now in final form, the peacemaking ministry of the local church will never be in final form. New ideas will be generated for peace initiatives. New stories will be lived out that will need telling. New heroes will arise to inspire us in our journey. My hope is that your own church will help write some new chapters in the book of Christians living out the gospel of peace.

Chapter 1

The Sunday Worship Service

The peacemaking ministry of the local church begins and ends in worship. But worship is not confined to a particular room within a building or an hour or two on Sunday. Worship is a whole life lived as an offering to God. The apostle Paul says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1). The entire peacemaking journey for an individual and a congregation can be an act of worship if it is undertaken for Christ. The Sunday service becomes a more explicit and conscious expression of worship that is validated by the larger act of offering one's life in the service of God. What is done in the sanctuary and what is done in the community or across the world are all cut from one cloth of faithful discipleship. So in a fundamental sense this entire book is about worship.

Corporate worship, usually on Sunday for the local church, is the shared experience of the members of the congregation before God. We gather together in the name and in the presence of Jesus Christ, and in that gathering we give expression to our faith, our values, our community, and our discipleship. The energizing source of our peacemaking can come through worship, sending us into the world with divine purpose and power to be agents of reconciliation,

justice, and healing. Then we come back from our particular labors to reflect back to God all our experiences in the journey. When the fullness of peace comes in God's time, worship will continue.

We come to the Sunday worship service as we are, bringing all the confusion and pains of our conflicts with us. In worship we can lift up what is tearing at us or what is destroying people about whom we care. We can question; we can cry; we can intercede through prayer. We also come seeking a "word from God" to address our needs and our situation. We can listen in the silence of prayer, in the message of the preacher, and in the words we sing. We can gain nourishment from new aspects of God's call to peacemaking for our minds to ponder throughout the week. We can gain nourishment for our inner being to go back and face whatever challenges are presenting themselves to us.

We can celebrate the goodness of God with praise, reveling joyfully in the redemptive works of God in our lives and in the lives of others. Most of all, worship can be an opportunity to connect with the heart of God. God is referred to in the Bible as the "God of peace" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). In fact, in Judges 6:24 Gideon builds an altar called "*Yahweh is peace*" (*italics mine*), a characterization of God parallel to John's "God is love" (1 John 4:16). Peace is announced at the birth of Jesus, then bestowed by the risen Christ upon his followers (Luke 2:14; John 14:27; 20:19). Peace is the culmination of God's work in history (Isaiah 2:2-4). *Shalom*, the Hebrew word for peace, expresses the fullness of God's redemptive purpose in human history.¹ In worship we bind ourselves to the heart of the divine One who is peace and who works peace. We prepare ourselves to be more active participants in God's redemptive project in human history. We are shaped deep within so that our peacemaking is not a mere cause or ideology but is an expression of passion for the One who made and redeemed us. Worship grounds our peacemaking in the infinite depths of the heart of God.

Because of who God is and what we are called to be and do as Christians, peace concerns should naturally be a part of the wor-

¹See Isaiah 55:10-13; 65:17-25. Also see Paul D. Hanson's "War and Peace in the Hebrew Bible," *Interpretation, A Journal of Bible and Theology*, October 1984, 341. The "American Baptist Policy Statement on Peace" (available from National Ministries Literature Resources, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482) discusses the biblical/theological basis for peace.

shipping experience of a local church. Often “peace” is left unmentioned because of a fear of controversy, except for inner peace or interpersonal peace. But to limit our worship by excluding peace at the places of profound conflict and anguish, including global conflict, is to deny God’s sovereignty over all dimensions of our lives and histories. Bringing our conflicts and God’s call to peacemaking into our worship experience both rounds out our Christian faith and provides a spiritual resource for people in the congregation to address points of crisis and need.

Prayer As Peace Work

Corporate prayer is a regular part of our worship services and can be an opportunity for voicing our concerns for peace. The pastor or worship leader can take the leading role, but other members can lead in prayer for peace concerns if there are opportunities to voice requests or to offer prayers in the service.

We are instructed in the Bible to pray for government leaders so that we may live quiet and peaceable lives (1 Timothy 2:2). That means praying for policies conducive to peace with other nations and with the citizenry. It means praying for the success of negotiations to resolve conflicts without violence. When President Reagan and Soviet President Gorbachev were preparing for their summit in 1985, the members of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, sent a telegram to each leader encouraging him in the quest to halt the arms race and offering their prayers on behalf of the negotiations. During the days before the Gulf War, hundreds of churches had special services of prayer for peace, often including fasting. At points of decision making for our own nation or for other nations, such as in the Middle East or former Yugoslavia or Korea, we can include in the corporate prayer intercession for God to give national leaders the wisdom and courage to act for peace.

Intercession is frequently made for family members in the armed forces, which is appropriate since they are our loved ones. In times of crisis or war, they are at a special risk, both physically and in terms of their total personhood. In war many people take actions or undergo experiences that can affect them for life, and we can plead for God to shape those moments toward wholeness not destruction.

We also are explicitly told by Jesus to pray for our enemies

(Matthew 5:44). This kind of prayer separates true followers of Jesus from practitioners of civil religion. During the Gulf War many congregations remembered the suffering of the soldiers and citizens of Iraq as well as their own family members and friends involved in the war. As Mark Twain pointed out with his caustic wit in "The War Prayer," "If you would beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse upon a neighbor at the same time."² To pray for success for our side means death and destruction for those on the other side—children orphaned, bodies maimed, spouses widowed, sorrows multiplied. Jesus calls his followers to transcend the narrow focus on our own side in a conflict and to see the humanity and the need of those who are our adversaries.

Praying for the enemy can also address people closer to home: people in different ethnic groups when a community is in conflict; people on different sides of labor disputes during a strike; gang members terrorizing our neighborhoods; abusive bosses or family members; even members of our congregation with whom we fervently disagree. We have enemies whose faces are known to us. In the times of corporate prayer, a pastor can lead the people in learning how to pray for enemies. Pray to be given God's eyes. What need does God see? What hurt does God see? What fear in that other person's heart is known to God? What is the good that God intends to come into that person's life? Those are matters for prayer, perhaps voiced generically by the worship leader but given specific content by each person in the pew. In the end, we may find that God's greatest work is to change our own hearts. Christian peacemaker Jim Wallis says that "fervent prayer for our enemies is a great obstacle to war and the feelings that lead to it."³ What I bring knowingly or unknowingly to fuel a conflict can be surprisingly touched by God when I pray for my enemies.

Often in our times of prayer we remember our missionaries and others engaged in sharing God's love through word and deed. We

²Mark Twain [pen name of Samuel Clemens], "The War Prayer," *Peace-Work*, no. 1, 1991, 1.

³Jim Wallis, ed., "The Work of Prayer," *Waging Peace: A Handbook for the Struggle to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 196.

can pray for the peacemakers as God's agents of reconciliation, even as we pray for missionaries. In fact, many of our missionaries are engaged in peacemaking and reconciliation ministries themselves.⁴ Peacemaking is a mission with a divine blessing. Peacemakers are often in vulnerable places, for they enter a conflict between the adversarial parties, where emotions can run high and, in some cases, where violence is frequent. Pray for church leaders in countries with civil wars. Pray for church leaders in communities with civil unrest, such as gang violence, riots, strikes or lockouts, and ethnic conflict. Prayers can be offered on their behalf for wisdom, creativity, protection, and courage.

We may not know about particular peacemakers in a conflict. Little news has come out of the work of peacemakers in former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia, a Croatian Catholic priest and some monks interposed themselves between the Croat militia and Muslim villagers fearful of being victims of "ethnic cleansing."⁵ These courageous peacemakers were able to quench the fires of violence in their immediate community. Such brothers and sisters may be unknown to us, but we can still pray for them. When we pray about a conflict in the news that disturbs us, we can pray specifically for God's people in the midst of that setting, that they may be given all the grace they need to be agents of reconciliation and peace.

As someone who has engaged in a peacemaking venture in another country,⁶ I have personally known the power of prayer by people interceding on my behalf. God has opened doors where there seemed not even to be a doorway. Praying for peace and for peacemakers is a peacemaking ministry in and of itself. Our prayer is peace work, for in the divine mystery of prayer it undergirds peacemakers with God's power and wisdom, as well as giving God an opportunity to do a work for peace within our own hearts.

One way to make a peace prayer is through the planting of a "peace pole." The peace pole has the international peace prayer

⁴See, for example, the story of Gustavo Parajón in my book *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1994), 132-135.

⁵Reported in the video "Hope for Bosnia: Beyond the News," produced by the Mennonite Central Committee.

⁶See *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope*, 139-143.

written in various languages: "May peace prevail on earth."⁷ A church can plant a pole outside or set it up on a stand in the sanctuary, foyer, or fellowship hall. The First Baptist Church of Detroit concluded their Vacation Bible School one year by planting a peace pole. Many local churches around the world can be found with a peace pole in their building or on their property.

Music

Many hymns in our heritage use stridently militaristic images, such as "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus, Ye Soldiers of the Cross." Though these hymns reflect military imagery found in the Bible, when religion is used in service of a nation's war ventures, the line between spiritual imagery and propaganda can easily evaporate. There are, however, many hymns that have a rich peacemaking message. Appendix A lists hymns that have peace themes and are found in most major hymnals. Use of these hymns, even in services with themes other than peace, such as world missions, can help give voice to constructive images for our discipleship.

The first Christmas carol was a peace hymn; the angelic host sang to the shepherds about Jesus' birth, "On earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:14). "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," the last verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," and "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" all give voice to peace themes as part of the Christmas message. "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" presents a debate between hope and despair that resonates with the struggle for integrity amid the ongoing violence of our world. "O Holy Night" has a third verse with a message of liberation worthy of being underlined. When an Advent or Christmas service is built around a peace theme, such carols will enhance the message.

Congregation members can be encouraged to write their own hymns related to peace. Some with musical talent may be able to compose original music for the lyrics. Such a hymn could be taught to the choir and then introduced through the choir to the congrega-

⁷For more information or to order a peace pole, contact Peace Pole Makers, U.S.A., 3534 Lanham Rd., Maple City, MI 49664 (616-334-4567; fax 616-334-4523).

tion as a whole. If someone is a good wordsmith but not a composer, a familiar hymn tune can be selected to go with new words. If the congregation responds well to the hymn, it should be copyrighted as well as sent to the denominational peace office to be used as a resource for other congregations.

There are many excellent contemporary musical compositions focused on peace themes, from hymns to choral numbers. Jane Parker Huber's *A Singing Faith*⁸ is one of the best collections available for combining contemporary lyrics on peace-and-justice themes with familiar hymn tunes. A host of hymns and Scripture songs can be found in the multiplicity of songbooks available in any Christian bookstore. Some of these have filtered into the newer hymnals, but sadly not as many of the new hymns related to Christian social concerns, including peace, have been given attention in the musical mainstream. It takes a bit more detective work to build up a collection of contemporary songs related to peace, but they are available.

Any copyrighted material used for congregational singing should be handled appropriately. Even using a hymn in a bulletin insert or on an overhead transparency should be done only with permission. Copyright services are available to facilitate this process; the church pays an annual fee and reports the hymns used in the service's listing.⁹ This will probably cover the bulk of hymns you want to use, but not all of them. For those that are not covered by the copyright service, you will have to track down the publishing house or the author—whichever holds the copyright. If the hymn has been published, the publishing house will have the author's address if he or she holds the copyright. Such effort may not be worth it if a hymn is to be used only once.

Your church may want to consider production of a supplemental hymnal if you don't have one already. A supplement can enable a church to publish and use hymns that pick up social concerns themes, including peace, which are often given short shrift in hymnals. The supplement could also contain favorite hymns not

⁸Jane Parker Huber, *A Singing Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987).

⁹A major copyright service is Christian Copyright Licensing, Inc. (CCLI), 6130 NE 78th Ct., Suite C-11, Portland, OR 97218-2853 (800-234-2446; fax 502-257-2244).

found in the church's hymnal, standard hymns redone with inclusive language, and compositions from members of the congregation. When printing your own supplemental songbook, you should of course obtain permission for the inclusion of each hymn either from the author or from the publishing house, depending on who holds the copyright. Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania, developed its own "Uncommon Book of Worship." It contains hymns from a variety of sources, for which the church diligently obtained the appropriate permissions. Some of the hymns are by congregational members. They also included readings for worship use. The "Uncommon Book of Worship" is in loose-leaf form so that every few years it can be updated.

Liturgy and Ceremony

For many people ritualized expressions of our faith, such as the corporate acts of liturgy and symbolic ceremonies, add a special richness to worship. Litanies are frequently produced in denominational worship resources along with other liturgical aids.¹⁰ Litanies can also be written to give particular expression to the contemporary concerns of the world and the congregation. It is important, however, not to preach at people through the litanies; rather, try to express the heart of people who are reaching out to God from the realities in which the church members live. Words that are not true to those who voice them do not advance the worship experience but only raise questions of hypocrisy. Peacemaking in worship must be honest, in line with the prophetic exhortation to "love *truth* and peace" (Zechariah 8:19, italics mine). Confessions that name our own sins can bring healing, so carefully examine every confession used to see that it expresses with integrity where people in the congregation are in their spiritual journey.

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, is a liturgical ceremony that is fundamental both to our faith expression and to the meaning of peace for Christians. Ephesians 2:13-16 says:

¹⁰ See the worship resources produced annually for Peace Sunday by the American Baptist Peace Program. The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program has also produced a two-volume resource, *Peacemaking Through Worship*, which contains litanies, prayers, readings, and other worship aids. Addresses are in Appendix B.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Christ's sacrifice becomes the bond of peace between Christians, so every time we gather around the Lord's table we are celebrating that peace. Such unity can be affirmed explicitly as a peace witness through the words that introduce the time of Communion or in the prayers for the bread and cup. World Communion Sunday (the first Sunday in October) gives an excellent occasion to remember the global bonds of peace forged at the cross, no matter what the political alignments of our national governments.¹¹ World Communion Sunday is a colorful and festive occasion at the First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland.

We use the opportunity of World Communion Sunday to get at the heart of the relationship between peace and global consciousness. On that occasion, we fill the nave with flags of the nations, sing songs that call us to barrier breaking, utilize various languages in a litany sometimes led by persons dressed in the clothing of their native lands, and intentionally provide a mixture of various colors, textures, and national origins of breads for our Communion service.

—Gilbert Hellwig, Cleveland, Ohio

Many congregations conclude their observance of the Lord's Supper by singing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." If the congregation has some racial or ethnic diversity, the breaking down of those social dividing walls can be visually enhanced if the participants form a circle around the sanctuary. Forming a circle breaks the worshiper out of the solitary experience of Communion and allows each person to scan the wondrous diversity of people called into this particular portion of God's family.

Some congregations have given a tangible expression to that

¹¹For Baptists, another occasion for expressing explicit global unity through the cross is Baptist World Alliance Sunday, the first Sunday in February.

diversity by exchanging Communion glasses with congregations in other countries when members travel on friendship or mission tours. When a U.S. church celebrated the Lord's Supper with a glass from a Moscow congregation during the Cold War, the congregation made a powerful witness to the transcending reconciling power of their one Lord. In the era of plastic disposable cups, this symbolism can be retained through placing a gift chalice or cup on the Communion table.

The ringing of bells has also been used in conjunction with various peace observances. Bells have been tolled in remembrance of the Holocaust. Churches with bells can ring them in celebration of peace events or in calling people to special times of prayer.

At Park Street Baptist Church in Pittsfield, New Hampshire, Peace Sunday was celebrated by inviting each worshiper to ring the church bell as a symbol of his or her commitment to personal peace.

In the morning message I stressed the biblical model for individuals to follow in order to be at peace with other individuals. According to Matthew 5:23-26, if we know we've wronged someone else, it is up to us to go and make things right. And Matthew 18:15-20 tells us that if someone has wronged us, it's still our responsibility to go and be reconciled to them—not to stew in anger.

The congregation's witness for peace was advertised in the newspaper during the previous two weeks so the community would understand the significance of the bell ringing.

—Jeff Collins, Pittsfield, New Hampshire

Lights also have been used symbolically as a sign of hope amid dark times. Lights have been used in many worship services, vigils, and demonstrations, including in the East German churches. Prodemocracy demonstrations began in the East German churches with prayer services followed by candlelight marches into the town centers. In the United States, prayer vigils during the days before the Gulf War were often held by candlelight. One congregation reflected Japanese tradition during an anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing by sending lit floating candles down the neighboring river.

When all the rich avenues of expression in worship are used to

express God's call to peace, then our spirituality and the conflicted world in which we live are integrated. God's grace is given an opportunity to permeate our lives at points of pain, confusion, and anger. Hope can be energized to lead us from the Sunday service of worship to the various spheres of our lives where God's peace is needed.

