

**WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

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**JUST PEACE COMPANION**





# **JUST PEACE COMPANION**

*“Guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79)*

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## *Preface*

The documentation presented here is meant to be used alongside the *Ecumenical Call to Just Peace*. The drafters hope that this further documentation will aid individuals and groups in studying and reflecting on the *Ecumenical Call* itself, and for that reason the *Call* itself is reproduced immediately after this Preface.

The documentation largely follows the structure of the *Call* and intends to provide necessary background information as well as basic biblical, theological and ethical considerations to support and unfold its basic message.

The documentation has been compiled by the same drafting group that prepared the text of the declaration. No individual authors are indicated for the different parts of the documentation, since most of these are the result of collective work. Much of the original research and theological reflection was undertaken by the first drafting group that prepared the Initial Statement towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace, which was circulated widely in 2009. The theological rationale developed in the Initial Statement had in principle been received positively among member churches and ecumenical partner groups.

It was subsequently decided that the declaration should be a relatively concise text and that the analysis and argument behind the declaration should be developed more fully in a “companion document”. The initial statement then became the basis for the preparation of this documentation. Where necessary, the material from the initial statement has been revised or rewritten in the light of critical comments received, but the essential thrust of the argument has been retained, honouring both

the excellent work done by the first drafting group as well as the many comments which had urged that the statement be retained.

Further material has been added to this opening part of the documentation, that is, the first two chapters and some parts of the fourth chapter. The third chapter places the process of preparing the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace into its specific historical and institutional context, the “Decade to Overcome Violence”. The declaration and this supporting documentation are being published to mark the official end of the decade and to provide a strong impulse for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, which will take place in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 2011 under the theme “Glory to God and Peace on Earth”.

The final chapter of the documentation focuses on “Just Peace Practices”. It is built around first-hand knowledge available and accessible to the drafting group. Information provided by churches in response to the initial statement has been used, as well. It is the hope of the drafting group that this concluding chapter will be expanded and amplified by examples of “good practice” collected during the IEPC, especially during the workshops.

An appendix has been added to share more widely the summary report and evaluation of the many expert consultations organized by the World Council of Churches in collaboration with ecumenical partners on issues related to the themes of the convocation and the declaration. In addition, several ecumenical partner groups sent their own peace declarations in response to the initial statement. Therefore, a selection of such peace declarations has been included in the appendix, together with a bibliography to facilitate further study of the issues concerned.

*On behalf of the drafting group,  
Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser*

## An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace

“Guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79)

*Preamble: This call is a concerted Christian voice addressed primarily to the worldwide Christian community. Inspired by the example of Jesus of Nazareth, it invites Christians to commit themselves to the Way of Just Peace. Aware that the promise of peace is a core value of all religions, it reaches out to all who seek peace according to their own religious traditions and commitments. The call is received by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and commended for study, reflection, collaboration and common action. It is issued in response to a WCC Assembly recommendation in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006, and builds on insights gained in the course of the ecumenical “Decade to Overcome Violence, 2001-2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace.”*

*Just Peace embodies a fundamental shift in ethical practice. It implies a different framework of analysis and criteria for action. This call signals the shift and indicates some of the implications for the life and witness of the churches. A resource document, the Just Peace Companion, presents more developed biblical, theological and ethical considerations, proposals for further exploration and examples of good practice. It is hoped that these materials, together with the commitments arising from the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 2011, under the theme “Glory to God and Peace on Earth,” will assist the forthcoming Assembly of the WCC to reach a new ecumenical consensus on justice and peace.*

**1 Justice embracing peace.** Without peace, can there be justice? Without justice, can there be peace? Too often, we pursue justice at the expense of peace, and peace at the expense of justice. To conceive peace apart from justice is to compromise the hope that “justice and peace shall embrace” (Ps. 85:10). When justice and peace are lacking, or set in opposition, we need to reform our ways. Let us rise, therefore, and work together for peace and justice.

**2 Let the peoples speak:** There are many stories to tell—stories soaked with violence, the violation of human dignity and the destruction of creation. If all ears would hear the cries, no place would be truly silent. Many continue to reel from the impact of wars; ethnic and religious animosity, discrimination based on race and caste mar the façade of nations and leave ugly scars. Thousands are dead, displaced, homeless, refugees within their own homeland. Women and children often bear the brunt of conflicts: many women are abused, trafficked, killed; children are separated from their parents, orphaned, recruited as soldiers, abused. Citizens in some countries face violence by occupation, paramilitaries, guerrillas, criminal cartels or government forces. Citizens of many nations suffer governments obsessed with national security and armed might; yet these fail to bring real security, year after year. Thousands of children die each day from inadequate nutrition while those in power continue to make economic and political decisions that favor a relative few.

**3 Let the Scriptures speak:** The Bible makes justice the inseparable companion of peace (Isaiah 32:17; James 3:18). Both point to right and sustainable relationships in human society, the vitality of our connections with the earth, the “well-being” and integrity of creation. Peace is God’s gift to a broken but beloved world, today as in the lifetime of Jesus Christ: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.” (John 14:27). Through the life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we perceive peace as both promise and present—a hope for the future and a gift here and now.

**4** Jesus told us to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, and not to use deadly weapons. His peace is expressed by the spirit of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11). Despite persecution, he remains steadfast in his active nonviolence, even to death. His life of commitment to justice ends on a cross, an instrument of torture and execution. With the resurrection of Jesus, God confirms that such steadfast love, such obedience, such trust, leads to life. This is true also for us.

5 Wherever there is forgiveness, respect for human dignity, generosity, and care for the weak in the common life of humanity, we catch a glimpse—no matter how dim—of the gift of peace. It follows therefore that peace is lost when injustice, poverty and disease—as well as armed conflict, violence, and war—inflict wounds on the bodies and souls of human beings, on society and on the earth.

6 Yet some texts in the scriptures associate violence with the will of God. On the basis of these texts, sections of our Christian family have legitimized and continue to legitimize the use of violence by themselves and others. We can no longer read such texts without calling attention to the human failure to answer the divine call to peace. Today, we must interrogate texts that speak of violence, hate and prejudice, or call for the wrath of God to annihilate another people. We must allow such texts to teach us to discern when, like the people in the Bible, our purposes, our schemes, our animosities, passions and habits reflect our desires rather than the will of God.

7 **Let the church speak:** As the Body of Christ, the church is called to be a place of peacemaking. In manifold ways, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, our liturgical traditions illustrate how God's peace calls us to share peace with each other and with the world. Yet, more often than not, churches fail to live out their call. Christian disunity, which in many ways undermines the churches' credibility in terms of peacemaking, invites us to a continuous conversion of hearts and minds. Only when grounded in God's peace can communities of faith be "agents of reconciliation and peace with justice in homes, churches and societies as well as in political, social and economic structures at the global level" (WCC Assembly, 1998). The church that lives the peace it proclaims is what Jesus called a city set on a hill for all to see (Matt. 5:14). Believers exercising the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to them by God in Christ point beyond the churches to what God is doing in the world (see 2 Cor. 5:18).

