

Becoming a Peace Church

The Study Guide

An Anabaptist Network study course

Introduction

Becoming a Peace Church

“Becoming a Peace Church” is one of a number of short courses for local churches that have been developed by the UK Anabaptist Network.

The leaflet that comes with these notes explains more about this network, its aims and core convictions. The network is not a denomination or institution but a resource agency, offering fresh insights from the radical Christian tradition on discipleship, church life and mission.

A free copy of a special issue of *Anabaptism Today*, the network’s journal, introduces the Anabaptist movement – its history, values and significance for Christians today.

In the UK and many other nations Christians are facing the challenges and opportunities of following Jesus in a changing culture, and churches are coming to terms with being on the margins rather than at the centre. Things look different from the margins!

In Europe the church has been at the centre of society for so long that we need help to look at things differently. One source of inspiration and guidance for churches on the margins are earlier marginal Christian groups, such as the Anabaptist movement, which for nearly 500 years has been exploring discipleship, lifestyle, mission and church life from the margins.

Growing numbers of Christians and churches (from many denominations) are drawing on the Anabaptist tradition and looking to the Anabaptist Network for resources. As well as running conferences and study groups and publishing *Anabaptism Today*, the network has now developed some short courses for local churches.

Other courses now available are:

- After Christendom: following Jesus on the margins
- Taking Jesus Seriously

For further information about these or about other activities of the network, please contact:

Anabaptist Network: 14 Shepherds Hill, London N6 5AQ. Or visit our web site and contact us by email: www.anabaptistnetwork.com

Becoming a Peace Church: the book

The five chapters that comprise the book *Becoming a Peace Church* started life as separate articles in the Anabaptist Network's journal, *Anabaptism Today*.

Four of the chapters were written by Alan Kreider, the fifth by Eleanor Kreider – both of whom now live in Elkhart, Indiana, but were for 30 years Mennonite missionaries in England.

Due to popular demand for these articles, they were collated, updated and turned into a book, published by the Anabaptist Network in March 2000.

Copies of the book are available at £1.50 each.

This study guide is intended primarily for group discussion, but it can also be used by individuals. It offers additional resources and suggests questions for discussion and ideas for action.

We suggest that you first read the whole book through in one sitting (it is only 43 pages long) and then follow the pattern indicated in this study guide – reading a short section of the book and pondering (together or alone) the questions raised about this section.

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Session 1: The Biblical Mandate



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp1-2

1. Check out the claim that many of the New Testament letters begin by blessing readers with both grace and peace:

- How many instances can you find?
- Are there significant variations in the way this greeting is given?
- It has been suggested that this is no more than a standard formal greeting – do you agree or do you think it is as significant as Alan claims?

2. Do you find the image of a one-legged man helpful? How does this relate to your experience of

- Churches?
- Christian organisations?
- Mission strategies?
- Other Christians?
- Your own commitments?



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp2-3

1. Alan asks: What do you say when someone says, ‘Tell me about your church’? How would you reply? If you are studying in a group, you might each write down one or two comments on a piece of paper and pass them to the next person, who reads aloud what you have written and invites you to say more about this.

2. The quotation about peace churches from Justin is one of several examples from the early church. Other references are listed in the notes on **page 41**. These passages are included in the appendix to this study guide. Read them now and ask what they add to your understanding of the early church as a peace church.



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp3-5

1. How well do you know the story of Peter and Cornelius? You may want to pause and read it again now. In fact, since Luke regards this incident as so significant that he tells it twice, it would be good to read it twice too: as Luke tells it in *Acts 10:1-48* and then as Peter reports it to the church in Jerusalem in *Acts 11:1-18*.

2. Here are some further questions to consider:

- How to understand the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Jews in Acts 2 and on these Gentiles in Acts 10 has frequently been a point of contention between Christians who have different views of charismatic gifts. But both passages point to these as peace-creating incidents. Why have they become contentious?
- Are we too far removed from the realities of life in occupied Judea to feel the shock of this incident? What other incidents from Acts or the Gospels do we also fail to read against this background? What have we missed seeing?
- How did Jesus relate to centurions? Check back in the Gospels, starting with *Matthew 8:5-13*. Was this the basis for Peter's courageous response to Cornelius?
- How do you think the Jerusalem church did here? Remember – they were not there. They only had Peter's report to go on. And this was pushing them well beyond their comfort zone.
- What would be a contemporary equivalent of this peace-creating missionary visit? Try to imagine the unimaginable (an Iraqi evangelist visiting the Pentagon?).



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp5-8

1. Ponder the various references in this section to the link between the gospel and peace:

- Why have we so often interpreted these passages as referring only to internal, psychological or spiritual peace?
- Is this a legitimate interpretation in some of these passages?
- Read *Ephesians 2* again: what are the implications of being called into 'the household of God'? Can you imagine Peter, in old age, reading this passage to Cornelius, also old – but now brothers in Christ?

2. Alan writes that the early churches ‘did not have peace committees, which socially concerned members might attend on Monday nights, or peace fellowships on the fringes at church assemblies.’

- Is there a ‘peace fellowship’ associated with your denomination? What do you know about it? What are its main aims and activities?
- Are special interest groups of this kind a help or a hindrance in getting peace on the main agenda of the church?

3. Already in this first chapter there have been two references to Jesus bringing division rather than peace (Luke 12:49 on *page 4* and Matthew 10:34 on *page 7*).

- How does this square with the church being a peace church?
- What is the relationship between peace and justice?
- Why is pacifism sometimes confused with ‘passivism’?
- How risky is it for a church to get involved in peacemaking?



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp9-12

1. Alan suggests we pose the question when we meet other Christians: ‘Where have you seen God making peace recently?’

- Have you tried asking this question?
- Do you know any stories to pass on?

In the appendix you will find some stories of this kind.

2. Consider the five objections to putting peace on the church agenda listed on *pages 9-10*. If you are studying in a group, you could invite pairs to debate each objection, with one person arguing for and one against, trying to put a persuasive case whatever your own views. What do you learn from this exercise? How significant are these objections?

3. In the appendix you will find an extract from Walter Wink’s book, *Engaging the Powers*, where he explains what he means by the ‘myth of redemptive violence.’ As you read this, think about how you could explain this to someone in your church.

Session 2: The Church's 'Domestic Life'



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp12-13

1. In the appendix is a copy of the engraving mentioned here. Ponder this and the story of Dirk Willems. Why do *you* think Dirk did what he did? There is also a copy of an article from *Anabaptism Today*, in which the writer also ponders the meaning of this story.
2. Do you agree that 'reflexes are important'? How do you respond to the question about who shapes you and trains your reflexes?



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp14-16

1. What is the difference between a 'moral majority' and a 'prophetic minority'? Imagine your church was concerned about the policy of your local council, perhaps on ethical grounds. You decide to speak out about this. How would what you say differ if you chose to adopt a 'prophetic minority' stance?
2. Read carefully through *Matthew 18:15-20*. Is this kind of process operative in your church? If not, how might you introduce it? If it is, how effective is it, and how might it be further developed? (For further reading, Stuart Murray: *Explaining Church Discipline* can be obtained from the Anabaptist Network for £2 per copy).



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp16-18

1. 'It seems a rule that where people are serious about life and issues, differences are inevitable.' Do you regard conflict as 'normal' and 'inevitable'? Do you agree that conflict can be good and that it is unacknowledged conflict that causes problems?

2. If you are studying in a group, can you tell each other stories (without breaking confidences) of where conflict was

- Avoided and/or denied?
- Handled badly?
- Handled well?

What can you learn from these examples?



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp18-21

1. Alan highlights here four skills of peacemakers:

- Truthful speech
- Expectant listening
- Alertness to community
- Good process.

Read *Acts 15:1-33*, which records a crucial meeting in the early church to resolve conflict between those who held strong views on what should be required of Gentile converts. How well do you think they did? Are the four skills of peacemakers evident?

2. This might be a good point in your study to sit quietly and reflect on the four attitudes of peacemakers (and on what you have learned thus far), and then to turn this reflection into spoken or silent prayers.

Session 3: The Church's 'Foreign Policy' – Worship



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp21-28

1. Reflect for a while on your recent experiences of worship or, if you are studying in a group, talk together about this. Try to identify both exhilarating and frustrating examples. To what extent have you experienced the 'peacemaking worship' described in this section?

- Have you acclaimed Jesus as Lord?
- Have you affirmed solidarity with God's family?
- How have you told God's story?
- Have you cried out to God for the world?
- What kind of theology have you sung?
- Have you experienced reconciliation and forgiveness?
- Has communion shaped you for peacemaking?
- Do you value the cycle of worship and mission?

2. Design (individually or together) a worship service, or series of services, that will enable participants to experience 'peacemaking worship'.

3. In the appendix are a number of resources from the Anabaptist tradition that might be helpful, either as you design a worship service or as components in the worship services of your own church.

Session 4: The Church's 'Foreign Policy' – Work, War, Witness



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp28-30

1. In the appendix are further stories of Christians bringing 'peacemaking imagination' into the workplace. Consider your own sphere of work: in what way might 'peacemaking imagination' inspire fresh initiatives in this context? Or how might peacemaking skills be helpful at work?
2. David, mentioned on **page 30**, gave up his job in order to pursue a new vision of peacemaking. Are there some jobs that Christians simply should not do because of their commitment to the God of peace? Or is it important, as many claim, that there should be Christians as witnesses in all spheres of life? Where, if anywhere, should we draw the line?



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp30-34

1. Alan writes: 'It's helpful for Christians to ask themselves: what would you do if someone attacked you?' Have you thought about this question that is often thrown at pacifists as a way of demonstrating their lack of realism? How would you respond to it? The book mentioned in the notes on **page 43** is very helpful here: John Howard Yoder: *What Would You Do? A Serious Answer to a Standard Question* (available from the Anabaptist Network).
2. Read the summary of the Just War position in the appendix. These are strict criteria (or at least they would be if they were applied properly). Can you think of three examples of wars in the last 200 years that meet these criteria?
3. In the appendix are further stories of Christians taking action for peace. Is there some action for peace that you or your church might take?



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp34-37

1. In the past many churches assumed that the normal order for people joining them was 'believing before belonging', but increasingly today this order is reversed: people start to belong before they are sure what they believe. Why do you think this is? How does this relate to 'a world that is post-Christendom and postmodern' (*page 34*)?

2. If this is so, the issues of character, relationships and actions highlighted in this section are more important than ever. Alan quotes Robert Warren as saying about churches that handle conflict well: 'When people come near such a community they will instinctively know how real the relationships are.' What do people find in your church? Would it be good to ask visitors or those who have joined recently?

3. What might 'fascination evangelism' look like today? In what way might your church act surprisingly (not through gimmicks but out of its deepest counter-cultural values)? In what way might peace be missional in your community?

Session 5: Praying for Peace



Read *Becoming a Peace Church* pp37-41

1. What might be done to put peace on the agenda of your church by the use of visual aids, notices or symbols in the building where you meet?
2. Do you agree with Eleanor that ‘intercessory prayers are a necessary part of corporate worship’? What part does intercessory prayer play in your church?
3. Read *1 Timothy 2:1-2* and search for other biblical injunctions to pray for those in authority in our world. How do you do this, and for what are you praying? Do you share Walter Wink’s conviction (quoted on **page 25**) that ‘history belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being’?
4. Read (together if you are studying in a group) the Lord’s Prayer (*Matthew 6:9-13*), reflecting on each phrase and discussing the connection of each with the gospel of peace:
 - Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name
 - Your kingdom come
 - Your will be done on earth as in heaven
 - Give us today our daily bread
 - Forgive us our sins, as we forgive others
 - Lead us not into temptation
 - Deliver us from evil
5. Consider the practical suggestions with which this chapter ends. Choose at least two of these that you (or your church) are not already doing and think about how to implement them.

