make gifts using their talents: paintings, crocheted wall hangings, embroidered Communion cloths, and the like. A photo album with notes and greetings can be put together.

The congregation can broaden its understanding of the partner church's country through special programs. Speakers from local universities or international students can be invited to discuss the culture and politics of the country. Ask your denominational office when missionaries to that region will be back in the States and visiting your area. The missionaries can share about the country, the ministry of the churches, and perhaps even bring specific greetings from your partner church. The congregation can also learn some liturgical phrases in the language of the partner church as well as a hymn or chorus. Customs about the observance of Christmas and Easter can be printed in the church newsletter or even incorporated into your church's traditional observances.

The partner churches can select certain shared activities, such as observing Human Rights Sunday or World Communion Day, with a focus on their relationship. Sermons can be preached from the same text and then exchanged. Bible study groups can study the same portions of Scripture and then write each other about their reflections and learnings.

As the relationship grows, so does the desire for face-to-face encounters. A group of church members can be sent to visit the partner church, either as a part of a longer tour of the region or specifically to spend time at that church. Arranging for the members to join in a ministry activity and worship service enriches the encounter. Sometimes the partner church can send a pastor or members to visit in the United States; if money is a problem, the U.S. church can invite them to come and pay their expenses. Arrange for the visitors to have opportunities to learn about you and your community as well as to share their concerns and ministries.

Many churches have established relationships with churches from other countries and experienced the joy and broader perspective that comes from connecting to others. The Greece Baptist Church near Rochester, New York, and the Rákoscsaba Baptist Church in Budapest, Hungary, began a partnership from a Baptist Peace Fellowship friendship tour to Eastern Europe in 1988. Paul Hayes, a pastor at Greece Baptist, suggested to the Hungarian

pastor, Géza Molnár, that the churches exchange correspondence as a way to improve East-West relations. The correspondence grew to include exchanging gifts, from artwork to embroidery. Videos and audio cassettes of choir music were also sent. One Thanksgiving a couple from the Rákoscsaba church, Ferenc and Margarit Szilágyi, were able to visit Greece Baptist, bringing with them a beautiful Jozsef Toth wood carving of Christ. Throughout the relationship, both congregations have learned about church life in another country and the kinds of issues each body must face in seeking to be faithful to its Christian calling.

The Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, is in a partnering relationship with the First Baptist Church of Matanzas, Cuba. Roger and Mary Ruth Crook from Pullen Memorial have been the key facilitators of the relationship, traveling to Cuba a number of times to speak and participate in worship services.

Our contact with Cuba began when we attended the International Baptist Peace Conference held in Sweden in 1988. There we met Francisco "Paco" Rodes, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Matanzas, Cuba, and Noel Fernández, a layman from Ciego de Avila, Cuba. At our invitation, these two men spent the summer of 1989 living in our home and studying English at the local community college. During that time Paco proposed a sister-church relationship between Pullen and First Baptist of Matanzas to provide contact and mutual support between the two churches. Since that time six groups from our church have visited Matanzas, and five groups from Matanzas have come to Pullen.

Our Cuba mission group meets regularly not only to share our mutual concerns and to pray but also to implement specific activities—some educational, some political, some humanitarian. Pullen has provided significant medical and other material assistance to the Cuban church. More than that, our visits and our prayers have given them spiritual support that they tell us has been life-sustaining.

We, in turn, have gained from them new insight into the meaning of a vital faith, and we have been inspired by their spirit of faithfulness to the mission of the church in the world. Our own worship has been especially enriched by their expressions of faith through music and art. Every visit from

our Cuban sisters and brothers has renewed us spiritually and has raised the level of our concern and our commitment to working for reconciliation between our nations. Every member of our congregation who has visited the church in Matanzas has had a truly life-changing experience. Together we have experienced the truth of Paul's affirmation that Christ "has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us" (Ephesians 2:14). Our sisters and brothers in Cuba tell us what we already know—that because nothing can separate us from the love of God, neither can anything separate us from the love of one another.

—Roger and Mary Ruth Crook, Cary, North Carolina

The Tokyo Peace Church in Japan has seen partner churches as a central part of its witness to the reconciling power of the gospel. This Baptist mission church established a partnership with the First Presbyterian Church of Iri, Korea, to address simultaneously the racism in Japan against Koreans and the divisions within the Christian community. Members have visited between the congregations, including five from the Korean church coming to Tokyo to celebrate the formal organizing of the Peace Church following seven years as a mission site. The congregations have exchanged gifts of art and plaques. The Tokyo Peace Church has also established partner churches in India and Oregon.

When John Detwyler returned to Schenectady from Nicaragua, the Emmanuel Baptist church agreed to link up with the Getsemaní Baptist Church. They sponsored a two-week visit of the pastor, Felix Ruíz Rivera, putting together an itinerary that included speaking engagements about life in Nicaragua to churches, colleges, high schools, community and social groups, as well as preaching at Emmanuel. Many of Emmanuel's members have made the trip to visit Getsemaní Baptist in Los Gutiérrez Norte. John and his wife, Sandra George Detwyler, spent a year in Nicaragua as volunteer missionaries, deepening the bonds between the congregations.

Christ has told us to love our neighbor. Sometimes it is difficult for us to connect with each other due to distance, language barriers, and cultural differences; but what we do have in common

[1]Sandra George, "Getsemaní Prays for Emmanuel in Every Service . . . ," *PeaceWork*, November/December 1988, 10.

is Christ and a desire for peace and justice, and that overcomes all the other barriers. Our church has grown in an understanding of Christian love through its contact with Getsemaní.
—John Detwyler, Schenectady, New York[1]

Sandra helped establish a sewing collective as an economic development ministry of Getsemaní Baptist Church involving the participation of both congregations. The women from Emmanuel provided the bulk of sewing machines, fabric, thread, and other supplies for the collective. One woman donated five hundred dollars to provide training for the women in the collective. Using her experience as a professional educator, Sandra provided the training and materials for Getsemaní to begin the first free preschool in Los Gutiérrez Norte.

To fund the school for one year, Emmanuel Baptist sponsored two events.

One was a special service in January emphasizing the sister church. Invitations were sent out to those within the community who had verbally and financially supported our ministry in Nicaragua. They included Baptists and laypeople and clergy from other churches: Methodists, Catholics, Unitarians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and so on. The service was truly ecumenical.

The other event was the "Fiesta de Amistad" (Fiesta of Friendship). Over a hundred people attended the ecumenical fiesta to feast on Cuban black bean soup, Mexican fiesta salad, chile, rice, and brownies. During dinner a Catholic sister visited tables throughout the hall, serenading the "fiesters" with Spanish songs. Following the meal a five-minute slide show was presented telling the story of the preschool, and a sombrero was passed for donations. Later, a Nicaraguan woman danced and the children enjoyed a piñata. Not only was the evening an opportunity to raise funds for the school (over a thousand dollars) but also an opportunity for education.
—Sandra George Detwyler, Schenectady, New York

Financial Paternalism and Gift-Giving

As the congregations learn more about each other and their ministries, the desire may arise in the U.S. church to help out with projects in the partner church, particularly if it is in a poor community.

This can be a legitimate expression of love and unity, but it can also become corrupted by the temptation of financial paternalism. American churches have a lot of money and are even fabulously wealthy by global standards. We tend to think that we can solve problems by giving money. This generosity, at least as we perceive it in ourselves, keeps us from having to acknowledge our own needs and that those we see as poor may have some important contributions to make to us. We can too easily assume that because we have money we should be in control of a relationship.

To counter paternalism in ourselves and dependence in partner congregations, the matter of gift-giving needs to be explicitly confronted. CEPAD, the Protestant relief and development agency in Nicaragua, has helped many U.S. churches link up with Nicaraguan churches. CEPAD insists that no large gifts of money or supplies be made by the U.S. churches in order to keep from falling into a crippling donor-recipient mentality. The partnership needs to be one of equality and mutuality. The U.S. church is not to become an aid or development agency.

Symbolic gifts that express the love and connections between the congregations can be simple and beautiful. More extensive participation in financial aid to development projects can be done more healthily through the national denominational offices or through international organizations. When the First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan, wanted to assist their sister church in Nandasmo, Nicaragua, with a poultry-raising project, they worked through the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua. An alternative holiday fair was held at the Ann Arbor church to "donate a chicken," and the funds were given through the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua along established mission-projects channels. Institutional gifts such as seminary scholarships or donations of books to school or seminary libraries are more appropriate than giving money to individuals. In some cases churches will encounter leaders of local ministries who are constantly hustling for financial support. The need may be great, but issues of accountability are often overlooked. From a distance it can be impossible to tell what is fraudulent and what is legitimate. Keeping any significant financial involvement to previously established missions channels will tend to screen out these problems and maintain appropriate accountability.

Building Domestic Church Partnerships

Establishing domestic church partnerships is obviously quite different from international relationships because of the shared community, the opportunities for interaction, and the interwoven histories of churches and neighborhoods. But often there are barriers to be overcome, particularly racism and the social distance it produces. Various ethnic groups can have their own circles in which they move, circles that other groups are unaware of or at least out of touch with. Ministerial alliances can have ethnically homogenous memberships, perhaps not intentionally but through the subtle interactions of racism and varied agendas, needs, and experiences. There is often a track record, for better or worse, of cross-cultural relations in the community, something upon which the domestic church partnership can build if that record is positive.

Call the local offices of the denomination or metropolitan ecumenical organization to see if they have a project in place to link churches. There may be some helpful mechanisms in place for starting relationships. If you are in a smaller setting such as a small city or a neighborhood in which cross-cultural partnerships could be built, the relationship can be started on more personal grounds, such as face-to-face encounters with pastors to explore the idea together. Some peace fellowships have gathered experiences of other churches that can be useful in planning the development of church partnerships. The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, for example, has a "Promise of Pentecost" project to encourage churches to overcome the divisions of racism and ethnic alienation. They have resources, Bible studies, and stories from other church partnerships to help get congregations oriented to the challenges and opportunities of such a relationship.

To get the ball rolling, work through the appropriate leadership channels in the church to present the idea and identify the people responsible to pursue it. The people working on the relationship, however, need to be in communication with the whole congregation and have a process through which the entire body is brought into the project and gives its blessing.

Then get to work on building the connection between congregations. Don't be impatient, for friendships are not built hastily, especially if there is a history of racism to be honestly faced. Dr.

David Forbes, Sr., is the former pastor at the Martin Street Baptist Church, an African American congregation paired with the predominately white Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. Dr. Forbes said, "Be aware racism has placed a scar on community central in its making, and no amount of goodwill will eradicate that pattern quickly."[2] Articulate your interest in a partnership with a few specific ideas for acting on the new relationship. Then listen, for the other congregation will need to join in shaping the vision and the structure of the partnership if it is to be a genuine linking together.

The other congregation may have a different time frame in which it approaches the partnership. Establishing the relationship can be very important and feel urgent to you, but the other church may be involved in other areas of mission that relegate the partnership to a lower place on the agenda. They may have internal matters to work through before they can appropriately address the request for a partnership.

> *It is inevitable that when we go to their meetings, work on their projects, get on their schedule, become concerned with their needs, that we will want to start making changes, to "improve" the way things are done. But it is not ours to change. We are not in control. It is healthy for us to experience being on someone else's agenda.*
>
> *—Kyle Childress, Nacogdoches, Texas*[3]

Patience becomes important, not being put off by a slow response but waiting for the internal workings of the other congregation to move to the point of being able to affirm the decision to pair up.

Pulpit and choir exchanges are the typical starting points for a partnership, and all too often that is as far as matters go. A healthy partnership needs some joint projects in worship and ministry. Special joint services can be held on occasions such as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, Easter sunrise, Thanksgiving Day, or New Year's Eve. A shared mission project can bring church members together to work side by

[2] Paula Womack, "Swimming Upstream Against Racism," *PeaceWork*, May-June/July-August 1990, 11.

[3] Ken Sehested, "How to Start and Sustain a Sister Church Relationship," *PeaceWork*, May-June/July-August 1990, 23.

side, such as vacation Bible school, a housing rehab, or a home weatherization ministry for the poor or elderly church members. Education events can be scheduled together: church-school teacher training, youth-group special activities, or a community issue study and action group. Families can pair up from each church to eat at one another's homes, an idea that was developed by Koinonia Southern Africa to address apartheid at an intimate level.

Besides direct encounters you can make ways to recognize and affirm the unity between the congregations. A joint banner with the names of both congregations can be made and shared back and forth between the churches. Prayers can be regularly offered for the ministry and people of the partner church. Newsletters can carry news from the other congregation, and the key contacts for each congregation should be on the mailing list of the partner church.

We [Underwood Memorial Baptist Church] have paired with Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, an African American congregation located in the Milwaukee central city, for annual shared worship services. On these Sundays, the churches alternate the privilege of serving as host to the two congregations. Choirs from the two churches rehearse together in advance so that they can sing together. The pastor of the guest church brings the morning message while the host church provides a meal for all the worshipers following the service.

We have begun koinonia groups consisting of equal numbers of whites and people of color that covenant for six months to meet for potluck meals in each other's homes to discuss racial/ethnic issues. The groups further agree to complete their covenanted relationship by sharing a meal in a restaurant and some form of public entertainment.

—Reid Trulson, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

As the relationship grows, the ideas generated can be endless, and they will grow out of the integrity of the relationship and the churches' call and mission. Tough issues will probably emerge; in fact, at some point they *must* emerge if the relationship is to deal honestly with the problems in our society, our churches, and our own selves. A cross-cultural partnership that is genuine will force growth in both congregations and will richly reward those who press ahead to the deeper issues and the unity that can be forged there.

How Far Do You Go?

A church partnership can go as far as the congregations want to take it. Many American churches, especially white churches, have short attention spans, and a church partnership can be a brief mission fad. When a war is going on, churches in countries like Nicaragua can attract our attention, but once the war is over, our attention can easily shift to other places and other issues. But the church in Nicaragua is still there with its struggles and ministries. Domestic relationships can be popular in the wake of racial violence, but racism often slides off the white agenda once superficial law and order is restored, taking the motivation out of cross-cultural relationships for some people.

A periodic reevaluation of the relationship can help congregations take a fresh look at the partnership. There may be a need to shift the focus or risk moving to a new level of involvement. The First Baptist Church in Palo Alto has periodic recommitment services to renew the vision for the partnership. How far a church will go depends on how deep its vision is. A biblically based vision that sees the church as a body of reconciled people will see the issues in partnership as going to the core of the life of the church rather than being mission elective projects. Reconciliation across racial, ethnic, and national lines is Christ's agenda and the Holy Spirit's imperative. Being faithful in working out and maintaining the partnership then becomes an expression of faithfulness to Christ.

Chapter 10

Traveling for Peace

Travel can be a peacemaking ministry when it brings people into face-to-face contact beyond the barriers of national, cultural, or political polarity. When I see the enemy and discover a human being, or when I experience a bit of the life and struggle of someone in a war zone I'd only read about before, my understanding is deepened, my heart is opened, and sometimes my entire life is transformed. Travel can take us out of the confines of our particular community, with its limited perspective of the larger world beyond, and dramatically expand our horizons.

Of course, travel in and of itself isn't peacemaking. Tourists see the sights but often miss the underlying realities. Pilgrims to the Middle East see the old stones of ancient ruins but often miss the "living stones" of people laboring for justice, reconciliation, and peace amid the explosiveness of contemporary politics. Corporate executives jet around the world to improve their company's bottom line, which may aggravate the economic disparities fueling local wars. To be an act of peacemaking, then, travel must have a purpose that shapes the itinerary and the use of the travel experiences.

Many people in our churches travel to other countries for education or ministry. Peace travels can be undertaken to learn about another country, and particularly to visit "the enemy" of our own government. Travel can also be an expression of solidarity with

In 1987 a respected member of my congregation [Helen DeLano—see below], at the age of sixty-seven, made a journey to El Salvador as part of a religious delegation. She returned with such passion for helping the poor of El Salvador that before long a large group of us were studying the issues and doing what we could to help from the sidelines. In August 1988 the opportunity came for me to move from words to action by accompanying refugees from a camp in Mesa Grande, Honduras, back to El Salvador. God's call to me was unmistakable, and, before I could even ask my congregation, I had agreed to join a delegation of fifteen people of faith from North America.

Overcoming many obstacles, the disapproval of both the United States and Salvadoran governments, over one thousand brave refugees asserted their right to go home, and it was our privilege to accompany them. It was the most exhilarating, inspiring experience of my entire life. Once informed, my congregation was completely supportive. In fact, they not only paid all my expenses but also sent extra money for the refugees. They supported the repatriation from home by sending telegrams to the Salvadoran government demanding support for the refugees and for the delegation. They also supported us with ongoing prayer and then a two-day prayer vigil during the time of the actual repatriation.

—Martin Massaglia, Royersford, Pennsylvania

Walking with those who suffer is a concrete way of responding to the biblical injunction to "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Longer-term partnerships can be developed out of the expressions of Christian unity made by those who cross the political/national divides and join with sisters and brothers, however briefly, in their struggle. Many partner-church relationships have been established as the result of congregation members visiting a church in another country and experiencing a bond that continued after the trip was over. Grace Morgan, a lay leader from the Underwood Baptist Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, visited the Baptist Church on the Marzahner Promenade in East Berlin before the Wall came down. Her initial contact on a Baptist Peace Fellowship friendship tour developed into a partner-church relationship between the two congregations. John Detwyler worked with American Baptist missionaries in Nicaragua for eight weeks in 1985 with

the encouragement of his home church, Emmanuel Baptist in Schenectady, New York. While in Nicaragua he visited the village of Los Gutiérrez Norte, where the Getsemaní Baptist Church carried on its ministry. Through John's contact on a volunteer work tour, a partnership grew between the two congregations. Such stories can be told about partnerships that developed after many such trips to various countries.

The third peace purpose of travel is to energize and direct political activism. Traveling to an "enemy" country is a political act itself, as is joining in solidarity with those whose suffering is exacerbated by U.S. policies. Acts of love and expressions of Christian unity are not done in a vacuum but speak with prophetic force. Peacemaking travelers can use their experiences to speak from their own firsthand experiences in advocacy efforts to shape governmental policies and church involvement in advocacy.

Members of our congregation had only begun to learn about the plight of Salvadoran campesinos forced from their homes during the nation's civil war when a call came from a woman gathering a delegation to travel to El Salvador. She wanted to get the real story of what was happening, dialogue with Salvadorans, be a supportive presence at a celebration marking the assassination of Archbishop Romero, and then return and tell the story. Though she had never before done anything like it, and though at sixty-seven years of age some people might have thought it would be too much, Helen DeLano accepted the invitation and made the journey.

Particularly moving to her were the conversations with COMADRES (the mothers of political prisoners, disappeared, and assassinated people of El Salvador). As she experienced both the pain and the inextinguishable hope of the poor, she was, in her own words, "converted again." In the Salvadoran people she saw the suffering Christ manifested in a powerful way. Upon her return she worked tirelessly as an advocate for the sisters and brothers she had left in El Salvador. Whether raising funds and people's consciousness or working in public advocacy for change in our nation's policy related to El Salvador, she was instrumental in making Royersford Baptist Church a major force in the Philadelphia area related to Salvadoran concerns.

—Martin Massaglia, Royersford, Pennsylvania

Thousands of Christians and people of other faiths who traveled to Nicaragua with Witness for Peace delegations could speak to local media and their political representatives from the basis of having seen the *contra* war and its impact directly. One cannot turn away from such an experience unchanged; the people and their stories stay with the peace traveler as an ongoing source of energy and commitment.