## THE WAY OF JUST PEACE

8 There are many ways of responding to violence; many ways of practicing peace. As members of the community that proclaims Christ the embodiment of peace, we respond to the call to bring the divine gift of peace into contemporary contexts of violence and conflict. So we join the Way of Just Peace, which requires both movement towards the goal and commitment to the journey. We invite people of all worldviews and

religious traditions to consider the goal and to share of their journeys. Just Peace invites all of us to testify with our lives. To pursue peace we must prevent and eliminate personal, structural and media violence, including violence against people because of race, caste, gender, sexual orientation, culture or religion. We must be responsible to those who have gone before us, living in ways that honor the wisdom of our ancestors and the witness of the saints in Christ. We also have a responsibility to those who are the future: our children, “tomorrow people”. Our children deserve to inherit a more just and peaceful world.

**9** Nonviolent resistance is central to the Way of Just Peace. Well-organized and peaceful resistance is active, tenacious and effective – whether in the face of governmental oppression and abuse or business practices which exploit vulnerable communities and creation. Recognizing that the strength of the powerful depends on the obedience and compliance of citizens, of soldiers and, increasingly, of consumers, nonviolent strategies may include acts of civil disobedience and non-compliance.

**10** On the Way of Just Peace the justifications of armed conflict and war become increasingly implausible and unacceptable. The churches have struggled with their disagreement on this matter for decades; however, the Way of Just Peace now compels us to move forward. Yet, to condemn war is not enough; we must do everything in our power to promote justice and peaceful cooperation among peoples and nations. The Way of Just Peace is fundamentally different from the concept of “just war” and much more than criteria for protecting people from the unjust use of force; in addition to silencing weapons it embraces social justice, the rule of law, respect for human rights and shared human security.

**11** Within the limitations of tongue and intellect, we propose that Just Peace may be comprehended as *a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation.*

## **LIVING THE JOURNEY**

**12** Just Peace is a journey into God’s purpose for humanity and all creation, trusting that God will “guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79).

**13 The journey is difficult.** We recognize that we must face up to truth along the way. We come to realize how often we deceive ourselves and are complicit with violence. We learn to give up looking for justifications of what we have done, and train ourselves in the practice of justice. This means confessing our wrong-doings, giving and receiving forgiveness and learning to reconcile with each other.

**14** The sins of violence and war divide communities deeply. Those who have stereotyped and demonized their adversaries will need long-term support and accompaniment in order to work through their condition and be healed. To reconcile with enemies and to restore broken relationships is a lengthy process as well as a necessary goal. In a process of reconciliation there are no longer powerful and powerless, superior and inferior, mighty and lowly. Both victims and victimizers are transformed.

**15** Peace agreements are often fragile, temporary, and inadequate. Places where peace is declared may still be filled with hatred. Repairing the damage of war and violence may take longer than the conflict that caused it. But what exists of peace along the way, though imperfect, is a promise of greater things to come.

**16 We journey together.** The church divided about peace, and churches torn by conflict, have little credibility as witnesses or workers for peace. The churches' power to work for and witness to peace depends on finding a common purpose in the service of peace despite differences in ethnic and national identity, and even in doctrine and church order.

**17** We travel as a community, sharing an ethic and practice of peace that includes forgiveness and love of enemies, active nonviolence and respect for others, gentleness and mercy. We strive to give of our lives in solidarity with others and for the common good. We pursue peace in prayer, asking God for discernment as we go and for the fruits of the Spirit along the way.

**18** In loving communities of faith that journey together, there are many hands to unburden the weary. One may have a witness of hope in the face of despair; another, a generous love for the needy. People who have suffered much find the courage to keep on living despite tragedy and loss. The power of the gospel enables them to leave behind even the unimaginable burdens of personal and collective sin, of anger, bitterness and hatred, which are the legacy of violence and war. Forgiveness does

not erase the past; but when we look back we may well see that memories were healed, burdens were set aside and traumas were shared with others and with God. We are able to travel on.

**19 The journey is inviting.** With time and dedication to the cause, more and more people hear the call to become peacemakers. They come from wide circles within the church, from other communities of faith, and from society at large. They work to overcome divisions of race and religion, nation and class; learn to stand with the impoverished; or take up the difficult ministry of reconciliation. Many discover that peace cannot be sustained without caring for creation and cherishing God's miraculous handiwork.

**20** Sharing the road with our neighbours, we learn to move from defending what is ours towards living generous, open lives. We find our feet as peacemakers. We discover people from different walks of life. We gain strength in working with them, acknowledging our mutual vulnerability and affirming our common humanity. The other is no longer a stranger or an adversary but a fellow human being with whom we share both the road and the journey.

## **SIGNPOSTS ON THE WAY OF JUST PEACE**

**21 Just Peace and the transformation of conflict.** Transforming conflicts is an essential part of peacemaking. The process of transformation begins with unmasking violence and uncovering hidden conflict in order to make their consequences visible to victims and communities. Conflict transformation aims at challenging adversaries to redirect their conflicting interests towards the common good. It may have to disturb an artificial peace, expose structural violence or find ways to restore relationships without retribution. The vocation of churches and religious communities is to accompany the victims of violence and be their advocates. It also includes strengthening civic mechanisms for managing conflicts and holding public authorities and other perpetrators accountable—even perpetrators from within church communities. The “rule of law” is a critical framework for all such efforts.

**22 Just Peace and the use of armed force.** Yet there are bound to be times when our commitment to Just Peace is put to a test, since peace is pursued in the midst of violence and under the threat of violent conflict. There are extreme circumstances where, as the last resort and the lesser evil, the lawful use of armed force may become necessary in order to pro-

tect vulnerable groups of people exposed to imminent lethal threats. Yet, even then we recognise the use of armed force in situations of conflict as both a sign of serious failure and a new obstacle on the Way of Just Peace.

**23** While we acknowledge the authority of the United Nations under international law to respond to threats to world peace in the spirit and the letter of the UN Charter, including the use of military power within the constraints of international law, we feel obliged as Christians to go further – to challenge any theological or *other* justifications of the use of military power and to consider reliance on the concept of a “just war” and its customary use to be obsolete.

**24** We acknowledge the moral dilemma inherent in these affirmations. The dilemma is partially resolved if the criteria developed in the just war tradition may still serve as a framework for an ethic of the lawful use of force. That ethic would allow, for example, consideration of “just policing”, the emergence of a new norm in international law around the “responsibility to protect” and the exercise in good faith of the peacemaking mechanisms enshrined in the UN Charter. Conscientious objection to service in armed forces should be recognized as a human right. Much else that is antithetical to peace and the international rule of law must be categorically and finally rejected, starting with the possession or use of all weapons of mass destruction. Our common life invites convergence in thought, action and law for the making and building of peace. As Christians we therefore commit to a transformed ethical discourse that guides the community in the praxis of nonviolent conflict transformation and in fostering conditions for progress toward peace.