If you have questions about anything you have studied on this course, if you have ideas to share or suggestions to make, please do contact the Anabaptist Network. You can also find further resources by visiting www.anabaptistnetwork.com

Appendix

Early Church Fathers on Peace

1) **From: Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)*, 4.34.4:**

If anyone, however, advocating the cause of the Jews, do maintain that this new covenant consisted in the rearing of that temple which was built under Zerubbabel after the emigration to Babylon, and in the departure of the people from thence after the lapse of seventy years, let him know that the temple constructed of stones was indeed then rebuilt (for as yet that law was observed which had been made upon tables of stone), yet no new covenant was given, but they used the Mosaic law until the coming of the Lord; but from the Lord's advent, the new covenant which brings back peace, and the law which gives life, has gone forth over the whole earth, as the prophets said: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He shall rebuke many people; and they shall break down their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and they shall no longer learn to fight."

If therefore another law and word, going forth from Jerusalem, brought in such a [reign of] peace among the Gentiles which received it (the word), and convinced, through them, many a nation of its folly, then [only] it appears that the prophets spake of some other person. But if the law of liberty, that is, the word of God, preached by the apostles (who went forth from Jerusalem) throughout all the earth, caused such a change in the state of things, that these [nations] did form the swords and war-lances into plowshares, and changed them into pruning-hooks for reaping the corn, [that is], into instruments used for peaceful purposes, and that they are now unaccustomed to fighting, but when smitten, offer also the other cheek, then the prophets have not spoken these things of any other person, but of Him who effected them.

This person is our Lord, and in Him is that declaration borne out; since it is He Himself who has made the plough, and introduced the pruning-hook, that is, the first semination of man, which was the creation exhibited in Adam, and the gathering in of the produce in the last times by the Word; and, for this reason, since He joined the beginning to the end, and is the Lord of both, He has finally displayed the plough, in that the wood has been joined on to the iron, and has thus cleansed His land; because the Word, having been firmly united to the flesh, and in its mechanism fixed with pins, has reclaimed the savage earth.

In the beginning, He figured forth the pruning-hook by means of Abel, pointing out that there should be a gathering in of a righteous race of men. He says, "For behold how the just man perishes, and no man considers it; and righteous men are taken away, and no man layeth it to heart." These things were acted beforehand in Abel, were also previously declared by the prophets, but were accomplished in the Lord's person; and the same [is still true] with regard to us, the body following the example of the Head.

2) From: Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem (Against Marcion)*, 3.21 Chapter XXI:

So you cannot get out of this notion of yours a basis for your difference between the two Christs, as if the Jewish Christ were ordained by the Creator for the restoration of the people alone from its dispersion, whilst yours was appointed by the supremely good God for the liberation of the whole human race. Because, after all, the earliest Christians are found on the side of the Creator, not of Marcion, all nations being called to His kingdom, from the fact that God set up that kingdom from the tree (of the cross), when no Cerdon was yet born, much less a Marcion. However, when you are refuted on the call of the *nations*, you betake yourself to *proselytes*. You ask, who among the nations can turn to the Creator, when those whom the prophet names are proselytes of individually different and private condition? "Behold," says Isaiah, "the proselytes shall come unto me through Thee," showing that they were even proselytes who were to find their way to God through Christ. But nations (Gentiles) also, like ourselves, had likewise their mention (by the prophet) as trusting in Christ. "And in His name," says he, "shall the Gentiles trust." Besides, the proselytes whom you substitute for the nations in prophesy, are not in the habit of trusting in Christ's name, but in the dispensation of Moses, from whom comes their instruction.

But it was in the last days that the choice of the nations had its commencement. In these very words Isaiah says: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord," that is, God's eminence, "and the house of God," that is, Christ, the Catholic temple of God, in which God is worshipped, "shall be established upon the mountains," over all the eminences of virtues and powers; "and all nations shall come unto it; and many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His way, and we will walk in it: for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The gospel will be this "way," of the new law and the new word in Christ, no longer in Moses. "And He shall judge among the nations," even concerning their error. "And these shall rebuke a large nation," that of the Jews themselves and their proselytes.

"And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" in other words, they shall change into pursuits of moderation and peace the dispositions of injurious minds, and hostile tongues, and all kinds of evil, and blasphemy. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation," shall not stir up discord. "Neither shall they learn war any more," that is, the provocation of hostilities; so that you here learn that Christ is promised not as powerful in war, but pursuing peace. Now you must deny either that these things were predicted, although they are plainly seen, or that they have been accomplished, although you read of them; else, if you cannot deny either one fact or the other, they must have been accomplished in Him of whom they were predicted. For look at the entire course of His call up to the present time from its beginning, how it is addressed to the nations (Gentiles) who are in these last days approaching to God the Creator, and not to proselytes, whose election was rather an event of the earliest days. Verily the apostles have annulled that belief of yours.

3) From: Origen, *Contra Celsum (Against Celsus)*, 5.33:

The remarks which we have made not only answer the statements of Celsus regarding the superintending spirits, but anticipate in some measure what he afterwards brings forward, when he says: "Let the second party come forward; and I shall ask them whence they come, and whom they regard as the originator of their ancestral customs. They will reply, No one, because they spring from the same source as the Jews themselves, and derive their instruction and superintendence from no other quarter, and notwithstanding they have revolted from the Jews." Each one of us, then, is come "in the last days," when one Jesus has visited us, to the "visible mountain of the Lord," the Word that is above every word, and to the "house of God," which is "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

And we notice how it is built upon "the tops of the mountains," i.e., the predictions of all the prophets, which are its foundations. And this house is exalted above the hills, i.e., those individuals among men who make a profession of superior attainments in wisdom and truth; and all the nations come to it, and the "many nations" go forth, and say to one another, turning to the religion which in the last days has shone forth through Jesus Christ: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in them." For the law came forth from the dwellers in Sion, and settled among us as a spiritual law. Moreover, the word of the Lord came forth from that very Jerusalem, that it might be disseminated through all places, and might judge in the midst of the heathen, selecting those whom it sees to be submissive, and rejecting the disobedient, who are many in number.

And to those who inquire of us whence we come, or who is our founder, we reply that we are come, agreeably to the counsels of Jesus, to "cut down our hostile and insolent 'wordy' swords into ploughshares, and to convert into pruning-hooks the spears formerly employed in war." For we no longer take up "sword against nation," nor do we "learn war any more," having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader, instead of those whom our fathers followed, among whom were "strangers to the covenant," and having received a law, for which we give thanks to Him that rescued us from the error (of our ways), saying, "Our fathers honoured lying idols, and there is not among them one that causeth it to rain."

Our Superintendent, then, and Teacher, having come forth from the Jews, regulates the whole world by the word of His teaching. And having made these remarks by way of anticipation, we have refuted as well as we could the untrue statements of Celsus, by subjoining the appropriate answer.

4) From: Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum (To Quirinus)*, 3.18:

That nothing is to be preferred to the love of God and Christ.

In Deuteronomy: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Also in the Gospel according to Matthew: “He that loveth father or mother above me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter above me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not my disciple.” Also in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, Because for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things we are more than conquerors for His sake who loved us.”

Stories of ‘God Making Peace’

1) From: “Multicultural vineyard grows in Reedley,” *Mennonite Weekly Review*, Sep. 9, 2002.

The traditional Anglo congregation of First Mennonite Church has become part of God’s multicultural vineyard in Reedley, a town set in California’s fruit fields where two-thirds of the community is now Hispanic.

To respond to the influx of Hispanics, the congregation, begun in 1906, has developed a ministry for those who have come to work in the fields and in other jobs. In a modern twist of demographics, Mennonites who came from such places as Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and Corn, Oklahoma, from the early 1900’s through the 1990’s, share one church. As in tending fields, growing a multicultural community is hard work, but the fruits of the labour are worth it.

“In 1996 we formed a task force to study how to continue to minister to Hispanics coming to our church,” said Stephen Penner, one of First Mennonite’s two half-time associate pastors. “We assumed that eventually we’d spin off the Hispanic ministry as a church plan...But instead, the task force, after looking at what we had and thinking about the changes in our community, recommended to the congregation that we do just the opposite. The congregation agreed, deciding that we should be one, just as Jesus longs for his people to be one.”

First Mennonite is slowly moving toward integration in one of the most racially diverse regions in the United States. There’s an English service on Sunday morning and a Spanish service on Sunday afternoon. Several joint services have included a Maundy Thursday event, baptisms and church picnics. Since 1999, the church has provided a contemporary worship service on Sunday evenings for young adults and seekers of many backgrounds.

Through these efforts, Anglos and Hispanics are discovering that neither English nor Spanish, neither money nor poverty, neither four-part harmonies nor charismatic praise, can separate them from sharing God's love in Christ, said Juan Montes, the other half-time pastor. Low-income, undocumented field workers and middle-class people worship side-by-side. Language and worship styles differ, but their Lord is the same. "As we've developed our relationship with each other, we can learn to see the beauty and the moving of God's spirit in the other people who are different from us," said Montes. "Our church becomes a new reality in which there is no segregation."

Even with this new reality, the groups face limitations and challenges in their relationship. "Working toward more integration takes a lot of patience, communication, willingness to supplement each other's gifts," said Ken Seitz, the congregation's full-time lead pastor. "This genius of First Mennonite is that we have a vibrant and diverse team that can respond to all this diversity."

"To become a church that's fully integrated, that's unaware of ethnicity or economic differences, is a vision that we reach for but one that we haven't fully realised," Penner said. "But we're still one church. We have one budget. We have one membership roll. When Juan has a baptism in a swimming pool, that person becomes a member of First."

Having one membership roll of 280 – with attendance of about 125 Anglos in the morning and about 40 Hispanics in the afternoon – doesn't mean the church has only one kind of ministry. Montes' ministry includes visiting the low-income Hispanic neighbourhoods in the southern part of Reedley, a town of 22,000 residents. He visits families, many of them facing marital, financial and addiction-related problems. He provides weekly care groups in three neighbourhoods. Montes and other leaders share Christ with them and disciple those who seek a deeper relationship with God. Recently, Montes baptised eight new members.

"We provide help with their immigration issues and work to solve problems between husband and wife," Montes said. "We try to teach them how to live in a new environment and how to better their situation. We send people to high school and help people to learn English...I have three people in my discipleship groups that came out of gangs. They have now graduated from junior college and now have jobs."

The younger generation and Hispanics are stretching the church's borders, Penner said. The church wants to "be broadly welcoming but also retain the strong Anabaptist distinctives of discipleship and peacemaking," he said. "We are seeking for new ways to be relevant in the 21st century in this changing community."