Types of Peace Travel

Many travel experiences are organized by groups or agencies outside the local church. A denomination may sponsor a mission work tour. For example, International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches sponsored mission tours of Central America in the 1980s that exposed participants to the problems of life in El Salvador and Nicaragua, to the sorrows of the war, and to the experience of the churches seeking to minister in that context. Various denominations sent teams to South Africa to observe and monitor the 1994 elections. These teams usually included a mix of national staff and people from local churches who had been active in South African issues. Even when individuals within the church sign up to go with such a tour on their own initiative, it can become an opportunity for the entire church to learn, grow, and perhaps act for peace.

Roy and Judy Johnsen both went on denominational tours to Central America. Roy participated in a mission work tour of Costa Rica and Nicaragua in 1982. When he saw the ministry of the churches in the revolutionary society of Nicaragua and saw their suffering at the hands of U.S.-sponsored *contras,* he was moved to greater activism. Upon his return he took every opportunity to speak and lobby for a change in U.S. policy.

> *In August 1984 I participated in a mission study tour to El Salvador and Nicaragua, sponsored by American Baptist Women. This trip was my first exposure to developing countries and my first exposure to extreme poverty. Both El Salvador and Nicaragua were in the midst of civil wars that were being fought with arms and military aid supplied most extensively from the United States. In both of these countries, people pleaded with our tour group, "Please tell your government*

to stop sending military aid."

In my naïveté, I had thought that the United States always did the "good" and "right" thing in its relationships with other countries. To realize the amount of suffering, torture, and killing that occurs throughout the world because of arms provided by my country was a painful and eye-opening experience. I realized, as a follow of Jesus Christ, how important it is to work for peace and justice. I realized, as a citizen of the United States, how important it is to express my opinions to my government through correspondence to my senators and representatives.

—Judy Johnsen, Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Denominational peace fellowships may also host tours. The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America was born out of a tour of Southern Baptists and American Baptists to the Soviet Union in 1984. Since then the BPFNA has sponsored "friendship tours" to Eastern Europe, Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and South Africa, as well as additional tours to the Soviet Union. These tours provide opportunities for learning about the situation in other countries as well as bridge building through the churches.

Peace organizations, and even professional groups, host tours that local church members sometimes join. One church began its involvement in Central American issues when a member of the church who was a school teacher participated in a two-week visit to Nicaragua by educators from their city. Many church folk participated in actions of Witness for Peace or Pastors for Peace, engaging directly in solidarity action by accompanying people in war zones, recording human rights violations, or delivering aid in violation of government-imposed embargoes.

Some trips have been organized within congregations themselves. Members of Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania, have traveled to South Africa and El Salvador to visit partner churches in those countries. Members from Judson Memorial Baptist Church in Minneapolis have traveled to a village in Nicaragua to express their solidarity with a Nicaraguan partner congregation. The First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland has undertaken an annual mission tour to Nicaragua for twenty-five years. Six to ten people go to Nicaragua for two weeks, working alongside Nicaraguan church members in shared ministry. They find that this regular commitment has broken down barriers between people, created

understanding about different ways of life, and given a perspective that can call into question personal lifestyles and national priorities. Because these trips grow out of the mission and social-ministry agendas of the congregations, they give expression to a commitment larger than the interest of only those who go on the trip itself.

Youth events can sometimes become peacemaking journeys. International youth conferences, such as those sponsored every five years by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), expose youth to the diversity of the world community. One youth who went to a BWA conference in Scotland in 1988 was challenged by Third World Baptists about church support of U.S. militarism. His travel encounters led to a dramatic reorienting of his values and social commitments, including changing his involvement in the National Guard because of his new conscientious-objector convictions. Baptist youth from Puerto Rico have participated in work projects with Christians in Cuba, and when the youth congress was held in Havana, Cuba, some American youth attended, crossing the barriers imposed by U.S. hostility and policy. For youth, such travels can be life-transforming encounters with differing people and cultures, even as they are for adults.

Tips for the Peace Traveler

Besides all the regular matters related to travel—documents, shots, itineraries, what to eat and drink—the peace traveler can take a few steps to enhance her or his experience and make a greater impact for peace both in the other country and upon returning home.

Gifts can be taken to tangibly express the peace mission. Plowshares pins (small lapel pins, made of scrap metal from a U.S. fighter plane, depicting a sword being bent into a plow) make easy gifts to carry in quantity.[1] Their vivid symbolism makes them a powerful expression of reconciliation for the traveler crossing into "enemy territory." Roy Johnsen of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, makes beautiful wooden peace ornaments. When I went to the Middle East, I had half a suitcase full of these ornaments to use as gifts for church leaders and congregations I met on my journey. Communion cups or sets have also been used as reconciliation or

[1]The pins are available for a modest price from Swords to Plowshares, Box 10406, Des Moines, IA 50306.

solidarity gifts between congregations, leaving tangible expressions of the love and connection that transcends national boundaries and distance.

Recording one's experiences is important to make the most out of peace travel. Tourists have fun and take pictures to treasure their memories (and having to tolerate their pictures has been the source of a fair bit of humor!). A peace traveler, however, has undertaken a mission and has a message to tell. The traveler will encounter people and situations that may be hidden by the ignorance, indifference, or hostility of the government, media, or public back home. So the peace traveler cannot responsibly just take in all that is experienced. There needs to be a time of telling the stories, so the traveler would do well to record them as fully as possible.

Recording the stories can be done in a number of ways. Keeping a journal is a basic discipline that will prove valuable in recalling the people, places, and experiences that can become a confused jumble as you move quickly from one place to the next. Take time each night to record what happened that day, whom you saw, what was said, your impressions and experiences. You can add notes during interviews and documents you pick up to put together a complete log. If there is any risk of your journal being confiscated and used by authorities against dissidents you visit, you should not use names. Either commit the names to memory or write them separately somewhere else, postponing the full reconstruction of your journal until you arrive home.

Taking photographs or videos can always enhance the story you tell when you get home. Be sure to ask people if you can take a picture or a video before you begin shooting. People are not objects for our ideological use, so show basic human respect and courtesy to the people you encounter. Slides or edited videos can help those in your home church or those who attend a presentation on your trip get a bit more of a feel of what you encountered and the people you met. When members of the peacemakers group at Dorchester Temple Baptist in Boston saw a slide show about a visit to El Salvador, seeing the pictures of children leaving their outdoor school class to climb into the crude bomb shelter during an attack brought home the horror of the bombing campaign in that country's civil war more than all the general statements of how bad it was.

The stories of people from another country are more powerful in conveying the realities of their lives and the passions of their concerns than statistics or recitations of history and political relations. Hearers of a presentation can relate more readily to the stories of named individuals with whom they can identify. The death of thirty thousand people reported in a newspaper will not move the heart as much as the story of a mother who told the group about losing three children in the war. The personal story of one black friend's daily ordeals living under apartheid in South Africa gave a personal angle to a national experience that revealed the core of that larger reality more than any general statements ever could. So make special note of the stories while they are fresh in your mind because these stories are what you will remember most vividly from your travels.

Involving the Congregation

Those in the congregation who do not go on the trip can still share in the peacemaking venture of the one who travels. Participating in sending the traveler can both link that traveler into the community of the church as well as hold him or her accountable to report back upon return. The one who travels is not going on his or her own but is sent as a representative, as a citizen ambassador.

International travel is expensive, and help in raising funds for the trip is one simple but extremely practical way a congregation can support a peace journey. Fund-raising support can enable people of more limited means but a deep peacemaking commitment to go on trips they could never make otherwise. It also allows people who cannot make the trip to express their support of the peace mission by helping to finance it.

Fund-raising in the church also provides an opportunity to educate the church members and the community about the issue. When church folks go on Witness for Peace delegations, a fund-raising event is an occasion where the conflict, whether in Nicaragua, Guatemala, or Mexico, can be highlighted. Aspects of the conflict that don't make the national news can be brought to people's attention with the assurance that they can help someone they know gain some firsthand experience about what is happening.

When the person or group goes, a commissioning service can be a moving experience for all involved. When Andy Smith went to

South Africa as an observer of the 1994 elections, his home church took time in their Sunday morning worship to commission him.

> *A number of colored ribbons hung from the large cross above the center of the sanctuary that Sunday. I was sitting under a ribbon of a different color. Steve Jones, the pastor, asked the children to find the special person and then asked them why I was special. He explained that I was about to go to South Africa to observe the elections. At the close of his story about the elections, Steve invited all the children to lay their hands on me as he prayed. I felt the presence and blessing of God and everyone in the congregation that day through the children. During the two weeks in South Africa, I sensed a calmness in myself that I rarely had on previous trips. I knew that the children and indeed the whole congregation were with me in spirit and were praying for my safety as well as a peaceful and successful election.*
>
> *—J. Andy Smith, Wayne, Pennsylvania*

There is a bonding created at such moments that increases the interest and commitment of all involved.

While the travelers are gone, they should be remembered during the congregational prayers each Sunday. If they are visiting a partner church, symbols of that partnership could be prominently displayed at the front of the sanctuary to keep all the members aware of the current connection between the distant congregations.

As mentioned earlier, gifts from the congregation give tangible expression abroad of a community back in this country that shares the concerns expressed by the traveling peacemaker. Before George Williamson, a member of the First Baptist of Granville, Ohio, traveled to Iraq just prior to the outbreak of the Gulf War, he took Polaroid photos of all the children at his church. He got an opportunity to give the photos to children in Bagdad, helping create a visible tie between First Baptist's children and the Iraqi children who would soon be under American bombardment.[2]

Upon their return an opportunity should be made for the peace travelers to report. This could be a few minutes in a service, or even

---

[2] The amazing story of how George Williamson distributed the photos is recorded in full in my book *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1994), 102.

a sermon. A church school class or coffee-hour forum could give an opportunity for a fuller report, including slides and videos. Special presentations could be set up to which the community is invited as well, broadening the scope of reporting on the trip as well as giving witness to the church's concern for peace issues.

People should be encouraged to respond to the report or presentation if possible. Those who traveled to Nicaragua often provided letter-writing materials so that church members could write Congress about upcoming *contra*-aid votes. People who traveled to South Africa provided material about the Shell boycott, since Shell was a major corporate supporter of the apartheid regime. Providing an opportunity for a response turns the travel experience into an advocacy education event. It also enables the traveler to keep a commitment of solidarity made to those visited during the trip.

Making the Most of the Media

Before and after an international trip, you can use the media to tell your story and express your concerns to the larger community in which you live. Whereas a report to one's home church might draw twenty to fifty people, getting the story in a local paper can reach twenty thousand or fifty thousand readers—or more. You are newsworthy because your trip relates to issues of national concern while also providing a local connection. Your firsthand experience provides the local media a close-to-home source for information as well as a connection to people in the local community. Contacting a reporter with your story is not an intrusion. You are not bothering the press but are helping them get their job done, particularly if you present clearly what is going on and why this is of interest to the community.

Before going on an international peace trip, consider carefully a plan to utilize the media so that you can have the greatest possible impact at home.[3] Most U.S. citizens have little knowledge of the

[3]G. W. Associates has produced an excellent one-hour cassette tape workshop entitled "Living Media." It discusses in detail how to effectively use your local media in relation to travel to the Third World for peace, justice, or ecological purposes. "Living Media" is available at a nominal price from G. W. Associates, 702 S. Beech, Syracuse, NY 13210 (315-476-3396). This tape is highly recommended as an important part of preparation for international peace travel.

Third World—and what they do have is often limited to stereotypes or seen through the filters of U.S. policy and national media, which generally tends to reflect that policy. When the perspective of the peacemaking community is in opposition to U.S. policy, such as was the case in the wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador, then local peacemakers need to use their hometown media to convey the perspectives usually screened out before reaching the public. Your peace work connected with the peacemaking journey is not over until you have tried to involve the local media.

To begin, make a profile of yourself and others in the group for the media to use. This includes a biographical sketch, your occupation, professional and community associations, interests, and so on.

Then identify the media in your area. Print media include the various papers, large city and Sunday editions, and suburban and specialty papers such as minority and religious papers. As you look at the unions, professional associations, or alumni groups with which the travelers are affiliated, consider which might be interested in an article for their newsletter. Also identify the broadcast media, both radio and television. What news programs and talk shows may have an interest? Remember the special angles you might have to interest religious stations or college and university stations. You can find information and phone numbers from the Yellow Pages or from your local library.

Next, you have to make your contacts. Call the papers to talk to reporters who might be interested in the story. Explain why it is important and interesting and what the local connections are to the national and international story. Provide background on yourself, the country, and the issues with which you are concerned. If you have identified someone at the news desk, you could send a press release first, but then follow up with a phone call. Contact producers at radio and television stations with the same information. It is wise to keep detailed records of whom you have contacted and what you have discussed or sent to them.

Make these contacts well in advance of departure—at least two weeks. Stories can be done before you even go that focus on who is going, the purpose of the trip, what you expect to find and do, and whether any collections are being taken for materials or funds. For example, when the Pastors for Peace caravans are put together,

local publicity has helped raise awareness of the materials being collected for shipment to Nicaragua or Cuba. Advance publicity helps people who may not be in your network's communication loop learn what is going on so they can participate as well. When you return, you can tell about your experiences and educate others about the situation and U.S. policy related to it. You can make your pictures, slides, and videos available to enhance the story or interview. You can also ask if the paper or station is interested in a particular story or angle. You could offer to do an editorial or a feature story yourself for their consideration.

Prepare for an interview so that you will say what you want to say. Identify specifically the issues that are important to cover. Think through the kind of language and choice of words that will best convey your concerns to your audience. Identify the particularly compelling stories of people you met. Think through the experiences on the trip that made their deepest impression on you: What made them significant? What did you feel? If you are on radio or television, let your feelings animate your voice; a monotonous speaking voice will turn off a listener fairly fast. Once a story is run, follow up with a thank-you to the reporter, producer, or editor involved. Politely correct any points that aren't accurate. Remember that you may need to come back again with another story; you are building a relationship. Appreciation for the work done by the media will help build a cooperative spirit, which will be needed the next time you have a peacemaking story to tell.

Chapter 11

Money and Social Stewardship

Money is a primary link in social relationships all around the world, even for people who never meet one another. Because of the interrelatedness of the global economy, issues of money link us either to conflicts and unjust situations or to creative solutions to conflicts, whether we are aware of it or not. Peacemakers need to recognize the stewardship opportunities related to finances so that our money becomes a tool for building peace rather than sustaining violence.

The stewardship of our money for peacemaking can be a corporate matter for the church, as the congregation looks at its financial and physical resources and the role they can play as investments or mission contributions. Our personal finances and how we spend our money can also have an impact in the congregation. What we do with our money can have legal implications as well, such as when the church is paying someone involved in tax resistance. All these matters will be examined in this chapter in the context of being good stewards of our resources and making the most of them for peace.

Peaceful Church Budgets

The two major ways the church budget can be a vehicle for peacemaking are mission contributions and investments. Contribu-

tions from the church budget to organizations working for peace deliver a clear statement about the congregation's understanding of peacemaking as a part of the calling of God's people. Many denominations have peace offices to which gifts can be given. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has an annual Peacemaking Offering that is used to fund the national work of their Peacemaking Program as well as to support local peace initiatives. There are also grassroots peace fellowships with denominational affiliations, such as the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America[1] or New Call to Peacemaking[2] for the historic peace churches. Even a small annual contribution from a congregation is appreciated by such peace fellowships, and once the organization is in the budget, it tends to stay in for a while. Other organizations dealing with peace issues, either globally or locally, are always deeply appreciative when a local church makes a donation to their work. The identification and support of the church provides affirmation in what can often be a difficult and controversial witness made by such organizations.

A member desiring to get a peacemaking ministry into the church budget needs to know the process for developing and approving the budget. The appropriate committee, board, or person should be contacted with the request to consider the particular peace group. Supporting materials should be readied and presented to those making the decision. If the organization is accepted in the budget, either the person suggesting the contribution or the appropriate committee in the church should publicize the work of the peace group and its connection to the congregation's own ministry. There may also be programmatic ways in which the congregation can share in the work of the peace group so that the partnership goes beyond a monetary contribution. Newsletters can be displayed on literature tables, and action projects for the fellowship or peace organization can be taken on as congregational projects. Such a partnership gives greater significance to the financial partnership.

Investing for Peace and Justice

Investments are more complex than mission contributions. If a church has endowed funds, the trustees or financial officers usually

[1] 499 S. Patterson, Memphis, TN 38111.
[2] P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501.

have the responsibility to oversee the investment of those funds so that income is gained for the church. But the investment itself can be a ministry. Often such funds are deposited in banks or with brokers for the purpose of maximizing the return within certain constraints for security of the investment. But when investments are made for financial reasons alone, the money can be used for purposes that are antithetical to the values and goals of the gospel. For example, the broker could invest in stock in a weapons manufacturer that gains its profits by selling arms to poor countries, thus fueling wars that destroy decades of mission work in the wake of their chaos. Furthermore, the manufacture of weapons may be polluting our own communities. So the net result is that the church has made money off the misery of the poor in the developing world and the degradation of the environment at home. This is both bad stewardship and ethical irresponsibility.

Using investments as a form of congregational ministry, however, can open doors of peacemaking that many church members have never imagined before. Trustees can become agents in an exciting work for impacting the world with gospel values on behalf of the entire congregation. J. Andy Smith, in his book *God's Gift, Our Responsibility,*[3] speaks of three different approaches to corporate responsibility related to investments: positive, negative, and activist. The negative approach is to avoid investments in companies that do business in areas the church does not wish to support. For example, some congregations or denominations will not invest in corporations that are involved in military production. During the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, many churches barred their brokers from investing church funds in companies doing business in that country.

The positive approach involves putting the money to direct use in ventures that are in line with mission goals. Putting church deposits in a minority bank can help strengthen poor communities and undergird local economic development and efforts for racial

[3]J. Andy Smith, *God's Gift, Our Responsibility: Biblical Reflections on Creation, Christian Stewardship and Corporate Responsibility* (Valley Forge, Pa.: National Ministries, 1993), 69-74.

justice.[4] Many churches banded together in Philadelphia to help establish the United Bank. They encouraged their members to invest in the bank so that their money would be engaged in the ministry of economic development in some of the city's poorer communities. Some churches also bought stock directly in the bank. In Detroit, church involvement in economic development in partnership with a local bank is taking place as several Detroit congregations have invested in the First Independence National Bank, an African American bank committed to building up the community. The Pax World Fund is a common stock mutual fund established by a group of Methodists to provide alternatives to investments in defense corporations.[5] Opening accounts in such institutions means your church's checking account or investment portfolio can be doing ministry even while waiting for the treasurer to apply the funds to other areas of ministry.[6]

Investments in community development loan funds can be riskier since they aren't insured, but they also help organizations that are addressing the root causes of war and violence. These loan funds often have excellent payback records, but even when the return is lower than standard investments, the social payback is very high. The Alternative Investment Clearing House of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility[7] provides information about groups and organizations for such alternative investments. There are also social investment funds that operate like traditional brokers but buy

[4] One of the most successful community development banks is the South Shore Bank of Chicago. The bank developed Shorebank Advisory Services to help community leaders concerned about economic justice evaluate the needs of their own communities. Shorebank Advisory Services will consult about beginning a process to recapitalize areas that receive little in the way of banking services or investment incentives. A church must be committed for the long haul if it intends to get involved in economic development because genuine solutions are long-term and require hard work. For more information, contact Shorebank Corporation, 71st at Jeffrey Blvd., Chicago, IL 60649-2400 (312-288-1000 or 312-288-2400).

[5] Contact the Pax World Fund at 224 State St., Portsmouth, NH 03801 (603-431-8022). A socially responsible money market fund is available through Working Assets, 111 Pine St., San Francisco, CA 94111 (800-223-7010).