**25** **Just Peace and human dignity.** Our scriptures teach us that humanity is created in the likeness of God and is graced with dignity and rights. The recognition of this dignity and these rights is central to our understanding of Just Peace. We affirm that universal human rights are the indispensable international legal instrument for protecting human dignity. To that end we hold states responsible for ensuring the rule of law and guaranteeing civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights. However, we observe that abuse of human rights is rampant in many societies, in war and in peace, and that those who should be held accountable benefit from impunity. In response we must reach out in friendship and cooperation to all partners in civil society, including people of other religions, who seek to defend human rights and strengthen the international rule of law.

**26 Just Peace and caring for creation.** God made all things good and has entrusted humankind with the responsibility to care for creation (Gen. 2:4b-9). The exploitation of the natural world and the misuse of its finite resources disclose a pattern of violence that often benefits some people at the expense of many. We know that all creation groans to be set free, not least from the abusive actions of humans (Romans 8:22). As people of faith, we acknowledge our guilt for the damage we have done to creation and all living things, through action and our inaction. The vision of Just Peace is much more than the restoration of right relationships in community; it also compels human beings to care for the earth as our home. We must trust in God's promise and strive for an equitable and just sharing of the earth's resources.

**27 Building cultures of peace.** We are committed to building cultures of peace in cooperation with people of other religious traditions, convictions and worldviews. In this commitment we seek to respond to the gospel imperatives of loving our neighbours, rejecting violence and seeking justice for the poor, the disinherited and the oppressed (Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 4:18). The collective effort relies on the gifts of men and women, the young and the old, leaders and workers. We acknowledge and value women's gifts for building peace. We recognize the unique role of religious leaders, their influence in societies and the potentially liberating power of religious wisdom and insight in promoting peace and human dignity. At the same time, we lament the cases where religious leaders have abused their power for selfish ends or where cultural and religious patterns have contributed to violence and oppression. We are especially concerned about aggressive rhetoric and teaching propagated under the guise of religion and amplified by the power of media. While we acknowledge with deep humility Christian complicity—past and present—in the manifestation of prejudice and other attitudes that fuel hate, we commit ourselves to build communities of reconciliation, acceptance and love.

**28 Education for peace.** Education inspired by the vision of peace is more than instruction in the strategies of peace work. It is a profoundly spiritual formation of character that involves family, church, and society. Peace education teaches us to nurture the spirit of peace, instil respect for human rights, and imagine and adopt alternatives to violence. Peace education promotes active nonviolence as an unequalled power for change that is practiced and valued in different traditions and cultures. Education of character and conscience equips people to seek peace and pursue it.

## SEEKING AND PURSUING JUST PEACE TOGETHER

**29** The Christian pilgrimage toward peace presents many opportunities to build visible and viable communities for peace. A church that prays for peace, serves its community, uses money ethically, cares for the environment and cultivates good relations with others can become an instrument for peace. Furthermore, when churches work in a united way for peace, their witness becomes more credible (John 17:21).

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### FOR PEACE IN THE COMMUNITY

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so that all may live free from fear (Micah 4:4)

*“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness...?” “Love your neighbor as yourself.” “Pray for those who persecute you.” (Micah 6:8; Luke 10:27; Matthew 5:44)*

**30 Global challenges.** All too many communities are divided by economic class, by race, color and caste, by religion and gender. Homes and schools are plagued by violence and abuse. Women and children are violated physically, psychologically and by cultural practice. Drug and alcohol abuse and suicide are forms of self-destruction on a large scale. Workplaces and houses of worship are scarred by conflicts within the community. Prejudice and racism deny human dignity. Workers are exploited and industries pollute the environment. Health care is inaccessible for many and affordable for only a few. There is a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Traditions that bind communities together are weakened by commercial influences and imported lifestyles. Media, games and entertainment that promote violence, war and pornography distort community values and invite destructive behaviors. When violence occurs, young males will generally be perpetrators as well as victims and women and children will find themselves at greatest risk.

**31 Main directions.** Churches become builders of a culture of peace as they engage, cooperate and learn from one another. Members, families, parishes and communities will be involved. The tasks include learning to prevent conflicts and transform them; to protect and empower those who are marginalized; to affirm the role of women in resolving conflict and building peace and include them in all such initiatives; to support and participate in nonviolent movements for justice and human rights; and to give peace education its rightful place in churches and schools. A culture

of peace requires churches and other faith and community groups to challenge violence wherever it happens: this concerns structural and habitual violence as well as the violence that pervades media entertainment, games and music. Cultures of peace are realized when all, especially women and children, are safe from sexual violence and protected from armed conflict, when deadly weapons are banned and removed from communities, and domestic violence is addressed and stopped.

**32** If churches are to be peacemakers, Christians must first strive for unity in action for peace. Congregations must unite to break the culture of silence about the violence within church life and unite to overcome habitual disunity in the face of the violence within our communities.

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### FOR PEACE WITH THE EARTH

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so that life is sustained

*God created the world and made it whole, offering humanity life in all its fullness. Yet sin breaks relationships between people and with the created order. Creation longs for the children of God to be stewards of life, of justice and of love. (Gen. 2:1-3; John 10:10; Romans 8:20-22)*

**33 Global challenges.** Human beings are to respect and protect creation. But greed at many levels, self-centeredness and a belief in unlimited growth have brought exploitation and destruction on the earth and its creatures. The cries of the poor and vulnerable echo in the groans of the earth. Excessive consumption of fossil fuels and other limited resources is doing violence to people and the planet. Climate change as a consequence of human lifestyles poses a global threat to just peace. Global warming, the rise of sea levels and the increasing frequency and intensity of droughts and floods affect especially the most vulnerable populations in the world. Indigenous people are exemplary in sustainable living and, along with inhabitants of coral atolls and impoverished coastal communities, they are among those who contribute the least to global warming. Yet they are the ones who will suffer the most.

**34 Main directions.** To care for God's precious gift of creation and to strive for ecological justice are key principles of just peace. For Christians they are also an expression of the gospel's call to repent from wasteful use of natural resources and be converted daily. Churches and their members must be cautious with earth's resources, especially with water. We must

protect the populations most vulnerable to climate change and help to secure their rights.

**35** Church members and parishes around the world must self-critically assess their environmental impact. Individually and in communities, Christians need to learn to live in ways that allow the entire earth to thrive. Many more “eco-congregations” and “green” churches are needed locally. Much ecumenical advocacy is needed globally for the implementation of international agreements and protocols among governments and businesses in order to ensure a more inhabitable earth not only for us but also for all creatures and for future generations.