2) From: George Beukema, *Stories from Below the Poverty Line*, Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001, pp. 75-76

Chicago, 1996

I've been associated with the Church of the Good News since its inception. My family was one of the first black families to move into Lathrop Homes. This church has always been an integral part of the community. We have black folk, Hispanic folk, white folk, and all kinds of folk! And you don't have to be a member to belong here. People who've never attended a service claim this church as their church. Just a few months ago a young boy was killed. His mother asked to have the funeral here. Over three hundred people squeezed into our sanctuary for the funeral. That's just the way it is here.

And when we built the new building, we didn't just make our own plans. We asked folks in the community for input. We ended up changing the whole design after talking to the people from the Head Start day-care program. We decided it would be great to have them in our building, but the city codes for a day-care facility were very strict. It was more expensive to build it this way, but it was worth it. Every weekday we have sixty kids and their parents walking in and out of this church...

That leads me to tell you about the Lathrop Community Music Center, which is also in our building. About twelve years ago we had this idea. It was around the time our President was saying things like, "Say no to drugs." Well, that's easy for him to say! The problem is that our kids have little to say yes to. Did you know that there's not one teacher in our neighbourhood school that can play an instrument? Can you believe that? Terrible! So George asked me, and some community folk, to check out a place in Uptown called the People's Music Center. They have over a hundred and fifty children and adults taking music lessons – a half-hour a week of private instruction and an hour each of theory instruction. They have some of Chicago's best musicians teaching for less than half the going rate. Some even do it for free!

We visited the school during a recital, and we saw children, teenagers, mothers, fathers, and grandparents performing on stage. You should have seen the look on their faces – concentrating – focusing – determined to make their loved ones proud. In the van on the way home from our visit we decided to start our own music centre!

The next Saturday morning we met at the church, drew up some flyers, then scattered them throughout the neighbourhood. The message was simple: "Interested in playing a musical instrument? If so, come to the Church of the Good News at one o'clock this afternoon." We figured if people didn't come, then it wasn't a good idea and we should be doing something else.

But by the time one o'clock came around, we had a church crammed with people! Today we have a board of directors, a full-time executive director, over ten quality musicians on staff, and over one hundred students!

3) From: Daniel L. Buttry, *Peace Ministry: A Handbook for Local Churches*, Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1995, pp. 168-169.

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 organisations.

"Among the means which 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 reflection, and they provide a vehicle for building relationships among individuals and groups seeking to develop non-violent strategies for recovering our communities from violence.

Our vigils have embraced a day-care centre that was under siege, 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 breach, restorers of the streets to dwell in.'"

Excerpt from Walter Wink's *Engaging The Powers*

Violence is the ethos of our times. It is the spirituality of the modern world. It has been accorded the status of a religion, demanding from its devotees an absolute obedience to death. Its followers are not aware, however, that the devotion they pay to violence is a form of religious piety. Violence is so successful as a myth precisely because it does not seem to be mythic in the least. Violence simply appears to be the nature of things. It is what works. It is inevitable, the last and, often, the first resort in conflicts. The threat of violence, it is believed, is alone able to deter aggressors.

The roots of this devotion to violence are deep. The religion of Babylon – one of the world's oldest, continuously surviving religions – is thriving as never before. It, and not Christianity, is the real religion of America. This myth of redemptive violence undergirds American popular culture, civil religion, nationalism, and foreign policy, and lies coiled like an ancient serpent at the root of domination that has characterised human existence since well before Babylon ruled supreme.

In the beginning, according to this myth, Apsu and Tiamat (the sweet- and saltwater oceans) bear Mummu (the mist). From them also issue the younger gods, whose frolicking makes so much noise that the elder gods cannot sleep and resolve to kill them. This plot of the elder gods is discovered, Ea kills Apsu, and his wife Tiamat pledges revenge. Ea and the younger gods in terror turn for salvation to their youngest, Marduk. He exacts a steep price: if he succeeds, he must be given chief and undisputed power in the assembly of the gods. Having extorted this promise, he catches Tiamat in a net, drives an evil wind down her throat, shoots an arrow that bursts her distended belly and pierces her heart; he then splits her skull with a club, and scatters her blood in out-of-the-way places. He stretches out her corpse full length, and from it creates the cosmos.

In the Babylonian myth, creation is an act of violence: Tiamat, “mother of them all,” is murdered and dismembered; from her cadaver the world is formed. Order is established by means of disorder. Creation is a violent victory over an enemy older than creation. The origin of evil precedes the origin of things. Chaos (symbolised by Tiamat) is prior to order (represented by Marduk, god of Babylon). Evil is prior to good. Violence inheres in the godhead. Evil is an ineradicable constituent of ultimate reality, and possesses ontological priority over good.

The implications are clear: humanity is created from the blood of a murdered god. Our very origin is violence. Killing is in our blood. Humanity is not the originator of evil, but merely evil already present and perpetuates it. Human beings are thus naturally incapable of peaceful coexistence; order must continually be imposed upon us from on high. Such a myth reflects a highly centralised state in which the king rules as Marduk’s representative on earth. Resistance to the king is treason against the gods. Unquestioning obedience is the highest virtue, and order the highest religious value. “The king’s word is right; his utterance, like that of a god, cannot be changed!”

The distinctive feature of this myth is the victory of order over chaos by means of violence. This myth is the original religion of the status quo, the first articulation of “might makes right.” The gods favour those who conquer. Conversely, whoever conquers must have the favour of the gods. The mass of people exists to perpetuate that power and privilege which the gods have conferred upon the king, the aristocracy, and the priesthood. Religion exists to legitimate power and privilege. Life is combat. Any form of order is preferable to chaos, according to this myth. Ours is neither a perfect nor a perfectible world; it is a theatre of perpetual conflict in which the prize goes to the strong. Peace through war, security through strength: these are the core convictions that arise from this ancient historical religion.

Why Did Dirk Willems Turn Back?

By Joseph Liechty

LATE IN THE WINTER OF 1569, Dirk Willems of Holland was discovered as an Anabaptist, and a thief catcher came to arrest him at the village of Asperen. Running for his life, Dirk came to a body of water still coated with ice. After making his way across in great peril, he realised his pursuer had fallen through into the freezing water.¹



Turning back, Dirk ran to the struggling man and dragged him safely to shore. The thief catcher wanted to release Dirk, but a burgomaster – having appeared on the scene – reminded the man he was under oath to deliver criminals to justice. Dirk was bound off to prison, interrogated, and tortured in an unsuccessful effort to make him renounce his faith. He was tried and found guilty of having been rebaptised, of holding secret meetings in his home, and of allowing baptism there – all of which he freely confessed.

“Persisting obstinately in his opinion”, Dirk was sentenced to execution by fire. On the day of execution, a strong east wind blew the flames away from his upper body so that death was long delayed. The same wind carried his voice to the next town, where people heard him cry more than seventy times, “O my Lord; my God.” The judge present was “finally filled with sorrow and regret.” Wheeling his horse around so he saw no more, he ordered the executioner, “Dispatch the man with a quick death.”

A child’s perception of injustice

When I first encountered this story more than thirty years ago as a child, my attention was riveted on what happened to Dirk. For his great goodness he received in return imprisonment, torture, and death. That he should suffer such a fate violated my childish sense of justice and fair play. My notion of how the world worked was undone, and I needed to find a new understanding.

Trying to understand Dirk’s story as an adult, I have come to make some strong claims about its significance. I believe that in the *Martyrs’ Mirror*, a book filled with heroic examples of Christian obedience to Christ, the story of Dirk’s simple action is the embodiment of some of the great strengths of Anabaptism. I also believe Dirk transcended and healed some great weaknesses of Anabaptism. In this action he obeyed Jesus’ commandment to be perfect as his heavenly father is perfect – that is, to love fully and indiscriminately.

¹ The story of Dirk Willems is from a 1660 Anabaptist martyrology compiled by Thieleman J. van Bracht, translated as *Martyrs Mirror* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1950), 741-42. A longer version of Joseph Liechty’s article on Willems appeared in *Mennonite Life* 45, no. 3 (1990:18-23).

What would I do if . . . ?

1569 was a bad year to be an Anabaptist. The *Martyrs' Mirror* lists a number of martyrs that year, some of whom lived close enough to Dirk's home that he would surely have known of their deaths. I imagine the prospect of death was constantly with him, a steady part of his inner life. I imagine he frequently asked himself, "What would I do if . . . ?" or, more likely in his circumstances, "What will I do when...?" His ruminations must have been shaped to a great extent by the teaching of the little Anabaptist fellowships, one of which met in his home. With arrest and death ever-present dangers, Anabaptists spent considerable time preparing one another to meet them.

One source of instruction was letters from prison. A young purse-maker and minister of the word named Hendrick Alewijns, after his arrest in 1568, wrote many letters to his wife, three small children, and fellow Anabaptists. "There is no fear in love," he wrote, but "fearless ones run through patience...not out of, but into the conflict that is set before us, and look not at the dreadful tyranny, but unto Jesus, the Captain, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

Alewijns and other Anabaptists did not mean they sought persecution, nor did they deny themselves the right to flee from it. But even so, this fearlessness was a difficult expectation. I imagine that when Dirk considered how he might respond to capture, he conjured up an array of options, ranging from fleeing at one extreme to calm acceptance of arrest at the other.

I try to imagine what thoughts filled Dirk's mind as he ran, followed closely by the thief catcher. Did fear and danger dull his mind or make it keen? In either case his thoughts must have been dominated by the effort to save his own life. In at least some small corner of his consciousness, he must have been considering what he had done in fleeing and what he might do if caught. Would he be able to brave torture? Would he renounce his faith? Such tormenting thoughts must have reduced him to so great a fear that, when he came to a body of water, he ran across the thin ice. He risked immediate death by drowning rather than submitting to the prospect of capture, imprisonment, torture, and death. But having saved his own life, Dirk turned back across the ice to save his drowning pursuer.

As a child, my attention seized first on Dirk's sad reward of death for virtue. But my focus soon turned to an earlier point, less dramatic but more mysterious, when Dirk turned back across the ice. It is this action I can hardly comprehend, that I return to time and again. I am surprised that Dirk even noticed his pursuer had fallen through the ice. I would have expected his desire to live was great enough to drive him forward, ears closed and eyes fixed ahead. Even if he heard cracking ice or a cry for help, I would have expected the desire to live to send him fleeing. Why did he turn back?

Intuitive response to evil

I believe that turning back was not a rational ethical decision, but an intuitive response. The properties of thin ice may almost have dictated intuitive action by leaving him little time to respond. Even if the thief catcher somehow caught hold of a

piece of solid ice, and Dirk had a few moments to consider, I still believe his decision was more intuitive than rational. No combination of mental calculations was likely to take him back across the ice.

Perhaps Christianity, with its teaching on loving the enemy, comes closer than any other religious or ethical system to requiring Dirk to do what he did. But where would the command “love your enemies” have led Dirk? He had no reason to believe he could save the thief catcher. The more likely conclusion would have been two deaths, and loving the enemy does not demand futile suicide. In those places where Jesus discusses loving the enemy, none of his examples comes close to requiring that one die for the enemy. If in fact there were others at the scene, the thief catcher’s compatriots, who could condemn Dirk if he had seen the man in distress as their business?

Perhaps chief among the considerations in Dirk’s mind would have been the doctrine of two kingdoms, a basic Anabaptist motif. “There were from the beginning of the world two classes of people, a people of God and a people of the devil,” wrote one Anabaptist martyr. The children of God “have always been persecuted and dispersed, so that they have always been in a minority, and sometimes very few in number, so that they had to hide themselves in caves and dens...but the ungodly have always been powerful, and have prevailed.”