[6] For an extensive listing of investment alternatives, see Appendix C in J. Andy Smith's *God's Gift, Our Responsibility.*

[7] 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 566, New York, NY 10115.

stock in corporations involved in the manufacture of socially and environmentally positive products, such as alternative fuels, recycled materials, and so on.

The activist approach takes a bit more work and must be done in partnership with other groups. Many denominations have offices that are responsible for the denomination's relations to corporations, such as the Social and Ethical Responsibility in Investments Program for the American Baptist Churches.[8] These offices often use shareholder resolutions to call on corporations to act in socially and environmentally responsible ways. From 1971 to 1993 the religious community led an effort to use shareholder resolutions calling for companies to divest themselves of their business enterprises in South Africa as part of the global campaign to end apartheid. Shareholder resolutions have been used to call for acceptance of a code of environmental ethics, for a halt to nuclear weapons production, for an end to the production of war toys, and the reporting of foreign arms sales, to name a few.

Many churches will let their investment bankers or trustees vote their shares for them, which could result in votes being made in opposition to the peacemaking goals of the congregation. The church can ask that the proxy statements from the corporations for their annual meetings be sent directly to the church for them to vote through their own committee or selected individual. The congregation could also contact the denominational offices, perhaps adding their shares to the shares voted as a block by the denomination. The Central Baptist Church of Hartford, Connecticut, has been a sponsoring shareholder with National Ministries of the American Baptist Churches for several years.

Our church voted to invest in support of the antiapartheid movement in South Africa. We felt we had to get a mandate from the congregation, so a resolution was passed. The motivation for this change came from Central's Board of Outreach. They had undertaken a campaign to write to companies listed within our stock portfolio. They urged support of the Sullivan Principles and asked for information on South African policy. The board also urged the trustees to communicate with Andy Smith (of the Home Mission Society—National Ministries for the

[8] National Ministries, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851.

American Baptist Churches) on the proposed policy change, which resulted in the final resolution for the American Baptist Home Mission Society to represent Central Baptist Church of Hartford in the filing of shareholder resolutions.
—Fred Falcone, Hartford, Connecticut

Each year Central Baptist of Hartford sends the list of their stock to the director of Social and Ethical Responsibility in Investments so that their stocks can be added into the denomination's proposals in shareholder meetings. The church simply sends a letter authorizing the church agency or official to act on its behalf and agrees not to sell the stock until after the annual shareholder meeting. A church trustee also sends an authorization of ownership. If many other congregations with endowed funds would join Central Baptist of Hartford, the impact of the denomination's corporate witness would be magnified.

Frequently there are so many corporate meetings going on in the spring that denominational staff cannot attend them all. In that case volunteers from a local church could attend on behalf of all the shareholders in the denominational action and vote at the annual meeting on the issue in question. Pastors or laypeople interested in participating in such action can contact their denominational office related to corporate responsibility and offer their services. If a shareholder meeting is being held within driving distance, then the local church member can play an important role in partnership with national staff.

To engage in such investment peacemaking, the congregation's financial leadership might need to study the matter together, looking at both the biblical issues and the financial options. Andy Smith's *God's Gift, Our Responsibility* provides a series of biblical reflections to help the congregation's financial decisions be grounded in a sound theological and ethical base. The book also provides practical direction to enable a congregation to begin revamping its investment practices. Once the finance committee or trustees are clear about what they intend to do and why, their reasoning and decisions should be presented to the congregation. This will allow fuller ownership of the peaceful and just stewardship of congregational resources, as well as educate the broader membership of the implications and opportunities of stewardship.

Wills, Bequests, and Memorials

Wills and bequests allow individuals to continue their ministry beyond their own lifespans. Such special gifts can be used to open up new peacemaking opportunities both for churches and for national bodies. Victor and Eileen Gavel gave the money to initiate the Edwin T. Dahlberg Peace Award for the American Baptist Churches (ABC). The award is given at the denominational conventions and is named after one of the great peacemakers in the life of the ABC. After years of underwriting the award, when the Gavels had both died, their will left sufficient funds to continue the award indefinitely.

Part of financial discipleship work in a congregation is instructing people how to use their wills to further the purposes of God. A congregation can hold a seminar on making wills. People can be encouraged to give to the endowment of the church or to help initiate or support special ministries in the congregation, including peace projects. Members can also be instructed as to how they can give to mission agencies and peace organizations to further these ministries as well. When Victor Gavel died, he also left money to the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, which was used to upgrade their administrative capacity through the purchase of new computer equipment and to inaugurate a new peace fund to support indigenous peace initiatives around the world.

Memorials can also be a way in which a person's death can provide an opportunity for inspiration and growth in peace work. Two deceased members of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Ridgewood, New Jersey, had been inspirations to the members of that church throughout their long lives of service to Christ and the cause of peace. The church established a peace lounge as a memorial to Carl Tiller and Marie Stites. The lounge contains a library on pacifism and is used for lectures and discussions as well as for meditation and reading. Setting up a memorial that carries on such work is an appropriate and lasting way to honor a deceased peacemaker. Memorials that enable further peace witness also connect the past and the future in a way that adds meaning and strength to both.

The Church Building As a Peacemaking Resource

Many church buildings have plenty of unused or underused space. Such space offers an opportunity for ministry. Most peace-and-justice organizations operate on minimal budgets and are sometimes so hard-pressed financially that staff go without pay. A congregation can provide office space to organizations consistent with the church's mission goals at low rent, no rent, or the cost of utilities.

Agreements to lease church facilities to a tenant organization should be drawn up in writing, clearly delineating space use, restrictions, and financial provisions. This will help both the tenant group and the church avoid unnecessary conflicts down the road. A church board or staff person should be designated as the liaison between the congregation and the tenant organization.

Some churches have housed many organizations on their premises. The Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis houses offices of a number of groups, including the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. Central America Mission Partners is located at the First Baptist Church in Oakland, California. Old Cambridge Baptist Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has provided space for many of the leading peace-and-justice groups in the Boston area over the years. The churches benefit from the stimulation and connections provided by these organizations as well as receiving some modest income from rents. The tenant groups benefit by having affordable facilities and sometimes by sharing office equipment such as copiers.

At times there can be a cost to housing peace-and-justice organizations. During the height of the wars in Central America in the mid-1980s, U.S. peace groups were often targets of break-ins and vandalism. The Pledge of Resistance offices in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church were repeatedly ransacked. Answering machines were stolen on the eve of demonstrations, thus removing messages to inform callers about the upcoming events. Files were riffled and tossed around the office. Though repeated complaints were filed, no investigation was undertaken about what appeared to be politically motivated crimes. Sanctuary churches (see chapter 14) also experienced this type of harassment. A church that opens its doors to a group challenging violence or injustice needs to know of

potential costs for providing hospitality and be willing to stand in solidarity if necessary.

Spending Money Justly

A congregation can encourage and facilitate people to spend money in ways that contribute to justice. Much of the injustice in the world is rooted in the inequities in the distribution of wealth, the production of goods and services, and the payment for those goods and services. Creative programming can present opportunities for redistributing wealth from more well-to-do U.S. congregations by paying poor craftmakers appropriately for their work.

The Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania, runs the Crafts of Freedom Shop with church volunteers. The shop, located in the church's Mission House, sells craft items made by poor persons from around the world. During the civil rights struggle of the 1960s, several women at Central Baptist, while looking for a way to make a contribution to peace and justice, identified a need for an outlet for the craft and food products made by persons in low-income areas of the United States and Third World. They opened the Crafts of Freedom Shop and operated it completely by volunteers. All profits from the shop go to help groups and co-ops develop new products or expand their markets.

> *Currently among our sources for products are SELFHELP of the Mennonite Central Committee; SERVE of the Church of the Brethren; Thai Tribal Crafts, related to the American Baptist Churches; Koinonia Farms in Americus, Georgia; Berea College Industries, Kentucky; and UNICEF. Twenty-eight years later customers still appreciate the opportunity to purchase a quality product while at the same time helping someone to be freed from the cycle of poverty. The shop is open every day, October through December, and several days each month, January through May.*
>
> *—Bud Wilmot, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania*

The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, has sponsored alternative Christmas fairs. The fair features craft items from Third World cooperative outlets and information about various economic development missions. A

person can give a gift to buy ten trees for a reforestation project in the Dominican Republic, ducks for a farmer in war-torn Mozambique, or trees to restore an orchard in Lebanon. Local projects such as Habitat for Humanity or battered-women's shelters also have tables where people can buy gifts to assist in building homes or rebuilding shattered lives.

Church newsletters can publicize nonprofit marketing organizations for Third World craftmakers, particularly at Christmas. The materialism of much of the Christmas celebrations can be countered with an opportunity to give gifts that provide a more just form of income distribution. Pueblo to People supports craft and agricultural cooperatives of the poor in Central America and the Philippines.[9] The Mennonite Central Committee has a project, SELFHELP Crafts of the World, which supplies both nonprofit shops and local groups doing short-term craft sales or running a mail-order catalog.[10]

Tax Resistance

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," Jesus said (Mark 12:17, RSV). For most people this means individuals should simply pay their taxes in line with the laws of the land. But some Christians see war-making and the destruction of human life as an illegitimate activity of Caesar. To pay taxes for war is, in good conscience, to violate God's call, according to these conscientious objectors. From this concern has grown a national movement of tax resistance that has taken many forms. It has also promoted a legislative campaign to pass the U.S. Peace Tax Fund Bill, which would allow taxpayers to designate their taxes exclusively for nonmilitary use.[11]

Tax resistance could be viewed as a purely individual matter, but the local congregation can and perhaps even must face the issue in two ways. If individuals in the congregation are involved in tax

[9] For a catalog, contact Pueblo to People, 2105 Silber, Suite 101, Houston, TX 77055 (800-843-5257).

[10] For a catalog or information, contact SELPHELP Crafts of the World, 704 Main St., P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501 (717-859-4971).

[11] For information, write the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, 2121 Decatur Pl., NW, Washington, DC 20008.

resistance, it would be appropriate to provide an opportunity for them to present what they are doing and the biblical, ethical, and political basis for their decision to act in disobedience to the government. The biblical passages in Mark 12:13-17 and Romans 13:1-7 can be discussed, along with other passages on the themes of peace and government authority. Materials about the U.S. Peace Tax Fund Bill can be made available for people who wish to write their legislators, whether or not they are directly engaged in tax resistance.

In some cases tax resistance can be an issue brought to a congregation because of actions of an employee, particularly a pastor, though anyone in the employ of a church could engage in tax resistance. Nonclergy employees usually have their taxes taken out by the church, and the treasurer sends the withheld money to the Internal Revenue Service. An employee engaged in tax resistance may file for a refund for military taxes paid or choose to reduce his or her income by charitable contributions, which would not impinge on the church itself. If the employee requests that no taxes be withheld, the church is liable to IRS penalties. A pastor, however, is considered self-employed for tax purposes, so no tax is withheld. The clergyperson controls the tax resistance, and IRS collection from the church becomes more difficult.

Dick Myers, pastor of the West Henrietta Baptist Church near Rochester, New York, and his wife, Beth, engaged in tax resistance in the mid-eighties. They sold a home from a prior pastorate and withheld the portion of the capital gains tax that would have gone to the military. The Myers told their pastoral relations committee and other members of the church what they were doing because one of the main purposes of their tax resistance was to make a public witness. One member was concerned that the church not be asked to pay the Myers' taxes for them, but generally the members were supportive. The main church board was also supportive of their pastor doing whatever he felt in conscience he should do, seeing it as not an issue for the church itself. The IRS ended up dealing directly with the Myers by seizing personal assets but not involving the church.

Charles Hurst was involved in tax resistance with his wife, Maria Smith, while pastoring Bethany Presbyterian Church in Cleveland.

The IRS twice sent a levy to the church demanding that Hurst's salary be turned over to pay taxes and penalties. The first time, the church went through a serious discussion among the session, the church's governing board, and the entire congregation. They decided to honor the levy, but sent a letter of support for their pastor's tax resistance to the IRS. They also organized a supportive ecumenical service to make the matter a public one. The second levy, following Hurst's continued tax resistance, was met with refusal to comply. The congregation sent a letter stating their reasons to the IRS. The IRS made numerous threats, but the church continued to refuse to comply with the levy. Rev. Hurst left the church to work with Witness for Peace in Central America. After a year the Justice Department informed the church that legal action against the church was imminent. Legal advisors said the church would not be allowed to give the reasons for its stand; the judge would only consider whether or not the church complied with the levy. To save further expense, the church complied with the levy. Throughout the process Rev. Hurst and his wife felt supported by the congregation both personally and in their beliefs about tax resistance.[12]

The historic peace churches have had more experience with tax resistance and its institutional implications. The Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Churches have passed resolutions on the issue supportive of individual conscience. Employees of church agencies who have taxes withheld have engaged in resistance by increasing their W-4 withholding allowances. Though the IRS has requested payment to be made by agencies garnishing wages, the agencies have refused. As of this writing, no further action has been taken against the institutions, but individuals have had accounts frozen and liens placed on property. Most churches who have been approached by the IRS have referred the IRS back to the pastor involved in the resistance. There are many church/state issues entangled here, and the IRS seems unwilling to push the matter.

[12] Charles Hurst's story is found in "Silence and Courage: Income Taxes, War and Mennonites, 1940-1993" by Titus Peachey, MCC Occasional Paper No. 18, Mennonite Central Committee, August 1993. Many other instances of tax resistance and religious bodies are recounted along with a history of tax resistance and Mennonite individual and denominational actions.

Chapter 12

A Ministry of Advocacy

As a democracy, the United States depends on its citizens to shape the direction and decisions of the country. From Moses addressing Pharaoh and Daniel speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, God's people have acted on the assumption that government leaders are to be held accountable to do what is right and just. In a democracy, however, the government leaders are constitutionally accountable to the people. Not only is there a prophetic ministry of speaking to those in power; there is a ministry of advocacy. Advocacy means getting involved in the dialogue that shapes government decisions and speaking out for one's values and concerns. An advocate makes a case for a particular position and then presses that case to those who make the decision. Since in a democracy our government officials are either elected by us or appointed by those whom we elect, they are ultimately accountable for our concerns. If they do not effectively represent those concerns, we can vote them out of office.

Churches involved in peacemaking have a ministry of advocacy because what happens in our world is of concern to God. God is not neutral about matters that affect human beings. We may not understand fully what God wants, sometimes claiming God is on our side when we may be the ones with the distorted perspective. But for what we do see and do understand, we can advocate. Advocacy is a form of ministry when it is flowing out of our faith and is seeking

to make a constructive difference in the world. As ministry it has a place in the work of the church.

But what about the separation of church and state? The separation of church and state is a fundamental principle of Baptist heritage and is embodied in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The separation of church and state does not mean that religious people cannot express their values in the political discourse of a democracy. After all, everyone has some sort of value system, and for religious people that value system is rooted in faith. All politics involve values, so religious people should be expected to bring their religious/ethical perspectives into the debate and decision-making process.[1]

The separation of church and state means that it is inappropriate for the state to use its power and resources to promote any particular religious group or to promote religion in general. Religious people are citizens in the democracy, but religious institutions are not to be dependent on the government for their support. Such support would involve coercion of conscience on religious matters, something that Baptists have historically resisted for themselves and for others. On the other hand, no church should be permitted to exercise political power in the government or dictate government policy. Yet individual people of faith and religious organizations and institutions can make their voices heard in public debate on government policies and programs in the same way nonreligious citizens and organizations do.

Practically speaking, this means that a local congregation should not expect or seek government support of its religious life, whether in the form of money, religious school tuition credits, or public support of religious practices. Churches should expect that the government will not interfere with their own expression of faith, including evangelistic outreach and works of ministry to those in

[1]"A Shared Vision: Religious Liberty in the 21st Century" is a cogent document signed by an extensive interfaith list of religious leaders and organizations on the relationship of religion and politics in the United States. It explores the separation of church and state in constitutional terms and court interpretations, with specific application to some of the pressing current religious liberty issues. "A Shared Vision" is available along with a study guide from the Baptist Joint Committee, 200 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002 (202-544-4226; fax: 202-544-2094).

need. Furthermore, the church can encourage individual members to speak out on political issues from moral and ethical grounds, as well as speaking corporately either as a local congregation or as a regional or national body.

Organizing for Advocacy

Some people in the congregation will write their legislators on their own, but the advocacy ministry of the local church can be dramatically increased by some simple organizing. This can be done without creating any new group but by having an established group act as the catalyst for the larger body. Often one person in the group will be the driving force, providing the information and enlisting a few others in the process.

A Sunday school class, mission action group, peacemakers group, or even the deacons can be the facilitating group. They should do their homework about the issue. If the denomination has any policy statement or resolution on the topic, it would be helpful to secure copies from the headquarters.[2] These resolutions and statements can give members an understanding of positions taken by the representatives of the denomination's churches from across the country as well as some of the theological rationale for the positions. Particular legislative issues and voting timetables can be obtained through the various offices and coalitions in Washington, D.C., or in similar organizations in the state capitals for regional issues.

Advocacy training can be done in the facilitating group or opened up to the congregation at large. This could be handled in a one-session class. A video on advocacy could be shown.[3] A presentation could be made about how to write and visit your legislators and how bills become law.

---

[2] For the American Baptist Churches, contact the Office of Issue Development, National Ministries, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482.

[3] An excellent advocacy training video is *Advocacy Is a Ministry*, available for rental or purchase from the ABC Office of Governmental Relations, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002 (202-544-3400) or from National Ministries Literature Resources, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482 (800-458-3766). The Office of Governmental Relations also has an annually updated booklet available at a nominal fee called "Register Citizen Opinion: A Congressional Directory and Action Guide."

Once the facilitating group is clear about the issue, the specific legislation, and the time frame for action, plans can be made to either act as a small group or to present the action opportunity to the entire congregation. In the latter case, an announcement can be made with a brief statement of the issue and why the church members are being encouraged to act. Then an opportunity needs to be made for immediate response. A table can be set up in the narthex, foyer, or coffee-hour lounge. The action table should have information sheets, a sample letter, stationery, pens, envelopes, and stamps.

Of course, to prevent unnecessary conflict in the congregation, the facilitating group should take its request to set up an advocacy table to the appropriate leadership body or church board. Avoid partisan politics, keeping the focus on the ethical concerns that are at stake in the legislative decisions.

The comments in this chapter are primarily about advocacy at a national level, but peace and justice need advocates locally as well. Often local peace-and-justice issues are clouded by seemingly mundane matters such as zoning, administration, civil service, and the like. However, the implications of decisions amid the details of state, city, and county governments can be immense for the quality of people's lives and the conditions of local communities. The same basic characteristics of effective advocacy apply locally as nationally: do your homework, know your issue, build relationships with officials, be respectful but also clear about where you stand. There are more opportunities to build relationships with local politicians and government officials than with national, so an active congregation advocating for justice and peace can be a significant player in the discussions shaping issues of local policy.

How to Write Effective Letters

In a survey of congressional staffpersons about the types of communications to which members of Congress respond, the number-one answer was spontaneous constituent mail.[4] Letters to representatives

[4] "Register Citizen Opinion 1993: A Congressional Directory & Action Guide," General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, 3. Available from Service Department, General Board of Church and Society, 100 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002 (202-488-5600).

and senators as well as state and local officials are an important channel to get one's voice heard and to help shape decisions. Since less than one in ten citizens write their Congresspeople, the impact of each letter is significant. Petitions are not a very effective means of advocacy; letters make a far greater impact. A postcard is not as effective as a letter, but a handwritten postcard is better than nothing or than a preprinted postcard.

In writing a letter, be sure to put your address on the letter itself since envelopes are thrown away. It is best to be brief, keeping your focus on a single issue. A letter of several pages will probably not be carefully read, so be concise and well organized in your presentation. Try to say something nice, such as thanking the legislator for a previous vote or offering congratulations on his or her election. Be polite. Threats and demands will only antagonize, while reasonably argued opinions will carry more weight. Come to the point quickly and concisely, using the bill number or title if you know it. If not, just be sure to state the issue clearly; many important issues will come up as amendments, so you need to be sure to communicate clearly your position on the issue itself.