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**FOR PEACE IN THE MARKETPLACE**

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so that all may live with dignity

*In wondrously creating a world with more than enough natural riches to support countless generations of human beings and other living things, God makes manifest a vision for all people to live in fullness of life and with dignity, regardless of class, gender, religion, race or ethnicity. (Ps. 24:1; Ps. 145:15; Isaiah 65:17-23)*

**36 Global challenges.** Even as tiny global elites accumulate unimaginable wealth, more than 1.4 billion humans subsist in extreme poverty. There is something profoundly wrong when the wealth of the world’s three richest individuals is greater than the gross domestic product of the world’s 48 poorest countries. Ineffective regulation, innovative but immoral financial instruments, distorted reward structures and other systemic factors exacerbated by greed trigger global financial crises that wipe out millions of jobs and impoverish tens of millions of people. The widening socio-economic chasms within and between nations raise serious questions about the effectiveness of market-oriented economic liberalization policies in eradicating poverty and challenge the pursuit of growth as an overriding objective for any society. Over-consumption and deprivation are forms of violence. Global military expenditures—now higher than during the Cold War—do little to enhance international peace and security and much to endanger it; weapons do not address the main threats to humanity but use vast resources that could be rededicated to that end. Such disparities pose fundamental challenges to justice, social cohesion and the public good within what has become a global human community.

**37 Main directions.** Peace in the marketplace is nurtured by creating “economies of life”. Their essential foundations are equitable socio-economic relationships, respect for workers rights, the just sharing and sustainable use of resources, healthy and affordable food for all, and broad participation in economic decision-making.

**38** Churches and their partners in society must advocate for the full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. Churches must promote alternative economic policies for sustainable production and consumption, redistributive growth, fair taxes, fair trade, and the universal provisioning of clean water, clean air and other common goods. Regulatory structures and policies must reconnect finance not only to economic production but also to human need and ecological sustainability. Deep cuts in military spending should be made in order to fund programs that advance the goals of sufficient food, shelter, education and health for all people and that provide remedies for climate change. Human and ecological security must become a greater economic priority than national security.

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**FOR PEACE AMONG THE PEOPLES**

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so that human lives are protected

*We are made in the image of the Giver of Life, forbidden to take life, and charged to love even enemies. Judged with equity by a righteous God, nations are called to embrace truth in the public square, turn weapons into farm implements, and not learn war any more. (Exodus 20:17; Isaiah 2:1-4; Matthew 5:44)*

**39 Global challenges.** Human history is illuminated by courageous pursuits of peace and the transformation of conflict, advances in the rule of law, new norms and treaties that govern the use of force, and now judicial recourse against abuses of power that involve even heads of state. History is stained, however, by the moral and political opposites of these—including xenophobia, inter-communal violence, hate crimes, war crimes, slavery, genocide and more. Although the spirit and logic of violence is deeply rooted in human history, the consequences of such sins have increased exponentially in recent times, amplified by violent applications of science, technology and wealth.

**40** A new ecumenical agenda for peace today is even more urgent because of the nature and the scope of such dangers now. We are wit-

nesses to prodigious increases in the human capacity to destroy life and its foundations. The scale of the threat, the collective human responsibility behind it, and the need for a concerted global response are without precedent. Two threats of this magnitude—nuclear holocaust and climate change—could destroy much life and all prospects for Just Peace. Both are violent misuses of the energy inherent in Creation. One catastrophe stems from the proliferation of weapons, especially *weapons of mass destruction*; the other threat may be understood as the proliferation of *lifestyles of mass extinction*. The international community struggles to gain control of both threats with little success.

**41 Main directions.** To respect the sanctity of life and build peace among peoples, churches must work to strengthen international human rights law as well as treaties and instruments of mutual accountability and conflict resolution. To prevent deadly conflicts and mass killings, the proliferation of small arms and weapons of war must be stopped and reversed. Churches must build trust and collaborate with other communities of faith and people of different worldviews to reduce national capacities for waging war, eliminate weapons that put humanity and the planet at unprecedented risk, and generally delegitimize the institution of war.

\* \* \*

**42 A people born to longing.** Our home is not what it might and will be. While life in God's hands is irrepressible, peace does not yet reign. The principalities and powers, though not sovereign, still enjoy their victories, and we will be restless and broken until peace prevails. Thus our peace building will of necessity criticize, denounce, advocate, and resist as well as proclaim, empower, console, reconcile, and heal. Peacemakers will speak against and speak for, tear down and build up, lament and celebrate, grieve and rejoice. Until our longing joins our belonging in the consummation of all things in God, the work of peace will continue as the flickering of sure grace.



**The doctrine of a just war intended by the churches to humanize war is becoming invalid. That is why we need to develop a doctrine of just peace now.**

## **1. VISION FOR JUST PEACE**

**1** The concept of “just peace” first entered ecumenical consideration through the discussions of the “Commission on a Just and Durable Peace” established in 1941 by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Its “six pillars of peace” envisaged the rebuilding of an international order of peace after the end of the Second World War. More than 40 years later the 15th General Synod of the United Church of Christ in the USA adopted a pronouncement “Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church” (1985). The pronouncement defines just peace as “the interrelation of friendship, justice and common security from violence” and places the UCC “in opposition to the institution of war”.

**2** The concept of Just Peace was used in statements by the WCC Central Committee for the first time in 1994 after it had been re-appropriated in the context of declarations during the conciliar process on justice, peace and the integrity of creation. In particular the Dresden ecumenical assembly in 1989 referred to it in the following terms: “Having through necessity overcome the institution of war, the doctrine of a just war intended by the churches to humanize war is likewise be-

coming invalid. That is why we need to develop a doctrine of just peace now, grounded in theology and oriented by virtue of its openness towards universal human values.” The concept and vision of Just Peace have also served as the fundamental frame of reference in position papers issued by German Catholic Bishops Conference on “A Just Peace” (2000) and by the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany under the title “Live from God’s Peace – Care for Just Peace” (2007).

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## PEACE IN THE BIBLE

3 The vision for Just Peace receives its inspiration from the biblical tradition. It is a way of rendering in contemporary terms the biblical meaning of *shalom*, which points to the interdependent relationship between justice and peace. *Shalom* is usually translated as “completeness, soundness, welfare, peace”, but *shalom* also links peace with all the following concepts: justice (*mishpat*), rightness (*tsedeq*) or righteousness (*tsedeqah*), compassion (*hesed*) and truthfulness (*emet*). There is no peace without justice (*mishpat*), and justice implies fair judgment and rectitude, which requires giving what is right and just to the afflicted, establishing and maintaining right relationships in community. Therefore, Just Peace is the effect of righteousness, and the practice of truth and justice.