When Dirk looked back on the thief catcher in the water, he saw not just a man near death, but a devouring ravening wolf. He saw not just an individual, but a manifestation of the kingdom of darkness, an agent of the devil himself. Anabaptists also frequently took an image from the book of Revelation. Martyrs, slain for the word of God, wait under the altar in heaven, crying to God, “How long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). When Dirk looked back, he might have seen an answer to the martyrs’ question – God delivering justice here and now. Or, he could have drawn on the image of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian captivity: his crossing of the ice was the Red Sea parted; the floundering thief catcher was horse and rider thrown into the sea.

Dirk had available to him sound biblical images to justify his running on and leaving the thief catcher to his fate. With the time he had gained, capture was far from inevitable. His crime in the Netherlands was not crime everywhere; he could have fled to other territories and reasonably hoped for a long and peaceful life.

Other examples of sacrificial love

Examining the usual range of sacrificial actions can take us some distance in explaining Dirk’s decision to rescue his pursuer. There are many examples of parents sacrificing for children. I recall the story of an American soldier in Vietnam who threw his body on a grenade, saving the lives of his comrades. Less frequent are accounts of people who gave their lives for someone unknown to them. One example is Father Maximilian Kolb, who chose to die in place of another innocent man in a Nazi concentration camp. Examples of people risking their lives for enemies are scarce indeed. A few years ago the South African bishop Desmond Tutu risked his life to save a suspected police informer from an angry mob. That is remarkable, but it is

still a case of the powerful acting to save the weak, and that is a long way from what Dirk did.

We may understand better how radical was Dirk's action if we transpose the Tutu and Vietnam stories into parallels of Dirk's situation. In the Tutu story, we would have to imagine that the informer, having almost reached safety, turned back to save one of his pursuers. We must imagine that the American soldier, fleeing what he expected to be torture in a POW camp, risked his life to save a Viet Cong soldier. These transpositions are difficult to imagine.

I am convinced that the only force strong enough to take Dirk back across the ice was an extraordinary outpouring of love. The only kind of love I know that extends to enemies is the love taught and lived by Jesus. When Jesus' earliest followers struggled to understand the mystery of his death, they found themselves extending the definition of love: Jesus had died for them "when we were God's enemies." We must allow that precisely this definition of love – a love that reaches so far as to die for enemies – had shaped Dirk's character to such an extent that in circumstances of gravest personal danger he was able to express his love in an intuitive response.

Did the Anabaptists love their enemies? We may be sure they taught it; they were never ones to shirk Jesus' hard sayings. They also had the example of Jesus in the way of the cross, which the Anabaptists generally understood as requiring the willing, non-violent acceptance of suffering. Their frequently cited experience of having been loved by God before they loved him must have reinforced the teaching and example of Jesus. At very least they had thrown away their swords, so they could not respond to their enemies in the conventional ways.

The enemy as wolf and lost lamb

Like a nation at war, Anabaptists needed to maintain identity and bind themselves together in unity through the stresses of conflict. To this end they had positive means: community, discipleship, and pacifism. But the Anabaptists also had negative ways of maintaining group cohesion. Like civilians uniting behind a war effort, Anabaptists were inclined to dehumanise their enemies by identifying them as entirely evil. They did this with the doctrine of two kingdoms: they were children of light, their enemies, children of darkness; they were lambs, their enemies, wolves. Today, when dualistic thinking is condemned as the root of many evils, the doctrine of two kingdoms has neglected merits. I would argue that without some form of a two kingdoms doctrine we are unlikely to understand fully Jesus' teachings or the demands of discipleship.

Yet the two kingdoms doctrine on its own makes a sorely deficient worldview. Christians in the Anabaptist's position are called to do the nearly impossible: to see their persecutors as both wolves and lost lambs, as both servants of evil and confused neighbours. The contempt for enemies inherent in two kingdom thinking, coupled with bitter experience, must have stained the Anabaptists' souls.

It must have seemed to Anabaptists that terms of life were being dictated to them, and they must simply respond as well and faithfully as they could. The battle could hardly have been less equal as the Anabaptists struggled against the combined forces of Church and State with nothing more than spiritual weapons. When the weak attempt

to love their powerful enemies, the results must be primarily passive and internal. Always hunted and sometimes on the run, they had no leisure to ask themselves, what can we do to express enemy-love in a positive way? If they could simply resist the spirit-deforming influence of hatred, they had accomplished much.

In these circumstances, the moment when Dirk stood poised between running on and turning back held a more than personal significance. The opportunity before him was a rare one, and he was choosing for all the Anabaptists who never had a choice either to run to freedom or to act on love for their enemies. The path Dirk took would be the testimony for a whole community of how deeply they had been penetrated by the love for enemies inherent in the cross they had chosen to bear.

In the next moment, when Dirk chose to turn back, he stood on holy ground, where things we normally hold apart were bound together. Dirk had accomplished the almost impossible: he had seen the thief catcher as both an agent of the devil *and* a helpless human brother. Only then was he free to fulfil the call to love his enemy – after all, lambs do not save wolves. He had acted on his own, and yet, perhaps, for his Anabaptist brothers and sisters as well. I expect that if we could ask Dirk why he turned to save the enemy, we would hear “Not I, but Christ in me.” Yet if Dirk was simply obeying what could not be disobeyed, his act has little meaning. In my imagination I can only resolve it thus: as Dirk walked across the ice, he was sustained but not compelled by the hand of God.

When I search the scriptures to help me understand what Dirk did, I go where I have always gone – to the hard sayings of Jesus and to the cross. I search for other passages as well, ones that speak of extravagant praise. The gospel of Mark records the story of a woman who poured a jar of costly ointment over Jesus’ head. The disciples were indignant at this appalling waste, but Jesus rebuked them, saying, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me...And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” Like this woman, Dirk Willems has done a beautiful thing for Jesus. Wherever the gospel is preached, it is good that what he has done should be told in memory of him.

‘Peacemaking Imagination’ Stories

- 1) **From: Kreider, Alan and Stuart Murray (eds.), “Coming Home,” Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2000, pp. 87-89.**

Alastair McKay: The Anabaptist heritage has reinforced my sense of the centrality of Jesus, particularly his whole life and teaching as a model and guide for us. It has helped me to understand the importance of the Church and the corporate nature of (among other things) Christian discipleship, worship and hermeneutics. It has also challenged my thinking in a number of areas, particularly on issues of coercion and non-violence – whether manifest in my innermost being and thinking, or through actual physical expression – and I have come to see the way of Jesus as a commitment

to an overflowing love which completely rejects violence towards and coercion of other people, and instead pursues peace even with those who are one's enemies.

What I have found helpful about the Anabaptist tradition is its embodiment of a way of discipleship and a form of biblical interpretation which takes Jesus and the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures seriously and seeks to live them out fully today. Here is a tradition which offers a meaningful and convincing way to aspire to follow Jesus thoroughly.

In February 1994, I took part in a three-day training course in mediation skills, organised by the London Mennonite Centre. I devoured the materials, ideas and practice we were offered. I was so excited. Suddenly, I had discovered what I wanted to be involved with – mediation and conflict transformation work. I felt that at long last I had found my work calling.

After a year of deliberation, a small group of us from the course set up a voluntary community mediation project to address neighbour disputes in the London Borough of Haringey. Within another year this proved to be non-viable because of the extensive of the other commitments of the core group of four people involved. However, the London Mennonite Centre had received a number of calls asking for training in handling conflict within the Church, and even one request to act as an intermediary in a large Baptist church on the verge of splitting. These pointers, along with our mutual interest in the area, led to our decision to try to reconstitute *Bridge Builders* as a service geared to offering training in handling conflict within congregations and a consultancy service for churches. I put together a grant application to Mennonite Central Committee (Europe) and an application to move to four days a week in my civil service work. When both applications were successful, we were able to formally launch the transformed *Bridge Builders* service in January 1996, staffed one day a week by me, with a similar time commitment from the Director of the London Mennonite Centre.

In 1996, my family and I visited the recently founded Conflict Transformation Program of Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia to explore the possibility of studying for an MA in Conflict Analysis and Transformation. In July 1997, we duly moved to Virginia for me to begin my studies, due for completion in July 1999, when we hope that I will return to head up a full-time *Bridge Builders* service at the London Mennonite Centre.

The whole of my working-life's direction has been radically changed as has my whole theological outlook and my Christian identity. And I hope – unless Jesus returns or takes me early himself – there is still much of this exciting journey which lies ahead, uncharted, and yet prepared by God. It is an adventure such as I had never foreseen, but for which I am heartily grateful to have the opportunity to journey in.

2) From: MCC Peace Office Newsletter, January-March 2002

Kanyatsi Mahirane came to the peace course at the African Peacebuilding Institute as a refugee. He had worked for several years for the Anglican Church promoting economic development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. But his work had

led to attacks against him and the bishop of the area by rebel groups. Both he and the bishop had been jailed twice because of accusations against them. Finally they decided that they could no longer continue their work and fled. Kanyatsi fled to nearby Zambia because of his close working relationships with Anglicans near the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. During his exile he enrolled in the peacebuilding course as a way to further his work for development.

Now as a strong advocate for the principle “No development without peace; no peace without development,” Kanyatsi is in high demand back in his home province in Congo. Even though he lacks funding to support his work or an office to work from, people from many churches in the area flock to his door with requests for workshops on peace and development. If they can gather enough money for fuel to get him to the workshop, he arrives and begins facilitating. People bring their own food from their meagre supplies and the workshops continue. Kanyatsi is feeding the hunger of the people for peace just as Jesus fed the people on the hillsides.

3) From: “Editing and Training for Gender Equity in Sudan,” MCC Peace Office Newsletter, January 2000.

Flora Gune Kasmiro edits a magazine that covers issues of women and the church at the University for Women in Khartoum, Sudan. She graduated from the University in 1993. But it was not easy to enter academics as a woman in Sudan. She says, “It was not only in the north that women were not encouraged to go to school but even in the south, there were limited resources for women to be given the chance to further their studies. Now I think people have come to recognise that women can come to be even more accepted than men at times.”

In addition to her duties as magazine editor, Kasmiro is involved in the Peace Center at the University for Women. She and several colleagues have offered training in gender and development and conflict resolution. The peace centre provides training to students with the goal of spreading peace and justice information throughout Sudan as the students graduate and return to their home areas.

How do Sudanese traditionally make peace in village disputes? “If the dispute is between two clans, both clans come and sit facing one another under a very big tree,” says Kasmiro. “The chief of each clan is at the front, facing the other chief and clan.” Of course, the women are not involved in this. They are just busy there cooking and working behind the scenes. The chiefs will decide. Of course, there will be some talk like ‘I will do this, and some of your people will do that, and some of my people will do this.’ When the solution is reached and agreed on, drinks and a meal are shared. A drink together is a sign that things are being settled now and we have to take some water at least to dissolve whatever it is that stands between us. And then something is supposed to be slaughtered. If it is a very big issue, of course, at least a bull. If it is something minor it will be a sheep or a goat.”

What about the role of women in such a dispute? “In some cases the women see something going wrong and tell the chief, or the men do nothing to solve a problem and the women will pressure them. And there are some women who are very strong in

the community—they can go to the chief or elder of the community and say, ‘I have seen something going wrong in the community.’”