State your reason for writing, what your opinion is, and why you think that way. If you are going to be directly affected or know people who will be affected by the legislation, such information can be especially helpful and significant for the Congressperson. After church people traveled to Central America with Witness for Peace or denominational mission work tours, they could speak directly about what they had seen and experienced. Such firsthand knowledge carries a lot of weight in advocacy. Offer information that can be handy for your legislator to remember and use. Cite your sources. With ten to fifteen thousand pieces of legislation introduced into Congress each year, you can help raise your legislator's awareness of an issue by effectively providing focused information.

Use your own words. If a letter is obviously mass produced or sounds like an organizational form letter, then the impact of the letter will be dramatically lessened. The legislator needs to know that you are a real person who cares about this issue. Ask questions that require specific answers. You will probably get a form letter back that is sent to everyone who writes about your concern. Use that as an opportunity to open up two-way correspondence. Write

back with specific information or crisp, cogent reasoning to address points your legislator makes with which you disagree.

Then remember to say thank-you, especially when your legislator votes on behalf of your position or takes an action you request. Legislators are people, too, and they like to be thanked for what they do. So when your representative or senator casts a vote your way or takes leadership in a legislative struggle, let him or her know you noticed and are appreciative. Insults or nasty letters don't work as a means of persuasion. Furthermore, you want to maintain a relationship with your legislator that could pay dividends down the line even if he or she votes contrary to your position on a current issue—to say nothing of basic Christian decency in how we are to relate to all people.

If there is no time to write a letter, you can either send a telegram or make a phone call. Phone calls will seldom get through to the actual member of Congress. You may be able to reach an appropriate staffperson with whom you can have a more extended discussion. On some hot issues, you may only be able to leave your brief message with a receptionist who keeps a tally that is passed on to the legislator. Generally, no record is kept of the phone call's content, so don't depend on the telephone to advocate to the extent that a letter can. (Addresses and phone numbers for government offices in Washington, D.C., are listed in Appendix C.)

How to Make Effective Visits

Visits to congressional offices are another important form of advocacy. Because the legislator has many constituents and a very busy schedule, it is not always easy to get an appointment. An individual is least likely to get in, unless he or she holds an influential position in the community. A group is more likely to receive an appointment. If the member of Congress is unavailable, try to set up an appointment with the appropriate staffperson. The staffers are usually knowledgeable and capable and play a key role in gathering information that is considered by the legislator, so they can have significant influence in shaping the legislator's stand on an issue. If you had an appointment with the representative or senator and discover you will only be able to see a staffperson, don't walk out. Proceed with the same plan you had for your original

appointment. If your views and lines of reasoning make an impact with the staffperson, you may end up with an ally intimately involved in the congressional office. A visit to Washington, D.C., may not be feasible, so take advantage of visiting your Congresspersons in their home offices during recess periods. You actually may end up with more time for discussion during these congressional breaks.

Before making the visit, do your homework. Gather information about the issue and the pending legislation on the issue. Gather stories about people you know who will be affected one way or the other by the legislation. Then decide who your key spokesperson will be, who will make the opening statement about your position, and what you want your legislator to do. Anticipate the issues that will be discussed, questions that he or she might raise, and questions you'll want to ask. You may want to prepare a small packet of material to leave with the legislator or staffperson.

When you make the appointment, assume you'll have fifteen minutes. Anything more should be considered a gift. Arrive on time, be polite, and dress neatly. After the introductions and informal comments, make a clear and concise statement of what your concern is. Try to include an affirmation of something positive the legislator has done recently. Be specific about the action you wish your legislator to take. Some legislators will digress, so politely return to the subject that concerns you when that happens. Take notes on what is said and any promises that are made. Offer to leave your packet of printed material and information with the legislator.

If your legislator disagrees with your information or assumptions, don't lose your temper or become argumentative. You can still convey your concerns and depth of feeling. In fact, most issues that would inspire someone to make the effort to visit Washington, D.C., are deeply felt. But if you become hostile, the legislator will probably get defensive or write you off. Discussion of deeply felt issues that remains respectful of the other person is more likely to get an effective hearing. Offer your information and personal experiences politely. If you don't have information the legislator requests, offer to get it and send it to his or her office; then be sure to follow up on that commitment as soon as you return home. Don't assume that the legislator will disagree with your position; assume

that you have some information your legislator needs, whether or not he or she will vote the way you want. Even if the legislator has consistently taken an opposing position, your visit is not in vain. You are establishing a relationship and dialogue that may pay dividends down the road. More than one legislator has switched positions on an issue due to constituent pressure, new information, and historical developments.

Close with an expression of appreciation for the time the legislator has taken with you. Then follow up by sending any information you promised along with a note of appreciation for his or her time and a special thank-you if the legislator votes as you wanted. Report back as soon as possible to your group or congregation about your visit.

Coordinating Actions with Larger Networks

Politics is about power. A single individual has very little power, but when a number of individuals band together to act on a common purpose, their power is dramatically increased. For a local church involved in advocacy, your impact will be magnified if you are part of a larger network that can act in an informed and coordinated manner.

The American Baptist Churches have an office in Washington, D.C., that engages in advocacy work regarding issues on which the denomination (through its General Board) has taken a position. Many other denominations have similar offices. Newsletters are regularly produced that discuss current legislative issues and provide issue analysis, prospects for congressional action, and steps constituents can take to make a difference. Concerned congregational members should be on their mailing list.[5]

The ABC Office of Governmental Relations has established a Rapid Response Network (RRN). The RRN mobilizes American Baptists to act in a timely fashion on pending legislation. "Action Alerts" are sent to network members when an issue is coming up for a vote in Congress. Background information, legislative status,

[5] American Baptists may write the ABC Office of Governmental Relations, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002. You will receive their newsletter, *Advocate,* at no charge and can also join the Rapid Response Network. Many other denominational offices are located at the same address, but check with your denominational headquarters for the correct address.

and ABC positions and theological perspectives are provided along with specific action recommendations. Through coordinated action and good timing, the advocacy impact is maximized.

When President Reagan vetoed the Civil Rights Restoration Act in 1988, Martin Massaglia, pastor of the Royersford Baptist Church in Royersford, Pennsylvania, contacted his representative, Dick Schulze, a Republican who had initially opposed the legislation. Rev. Massaglia and other church members were part of the Rapid Response Network and had frequently contacted Rep. Schulze about this civil rights bill.

> *On the day that the vote happened, I got a call from Tom Berryman, who was Dick Schulze's aide. He said, "Martin, this is Tom Berryman. In about forty-five minutes the House is going to vote, and I wanted you to be among the first to know that Dick Schulze is going to vote to override President Reagan's veto." I thought I'd misunderstood him. I stammered and stuttered and said, "Did you say he was going to vote to override?" And he said, "That's right. And I want you to also know that he has changed his mind in part because of you and your congregation's work."*
>
> *So I was newly convinced that we could make a difference. We could clearly see the fruits of our labors—and with a legislator about whom we had no hope. And I think he wanted to make the point that he is listening and that he wants to hear from us.*
>
> *—Martin Massaglia, Royersford, Pennsylvania*

Coalitions are also formed about religious values or specific issues so that denominations and other groups can further coordinate their legislative efforts. The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs monitors and lobbies regarding religious liberty issues.[6] Many denominational offices participate in Interfaith Impact for Justice and Peace. Individuals can become members of Interfaith Impact and receive their legislative updates and issue analysis pieces.[7] Bread for the World has focused on the issue of hunger,

[6] The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, 200 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002. Their publication, *Report from the Capital,* is available for a modest subscription fee.

[7] Interfaith Impact for Justice and Peace, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002.

including the aggravation of hunger through excessive military spending. Every year Bread for the World has an offering of letters to Congress about a specific hunger issue.[8]

Human rights are intimately bound up with peace concerns. Amnesty International is the major human rights organization, focused particularly on prisoners of conscience, torture, and the death penalty.[9] A peace group in the congregation could participate in the "Voices for Freedom" campaign, which provides quarterly information packets about human-rights abuses with religious dimensions. A variation of the advocacy action table could be set up for church members to write letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience or other victims of state-sponsored human-rights violations. Letters written to foreign government officials should be very polite, even if the abuses being raised are horrible. The purpose of the letters is to let the government know that their actions are known and being watched and perhaps to prompt the release of the prisoner or a change in policy. Venting anger in a letter may feel good to the writer, but it can put political prisoners at greater risk. The coordinated, respectful, and persistent campaigns of Amnesty International have led to freedom for many captives and the raising of the visibility of human rights on the global agenda.

[8] Bread for the World, 1100 Wayne Ave., Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301-608-2400; fax: 301-608-2401).

[9] Amnesty International, 304 West 58th St., New York, NY 10019.

Chapter 13

Nonviolent Direct Action

One of the major forms of peacemaking is to take nonviolent direct action as a witness against evil and as a form of resistance to it. There are many forms of nonviolent direct action, from prophetic statements to silent vigils, from marches to blockades with one's own body, from boycotts to walkouts.[1] Sometimes individuals from churches engage in nonviolent direct action as members of peace or solidarity organizations. Sometimes a group within the church, particularly a peacemakers group, will participate in an action together. Depending on the issue and the degree of peace involvement in the whole congregation, general involvement of church members in a nonviolent action may be openly encouraged.

These actions are some of the most controversial steps a church can take in peacemaking. In fact, it is seldom in this country that many churches have engaged in nonviolent campaigns. One of the main exceptions was the civil rights movement, in which black churches played a central role in resistance to segregationist oppression, joined at times by church leaders from white congregations. Much of the resistance to U.S. policy in Central America in the

[1]See my book *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1994) for a thorough examination of the biblical, historical, and contemporary practice of nonviolent direct action.

1980s was centered in the churches, with the Pledge of Resistance, a national nonviolent resistance movement, being born out of a religious leaders' retreat. However, churches that have significant participation in such forms of peacemaking tend to be small in number. Though few, the actions of these congregations are magnified by the nature and boldness of their witness.

Because of the controversial nature of these types of action, any engagement by church leaders or a congregational peace group in nonviolent direct action should be processed through appropriate decision-making channels in the church. What people do as private citizens should not be a matter of church decision; individuals need to be free to act on their own convictions. However, the formal involvement of a congregation in supporting a campaign, taking a stand on an issue, or providing training or administrative support for a nonviolent action should be handled with integrity within the normal process and accountability structures. This may take longer than some of the leading congregational activists might like, but the feeling of support and the affirmation of actions of conscience will be well worth the time spent.

Demonstrations

One of the most common forms of nonviolent action is a demonstration, often a march or a vigil. The demonstration is usually organized by a coalition of groups in the community who share a common concern. If a pastor or other church member is involved in a local issue network, she or he should be encouraged to share plans for upcoming actions with other members of the congregation. There is no substitute for getting to know leaders in the community who can work on various issues and mobilize people to respond to the issues in a timely fashion. Out of such networks the calls to action are generated.

When a demonstration is scheduled on a matter of concern to the congregation, it can be announced either publicly at the worship service or in the bulletin, or the peacemakers group within the congregation can contact people who they know are interested. Some churches will have the group from their congregation carry a banner identifying the church so that their presence is made more visible to the public. Demonstrations that may draw fringe groups

seeking to increase their visibility may have heightened credibility if the more "mainstream" participants, such as church groups, are bold in making their presence known.

Christian involvement can also provide a stabilizing influence, steadying people when tensions run high. In the strike by the United Mine Workers of America against the Pittston Coal Company, the miners made an intentional and extensive effort to maintain a nonviolent protest. A local Baptist pastor and his wife, Harry and Lucille Whitaker, of the Straight Hollow Free Will Baptist Church in Dante, Virginia, became pastors on the picket lines. They led the singing, organized support, and played a major role in preventing violence when emotions reached high levels. Miners who were Sunday school teachers, deacons, and bivocational pastors were leaders in convincing other miners to abandon the use of dangerous jackrocks (welded bent nails) to block company trucks and instead hold nonviolent sit-ins across the coalfield roads.[2]

A local church can sponsor its own demonstration. The members of the Broadman Baptist Church in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, were appalled by a Doritos Chips commercial in which an elderly woman was run over by a steamroller while the bag of chips she was munching was rescued. In response to the blatant ageism and violence of the commercial, Pastor Jeff Scott devised a demonstration in which someone dressed as a senior citizen drove a steamroller over Frito-Lay products. Frito-Lay, the maker of Doritos, pulled the commercial, apologized, and donated twenty cases of chips to a Cuyahoga Falls charity.[3]

Sometimes community crises will demand some sort of public witness by the churches and other people of goodwill in the area. A racial murder in Boston prompted church and community leaders to call for a march of protest and community unity through the neighborhood that had been the scene of much racial tension. Blacks and whites marched together, calling for neighborhood harmony. Many of the local pastors from their pulpits invited parishioners to bear witness to the reconciliation mandate of Christ

[2] Kim Christman and Stan Dotson, "Beyond Jackrocks and Prayer," *The Baptist Peacemaker*, Spring 1990, 6-7.

[3] "Protest by Baptist Church Leads Frito-Lay to Apologize for Ad," *The Baptist Peacemaker*, Winter 1993, 17.

and march together as church delegations.

Participating in public witness regarding issues affecting the community gives new meaning for church members to the teaching of Jesus, "let your light shine before others" (Matthew 5:16). Faith and everyday life are seen to be interrelated. What goes on in the sanctuary and what goes on in the streets are connected, for both the sanctuary and the street are places for proclaiming and demonstrating the reign of God.

That kind of understanding of the relationship between the church and the streets drove Al Gallmon, pastor of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., to lead weekly demonstrations in the nation's capital. He organized protests every Thursday at noon in front of the National Rifle Association building for four months to urge the passage of gun-control legislation. The killings going on in the streets of his community required a witness beyond the church building.

> *My thrust here was that the church needs to be more involved with the community in which it finds itself... What I wanted to do was expand our walls, to be a church without walls. The community is our church. The problems of the community are the problems of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church.*
>
> *—Al Gallmon, Washington, D.C.*[4]

Prophetic Witness

Nonviolent action is not just demonstrating in the streets. Speaking boldly to the powers-that-be over matters that are destructive to human life and dignity is another form of nonviolent witness. Sometimes a clear, prophetic statement needs to be made to a community from religious leaders. As people who explicitly state a concern for ethics and morality, pastors and their congregations have a responsibility to carry out the prophetic ministry of speaking truth to political leaders and to the community as a whole. Churches can have a visible impact by speaking out publicly on moral issues that affect the peace of the community.

When Arizona refused to recognize the national observance of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, two Phoenix pastors lead the fight to

[4]Christie Goodman, "Profile of Rev. Al Gallmon," *Baptist Peacemaker*, Fall 1993, 11.

recognize the holiday. Warren Stewart of First Institutional Baptist Church and Paul Eppinger of First Baptist Church gave strong and visible leadership in the three-year campaign that finally led to legislation to observe the holiday. As a black man and a white man working together on the project, they modeled the "beloved community" ideal of Dr. King that they were calling the Arizona community to remember and honor.

A local church can even take its message to major world powers. When a U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit between President Reagan and Soviet President Gorbachev in 1985 was looking like a mere "getting acquainted" meeting, the members of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, sent a telegram to each leader, encouraging them in the quest to halt the arms race and offering their prayers on behalf of the negotiations. Tom Walsh, chair of the Deacon Board, said, "There are some people who think that this is political, but as Christians it is important to us to encourage peace."[5]

Civil Disobedience

Civil disobedience is a type of nonviolent direct action in which participants engage in illegal activities as a form of political protest against what they view as greater evils. People committing these acts of protest consider that they are engaged in "holy obedience" to a higher morality than that codified in a specific human law or expressed in a particular governmental policy. Such illegal activities might be holding a sit-in at a public place, blocking access to buildings or roadways or military facilities, trespassing on private property (such as entering the grounds of a weapons plant to pray), or refusing to disperse when ordered to by a police officer. This form of nonviolent action has been practiced for a long time, with many people of good conscience having been arrested and spent time in jail.

Most decisions to commit civil disobedience are made by individuals. However, most individuals making such a commitment do so within the context of a support group or affinity group. Occasionally, a decision needs to come before a church body. I was pastor

[5]"Prescott Memorial Adds Voice for Peace," *PeaceWork*, September 1985, 5.

of the Dorchester Temple Baptist Church in Boston during the mid-1980s and was active in the Pledge of Resistance. When an action of civil disobedience was planned, I presented my conviction that I should join in that action to the Board of Deacons. After long discussion it was decided that I was not acting on behalf of the church or in any official capacity, but that I should be fully supported to act out of my conscience. Another church member joined me in getting arrested in a major action in which people from a number of Boston area congregations participated. A dozen members from the church's peacemaking group participated in a support demonstration.

"The government of the richest, most powerful nation in the world is blocking, attacking, and destroying the life aspirations of our people." These words, from the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua, came to the attention of our American Baptist church in 1985. How would we respond to the voice of our brothers and sisters in Christ who were crying out for help from the wilderness of a war-ravaged land?

After focused prayer, discussion, and reflection, our church-based peace group decided that we would join a movement of religious and secular organizations committing civil disobedience in an effort to bring national attention to the situation in Nicaragua. We hoped our collective action would change U.S. policy in the region.

Civil disobedience? But I wasn't raised to break the law! Yet, as a community of believers, we were convinced that God would have us break a human law in order to obey God's law of justice and righteousness. Only in a community of faith, with the Word of God before us and the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, could I be committed to an action so contrary to my upbringing. Nine years later I am certain that God led us to do the right thing at the right time.

—Katherine Vignoli, Milton, Massachusetts

For people who affirm the importance of the individual conscience, acts of civil disobedience need to be recognized as highly committed works of conscience, whether or not one agrees with the position or the tactics of the one engaged in the action. The congregation may not endorse the action, but the members should affirm

acting out of the fullness of our ethical convictions as followers of Christ. As one deacon expressed to me during the discussion of civil disobedience, "I don't agree with you, but I will stick up till the end in this church for your right to do what your conscience tells you to do." That deacon was a good church leader and a good Baptist!

Nonviolent actions, especially when people are engaged in civil disobedience, should not be taken lightly. Tensions may be high, and participants need to be well disciplined. That discipline comes through preparation and training. Experienced peace groups always provide nonviolence training prior to their actions, mandating it for those who will risk arrest. Churches can host training events or let the peace groups hold the training in the church facility. During the civil rights movement, marchers were trained in the churches prior to hitting the streets. They had to sign a "commitment card" about their physical and verbal conduct as well as their spiritual preparation.[6] During Pledge of Resistance actions, many local churches opened their doors for day-long training sessions, often with the congregational peace group as hosts and beneficiaries of the training themselves.

[6] The text of the "commitment card" used in the Birmingham movement is found in Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 63-64.

Chapter 14

Ministry to the Victims

One form of peacemaking is the direct ministry to the victims of violence, whether the violence takes place in the home, in the streets, or on battlefields. Wars, both intimate and international, create victims. All of us are victims to some extent; we all bear the cost of living in a violent society and world. But many people pay a disproportionate price for that violence. Besides the dead are those who are wounded and maimed, those who are psychologically scarred, those who are displaced, those who are orphaned and widowed or who have lost their children.

Sometimes aiding people who are victims of violence is an expression of Christian compassion that flows fairly easily from the heart of our faith. But at other times the victims are pawns in power games between combatants, and people who would help them get drawn into the conflict as well. Ministry to the victims can be very costly to a church that practices peacemaking by helping others with a neighborly, good-Samaritan type of love.