Chapter 2

Preaching on Peace

The ministry of preaching is a central part of the worship experience of a congregation. Preaching involves the interpretation of God's Word in the contemporary context, bridging the gap of centuries between Bible days and today. As such, effective preaching needs to stand on two legs: one planted on the Bible and the historical revelation of God through Jesus Christ, Israel, and the early church; the other planted on the realities of life for the members of the local congregation. Each week the preacher has the opportunity to make the ancient Word a contemporary, living Word.

Preaching Peacefully

That Word has been described in the Bible as the "gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). Peace was woven into the message of Jesus, from the angelic proclamation at his birth to the commissioning he gave his disciples following the Resurrection. Preaching on peace themes flows out of the core understanding of the message to be delivered.

Many pastors, however, find it difficult to preach on peace because it can be controversial whenever one ventures beyond the sphere of inner peace or peace in our interpersonal relationships. Addressing areas of conflict in the community, nation, or world inevitably plunges one into controversy, as people and groups line

up on different sides with competing interests that are near and dear to them. If those sides are represented in the congregation, the preacher is entering a mine field to speak from the pulpit in any way that touches on the concerns in the conflict.

Controversy is no excuse for silence, however. The preacher is one called by God to speak God's message to the people. Faithfulness to that calling is essential if the preacher is to be worth his or her salt. That does not mean one must be a shrill, self-righteous prophet, abusing the congregants and the pulpit for political agendas. The preacher in the local congregation is a pastor, so the word needs to come out of a heart and mind that is deeply committed to nurturing people in their faith journeys. The message of peace needs to be spoken in the context of love and mutual respect between pastor and people; otherwise the preacher is not practicing what is preached!

So how does one preach on peace without falling into the traps of superficiality on the one hand or stridency on the other? Kyle Childress, pastor of the Austin Heights Baptist Church in Nacogdoches, Texas, has some good advice in his article "How to Preach on Peace (Without Resorting to Violence)."¹ Childress calls us to preach biblically. Biblically based preaching gives the congregants the spiritual and ethical perspective from which to approach the issues that they face. In all the confusion and complexity of the modern world, people want to hear a word from God that can provide clear guidance. Differences might exist over the application of the biblical values to a particular issue, but effective dialogue and spiritual growth can take place when people are challenged to deal with what the Bible says. Preaching on peace should be not less biblical because it deals with peace concerns but *more* biblical because such a message goes against much of the world-view ingrained in our society.

The preacher must also preach prayerfully. In controversial issues it is tempting to speak one's own word rather than God's. So the sermon must be constructed out of prayer. God's peace must come into the preacher's heart before it can flow to the congregation in restorative power. Does the preacher have an ax to grind with a

¹*PeaceWork*, March/April 1986, 6-7. *PeaceWork* is a newsletter published by the Baptist Peace Fellowship for North America.

contrary-minded church member? “Take it to the Lord in prayer.” Prayer will also help the preacher connect with God’s heart, which is deeply grieved by the sorrows that human conflict and war bring. Out of such prayer a message with depth and grace can emerge.

Besides preaching from the Bible, the preacher can draw people into the message through stories. Stories allow people to identify with other people as they face situations and decisions. Rather than moralizing—“do this” and “don’t do this”—the preacher, through the use of story, invites the listener to wrestle with the dilemmas of being faithful in situations that may not be clear cut. Such stories can be gathered from missionary newsletters, magazines such as *The Baptist Peacemaker* and *Sojourners*, and direct experiences through one’s travels, conferences, or involvements in the community.

Childress speaks of the timing of preaching on peace. Sermons should emerge out of the pastoral relationship. Instead of shocking people on Sunday morning with a politically loaded sermon, talk with people in their kitchens and living rooms and wrestle with them through the issues in Sunday school classes and Bible studies.

I learned very early that there were two keys to my being able to preach on controversial subjects like peacemaking. First, my sermons were strongly biblical, usually narratives, and they were rarely “topical.” In other words, peacemaking arose out of the normal preaching of the biblical material over time rather than being a specific subject in search of a text. Second and perhaps most important, I spent a great deal of time personally visiting with the members of the congregation, talking, struggling, and wrestling with them about peacemaking, pointing out that the way they dealt with conflict with their son-in-law and what we did about the arms race were both connected to being disciples of Jesus. My pastoral visits were rarely boring.

—Kyle Childress, Nacogdoches, Texas

Take time and be patient with people. As Childress says, “People need to know we are not there trying to convince them of something, but we are there because we care for them. We love them for who they are and not for who we can make them into.”²

When the preaching is done against something—such as a governmental policy—the likelihood of resistance is increased. If

² Ibid., 7.

someone is in agreement with that policy, then the sermon comes across as an attack, and the normal response to being attacked is to get defensive. The preacher has then set up an adversarial relationship with the person in the pew. A positive approach is more likely to encourage open-minded consideration of new ideas and approaches to a problem. Take a problem-solving tack, presenting a constructive vision for peace, reconciliation, or justice. There may be a critique in the positive vision, but this kind of an approach invites the hearer to enter into the challenge of resolving the issue and finding a way out of the dilemma. The hearer is then more likely to feel stretched in faith, which can be a positive experience, rather than attacked for disagreeing with the pastor.

Sometimes peace topics can be very sobering and sorrowful for a congregation to face, such as Holocaust Sunday, the anniversaries of the atomic bombings, or when a slaughter such as took place in Rwanda fills the news. To honestly face these kinds of events, especially when we are complicit in them, can be very disturbing to congregants who come with expectations of being lifted up and encouraged by the message. Facing human evil, in the world and in ourselves, is never an easy matter, but to ignore it will leave us with an insipid, shallow faith. To help church members both grapple with the realities of evil and move constructively with the preacher, it is important to convey God's grace and hope as well as to direct congregants into appropriate opportunities for response. If people are made to look at evil and feel guilty about it too often, they will feel the preacher is "beating up on them." Such preaching is ultimately disempowering for people. Grace and hope must be strong elements of the message if the hearers are to gain the strength and commitment to become "doers of the word," especially in the face of grave evil.

Biblical Texts for Preaching Peace

A number of biblical texts may immediately come to mind when one thinks of preaching on peace.³ "Blessed are the peacemakers"

³"God Intends Shalom: Scriptures Which Speak of God's Promised Future" is a collection of Bible passages from Genesis to Revelation on peace themes. It is available from the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. See address in Appendix B.

(Matthew 5:9) gives an explicit statement of God's valuing of this work. Jesus weeping over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41-44 because they did not recognize "the things that make for peace" provides a vivid picture of the heart of God in relation to the warring and violence on our planet. The prophetic vision of swords being beaten into plowshares and nations learning war no more (Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-5) presents God's future—a future that certainly stands in vivid contrast to the present. Such texts make clear sermon themes and need to be preached. Unfortunately, many of these texts are so familiar to some in our churches that they are trivialized and not taken seriously in the real-world conflicts with which people grapple. The challenge is to present them in such a way that people will take seriously the call to flesh out these biblical concerns.

A number of passages speak to the deeper issues in peacemaking. Hosea 10:13-15 and Psalm 33:16-17 deal with the issue of trust. In what do we find our security? Hosea 14:1-3 makes a clear contrast between trusting in military alliances and trusting in God. The tie can be made from these prophetic passages to Jesus' statement in the Garden of Gethsemane that "all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Jesus' challenge to "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:43) pushes the disciple into a deep examination of his or her own heart and how we create enemies and nourish enmity.

The ministry of reconciliation to which Paul calls Christians in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 is based on Christ's own reconciling work. The peacemaking of Jesus can be a theme for a Communion meditation by drawing on Ephesians 2:14-16, where Christ is presented as "our peace," who "in his flesh . . . has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us."

Specific biblical case studies in conflict resolution can illustrate the skills needed to peacefully bring our conflicts to a constructive conclusion. Many biblical conflicts are horribly and often bloodily resolved, sowing seeds for further enmity and violence. But there are some examples of good processes that can instruct Christians on conflict resolution skills for their own lives. The early church resolved its first conflict in Acts 6 by addressing a situation of injustice with structural change and the empowerment of those who

had been disenfranchised. Joshua 22:10-34 presents an obscure but fascinating story of conflict resolution in which the two sides averted a war by carefully communicating through their false projections of the other side's motives. The story is too long and culturally alien to be done in a straight expository format, but creative storytelling could bring to life a lesson usually ignored.

A very different approach to take in preaching is to use a familiar story symbolically. Abraham offering Isaac on the altar is a graphic and gripping story that can raise the question of how we offer our children on the altar. In a society where children are killing each other with guns to the extent that homicide is the leading cause of childhood death, are we not sacrificing the next generation? For what reason? Will we hear the voice calling us to stop before it is too late?

Familiarizing oneself with the extensive biblical material on war and peace will open up many new avenues to approach peacemaking themes from the pulpit.⁴ Sometimes what we draw out of the Bible depends on the questions we bring to it. If we come with questions about living faithfully and constructively in a world of injustice and violence, familiar passages will shine with new meaning and forgotten passages will spring out with surprising potency.

Using Illustrations

Peace can be promoted in sermons that don't speak directly to peace by using illustrations. A sermon on prayer can use illustrations of the power of prayer in Jimmy Carter's Camp David peace process or in negotiations among gang members at the "gang summit" in 1993⁵ or in stories from your own experiences in peacemaking. A sermon on hope can be illustrated by the power of hope in those who struggled nonviolently for justice, peace, and freedom, from Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement in the United States to Nelson Mandela and the freedom movement in South

⁴ *My Bible Study Guide on War and Peace* (Valley Forge, Pa.: National Ministries, 1990) is a comprehensive workbook on biblical passages dealing with war and peace (available in English or Spanish). See resources listing at the end of the book.

⁵ These stories and others involving prayer and peacemaking are told in my book *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1994).

Africa. Reading the stories of peacemaking in books such as my *Christian Peacemaking* or Paul Dekar's *For the Healing of the Nations* or the contemporary stories gleaned from the news will provide a wealth of examples of love, courage, faith, communication, perseverance, and even miracle.

Small details from personal experiences involved in peacemaking can make compelling stories to illustrate matters besides peace and justice. When my family and I were going to a demonstration about the war in Central America our four-year-old son, Chris, asked my wife and me if we had prayed about the war. I responded in a condescending way, "Of course we have prayed about the war." Chris asked if we could pray right then for peace, so we stopped on the sidewalk, and he poured out his little heart to God: "God, help President Reagan to stop making the war in Nicaragua." I was so busy acting that I didn't take prayer seriously, but Chris, in the childlike purity of his faith, did. His prayer is a marvelous example of the faith of a child that Jesus said is necessary to have to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3). In a sermon on church renewal that deals with becoming like children, Chris' peace prayer is a clear illustration of faith. Peacemaking here is just a normal activity of life in which one can see many other aspects of the Christian journey portrayed. Treating it as something to be experienced in the normal flow of our lives helps congregants move peace-and-justice work from the fringe of Christian action to the center of living out one's faith.

Opportunities in the Church Year

The church year provides many opportunities to speak on peace, both the traditional Christian seasons and the special days from our national or denominational experience. Lent and Holy Week provide many opportunities to examine the sins in ourselves that lead to hatred and violence as well as to affirm the reconciling work of Christ on the cross. James 4 speaks of the sins that lead to war, so a Lenten journey of repentance can give focused attention to the expression of those sins in our own lives and culture. Jesus weeping over Jerusalem is a major part of the Palm Sunday event. Pentecost was the time when God's Spirit overcame the divisiveness of Babel and gave a peacemaking message to a society torn with racial and

ethnic conflicts. Advent and Christmas present us with the coming of the "Prince of Peace," at whose birth the angels proclaimed "on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). The Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) and Herod's slaughter of the innocents (Matthew 2:16-18) speak with power when viewed through the contemporary experience of poor countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

The Fourth of July presents a challenge on how a Christian relates to the nation. Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), but many congregations may be tempted to make the Fourth of July a festival of civil religion. This can be a good time to look at God's claims over the nations and those who hold positions of leadership. National elections can also be a time to examine such values through biblical lenses. Memorial Day presents similar concerns, with the added burden that many people in our congregations have served in the military or lost friends and loved ones in wars. Nancy Sehested, pastor of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, preached about the lessons learned from soldiers—their dedication, their discipline, their willingness to die for others—while raising the question of what the dead would say if they could speak to us now. Would they wonder if they died so humanity could wage bigger and more destructive wars? Would they wonder why their sacrifice has not caused us to learn other ways to settle our disputes?⁶

Mother's Day was first called for by Julia Ward Howe in 1872 as an explicit protest against war. After witnessing the horrors of the Civil War in the United States and the Franco-Prussian War in Europe, Julia Ward Howe called women to arise: "Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience. We women of one country will be too tender to those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."⁷ Such a call is a far cry from the sentimentality that marks most of our Mother's Day observances.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Day in January honors a church hero

⁶Nancy Hastings Sehested, "Let the Silence of Cemeteries End," *The Baptist Peacemaker*, Spring 1990, 18.

⁷"Mother's Day, 1870," *PeaceWork*, January-April 1988, 1.

who made a national, and even global, impact with his ministry of nonviolent action for justice and peace. Preaching on the life and work of King, along with the biblical teaching that shaped him, can weave a thread from the days of Jesus through the civil rights movement to contemporary concerns in shaping a more just society. Issues of racial justice, reconciliation, and community peace will continue to require the raising of prophetic and pastoral voices throughout our lifetimes.

Holocaust Remembrance Day provides another occasion to speak on prejudice and racial violence. The date to commemorate the slaughter of six million Jews and other victims of Nazi hatred is set by the chief rabbinate of Israel each year. Christian remembrance is important due to Christian complicity in anti-Semitism, including Nazi Germany and the United States. In humility and with repentant hearts church members can commit themselves to the pledge "Never again!" The anniversaries of the dropping of the atomic bombs on August 6 and 9 remind us of the human potential for self-extinction and the abyss at whose edge we have flirted. The memorial to Sadako, the girl from Hiroshima who died from radiation-induced leukemia, is inscribed: "This is our cry, this is our prayer: Peace in the world."

American Baptists observe Peace Sunday on the first Sunday in May, and usually a resource packet is produced by the national staff to assist in congregational programming and worship preparation. Many other denominations have similar dates set aside in their calendars (such as the Presbyterians' Peacemaking Offering). World Communion Sunday, observed on the first Sunday of October, provides an occasion to focus on our ties with all people in God's family across any of the boundaries of human enmity. The Lord's table is the place where Christ's peace between us is symbolically actualized. The interfaith observance of Peace with Justice Week is held at the end of October.

In planning a year's preaching, a pastor can select some of these occasions to expand the congregation's understanding of God's concern for peace and justice and to raise the ethical challenges of responding to God's concerns in today's contexts.⁸ Various aspects

⁸ The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America periodically publishes an extensive calendar of dates, anniversaries, and events that are of significance for peace preaching and programming. See address in Appendix B.

of peacemaking can be addressed so that the message doesn't become redundant and grating. Tying peace issues to major symbols and celebrations of our faith also deepens their meaning with integrity. We haven't fully presented the meaning of Communion unless at some point we speak of the reconciliation that Christ's sacrifice requires us to make with each other. We haven't explored repentance during Lent unless we face the sins that breed war and violence. Martin Luther said, "If you preach the Gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time, you are not preaching the Gospel at all."⁹ Sound preaching, then, will address contemporary concerns of peace and justice, and these dates throughout the church year provide many excellent opportunities to heed Luther's words.

⁹ Quoted in *Post-American*, Summer 1972, 1.

Chapter 3

Christian Education: Children and Youth

Ken Sehested of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America compares our peacemaking to growing pumpkins. Pumpkins are seasonal; you plant the seed, care for the vine as it grows, then harvest the pumpkins in due time. Working on major peace issues is like growing pumpkins: you work on them for a time, then move on to the next concern.

On the other hand, Ken likens raising children to growing date trees. A farmer plants a date tree by faith and a hope that is far-seeing. A date tree takes many years to reach its fruit-bearing stage. The farmer may even have died by the time the first harvest of dates is ready. But the date farmer has a long-range vision and a commitment to growth even if it takes time. What we teach our children may not bear fruit for a long time. But the biblical promise is like that of the farmer growing dates: "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" (Proverbs 22:6). Parents often wait a long time to see the fruit in their children, but in faith and hope they provide nurture and care so that their young ones will get off to a healthy start in life.