Is the role of women changing over time? Will a woman some day take the chief’s role? “If the community is open to this society having contact with people in the cities, eventually it will take place one day. Women will start realising that their role is not only cooking and talking behind the scenes. There are women who have got very strong qualities of leadership. If they have that chance of also helping some other women to be strong and speak to the chiefs, they can do something. The change will take place—not, of course, in the very near future but over time.”

4) From: “Teaching math and peace in Serbia,” MCC Peace Office Newsletter, January 2000.

Both her grandparents are Orthodox Christians. She was baptised as a Roman Catholic. So Marijana Ajzenkol is in a good position to work with an inter-religious non-governmental organisation in Yugoslavia. And that is exactly what she is planning to do.

Ajzenkol is a high-school mathematics teacher in Belgrade. But she has devoted many hours of her own time in the last several years to peacebuilding activities. Before coming to the Summer Peacebuilding Institute, Ajzenkol worked for the Center for Strategic International Studies on a project in Belgrade. “It was a conflict resolution training program for religious people, lay people and clergy. I organised meetings and seminars and interfaith dialogues between Muslims and Christians. A couple of days before the NATO bombing, I was also in the process of registering the first interreligious NGO in Yugoslavia.”

I asked about her ethnic background. “My father is Croat, my mother is Serb.”

“What is it like for you to be part Croat and part Serb? Has this created difficulties for you as a person?”

“No, I am proud of it and when I am asked who I am, I say one-half is Serb and one-half is Croat. Truly I am sorry that I must explain because it was much easier when we were living in Yugoslavia together before the changes. It was easier. All of us were loving each other and nobody cared.”

I asked how she developed the vision for the interreligious centre. “I am not educated for doing this, but I got a blessing from the Serbian archbishop. He gave me the blessing and recommended me to continue to work with him because I said I would like it if faith could re-establish a system of values in a society that I felt was going down somehow. Basically what I did was relationship building. I have been working at this for three years.”

When asked how the NATO bombing would affect her work, Ajzenkol replied, “I want to have hope and certainly wish that I will be able to continue the work, because I think that it is very important. Just three days before the bombing I received word that I had funds to organise a meeting in the Sandrik region, which is a region

between Kosovo and central Serbia that has a Muslim majority. I hope I will be able to do this when I return, but I cannot say that I will be able.”

What has she learned at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute that might be helpful in her work? “When I was in Yugoslavia I felt a little bit insecure because I was not educated in this. But coming here I have a little bit more education. I have more skills. And I got an answer to the question, How come people always came to my invitation? Why did they somehow listen to me? I realised that there is just one rule that could help you. There is not a theory about reconciliation, there is just one simple question: Care for people. I really do care for people and I do love the people in Yugoslavia. I don’t have any prejudice among people, whether it be religion, gender, education, or whatever. And I think that maybe that is the best skill you can have—to be sensitive enough to feel their needs, to care a little bit more. I know what they like to eat, who has what disease, what they don’t like, and what they care about.”

5) From: Kraybill, Ronald S., *Repairing the Breach: Ministering in Community Conflict*, Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980, pp. 22-23

“Observers in a Farm Labor Dispute”

Mix together United Farm Workers, Teamsters, unaffiliated workers, growers, vineyard foremen and sheriff’s deputies and you have an explosive combination. In the summer of 1973 the Central Valley of California had been rocked by violent eruptions of that same mixture. But the next year a new ingredient was added when people of faith, clergy and laity alike, were present a points of possible confrontation. They were third-party observers, wearing orange vests emblazoned with the Spanish and English words “Observer/Observador.” The bilingual two- and three-person teams stood apart from the adversaries with paper and pencils, ready to report each day’s activities.

Since Cesar Chavez, Larry Itliong, and others began the organisation of farm labourers in 1962, Delano and the surrounding areas of Kern and Tulare counties had been the centre of the farm labour dispute. Without a farm labour law to channel the conflict through secret ballot representation, elections there had brought recurring violence in the fields and communities. With the new interest of the Teamsters’ Union in the organisation of the field workers, the summer of 1973 was particularly violent with many confrontations, numerous arrests, and one person killed on a picket line near Delano.

In an effort to avoid such violent repetitions, religious leaders formed the Inter-faith Committee of Concern, whose intent was: “to mobilise the good will of the community in declaring that while there may be conflict there must not be violence to persons or property.” Observer teams were to be present at potentially abrasive locations in order to give “unbiased and objective reports of the events.” This third party presence sought the endorsement and co-operation of all parties involved, who in turn would receive regular reports along with the general public and media.

The committee approached law enforcement agencies, including the sheriff, police, and district attorneys in each jurisdiction; the Teamsters’ Union; growers through

their various organisations; and the United Farm Worker's Union. Although sometimes wary of church involvement, all parties accepted the plan.

The response by people from many churches was mixed for the proposal seemed filled with many dangers. Not the least of these fears was the fear of actual physical danger for observers, and the fear of renewing the painful conflicts in the churches resulting from the long-term controversy. Most of the observers were drawn from the larger urban setting of Bakersfield, which was a little more insulated from the controversy. The community of Delano with its population of 15,000 yielded fewer participants because of the years of personal, painful conflict. Congregations were not asked to endorse the program officially but individuals were invited to volunteer. Before the summer ended over sixty people of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faith had spent many, long hours in the hot sun together.

During July and August 1974, the Inter-faith Committee of Concern fielded two- and three-person observer teams for a month in the grape vineyards south of Bakersfield and for a month during the harvest in the two-county area around Delano. From the break of day through mid-afternoon, the teams followed picket parties from field to field, often forming processions with union and law enforcement vehicles. It was often hard even to find places from which to observe and not be identified with any of the parties.

All in all it was a non-violent season in the grape fields. Minor incidents of property destruction and a brief period of "pushing and shoving" were the extent of the violence. There were no physical attacks upon persons observed. The many sharp verbal exchanges that might have escalated into physical violence were "cooled" by the self-restraint of one party or another.

Media representatives and community leaders credited the observer teams with keeping the conflict in the fields minimal. The members of the committee credited the participants with self-restraint. Reports of the committee were reprinted almost verbatim in the local newspaper. These reports discouraged gossip and rumour by providing accurate reports of activities in the fields.

6) From: Hutchinson, Ruth, "Faith and Practice – Ruth Lavery," *Lion and Lamb*, Issue 26, Autumn 2000.

Ruth Lavery, a member of the Equality Commission and a part-time chair of the Independent Appeals Tribunals, is a native of Belfast. Brought up on a farm on the outskirts of the city, she now lives with her husband and seven-year-old daughter in the Lisburn area. Until recently she lectured in the law school in Queen's University, specialising in the law as it applies to children and to vulnerable adults. Throughout her life she has worshipped in Windsor Baptist Church, where she is a member. Her reasons for studying law are rooted in her upbringing.

I studied law partly because I thought it would be an intellectual challenge. I also thought an understanding of law would give an insight into the nature of power and authority in society. The law sets the parameters of what it is possible for one person to do to another, and I have always been fascinated by the way people like to control

one another. In particular I grew up aware of the way women in a rural society often had very little say in decision making, often working hard on farms at the expense of their own aspirations, and without recognition in terms of gaining property rights. In particular I was aware that women often shouldered caring responsibilities for children and older relatives, without much tangible recognition of the value of their work. I thought that knowledge of the law would give me an understanding of the responsibility of the state to provide care. The vulnerability of carers and cared for and the role of law in family life has been a focus throughout my working life.

Concern about injustice takes many forms. My own preoccupation has been with the need to protect and empower people who are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and with equitable treatment of carers. I would like to see greater emphasis on carers having a right to support and a say in the limit of their responsibility. I don't think that the most vulnerable people in society are really of central importance to the political agenda. Part of the value of equality and human rights provisions is that they provide legal mechanisms with the potential to help to counter this. I accept, however, that the law is very limited as a means of ensuring justice in the home and family.

I firmly believe that God cares about each individual and that each person is equally important, regardless of what they have or what they do. I look at the law as it applies to children and to vulnerable adults in light of this principle. The image that I held to when teaching child law was of Christ's displeasure with the disciples when they kept children from him. We need to be vigilant that children's real needs are not sidelined and that they are a central policy concern. For instance, discussion of childcare often centres on meeting a parent's need to work, rather than on the child's need for care.

I can't remember a time when I was not concerned with spiritual issues. In particular, how to relate to God and what happened after death concerned me even as a child. I was fortunate to have a Christian upbringing with parents who never directly preached or tried to enforce belief, but who were very positive role models. I have also, however, been aware that faith cannot be inherited, and that I must decide for myself whether to follow Christ or not. This is a commitment that I have had to reaffirm as I have gone through life, particularly when the implications of living as a Christian were demanding.

I hesitate to spell out how my faith has influenced my working life. It is very easy to claim Christian attitudes and values without really living them out. I have no doubt that I would have been very committed to my work and to some vision of social justice even if I was not a Christian. The key difference it has made is in my understanding of the importance of what I do. I have learnt that my value does not lie in what I do but simply in being loved by God and by other people. This is liberating and allows me to enjoy work, rather than seeking self-endorsement from it. I also believe that the value of a task lies in how it is done, not what it is, so that I don't really divide my life into work and non-work. Much of my work as an academic, and now as a Commissioner and chairperson, is done in private. No one really knows how full my preparation for work is. No one is really going to check every footnote. But I know that God sees everything I do. In an increasingly 'results orientated' society this awareness is a check to taking short cuts and to concentrating on only doing well what other people see. Without this I am quite sure small dishonesties would have crept in and I would be looking for the approval of other people more than I do.

More generally, a faith in meaningful life after death gives a perspective on the relative importance of both problems and achievements. I hope that my faith has given me a willingness to serve others when working. It is a real struggle to remember that work is not primarily about self-advancement or achievement or earning money but about service. I think that increasingly Christians will find that such values are at odds with the attitude to work in society.

I think that I have tried to work out my priorities and commitments irrespective of particular pressure to do so. I think it is important to have a belief in the value of what you are spending time and effort on, and to know why you are doing so. One defining event was the birth of my daughter. It didn't change what I thought was important, but it meant that work had to fit in with caring for her. This was a privilege, not a problem. I went from working full-time to part-time and gave up many of the outside connections which I valued, for instance with the Western Health and Social Services Board and with Age Concern (NI). Ultimately, I suppose it led to my leaving academic life and finding a way of working which is more family-friendly. It also made me more passionate about the welfare of children, and aware of how much children are at the mercy of their parents' choices.

All my natural inclinations are to plan ahead and to work towards specific goals. I can honestly say that, at the moment, I have no definite sense of direction. While once this would have worried me, I am learning to live in the present and, hopefully, to be able to trust my future to God. This is easy to say, but I think that Christians must always have an open mind about the direction of their life and work.

'Peacemaking Worship' Resources

PRAYERS

-- Ferocious God, We Fear Your Peace (*Prayers Plainly Spoken*, 61)

Ferocious God, we fear your peace. We say we want peace, but we confess that war and violence capture our imagination and our spirits. Violate our violence with the transforming power of your love. Wrench us from all hatreds and loves that are the breeding ground of our violence. We cannot will that your peace come, but through the Spirit you make it possible for us to live in your peace. So fire us with that Spirit that the world might be flooded with your reconciling kingdom. Amen.