This chapter explores some ways that victims of violence can be served by a congregation. Some of these ways are more familiar and traditional forms of ministry. Other ways are riskier and hence not employed as frequently and are only appropriate in certain historical contexts. All draw inspiration from the teachings of Jesus:

> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me (Matthew 25:35-36).

As churches have cared for the victims of war and violence, they have cared for the Christ who suffers along with them.

From Charitable to Prophetic Relief Assistance

Each war or riot takes its toll of human suffering, sometimes expressed in a flood of refugees seeking safety from the shooting and bombing. A host of Christian agencies have been formed to distribute aid to refugees and other victims of large-scale violence. Each denomination has a channel for receiving funds from local churches and passing them on to ecumenical agencies or local churches involved in direct service to the victims of whatever catastrophe has occurred.[1] When a particular conflict is of concern to a congregation, a special offering can be taken to provide aid to the victims of that conflict. Posters to promote the offering can be made using a collage of newsmagazine photos and newspaper headlines. This will help tie congregants' faith actions to current events.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union brought about a different kind of crisis. In 1991 the confusion in the economy of the disintegrating Soviet Union led to a severe need for food assistance. The Leesburg Baptist Church in Virginia met Rev. Sergei Rebrov of the Moscow Baptist Church while he was visiting in the United States. They arranged with him to send a DC-10 filled with 132,000 pounds of canned goods, dried cereals, beans, and tinned meats for distribution through the Moscow Baptist Church. They contacted the Baptist World Alliance, which, through its hunger fund BWAid, was able to provide assistance for transportation costs. The arrival of the plane in Moscow

[1]For American Baptists, funds can be sent through the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), designated for the particular area of concern. OGHS contributions can be sent to the regional offices of the American Baptist Churches. Also Baptist World Aid distributes relief assistance through various Baptist-related aid providers. Donations can be sent through BWAid, 6733 Curran St., McLean, VA 22101-3804.

on January 5, in time for Eastern Christmas, marked a special expression of solidarity between Christians of once-enemy nations during a time of great need.

Often there are conflicts for which we may take an offering to help the victims, but the policy followed by our national government may be exacerbating the situation. This happened in Central America in the 1980s, when U.S. military aid supported wars that left over a million displaced persons from Nicaragua and El Salvador. On the other side of the Atlantic, Angolan refugees fled the violence of U.S.-sponsored insurgent forces in their country. Offerings for refugee assistance can be accompanied by calls and letters to Congress and the president calling for policy changes. Similar calls can be made requesting increases in government assistance to refugee populations, such as those fleeing Rwanda and Bosnia in 1994.

Pastors for Peace, initiated by Rev. Lucius Walker from Brooklyn, New York, combines relief work and advocacy with a prophetic challenge to government policy. The first Pastors for Peace caravan took place around Christmas 1988, as nineteen trucks carrying one hundred twenty tons of food, medical supplies, and tools went from U.S. churches and synagogues to Managua. Many local churches worked to support members who drove on the caravan, finding trucks or buses to be donated and filled with supplies and raising the funds for undertaking the trip. All along the route, as the trucks converged on San Antonio, Texas, from various points across the country, the *"caravanistas"* stopped at churches to make presentations and gather more aid.

Since the initial Pastors for Peace caravan, numerous caravans of aid have been delivered to churches and relief groups in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

The Central Baptist Church Task Force on Nicaragua was looking for a new project in the winter of 1990 when I offered to drive a Pastors for Peace truck to Nicaragua. I explained that PFP was a national activist group that already had sent four truck caravans to Central America with much needed supplies—and left the trucks there for community groups to use. "Terrific!" was the response. This would be a way we could help the downtrodden. Also, since Nicaragua had been

devastated by the U.S.-sponsored contra raiders, our truck could be a vehicle of atonement! The task force jumped at it. Al Robinson, its chairperson, quickly organized a church-wide "Treasures Sale," which netted two thousand dollars for the project. Within four months we had collected another ten thousand dollars from various sources in the region—an ecumenical venture—and our project was firmly funded. With the help of PFP we had soon purchased a used Mercedes twelve-ton box truck and began filling it with such things as educational supplies, tools, fabric, flour, motor oil, and an X-ray machine for the Baptist hospital in Managua. I had never driven anything that big—the truck's size seemed formidable—but driving in that summer caravan to Nicaragua was one of the most exciting, spiritually rewarding events of my life.

—Gordon Bennett, Paoli, Pennsylvania

In 1993 the first caravan to Cuba violated the U.S. economic embargo to bring aid to Cuban people suffering under the desperate conditions caused by their isolation. Confrontations with U.S. customs officials at the Mexican border prompted Pastors for Peace drivers to engage in a hunger strike until all the impounded vehicles and supplies were released. A later caravan included over seventy vehicles and 145 tons of aid, to be distributed through the Cuban Council of Churches.

A local congregation can participate in this activist form of relief by contacting Pastors for Peace.[2] Find a vehicle that someone is willing to donate, such as a used pickup truck, van, delivery truck, or even a semi truck and trailer—or raise the funds for its purchase. Obviously, if a large truck is donated, a competent driver will be needed to take the vehicle to its destination. Then use the truck with its side painted or festooned with a banner or posters as an advertising sign in front of the church to raise the goods to fill the truck. Often donations of used materials from dental offices, medical offices, schools, and so on can turn waste into blessing. Ask church members to think creatively about how they might contribute supplies for the caravan. One retiring church member donated his optometrical equipment to outfit an office in Cuba. When U.S.

[2] Contact Pastors for Peace, 331 17th Ave., SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414 (612-378-0062).

professionals are updating their equipment, their old equipment is often far better than any that has been seen in many parts of the world. Tangible projects such as filling a truck can inspire greater participation and creativity than mere financial contributions to a general relief offering.

When the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America raised funds to buy a "food bus" to assist the agricultural program of the Polytechnic University of Nicaragua, one local congregation, First Baptist of Granville, Ohio, coordinated the logistics. Two families from the church drove the bus from Ohio to Nicaragua.

> *Our church helped the Baptist Peace Fellowship raise money to buy the bus. It was delivered to us, sat for a week in our yard, and was driven by our drivers from church to church picking up supplies for Nicaragua. In the end we had more than the bus could hold. For a week our congregation draped everything up the walls and across the floor in the front of the sanctuary. All that was our church's vestment for worship on Sunday morning. After the sermon, while the organ played hymns, everybody took pieces to their seats and boxed them. Then we had Communion, laying hands on the heads of those driving to Nicaragua, taking bread and cup, and taking a rag. Out we went in procession to the bus. With our rags and hoses we . . . baptized it. As it drove off, we sang "Amazing Grace."*
>
> *—George Williamson, Granville, Ohio*

The banner that welcomed the "food bus" at the university still hangs in the sanctuary at the Granville First Baptist Church.

Refugee Resettlement

Mary and Joseph had to flee with the infant Jesus from the political violence of Herod, becoming refugees in Egypt. Today many refugees flee war, political terror, and famine. In 1994 the world refugee population had swollen to twenty million even before the record-breaking outpouring of refugees from Rwanda. Each individual and family has a story and a need. Many can never go back home. Welcoming the stranger who has fled violence is a peacemaking ministry in which the world's problems intimately enter our communities.

National and international organizations are engaged in refugee

resettlement, helping process refugees coming from various refugee camps and immigrant sites. They handle the work through the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). But the pressing need is for sponsors for the refugee families. That is where a local congregation comes in. Several major Protestant denominations have joined together with Church World Service to resettle refugees. A church interested in participating in this ministry should contact their denominational office responsible for refugees.[3] They will have resources and counsel to help a congregation prepare for and carry out the sponsorship of incoming refugees.

First, set up a sponsorship committee. The committee members should be people who are willing to take the time to assist the refugee family in getting settled in their new land, adjusting to the culture, and moving toward self-sufficiency. In particular, the main responsibilities will be to help the breadwinner find suitable employment and provide decent and safe housing until the family can sustain themselves from their own income. Additionally, the committee can assist in signing refugees up for English classes, orienting them to shopping, using the public transit, getting a Social Security card, enrolling the children in school, and understanding the health-care system, job requirements, and paycheck deductions.

Relationships are important. New arrivals can be invited to church and may want to attend. But some refugees are from other churches or other faiths. Gracious assistance in helping them connect with their own religious community should also be offered. Sponsorship, however, is not a contract. Once their lives are somewhat stabilized, the refugees may decide to move to be closer to relatives or friends. Respecting their decisions is a part of acknowledging their dignity and worth. Though their lives have been uprooted and they may appear "slow" because they don't speak English, refugees are normal people who have their own needs and interests and ideas of how to meet them. Be open to receive and learn from them as well. The sooner the newcomers can contribute to their new community in some way, the healthier they will feel.

The First Baptist Church of Syracuse/Jamesville in New York

[3] For American Baptists, contact the Office of Direct Human Services, Immigration and Refugee Services, National Ministries, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482 (610-768-2425; fax: 610-768-2470).

received an emergency call from another local church to cosponsor a nine-member Haitian family fleeing the chaos of Haiti following the overthrow of President Aristide. Pastor Scott Kavenagh took the request to the missions committee, and then it was presented to the church. A senior member spoke out: "If that were my family, I would want to know there is a church to let them in." The vote to become cosponsors was unanimous and met with resounding applause. Once the family arrived, the church provided housing and health care and helped set up English lessons, since none of the family members spoke English. Involvement in the lives of these refugees has been energizing to the congregation and expanded their concept of ministry.

Providing Sanctuary

The refugee who is undocumented and unrecognized as a refugee by the U.S. government requires a special form of ministry. During the 1980s a stream of people fled from the wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Nicaraguan refugees were often granted asylum because the U.S. government was opposed to the Sandinista ruling party and was even financing the war against them. However, the United States supported the regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala, even though the military and associated death squads spread terror among the civilian population. Though the United Nations recognized those who fled as refugees, the U.S. government did not. About 98 percent of those applying for asylum were denied,[4] even though family members had been killed and those fleeing had received death threats from the death squads.

The sanctuary movement began as church people encountered some of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees seeking assistance. One pastor in San Diego found a Salvadoran man hiding in the church shrubbery while a border patrol helicopter circled with a searchlight. The pastor took the man in and later gave him a ride to Los Angeles to connect with friends. Many similar encounters stirred the consciences of church folks to act in opposition to their government on behalf of people fleeing for their lives. The South Side Presbyterian Church of Tucson became the first U.S. congregation

[4] U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, as reported in "INS Claims Sucess but Others Disagree," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 June 1989, 14.

to make a public declaration of sanctuary to Central American refugees.

Drawing on the biblical image of "cities of refuge" (Numbers 35:9-15), over three hundred more churches and synagogues declared themselves "sanctuary congregations," places of refuge for those fleeing political violence. Over fifty thousand Americans of various faiths were involved in the national sanctuary movement in one form or another. Churches opened apartments in their facilities for the refugees to live in and provided speaking engagements, often with the refugee masked. They provided transportation to other sanctuary sites on a new "underground railroad" until the refugees could safely reach Canada, where they were freely welcomed.

Declaring a church a sanctuary congregation was no easy decision. The process usually involved prayerful study of both the situation in Central America and the stringent federal penalties for harboring "illegal aliens." The congregation would follow its decision-making procedures and come out with a public declaration, which would usually be sent to the local press, the INS, and the U.S. attorney general. Then a sanctuary committee would be formed to carry on the coordinating work of mobilizing the congregation to provide for the needs of the refugees and to connect with the sanctuary network. Housing, food, clothing, education, and employment needed to be arranged, as well as arrangements to receive the refugees.

Sanctuary was provided publicly not only to meet the needs of Central Americans fleeing violence; it was also a form of public education and political protest. Refugees who took sanctuary in the churches and synagogues did so with a commitment to help in publicizing the conditions from which they were fleeing, and churches hosted public events where those in sanctuary would tell their stories and experiences of repression and flight.

It was Friday afternoon of Memorial Day weekend when two or three cars from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) pulled up on a street corner of our city and took Alejandro away from his wife. The Gómez family was being given sanctuary by several churches and one synagogue in our community. Over the months of their stay, they had spoken in

many churches about the suffering in El Salvador, and the news of the sanctuary movement had been well publicized by the religious communities. The Gómezes were away from their home in the church on that Friday, and somehow the INS knew it and seized Alejandro.

The news of Alejandro's capture spread rapidly through the media. For several hours his wife had no idea where he was, a painful experience for a woman from El Salvador where people disappear forever. Finally we learned that he was sixty miles away and that bail was set at fifty thousand dollars cash. It was a holiday weekend; banks were closed.

The synagogue worshipers were informed at Friday night services. People dropped in off the street to one of the churches, bringing money and interest-free loans. In less than twenty-four hours, fifty thousand dollars in cash had been raised, and Alejandro was returned to his family. It was a great day!

—Dick Myers, West Henrietta, New York

Providing sanctuary was risky. Churches were vandalized, and government informants infiltrated church meetings and Bible studies. Even more serious steps were taken against churches in Arizona, where sanctuary workers—including a pastor, two priests, and a nun—were arrested and tried. Seven people were convicted, but the sanctuary movement continued. Finally the Congress passed legislation granting extended departure status to Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees, validating the moral stand taken by the sanctuary congregations.

When we began this journey, I think we began it a little bit naïvely, not realizing the profound spiritual journey upon which we were embarking. When we received these people into our midst and began to love them and receive love from them, and these were our sisters and brothers in Christ from Central America, we began to be attached in a way we never expected before. It brought to us a sense of community, to what I can imagine the disciples must have experienced with Christ, a real sense of family, of community in Christ. This was extremely rewarding for us.

For us then we began to see we were starting to scratch the surface of what it means to take up the cross. The churches in Central America have taken up the cross, and we were just

beginning. We've experienced things like rocks through our windows. At Christmastime we had two barbells thrown through stained-glass windows. We've had our church graffitied. We've had informants in our church. So we have felt this in a very, very small way. We've begun to feel what it means when you take up the gospel, and take it seriously, but I feel we're still scratching the surface.

—Barbara Heibert-Crepe, Seattle, Washington[5]

With the ebbing of the refugee crisis in Central America, sanctuary has faded as a movement, but there continue to be situations in which providing refuge for victims of war may be appropriate. During the Persian Gulf crisis and war, some churches, such as University Baptist in Seattle and Riverside Church in New York City, declared themselves sanctuaries for conscientious objectors refusing the call-up of the National Guard. Many Hispanic and Haitian churches have provided assistance to illegal immigrants who are often fleeing political violence, but they maintain a low profile because of the vulnerability of many members in their congregations to INS investigation. Such churches help undocumented refugees find safety, shelter, jobs, and a new beginning. Whatever the legal status of these victims of violence, Christian compassion compels these congregations to act on their behalf with tangible and protective assistance.

Caring for the Victims among Us

There are victims of violence who are not far away and who have not fled here from distant lands. These victims are in our own congregations and neighborhoods. Some are victims of violence in homes. Some are victims of violence in our streets and communities. Some are victims of wars who have come home but not found peace. Peacemaking ministry needs to be extended to them as well.

Statistics about family violence suggest that there are victims of physical and sexual abuse in every congregation as well as offenders. A church can be a safe place for a victim if it is a place where

[5]Quoted in "Sanctuary: An Exercise in Faith," a video produced by the Office of Communications, American Baptist Churches, 1986.

[6]An excellent introductory resource is Melissa A. Miller's *Family Violence: The Compassionate Church Responds* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1994).

truth can be told, abuse acknowledged and named, and where love is available to support the journey of healing.[6] A supportive atmosphere can be fostered by giving attention to biblical stories of abuse and inviting survivors of abuse to tell their stories. This can be done in a worship service on that theme or in a Bible study or church school class. Recognize the need to tell stories and process anger and grief. Justice is a fundamental concern because the abuse occurs out of an unjust power relationship. Abuse can provide an excellent example of the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Community services related to domestic violence can be publicized and supported. Local shelters for battered women and families can be recipients of drives for food, furniture, and volunteers. Volunteers in shelters can be honored for their work. Support groups can be formed for victims and survivors of incest or rape or domestic violence. Riverside Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., formed a group called Survivors of Incest Anonymous, a small group for women only.

As a survivor of incestuous rape, I have found it is important to have a support system in place—a safe place—as I work through my pain, anger, guilt, and all of the unhealthy behaviors I learned as a child to survive in a dysfunctional and abusive environment.

I have found a safe haven in my church and the weekly incest support group I attend. The understanding and support of the pastor and congregation allows me to heal . . . to grow in Christ; and as a result I am able to give back to others. I organized a weekly, twelve-step support group for survivors of incest and/or rape at my church. I am committed to this ministry and to those persons who are still in pain and/or denial. I am committed to tell my story so that others will know that healing is possible through the church . . . through twelve-step support groups. I believe that only after we come to understand that a "power" greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity can we come to name who our "Higher Power" is. And for me today, I can name my "Higher Power." I call him Jesus . . . I call him Lord . . . I call him God!

It started out of my own needs. In the meetings, you are encouraged to show support. There is a lot of love shown—and a lot of healing takes place. The first night I started the group,

I was in the basement of the church with my brochures and candles lit, waiting. No one showed up. I was back the next week. Soon there were three women.

—Amerah Shabazz, Washington, D.C.

The support group for survivors of rape and incest at Riverside now often has twenty women at the weekly meetings.

Five women at the First Baptist Church in Nashua, New Hampshire, came together seeking help for healing as survivors of childhood incest and rape. They sponsored a workshop to which over a hundred people came. Many were referred to counselors for help in healing, and a special service of healing and reconciliation was held at the end of the workshop. The program had such an impact that area churches and the state prison asked them to hold workshops as well.

With sexual abuse in churches exploding periodically on the front pages of newspapers, a congregation would be wise to take a thorough look at the issue and develop a policy about how to handle the various forms of abuse if they should arise, including sexual abuse or harassment by clergy. A policy can be developed that states the basic values and commitments of the church and a procedure to handle accusations, make decisions, and process feelings. Training can also be provided to teachers in the church school or in child-care programs for how to spot abuse and make appropriate interventions.[7] Even naming abuse publicly can be a major step forward. Sermons or Bible studies on the experiences of Hagar, Bathsheba, Tamar, of Jephthah sacrificing his daughter, and the Levite offering his daughter to be raped and murdered by a mob all can speak to the horror that many people, mostly women and children, endure daily (see Genesis 16 and 21, 2 Samuel 11, 2 Samuel 13, Judges 11, and Judges 19 respectively).

Support groups can be formed for other victims as well. Veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress can benefit from support groups along with others victims of violence.

I was not a loud protester of the Vietnam War but did work against it. It was more than fifteen years after the war that I

[7] For a brief outline of what a teacher can do, see Merry L. Rader, "Child Abuse: What Every Church School Teacher Should Know," *Baptist Leader*, June 1987, 15-16.

thought, "If you're such a peacemaker, why not make peace with the veterans?" It occurred to me that I had never welcomed the warriors home. I began attending a men's support group at the local Veterans' Outreach Center. It was an interesting mix of war veterans and war protester, and difficult for all of us. I quickly learned that some of the biggest victims of war are those who fight in it—that the enemy is not the Vietnamese, not the U.S. military, but war itself. As the veterans and I tried to hear one another, we experienced anger, self-righteousness, fear, and hurt. But slowly, over the months, we discovered that we belong together and found new respect and love for each other. I am very grateful to these men, and one woman, who are now my friends.

—Dick Myers, West Henrietta, New York

When a particular support group is not available, a Bible study or prayer group may play that role for an individual. In one church an adult church school class had developed close bonds among the members. One veteran was having trouble sleeping. As he talked with the teacher, he related an incident troubling him from his experience in the military. He later told it to the whole class with intense feeling and detail—an incident in which he had killed two people in the line of duty. Though he had done his job as a soldier well, he was still scarred by fear and revulsion over the event. The night after that class, the veteran had his first good sleep in many weeks.