Peacemaking ministry among our children, therefore, is a long-term but vitally important part of any church's work toward the day when the lion shall lie down with the lamb. It is also a ministry that

is vital to counter the trends toward violence in American society. Children today are growing up in one of the most violent cultures ever. Over five thousand children a year die from handgun violence, and the Harvard School of Public Health reported that the rate of children wounded by gunshots doubled from 1987 to 1990. Psychologists have found that children growing up in Chicago's public-housing projects were showing the same psychological stress symptoms as children growing up in the war zones of Mozambique, Cambodia, and Nicaragua.¹ A survey of one thousand Chicago high school and elementary students showed that nearly 40 percent had witnessed a shooting, 33 percent a stabbing, and 25 percent a murder.² For those not in the most violent neighborhoods, a steady diet of violence is still available from television, movies, and video games. Violence is an easily accessible thrill for children.³

Christian education is faced with the task of overcoming this violent worldliness with a gospel-oriented counterculture that helps youth enter into the adult world as people who can make a positive difference. "Growing date trees" for peace and justice is done in a very harsh environment—but we can be encouraged by the fact that God is the One who gives the growth. No doubt our children and youth will continue to astonish us with their insights and dedication to follow God's call and do what is right. Clearly the staggering needs of children in our society indicate that we have much work to do—and need more workers—if the next generation is to have a hopeful future and the skills to build it.

Peace Parenting

Nobody has more impact on growing the date trees of a young person's life than his or her parents. Therefore, Christian education takes place first and foremost in the home. Parents can be teachers

¹See James Garbarino, Kathleen Kostelny, and Nancy Dubrow, *No Place to Be a Child: Growing Up in a War Zone* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1991).

² *Ibid.*, 136.

³ The Children's Defense Fund (25 E St., NW, Washington, DC 20001 [202-662-3589]) is a leading advocacy group for children, particularly on issues related to violence. The annual Children's Sabbath materials produced by CDF can be incorporated into the Christian education program, worship services, and advocacy actions of the church.

of peace through all the forms of communication and shared living whereby our values are passed from one generation to the next. Children learn more from parents' behavior than words, so parents need to model peacemaking in their lifestyles, in how they handle relational conflicts, in how they treat their children, and in how they live as global citizens. Peacemaking behavior by parents provides their children a tangible reference point for the spoken words and handed-down stories that interpret the values being lived out.

Parenting in a way that raises a child to contribute to peace and justice in the world is a difficult challenge. Parenting for peace and justice is a topic of sufficient scope that numerous books have been written on it—and even an organization formed to support and educate parents. Parenting for Peace and Justice (PPJ) is a network that grew out of the Institute for Peace and Justice in St. Louis, Missouri. Jim and Kathy McGinnis developed a training program that has resulted in thousands of families over the last decade learning parenting skills that will build values that foster peace and justice, from the most intimate relationships to one's involvement in the global community. PPJ holds training events around the country for clusters of churches in a metro area.⁴ A congregation can send a couple or family to the training session, who can return with both the skills and resources to conduct similar training in their own congregation. This multiplies the impact of the education, touching more families than one organization could ever reach directly. PPJ also has video and print resources for use in a church training program if no one can attend a regional training event. A church library can also make some of these and other outstanding parenting and family conflict resolution resources available for parents' use.

Teaching and practicing conflict resolution skills within the family provides peacemaking skills that can be carried over into all arenas of life. Beginning with children at home ensures that these skills will be woven into the value system the family nurtures and that they will have plenty of practice in putting them to use. The McGinnises encourage family meetings on a regular basis. Regular

⁴For information about Parenting for Peace and Justice training events or to obtain resources, contact PPJ at 4144 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108 (314-533-4445). They also produce an excellent newsletter for parents.

meetings to deal with family issues, with a posted agenda that anyone can add to, give family members a constructive setting in which to work out their conflicts. Basic communication and negotiation skills—giving everyone a chance to speak, restating what others have said, making sure decisions are clear, and looking for “win/win” solutions—can be taught in church training programs and then put into practice at home.

Family worship and the church calendar can be used to teach about peace-and-justice heroes. All Saints Day (November 1) provides an excellent opportunity for church families to pass on to their children the heritage of church history, family history, and mentors of peace, justice, and faith.

On All Saint's Day each member of our family chooses a "saint." A "saint" is anyone who is exemplary in Christian faith and life—and for our purposes can be someone we know in daily life as well as a biblical or other historical figure. Because our family has a special interest in peace and peacemakers, we often choose peacemakers as our saints.

On the evening of All Saint's Day, we clear the dinner table and light candles, one by one, as we share a story or anecdote about our chosen person. Then we compose a poem, which I copy on an attractive poster to display in our kitchen until the next All Saints' Day. The Halloween costumes are stuffed in the back closet, the Christmas carols and decorations are eventually tucked away in the loft, but our All Saints' Day poetry is a constant reminder of our heroes and mentors as we seek to love and serve the Lord throughout the year.

The purpose of all this remembering is imitation. Hebrews 13:7 reads: "... consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." Situations arise daily in the lives of our families, our churches, and our world that challenge our faith. The unrelenting prayers of my husband's grandmother; the vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.; the loving hospitality and leadership of Lydia are worthy of imitation when we are confronted with our own thorny limitations.

—Sharon Buttry, Swedesburg, Pennsylvania⁵

⁵From Sharon Buttry, "What Comes After Halloween?" *Baptist Leader*, Summer 1994, 32.

A congregation can introduce this practice to the families of the church (however a family is constituted) so they can honor those who bore the faith to them and demonstrated their faith in lives of justice and peacemaking. The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America has an excellent resource for family use on the life and witness of Martin Luther King, Jr. *Dreaming God's Dream: Family Activities Guide* contains suggested learning experiences for the whole family to explore the impact of racism and poverty and to appreciate the culture and heritage of African American people.⁶ Members can be encouraged to discover a new peace-and-justice saint in church history, perhaps using a book like *Peace Be With You* by Cornelia Lehn,⁷ which presents children's stories about people from church history who nonviolently stood for peace and justice or creatively loved their enemies. On the first Sunday of November, prior to the Lord's Supper, the "communion of the saints" can be recognized by asking families to name and say a brief word about one of their "saints." Hebrews 12:1-2 makes an appropriate theme text, and a sermon could be preached on a peace-making saint.⁸

Family devotions, seasonal observances, and just plain fun can all be woven together as part of the spiritual nurture of the children. Susan Vogt is a member of the Parenting for Peace and Justice Network. Her book *Just Family Nights: 60 Activities to Keep Your Family Together in a World Falling Apart*⁹ is full of family activities that include a devotional theme, educational information, or observance regarding a peace or justice theme; ways to respond to the issue; games; and even refreshment ideas.

Parents can also model their peacemaking by bringing children

⁶Kathleen McGinnis, *Dreaming God's Dream: Family Activities Guide*, ed. Ken Sehested. See also Ken Sehested, ed., *Dreaming God's Dream: Study Materials for Church Home and School—Learning-Based Activities for Six Age Groups*. These are available from the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, 499 S. Patterson, Memphis, TN 38111.

⁷Cornelia Lehn, *Peace Be With You* (Newton, Kans.: Faith and Life Press, 1980).

⁸See Paul Dekar's *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers* (Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993) for stories from the Baptist tradition.

⁹Susan Vogt, *Just Family Nights: 60 Activities to Keep Your Family Together in a World Falling Apart* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1994).

with them to various peace events. If the church peacemaking group is going to a demonstration, bring the children along. (If civil disobedience actions are planned, parents should carefully consider the nature of the action, the likely police response, and whether it is appropriate or safe for children to be present.) Children can help make signs and posters. Parents should explain what is going on and why they are involved in the action. Children often can connect to the fairness issues at stake and enter enthusiastically into the event—though young ones will tire quickly! Mission work trips, especially locally, can help inculcate values of respect, service, compassion, and justice in children as they work alongside their parents and other church members.

Bible Stories and the Sunday School

Stories from the Old Testament are staples of the Sunday school curriculum, and the Old Testament is full of violence. David and Goliath can serve as a paradigm. While the lesson is that David trusted God to give him the victory, the victory came by killing the giant. Seeing this story as the paradigm for young faith places violence at the center of godly behavior, whether or not it is intentional.

Purging David and Goliath from the Sunday school curriculum isn't the answer. We need to teach these Bible stories, but the approach for the peacemaking church will need to be one of comprehensiveness and complexity. *Comprehensiveness* means that we will need to be sure to lay a foundation for faith and discipleship that is not centered on the violence of the Old Testament but on the life and call of Jesus. Jesus' work to reconcile us to God and to one another offers many stories for the teacher to unfold for the children; numerous other biblical stories also pick up these themes. *Complexity* means that as the students mature, they can grapple more and more with Scripture as well as with world issues. Juniors and teens could take the David and Goliath story and juxtapose it to the story of God's judgment when David tried to institute draft registration ("numbering the people" in 2 Samuel 24) or with Jesus' teachings of loving your enemies and turning the other cheek. How does this work out amid the conflicts they encounter at school and the options for resolving them? If young

people can see movement and growth in the faith of the people in the Bible, then they can come to understand their own faith as a dynamic relationship rather than a rigid dogma handed down by their elders for them to memorize and obey.

Unfortunately, many of the church school resources produced by denominational or independent publishing houses do not deal with peace or conflict resolution—though there are a few refreshing exceptions. Christian educators who want to equip children and youth to face the conflicts and violence in their world—which for many children intrudes dramatically into their schools and neighborhoods—can write to their curriculum publishers requesting that peacemaking and conflict resolution themes be included in the development of new resources.

Creative teachers can develop their own curriculum or add peacemaking themes to standard curriculum at appropriate points. Supplemental activities can be devised or culled from some of the resource books listed in Appendix E. The Martin Luther King, Jr., curriculum published by the Baptist Peace Fellowship, *Dreaming God's Dream*, has materials ready for use in church school settings.¹⁰ James McGinnis has put together an eleven-unit curriculum, *Educating for Peace and Justice*,¹¹ for grades seven through twelve. It has ideas and projects that can be used in a church school, a youth group, or as a resource to incorporate specific program pieces into a prepared program. Members of the First Baptist Church in Granville, Ohio, wanted to teach their children more extensively on peace and justice themes, so they developed their own curriculum for the entire church school.

In this age of specialization, people are unwilling to believe their own experience. Even teachers balked at creating their own curriculum; they were convinced that their experience and expertise could not be as valid as that of the "experts." It was exhilarating to see people discover their own potential, and just as exciting to see church people of every kind coming together to write a curriculum about things they believed in.

The brainstorming sessions are at the heart of the process.

¹⁰See information in footnote 6.

¹¹James McGinnis, *Educating for Peace and Justice: Religious Dimensions, Grades 7-12* (St. Louis: Institute for Peace and Justice, 1993).

Helping participants delineate goals and at the same time capturing enthusiasms that can later be translated into the classroom is the role of the leader here. In this way goals are shared, excitement is generated, and tangible results are produced. It is good to try to have one professional in each small group as a resource person, but it is not necessary. Lessons can always be added to and refined later. The beauty of the process is that it acts as yeast in the congregation as a whole, not only in regard to the curriculum, but in the life of the church as well.

—Karolyn Burkett, Granville, Ohio

Vacation Bible school (VBS) programs can be a time for focused attention on the Bible and peace. The First Baptist Church of Overland Park, Kansas, set peacemaking as its congregational theme and ministry goal for 1991. That year the VBS theme of “peacemakers” was based on a curriculum developed by their minister of discipleship, Steve Edwards. Conflict resolution education for children could also be taught during VBS. Education in conflict resolution for the VBS or church school staff would help teachers deal with conflicts in their classes in a manner reflective of the values they teach. The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program developed a five-session curriculum on the theme “The Family of God: Creating a Fair Community,” which is suitable either for a VBS program or church school (see Appendix B).

When the First Baptist Church of Detroit ran their VBS program in 1992, they selected the theme of Christian peacemaking.

In January 1992 the board of Christian education worked on the question “What do our children need to gain this summer from vacation Bible school?” Responses included self-esteem, learning to get along with different kinds of people in positive ways, and having fun within the context of Christian community. These answers began to reveal a common thread: Christian peacemaking. We found peacemaking to be at the heart of the gospel. Our children had great fun and learned a crucial aspect of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus at home, in the neighborhood, and at school.

—Carol McVetty, Southfield, Michigan

Once they identified peacemaking as the theme, they then set their goals: to help their children gain a sense of their own worth

and the acceptance of the differences of others, learn tools for dealing with anger and resolving conflict without fighting, and develop an awareness of peacemaking as part of Christian life.

When they were unable to find curriculum to meet their needs, they created their own using some of the resources listed in Appendix E. The children were divided into small groups called "circles," named after peace heroes. They learned conflict resolution skills from the *Young Peacemakers Project Book*. Learning centers called "Shalom Shops" focused on each of the goals using different forms of activity. The VBS program culminated in planting a "peace pole" bearing the prayer "May peace prevail on earth" in the major languages spoken in their community.¹²

Preschool and After-School Programs

For churches that have preschool or after-school programs in which they have input into the curriculum, peacemaking education can be a regular part of what is done with the children. Conflict resolution curriculum and cooperative activities can be woven into the program. Many conflict resolution resources have been developed for use with children of various ages.¹³ One curriculum was designed by Don DeMott of the New York Baptist Peace Fellowship. Called "Project HOPE," this curriculum has been used extensively in public schools in the state of New York in a program that has often involved church members as volunteer trainers in the public schools. The materials would be well suited for use by churches themselves in their own before- and after-school programs.¹⁴

The Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland, California, has a child-care center that provides both day care and before- and after-school care for children ages three to twelve. They decided that one way of carrying out the church's mission of reconciliation

¹²For a fuller description, see Carol McVetty, "Peacemaking in Vacation Bible School," *Baptist Leader*, Spring 1994, 26-27.

¹³The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is a good clearinghouse for many resources related to peace education and conflict resolution. They can be contacted at 528 East Madison, Lombard, IL 60148 (708-627-5310).

¹⁴For the "Project HOPE Curriculum" contact Donald W. DeMott, 4408 East Groveland Rd., Geneseo, NY 14454.

in a diverse community was to develop a "Children's Peace Academy" to become a part of the program in their child-care center. After extensive study and testing of various programming ideas, the church launched the academy. They paid for child-care center staff to attend conflict resolution training as a staff development activity. With well-thought-out curriculum and trained staff, the children in the Lakeshore Avenue Baptist peace academy are getting an education more valuable than they can comprehend. Parents of the children are also being incorporated into the academy's program with a four-week training course on "Nurturing Young Children as Peacemakers."

There are two realities that helped keep us motivated: (1) In Oakland, as in much of the country, homicide is a leading killer of teenagers. We believed that very early intervention was part of the answer to this moral and public health crisis. (2) Howard Thurman says that there is great danger when people live in proximity but not community. We wanted to plant the seeds of respect and appreciation that later bear the fruit of community.

—Jim Hopkins, Oakland, California

A whole curriculum need not be developed or used. Many resources offer creative ideas in arts, crafts, games, and stories. Activities can be selected to weave into other programs; individual events can fill up smaller program slots. Phyllis Vos Wezeman's *Peacemaking Creatively Through the Arts*¹⁵ is a gold mine of ideas for elementary age children, using art forms from drawing to drama to dance, from music to puppetry to mime. Cooperative games can teach ways to get along with others and to value each person's contribution to the success of the entire group. Resources in these areas are listed in Appendix E.

War Toys

Toys are often donated to church preschools and child-care centers, often with little thought to what is being given. Violent toys can be weeded out. Children often act out what they see on television with toys that are made in conjunction with children's program-

¹⁵Available from Educational Ministries, Inc., 2861-C Saturn St., Brea, CA 92621.

ming. Whether with Ninja Turtles or Power Rangers, when play turns to martial arts demonstrations, very little that is positive will result! Behavior tends to become more aggressive, selfish, and hurtful. Providing toys that are cooperative, creative, and nonviolent will channel the children's play in more constructive directions.

Toys are big business, as any parent surely knows. To toy manufacturers, children are consumers, and a huge quantity of advertising is geared toward them to whet their desires. Often lines of toys are linked to children's television shows, turning entertainment into thirty-minute advertisements. With many war toys, the children then act out the plots to the shows they have watched, complete with kicking, shooting, hitting, and other forms of violent behavior. At least half of the video games are some form of combat between people, monsters, or machines. Some games are particularly graphic in their violence, with victors beheading or ripping out internal organs of their prostrate foes.¹⁶

Christmas is one of the two major Christian holidays—and is certainly the one with the most glitz. For children Christmas is more about toys than the Christ child. It is tragically ironic that celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace often entails buying war toys. That means that the peacemaking church has a good teachable moment. When the Christmas shopping season opens, the church should begin the war-toys education season.¹⁷

A presentation on war toys could be made in church or at a Sunday school opening program. Perhaps the youth could have a study on the issue for a few weeks and lead in the presentation. Niños y Jóvenes por la Paz de Puerto Rico (Children and Youth for Peace in Puerto Rico), a group of Baptist youth from many churches, hold annual festivals during the Christmas season to counter war toys. Some dress up as clowns, talking about war toys and distributing nonviolent toys.

¹⁶An excellent book to study the relation of toys and children's play to violence is Nancy Carlsson-Paige and Diane E. Levin, *Who's Calling the Shots? How to Respond Effectively to Children's Fascination with War Play and War Toys* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990).