-- Prayer for Reconciliation (*Celtic Daily Prayer*, 215)

Lord,
let our memory
provide no shelter
for grievance against each other.

Lord,
let our heart
provide no harbour
for hatred of each other.

Lord,
let our tongue
be no accomplice
in the judgement of each other.

Prayer (*Prayers Encircling the World*, 289)

To you, Creator of nature and humanity, of truth and beauty, I pray:
Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victim of all wars and violence among individuals and nations.
Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war.
Hear my voice when I beg you to instil into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice, and the joy of fellowship.
O God, hear my voice, and grant unto the world your everlasting peace.

Pope John Paul II

The shadow of the dove (*Human Rites*, 79)

When the dawn's ribbon of glory around the world returns
and the earth emerges from sleep –

May the shadow of the dove be seen,
as she flits across moor and city.
Over the warm breast of the earth she flies, her
shadow falling on the watcher in the tower
the refugee in the ditch,
the weary soldier at the gate.

May the shadow of peace
fall across the all night sitting of a council;
across the tense negotiators around the table.

May the shadow of hope
be cast across the bars of a hostage cell
filling with momentary light,
rooms tense with conflict, bringing a brief respite:
a slither of gold across the dark.

May she fly untiring across flooded fields:
across a city divided by hate and fear,
across a town wreathed in smoke.

May the shadow of reconciliation,
the dove of peace with healing in her wings,
be felt and seen and turned towards
as she makes righteousness shine like the dawn;
the justice of her cause like the noonday sun.

Holy Spirit of love
Bring healing, bring peace.

Prayer (*Prayers for Peacemakers*, p. 16)

God, we confess that we are frightened and humbled by the violence and hatred that
we see rampant in
our society and feel sometimes in ourselves. Forgive us for our lack of understanding
and love. Help us to
bear up under hatred and persecution and courageously stand for peace and justice.
Amen.

Make Me an Instrument of thy Peace (*Prayers from the Heart*, 108)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

AMEN

Francis of Assisi

Prayer (*Mennonite Hymnal* No. 756)

O God,
for too long the world
has called us to war,
and our dead lie sprawled
across the bleeding centuries.

But you
break the bow and shatter the spear,
calling us to sow the seeds of peace
in the midst of despair.

In tenderness,
may we take the tiniest sprouts
and plant them
where they can safely grow
into blossoms of hope.

AMEN

Prayer – to be used in a communion service (*Mennonite Hymnal* No. 790)

Blessed are you, O God.
You set aside
this bread as a sign of your Son's broken body,
this cup as a sign of his shed blood,
this basin as a sign of his servanthood.
Through them you have made us partakers of Christ
and of one another.
As we go forth, give us grace

to count others better than ourselves,
to love our enemies,
to seek peace.

Send the Spirit of truth to keep alive in us
what Jesus taught and did,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.

AMEN

Prayer (*Mennonite Hymnal* No. 696)

God of love and justice,
we long for peace within and peace without.
We long for harmony in our families,
for serenity in the midst of struggle,
and for commitment to each other's growth.
We long for the day when our homes
will be a dwelling place for your love.

Yet we confess that we are often anxious;
we do not trust each other,
and we harbour violence.
We are not willing to take the risks
and make the sacrifices that love requires.

Look upon us with kindness and grace.
Rule in our homes and in all the world;
show us how to walk in your paths,
through the mercy of our Saviour.

AMEN

Father of Lights Prayer

Father of Lights, help us to carry within ourselves the suffering of the people of Iraq, especially now as war draws near and as their homes and families come under attack again from an enemy that does not even know them. Merciful Creator, help us to turn that suffering into understanding, and understanding into action, and action into the abiding peace that you embodied when you came to this world in human form. Forgive us for our apathy and lack of regard for others. Do not let us forget the mercy you have given us so generously, and that we as believers must show to those our nation goes to war against. Father, protect the innocent, convert the hearts of the warriors, comfort the pain and agony and fear that are being felt in places unknown to us, in the hidden shadows and alleys and houses where people are frightened, where children seek protection from the coming of the unseen attackers, from the jets and missiles in the sheltering sky. Only you, Father, know where the worst suffering is tonight, at this moment, all over this hurting and devastated world. Bring your mercy

Leader: We are of the kingdom on earth. In all holiness we are called to create a just society which allows for the human dignity of all; that allows people life, food, freedom to walk in their own land.

Response: We are the branches of the vine.

Leader: We are called to reject the false gods of weaponry systems and economic systems that are killing people both of starvation and 'fall out' and violating the earth's resources.

Response: We are the branches of the vine.

Leader: We are of the Kingdom of heaven on earth. We are called to vulnerability, we are called to strength, we are called to laughter, we are called to tears, we are called to the depths of love.

Response: We are the branches of the vine.

Responsive reading (adapted from "A Mennonite Statement on Violence" and Matthew 5 and Matthew 26)

Leader Jesus suffered violence

All but would not commit violence.

Men He told his followers not to use violence to prevent him from being arrested.

Leader Jesus rejected the use of violence for self-defence.

Women He taught his disciples not only to avoid committing violence,

All but actively to love their enemies.

Children Jesus taught his disciples to avoid murder and insult,

Leader and to be reconciled with their brothers and sisters.

All By his word and example, Jesus taught us to respond to our enemies with

surprising acts of mercy and non-violence.

Call and Response (*Mennonite Hymnal* No. 711)

Leader: Jesus taught us to speak of hope as the coming of God's kingdom.

*ALL: We believe that God is at work in our world,
turning hopeless and evil situations into good.
We believe that goodness and justice and love
will triumph in the end
and that tyranny and oppression cannot last
forever.*

*One day all tears will be wiped away;
the lamb will lie down with the lion,
and justice will roll down like a mighty stream.*

Leader: True peace and true reconciliation are not only desired, they are assured and guaranteed in Christ.

*ALL: This is our faith.
This is our hope.*

Prayer for three voices

Psalm 118 reprinted from *The Liturgical Psalter*

(Readers could be located in different parts of the worship area)

1,2,3

Lord, hear our prayer.

1

Hear my prayer.

I am not strong, certainly not courageous. But sometimes I have high expectations. When those are not met, I become angry. Then violence seethes from my heart and my mind, from my tongue, my hands.

O my God, give me the courage to forgive myself. Remind me every day of my value in your eyes. Lord, give me the strength to follow your example of love.

1,2,3

Lord, hear our prayer.

2

Hear my prayer.

I long for freedom. Yet I often want my own way at the expense of my friend's freedom, regardless of my friend's wishes. O God, help me to see that there is no freedom in controlling any other. Remind me every day of the precious value of the ones with whom I share each day's moments.

1,2,3

Lord, hear our prayer.

3

Hear my prayer. I am overwhelmed by the evil in this world. The whole earth is corrupted by rage, blind hatred, and the terrible potential for indescribable destruction. Lord Jesus, walk with me through the night. With your powerful love, cast out my fears.

1,2,3

Lord, hear my prayer.

Hear our prayer.

Micah 4:1-4 (*Mennonite Hymnal* No. 833)

ALL:

*In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains, and shall be raised up above the
hills.*

Leader:

Peoples shall stream to it,
and many nations shall come and say:

People:

**“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”**

Leader:

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

People:

**He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far
away; they shall beat their swords into
plowshares, and their spears into pruning
hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;**

Leader: but they shall all sit under their own vines
and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
ALL: *for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.*

Call to Worship (*Prayers for Peacemakers*, p7)

This earth is Holy, it is the Lord's.
In love we come together to proclaim the Good News that speaks of a quality of life
that is
freedom in justice,
freedom in peace,
freedom to breathe,
freedom to plant,
freedom to walk without fences,
freedom to be at home on our own land.
We pray for this place.
We pray that we may be instruments of God's peace and justice.

Act of Penitence (*Prayers for Peacemakers*, p19)

Leader: Lord, you made the world and everything in it; you created the human
race of one stock, and you gave us the earth for our own possession.
Response: Break down the walls that separate us and unite us in a single body.
Leader: Lord, we have been divisive in our thinking, in our speech, in our action
we have classified, bombed and imprisoned one another; we have fenced
each other out by hatred and prejudice.
Response: Break down the wall that separate us and unite us in a single body.
Leader: Lord, you mean us to be a single people, ruled by peace, feasting in
freedom, freed from injustice, truly human, women and men, responsible
and responsive in the life we lead, the love we share, the relationships we
create.
Response: Break down the walls that separate us and unite us in a single body.
Leader: Lord, we shall need ever new insights into the truth, awareness of your
will for all humanity, courage to do what is right even when it is not
allowed, persistence in undermining unjust structures until they crumble
into dust, grace to exercise a ministry of reconciliation.
Response: Break down the walls that separate us and unite us in a single body.
Leader: Lord, share out among us the tongues of your spirit, as we repent of our
misdoings, that we may each burn with compassion, for all who hunger
for freedom and humanness; that we may be doers of the Word and so
speak with credibility about the wonderful things you have done.
**Response: Lord, forgive us; direct us in ways we do not yet discern and equip us
for the service of reconciliation and liberation in you world. Amen.**

WORSHIP SERVICE FOR PEACE

(NOTE: Replace the news items with more current ones to update the litany.)

Call to Worship ~~We gather together here today to pray for peace. As we gather to pray for peace.~~
(Voice 1): we reflect on what we are being called to do in order to be peacemakers in our world. Prayer is not a substitute for action, but challenges and prepares us for action. In the book, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, Donald McNeill, Douglas Morrison and Henri Nouwen share the following reflection: “If the emphasis on prayer were an escape from direct engagement with the many needs and pains of our world, then it would not be a real discipline of the compassionate life. Prayer challenges us to be fully aware of the world in which we live, and to present it with all its needs and pains to God. It is this compassionate prayer that calls for compassionate action. The disciple is called to follow the Lord not only into the desert and onto the mountain to pray but also into the valley of tears, where help is needed, and onto the cross, where humanity is in agony. Prayer and action, therefore, can never be seen as contradictory or mutually exclusive. Prayer without action grows into powerless pietism, and action without prayer degenerates into questionable manipulation....In prayer we meet Christ, and in him all human suffering. In service, we meet people, and in them, the suffering Christ.”

(1 minute silence)

Voice 2:

Let us pray: O God,
for too long the world
has called us to war,
and our dead lie sprawled
across the bleeding centuries.
But you
break the bow and shatter the spear,
calling us to sow the seeds of peace
in the midst of despair.
In tenderness,
may we take the tiniest sprouts
and plant them
where they can safely grow
into blossoms of hope. AMEN (from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*)

(2 minute silence)

Voice 1:

We pray for a peaceful resolution to the escalating conflict in Kosovo.

(1 minute silence)

Voice 2:

We pray for real peace for all peoples in Israel.

(1 minute silence)

Voice 3:

We pray for an end to the suffering in Iraq.

(1 minute silence)

Voice 1:

Yesterday, in Indonesia, six students were killed and others injured by police bullets. We grieve with the people of Indonesia and pray for a peaceful solution to the social conflict there.

(1 minute silence)

Voice 2:

We pray that the killing of the bishop in Guatemala will not undermine the fragile peace there.