4 The Hebrew word *shalom* shares linguistic roots with the Aramaic and Akkadian words *salamu*, and the Arabic *salaam*, which means “to have enough, to equalize“. The Korean word *Pyung Hwa* also suggests that “peace” has to do with being fed and satisfied. These words have the meaning of being faultless, healthy and complete; they indicate safety, prosperity and freedom from strife and political weal. They are about a holistic view of human security, a condition where one is able to live a healthy life, sleep soundly, enjoy one’s children and die serenely after a life lived meaningfully. These words encompass the well-being of human beings and of creation, which are intricately interconnected. The Hebrew scriptures are clear in their understanding that peace is lost when illnesses, injustices, poverty, conflict, violence and wars inflict wounds on the bodies and souls of human beings, on society and on the earth. Thus, peace is more than the absence of conflict and war.

5 *Shalom* is related to the Arabic notion of *islam*, which means submission of oneself to God, giving us the understanding that all peace is of God, and the wholeness of human life includes partnership with God who is just, merciful and righteous. Just Peace is ultimately a gift from God. It is the manifestation of God’s righteous rule over all of creation

and is affirmed as the reliable promise of God's salvation, as expressed in Psalm 85: "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet, righteousness and peace will kiss each other, Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky" (Ps. 85:8-11). God's covenant with Noah after the flood (Gen. 8:20ff.) reveals God's firm purpose of salvation: "For this is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that ...my steadfast love shall not be removed from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed..." (Is. 54:9f.). Just Peace is rooted in the assurance that God is faithful to this "covenant of peace". (Ezek. 34:25 and 37:26).

**6** In their critique of Israel's unfaithful rulers and their challenge to those who proclaim peace where there is no peace, the prophets, and especially Jeremiah, felt constrained to affirm that God had taken the peace away from the king and the people (Jer. 16:5; cf. also Ezek. 7:25ff). They expected the full restoration of God's *shalom* from a ruler or king who will judge with righteousness. In his just rule he will not only defend the cause of the poor and crush the oppressor, but creation itself will flourish: "May he be like the rain that falls on mown grass, like showers that water the earth. In his day may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more." (Ps. 72:2-7). The prophets looked forward to the time when the nations would come to the mountain of the Lord to receive God's instruction: "He will judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. 2:2ff.; Micah 4:1ff.).

**7** The full manifestation of *shalom* is expected from the coming of the righteous rule of the messianic prince of peace (Is. 9:5; cf. Zech. 9:9f.). Then peace will be the "overseer" of God's people and righteousness their "taskmaster" (Is. 60:17). *Shalom*, therefore, refers to a social and public reality, rather than merely to an inward attitude. It is dependent on the praxis of justice which forms the very "texture" of *shalom*. Thus, the prophet Isaiah can say: "the effect of righteousness will be peace and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever" (Is. 32:17).

**8** When *shalom* is in place, it becomes easier to attempt the priestly invitation: "Be holy, because I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev. 20:7). While *shalom* connotes completeness, *holiness* points toward healthy wholeness. In this connection, *shalom* takes on a spiritual dimension also,

and *holiness* is rooted in healthy and healing behaviour as well. *Shalom* and *holiness* are intimately connected; they both have to do with actions, so they are both practical rather than simply conceptual.

**9** The comprehensive meaning of *shalom* is carried over into the New Testament and the way it uses the classical Greek word *eirene*. We encounter it in the frequent formulae of greeting: “Peace be with you” (Luke 10:5; Jn 20:19ff.) or “Go in peace” (Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50). Behind the common wish of well-being stands the conviction that this peace is a gift, a blessing from God and represents the powerful reality of God’s salvation. The prophetic and apocalyptic message of the reign of God is the centre of the gospel proclaimed by Jesus. The presupposition of his teaching and healing is that the final, decisive hour has already arrived: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). The New Testament witnesses in their diverse voices that this presupposition holds true: in the person and story of Jesus of Nazareth, the sovereignty of God has “become flesh”. In Jesus, God’s kingdom was– and is –“in our midst” (cf. Luke 17:21). Jesus proclaimed and lived the good news of the coming kingdom of God, and of its liberating promise of Just Peace.

**10** At the birth of Jesus the angels rejoiced: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom God favours” (Luke 2:14). God’s gift of peace differs from the “*pax Romana*,” which is based on imperial powers. In Jesus the “peace in heaven” has now come into history (Luke 19:38), and the feet of the people will be guided “into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79). The Sermon on the Mount has been called the “covenantal constitution of the kingdom” and with his call to respond with nonviolent resistance to the evildoer, and to love the enemy, Jesus leads the way of Just Peace (Matt. 5:38-48). In the Beatitudes, Jesus blesses the peacemakers, “for they will be called children of God” and to those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, he promises the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:9f). This is echoed when the apostle Paul affirms: “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom.14:17). Following in the way of Jesus his disciples are being drawn into the dynamic of the kingdom and called to proclaim God’s reign of Just Peace.

**11** As the one who through his life, his death and resurrection manifested the eschatological reign of God, Jesus Christ is an embodiment of “our peace” (Eph. 2:14). His life manifests the Spirit of Peace, a peace that the world cannot give and that surpasses human understanding (Phil. 4:7). This peace he bestows upon his disciples: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts

be troubled, and do not be afraid” (Jn. 14:27-28). The peace of Jesus is a dynamic reality which overcomes enmity and division (Eph. 2:14-16). Through his death on the cross, Jesus has overcome the very sources of enmity, making it possible for all creation to be brought together in unity through him and be reconciled to God (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:16.19-20), to one’s neighbours (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19), and to the creation.

**12** When Just Peace is present, *comfort* (as in the Hebrew *nichem*) is possible. This is the comfort that psalmists and prophets encouraged (“Comfort, comfort, my people...” in Is. 40:1), and for which sufferers (such as Job) long (cf. Ps. 23:4). The comfort of Just Peace will not allow one to be comfortable and complacent, but to be in solidarity with God, with others and with creation. The comfort of Just Peace necessitates the mending of visions, ways, lives and relations, through confession, repentance, transformation and celebration. Just Peace will not prevail without comfort and comforters, and those will not endure without justice.