¹⁷The War Resisters League has a long-standing project on war toys and offers some excellent resources. For information, contact them at Children & Nonviolence Campaign, WRL, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012 (212-226-0450).

At Niños y Jóvenes por la Paz we campaign against war toys by teaching what they are and why Christians should not promote their use by our children. We learned through workshops and experience how important it is for a child to play and how much they learn while playing. That gave us ideas on how to reach kids with cooperative games, songs, and puppets. When you ask a five-year-old if killing is bad, the answer will probably be yes, but then this same kid may enjoy playing war with toy guns and soldiers.

I like to think that the kingdom of God is built brick by brick and that those bricks are made of tolerance, peace, justice, and love. When I help a young person understand that sharing will become justice and that cooperation will turn into peace, I feel that I have helped in building God's kingdom.

—Sandra Roman, Gurabo, Puerto Rico

Similar presentations could be made in church. FOR KIDS, the child advocacy ministry developed by Broadman Baptist Church in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, sponsored a conference entitled "Violence: Toys, Television, and Children." The conference was covered by both radio and television in the area. To encourage the use of nonviolent toys by church families, lists of constructive alternatives to giving war toys can be printed in church newsletters or bulletins.

Mission Projects for Peace Education

Kids can get very enthused about concrete projects. Their creativity and generosity can be infectious even while they learn about the world and some of its pains. With something concrete to do, they can feel empowered to make a difference. A mission project with a peacemaking theme can tap into that wellspring of enthusiasm and teach about issues and peace action.

Many children hear about wars and other calamities on the news, sometimes in conjunction with school assignments. Regular relief offerings for war-torn countries can be highlighted for the kids. In Sunday school or during the children's "sermon," ask them to say what they know about what is happening in the particular country. This will help give them a sense of participation in making a difference in something they hear about on the news.

Older children and youth can enter walk-a-thons—and some will walk three times as far as the adults as they race ahead, come back, and flit from side to side along the walk route! Teach them about the cause for which the money is being raised and invite them to raise sponsors and walk themselves.

The children from the Sunday school of the Killarney Baptist Church in Manitoba, Canada, collected one hundred thousand pennies from the churches in Killarney. This thousand dollars they raised was used to help political prisoners in Haiti who have been severely abused by political and military authorities. The project developed out of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) who had been active in Haiti. Lloyd Jersak from the church had been a part of the CPT in Haiti in 1993 and developed the idea in response to urgent appeals from the families of six prisoners.

Youth and Military Service

A big decision for many mid- to late-teens is whether or not to join the military. Teens are bombarded with recruitment ads on TV, hear recruiters at their high schools, and are often encouraged to join Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC) programs in the public schools. Churches need to equip their youth with the ethical and biblical tools for making their own decisions about military service. Whether it takes place in a church school class or in youth group meetings, time needs to be taken to discuss the upcoming choices regarding the military and the ethics of war.

General Bible study on war and peace can be a component of the study. Adults can be involved by asking a number of church members who have had various experiences as military personnel, conscientious objectors, or peace activists to tell their stories. Youth can be asked to take one of the options (join the military, register for the draft but not join, register as a conscientious objector, or refuse to register), state the pros and cons, and argue for that particular choice.

Most denominations have a range of convictions among their members, from pacifists to people who are active members of the armed forces. Adequately equipping the youth to make their own decisions requires that they be presented the range of options and

the opportunities and risks associated with each option. Overshadowing the entire decision is the question of what values one holds that determine how to weigh the options. More than funds for a college education are at stake, as members of the National Guard discovered when they were called up to go to the Persian Gulf in 1990. Many young people who had never seriously wrestled with their convictions about war and killing were caught up in a fast-moving system that did not offer them an easy way out. A congregation serves its youth well to encourage them to think through the issues before the time of crisis.

As of this writing, the selective service system and draft registration are still in place.¹⁸ When an eighteen-year-old registers for the draft, there is no opportunity to state one's convictions as a conscientious objector (C.O.). C.O.s must wait until such time as the draft would be reinstituted. Then they have ten days from the time the draft notice is sent out to register their position with the selective service. It is important that the draftee have on record a statement of his or her convictions, particularly if not a member of a historic peace church. Some denominations have a registry for C.O.s. The teen can contact that denominational office and send a letter stating his or her convictions, which will then be kept on file in case it is needed.¹⁹

My decision to register myself as a conscientious objector to military service is rooted in my belief that God created us to live in harmony with God and the rest of creation. In light of this, I believe that violence is a violation of the relationship in which we are called to live, that it goes against God's intentions for us as God's children.

Even though I have made the decision to be a conscientious objector, I recognize that it is a potentially divisive issue and that there are many within the denomination who would not agree with my understanding of what our faith calls us to.

¹⁸ Efforts in Congress in 1994 to close down the selective service system were defeated, though there is a possibility that this issue will be revisited. In many circles, including some sectors of the military, the draft is viewed as antiquated and ineffective for U.S. military and security needs.

¹⁹ For American Baptists the C.O. registry is located with the Peace Program, National Ministries, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482. A study packet is available entitled "War, Your Conscience and Draft Registration."

Because of this, I believe that the denomination's willingness to support both conscientious objectors and those who accept military service is a powerful sign of its commitment to the soul freedom that has always been a hallmark of Baptist faith.

—G. Andrew Tooze, Denver, Colorado

Study resources and information on the various dimensions of conscientious objection are available from two major organizations: the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCCO) and the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (NISBCO).²⁰ Both have produced a number of excellent tracts on issues related to conscientious objection that help focus the issues and provide solid information about selective service and U.S. military procedures for C.O.s. CCCCCO also gathered an all-star cast of comic-book writers to produce a comic book, "Real War Stories." These resources provide youth with an alternative perspective to the recruiters' materials provided at taxpayer expense.

Once a person is in the military, including the National Guard, it is very difficult to get out on grounds of conscientious objection, particularly in the midst of a military crisis. Every person in the National Guard is liable for call-up for full-time duty, something that the young person considering joining needs to thoroughly understand and evaluate. Young adults are at an age when many of their values and convictions are being shaped and reworked; convictions are not set in stone by age eighteen! I was in ROTC in college when I became a C.O. due to a new faith commitment. If a person changes his or her convictions while in the military and wants to get out, pastoral involvement can be very helpful, both as personal support and as witness to the person's ethical development. The pastor would need to be in touch with military officials handling the church member's case and with counselors from NISBCO or CCCCCO. Each case is different, so it is helpful to draw upon the expertise of those who have worked the system from a variety of angles.

Public-school programs providing military training are a concern

²⁰ The Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors is located at 2208 South St., Philadelphia, PA 19146. The National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors is at 1612 K St., NW, Suite 1400, Washington, D.C. 20006-2802 (202-293-3220).

to many peace churches. JROTC programs within schools are readily accessible and present a positive view of military participation to young teens in hopes of recruiting them into the military forces following graduation. The Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Indiana, mobilized some other local congregations to take their concerns about JROTC to the superintendent and school board. When their proposal to drop JROTC was rejected, the churches took the issue to faculty and students, distributing fact sheets, setting up information networks, and bringing in a speaker for a special meeting. As of this writing, JROTC is still in the South Bend schools, but the churches are continuing to raise their concerns about military training as the schools are trying to deal with violence and teach conflict resolution.

Chapter 4

Christian Education: Youth and Adults

Along with the worship service, the Christian education program is the heart of the week-by-week life of the local congregation. It provides an opportunity for serious engagement with issues, both biblically and in the contemporary society. Often the setting is that of a small group, so people can participate easily in discussion and shape the program to their own interests and concerns. Topics that might be handled in only one sermon a year can be studied in depth and from a variety of angles. For the peacemaker, then, the church's Christian education program needs to be a major point of attention.

Jesus said in his Great Commission, "Go . . . teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). The peacemaking teachings of Jesus have often been slighted by churches for a host of reasons, from the influence of civil religion to the spiritualizing of passages that speak of peace or justice. The teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are often viewed as nice ideals that not are necessarily to be taken literally in the rough-and-tumble conflicts of the real world; loving your enemies is deemed to be impractical. As a result, major portions of what Jesus commanded are not taught as regular parts of our discipleship programs.¹

A church executive in a war-torn country wrote me a letter about how the churches in his denomination had not taught about war and peace. "Theologically speaking we never learned or taught about the Christian responsibility on peace," he wrote. "So when the war openly started . . . there were few people and congregations reflecting or acting to face the rising problems." They were great at evangelism and personal morality, but their Christian education overlooked the social dimensions of Jesus' teaching related to violence. When the war exploded in his country, the people in most of the churches were caught off guard and without biblical grounding as to how to respond to the chaos engulfing them. As the tides of violence rise in many American communities, some of our own inadequacy in dealing with violence thoroughly and biblically is similarly being exposed.

As Christians we turn to the Scriptures for guidance; therefore, Bible study on issues of war, peace, justice, and violence can provide a solid foundation for building a responsible ethic. Then we need to bring together our biblical understanding with an analysis of the world we live in with its complexities and problems. Finally, we need to learn how to apply what we learn in practical action, becoming "doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (James 1:22). A Christian education program that can provide this kind of learning in the area of peace concerns will be well on the road to carrying out Jesus' discipling commission.

¹ In his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* (New York: Citadel Press, 1992), Michael Hart listed Jesus as number three, behind Mohammed and Isaac Newton. In explaining the reason for putting Jesus third, Hart said Jesus' most distinctive and original ethical idea was to love one's enemies, which, if it had been followed, would have moved Jesus to Hart's number-one spot: "But the truth is that they [Jesus' teachings about enemies] are not widely followed. In fact they are not even generally accepted. Most Christians consider the injunction to 'Love your enemy' as—at most—an ideal which might be realized in some perfect world, but one which is not a reasonable guide to conduct in the actual world we live in. We do not normally practice it, do not expect others to practice it. Jesus' most distinctive teaching, therefore, remains an intriguing but basically untried suggestion." Hart's assessment would make a good discussion starter for a church school class or Bible study.

Involving the Youth with the Adults

The youth in a church often have their own programs, groups, and church school classes. However, high schoolers are often very concerned about issues in the world and frequently organize to act on issues as their own convictions are developed. In the area of peacemaking in particular, youth have as much a stake as adults in what happens, if not more. They are nearing the age when they could enter into the military, and they can see the state of the world they will inherit from adults. Programming related specifically to youth is good, but it is also important to begin integrating what the youth are learning and doing into the life of the full community of faith.

The churches in Puerto Rico have a model regarding youth ministry that might be helpful to U.S. churches. They define youth as roughly from fifteen to thirty years of age. They have youth organizations, including peace groups, that are self-governing, and they organize programs for their members and outreach activities into the churches and wider community. The typical U.S. division between youth and adults at about age eighteen (or high school graduation) groups older teens with children, with a clear delineation between them and adults. The Puerto Rican churches have their older teens working with young adults in situations where they can take full responsibility for what they do. The young adults are also in leadership positions rather than on the sidelines of churches (in which the leadership roles are taken by older members who have been around a long time). People can graduate from seminary and become pastors while still being "youth." Both teens and young adults, in this definition of youth, can stretch toward using their gifts and developing their leadership capability, which is probably a major contributing factor to the high level of capable young leadership in the Puerto Rican churches.

Changing the definition of youth may not be culturally feasible, but a congregation can make an intentional effort to involve older teens as full participants in the peacemaking education and action of the church. The classes that study the Bible or social issues can be done by youth groups as well as adult groups—and they can also be mixed. The mixing probably won't occur without direct and persistent invitations to the young people, and then a repeated effort to communicate their importance to the group by involving them

fully in the study and discussion. Youth should be invited to serve on planning committees for peacemaking ministry, and their ideas should be actively solicited and incorporated into the church's peacemaking program.

Education can also take place through modeling—living out peacemaking in action with the youth. Every December there is a peace pilgrimage from Nazareth to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The ten-mile walk culminates in an ecumenical service with a noted peacemaker speaking. Members of the Royersford Baptist Church, including the youth group, often participate. To share conversation in the long walk and to take in the content presented by the speaker at the closing service gives youth an opportunity to learn as they act in partnership with the adults in the congregation.

As it became obvious that President Bush planned to commit U.S. troops to the Persian Gulf, increasing numbers of people in my congregation asked what they could do to "wage peace." On the day before the fighting actually started, thirty-five people from our church drove to Washington to urge our members of Congress to seek nonviolent solutions to the conflict. After a briefing at the American Baptist Churches' Office of Governmental Relations, we divided the group into four delegations to visit the offices of four separate members of Congress. Ten of the thirty-five people were middle- and senior-high-school youth who had taken a day off school to be with us. The youth were encouraged to comment or ask questions if they wanted to; but whether they spoke or not, it was undoubtedly one of the most important days in their lives as they were given the means for acting on their beliefs.

—Martin Massaglia, Royersford, Pennsylvania

Most of the activities outlined in this book can be done by youth as well as adults, and their involvement together begins by respecting the integrity of the youth as disciples of Christ.

Classes Studying Peace

The backbone of many Christian education programs is the church school. Bible study groups, either in homes or at the church building, also provide a major setting for Christian education. These classes and groups are prime places for studying peacemaking from

a biblical basis. Unfortunately there is much biblical illiteracy on matters of peace and justice; the wealth of biblical material will keep a class going for a long time.

One form of Bible study is simply to dig into the Bible, using a concordance to do a study of peace-related passages. *A Bible Study Guide: War and Peace* and *A Bible Study Guide on Conflict Resolution* are workbooks I've put together to provide Bible texts and questions to help class participants expand their own understanding of what the passages say.²

A few years ago I used the Bible Study Guide: War and Peace with the adult Sunday school class I was teaching at that time. This group of young adults plunged into the challenge of pursuing the threads of war and peace through Scripture with enthusiasm and a healthy skepticism about what anybody else was going to tell them the Bible said. However, they really appreciated the starting point of the study, Jesus' teaching about war and peace, rather than a strictly table-of-contents linear approach. They found that anchored the whole study. My class had a great time using it.

—Carol Franklin Sutton, Norristown, Pennsylvania

The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program has a series of excellent Bible studies on peace themes in Genesis, the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Luke, Acts, and the Corinthian letters.³ These studies in a particular biblical book examine selected passages with contemporary vignettes to provoke discussion about current implications of the biblical teaching. The Kerygma Program also has a series of Bible studies on many topics, including one on peace entitled *Shalom*.⁴

A variety of books have been written about the peacemaking teachings of the Bible. One could be selected for class use, with everyone reading a chapter a week and discussing the material.

² These guides are available from National Ministries Literature Resources, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482. The war and peace study guide is also available in Spanish and is called *Guía de Estudio Bíblico: Guerra y Paz*.

³ These can be obtained through the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

⁴ For information, contact the Kerygma Program, 300 Mt. Lebanon Blvd., Suite 205, Pittsburgh, PA 15234 (800-KERYGMA).

Richard McSorley's *New Testament Basis of Peacemaking*⁵ provides an overview of the New Testament from the point of a Catholic pacifist. Walter Wink's *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa: Jesus' Third Way*⁶ examines the Sermon on the Mount in the challenging contexts of biblical Palestine and apartheid-era South Africa. In *The Way God Fights*,⁷ Lois Barrett examines the Old Testament war stories from a peace perspective and offers some interesting insights. *Christ and Violence* by Ron Sider⁸ looks at the New Testament teachings by and about Jesus along the thematic lines related to violence issues. Robert McAfee Brown helps readers step into the context of the poor nations to hear the Bible's liberation perspective anew in his book *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*.⁹ For classes that are confident about taking on more difficult topics, *Ain't Gonna Study War No More* by Albert Curry Winn¹⁰ directly deals with the ambiguities in the Bible regarding war and peace and the variety of traditions all taught within Scripture. William Herzog gives some surprising and illuminating interpretations of the parables of Jesus in *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*.¹¹ My book *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope*¹² includes two chapters on biblical material related to nonviolent action and conflict resolution. (Our books through your local Christian bookstore.)

A different approach could be to discuss the various positions

⁵Richard McSorley, *New Testament Basis of Peacemaking* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979).

⁶Walter Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa: Jesus' Third Way* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987).

⁷Lois Barrett, *The Way God Fights: War and Peace in the Old Testament* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1987).

⁸Ronald J. Sider, *Christ and Violence* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979).

⁹Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

¹⁰Albert Curry Winn, *Ain't Gonna Study War No More* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

¹¹William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

¹²Daniel Buttry, *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1994).

taken on war and peace by Christians. *War: Four Christian Views*¹³ has four presentations on nonresistance, Christian pacifism, just war, and the crusade or preventative war by proponents of those views, followed by responses from the other contributors. Roland Bainton's classic *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*¹⁴ provides a historical overview of the development of the basic Christian traditions regarding war. Both these books, however, are missing the recent contributions of liberation theology to this issue. To get a range of liberationist perspectives related to the question of war and nonviolence, a class could read together *Theology and Violence: The South African Debate*.¹⁵

Many other books related to current conflict areas or peace issues could be studied by groups. A number of good books are available through the book services of Sojourners and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (see their addresses in Appendix B). Browsing through a Christian bookstore, unfortunately, will provide only a very limited selection of books related to peace concerns. You may even find more titles taking a militaristic approach to conflicts and U.S. policy. Titles you see reviewed in magazines and journals usually can be ordered by local bookstores, however. While ordering, encourage the bookstore to stock more titles in the area of peacemaking concerns—and then shop there to encourage its continued stocking of a broader selection of books on social issues.