When a group has grown close enough for members to risk sharing their deepest pains, the group can help with healing by listening, loving, not trying to fix, but just being present. A congregation can be taught through sermons, leadership training, and in study groups how to listen supportively to people sharing painful stories. Not just pastors but all the members of the congregation have the capacity to be friends to whom a person can turn for compassion and understanding. Deeper assistance may require a referral to the pastor or to counselors, but even with all the best therapy, a network of caring friends is still vital to the healing and recovery process.

Chapter 15

Peacemaking in the Community

Peace issues are not matters just for other countries or for Washington D.C. The need for peacemaking can be as near as the doorstep of the church. The two major causes of war in the world today are racial/ethnic prejudice and economic injustice—problems that are deeply ingrained in our whole society in the United States. Problems with racism or economic disparity at their root, or a combination of the two, create some of the most volatile conflicts in our cities, towns, and rural communities. In a country whose founding included the near extermination of one race and the enslavement of another, we are heirs of a complex mess of power relationships, stereotypes, myths, and fears that undermine the peace of our communities.

But as Christian churches we are also bearers and witnesses of the gospel of reconciliation. The Christ who has broken down the dividing wall between us has also given us the ministry of reconciliation (Ephesians 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 5:18). The church can be a place in which we see reconciliation operate, though our track record of ethnic separation shows we are more swayed by the customs of the divided world than the power of the reconciling gospel. Our shortcomings should not make us timid in the cause of

community peacemaking, however. Rather we can move ahead with a humble leadership, confessional in style. As Christians we do not have ethnic and economic issues all worked out, but we do know of God's ideal, of the vision of community where people from every tongue, tribe, and nation come together as one, and where justice flows down like a mighty river (see Revelation 7:9-10 and Amos 5:24).

Peacemaking in the local community requires integrity because the church will be seen by its neighbors over a long period of time. Taking a public stand will have some risk because the issues of local conflicts are often more intensely felt than the issues that might send us on a march to the Capitol. Our toughest peacemaking ministry, and our most strategic, is in our own hometown.

Racial and Ethnic Peacemaking

Racial and ethnic divides are a perennial problem that have taken a particularly hideous and demonic form in the twentieth century. From Hitler's slaughter of the Jews in Nazi-held territories to the tribal massacres in Rwanda, we have seen a global orgy of ethnic violence. Long memories fuel the fires in places like the former Yugoslavia, where evils committed centuries ago become the excuses for the commission of new acts of evil. The survivors of one horror become the perpetrators of another. But these evils that shock us across the globe can be found close at home, too.

Racism and ethnic prejudice have a long history in the United States. Native peoples were often thought of as "savages" and nonpersons and victimized by wars of extermination, forced relocations, and confinement to barren reservations. African peoples were enslaved, legally labeled three-fifths of a person, and even in an emancipated state were stigmatized by institutionalized racism. Immigrants have been targets for their "otherness" in successive waves: "Irish need not apply" signs, Italians tried in prejudicial hysteria, Jews excluded from civic organizations and their synagogues vandalized, Chinese hired to work in the sweatshops and lay the railroads, Japanese interred in concentration camps, Arabs firebombed to vent rage against Saddam Hussein, and on and on. No U.S. community is free of racism and its ugly, volatile spirit. If the gospel has any validity in this country and in this moment of

history, it must work at the point of racial and ethnic conflict.

Many local churches are laboring hard for reconciliation in their communities. Establishing partner relationships between ethnically different congregations has been a frequent form of reconciliation ministry. (Partner relationships are fully discussed in chapter 8.) However, the motive for entering into a partner-church relationship can sometimes be misguided. Our conscience can prod us to recognize the sin in our prejudice and its most vicious manifestations. Then, out of a feeling of guilt and wanting to do what is right, a congregation can try to build a relationship with a different ethnic congregation and perhaps participate in some unity activity. The good-intentioned temptation is to look for a warm feeling of acceptance that eases the guilt but not go to the deeper levels, where the roots of conflict lie. This is particularly true of white churches. Injustice is always involved, and reconciliation that does not also include justice building is not the genuine article. Becoming a partner in establishing justice is essential for the healing of reconciliation to take place. A church that wants to be a local peacemaker will have to get involved in the sometimes murky and costly issues of justice as well.

Some basic peacemaking activities include participating in community coalitions for unity or protesting racial/ethnic violence. After a racial murder in Boston, members of many churches joined with others from the community in a march through the affected neighborhood, a type of action that has been done in many cities as an affirmation of the need for interracial harmony. When campaigns are initiated to make a communal antiracism witness, the local church can commit its pastoral leaders to participate and take an active leadership role. The church board or council can affirm the movement or coalition with a vote and public statement.

Special symbolic actions can be taken. Although these are done within the church, they also send a message to the larger community. In the midst of racial tension and violence between African Americans and Korean Americans in New York City, the predominately black Antioch Baptist Church in Queens hosted the ordination of Korean-born Dr. Chong Lee. Dr. Lee pastors the New Jerusalem Baptist Church, a Korean American congregation, which at the time had no permanent location. By hosting the ordination service, the

members of Antioch Baptist Church made a witness of reconciliation to their community that received much publicity in the volatile setting of the time. Dr. Marvin Bentley, pastor at Antioch, said that by ordaining Dr. Lee the congregation "was creating a bridge that we hope is not only symbolic enough but realistic enough to overwhelm our superficial differences."[1]

Sometimes the racial violence requires more than protests or unity services. In the neighborhood of Dorchester Temple Baptist Church in Boston, there was a firebombing of a three-story house of black families on a predominately white street. The tension had been building in the community over racial turf issues, and this triple-decker was becoming a focal point for conflict. Neighbors set up an around-the-clock watch on the front and back porches of the house throughout the weekend. Church members organized to take shifts on the watch. With extensive institutional and neighborhood support, the situation was defused. It would have been easy to just depend on the police to solve the crime or protect the community, but racial violence requires a risky community-wide response. Major figures and institutions in the community, including the churches, need to affirm together that racial violence will not be tolerated or overlooked.

When there is racial tension in the community, the local church can be the meeting place for people in the community to discuss their concerns, to talk to each other and to local officials. If the church is connected to the ministerial and community organization networks, the word can be passed on that the building is always available in a time of crisis for people to meet to work on conflict resolution. This will provide a place for the issues to be dealt with as well as give the church a reputation of being involved in working for the betterment of the community.

Overcoming the racial and ethnic divides need not be so dramatic. Much of institutionalized racism is masked by the mundane matters of local government and administration. Sometimes the urban/suburban divide, with attendant economic disparities, provides a geographic and jurisdictional barrier that supports racism. State legislatures are often controlled by white majorities from the

[1]American Baptist News Service, "Korean Native Ordained in Black Baptist Church," 30 April 1991.

suburbs and small towns that feel fear and disdain toward the urban centers. Churches concerned with racial peacemaking need to become advocates for justice in both state and metropolitan areas. The people of Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, put their money where their justice convictions were. Besides participating in urban/suburban church partnership projects, the church voluntarily "taxed" itself by sending an offering to the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department for summer recreation projects that were being hurt by state funding cuts. By showing the connection between those living in the suburbs and those in the inner city, this congregation gave witness to God's call not just for acts of mercy but for structural justice in society.

Education events can be undertaken both for the congregation and the community at large. "Undoing Racism" seminars can be hosted. A forum can be set up with local political and police officials, community organizers, educators, and clergy to discuss neighborhood peacemaking. Study groups can be set up to deal with racism.[2] Shedrick Banks, pastor of Christ the Savior Baptist Church in Kansas City, Kansas, was concerned about the rising violence and racial separation in his community. He brought together leaders from a number of other congregations in the area to hold an "Interfaith Harmony Workshop."

> *The "Interfaith Harmony Workshop," held in March 1994, had some very positive results. It brought together persons from different cultures, races, religious faiths, and denominations of the same faith to explore ways to overcome the barriers that exist among the various groups. As a result of this workshop, a number of persons made commitments to establish cross-cultural and cross-racial relationships. A planning committee was formed to plan other workshops and activities for the purpose of breaking down barriers that prevent persons of different groups from building good relationships.*
>
> *In October 1994 the planning committee held a second conference with workshops. This event resulted in action planning*

[2]"Can't We All Just Get Along" is an excellent short guide for a study group on racial/ethnic peacemaking. It is produced by the Study Circle Resource Center, P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258 (203-928-2616). The center also has a good discussion guide entitled "Racism and Race Relations."

in small groups as well as additional commitments to establish partnerships between persons of different groups for the purpose of developing better relationships. The small group action plans are being reviewed to determine priorities for implementation.

—Shedrick Banks, Kansas City, Kansas

During election campaigns candidates can be invited to speak to church members and community voters on issues of overcoming racism, community safety, and unity. The church sends a message that these concerns are on our agenda and we expect our elected officials to deal constructively with them.

Celebrations can be held to lift up and revel in the diversity of the human family. Racism is undone not only by confronting the evil but by building constructive relationships that respect the uniqueness and dignity of each person and culture. Many churches are used to holding church fairs. The fairs could be turned into ethnic diversity festivals, highlighting ethnic crafts and foods and art forms. An arts festival could be organized by one congregation or by a cluster of churches, utilizing a range of indigenous art forms, including sculpture, painting, poetry, dance, and music. The Dorchester Temple Baptist Church is a multicultural congregation, and many times at Thanksgiving they hold an International Harvest Festival, with members bringing dishes from their own ethnic heritage. Unity services can bring a variety of cultures and languages into the worship experience. Even music in another language can be sung if the songs are simple and the lyrics are short. Learning a song in another language can be a way of affirming the validity of that tongue as a vehicle for God's praise.

A church that is serious about racial/ethnic peacemaking will need both a clear vision of what Martin Luther King, Jr., called "the beloved community"[3] and a strong dose of perseverance. Racism has marred life on the North American continent for over five hundred years, so a brief program, a unity project, or a religious commission will not end the problem. Reconciliation is a lifelong work, but one that goes to the core of being faithful to the gospel. The apostle Paul spent most of his ministry hammering out reconciliation

[3] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 54.

between Jews and Gentiles in the early church, seeing the ways they treated each other within the congregation as a reflection directly on the power of the death of Christ.[4] The work of racial/ethnic peacemaking—within the congregation itself and then spilling out into the surrounding community—is a central witness to the work that God is about. When people experience a bit of "the beloved community" that embraces all people, there is a sign of a hopeful future right in the home church. Dorchester Temple, with its dozen or so ethnic groups, sometimes closes its Communion services by having everyone hold hands in a vast circle around the sanctuary. As they sing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" and can see people around the circle from every continent of the globe, they get just a taste of God's future in the midst of a racially torn city.

Overcoming Violence in the Community

Violence has been increasing in the 1980s and 1990s across the United States, in every kind of community. This is not just a concern for law enforcement; it is a profoundly spiritual issue that the churches need to address as such. That the United States has become one of the most violent societies on the earth, with staggeringly high murder rates, says something important about who we are as a society.

Overcoming violence begins not by decrying the rising tide of crime around us but by examining our values and our source of security. We can reflect on Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 31:1, and Hosea 10:13-14. The questions of who we trust and where we turn for security are key to finding a constructive way to deal with violence. The violence in the streets is just one manifestation of a systemic violence that is rooted in our history, our mythology, our foreign policy, our entertainment, our definitions of manhood (and, passively, of womanhood), and even our understanding of how God works in the world. The symptoms of the problem will not significantly abate until the disease itself is brought under control. The theological and spiritual work done in preaching and teaching will

[4] See the discussion in Galatians 2, in which the prejudice that drove a wedge between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians and caused them to eat separately showed that they had not fully grasped the theological scope of what it meant to die with Christ and have Christ live in them.

help the local congregation to be a place where alternative understandings of trust, security, human worth, and nonviolence can be built and expanded.[5]

But the antiviolence work must move to the streets if it is to have any telling effect in society. Many congregations are courageously leaving their sanctuaries to make their presence known in the community. Twenty-five churches and synagogues in the Oakland Coalition of Congregations decided to hold weekly vigils at the sites of recent murders in their city. The vigils included songs, prayers, Scripture readings, words of inspiration, and readings of the names of persons killed in Oakland during the year. Signs and flyers were made to explain to passersby what the vigils were about. After a year of the weekly vigils, the project was shifted to monthly vigils, with an effort to recruit a greater range of participation from other members of the community. The coalition also organized violence-prevention training sessions and community forums.

The Hyde Park Union Church on Chicago's South Side has been one of the leading groups in "Vigil against Violence," a grassroots antiviolence movement developed from churches and community organizations.

> *Among the means we employ are candlelight vigils, held on the first Sunday of each month, at which we gather and read the names of those killed on the South Side of Chicago during each year. We have been reading names since 1993. Last year we read 451 names; thus far this year we have read 353.*
>
> *We are trying to help one another—and our society—to wake up. To wake up to levels of violence that are intolerable yet are tolerated. To wake up to the ways violence and fear poison our relations, corrupt our institutions, and diminish our lives. To wake up to the reality that the carnage on our streets is not a local phenomenon but rather a product of larger social and economic patterns in which we are all implicated to the extent that we do not actively resist them.*
>
> *The vigils are occasions for making visible our resistance to these patterns of violence. They are occasions for private*

[5] The Study Circles Resource Center's discussion guide "Violence in Our Communities" provides a good resource for community conversation and learning about the issue. See footnote 2 for their address.

reflection, and they provide a vehicle for building relationships among individuals and groups seeking to develop nonviolent strategies for recovering our communities from violence.

Our vigils have embraced a day-care center that was under seige, a high school where a shooting took place, a public park reclaimed from gangs. We work all day on Saturdays to restore public spaces lost to violence and decay, cleaning up vacant lots, planting gardens, creating parks. We take very locally Isaiah's calling that we are to be "repairers of the breech, restorers of the streets to dwell in."

—Susan B. W. Johnson, Chicago, Illinois

The campaign has a sophisticated view of violence. As one of their flyers states: "Among the powerful, there is much talk these days about violence. There is not, however, a comparable eagerness to talk about power. We condemn individual acts of violence. At the same time, we call to account the public and private institutions that contribute to the conditions of powerlessness out of which these violent acts arise."[6]

Six Philadelphia churches in high-traffic areas near their neighborhood schools have established safe corridors to protect children traveling to and from school. Led by Rev. Bill Moore of Tenth Memorial Baptist Church, the churches have organized volunteers with bright orange caps, sweatshirts, and T-shirts to visibly and peacefully secure intersections along the way and escort children through the area. They are endeavoring to provide a violence- and drug-free zone for the children. After one year of the safe corridor projects, the schools reported that attendance and academic achievement had increased due to the added feeling of safety for the children.

Members of the Dorchester Temple Baptist Church, in conjunction with Bruce Wall Ministries, have participated in Operation Urban Liberation. This project is designed to create a ten-block area around the church that is drug free, violence free, gang free, and crime free. For three nights the copastors of the church, many church members, and people from the community camped out in the Roberts Park a block from the church. They sang, prayed, and occasionally slept through the night. For three nights there was no

[6] "Vigil Against Violence" flyer for Sunday, 6 March 1994, vigil.

drug dealing or violence in the park. When one youth cynically said that the drug dealers would be back, Rev. Bruce Wall responded, "Then we'll come back to pray and chase them away."[7]

We won the fight with the drug dealers at Roberts Park with faith and sleeping bags. We want to serve as examples of what a church can do in and with a neighborhood.
—Bruce Wall, Boston, Massachusetts

Because so much of the violence has been tied to the prevalence of guns in the society, a number of churches have hosted gun turn-in events in cooperation with local police departments. A Washington, D.C., gun turn-in day involving fourteen churches saw more than three hundred firearms and five hundred pounds of ammunition turned in to police. When Charles Worthy, pastor of the Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church, heard how two women from a United Methodist Church in Ashton, Maryland, had organized a gun turn-in in their community, he mobilized other congregations in conjunction with the Washington Urban League and the police. At National Baptist Memorial Church the father of a young girl victimized by a drive-by shooting brought in a toy water pistol because it was all he could find in the house and he wanted to support the campaign. Church members advertised the gun turn-in in their bulletins and by posting notices in the neighborhood.

Local churches have taken on the ministry of teaching conflict resolution in partnership with local schools. The New York Baptist Peace Fellowship established Project HOPE, using a curriculum on conflict resolution written by Don DeMott.[8] Many local churches sponsored in-service trainings for their local schools. Members of the churches were recruited to be volunteers in the schools to help teachers and students in conflict resolution. Teachers and volunteers have been trained in many of the Rochester elementary schools as well as in school districts across New York state.

We know how to reverse the epidemic of violence that is destroying our society. Teaching children nonviolent conflict

[7] Peter Gelzinis, "Shepherds Sing to Take Back the Park," *Boston Sunday Herald,* 11 September 1994.

[8] *Project HOPE Curriculum* and *Conflict Resolution for the Elementary School* by Donald W. DeMott is available from the New York Baptist Peace Fellowship, 4408 East Groveland Rd., Geneseo, NY 14454.

resolution has been shown to reduce violent behavior by 75 to 80 percent when the training is begun in the earliest elementary grades and continued on through high school. But it will take a persistent, nagging voice of conscience—spelled c-h-u-r-c-h—to persuade school boards to provide training and materials, colleges to change their teacher-training requirements, administrators to adapt their curricula, and teachers to learn to use new techniques in their classrooms.

—Don DeMott, Geneseo, New York

Prayer and education about community violence can strengthen people's commitment to antiviolence efforts and bring people into greater unity to resist the forces tearing apart neighborhoods. The First Baptist Church of Fall River, Massachusetts, hosted an interfaith forum and service of prayer to end violence in the schools. Students, educators, community leaders, and church members discussed the root issues and prayed together for help, understanding, justice, and vision.

Hate crimes are a particular type of violence also on the rise in the United States. Whether directed at blacks, Jews, Asians, or gays and lesbians, hate crimes are not sporadic instances of violence but are encouraged by hate organizations, many of them with white supremacy dogmas, which are growing in number.[9] When a hate group organizes an event or when racist, anti-Semitic, or homophobic vandalism or violence takes place in the community, it is important that local church leaders do not try to ignore the issue. Direct confrontations can serve to promote the hate group, so positive counter-events can often prove more effective in making a clear statement of the values held by the majority in the community. Public witness in some form is vital. If people are victimized, pastors can offer pastoral care and the services of the church. If a church, synagogue, or mosque is vandalized, a public donation can be offered to help with repairs. Prayer services or unity rallies can be held involving an interfaith coalition of congregations. To counter hate crimes it is best not to wait for the crisis but to already

[9] *When Hate Groups Come to Town: A Handbook of Effective Community Responses,* published by the Center for Democratic Renewal (P.O. Box 50469, Atlanta, GA 30302-0469), is a thorough resource on hate groups, various forms of prejudice, and community activities to counter them.

have established communication and organizational ties with various ethnic churches, synagogues, and mosques in the community.

The winter of 1993-94 saw the people and congregations of Billings, Montana, respond creatively to a surge of hate crimes.[10] During Hanukkah, windows in which Jewish families displayed menorahs were smashed, and many Jewish families received threatening phone calls. In one instance, a cinder block was hurled through the bedroom window of a five-year-old boy. Police advised the Jews to take down their menorahs and put bullet-proof glass and bars in their windows, but instead churches and community groups encouraged their members to show support for the local Jewish families by hanging pictures in their windows. Copies of a picture of a menorah were put in church bulletins and printed in color in the *Billings Gazette*, and soon thousands of homes, churches, and businesses were displaying menorahs. The white supremacists smashed windows in many homes and in some churches, but the community resolve was only strengthened. Thousands more menorahs went up, and finally the vandalism stopped as the hate groups were unable to intimidate the determined citizens of Billings.