(1 minute silence)

Voice 3:

Let us pray together:

All:

Listening God,
you hear our prayers before we speak,
yet welcome our praying;
therefore we come with confidence
to lay our requests before you.

Leader (Voice 3): We pray for the whole people of God, for faithfulness and strength to persevere in righteousness.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the nations of the world,
for all leaders
and for those who make policy decisions.
We pray for the commonwealth of our global community.

People: Lord, hear our prayer

Leader: We pray for those who are overcome by violence,
for victims of injustice or oppression,
and for those in poverty or pain.
We pray for all who need healing and peace.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those who endure trials,
for those who are dying,
and for those who mourn.
We pray for all who need comfort and hope.

People: Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: You have heard the prayers of your people, O God.
We rest in the comfort of your care,
as we pray in Jesus' name.

All: Amen

Leader (Voice 1): Jesus taught us to speak of hope as the coming of God's kingdom

All: We believe that God is at work in our world
turning hopeless and evil situations into good.
We believe that goodness and justice and love
will triumph in the end
and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever.
One day all tears will be wiped away;
the lamb will lie down with the lion,
and justice will roll down like a mighty stream.
This is our faith.
This is our hope.
This is our call.
(The above litanies were modified from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*)
We will be listening to a spoken hymn. The hymn is entitled "O God of Every Nation" and was written by William W. Reid:

Voice 1: O God of every nation,
Of every race and land,
Redeem your whole creation
With your almighty hand;
Where hate and fear divide us,
And bitter threats are hurled,
In love and mercy guide us,
And heal our strife-torn world

Voice 2: From search for wealth and power
And scorn of truth and right,
From trust in bombs that shower
Destruction through the night,
From pride of race and station
And blindness to your way,
Deliver every nation,
Eternal God, we pray.

Voice 3: Lord, strengthen all who labour
That all may find release

From fear of rattling sabre,
From dread of war's increase;
When hope and courage falter,
Lord, let your voice be heard;
With faith that none can alter,
Your servants under gird.
All: Keep bright in us the vision
Of days when war shall cease,
When hatred and division
Give way to love and peace,
Till dawns the morning glorious
When truth and justice reign,
And Christ shall rule victorious
O'er all the world's domain.

LITANY OF RESISTANCE

by Jim Loney (Christian Peacemaker Team Reservist), Toronto, Ontario

One: Let us pray - You have learned how it is said
All: Love your neighbor and hate your enemy
One: But I say this to you who are listening
All: Love you enemies
One: Do good to those who hate you
All: Bless those who curse you
One: Be compassionate
All: Judge not
One: Do not condemn
All: Grant pardon
One: Because the amount you measure out
All: Is the amount you will be given back
One: Let everything you do
All: Be done in love
One: Blessed are the poor
All: For theirs is the kingdom of God
One: Blessed are they who mourn now
All: For they will be comforted
One: Blessed are the meek
All: For they will inherit the earth
One: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice
All: For they will be satisfied
One: Blessed are the merciful
All: For they will be shown mercy
One: Blessed are the pure in heart
All: For they will see God
One: Blessed are the peacemakers
All: For they will be called the daughters and sons of God
One: Blessed are they who are persecuted because of righteousness

All: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

One: Deliver us, O God

All: Guide our feet in the ways of your peace.

One: In humility, we ask

All: Hear our prayer. Grant us peace.

One: In humility, we ask

All: Hear our prayer. Grant us peace.

One: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world

All: Have mercy on us

One: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world

All: Free us from the bondage of sin and death

One: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world

All: Hear our prayer. Grant us peace.

One: For the victims of war

All: Have mercy

One: Women, men and children

All: Have mercy

One: The maimed and the crippled

All: Have mercy

One: The abandoned and the homeless

All: Have mercy

One: The imprisoned and the tortured

All: Have mercy

One: The widowed and the orphaned

All: Have mercy

One: The bleeding and the dying

All: Have mercy

One: The weary and the desperate

All: Have mercy

One: The lost and the forsaken

All: Have mercy

One: For those fleeing in terror

All: Have mercy

One: For our scorched and blackened earth

All: Forgive us for we know not what we do

One: For the scandal of billions wasted in war

All: Forgive us for we know not what we do

One: For our leaders who wage war in our name

All: Forgive us for we know not what we do

One: For our Caesars and our Herods

All: Forgive us for we know not what we do

One: For our generals and tacticians

All: Forgive us for we know not what we do

One: For the men and women in battle

All: Forgive us for we know not what we do

One: For the men and women training for war

All: Forgive us for we know not what we do

One: For the scientists and researchers
All: Forgive us for we know not what we do
One: For the arms dealers and the merchants of death
All: Forgive us for we know not what we do
One: For our taxes that fund the evil of war
All: Forgive us for we know not what we do
One: Deliver us, O God
All: Guide our feet into the ways of peace
One: In humility, we ask
All: Hear our prayer. Grant us peace.

One: From the arrogance of power
All: Deliver us
One: From the poverty of violence
All: Deliver us
One: From the tyranny of greed
All: Deliver us
One: From the ugliness of racism
All: Deliver us
One: From the politics of hypocrisy
All: Deliver us
One: From the hysteria of nationalism
All: Deliver us
One: From the cancer of hatred
All: Deliver us
One: From the seduction of wealth
All: Deliver us
One: From the addiction of control
All: Deliver us
One: From the avarice of imperialism
All: Deliver us
One: From the idolatry of national security
All: Deliver us
One: From the despair of fatalism
All: Deliver us
One: From the violence of apathy
All: Deliver us
One: From the filth of war
All: Deliver us
One: From the profanity of war
All: Deliver us
One: From the necessity of war
All: Deliver us
One: From the madness of war
All: Deliver us
One: From the blasphemy of war
All: Deliver us
One: From the brutality of war
All: Deliver us
One: From the demonic waste of war and of preparation for war

All: Deliver us
One: Deliver us, O God
All: Guide our feet into the ways of peace
One: In humility, we ask
All: Hear our prayer. Grant us peace.

One: Obedience to God comes before obedience to human authority
All: Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's
One: Let your will be done, not mine
All: With the help of God's grace
One: Let us resist and confront evil everywhere we find it
All: With the help of God's grace
One: With the waging of war
All: We will not comply
One: With all preparation and training for war
All: We will not comply
One: With the forces of fear
All: We will not comply
One: With the legalization of murder
All: We will not comply
One: With the legalization of genocide
All: We will not comply
One: With laws that betray human life
All: We will not comply
One: With the bombing of civilians
All: We will not comply
One: With the bombing of cities
All: We will not comply
One: With the violating of our earth
All: We will not comply
One: With the destruction of peoples
All: We will not comply
One: With the raping of women
All: We will not comply
One: With governments that are blind to the sanctity of life
All: We will not comply
One: With economic structures that impoverish and dehumanize
All: We will not comply
One: With the manipulation and control of public information
All: We will not comply
One: With economics that manufacture instruments of death
All: We will not comply
One: With economics that practice the use of instruments of death
All: We will not comply
One: With the perpetuation of violence
All: We will not comply
One: With structures that divide rich from poor
All: We will not comply
One: With the hypocrisy of political maneuvering
All: We will not comply

One: With the help of God's grace
All: We will struggle for justice
One: With the compassion of Christ
All: We will stand for what is true
One: With God's abiding kindness
All: We will love even our enemies
One: With the love of Christ
All: We will resist all evil
One: With God's unending faithfulness
All: We will work to build the beloved community
One: With Christ's passionate love
All: We will carry the cross
One: With God's overwhelming goodness
All: We will walk as pilgrims of peace
One: With Christ's fervent conviction
All: We will labour for truth
One: With God's infinite mercy
All: We will live in solidarity with all people
One: In the end there are three things that last
All: Faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love
One: Let us abide in God's love
All: Thanks be to God.

EASTER SERVICE FOR PEACE

(From Prayers for Peacemakers, pp32-33)

Notes: In the Christian Church in early years the Easter Vigil was the time of baptism when the catechumens were received into full membership of the Christian community. Before dawn the paschal fire was lit, proclaiming the Resurrection and the new light shared in the community.

Form of worship:

1. The ceremony of New Fire
2. The light of Christ proclaimed
3. Baptismal vows renewed
4. The proclamation of Christ's resurrection
5. A Eucharist for Easter

The ceremony of New Fire: a fire is lit outside the church, and a paschal candle is lit from it. This is carried into the church, with proclamations of the light of Christ coming into the world.

Baptismal vows: the paschal candle is placed in the centre of the otherwise unlit church. An anthem could be sung, or a reading proclaimed (for example John 1:1-5). The individual candles, held by all the congregation, are lit from the paschal candle, and words from a baptismal service are used to reaffirm our belief in the one true God.

The proclamation of Christ's resurrection: all lights are lit, bells rung, fanfares played. The Minister says: 'Christ is risen' to which all reply: 'He is risen indeed, alleluia!' (repeated three times). A play or dance could be performed. The peace of Christ is shared around the congregation, and a Eucharist offered. At the dismissal, Easter eggs could be handed out, or breakfast shared together.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE SERVICE

(From Prayers for Peacemakers, pp37-38)

17 September (1945) – United Nations General Assembly founded.

Also suitable for the Week of Prayer for World Peace (3rd week in October), especially United Nations Day (24 October) or the World Day of Prayer for Peace (Peace Sunday) at the beginning of the year.

Form of Worship:

1. Introduction and processional hymn
2. Prayers (during which candles are lit)
3. Silence
4. Readings and hymns
5. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
6. The Universal Prayer for Peace
7. Sharing the peace/peal of bells
8. Blessing and vigil (or concert)

Notes: International co-operation is an awe-inspiring task and it should of course be tackled at the highest levels. But it should not be considered too large an issue for even the smallest country church. Where there are several ethnic and religious groups living close together, it would be logical to share the worship and to highlight links between the local parish/neighbourhood with brothers and sisters around the world.

Since the Second World War, people have been keeping one minute's silence at 9pm to pray for peace; this should be included specifically at some point. The service could begin outside, as a witness to passers-by, with banners, the UN flag, globe, paper doves, etc. UN literature could be distributed and part of the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be read. Choose international music and dances, if possible, and make it the occasion perhaps for an international party with food from around the world prepared by members of the local community from different countries. If you have an interfaith or international congregation make sure your selection of prayers, readings and songs is appropriate.

The Just War Criteria

The pacifism of the early churches did not suit the new Christian empire once the church had come in from the margins to the centre and felt responsible for maintaining and defending this empire. A new and more “realistic” approach was needed to issues of war and peace.

This was provided by Augustine, late in the fourth century, whose towering influence on medieval Christianity ensured that on this (as on many other issues) his views would prevail over earlier, more radical approaches.

Augustine lived in the period when church and state were now partners in a society that was regarded as fast becoming Christian. Christian citizens owed obedience both to the church and to the state, whose interests generally coincided. So if the Christian state declared war, Christians were expected to fight.