**13** To sum up: Just Peace connotes wholeness. It is not merely an absence of conflict and war, but a state of well-being and harmony in which all relationships are rightly ordered between God, humankind and creation. Just Peace is associated with the reign of God, for which we pray when we pray, “*Let your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven ...*”

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## JUST PEACE AND THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

**14** Humanity’s efforts of building peace have their place in this world. How does the vision of Just Peace become a source of empowerment, orientation and correction for these efforts? Just Peace is ultimately God’s gift for this world which is God’s creation, God’s household (*oikos*). *Oikos* is a term that includes the habitation for all people; the affairs, relationships and common cause of the people in that *oikos*, as well as their dwelling place, their home, and their environment (Eph. 2:19-22). The members of the *oikos* have the basic responsibility of working for the good of all people (Gal. 6:10). In the ancient Greek world, *oikoumene* was understood to refer to the whole world as an administrative unit and, for some time, was equated with the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1). In a broader sense, the New Testament writers understood *oikoumene* as the earth and all of its inhabitants (Luke 2:10; 4:5; Acts 17:30-31). Yet, the followers of Jesus Christ, living with the expectation that the consummation of the kingdom of God will bring “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1) began to look towards the *oikoumene to come* (Heb. 2:5). Eventually, this word would provide the origin for “ecumenical”. The community of faith, ”built upon

the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone“ (Eph. 2:20) was seen as a sign of the reconciliation of human beings to God and to one another. It not only points to a future reality, but is already the effective beginning of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17f.), built like living stones into a “spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:4f.), the true household of God.

**15** In the perspective of the kingdom of God, peace-building and reconciliation become important dimensions of life together in the household of God. If all members of the community are to experience well-being as the fruit of living in truth, justice and peace in the household, then all are called to participate in the process of peace-building, spiritual strengthening and edification (*oikodome*). Each is called to be a builder of the house (*oikodomos*) and thus a peace-builder, one who strives to make the community of faith a sign of healing, reconciliation and justice in the world, and thus restores wellness and wholeness to the whole household of God (Rom. 14:19, Luke 12:42f.). The process of healing requires dismantling of cultures of abuse and violence. Jesus demonstrated through his life the work of such an *oikodomos*. He fed the hungry, healed the sick and comforted the lonely. He restored sight to the blind and gave voice to those who could not speak.

**16** Just Peace is God’s gift to humanity. It both sustains history and prefigures its fulfilment. The community of those who follow Jesus Christ in the way of Just Peace are called to live as that force within humanity which witnesses to and manifests God’s purpose of salvation through justice, peace, reconciliation and healing. They are called to be present in the places where peace is endangered and to be God’s ambassadors of reconciliation, to mediate situations of conflict, to give courage to the weary, and to comfort those who suffer (Matt. 5:4; 2 Cor. 1:3f; 5, 19f.). They are assured the guidance and help of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). Indeed, it is the working of the Holy Spirit that sustains the vision of Just Peace and faith in God’s saving presence in settings where God seems to be absent. The Holy Spirit reveals the eschatological horizon of peace pointing towards the time when “God will be all in all“ (1 Cor. 15:28).

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## THE GOD OF JUST PEACE

**17** Who is this God who is revealed in the gift of peace? In the Hebrew scriptures God is revealed to us as the *creator* of the world and of all that is in it, who in the covenant with Noah has promised to protect the creation from destruction and who judges all peoples in faithfulness, jus-

tice and mercy. The New Testament confesses that God has sent his only *Son* for the salvation of the world (John 3:16), thus overcoming enmity and reconciling the world to Godself (2 Cor. 5:19). It also confesses God as the *Spirit*, the liberator and giver of life (1 Cor. 15:45; cf. also 2 Cor. 3:17) who empowers people to enter and persist in the struggle against the forces of death and darkness and thus to participate in God's purpose of building peace. The early church appropriated this dynamic understanding of God by confessing God as the Holy Trinity, the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian foundation enables us to conceive of creation, salvation and sanctification as one great movement within God and not to isolate them from each other. It allows us to see the God who freed Israel from slavery as the same God who took on human form in Jesus Christ and who since then continues to inhabit this world, in order to free it from violence and lead it to the fullness of life – for people of all religions, and for the whole of creation. Just Peace, therefore, does not begin with a static concept of God, but rather a dynamic one, that expresses the great movement of love within the divine communion.

**The *oikos* finds its meaning and purpose in the communion of love, justice and peace between the three persons of the Trinity. With our efforts of peace-building we participate in this communion.**

**18** As Christians we believe that in Christ we *participate* in this divine communion. This has implications for our efforts of peace-building. It is God who through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit establishes the reign of peace and justice. Following in the way of Jesus Christ we participate in the dynamic of God's reign of peace and therefore we can work to transform conflicts, to defend human dignity and the sanctity of life, to promote just and sustainable communities and to build cultures of peace.

**19** In Trinitarian perspective God and creation are not set at infinite distance from each other. Rather they are in profound relationship with each other. It is God's blessing and the life-giving Spirit that maintain the delicate web of relationships between all of creation, which reveal the reality of God - creating and sustaining, healing and redeeming, bringing to fulfilment and reconciliation in peace.

**20** The *oikos* of the world and of the church, the *oikoumene* of God's design and purpose, therefore, are not arbitrary constructs. The *oikos* finds its meaning and purpose in the communion of love, justice and peace between the three persons of the Trinity. With our efforts of peace-building we participate in this communion. Therefore, peace-building is not just

about repairing what has been broken, but about expanding and completing relationships that make the *oikos* a mirror of God.

**21** What does this tell us, then, about God, about peace, about ourselves?

- That God is triune reveals a commitment to communion, to the fullness (*pleroma*) of creation, and the difference and diversity of creation.
- God is at once a God of peace and justice, of mercy and truthfulness, all of which are in profound embrace (Ps. 85:10-14).
- Peace is an embrace of all creation. Our relations with God, with one another, and with the earth are not based on the pursuit of interest or arbitrary choice. They are the bonds of love.
- In Jesus Christ, who is our peace (Eph. 2:14), God has entered the world, knows our brokenness, embraces our vulnerability, and is reconciling all things in himself (Col. 1:19-20).
- As created in the image of God and thus participating in the divine communion, human beings have the potential to build peace and overcome violence. They are called to act as mediators and “priests of creation” co-operating with God in resisting the forces of death and destruction.
- The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation meets under the theme: “Glory to God and Peace on earth”. They are held together in cruciform fashion - emblematic of the cross of Christ that stands as a sign of our reconciliation with God (the vertical beam) and with all creation (the horizontal beam). Ascending praise is answered by descending peace. Glory to God (*doxa*) is manifested in the building (*praxis*) of peace.

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## CHURCH AS INSTRUMENT OF PEACE-BUILDING

**22** The New Testament does not give any systematic definition of the church, but offers a broad spectrum of images that try to introduce us to the reality of the church, both earthly and transcendent, and invite us to embrace this reality. Among the most striking images are the church as the people of God, as the Body of Christ, as the temple of the Holy Spirit, where the holiness of God dwells on earth; and as communion (Nature and Mission of the Church, §§19-24).

**23** One of the major distinctive features of the church is its being a sign of peace and reconciliation. In its liturgy, especially in the celebra-

tion of the Eucharist, the church remembers and re-presents how God reconciled the world through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the liturgy is an act of memory of what God has already done for us in Christ's life, death and resurrection. It is also the window on the eschatological hope, that has been promised to us, of the bringing together of all things. In variegated ways, our liturgical traditions illustrate how God's peace is communicated to us. They call us to share this peace with each other and to carry it into the world. Despite our shortcomings and failures as human beings, God's peace can be experienced in the lives of individuals, in families, in partnerships and in communities.