Gang Summits and the Church As Sanctuary

While violence among urban youth has been rapidly escalating, a countermovement had developed among gang members to have urban "summits" to try to stop the killing. The National Urban Peace and Justice Summit held in Kansas City in the spring of 1993[11] pulled together a number of gang peace movements from across the country with the support of religious leaders. In the year following the national summit, a number of city-wide summits were held—in Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, San Francisco, Cleveland, San Antonio, and Pittsburgh.

Though the truce movement was initiated by gang leaders themselves, the involvement of community and church leaders and local congregations was crucial. Church buildings became the neutral ground where rival gangs could meet to hammer out peace agree-

[10] "A Nonviolent Response to Hate Crime," *Nonviolent Sanctions*, newsletter of the Albert Einstein Institution, Summer 1994, 3.

[11] See the August 1993 issue of *Sojourners* for a comprehensive report on the summit, including many interviews with summit participants.

ments and connect to community leaders who wanted to help the youth end their violence. The original summit was held at St. Mark's Church and St. Stephen Baptist Church in Kansas City. Mt. Olivet Baptist Church hosted the Minneapolis/St. Paul summit, and three churches in Pittsburgh were joint hosts of the summit in that city, including Victory Baptist, pastored by John Cook.

> *Our church was invited to become involved in the 1994 Gang Peace Summit by mothers who had been wounded by gang violence in the worst way: loss of a child. Our involvement helped us come to an understanding of peace in the way Martin Luther King, Jr., came to understand it, in that you can't separate inner peace from domestic peace or domestic peace from world peace. King realized that to be an advocate for peace south of the Mason-Dixon Line, you had to be an advocate of peace in South Vietnam. Being advocates of peace in the 'hood has made us stronger advocates for peace in the heart, home, and everywhere.*
>
> *—John Cook, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

Peacemaking churches in areas with gang activity can and have been partners with the youth in the quest for peace on the streets. The gang members seemed to respect the spirituality of the churches as all of the summits have been events filled with a lot of prayer and calling on God for help.

Churches who want to participate in gang peace initiatives can take a number of roles. It is important for churches to be clear about what they can do and what role is appropriate for them to play. For those with outreach ministries to street youth involved with gangs, they can tell about the gang summits and encourage exploration of truces. Some pastors have been able to mediate conflicts because of the relationships they have built with the youth, cooling fires before shooting starts. Out of such relationships the idea of a summit can be formed and developed. A church where a pastor or lay leader has played a significant role in gang outreach could be a host site. Some communities have developed their summits out of their own networks.

---

[12] For more information about "The Things That Make for Peace," contact either the Environmental and Economic Justice Program, National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 572, New York, NY 10115 (212-870-2385) or Sojourners, 2401 15th St., NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202-328-8842).

If there is a need for outside advice or contact with experienced summit leaders, a church can contact people in "The Things That Make for Peace," an antiviolence action network for churches.[12]

For a church hosting a summit, a few particular issues are worthy of mention. Security is a major issue, as most of the youth have weapons. Clear relationships must be set up with the police, but it is best if the security arrangements can be handled with a local group or company. For gang youth, police are the enemy, and often police use of force has triggered greater disruptions. All weapons have to be excluded from the church during a summit, including church grounds like parking lots. Metal detectors and searches are a must, not just to remove weapons but to create an atmosphere of safety which will allow the youth to move toward conflict resolution. Transportation will be needed to safely bring youth through rival gang territory to the summit site. Buses can be hired with security personnel on board.

Churches who don't have any outreach to gang youth but want to be supportive can play a very important peacemaking role, too. Many of the gang summits have created a lot of controversy because of fear or a desire to punish the youth rather than redeem them. Church leaders are often needed for advocacy. When the Pittsburgh City Council voted 4-4 on a resolution to condemn the summit, clergy organized and sent the mayor a letter of support for the summit with over seventy clergy signatures. The Minneapolis/St. Paul summit ran into police and municipal government hostility when a police officer was killed by a gang member. James Battle, pastor of Mt. Olivet Baptist Church and chair of the black clergy association, insisted on the need for the summit and committed his church to be the host. Suburban and downtown churches and peace groups can join publicly in advocacy on behalf of gang peace efforts. Politicians are unlikely to support summits because of their political vulnerability in being perceived as "coddling criminals." But church leaders who raise a moral voice in the community that says transformation is possible can provide strong support and prophetic advocacy on behalf of youth trying to find a way out of the cycle of violence. When the summit is held, those church leaders should come both to show their support and to connect with the youth directly. This can be a

learning time for church folks and gang members.

Gang summits are in some ways like revivals. They are emotionally intense; they can help participants gain new insights and come to new commitments. But when they are over, the reality of the streets—racism, poverty, joblessness, and so on—sets in again. To maintain the momentum for peace, it is critical that follow-up programs connected to churches and community groups be established. Economic development projects need to be set up. The New Salem Baptist Church in Minneapolis has established Operation Resurrection, which works in housing rehabilitation, training gang youth in construction skills so they can be preparing for the job market even as they improve their community. Church members also help youth with their legal problems, since most have criminal records and parole limitations that can make it very difficult to start reconstructing their lives. Break and Build was set up with the support of the pastors of St. Stephen Baptist Church and St. Mark's Church in Kansas City to continue to address the issues identified at the national gang summit. Groups have been set up with youth, church, and appropriate community (including city government) participants to work on issues such as community peace, police brutality, and economic development. Pastors in Boston have initiated a ten-point plan that calls on churches to adopt a neighborhood gang as they work on a variety of youth ministry and antiviolence efforts.[13]

The Church and Peace at the Job Site

Conflict can erupt, sometimes with violence, between workers and management or owners. A community can be torn apart as the conflict in a major industry in town deepens and affects the livelihood and well-being of both employees' families and businesspeople who depend on them as customers. In a small town or city dominated by one company, any strike or lockout can have extremely traumatic and long-lasting effects on the community, including the local churches. The battle lines may even be drawn between people gathered at the Communion table or rail.

A peacemaking church can pursue a course of advocacy and solidarity with those perceived as suffering from injustice, or it can

[13] See "10 Point Plan to Mobilize the Churches," *Sojourners*, February/March 1994, 13.

play a mediating role. The advocate congregation takes sides, perhaps not on the particular points of a labor contract, but on the basic principles of fair pay, justice, security, and safety. During the United Mine Workers strike against the Pittston Coal Company, many church folks were actively involved. Harry and Lucille Whitaker, from the Straight Hollow Free Will Baptist Church in Dante, Virginia, were "pastors of the picket lines."[14] They encouraged the maintenance of a nonviolent discipline, brought meals, and led singing, including old gospel hymns. St. Mark's Episcopal Church in St. Paul, Virginia, owned 206 shares of Pittston stock. They sent forty-two miners and family members as their proxies to the annual meeting of Pittston's stockholders in Greenwich, Connecticut, to speak directly to the directors and stockholders about the injustices they were experiencing. Local clergy in Greenwich hosted the group and purchased a full-page ad in the *Greenwich Times* calling on Pittston to mend its ways. Some congregations have participated in supportive actions for the United Farm Workers, promoting boycotts or joining in marches or leafleting supermarkets.

I see supporting labor unions, whether they be coal miners on strike four years ago or cannery workers on strike this week, as at best only half of the job of Christian peace-and-justice-making. Three of our church folks work at the cannery, which produces cans for the local beer company (another story entirely!). When one of these workers comes over and talks about the company trying to take away health insurance, and when his son is physically handicapped and requires a great deal of medical attention, there's not much to do as a pastor except offer to support them in the strike in whatever way we can. To me, that's simply trying to "exalt every valley."

The other half of Christian peace-and-justice-making is "laying low every mountain." When it comes to labor strife, this takes place in those churches where the owners and stockholders of these companies sit in the pews each week. The way I read the Bible, reconciliation between rich and poor cannot take place until the poor are "filled" and the rich are "emptied." My job as pastor of a working-class church, even

[14] Kim Christman and Stan Dotson, "Beyond Jackrocks and Prayer," *Baptist Peacemaker*, Spring 1990, 6-7.

in a community hostile to unions, is easy and requires little courage. The prophetic ministry needs to be taking place in the opulent sanctuaries of power.

—Stan Dotson, Stoneville, North Carolina

The Northern Baptist Church in West Frankfort, Illinois, was distressed over the rising hostility in their community as a long coal strike and a utility company lockout eroded the local economy and put stress on most of the families in town. The contract negotiations were being handled a long way off, but the pain was being severely felt in West Frankfort.

As two prolonged and bitter labor disputes continued to drive more and more of our area's families into economic and emotional crises, our church faithfully stepped forward to organize a special service that became known as "United in Prayer." Our goal was to reach outside of our small American Baptist congregation into the homes and workplaces of our community to unite union officials, negotiators, government leaders, area clergy, and families in crisis. Together, we shared our pain and frustration and ministered to each other through words and hope and faith. But most importantly, we prayed together.

Why did our church take such a risk to step forward into an arena so charged with animosity and divisiveness? First, we were armed with the knowledge that God honors a community united in prayer. Only God could provide the wisdom, power, and grace to resolve these labor disputes in a just and equitable manner. Secondly, the community, particularly the unchurched, needs to hear the message that Jesus Christ and his church is indeed concerned about every aspect of life, including the struggles to earn a fair and honest livelihood for oneself and his or her family. To our church, these were difficult and trying times, but they were also a unique opportunity to share a part of the gospel that is too often ignored.

—Bill Lewis, West Frankfort, Illinois

The Northern Baptist Church in West Frankfort demonstrated that peace and justice are God's concerns—concerns that are as close as our own workplaces and hometowns.

Chapter 16

Communicating the Story

"If a tree falls in the forest with no one around, does it make a sound?" So goes the philosopher's question. Unless we "make a sound" by communicating our peacemaking stories clearly, others may raise serious questions about the value of our work. Genuine peacemaking often involves communities of people, and for those people to be moved to change, effective communication needs to take place.

Communication needs to be effective both within and beyond the congregation. The members of the congregation need to communicate with one another in order to pass on information, educate, and handle disagreements constructively. They also often need to communicate to the larger community. The circle of awareness about the issues of concern can be dramatically expanded by knowledgeable use of the media. The impact of your peacemaking can in some cases take a quantum leap as you get the word out beyond the confines of your congregation.

Communicating within the Congregation

To communicate effectively about the peacemaking ministries taking place within the congregation, two assumptions need to be embraced. First is a belief that the work of peacemaking is a story worthy to be told. This may not be a problem in all congregations, but in some congregations people interested in peace concerns may

feel outnumbered and even marginalized by those involved in what are perceived as more traditional and basic ministries, such as evangelism, music, Christian education, and so on. If this is the case, leaders need to affirm the calling and labor of the peacemakers and give them proper place among the span of ministries in the congregation.

The second assumption can be more problematic. Peacemakers should assume that there are people interested in what they are doing besides those in the activist group. Sometimes activists become self-righteous and take upon themselves a "mantle of prophetic superiority." They may characterize those who don't show up at their events as uncommitted and uncaring or perhaps politically compromised. Such operating attitudes will prove divisive and destructive, contrary to the professed desire to find the ways of peace. If instead the peacemakers assume that more people care than show up at their sponsored events, communication will come across with a positive slant. It will be informational and invitational rather than accusatory and guilt-inducing.

Concentric circles of interest and ability are normal. The center circle is those who are deeply involved, investing their time and energy into the peace activities, attending meetings, planning actions, and standing up to speak on the issues. The next circle is those who are willing to come out for educational events or perhaps join in vigils and demonstrations. Many people, because of jobs, children, or other pressing issues in their personal lives, cannot get involved in the center of action. But they still care deeply and may do something if given the right opportunity at the right time. Communication is vital to engage them in peace activities at the times they do have available. The activist group could even make a list of such people so that, in addition to regular church communications, they can personally invite them to participate at pivotal events.

Some people simply have other interests, callings, and ministries that take most of their time. They may be unable or uninterested in attending events or actions but are open to listening, learning, and supporting your efforts with prayers and modest contributions. Communication that accepts them for who they are and accepts their own journey will help educate and sometimes pique their curiosity to investigate the issues further.

Then there are those who are opposed in varying degrees, includ-

ing those who see the peacemaking work of the activists as having nothing to do with the work of Christ and as perhaps even antithetical to the gospel. Communication with them is still important, since you are all members of the same congregation. Try to be gracious and open, telling your story, inviting people to come and discover for themselves what is going on. Nobody starts as an activist, and some of us were even hostile to peacemaking at some point in our lives. Good communication is what keeps all the concentric circles of commitment and interest linked together and, in some cases, assists people to move from one circle into the next.

So which forms of communication in the church are most helpful? Obviously there are the traditional ways to communicate about church concerns: bulletins, newsletters, bulletin boards. These should be used as often as appropriate. Write short news reports of the peacemaking actions for the newsletter. If someone is involved in an upcoming event, announce it in the bulletin. If a peace group or a missions committee handles social concerns, see if you can obtain bulletin board space on which to post articles, photos, announcements, artwork, and so on. If the bulletin board is regularly changed and colorfully arranged, it will catch people's attention.

During services some congregations have announcements, prayer requests, or expressions of thanksgiving. These are opportunities to communicate peace concerns and events and to invite others to participate through their attendance at events and prayer for those engaged in the peacemaking ministry.

Telling the Story through the Media

There are two assumptions related to effectively getting the story out to the larger community outside your church. The first is that you are newsworthy. When you engage in an action on a peace concern, it is newsworthy. You may need to look at the best angle for presenting the story, which will vary depending on the nature of the media and the particular interest the news outlet has. But as a member of the community and part of a visible institution, your actions and activities are of interest.

The second assumption is that you are a help to the media when you tell them your story. Reporters usually welcome calls that suggest stories. You are not a bother or intrusion; rather you are an aid in their efforts to find good stories.

To paraphrase [F. Scott] Fitzgerald, the media are not like you and me. You don't just talk to journalists. You don't talk at all unless you're comfortable with all the possible uses they might make of your statement. If you do talk, better say it in your own sound bites and quotable quotes or they'll translate it into theirs. We took a journalist along [on a trip to Iraq] to help us not talk too much and to say what we meant in their language. I learned from him to make up my sentences as soon as I saw the pencils and microphones coming. Before I went on a people-to-people peace mission to Iraq just before the Gulf War, the press published quotes from federal officials to the effect that the proposed visit was in violation of law. It wasn't, but the quote made for an arresting heading and shifted the focus from the debate on the morality of war. But a good journalist, with a passion for making plain what is there, is a gift from God. Without a good journalist the prophet is silent and the people are blind.

—George Williamson, Granville, Ohio

A general step toward working with the media is to identify the local media outlets that may be interested in what you are doing. The print media include the daily papers (including the Sunday edition); suburban or town papers; specialty presses (minority or religious papers); and even newsletters of professional groups, unions, and alumni organizations to which church members may belong. Radio and television have news, religious programming, and talks shows. Local college stations may also be open and interested. Find out whom you should contact at the paper or station. To whom should you send a news release? Addresses and phone numbers can be obtained at the local library or in the Yellow Pages.

If your community has a local paper, cultivate relationships with some of the reporters or the religion editor. Ask how they make their decisions about whether or not to cover a story. You can sometimes write a feature article or an editorial about your concerns or actions. Think through what the human-interest side of your story is for the paper and then present that clearly and up front.

If your church is involved in a peace story—for example, a member is traveling to a war zone or you are holding a vigil against violence in your community—begin by writing a press release before the event. Use church stationery if possible and double-space

the text, using simple yet interesting sentences. In the first paragraph, give the gist of the story, answering the questions *who, what, when, where,* and *why.* Reporters are swamped with papers and press releases, so your release will only be skimmed. Therefore, you must be straightforward and to the point from the very beginning. Use the second paragraph to give more details; then give your name and phone number as the contact.

Follow up with a polite phone call to see if the reporter, editor, or producer wants to pick up the story. Don't be discouraged or put off if your story is turned down. Keep trying other outlets, or ask if another reporter might be more available to do the story. Always be polite and say thank-you. You are building a relationship that is as important as the particular story with which you are immediately involved.

It's been exciting for me to come home and tell about what I have seen in places like Nicaragua. Telling the story to people who might have distorted ideas about "the enemy" is a good discipline. Sometimes we peacemakers are content to preach to the choir. So I have written several articles about peace for the op-ed page of our area newspaper. It reaches some 150,000 people. This makes me think hard about what I really saw, what I believe, and how I can write about it positively.

There are a lot of people who are hungry for the peace perspective. Many peacemakers feel alone because the loudest voices preach intimidation. They're glad to hear what I have to say. I try to state my point simply, tell what I saw, and be open about how I feel. I find that when I speak about the struggles of my own heart and tell of things that aren't regularly reported, lovers of peace learn that they aren't alone at all. One of my articles resulted in a new member for our church. Is this peacemaking or evangelism? Both!

—Richard Myers, West Henrietta, New York

Getting your story into the media takes an event that perhaps only fifty people might experience directly and brings it to the attention of tens or even hundreds of thousands of people. If you are seeking to raise awareness of an issue or change the policy of the government, opportunities to speak through the media need to be used competently.[1]

[1]See chapter 10 for some additional ideas and resources on relating to the media.

Chapter 17

Conflict in the Congregation

A Christian peacemaker's concern for peace may not lie only in the scope of the wide world or local community. Sometimes conflict erupts within the local church, and though Christians claim to follow the Prince of Peace, they can be very nasty toward one another in their conflicts. In fact, the topic of peace itself can be cause for war within the congregation! Some of the most vociferous attacks within a church can occur over peace issues, which can seem shocking to those who naïvely assume that followers of Jesus would be against war or killing. Even the peacemakers can be strident in their approach toward more conservative members of the congregation out of passion for the injustice and suffering they see. The mentality that prompted slaughter in the name of faith during the Crusades can rear up within a church, surprising those who are accustomed to worshiping together in unity. To use a military image, it has been said that the army of the Lord is the only army in the world that shoots its wounded. Pastoral and lay casualties of "congregational wars" attest to how poorly many churches handle conflict.

So what is a church to do with its own internal conflicts, particularly when peace is the cause of the war? Many good books and resources on conflict management and conflict resolution are avail-

able for the local church.[1] In this chapter the focus will be on those conflicts rooted particularly in disagreements regarding the place of peacemaking in Christian discipleship and in specific historical issues that peacemakers address.

Why "Peace" Starts Wars in Church

Sometimes conflict over peace concerns arises because the seriousness with which the peacemakers apply their faith challenges the complacency of those whose faith is at best a comfort for life's troubles and at worst a mere habit. Following Jesus always stirs matters up, as Jesus himself said:

> Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law (Luke 12:51-53).

Taking Jesus seriously raises questions about our fundamental accountability to God regarding all we do. For those who would rather structure their lives around themselves or values of patriotism, American power, or wealth, the thorough-going commitment to Christ stands in sharp contrast to their loyalties. Following Jesus is a call to leave behind their old commitments and involvements and begin a new journey, even as the Galilean fishermen were called to leave their nets and follow Jesus into an unspecified future (Mark 1:16-20). The call to a deeper discipleship can prompt a defensiveness that seeks to avoid change and sidestep God's claim on our lives.