But the memory of earlier hesitations about fighting and killing were too strong to ignore. A new theology or theory of warfare was needed that permitted participation but recognised concerns about peace and justice. Augustine outlined what in time would become the Just War theory, which (in the form it took after other thinkers had worked on Augustine’s ideas) has six main components:

1. War must be for a just **CAUSE**: in self-defence, in defence of others, in response to a deliberate act of unprovoked aggression.
2. War must be with a good **INTENTION**: to rectify evil and establish good, to bring about a more just order, to restore peace as soon as possible, not for vengeance or to establish supremacy over others.
3. There must be a reasonable **EXPECTATION** of success: that more good than evil will result.
4. War must be waged by just **MEANS**: proportionate rather than excessive, so that the results of victory outweigh the suffering caused to achieve this. Action taken must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants, civilians must not be harmed, no intrinsically wrong means may be used, and terms of surrender must be equitable and merciful.
5. War must be the **ONLY** possible way of removing evil: the last resort after trying all other ways of responding through negotiating or sanctions.
6. War must be declared and fought by a legitimate **AUTHORITY**: normally this is the state, though in situations of civil war this is less clear.

This new approach was based on a mixture of Old Testament quotations and the classical pagan tradition of thinkers like Plato (Greek) and Cicero (Roman), though the principles owed far more to paganism than to biblical perspectives. Augustine dealt with awkward New Testament material by distinguishing attitudes and actions

(so killing can be loving) or personal and political spheres (loving personal enemies but killing state enemies).

The Just War theory does not glorify war (as the crusade theory does). It regards war as unwelcome but sometimes necessary, and attempts to spell out the conditions that need to be met if Christians are to participate. It is based on certain presuppositions:

1. Nothing in the Bible precludes Christians participating in war: Jesus' call to peace is eschatological.
2. War is sometimes the lesser of two evils and necessary to achieve justice.
3. War is a form of extra-territorial policing, a legitimate extension of government.
4. Pacifism is unrealistic and irresponsible in a sinful world – passivism.

Augustine was clearly not fully at ease with his approach to war but, as with his teaching on tithing that replaced the earlier radical approach to economics, he could not imagine that the earlier pacifism was feasible in this new context. He looked back wistfully but presented this theory as a grim necessity, advising soldiers to repent in advance.

But it has been adopted as the orthodox view of war by almost all denominations. It has been tweaked and interpreted in various ways by theologians and philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, Hugo Grotius, Jean Calvin, John Locke and Reinhold Niebuhr. Some have been enthusiastic advocates, some have indicated this is a compromise position – for example, Aquinas excluded monks and clergy.

How do we assess this approach?

- Are the presuppositions correct?
- Can this approach be reconciled with the Bible and especially with Jesus?
- Is pacifism unrealistic?
- Is war a form of policing?
- Is the history encouraging?
- How has the theory been used?
- Which wars has it actually prevented?
- When has the church declared a war unjust?
- Why is church history so full of religious wars between supposedly Christian states?
- Can the criteria actually be applied?
- Are they too vague – what is appropriate?
- Can any individual or congregation know enough facts to judge?
- Can modern forms of warfare ever meet these demanding criteria?
- Why has the church opposed each new weapon of war before accepting it?

'Action For Peace' Stories

1) From: *The Mennonite*, Dec. 24, 2002

From coast to coast, Mennonite Church USA congregations are declaring their support for peace and opposition to war with Iraq.

On Dec. 8, Pasadena (California) Mennonite Church held its Sunday-morning worship service in the city's Central Park. The location was chosen because it is a block and a half from the office of Adam Schiff, Pasadena's representative to Congress. The date coincided with the deadline for Iraq to declare its weapons of mass destruction.

During the hour-long service, 93 people signed a letter to Schiff, urging him to oppose military action against Iraq. As the letter was signed, worshipers placed small pieces of cloth at the foot of a candelabrum holding the Advent candles. The cloth represented victims of war and the filthy rags of self-righteousness as found in Isaiah 64:6. The candles represented the refining fire of God. The service began and ended with Middle Eastern-style drumming.

2) From: André Gingerich Stoner, "The Death Penalty: A Church's Growing Response," MCC Washington Memo, September-October 2001.

For years, before nearly every execution in Indiana, Homer Nissley has stood up during sharing time at Kern Road Mennonite Church and reminded us that once more the state was planning to take a life in our name. This helped raise our awareness and prepared us for public witness.

In 1999, for the first time in years, a capital case was brought before a St. Joseph County jury. An all-white jury was deciding the fate of a black 16-year-old charged with murdering a policeman. Five church members were a prayerful presence in the courtroom throughout the trial. One of them, Darrin Belousek, had the opportunity to share his faith and opposition to the death penalty in a front-page interview in the *South Bend Tribune*.

When the jury came to a guilty verdict and moved into the penalty phase, we held prayer vigils outside the courthouse. Friends and fellow pastors spread the word. We were overwhelmed when more than one hundred people, black and white, participated in four gatherings of public prayer. It was a powerful witness. The jury and the judge decided against the death penalty.

This experience inspired us to organise the St. Joseph-Elkhart County Religious Coalition Against the Death Penalty. The coalition has circulated petitions, organised letter-writing campaigns, held a press conference with religious leaders and continues to conduct local prayer vigils whenever an execution is scheduled in Indiana. There have been numerous opportunities in the secular and religious media to speak on this issue.

Sometimes our efforts seem insignificant and our energy lags. Yet we know that the relationship between what we do and what we hope for is not one of cause and effect, but one of cross and resurrection. When we are discouraged or feel frail, we remember that a creative, untamed and unpredictable God who makes a way out of no way is still at work. It is in this God we trust.

We are gratified to be reminded that the witness of speaking truth to power is in a long tradition – from Moses and Esther to Jesus and the apostles. We are thankful for all the friends and partners God sends on this journey, and are confident that through God's power at work within us, God is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine.

3) From: David Platt, from "A Lively Presence: Faslane, Feb. 22," in *Peace and Reconciliation*, May/June 2002

The Blockade of the RN Base on the Clyde on 11th February was the most joyful and relaxed I have been on. Because there were two further days of the protest, culminating on Ash Wednesday, there were under 500 protesters on the Monday. The day was reasonably clear and bright, although it was still dark as our coach from Oxford reached the main gate. Immediately, a dozen young activists leaped out of the coach complete with drainpipes and ready to lock on. They were quickly arrested!

Members of the Iona Community led us in worship, especially the Eucharist, after which some nine clergy were arrested. (The ordained protesters were better organised last January when 30 were arrested!) 200 Strachclyde police queued up cheerfully waiting to arrest those who would not move.

Special care was taken this year not to block the main road so through traffic could pass. Maximum disruption was caused by one young man who cleared a 10 foot fence and barbed wire, evaded dog-handlers and their Alsatians, and climbed a gate where he sat for 2 and a half hours while 18 officers erected scaffolding to bring him down.

There was a calm and joyful spirit throughout. The organisers called a halt to the day at 1.45 because of bad weather setting in.

4) From: Oswald, Laurie L., "Churches put peace beliefs in action," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, January 21, 2003

Becoming involved in peacemaking isn't a novel idea for Carol Rose, pastor of Mennonite Church of the Servant in Wichita, Kansas. Ever since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, many people in the 25-member congregation have joined others of the Peace and Social Justice Center of South Central Kansas for public peace witness. In rain, snow or sun, they've stood at two major intersections in Wichita on Tuesdays during evening rush hour and held up signs for motorists, including "Don't Attack Iraq."

Despite some adverse reactions, Rose, with the tiny band of peacemakers, believes mustard-seed efforts can spread Jesus' message of peace far and wide. "We got all kinds of responses, ranging from honks in response to our 'honk for peace' signs to people flipping us obscene gestures, or even people yelling, 'kill 'em all!' But no matter the response, I take hope in the fact that Mennonites and others involved in peacemaking can be like yeast throughout this city."

Many other congregations are joining Mennonite Church of the Servant in offering this hope. There are numerous stories of peacemaking efforts across the United States. For example, children at First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas, this past summer wrote and wood-burned "peace on earth" in four languages on peace poles. Members of the church placed a peace pole outside the church's front door next to a tree planted in memory of Rhonda Krehbiel, a young mother murdered in her home in Newton several years ago. When asked to sign pledges to become peacemakers, a little boy said he couldn't sign because he wanted to be an Army pilot some day. Several weeks later, when members of the church were signing a letter asking President Bush to seek non-violent alternatives to war with Iraq, the boy approached First Mennonite member Judy Schrag and asked, "Judy, where is that letter to sign to President Bush so we don't go to war?"

Salford Mennonite Church of Harleysville, Pennsylvania, made two quilts, one for President Bush and one for President Saddam Hussein. On the side of each quilt is half of a tree. A dove is perched in the branches of each half, and these branches spread out over a section of the globe. The side with Europe and Africa with Iraq highlighted will go to President Hussein. The side containing North and South America will go to President Bush. Branches from each tree will overlap from one quilt to the other. When these quilts are joined, there is one Tree of Life enveloping and unifying all people.

Shalom Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia, celebrated Peace Sunday by inviting Muslims from the local mosque and students in the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg to help the congregation learn more about Islam. MC USA suggested Peace Sunday as a fast day, and since it was also during Ramadan, Muslims and Mennonites broke fast together in the evening by sharing homemade soup and bread.

Rose believes none of these efforts are in vain, because peacemakers can impact whether the world swings to the side of peace or violence. "I think we're at a hinge point in what God is doing in the world regarding the myth of redemptive violence, and I believe Anabaptist peacemakers are right in the centre of that hinge," Rose said. "Not so very long ago it was considered normal for a human being to own another human being. God moved through the church to stop slavery. And God can move through the church to show how violence is wrong."

5) **Lifeline Expedition**

In May and June this year, an unusual symbolic act took place: European representatives of former slave-trading nations walked silently in chains through the streets of French ports which were involved in the transatlantic slave trade.

This was the latest leg of the Lifeline Expedition, a series of journeys of reconciliation. The original idea came in a dream given to David Pott of YWAM's Fountaingate community in London, inspired by the biblical story of the snake on the pole (Num 21:4-9; John 3:14-16). The Greenwich meridian line (linked to the pole in the dream) and the countries it passes through are a particular focus: hence in 2000 David led a team down the line in England. Now, in 2002, came the French leg, though the project has grown beyond following the line.

The main reconciliation issue is the legacy of the slave trade. The expedition is committed to education and raising awareness about the slave trade and its legacy. To reflect the slave trade issue, the expedition team normally includes Africans, Africans of the Diaspora (slave descendants), Europeans and white Americans. The French team consisted of 20 people from 11 nations, and visited the ports of Rouen, Honfleur, St Malo, Nantes, La Rochelle and Bordeaux, handing out an apology for the role of Christians in the slave trade.

The expedition brought the message of reconciliation into the French public consciousness through civic receptions, school visits, linking with local churches, and media exposure. There was considerable media interest, including newspaper articles, radio interviews and an appearance on France Trois TV. During a reception in Rouen, the team managed to give the French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, a T-shirt with the word "Pardon" on it and literature explaining the expedition. On the streets the reaction was predictably one of curiosity; the leaflets were read eagerly. Descendants of slaves living in France were deeply moved.

Giving is central to the expedition. Many people have given freely in different ways to the project, including financially and in prayer. The expedition has been able to make donations to various projects in Africa: the walk in England gave a donation that enabled 44 literacy teachers in Togo to be trained. This is another aspect of the project: countering the greed and materialism of the West and encouraging generosity. Further journeys are planned, including a walk along former slave-trading routes in West Africa in 2004.

For more information go to:

<http://membres.lycos.fr/reconciliation/mainengframe.html>

or email: lifelinex@fountaingate.co.uk