**24** *Peace and Church Unity:* The various images by means of which the New Testament describes the church (body, temple etc.) unambiguously show that the church cannot but be one. This is the reason why divisions within the Christian community have been perceived, as early as the apostolic times, to be a factor distorting the very character of the church as a sign of peace and reconciliation and jeopardizing its witness of Jesus' cross and resurrection. Today, the very disunity of the churches of God on central elements – such as the sacraments – has undermined the churches' credibility. However, different as they are, our liturgical traditions have obviously preserved the awareness that the unity of the church and its being a sign of God's peace are interdependent and condition each other. Through the variety and richness of our liturgies, we can discern a thread emphasizing that what we experience in our daily church life ought to be a partial, yet real anticipation of the eschatological bringing together of all things implemented by God. Thus, liturgically speaking, Christian unity is not an optional luxury, but a direct implication of the peace of God communicated to the church. Striving after a new paradigm combining justice and peace, the churches are invited to do *justice* to this interrelatedness of peace and unity, as witnessed in their liturgical practice, through a dynamics of spiritual ecumenism of repentance and conversion of the heart (*metanoia*). This dynamics is meant to strengthen/deepen the openness of the churches to the Holy Spirit's gift of reconciliation.

**25** As a place in which the Holy Spirit dwells and acts, the church is prophetic in its very nature. It has the special vocation of discerning and proclaiming God's intention for the world and pointing to how this intention unfolds in concrete actions. Accordingly, the churches are called to speak out against injustice, to advocate peace, to show solidarity with the oppressed and to accompany victims. Refusing to condone violence, and following a way of nonviolence indicate how Christians are to respond to a violent world. Jesus met his own violent death with nonviolence, and his way remains the model for Christians to follow in overcoming violence.

**26** To be a prophetic sign of peace in a violent world requires commitment, courage and consistency. These are virtues that the churches have not always displayed. Here we must as Christians confess our sin if we are to be credible vessels of the prophetic message entrusted to us. Churches have at times allied themselves so closely with violent policies that they have legitimized them. When the churches have embraced the banner of nationalism or ethnicity and have blessed the oppression and extermination of “enemies”, they have wandered away from their true vocation. When they have adopted beliefs that legitimize violence as a way of cleansing the world or as a purported instrument of the wrath of God, they have betrayed their true nature. When they have turned away from suffering, either to seek or protect their own prosperity or not to get “involved”, they are like those who left the wounded man in the ditch (Luke 10:31-32). And the very disunity within the churches themselves on central elements – such as the sacraments – has undermined the churches’ credibility. Churches must be constantly ready to examine their discourse and actions, as well as their inaction, in the light of the gospel, to repent, and to seek forgiveness. To that end, the service of the churches must exhibit the willingness to embrace vulnerability and the unwavering commitment to the poor and marginalized that marked the ministry of Christ.

**27** If the churches are to serve the purposes of God, to be a “sign and instrument of God’s intention and plan for the whole world” (Nature and Mission of the Church, §40), they are called to concrete actions in the service of just peace. Just peace is not just a view of life. It is also a way of life. In a world beset by violence and threatened by all kinds of destabilizing forces, it means cultivating a spiritual posture, a spirituality. By spirituality is not meant a pick-and-choose of preferred elements to craft a unique or distinctive lifestyle. Spirituality means deepening a mind-set and engaging in those spiritual practices, especially communal ones that lead deeper into the mystery of Christ (cf. Chapter 2, paragraph 55ff).

The churches can help to promote the formation of capacities within civil society for prevention of violence and transformation of conflicts.

## 2. SIGNPOSTS FOR JUST PEACE

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### INTERPRETING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

**1** “You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.” (Matt. 16:3)

**2** Interpreting the signs of the times has been a preoccupation of many Christian groups and anxiety about the end times seems always to have been a feature of Christianity. Yet the term “signs of the times” is found only in one place in the New Testament, Matt. 16:1-3. In that episode, Jesus responds to a demand for a miracle as a sign of God’s approval, by chastising those making the demand. He contrasts their skill at interpreting the signs of nature (red skies and dark clouds) with their lack of ability to distinguish the signs of the times—and to act accordingly. Discerning the signs of the times requires response more so than do the signs of nature.

**3** Perhaps influenced by the apocalyptic elements in the gospels (Mark 13) and Revelation, in many Christian interpretations, the “signs

of the times” have often been identified with the terrifying events which are expected to precede the end of the world—earthquakes, floods, wars, heat waves, deadly diseases, culminating in God’s main event, the Battle of Armageddon.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in a world threatened by nuclear war and acts of terrorism, many argue that times are getting worse and this is an indication of “the end times”. Indeed, some groups are obsessed with looking for time clues as indications of the impending destruction of the world – SARS, 9/11, worldwide violence and disaster in the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> However, many other Christians read the story differently. There is another more fruitful tradition concerning the signs of the times, which is demonstrated, inter alia, in the Roman Catholic Social Teaching. In the 1960s, for example, the Catholic Church began to employ the term in an optimistic fashion, and Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) continued the optimistic tone when he spoke of developments in human history which Christians ought not to respond to with fear or resistance. Rather, such events are to be viewed as instruments of divine revelation. Through these events God may be calling humanity to recognise new challenges and in so doing exercise creativity in finding new ways of meeting these challenges. Through these challenges God may be calling us in a deep way to conversion (*metanoia*), a change of heart and mind (Mark 1:15).

4 *A changing world:* The world in which we look for the signs of divine revelation has undergone major changes within the last several decades and that process of change continues rapidly. Nonetheless, the material and scientific advances that have been the hallmark of the globalised world have not been without ambiguity. In fact, they point us to contradictory interpretations of the signs of the times—possibilities for progress or dangerous nightmares and increased suffering.<sup>3</sup>

5 Advances in technology have decisively shaped the patterns of our lives, including our religious life. Transportation and communication are two of the areas in which this technological advance is most evident. Our ability to connect with others is no longer limited by geography. We have faster means of directly experiencing unknown places and people; our ideas and decisions can be influenced by people in distant places in a fashion that was unthinkable even ten years ago—satellite, cellular phones, the internet have broadened our world, in one sense, while narrowing it in another. Communication with others is a constant and highlights our interdependence and the challenge of building and sustaining human solidarity. Exposure to the breadth of human culture and belief oftentimes means that lifestyle choices are diverse and several; even religious beliefs and values are subject to choice in a way they were not previously. Multiple perspectives, claims and authorities now compete for our loyalties.