Often, however, the conflict is between people who all take Jesus seriously but have very different theological assumptions governing how they see Jesus, the Bible, and the issues at stake. Sincere people of faith with deep commitments to following God's Word

[1]Some of the best books on church conflict are Speed Leas and Paul Kittlaus, *Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); Speed B. Leas, *Moving Your Church Through Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1985); Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985); G. Douglas Lewis, *Resolving Church Conflicts: A Case Study Approach for Local Congregations* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

can come out on opposite sides of issues on economic justice, ordination of women, homosexuality, and participation in war. Within one's own framework for understanding the Bible and what Jesus is all about, it may seem obvious that one's own position is correct. We cannot understand how anyone who is serious about the Christian faith could see it otherwise. But the depth of the conflict and the intense feelings connected to it are the direct result of the integrity of the faith commitment of each side.

The spirit of judgmentalism can creep into both sides of the conflict. The "peace" camp may assume that those opposed to them are more committed to the United States as a nation and to its governing ideology than to the liberating gospel of Jesus. Those who oppose the involvements or positions of the peace group may accuse the peacemakers of being too worldly and not caring for lost souls or of confusing liberal or radical political philosophies with the gospel. Such demeaning judgments blind one to the integrity and genuineness of the sister or brother who disagrees. To work toward a resolution or at least a respectful understanding of one another, we must get to the point where we can at least listen with some appreciation to those on the other side.

A Basis for Dialogue

A foundational principle may need to be explicitly presented, discussed, and affirmed: the freedom of the individual conscience. This principle, which grew out of the experience of Baptists, Quakers, and other religious minority groups being persecuted in England and the American colonies, has come to stand as a major shaping value in American freedom. Those who had experienced religious persecution enshrined the rights of free speech and religion and the separation of church and state in the U.S. Bill of Rights. In noncreedal churches the freedom of the individual conscience guided by the Scriptures and enlightened by the Holy Spirit is still a foundational belief. Explicitly lifting up that principle and discussing its practical implications can move the conflict out of a context of rancor into one of practicing our historic faith.

Healthy dialogue on peace issues requires a weaving together of acceptance and challenge. We need to accept those sisters and brothers who think differently than we do. We don't need to accept

their viewpoints and opinions in order to accept them as persons of faith. But at the same time we need to lovingly challenge each other to grow as disciples of Jesus, to stretch our faith and action so that we can fulfill God's calling as completely as possible. Besides, we may be surprised at what we can learn from those with whom we are in conflict if we respectfully listen to them.

A component of the process for handling conflict that builds acceptance and respect is the telling of stories. Each person has a journey through life that affects the beliefs and values he or she holds. Telling stories humanizes the opponent, and we can discover things about those we worship with that we may never have known. Ask members to talk about formative events in their lives regarding war or peace. In one church where members shared their stories, some told of their own combat experiences, which had different affects on different people. Others told of losing loved ones to violence or the fear and helplessness they felt. One story about the death of a brother stunned the people who thought they knew this person so well. When we hear the shaping experiences, particularly the pains and traumas, our compassion is drawn out. We listen to those with differing positions with greater understanding and warmth.

I was in a support group for people with loved ones involved in the Gulf War. My brother-in-law was killed in an army accident during the deployment phase. Others in the group had children in the Persian Gulf, plus two military chaplains were with us. We had a variety of positions regarding the war, from totally supporting the U.S. administration's policy to active resistance to the war. But as we shared our stories, there was a respect and understanding that formed a community in spite of our disagreements.

Shortly after the Gulf War, one pastor in our network mentioned the following experience to me in a phone conversation. He had been speaking out against the war and had become the target of antagonism from church members—one man in particular. During a personal conversation with this man, my friend discovered a very important insight. The church member's support of the Gulf War had little do to with political ideology or foreign policy analysis. Rather his support was stated something like this: "Pastor, my boy has been deployed

with other troops to Saudi Arabia. There's a fair chance he will see action. He might even be killed. Declaring the war to be unjust will take away the meaning and significance of his death, should it occur. Please don't do that to me."

The pastor did not change his conviction because of this conversation. But he did learn some very important things. He was now much better equipped to speak to the issue in a way that was pastorally sensitive and informed.

—Ken Sehested, Memphis, Tennessee

Aside from the particulars of the conflict, the church can encourage healthy forms of discussion of the issues through providing a course on conflict resolution. This could include a Bible study on conflict resolution, with application made to the specific issues before the church.[2] Charles R. McCollough's *Resolving Conflict with Justice and Peace*[3] is an excellent resource for helping congregations work through their differences regarding issues so as to move forward as a church. The last part of the book is a training course for a congregation in handling conflicts related to matters of justice and peace. The course can be run for various lengths of time: from five to twenty-seven hours. Getting a group to participate for a full course would be a lot of work, but in the end you would have a significant core of people with the understanding and skills to work together to amicably resolve conflicts—which can be applied to all areas of church life.

Framing the Dialogue

Part of the discussion in the church can be identifying where the common ground lies regarding the issue at hand. What are the agreed-on values and commitments? Are there shared concerns and possible shared actions? Pacifists and those who belief in just-war ethics can often discern major areas of commonality if they take the

[2] Possible resources are my *Bible Study Guide on Conflict Resolution* (available from National Ministries, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482) and Lynn and Juanita Buzzard and Laury Eck, *Readiness for Reconciliation: A Biblical Guide* (available from the Christian Legal Society, 4208 Evergreen Lane, Suite 222, Annandale, VA 22003).

[3] Charles R. McCollough, *Resolving Conflict with Justice and Peace* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1991).

time to work together to discuss their positions and the particulars of the given issue. There may be disagreement on issues of whether military intervention is justified in a particular situation, but there may be agreement to support relief to refugees, study the history of the crisis, and open up interfaith dialogue in the community if the conflict has religious dimensions. The cause of peace may be advanced more by working on the points of common ground than trying to win a debate.

But debate can also be healthy. A church can encourage the acceptance of differences and the building of constructive dialogue by becoming a place where the issues can be respectfully discussed. A forum could be held on the controversial issue, with advocates from various perspectives presenting their positions and responding to questions and comments from the audience. Such a forum could be open to the community as well as church members. When the U.S. Congress scheduled debate on the war with Iraq, parallel local forums on the issue could have been held, with an advocacy table set up for people to expand the forum by expressing their views to their congressional delegates.

During the height of the war in Nicaragua, many missionaries were opposed to U.S. policy, which brought the issues of the war into the center of church life. The West Shore Baptist Church in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, encouraged open, respectful dialogue in the church. They provided space in the church newsletter for two members to write pro and con editorials regarding U.S. involvement in the war. They regularly published opposing editorials on various issues, fostering an atmosphere of openness and honest discussion. Rather than being afraid of conflict, this church found constructive channels in which to express their disagreements so that members could be educated and make up their own minds.

A pastor needs to be sensitive to what the congregation needs and expects regarding preaching on issues. Many churches want their pastor to speak prophetically on timely concerns. Other churches have members who view any discussion on peace or justice issues as "political" and not "spiritual." Where the preaching may spark conflict, the pastor needs to beware of turning the opportunity to preach into a "bully pulpit." Members will resent being beat up from the pulpit. The pastor can best preach on

controversial matters by taking more constructive and inviting approaches to make the conflict a positive experience for the church. The sermon can be one that poses contemporary problems, raises awareness of biblical perspectives and experiences, then raises questions of faithfulness in the current context. Stories rather than dogma offer more opportunity for those who disagree to enter into what is being said. Sermon "talk-back" groups keep the sermon from being the final word on the matter. This is harder for churches with an 11:00 A.M. worship service if people are eager to get home for lunch, but even a thirty- or forty-five-minute informal discussion with coffee and tea can provide congregants a time to respond with their concerns, questions, and comments. There is likely to be less resentment and less underground discontent if members can respond openly to the sermon and enter into discussion with the pastor and others in the church.

In Whose Name?

Church members can be very tolerant about what members do on their own outside of church. You can go on a march, get arrested, refuse to pay your war taxes, visit the "enemy," vote for whomever you want—as long as you don't link what you do with the church. Of course, it is different for pastors. Pastors will tend to be linked to their congregations in public events whether they want to be or not, particularly if they are involved in a controversial issue. Where privacy cannot be maintained, the pastor is a public figure identified with the church.

In controversial situations the question may arise concerning what the pastor can do, what a group within the church can do, what the church as a whole can do—and in whose name to do it. Given the potential divisiveness of any controversial issue (which many peace issues obviously are), it is critical for the congregation to have clear processes for deciding what can be said in the name of the church and for handling complaints regarding actions or comments made in the church's name. Lines of accountability and responsibility need to be clear. Then when the church or groups within the church speak or act publicly, there will be greater strength in what they do because of their stronger congregational base.

In a demonstration, for example, should the members of the

church carry generic signs, or should they take a banner that proclaims their church identity? Should the banner say "First Church for Peace" or "First Church Peacemakers Group," which avoids identifying the entire congregation with the action? The answer to the question might vary depending on the nature of the action. A general interreligious prayer vigil for peace might raise no concerns in the broader congregation, whereas a politically charged antiwar demonstration with civil disobedience actions might cause many members to distance themselves from the action. If there is going to be any public identification with the church, the matter should be presented for approval to the appropriate body within the congregation. Some churches may have made their involvement in peacemaking ministry so clear that those in peacemaking leadership have been given the endorsement to act as they see fit. But for congregations that are just beginning their peace involvement or have been sporadic in their peace ministry, it is important to clearly spell out what is appropriate for speaking or acting in the church's name.

I experienced these issues during the Pledge of Resistance campaigns against U.S. war policies in Central America in the mid-1980s. The Dorchester Temple Baptist Church had a peacemakers group that had been active for a couple years when some members, including me, decided to engage in civil disobedience. I knew that as pastor I could not be arrested as John Q. Citizen, even if the church was not endorsing the action, and any jail time was to be taken as vacation time. I would inevitably be associated with the church, so the whole matter was taken to the board of deacons, the governing body of the church. I presented the issue and my convictions but said I would defer to the wishes of the board should they ask me not to engage in the Pledge of Resistance actions. After extensive discussion and prayer, two members of the board who were politically in disagreement with me spoke on behalf of my freedom to act upon my conscience. The board voted to give me freedom to do what I thought best. The church would not endorse the action, but neither would they restrict me as their pastor. This potential conflict was positively resolved because there was a previous relationship of love and respect, the process of accountability was followed, convictions were presented with humility and

respect, and as Baptists the church leaders affirmed the freedom of conscience.

Peacemakers need to respect the processes and leadership structure in a church as they plan programs and actions. It may seem to the more radical members of the peacemaking group that the church board or perhaps the pastor are too nervous about controversy or too timid about taking actions for peace. However, abusing agreed-on congregational decision making and accountability channels is not in the spirit of peace. If peacemakers are striving for peace and justice as their desired end, they are wise to use peaceful and just means. The Bible speaks of means being consistent with the end when it says, "The harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18, RSV). If peacemakers practice what they preach within the church, even amidst the controversy they introduce, then they are more likely to be heard, to bring people around to their position, and to be supported by a unified church.

Chapter 18

When the Nation Goes to War

There is no experience for a people quite like going to war. War is a consuming affair that seldom goes as planned and usually brings major changes in its wake. The major wars in the lifetimes of our church members—World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf—were each very different in how they were fought, their scope, and their impact on the country. The experience of local churches in relation to these wars was also very different, coloring the perceptions of members of the churches who lived through those periods. There have also been numerous smaller military interventions, such as Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Grenada, Somalia, and so on. These episodes have not been as profound in the social and political life of the United States because of their smaller size, duration, and level of mobilization. Churches could ignore these minor wars in their programs and ministries for the most part. What wars will come in the future is anybody's guess, but a safe assumption is that the war will take its own pattern and present its own unique challenges to congregations seeking to be faithful to Christ's reconciliation mandate.

Though plans cannot be made to appropriately address a future war, some clear areas of local church ministry can be directed toward peace. It may seem that the tides of history are sweeping out

of control over anything the church does, but a local congregation can play a part in God's countercurrent. Tending faithfully to its peacemaking ministry will enable a congregation to have an impact, if not to help end a war, to at least be in a position to move toward healing and reconciliation.

Processing the Issues

When a major war erupts, an intense level of emotion is generated by the nation to maintain the commitment needed to wage war. Political leaders and the media mobilize to shape public opinion even as the military mobilizes to defeat the enemy. The "fog of war" extends beyond the battlefield to the public. Truth becomes the first casualty. A country such as Vietnam, Iraq, or North Korea is largely unknown to most U.S. citizens, and enough sense of evil and threat must be linked in people's minds with this relative unknown that they will support the risks and costs borne in going to war. The unknown needs to become "the enemy" so that the violence can be justified.[1] In such a context trying to get accurate information and to engage in ethical analysis is both difficult and critically necessary.

The local congregation can play a role in processing the issues for the members and for people in the community. Sermons and Bible studies can be focused on the foundational Christian ethical values and where God is in history. The peace sermons that are so easy to preach during years of relative calm become more risky and contentious when the pastor is giving a message that questions the political leaders seeking to rally people to the cause. Yet those very questions are essential for Christian faithfulness. Congregants need to think biblically and ethically, and all their preparation is specifically for the tough times and tough choices such as face us in wartime.

Processing the issues requires a two-way street for communication. The pastor cannot just preach from the powerful perch of the pulpit. Members need an opportunity to speak together, to raise questions on all the various levels of experience and thinking. If there is no regular sermon "talk-back" forum, perhaps a special session can be set up. Pastors and teachers can use the Socratic

[1]For an excellent examination of the process of making an enemy for the purposes of war, see Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

approach of asking questions, particularly the questions that tend to be swept aside in the rush of military and public mobilization. Special events can be scheduled with speakers to present one or multiple sides of the issues related to the conflict. The event can be publicized in the community so that the ethical discussion can be broadened.

Our church wanted something more humane and creative than war in our national encounter with Iraq, wanted to turn the hysterical war hoopla into mourning, wanted the fruits of repentance instead of the swagger of victory at the end. So we put up a sign outside. It invited the people in for activities meant to undo the war: conscientious objector counseling, support group for service peoples' families, weekly prayer vigils for peace, and weekly lectures entitled "Who Is God in Time of War?" Not many came, and no war was stopped. But everybody in town knew that something was going upstream through the down-gushing war mania. The book of Revelation calls this "the faithful witness" and "patient endurance."

—George Williamson, Granville, Ohio

Throughout the process of raising questions and discussing biblical values and the particulars of the conflict, feelings may be very intense. Members of the congregation may have opposite points of view. Those who call for peace may see support of the war as thoroughly demonic. Those who want to support the government and the military, or at least our young men and women in the armed forces, may view dissident voices as treasonous. To keep the process open and conducive to growth, church members need to affirm the primary call to follow Jesus. We may have disagreements as to how our discipleship takes shape, but if we can agree on the challenge to be faithful to Christ, then we have common ground. We also need to affirm the freedom of the individual conscience, whatever one's choice. Each person is responsible for the stand she or he takes, one way or another. We can challenge each other to reexamine our understanding of the facts, our analysis of the options, our values, and our priorities. People may need to be reminded that Christian unity is not derived from pushing aside the difficult issues but in sharing a common commitment to following God in Jesus Christ.

Praying for Peace

Praying for peace can be a trite, innocuous exercise or a challenging, prophetic act. When war is underway or looming on the horizon, congregational prayer can be an opportunity to express the anguish that must be in God's heart over such massive violence and human suffering, as well as a time to offer our own confusion, fears, and hopes at the divine mercy seat.

Many churches will pray for the government officials making decisions and the military personnel who have been mobilized, particularly for relatives of congregational members. This is appropriate, but one must beware of prayer becoming a blessing of civil religion. When praying for government officials, pray for both our government and the opposing side, that all might have the wisdom and courage to find the way to a just peace. Pray for those involved in mediation or negotiation efforts. Pray for military personnel from all sides. Our own family members are special to us, but each individual is special to God. Pray for our own insight and courage to do what is right in times that can be a rigorous test of our convictions. Give extensive content to the prayers, and remember that God is not nationalistic or partisan.

Mark Twain's "The War Prayer"[2] tells the story of a church service in which the pastor is caught up in the fervor of patriotism as the nation goes to war. He calls upon God to bless their troops in their patriotic work, to protect them from harm and help them vanquish the enemy. Then a stranger enters the sanctuary and walks to the pulpit to tell them their prayer has been heard, but that God heard what was unsaid as well as said. Their prayer included the tearing to shreds of other human beings, creating widows and orphans, and leaving the land desolate. The horrors of war were asked for in the spirit of love from a loving God. Mark Twain's caustic prayer is an important reminder to us of how our prayers can be one-sided and end up an affront to God. Calling for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven and to forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us will be far more reflective of the heart of God.

During the Persian Gulf crisis and war, the Fellowship of Recon-

[2] For a copy, check your local library for collections of short stories by Mark Twain (pen name for Samuel Clemens).

ciliation distributed an interfaith prayer that is an excellent model of a peace prayer embracing the breadth of people involved in the conflict:

> O God, you fill the universe with light and love.
> In you we live and move and have our being.
> We pray for Saddam Hussein and George Bush.
> Enlighten their minds, and fill their hearts with the power
> of your creative love.
> Guide their actions so that all civilians and soldiers in
> the Gulf area are protected from the sufferings of war.
> Inspire their decisions so that the crisis in the Middle East
> is resolved peacefully, and all peoples of the world
> learn to walk in the ways of justice, love, and peace.
> Amen.

During the build-up phase of the crisis and throughout the fighting, the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America called on churches to engage in weekly prayer and fasting for peace. Over fifteen hundred people signed a pledge to pray daily and fast weekly. One church in New York held a twenty-four-hour vigil in partnership with other local churches, and many congregations had special prayer services, sometimes in partnership with other congregations in their communities.

Loving Our Enemies

One of Jesus' most explicit commands is also the most difficult to seriously follow during wartime: "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44). War runs on hatred like a car runs on gasoline. In order to justify killing not just soldiers but also civilians, they must be dehumanized in some way—a task taken on by political rhetoric, media portrayals, cartoon caricatures, and even religious condemnation. A faithful church during a war has the unpleasant but spiritually critical task of reminding people by word and example of Christ's imperative to love the enemy.

Part of loving is trying to understand. What are the valid interests of the enemy? Are those interests being appropriately addressed in any of the actions or proposals of our own country? What kind of fears does the other side have of us? Are our actions

building bridges of trust or deepening the distrust?

During these crisis moments, understanding the enemy can be helped by inviting special speakers to make presentations. During the Gulf War a number of churches contacted Muslim and Jewish leaders in their communities to talk and develop joint programs to build more understanding. Though the war was going on halfway across the globe, our neighbors could help us remove our ignorance and prejudice, upon which much of our hatred of the enemy depends. Christians have a history of animosity and misrepresentation of Muslim cultures and faith, which has been an issue in the conflicts in the Middle East that continually enter our news. Through guest speakers or classes about different faiths and cultures, people who are different can become less alien and more understandable.[3]

Praying specifically and positively for our enemies is important not just for our enemies but for the spiritual survival of our own hearts in the midst of surrounding bitterness and hatred. The natural human tendency in times of war is to pray the condemnations of the Psalms: "O that you would kill the wicked, O God!" (Psalm 139:19). Jesus' prayer from the cross provides a different model: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Prayers for enemies can include petitions that their needs will be met and their fears assuaged and that they might participate in finding the path to a just peace. But the most important fruit of such prayer may be the change in our own hearts. Jim Wallis has said, "Fervent prayer for our enemies is a great obstacle to war and the feelings that lead to it."[4] My own perspective is changed as prayer draws me into God's perspective. The apostle Paul reflects our transformed understanding of others as he explores the impact of the reconciliation ministry of Christ that is passed on to Christians: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view" (2 Corinthians 5:16). A church praying for a nation's

[3]Two books on the Middle East and Islam for church use are Charles Kimball, *Striving Together: A Way Forward in Christian-Muslim Relations* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991) and Charles Kimball, *Angle of Vision: Christian and the Middle East* (New York: Friendship Press, 1992).

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