Other Educational Settings

Besides classes and Bible studies, peace education in the church can take place in a wide variety of settings. Speakers can be brought in during the church school hour, for presentations following the worship service, or for special events during the week or weekend. If someone from another church or from your community has traveled to a conflicted zone or an "enemy" country, invite that person to come and tell his or her stories. Invite missionaries

¹³Robert G. Clouse, ed., *War: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1981).

¹⁴Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960).

¹⁵Charles Villa-Vicencio, ed., *Theology and Violence: The South African Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988).

working in conflicted countries to come discuss what is happening and tell of the ministries going on in the midst of the violence. Peace activists can come to address pressing issues on the national agenda. During the height of the war in El Salvador, many refugees staying in sanctuary churches went to neighboring congregations to relate their experiences.

For some issues, a special forum can be set up to allow a diversity of opinions or a variety of approaches to be presented. If a church is concerned about not taking sides on a particular matter, a forum will allow the issue to at least be discussed. Advocates from a number of points of view can state their cases, and members of the congregation can shape their own opinions—and probably everyone will hear perspectives they may not have heard before.

The Study Circles Resource Center has stimulated the growth of small groups studying current issues, including many peace concerns.¹⁶ The groups are set up for limited periods of time, usually four to five weeks. A group could meet at a church, in someone's home, or during lunch hour at a central location in a business district. The discussion guides available from the resource center are very inexpensive and are focused on timely issues. A congregation could use them for their own exploration of issues or as part of an outreach program to the community to stimulate ethical thinking about concerns on the national agenda.

Simulation games can provide fun as well as a stimulating educational experience. Usually twenty to forty people are needed to successfully play such a game. The games may take up to two hours to play, plus time to debrief. They are often specific to a particular era or peace issue, so they may become dated or discontinued by the organization that developed them. Keeping an eye on resource listings in social concerns magazines or peace organization newsletters will let you know when new games are available.¹⁷

¹⁶ For information contact the Study Circles Resource Center, Route 169, P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258 (203-928-2616).

¹⁷ The Office of Governmental Relations for the American Baptist Churches has developed a simulation game on the shaping of the U.S. budget, including military spending. "Paths to Power: How the Federal Budget Reflects Power" is available from National Ministries Literature Resources, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851.

Simulation games can be played at a retreat, as part of a weekend afternoon special event, or at an evening gathering. Debriefing time is very important, as discussing what happened makes explicit the learnings as well as provides an opportunity to compare the events in the game with the events in real life. Simulation games are also an excellent way for youth and adults to participate together as equals in an educational experience.

Videos are a widely available educational tool. Many peace videos can be obtained through peace organizations, though central lending or distribution sources are hard to find. EcuFilm has videos for participating denominations.¹⁸ A nonreligious source for purchase of reasonably priced videos on peace and ecological issues is the Video Project.¹⁹ Many denominations have their own film libraries, which can be contacted to obtain the peace listings.

A video can be shown in a class or as part of a larger educational event. Always preview the video so you will know the content and how appropriate it is to what you are trying to do—and to be sure the tape is in good shape and your equipment works. Discussion following the showing of the video helps crystalize the learnings, focuses questions and disagreements, and lets the leader introduce action steps people can take in response. Commercial films available through neighborhood video stores, such as *Romero* and *The Mission*, can contribute to good learning experiences, though they tend to be too long for most program settings, and some movies may not be appropriate for younger viewers.

Sometimes education can be woven together with action. The First Baptist Church in Norristown, Pennsylvania, wove together environmental and justice concerns during an Earth Day celebration. With the help of a Native American member of the congregation, the youth fellowship presented a program that linked environmental concerns with the issue of Indian treaty rights, which was exploding into violence over Chippewa spearfishing in northern Wisconsin. After a videotape was shown, the church members rallied outside with treaty support posters.

¹⁸ Contact EcuFilm at 810 Twelfth Ave., South, Nashville, TN 39203 (800-251-4091).

¹⁹ Contact the Video Project at 5332 College Ave., Suite 101, Oakland, CA 94618.

As a person of Native American ancestry, I have been involved in Indian rights issues for many years. I have also been a Christian for many years and just as involved in the life of my church. When heated conflicts erupted over fishing rights in Wisconsin, Washington, and Alaska, I appealed to my church for support. However, since there had been little or no information about the violence directed toward the Indian population in these areas, it was necessary to educate the congregation. An Earth Day celebration seemed the logical platform to present the issues and survey effective advocacy procedures. The pictures that were taken, along with an accompanying article, were sent to Indian newspapers and were subsequently published.

The event sparked a sense of social justice among our young people as they expressed an eagerness to pursue solutions. It was a gratifying and affirming experience for me to share the concerns of my heart within the walls of the church. Issues of justice belong in the church, which is, after all, the body of Christ, and I believe he demands it. Mission work is as important to the life of the church as its banquets and bazaars. Although the dominant concept of "missions" is packaging mittens or blankets in a box to send to a far-away land, Indian issues are usually political in nature and require distinctive and sophisticated action, which may be as simple as writing letters to our legislators but sends a signal that the church abides by higher laws: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

—Sandra Cianciulli, Norristown, Pennsylvania

The Church Library

Many church libraries are collections of old books stuck off in a forgotten corner of the church. They are relics of by-gone days when the church was the center of social life. With a little work, a church library can become an important ingredient in the congregation's Christian education program. Bring the library into the heavily trafficked areas of the church, such as next to the church office, in the fellowship hall, or wherever people gather before or after church. Make an inviting space for people to sit and relax. Display new selections and magazines and newsletters, and keep changing the displays so that there is always something new and interesting to see. The library for the Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, is a bright room opposite the main entrance to the building.

There are plenty of chairs to sit in, and an inviting atmosphere draws in both members and visitors.

A library can also be incorporated into a multipurpose project. The Emmanuel Baptist Church in Ridgewood, New Jersey, honored two of its peacemaking members by creating a "peace lounge" as a quiet place for reading and meditation. The lounge houses a collection of literature on pacifism and a painting of Jesus as Prince of Peace. It is also available for special lectures and discussions.

Purchase some of the books listed in the bibliographies in Appendix D for your library. Invite individuals to donate from their own personal libraries; if they have read a book, they can pass on the wealth by donating it to the church library. Subscriptions to Christian peace-and-justice magazines and newsletters from peace organizations will provide the library updated material that can be prominently displayed and reach people who may not be aware that such publications even exist. Members of the congregation can buy gift subscriptions to Christian peace-and-justice periodicals for the library as a sign of support.

Develop a children's section, including titles listed in Appendix E. A story time could be held in the library during the coffee hour. Encourage teachers and students of church school classes as well as day-care or after-school programs to use your library facilities and familiarize themselves with what is available. Teachers' and parents' resources can be collected and clearly displayed.

If you are going to make your library a valuable resource, you'll need to publicize it again and again. Make announcements about new resources being located there. Have people write book reviews in the church newsletter. A library is of value only if people use the resources in it, and people will use them only if they know what is there and that it will help them.

Peace Education and the College Town Church

When a church is located near a college or university, opportunities in peace education can benefit both the church and the college community. Students will often visit and become regular attenders, especially if a congregation is intentional about incorporating students into its church life. Professors and administrative staff may be members of the church, providing an intimate link between the

religious and educational institutions. With a little thought and diligence, this relationship can strengthen the peace education component of a church's Christian education program.

The church can structure some of its educational program to coincide with the college's academic schedule, allowing students to participate as full members of a class or group studying a peace topic. Notices of the educational offerings of the church can be posted or listed in appropriate newspapers so that students will be aware of what is going on and know that they are particularly welcome. When a special event is being held that has contemporary significance—such as a missionary speaker from a war zone or a delegate from a friendship tour giving a report—the program can be publicized on campus.

Contact the leadership of campus ministry groups to let them know about your church and the programs you have. Some groups may not be interested in peace matters, but offer to provide special programming such as a Bible study on peace or a report on reconciliation work by Christians in a war-torn country. Members or leaders of the campus ministry groups could be invited to join church members who go on a friendship tour or mission work group.

If the college or university has a chaplain, let him or her know of your interest in the students and willingness to assist in showing students at a local level how Christians seek to respond to contemporary issues. A chaplain might be delighted to have a pastor or peace group leader come to speak to a student group.

On the wall in our living room is a poster an Oberlin College student gave us on his return from a trip to Central America. This student never attended our church but began to consider himself an "awakened Christian" because of our contact with him through the Central America Task Force, a student-led group. We have learned that if you are going to be involved in peace-and-justice ministry at a college or university, you need to be on campus as much as you can be, listening to the concerns being expressed and linking with people on campus who are actively exploring and working on peace-and-justice concerns. You can learn about what's going on by reading the campus newspaper, looking at the posters around campus,

attending special programs and lectures, and by simply talking to the students, faculty, and staff you already know.

If there is a demonstration or program on campus dealing with some peace-and-justice concern, we get as involved as possible because it is important to be very public on campus in your commitment to such issues. The presence of clergy and other church folk at such events bears witness to the Christian and non-Christian campus communities, and that public presence can lead to a variety of private conversations. In our ministry at Oberlin, we try to "work both ends against the middle"; that is, we try to help Christians understand the importance of many of these peace-and-justice concerns to the gospel, while helping those who approach these issues from a secular perspective realize that there are religious motivations for become involved in peace-and-justice work. Both groups need to hear you talking about the Bible.

—Stephen and Mary Hammond, Oberlin, Ohio

The college is also a rich resource for the church to enjoy. Be sure the church is on the publicity list for special events on campus. When speakers visit who will address a matter on the peace agenda, publicize the event at church or organize a group to go together from the church. Professors can also be invited to participate on panels for peace education events at the church, providing historical, social, or economic background to the particular issue the church is addressing. Courses in current affairs, the Middle East, third-world politics, or liberation theology may be open for members of the community to audit or take for credit. Then the church member who takes the course could make a report to an adult church school class or peacemaker group about the new learnings gained.

Adult education can always go on as we explore more about the world and the amazing complexity and challenges of human community. Educating for peacemaking will put the church members at the growing point where faith and everyday life meet. The result will be tougher questions, a more dynamic faith, and a deeper engagement with the issues of the day.

Chapter 5

Evangelism and Peacemaking

For some people, linking evangelism and peacemaking seems like mixing apples and oranges or, worse yet, poison and fruit. One side may be fixed on stereotypes of evangelists as fundamentalist militarists calling people to Jesus while cheering the preparations for Armageddon. The other side may view peacemakers as long-haired anarchists with communist tendencies or wishy-washy liberal humanists who don't know Jesus. Of course, few people fit those stereotypes. When we dialogue with people who are different from us theologically or politically about who we are and what we believe, we find many nuances of thought that belie stereotypes and give a far more complex picture of people than will fit into nice, simplistic categories.

People may have different definitions of what *evangelism* means. We will use the term's most common meaning: calling people to a faith commitment in Jesus Christ. Evangelism and peacemaking are woven together in the same message. In fact, a strong case can be made that the fully evangelical church is a peacemaking church and that full peacemaking is evangelistic.

The Gospel of Peace

In its description of the armor of God, Ephesians 6:15 exhorts us, "As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to

proclaim the gospel of peace.” The gospel message is one of peace, from the angels heralding “on earth peace” at the birth of Jesus to the final triumph of God’s future when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Luke 2:14; Isaiah 2:4). The apostle Paul used the word *reconciliation* frequently in his writings. In Romans 5 he writes about the peace with God that we have as a result of the reconciling work of Christ on the cross. We who were enemies were reconciled by Christ’s death. But that vertical peace has a horizontal dimension that Paul clearly spells out in Romans 12 when he speaks about living peaceably with all people, not taking vengeance, feeding your hungry enemies, and overcoming evil with good. The same dual reconciliation between God and people and between various people is found in 2 Corinthians 5 and Ephesians 2. The gospel that calls us to be reconciled to God inherently works for interpersonal peace.

The cross, in particular, is spoken of as an agent of peace. Christ’s death reconciles us to God. It also is the force that breaks down the walls dividing people from one another, according to Ephesians 2. The crucified Jesus becomes “*our peace*” (Ephesians 2:14, italics mine). To proclaim the cross of Christ without the claim of being reconciled to other people is to proclaim what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace.” It is evangelism without discipleship—and therefore not the kind of evangelism spoken of in the New Testament. Every person who responded to the call of Jesus to follow had to leave something behind. To respond to the gospel requires that the enmity, bitterness, fear, and prejudice that divide us from others and fuel the conflicts between us be laid aside.

The gospel of peace calls people into a new peoplehood beyond the divisiveness that draws up the battle lines. The Jew/Gentile distinction was the point of difficulty for the early church through which they learned that Christ was their peace, making the two one. As Paul said in Galatians 3:28, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” This unity transcending human diversity is reflected in the vision in Revelation 7:9 of the great multitude of people “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.” Evangelism doesn’t just call individuals to get their “souls saved.” It calls us to be

the new people of God, which means racial, social, and national exclusiveness must be left behind.

Evangelistic Services

When a church is involved in evangelistic services or a regular worship service with an evangelistic theme, people are being called to make commitments to Christ. Peacemaking can be woven explicitly into that call to commitment. Some of the sins from which we turn away include racism, hatred of enemies, and the desire to "get even." The call to follow Jesus includes being willing to love our enemies, forgive those who persecute us, going to the one with whom our relationships are broken, and becoming reconciled. The sins from which we are saved are not just personal but also social dynamics and structures of injustice. We are freed to become builders with Christ of the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven.

There are some peacemaking evangelists who can call people to faith in Christ in a thoroughgoing commitment that encompasses both personal and global peacemaking. Ken Sehested, Myron Augsburger, Tony Campolo, Karen Burton Mains, and Ron Sider are among those who have long records of evangelistic peacemaking or peace-filled evangelism. A local church could invite such a speaker to lead in a series of evangelistic meetings or spiritual-emphasis week. (Peacemakers should steer clear of the word *crusade* because it harks back to some of the bloodiest crimes in history committed in the name of God. Evangelism among Muslims is still greatly hindered by the memory of Christian Crusaders.)

When Kyle Childress was a new pastor at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Franklin, Texas, he invited Ken Sehested of the Baptist Peace Fellowship to lead a series of evangelistic meetings.

The first night of the revival meeting half of the congregation boycotted the worship service because they thought Ken was an "outsider" who was preaching "politics" instead of "salvation." After the first night of hearing him preach, however, word spread that Ken was a fellow Texan who preached a strong biblical message. At the same time, Ken personally visited the leaders of the boycott and convinced them to change their minds. The rest of the week the services were packed.

—Kyle Childress, Nacogdoches, Texas

The call to commitment to Christ can challenge some fundamental loyalties in a person's life because of the peacemaking dimension of discipleship. At the end of the first Urban Peace and Justice Summit in Kansas City in 1993, Charles Mac Jones preached an evangelistic message to the gang members who had gathered to talk about peace. He preached about the prodigal children mired in "hog pen mentality" in which we violate one another. He talked about the welcoming party of the God who eagerly awaits us to come home from the hog pen. Then he gave the invitation, calling for the gang members to lay down their "colors," the sign of their gang affiliation, and work for unity, justice, and peace.¹ When some young men came forward and laid their colored "rags" at the altar, it was clear that a profound commitment was being made.

But the same kind of challenge can be made by the gospel to people in socially acceptable professions. I was approached by a young man who was a technician at a company making guidance systems for nuclear missiles. He realized that Christ's call to discipleship was incompatible with his job. If he was going to follow Jesus, how could he make weapons of mass destruction? Like the rich young ruler, he was challenged by Christ's claims, claims that were very difficult to swallow. After much soul-searching, the courageous young man decided to leave his new career and the security it offered. His response to the gospel cost him his job because of the connection between the gospel and peace.

The Sojourners community in Washington has sponsored "revival services" on the theme "Let Justice Roll Down." Its founder, Jim Wallis, preaches, and Christian performer/composer Ken Medema sings. Usually congregations in a metro area have joined together to sponsor the revival, which calls people to faith in Christ through a comprehensive commitment addressing the issues of justice and peace. A similar type of "revival" can be organized using local peacemaking pastors and musical groups. Denominational peace offices or regional peace fellowship groups are good sources for possible preachers and musicians in your area that can combine peace and evangelism.

The life of John Newton illustrates the importance of both

¹Charles Mac Jones, "Finding Ourselves at Last," *Sojourners*, August 1993, 28-30.

evangelism and peacemaking—or in his case, more specifically, justice making. John Newton is celebrated for writing “Amazing Grace,” along with many other hymns. Many people know of his life as a slaveship captain and celebrate God redeeming him out of such a sinful profession and leading him into the ministry. But it is seldom told that the same “amazing grace” that “saved a wretch like me” also compelled him to not just leave slaving but to become an activist for its abolishment. He wrote antislavery tracts and was a major influence on William Wilberforce’s becoming an abolitionist leader. Newton is much like Zacchaeus, a person whose encounter with the gospel required a radical social reorientation toward justice. Conversion stories like these tell not only the happy endings but also the challenging endings. Giving hearers examples such as Zacchaeus and John Newton will help them count the cost for following Jesus, something Jesus himself did in his evangelistic invitations (Luke 14:25-33).

Peace Begins with Me

A church that is highly active in peacemaking ventures needs to be sure to periodically take time to have people look inward at their own commitments. Peace begins within. Peace activists can operate out of guilt or fear; they can be “activists” because it is easier to deal with issues “out there” than to face their own inner needs or broken intimate relationships. Anger is a powerful engine for action, whether direct anger at an injustice or transferred anger from one’s past aimed at authority figures. But anger alone in a human heart becomes corrosive and hateful. Some people work diligently for peace but do not know peace in their own selves.

By calling peace activists and all the members of a congregation to a new or fuller commitment to Christ, there can be a liberating and peace-filling experience of God’s grace. If we know we are loved by God, we can be free to look honestly at the places within ourselves where conflict is generated. We can release the hurt and anger of our injuries to the Christ who bears all, allowing us to forgive those who have treated us unjustly. Knowing we have been loved enables us to look at our enemies through the loving eyes of Christ, giving us the strength and resolve to be reconciled.

At times conflict can be so severe that all hope vanishes. A peace

church persists in proclaiming a gospel of hope. During the most tense days of the Cold War, it was clear that humanity had the capability of self-extinction through a nuclear holocaust. Many activists were filled with despair as they painted horrifying pictures of what an atomic bomb would do to their cities. Their concerns needed to be taken seriously, for the perils were—and still are—genuine. But there was a need for good news, for a message of hope. A church that was involved in working for peace could carry the message with them that God was actively involved in human affairs. The One who made the world is in the process of redeeming it. Christ has shown we are not alone, adrift in the cosmos. Emmanuel, “God with us,” has come, entered into our suffering, and triumphed over death. An activist’s commitment is not taken away but is rather energized by a living hope that what we do is not in vain. I have had opportunities on the picket line to share “the hope that is in” me (see 1 Peter 3:15) with dedicated, caring peace activists who felt despair before the bomb or government intransigence.

For peace to be forged between people or nations, individuals must change. A cessation of hostilities may result because of fatigue from the fighting or a pragmatic assessment of the situation, but for peace to take place, matters of the heart, such as forgiveness, must be involved. Evangelism brings people to the God who can change the heart, thus making peace possible. Much more needs to take place than just asking Jesus to come into one’s life if a person is to become a responsible disciple in the middle of a conflicted world. But with God at work within a person, forgiveness can be unleashed, enemies can be seen with new eyes, arrogance can be replaced with humility, fear can be transformed into courage, and hope can give the sustaining energy to persevere.

Chapter 6

Peacemaking through the Arts

The Psalms exhort us to praise God in many different art forms, including music and dance. Art can be a peacemaking ministry. It can reveal truth with a directness and power that words cannot convey. Art can move us at the core of our being, energizing action on peace and justice. The arts can help us cry, express our rage, give birth to hope, and be fountains for our joy. As peacemakers we should never be so serious that we neglect the arts—or perhaps we should be so serious in our work that we give significant attention to the arts.

Music

Music is a major artistic field, and it has been covered to some extent in the chapter on worship. Music is the art form with which churches seem most familiar and comfortable. But music also can be used as congregational peacemakers move out of the sanctuary. Hymns can take on new meaning when put in the context of struggles for justice and peace. The civil rights movement marched to freedom songs born in the church. Singing about Paul and Silas being in jail made the ancient biblical stories a powerful inspiration as protesters were hauled off to their own jail cells for challenging the segregation laws. Music can flow from the sanctuary to the streets to the courthouse and jailhouse.

During the United Nations's Third Special Session on Disarmament, Darrell Adams sang at a prayer vigil under the Isaiah Wall. E. A. Hoffman's hymn, "Leaning On the Everlasting Arms," was filled with new meaning as leaders from around the world were discussing how to curb the threat of nuclear weaponry:

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
 Leaning on the everlasting arms?
 I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
 Leaning on the everlasting arms.
 Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus,
 Safe and secure from all alarms;
 Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus,
 Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Darrell made a prophetic statement of ultimate trust that deeply stirred old Baptist pietistic hearts.

Music has also been used as a bridge builder. As musical groups from the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other "enemy" countries have toured in U.S. churches, people have been able to see the "enemy," connect at a common point of human experience, and be found together in a shared faith across language and national barriers. Churches who have hosted such musical tours have used the occasion to educate the congregation and the wider community about the conflict and the efforts of bridge-building.

One of our peacemakers on a trip to visit Christians in the old Soviet Union was an African American woman, Lemuel Buttler, from New York City. We soon learned that she loved to sing, especially the songs from her heritage. We could not have planned what transpired. In church after church, her music bridged the gap between very different cultures. Americans and Russians alike found ourselves in the arms of the God of Peace as she sang the songs of suffering from her people's heritage.

On another trip five years later, one of the Native American Indians in our party, Reaves Nahwooks, sang Comanche hymns in Romania, Hungary, and all the way to the International Baptist Peace Conference in Sweden. Once more we were drawn in the embrace of the God of Peace. Music is a language beyond language.

—Richard Myers, West Henrietta, New York

Music concerts can also be held with peace-and-justice themes. Some churches have hosted Sojourners's "Let Justice Roll Down" revivals with peacemaker Jim Wallis preaching and gifted Christian musician Ken Medema doing the music.¹ Some congregations have formed music groups to minister in the congregation, in conferences, and in the streets. "Just Us" came out of the University Baptist Church in Seattle; "Harmony and Struggle" from First Baptist in Granville, Ohio; and "The String Bean Band" out of Providence Baptist Church in Stoneville, North Carolina. Churches without such musical talent can invite nearby groups or solo artists to put on a program that will stretch the congregation's perspective to embrace concerns for justice and peace in the world. Concerts serve as energizing fund-raisers for peacemaking projects. Thousands of dollars in scholarship assistance was raised for the International Baptist Peace Conference in Nicaragua in 1992 through benefit concerts at local churches.

The Visual Arts

In many sanctuaries banners add color and lift spirits of worshippers. Banners can be made on peace themes, sometimes tailored to the specific season ("Peace on Earth" at Christmas, "Breaking Down the Dividing Wall of Hostility" during Lent). Banners provide a graphic witness when a group from the church is participating in community programs or in demonstrations. The banner identifies the church's presence and lifts up particular Christian themes in peacemaking. The Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania, has made banners of all the various groups and ministries in their church, including a number of peacemaking ministries. These banners are displayed in their multipurpose room as a constant reminder of the various callings and activities within the congregation. On one Peace Sunday the First Baptist Church of Waltham, Massachusetts, used a pulpit cloth and wall hangings made by the children to celebrate peace.

Our church's vision of becoming a community in which the multicultural nature of God's kingdom can be seen and experienced is in the early stages of being realized. We are experi-

¹For information, contact Sojourners at address in Appendix B.

menting in a number of areas, feeling our way along by "trial and error." Our worship committee has created six-piece sets of banners that hang along the outside aisles of our sanctuary. The banners give visual messages that are racially inclusive. A set of "Angel Banners" depicts angels with various skin tones. A set of "Pentecost Banners" proclaims "Jesus is Lord" in six languages accompanied by ethnically diverse human figures. A mini art gallery is being developed in a prominent area of the church building to display ethnic depictions of Jesus Christ.

—Reid Trulson, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Paintings that speak to peace-and-justice themes flowing out of the Bible or a church's history both educate and inspire. Second Baptist Church in Detroit was in the forefront of the struggle to emancipate slaves and achieve justice for African Americans. The church served as the last station on the Underground Railroad before escaped slaves reached Canada. In the church's fellowship hall they have hung paintings detailing their history, especially their pioneering in the quest for freedom and justice.

Art, portrayals in painting, is indeed the highest form of flattery since it is the result of painstaking effort and ability in comparison to snapshot picture taking. At Second Baptist we have witnessed creative art in which the painter made history visible from an idea. The first is a series of paintings by a sixteen-year-old to represent our humble yet determined beginnings before Michigan received statehood. The most significant is a twenty-four-footer "Christ Weeping Over Detroit"—a sermon on the wall (based on Luke 19:41).

—Nathaniel Leach, Detroit, Michigan

Art shows can be held, perhaps inviting community artists or children in the church to display their work. An art contest for children could be held with an appropriate prize, such as a "huggable planet" pillow, awarded for leading entries.

The pen may be mightier than the sword, but you may be surprised at the power in a Crayola! A third grader's crayoned vision of a strife-free world has the power to make adults shake their heads and feel a greater resolve to work for peace. Ninety pieces of art magnify the effect!

Children in our community have had an opportunity to share

their ideas about peace in an annual art show held at our church, a metropolitan congregation on the fringe of the inner city. The "Peace by Peace Art Show" has evolved over a five-year period.² Each year it is a bit different, but the primary purpose has been the same: to provide a vehicle for children in grades one through six to share their ideas on how to have peace in homes, neighborhoods, and the world.

The event has been well received by church and community and has had some serendipitous spin-offs (an eight-year-old's drawing became cover art for a national magazine associated with our denomination). This show affirmed and reinforced children's ideas on nonviolence in their world. The event has also given our church's Christian witness for peace a higher profile in the community. Many people entered our doors for the first time to view a work by their child or pupil.

—Jane Grant, Rochester, New York

Urban churches can use the mural art form that has transformed drab brick or concrete walls into vibrant expressions of life. The First Baptist Church in Los Angeles has a large wall along its parking lot. Concerned that the walls would become targets for local graffiti artists, church members turned it into a "Street Gallery" by inviting teenage artists in their neighborhood youth program to paint a series of murals.

The paintings were products of the imaginations of the kids. No direction was given other than that the paintings should express goodwill, brotherhood, and so on. One I thought most profound was of bombs coming from a plane in the sky. As they were falling, the noses of the bombs burst into bouquets of flowers.

The murals lasted quite a while. They finally deteriorated and were painted over. There was a lot of interest in the congregation. The results were quite good for amateurs. It was also quite a testimony to the neighborhood.

—John Townsend, Los Angeles, California

²The original inspiration for the "Peace by Peace Art Show" came from the "World at Peace Art Show" sponsored by the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church. Pullen Memorial will provide information for those wishing to sponsor their own art show. Write Pullen Memorial Baptist Church at 1801 Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC 27605.

Public art is a good way to make a life- and peace-affirming statement to the community and to make the presence of the church known in the neighborhood.

If the church has anyone who can do sculpture, creative efforts expressing peace motifs could be prominently displayed. Crafts can also be used. Roy Johnsen, pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, has produced woodcrafts that often speak to the peace of Christ. Many of the proceeds of his sales were donated to the Baptist Peace Fellowship. His Communion sets and dove necklaces have been used as peacemaking exchange gifts with Baptists in the Soviet Union, Nicaragua, and the Middle East.

The Verbal Arts

While good preaching is surely an art form, a poet can often say in a few words what a mediocre preacher fails to say in an hour-long sermon. Poetry can deliver God's Word as surely as a sermon can, so our poets as well as our preachers need to be heard.

Poets such as b. f. maiz, a campus chaplain in Cleveland, can be invited to do readings or recitations at special events. If someone in the congregation writes poetry, he or she should be given a place in the service to read a poem or have it published in the church newsletter. Perhaps poems can be presented on a poster, using the skills in the visual arts of some other congregant. Even if there are no writers of poetry in the congregation, appropriate poems could still be read as part of the worship experience.

Children often enjoy writing poetry, especially if given a particular theme and structure. One common form is the cinquain poem. Line one is a one-word noun, such as "peace," "friend," "war," and so on. Line two is two adjectives that describe the noun. Line three is three gerunds ("-ing" words) that describe the noun. Line four is four words that express a feeling about the noun. Line five concludes the poem with a one-word synonym. The children's poems can be displayed in the church or read as part of the worship service.

Storytelling is an ancient art experiencing revival in this country. Much of the Bible consists of stories that were passed down orally before being put into writing. Paul Dekar, a Canadian Baptist historian, has brought to life many stories of Baptist peacemakers whose journeys of faith and ministry can inform our own. He has

told these stories at many Baptist Peace Fellowship conferences around the world. Some have recently been published in his book *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers*.³ Telling stories of our historical heritage helps weave the generations together. If the younger generation doesn't learn its history in a compelling way, then it is impoverished.

Some sermons can be turned into stories. All Saints Day (formally November 1, but could be observed on the first Sunday in November) is a good time to tell the story of a peacemaking Christian—that person's context, the issues faced, and how she or he was faithful to Christ's call during that particular time in history. Children's sermons can provide an opportunity for instruction for the children through story, and if the story has depth and integrity, it will also speak to the adults who are listening. Storytelling through the use of folktales or the reading of children's books on peace themes can also be effective.

Movement Arts

Dance is an art form some of our forebears might be disturbed to know is used in churches today. But dance was an expression of Hebrew worship, from David, who danced before the ark, to the psalmist who proclaimed "Praise God with timbrel and dance!" (see 2 Samuel 6:14 and Psalm 150:4). Skilled liturgical dancers can interpret through movement peace Scriptures, songs, or poems. Simple dance motions can also be taught to the congregation as a whole; hand motions or the use of American sign language with songs can be taught for variation or if dancing is too uncomfortable for some.

Dance has played a major role in the freedom movement in South Africa. Where people suffer, dancing can become an expression of hope. When hopes are fulfilled in victory, dance becomes the exuberance of joy. If a congregation has journeyed together in a peace initiative, there may come moments when spontaneous dancing is a natural expression of the congregation's feelings. Such jubilant outbursts have happened at various conferences, but most

³Paul R. Dekar, *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993).

local churches are still too restrained!

Drama can be an effective way of communicating peace messages as well as using the talents of a number of church members. Many plays and skits on peace themes are available.⁴ Writers in the church should be encouraged to come up with their own skits, perhaps expressing a particular theme in an upcoming worship service or relating to a peace project the church has undertaken. Puppets are another way drama can be presented, involving not just the puppeteers but also those skilled in making the puppets.

Arts Festivals

An arts festival can bring together a variety of artistic expressions around one theme. Organizing a festival takes a lot of work and coordination, but the event can be a major one for the life of the congregation and even the larger community. The First Baptist Church of Lafayette, Indiana, played a leading role in organizing a religious arts festival for its city on the theme "Artisans of Peace, Weavers of Life." Many of the area churches were involved in hosting portions of the festival. The festival included paintings, slides, calligraphy, choirs, drama, handbells, and workshops in various arts and crafts. There was even an exhibit on liturgical vestments and the language of clerical robes. An exhibition of works by over thirty artists was set up at First Baptist Church during one of the festival weeks.

I had a dream of having a peace fair in a parking lot of First Baptist Church of Lafayette, Indiana. I was trying to build consensus among several clergy and lay leaders in the community, but one person effectively blocked the direction I was going. A member of the Religious Arts Festival was open to the idea of their hosting a Peace Day on the theme "Seek Peace and Pursue It." The St. Thomas Aquinas Center was willing to host the day at the center. We had activities for children, youth, and adults, closing with a worship celebration. The following

⁴See the listing in *Peacemaking Creatively Through the Arts* by Phyllis Vos Wezeman (Educational Ministries, Inc., 2861-C Saturn St., Brea, CA 92621, 1990), 229. A number of plays are contained in Ingrid Roger's *Swords into Plowshares: A Collection of Plays about Peace and Social Justice* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1983).

year our theme was "Artisans of Peace, Weavers of Life."

Someone's no was not closure but a new direction (though I did not feel that way at first). By tying Peace Day to the Religious Arts Festival, I saw new ways of communicating, learning, teaching, and experiencing peacemaking. Through the arts, biblical peacemaking was able to transcend, transform, and translate biblical peacemaking into realities that broadened the current modalities of peacemaking. The creativity of the participants of all ages brought forth new ways of relating to one another and the creation. The arts related at different levels that touched people in unexpected ways. What was also exciting for me was to see social activists in our area not snubbing the arts as a superfluous exercise; they participated. We will never know the full impact of Peace Day. But this I do know: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11, KJV).

—Ernie Elder, Lafayette, Indiana

There are more ways to use the arts in the service of peacemaking than anyone can imagine, for the imagination God has put within us is infinitely creative. Turn that creativity loose in your church, not only for peacemaking but for all expressions of Christian life and community.

Chapter 7

Affinity Groups

Small groups are to peace movements and to church renewal movements what cells are to living organisms. The small peace-making group within a local church can be the most basic, intensive, and vital expression of peacemaking ministry while also serving as a building block for the larger-scale mobilizing of people to bring about change in a society.

A small group can take heartfelt concerns and lofty ideals and translate them into specific actions. By joining together we create an accountability that pushes us past merely talking about issues into doing something productive. Moving stories on the news or from the pulpit can stir our hearts, and a conflict at the crisis point can deeply disturb us. However, unless we organize ourselves, the good intentions generated by these proddings of our conscience will evaporate, leaving nothing of substance. By organizing a group to share, study, and act together, the good intentions can be fleshed out.

The author of Ecclesiastes speaks of the value of having other people as partners in our journeys:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another,

two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

The journey of peacemaking can lead to confronting difficult issues within oneself: feelings of violent anger, the loss of long-held values or myths, and so on. One may even be brought to points of action that require a courage seldom exercised before. Having friends to share that journey, to provide a listening ear and offer the support of companionship, can make the difference between moving ahead with courageous purpose or slipping into wistful irrelevancy as the world goes through its turmoil.

Many local congregations have formed peace groups, some for long periods of time, others for shorter-range projects. The Dorchester Temple Baptist Church in Boston formed a peacemakers' group around the nuclear freeze campaign in the early eighties, which was then reconstituted to act around Central American issues in the mid-eighties.

Other congregations have peace groups that sustain their life for years, covering a multitude of issues. For many concerned individuals, however, their church is not very supportive of their involvement in peace concerns. For such people, the support group might be a community group or a regional peace fellowship. There is much to be gained, though, if the journey of those who have made a major commitment in peacemaking can be woven into the corporate life of the congregation. Instead of living a schizophrenic life of spirituality and worship on the one hand and politics and action on the other, these two worlds can be integrated. Faith can have a holistic expression in worship and action in the world.

The presence of a peacemaking group will also give fuller expression to the whole congregation of the scope of ministry that flows out of the people of God. The group will make the body of Christ more whole by using the gifts of the group's members and providing a channel for their ministry to be carried out. The group also can provide a prophetic witness within the congregation to stretch all members to deeper discipleship within the contemporary world.

Getting Started

Every new project requires someone willing to put in the effort to get the ball rolling. Often organizational and personal inertia needs to be overcome, and one or two people willing to invest the

time and energy to start a group are needed. They must have at least two qualifications: a vision for the group clear enough and relevant enough to draw people, and a willingness to do the basic, mundane work of getting organized. The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America has a booklet, "Recipe for Peacemaking: Which Ingredient Can You Supply," which provides material on both a vision for the group and practical ideas for involving congregation members in peacework.¹

Laypeople generally make the best leaders of a small group, though a pastor may help stimulate and state the guiding vision. A layperson can often provide more focused energy and not get swamped by the broad range of congregational and institutional responsibilities that can weigh on the pastor. Lay leadership also provides some grassroots ownership of the ministry of the group, which can help minimize conflict or resistance in the congregation about having a peace group. Unless the pastoral leadership is strong or the church's peacemaking commitment clearly established, having the pastor as the main promoter and organizer of a peace group can deepen an adversarial relationship between pastor and people. If the pastor does not attend, the group leaders should keep him or her informed of the group's activities on a regular basis.

The vision of the group can be formed around a specific issue: mobilizing to act about a war, community violence, racism, conversion of local military industries, and so on. Or the group can be formed around a spiritual growth concern such as studying what the Bible says about peace or justice. The group may have an initial focus to relate to a mission project in a conflict zone, such as Haiti or Nicaragua or Eastern Europe, perhaps looking into church partnerships or mission work trips as the initial organizing activity. The Dorchester Temple Baptist Church peacemaking group was revived when a member of the congregation visited Nicaragua with a group of school teachers.

In the summer of 1984 I spent ten days traveling in Nicaragua with a group of North American teachers, hosted by representatives of the Nicaraguan educators' union. I went eagerly, praying for a clear perspective on the four-year-old Sandinista revolution and on the U.S.-supported "contra war"

¹See Appendix B for BPFNA address.

that the Reagan administration had been escalating to undermine the new government. My exposure there to the civilian, and often Christian, casualties of the war, gained through meeting with American Baptist missionaries as well as with teachers, was deeply disturbing. Struck by the spiritual blindness of U.S. policy, I returned with a profound sense of responsibility to share what I had seen and heard.

Upon my return, friends of mine within my church who had been involved in a peacemakers group encouraged me to give a slide presentation about the trip for interested members of the congregation. That evening of sharing turned out to be a catalyst for a new season in the peacemakers group experience. New folks joined, and we continued to meet weekly to pray, to learn about Central American history, to build ties with Nicaraguan Christians, and to engage in peaceful actions of protest against our government's policies. It was wonderful to see the trip spawn such a wholehearted response and to find the yoke and burden of my personal sense of responsibility made light, and even joyful, through our fellowship and work together.

—Scott Walker, Boston, Massachusetts

The group's initial vision should not be so detailed that other people cannot help shape the direction of the group. A question rather than an answer can be the best starting point. Then one of the first tasks of the newly formed group will be to shape a shared set of goals so that the vision is more broadly owned.

The next step is to invite others to participate. Announcements of a meeting can be made through the church bulletin and newspaper or at the worship service. Identify people in the congregation you know who might be interested in the issue. Approach them directly at church or over the telephone. There is no substitute for direct, one-on-one invitations. The organizers need to talk to people personally and take the time to listen to other people's concerns as well as sharing the organizing vision. Often those conversations help provide a sharper focus and a more broadly shared vision for the group. A simple information sheet can be prepared that sketches out the vision and provides the names and phone numbers of the contact people. Once the group is going, make further invitations through information tables in the back of the church or at coffee hour or through hosting an educational forum on the issue.

The initial invitations should be made with a tentative date in mind that can be firmed up in discussion with those who indicate an interest in participating. A home or small church meeting room, perhaps a parlor, would be the best location. Plan the agenda carefully, being sure that the meeting will not drag on too long. Begin with a brief devotional related to the theme of the meeting. If people don't know each other well, take some time for introductions. Invite participants to tell what stimulated their interest in peace issues, particularly in the topic at hand.

Once the group is introduced to one another, don't try to solve all the world's problems in an initial meeting! Rather, present the proposed project or give a brief educational presentation on the issue. Allow plenty of time for discussion and interaction. If a particular project is being suggested, present the necessary steps for its implementation, including an outline of costs and tasks. The agenda should include a discussion about the next step, whether or not to hold another meeting or form an ongoing group, and who will make commitments to the new group or particular tasks. The group might want to set a specific point at which to end the project or at least reevaluate commitments and direction. Set a specific time and place for the next meeting while everyone is together. Close with a time of prayer about the issue and your commitments to act on it.

Those involved in leading the group or hoping to start one might benefit from reading a book about peacemaking groups. Glen Stassen's *Journey into Peacemaking*² is an excellent guide for new peacemaking groups. It contains thirteen sessions of study, prayer, and action suggestions that can help a group get grounded biblically and relationally as they seek to act constructively in the world. *Peace and Justice Ministry: A Practical Guide* by Richard Taylor³ is a basic guidebook for how to organize and run a peace-and-justice group within a congregation. It contains helpful lists of things to do, from constructing an agenda and group decision making to outreach and evaluation.

² Glen Stassen, *Journey into Peacemaking* (Memphis: Brotherhood Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 1983).

³ Richard K. Taylor, *Peace and Justice Ministry: A Practical Guide* (Dubuque, Iowa: Brown-Roa, 1994).

Group Life

A peacemaking group is more than a committee; it can become a community. People in the group will journey together in ways that may be life transforming, often bringing them into experiences that stretch their faith, realign their values, and shake their world-views. They will come into close contact with profoundly disturbing problems and struggle to discover God's call and provision in a very complex context. They may experience deep sorrows and ecstatic joy together. Peacemaking involves life-and-death issues at times, so a serious commitment will bring the group members into a world that is both emotionally intense and intellectually stimulating.

Some congregational peace groups will meet monthly or bi-weekly, while others will choose to meet on a weekly basis. Yet others will gather only for special events, with a few people acting as a steering committee that plans the group's projects and programs. The peace group in the North Hills Community Baptist Church in Pittsburgh meets weekly. They study, pray, and develop projects. They sponsor the church's annual observance of Peace Sunday and lead the service. They have sent a member to work in a refugee camp in Croatia. They also have worked in partnership with other groups, such as the local Habitat for Humanity project and a health ministry to low-income people. They have traveled to Washington, D.C., to demonstrate for handgun control and have participated in a "gang summit" in their own city. Their actions emerge out of their steady core of meeting, study, and prayer.

As we engage in the peacemaking journey together, shared spiritual disciplines can deepen the bonds among the group members and between the group and the sustaining grace of God. Shared spiritual disciplines (see chapter 8) are especially needed if the group is engaged in a longer-term project or one with some risk involved, such as traveling to a war zone or committing civil disobedience. Bible study, prayer, discussion, and reflection can help members keep a Christ-centered focus and root their hope deeper than any ebb and flow of historical events.

A wealth of biblical material on peacemaking is available, although much of it may be unfamiliar to most church members. Bible studies can be held periodically as ways to ground the group's

actions in a more thoughtful faith basis.⁴ Journaling can be another way to process one's views and experiences. If members of the group take time to share their insights from journaling or from reflections on readings about peacemaking, they will grow in both wisdom and commitment.⁵ Group prayer can become more than a perfunctory opening and closing of a meeting. Together the group members can process their own feelings and concerns before God. One peace group found themselves spending a third of their meeting time in prayer, confronting their own anger toward the government and their own fears about taking action.

Decisions in the group are best handled by consensus, which forces the group to practice peacemaking among themselves. Consensus decision making values the contribution of each person to the process and the fact that each has something at stake in the decision. It also gives broader ownership of the decisions made by the group, which heightens the commitment to follow through on those decisions.

To decide by consensus the group first discusses the proposals. When a decision point is reached, ask if there is consensus. Solicit especially the input of those who have been silent. Ask if anyone has a problem with the proposal. If there are problems, ask people to state their concerns and see if the proposal can be acceptably adapted to address those concerns. The result can often be a stronger proposal. If the proposal cannot be adapted to address the concerns of those who cannot agree with it, then ask whether they feel strong enough about the issue to block the consensus or whether they will

⁴*My Bible Study Guide: War and Peace* is a comprehensive workbook on biblical teachings on war and peace. It provides biblical texts, introductory notes, questions, and space to write answers and reflections. The study guide is available in Spanish as well as English from National Ministries Literature Resources, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482. The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program (100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202-1396) has an excellent series of Bible studies on peacemaking in Luke, Isaiah, Corinthians, Jeremiah, Acts, the Psalms, as well as on topics such as violence, conflict resolution, and the family. The Kerygma Program has a study, *Shalom: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Peace*, available from 300 Mt. Lebanon Blvd., Suite 205, Pittsburgh, PA 15234.

⁵*A Peacemaker's Journal* can be a tool for group reflection and journaling. It contains fifty-two quotes on peace themes, particularly on the inner journey of the peacemaker, with room to write or draw. *A Peacemaker's Journal* is available from National Ministries Literature Resources (see address in footnote 4).

accede to the position taken by the others in the group. For genuine consensus it is vital that those who block consensus be valued and not bullied into agreement. There are plenty of times when the lone minority voice was proved right in the long run. The wisdom of dissenters must be respected, especially in groups that claim to dissent against the injustices and domination of other groups and social systems.

Justice also needs to be practiced within the group. Lessons in the struggles against sexism and racism have revealed some of the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that domination can be carried out, even by people with good intentions. Talking too much, taking charge before others can volunteer, condescending, restating what another person has said clearly, intellectualizing when it's appropriate to share personal feelings, and solving problems before others have a chance to contribute—all these are tools of control that will undermine the efforts of committed peacemakers. If such problems plague a group, honestly confronting the problems with others or within oneself is the necessary step to create more equitable relationships. There may be times of painful dialogue, but faithfully persevering in the process of honesty will pay off with deepened trust and respect for one another.

The life of a peacemaking group may fall into a natural rhythm. Periods of activity around campaigns, congressional votes, trips, and demonstrations are offset by quieter times when no issues are pushing to the forefront and participants are able to catch their breath. The rhythms of events and group life can be a dynamic within which the group works. See the quiet times as opportunities to deepen the group spiritually by doing Bible study or participating in shared spiritual disciplines. Slow times are good to engage in background study, perhaps picking a book that the whole group can read and discuss. Relationship-building activities can just be fun get-togethers. If the group has engaged in difficult activities together, such as a civil disobedience action or a trip to another country, more relaxed settings of a cookout or picnic can allow for a different kind of bonding to take place.

Part of a group life cycle is death. There comes a time for all groups to die. It is healthy to acknowledge when a particular group needs to disband. The warning symptoms may be a more muddled

focus, lagging attendance at group events, and a lessened energy level in the group. Rather than just letting the group wither away, the group can be ended explicitly and with celebration, leaving those involved with a more positive feeling. Have a closing party at which you can share stories and pictures, express thanks to individuals, and recall victories and defeats. Close with prayers of thanksgiving for the journey you have had together and intercession for the needs that still exist.

Sometimes, as the issues shift—from the nuclear freeze to Central America, from the Middle East to Korea, from South Africa to neighborhood violence—the makeup and commitments of the group will shift as well. Letting one group die and another be born to focus on a new concern can help with the transitions. It allows people to make clean decisions about whether to continue, and such breaks permit new people to join at the beginning stages and help shape the nature of the group. Some groups will have a broad peacemaking vision, in which case disbanding and reconstituting around a new issue may be unnecessary. But if not, few things are more deadly to a group than losing focus and limping around looking for a new concern around which to center. Clear vision, clear times to end the project, and new beginnings can keep the church's interest in and commitment to peace strong.

The Salvador Partners Mission Group of Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania, began ten years ago as the Sanctuary Task Force. At that time a nucleus of a half-dozen leaders first coordinated congregational study and approval of becoming a "sanctuary church" for Central American refugees. When we received a Salvadoran man seeking sanctuary, the task force arranged hospitality and speaking engagements for him. As the realities and needs in El Salvador changed, so did the focus of Salvador Partners—from working with public sanctuary to working with partners in El Salvador. The Salvador Partners Mission Group, though small, continues to flourish with the full support of the congregation. We have kept our focus on El Salvador, and although other mission groups deal with other issues, we have tried to find common threads in our work for peace and justice. We have evolved as the situation changed and sought to keep ourselves and our congregation educated about the politics, the economics, and the theology

emerging in El Salvador.

Perhaps most importantly, we have made our partnerships real through personal contact. We have touched each others' lives and challenged each others' views so that we can truly grow together as partners. The people in our partner communities are not just names; they are real people with stories to tell, arms to hug us, and tears of joy and pain to share.

—Ellen Green, Trappe, Pennsylvania

Connections

Maintaining connections to those outside the group is important for the work of the group in the church and its involvement with the larger community. Good connections should be maintained with the larger body of the congregation. Identifying the leadership team of the group helps people in the church know whom to contact about events or to join the group. A spokesperson should be identified to be sure that announcements are made in the bulletin, church services, and newsletters in an appropriate and timely fashion. If the group is more than an ad hoc cluster to examine a particular issue, it might be worth exploring some form of structured representation on a church board or council. This would give the peacemaking group an official place within the church structure as well as a formalized channel into the decision-making processes of the church. Some churches have a social concerns, social action, or missions committee that may be the appropriate body to which a peacemakers' group could relate.

The group may also decide to be a part of a larger issue network in the area or even to participate in a number of networks. Many metropolitan areas have Central American networks. A group focused on Central America would want to be linked into the area network to keep in touch with upcoming events and actions. Members of the group might want to participate in tours sponsored by the regional network. Identify a person in the group to be the liaison to the network. This lets the network know whom to contact when they need to get the word out quickly regarding a special concern or action. The contact person may also want to attend the meetings of the network planning group. It takes quite a bit of time to be a contact person because you are effectively involved in two groups,

but these linkages provide the glue that holds a movement together. An effective connection to an action network can multiply the impact of your group's work as well as provide the inspiration and stimulation of being part of a larger movement for social or political change.

Nurturing the Inward Journey of Peacemakers

The Teacher in Ecclesiastes said, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war" (9:18). Such wisdom comes only through deliberate discipline and reflection. James 3:17 describes it as "the wisdom from above," a product of an intimate walk with God. The peacemaking journey is long and fraught with many dangers, defeats, and dilemmas. To sustain oneself and one's companions along the way, the inward spiritual journey needs to be intentionally nurtured.

The front lines of peacemaking often lie within our own hearts. That is where hatreds fester, fears lurk, and greed devours our souls. The inner self is also where perseverance is born, where hope is generated, and where courage takes root. In Jesus' parable of the sower, he spoke of the seed that fell in the rocky soil. It sprang up quickly but then withered in the heat of the sun, for it had no root (Mark 4:5-6). Though Jesus was referring to the response of people to the gospel message, the parable also is apt for the short-term efforts of many peacemakers. As they encounter the scorching difficulties of intractable and even violent conflicts, early enthusiasm and idealism can fade away. Paths of cynicism or self-serving can be taken, instead of paying the price to pursue a vision of peace. Roots need to be put down. We need nourishment from deep sources within us that tap into the wellsprings of God's Spirit.

Spiritual Disciplines

The traditional spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, Bible study, and fasting all can nourish the peacemaker. Prayer is the vital communication link between us and God. Quality communication makes any relationship, and in the divine-human interaction, a life of prayer becomes a dynamo for action in the world. In prayer we can offer our own troubles and the troubles of the world that burden us to the One who said to the wind and waves, "Peace! Be still!" (Mark 4:39). We recognize God's sovereignty over all the baffling events of history's flow through our lives, and God hears our cries of anguish for those who suffer. God also touches us in the mystery of prayer so that "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) will hold our minds and hearts secure even when the rational mind is battered by the evidence of human brutality and folly.

Bible study can be specifically geared to peace. The student of the Bible can do a topical study of war and peace. Workbooks such as my *Bible Study Guide on War and Peace* and *A Bible Study Guide on Conflict Resolution*¹ can give a disciplined structure to one's biblical investigations. The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program publishes an annual "Biblical Witness to Peacemaking" that gives daily readings from the Bible on a wide range of peace themes for the entire year.² Such aids can be used in one's daily devotions. Read a passage, study it, reflect on it, and listen to what God might say through it about the situations you face.

Meditation is quieting ourselves so we can reflect on a particular point of growth or need. It can be intentional, focused thinking. It can be prayer in which one's inner being is quietly and openly directed toward God. It can be mental silence so that deep voices within ourselves can emerge. Sometimes it is helpful to give content or an initial jumping-off point to our meditations through the use of Bible passages or the writings of people who have expressed their own journey of peacemaking.³

¹ See resource listing for information on how to obtain these study guides.

² To obtain a copy of "The Biblical Witness to Peacemaking," contact the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202-1396 (502-569-5784).

³ My book *A Peacemaker's Journal* is one aid to meditation. It is a collection of quotes on peacemaking themes with room for writing reflections and poetry or drawing.

Fasting is an alien practice to many North American Christians, but it has a long history in our faith as well as in the faiths of many other religious folk. Fasting is a disciplining of one's desires, expressed most graphically by refraining from eating. Radical fasts involve not eating at all. More modest fasts might involve skipping a meal or drinking juices. Fasting is best done in conjunction with prayer so that the inner issues become the focal point rather than the mere missing of food. The point of fasting is not deprivation. Rather, one's desires are focused on a transcendent need for self or for others. Since wars are rooted in corrupted desires (see James 4:1-10), fasting seeks to develop mastery over our desires. Fasting is usually a private matter, though at times fasting can be a group discipline with a witness to the larger community. Prior to and during the Gulf War, the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America called for people to commit themselves to daily prayer and weekly fasting for peace. Over fifteen hundred Baptist women and men joined in that commitment.

The struggle to control appetites, whether literally (in the case of food) or metaphorically (in other acquisitive habits), is clearly a pertinent issue for all of us who live in the so-called first world. The very fact that, in an age when sixty thousand die daily from starvation and nutrition-related diseases, our media is crowded with advertising for diet plans is proof enough that something is seriously out of balance.

On a larger, public scale, the issue of uncontrolled appetites is identified by James as the root of war. "What causes wars?" he asks. "Is it not your passions"—your cravings, your appetites—"which are at war within you? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war" (4:1-2, paraphrased).

Seen in this light, the cravings of individuals and the cravings of nation-states—though obviously different in scale—are parallel afflictions. To fast, therefore, encourages us to acknowledge our own personal temptation and inclination to gluttony and gives us a manageable, remedial step toward health. It also helps us identify with the gluttony in which we participate on a much larger scale.

Bringing our personal habits under control, adjusting them so that they nudge us toward health rather than heart attack,

toward life rather than death—these are among the reasons for fasting. And as we do this, we become aware of the need to bring public, corporate habits (policies) under control; we face the need for policies that nudge our nations toward health and life.

—Ken Sehested, Memphis, Tennessee

Nurturing One Another

Within the congregation are ways we can nurture one another in our inward journeys as peacemakers. Pastors, teachers, and group leaders can explicitly encourage and teach the spiritual disciplines, emphasizing that activists need to nurture their inner selves as do people who take to quietness more naturally. Activists can be so busy doing peace work that they can crash into despair or burnout without realizing they were in danger, so a word of encouragement to foster a deep peace within is a word well spoken.

A peacemaking group within a congregation can adopt a group discipline as a part of their regular experience. Our peacemakers group at the Dorchester Temple Baptist Church in Boston would begin their meetings with a member leading in a brief Bible study or reflection on a reading. Then we would pray. Besides intercessory prayers for people in war zones, we spent much time processing our own feelings of anger toward U.S. officials. It can be easy for some peacemakers to love those far-off labeled as “enemy” by our government, and then in self-righteousness hate the “enemy” close to home, the “enemy” whose policies we oppose. Through group prayer such feelings can be processed and purified. Then the actions planned in the rest of the meeting flow from clearer minds and hearts.

Often a peacemaking group experiences a rhythm of intense action followed by quiet. As demonstrations or lobbying campaigns are underway, the activity takes all the group’s energy and focus. But during the “down times,” there can be a nurturing of the inner person, a process shared and supported by the group. More intense times of Bible study and spiritual formation can be held when the agenda is less crowded with the pressure of the urgent. Those times are normal and even necessary for group life, so that when the action heats up again there will be deeper roots from which to draw sustenance.

Loving Our Enemies

The greatest spiritual discipline for peacemakers is loving our enemies. This discipline was explicitly and plainly given to us by Jesus: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44).

Loving our enemies has many different meanings. Our first question might be, "Who is my enemy?" During the Cold War the enemy of the United States was said to be the Soviet Union, along with smaller enemies, such as the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, Cubans, Vietnamese, and other Communists. Now the national enemies list contains some old hangovers from the Cold War era, such as Cuba and North Korea, and new villains, including Muslim fundamentalists and Iraq. Many U.S. citizens would agree with the government assessment of these opponents as enemies and accept distorted stereotypes as truth. Feelings of hatred can be stirred up at times even with little understanding of who the "enemy" really is. Peacemakers, on the other hand, would tend to learn more about the opposed country, often through direct contact. They thus frequently have a different perspective. While not always agreeing with or accepting the policies of "enemy" countries, they develop ties of love and respect to people which counter the hatred around them. Loving our national enemies has often been a part of the peacemaking journey.

Loving the "enemies" at home has been harder for peacemakers. The people in our government who shape policies with which we disagree and people in our own congregations who go along and cheer those policies are the "enemy" in our hearts and minds, though perhaps never acknowledged as such. While Communists and Islamic fundamentalists don't produce an immediate response of anger, conservative politicians, military personnel, and fundamentalist Christians engaged in conservative politics can make a peacemaker's blood boil. One noted Christian peace figure once wrote about Henry Kissinger as a demonic person, having passed from humanity into evil incarnate. That is as dehumanizing as calling the Soviet Union the "Evil Empire." On the other hand, certain forces, institutions, and historical dynamics are clearly destructive to human existence and well-being. Walter

Wink's three-volume work on "the powers" provides a stimulating, biblically based look at such forces and ways that Christians can engage them for peace and justice.⁴ How then does the Christian peacemaker separate the persons involved in evil systems and institutions from those "powers"? Do we love just the person who is the "enemy," or also the force or institution?

Honesty requires peacemakers to identify their true enemies. How do we distort what the other side or person is saying or values? How do we fear them and act out of the projections born of those fears? Jesus spoke about not pointing out the speck in the other person's eye until we have dealt with the beam in our own (Matthew 7:1-5). Peacemakers need to apply the same perspectives toward our theological and political enemies for the sake of our own spiritual health. Some activists labor sacrificially for peace and justice at a global level but have wretched conflicts in their own intimate relationships, sometimes due to their unjust treatment of those closest to them. Even worse is the enmity within our own selves. Augustine said, "Imagine the vanity of thinking that your enemy can do you more damage than your enmity." We can be "politically correct" and yet spiritually bankrupt, saving the world but losing our own souls.

Sam Keen has produced a classic study of the psychology of enmity in his book *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination*.⁵ Using political art and cartoons, Keen shows how enemy thinking is developed and manipulated to the point where people dehumanize one another so they can then kill. He argues that we must struggle against the entire war system, including the institutions that shape people's thinking about war and the psychological defense mechanisms we employ. Peacemakers can get a good handle on the institutions but miss our own inner enmities. Keen encourages us to "listen to what the enemy says about you, and you will learn the truth you have repressed. To

⁴ Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1984); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1993); *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1992).

⁵ Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

come to greater self-understanding, borrow the eyes of the alien, see yourself from afar.”⁶

To learn how to love our enemies, a support group within the church, perhaps the peacemakers group, can be a place where we can be honest in identifying those who spark our rage and hatred. Name them. Then begin to pray for them by name. Pray that God will bless them and help them grow. Pray for your own feelings, too—for the cynicism, bitterness, fear, and envy of success that distorts how you perceive both yourself and the other. Loving your enemy doesn’t mean you will agree, give in, or cease to struggle for justice and peace. It does mean that you will keep humanizing your enemies in your own mind, thus humanizing yourself. It is a work of God to replace the dynamics of hate with the dynamics of love, and confession and prayer are the footsteps of the journey.

⁶ Ibid., 95.

Chapter 9

Church Partnerships

Church partnerships across national, racial/ethnic, cultural, class, or language divides can be a special project of congregational peacemaking. Partnerships with other congregations, sometimes called “sister churches,” have been established to demonstrate Christ’s reconciling work in contexts where political or social conflicts have split people apart. Sometimes the partnerships are with congregations in the same city. Other partnerships span thousands of miles as churches are linked across “enemy” borders. Church partnerships generate both excitement and frustration. By looking carefully at what is involved and setting realistic and mutually acceptable goals, a church partnership can become a moving, learning experience that bonds people together in profound ways.

Why Establish Partner Congregations?

The divisions among humanity caused by racism, international conflicts, class differences, language, fear, and ignorance are elements of the context into which the gospel comes. The biblical message is that Christ has become the unifying bond reaching across the barriers. As Ephesians 2:13-16 puts it:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us . . . that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Central to our theology is the unity of the body of Christ, God's people.

However, central to our church experience is segregation according to the world's divisions. The old saying that Sunday at 11:00 A.M. is the most segregated hour still holds true. We can find some acceptable reasons for that segregation (people prefer to worship in their own cultural forms, for example), but the main reason is the history of Christian accommodation to the sins of society, a history we still live out in the present. Establishing partner congregations is one way to try to move beyond the history of division and break out of the confines of segregation. It is one way to resist the creation of new barriers erected by conflict and to participate in the building of bridges of understanding and solidarity.

Few churches are genuinely multicultural. Churches are geographically defined, if not to a particular neighborhood parish, certainly to a town, metropolitan area, and nation. Most congregations are made up predominately of members from one ethnic group and reflect that group's culture, even though there may be a sprinkling of members from other ethnic groups or cultures. So for there to be a vital expression of Christian unity, intentional efforts need to be undertaken to connect to congregations representing different parts of the human and Christian family. Partner churches can give concrete expression to the work of reconciliation that the Bible sees as central.

The sister-church relationship is a life-giving experience. It has changed lives. Our congregation has grown in faith and understanding as well as the individuals who have participated in our delegations. Our young people tell us that they will not be the same. They won't. I see it in the development of their faith.

—Charles Syverson, Palo Alto, California

How to Start an International Partnership

A congregational partnership is first and foremost a relationship. As a relationship, its genesis is more likely to take place through face-to-face encounters than in some semi-arbitrary pairing. Formalized efforts to match congregations have a poor track record and tend to collapse quickly. They are the dating-service version of congregational pairing. So it is not recommended to contact a denominational or ecumenical office to seek a partner church. However, if the church feels it has no other options and wants to pursue a pairing, it can check with the denominational mission office for a recommendation. The process may take a while and demand perseverance and creativity, so those engaged in initiating the partnership project need to be prepared for a long, slow process. Some churches in fact *have* successfully established church partnerships by going through denominational channels.

We have an official sister-church relationship with Primera Iglesia Bautista in Corinto, Nicaragua. We have had an active relationship since July 1985. In February 1984 we were challenged by Gustavo Parajón and Steven Heneise, both American Baptist missionaries in Nicaragua, to form a sister-church relationship if we were seriously interested in knowing Nicaragua's people and understanding their social, political, and religious realities. With the help of Tomás Téllez, executive secretary of the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention, we were initially paired with the church in Leon, but due to pastoral difficulties, we were paired with Corinto.

We have maintained our relationship with monthly phone calls, weekly prayers for one another, letters, special recommitment worship services, support by First Baptist Church for specific projects at Primera Iglesia Bautista, and through delegations visiting Corinto. These face-to-face visits have been powerful experiences that have done the most to solidify and strengthen the relationship.

—Charles Syverson, Palo Alto, California

The best way to find an international partner church is for someone to travel. When people are on a friendship tour or a mission work tour, they have the opportunity to see other churches and meet the sisters and brothers in those congregations. The bond is created

face-to-face rather than dossier-to-dossier, resulting in heart-to-heart connections. When Grace Morgan of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, visited the Baptist Church on the Marzahner Promenade in East Berlin in the old German Democratic Republic, her personal tie initiated the relationship that grew between that church and her home congregation, Underwood Baptist. When John Detwyler served as a volunteer missionary in Nicaragua, he visited the rural area of Los Gutiérrez Norte, where he met the pastor of the Getsemaní Baptist Church. Their relationship grew, and when John returned to his home congregation of Emmanuel Baptist in Schenectady, New York, he suggested the churches link up.

If a church member is going on such a trip, preparations should be made in advance to consider whether the church wants to pair up with another congregation. The pastor and the church's leadership body should discuss the idea, and if it is viewed favorably, a committee could be drawn up or the proposal passed on to the appropriate standing board or committee. Then preparations can be made to send some items from the church with the traveler, such as a photo of church members, a church bulletin, and a small, symbolic gift. Many partner-church relations begin only after the initial contact is made and the traveler returns full of enthusiasm about the people met in the other country.

The formal discussion about a partnership can be initiated by drafting a "partner-church covenant" that outlines the commitments made. This might include a statement about giving witness to the unity and universality of the body of Christ, a commitment for regular prayer on behalf of the partner church and its ministries, a commitment to correspond and learn from each other, and a commitment to explore ways to encourage one another's ministries and deepen the fellowship between the congregations. The draft covenant can be sent to the partner congregation to revise and, if they so choose, affirm. The covenant should be consecrated in a worship service either prior to sending it or when it is received back from the partner church. The committee, board, or peacemakers group facilitating the partnership could be commissioned to act on behalf of the larger body.

Building and Sustaining the International Partnership

The most convenient way to get the partnership moving and to sustain it over the years is through a regular exchange of letters. The letters can describe topics being presented in sermons or study groups, ministries in which the church is engaged, special milestones in the congregation's life, and some of the concerns that the church members have as they seek to be faithful disciples of Christ. If the partnership is with a congregation speaking a different language, you will probably need someone who can translate their letters for you. Write your letter in their language if at all possible. Many people around the world do know English, but we need to overcome the common assumption that others will accommodate the U.S.'s linguistic ignorance. Making the effort to translate what we say into another's language conveys a deeper message of commitment and respect.

Letters can be sent in packets with other expressions from the church. Children could write letters or draw pictures. Photos of the congregation or groups of people within the church could be sent. A cassette tape of choir music, a sermon, or a church service provides a way for the other congregation to enter into some of your church life. Even recipes can be exchanged. With the use of a speaker phone, you can even arrange for a direct conversation with a member of the partner church during a Sunday service to supplement the communications sent by letter. This takes some advance planning but can be an exciting way to communicate for those who never get the opportunity to travel abroad. The First Baptist Church of Palo Alto has monthly phone conversations with the Primera Iglesia Bautista in Corinto, Nicaragua. A display can be set up in the foyer so that gifts, photos, and letters from the partner church can be seen and read by everyone.

Gifts that express the unity of the congregations can be exchanged. A banner can be made displaying the names of both churches—to be hung in your church for a while, then sent to the partner church. Communion cups or chalices can be sent. One congregation has a glass cup from a Russian partner church that is always mixed in with their own cups to remind the members during the Lord's Supper that they are united with sisters and brothers across the globe. Artists and craftmakers in the congregation could