Indeed there is the increasing possibility of mobilizing people and resources around shared goals. New technologies, new drugs, new surgical interventions have all improved the health of so many, especially in the well-resourced nations.

6 In many resource-rich countries of the world, adequate food, shelter, and clothing are no longer daily preoccupations. Improvements in education have broadened the life choices of many, especially women and minority groups. Progress in education has helped human beings to understand our dignity and uniqueness as human persons, as well as the meaning and responsibilities of personal and political freedom.<sup>4</sup> Many societies are being transformed as population shifts have impacted cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, languages. The developments in global communications and transportation have also facilitated the emergence of global markets for goods, services and capital. Global growth and economic prosperity has expanded the freedom and life choices of many.

7 Money is a major international commodity and is subject to global pressures; it increasingly affects the fate of nations, as has been so clearly demonstrated in the current financial crisis.<sup>5</sup> Increasing gaps continue to open up between the materially well off and those who are not, inside countries and between them. Clearly progress has left problems such as poverty unsolved while creating and exacerbating others: the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, international conflicts, civil wars, economic crises, ecological disasters (e.g., massive oil spills, thousands of species driven into extinction), pollution, contamination of the food supply, of water, of the atmosphere (e.g., the earth's ozone layer), faulty and dangerous manufactured products, high tech and violent crime of all varieties, and, what Richard McBrien refers to as “the crowding out of spiritual values”.

8 *Societies are being changed by the waves of refugees and immigrants.* Communication technologies that link us to distant persons may serve to distance us from those physically present—family, co-workers, neighbours, friends.<sup>6</sup> Yet even as it opened up possibilities of personal choice, education has exposed us to further manipulation by advertisers, governments, business and even religion. Education has been used as a means of social and psychic socialization. Even as we experience our connectedness and interdependence, we find our age riddled with racial and ethnic conflicts, increased criminal brutality. Religion has not escaped the effects of the changes at play today. Many persons are abandoning religion and the abandonment of faith in God is an increasing and widespread phenomenon. All of these are a threat to the peace of the planet.

9 “[Yet] God gives hints of his will in each age, but believers must be

**Paradoxically, in the eyes of many the Bible seems to have lost the power to shape our social and political imagination; at the same time, it serves as the divine sanction for the political claims of many.**

attentive to them. The saying [signs of the times] is an invitation to the hermeneutics of history and as such a permanent challenge to the church.”<sup>7</sup> It is in the unfolding of history that God speaks. All around the world the Divine continues to speak to humanity in the very moments when we are at our lowest point and in those places where we need to live out and experience the fullness of our humanity. Clearly, embedded in the concern about the signs of the times is the notion that “the world has come from the creative hand of God, as having been redeemed and renewed by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, as embodying now the presence

and activity of God...and as being destined for eternal glory”.<sup>8</sup> Reading the signs of the times is necessary in order to discern God’s will and to acknowledge and validate the presence of God in creation. It is in light of this divine invitation that Samuel Kobia, former general secretary of the WCC, exhorts us, “Brothers and sisters, we are called to discern the signs of the times, and to take responsibility for our actions: we are called to confront the forces of sin and death, to face down the false messiahs, to open our lives and the lives of our churches to the witness of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

**10** *Reading the Bible today:* The Bible continues to have a powerful influence in contemporary times; interpreting it authentically therefore remains an important responsibility. “To read the Bible in the public square in these times is to take on a challenging task. Issues of hunger, poverty and violence are urgent and call for our response.”<sup>10</sup> Paradoxically, in the eyes of many the Bible seems to have lost the power to shape our social and political imagination; at the same time, it serves as the divine sanction for the political claims of many.

**11** *Responsible biblical interpretation necessitates reading the signs of the times.* To do this requires taking seriously the political context in which the reading is done. In so doing, the engagement with scripture needs recognise the variety of ways that it can be approached: as a positive resource, a source of cultural criticism, a negative model to recognise and resist, powerful text with an ambiguous history, and as a means of understanding the meaning of contemporary events<sup>11</sup>. We must be alert to the fact that religious language has been and is still allied with economic and social systems in order to maintain and perpetuate them. Jesus was a model for political engagement as he criticised the alliance of religious symbols with coercive power, much in the same way the ancient Hebrew prophets

did. We can employ a method of correlation which involves scrutinising the signs of the time and interpreting them in light of the gospel. This calls us to be able to identify the key characteristics of the present age and using the message of the gospels to illuminate them. Our ethical concerns with issues such as poverty, violence, domination, oppression shape the questions we ask of the scripture.

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## THE BIBLE AND VIOLENCE<sup>12</sup>

**12** Striving for Just Peace is an expression of the response to the reality of violence that is inspired by the way of Jesus Christ. Jesus was realistic about the dynamic of violence in human community. He knew that those “who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52). Violence cannot be overcome by violence; for any violent resistance against violence is subject to the same logic and only continues the cycle of violence. Therefore this cycle, the very dynamic of violence, must be interrupted at its source, i.e., regarding the other as a rival and potential enemy. The renunciation of violence which Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount is not an advice of acquiescence and passive submission, but the encouragement to refuse to respond to violence in its own terms and the effort to transform a situation of confrontation and enmity into a relationship of communication and mutuality. This alternative praxis which actively challenges the logic of violence is rooted in the conviction that God will ultimately overcome the evil of violence and anticipates God’s rule of love and compassion.

**13** Religions have at their core a message of life, of peace and justice, of mutuality and right relationships in community. However, for this very reason religions have to face up to the pervasive presence of violence in human life and its destructive power. Violence, from a religious perspective, is a manifestation of evil and all religions are struggling with the question where this evil comes from and how it can be overcome. *There can therefore be no authentic affirmation of peace within any religious tradition without facing up to the challenge of violence in human community life.*

**14** Primal religions respond to the question of the origin as well as the limitation of violence by way of myths which bind together the human and divine dimensions of reality. Myths are a reflection of fundamental human experience and represent the inner core of cultures, including religion, in their response to violence. Many such myths depict a struggle between order and chaos. The created world is constantly in danger of slipping back into chaos and order can only be maintained through “re-

demptive violence”. Understanding and interpreting the language of such foundational myths therefore is essential for clarifying the relationship of religion and violence. By establishing a close link between religious myths and the corresponding rituals, on the one hand, and the pervasive presence of violence in human life on the other, by integrating violence into the sacred, religions aim at containing the destructive influence of violence in order to establish peace and a viable order. Because order and life are constantly threatened by violence, violence is being absorbed into the sacred. It is this ambiguity of religion with regard to violence which calls for critical reflection within all religious traditions.

**15** *There is no question that the religious ambiguity regarding violence is present in the Christian tradition as well.* The Bible is full of stories of violence and of violent images even with reference to God. At the very least the Bible presents a very realistic picture of the potential of violence in human life. However, an analysis of the account of primeval history in the early chapters of the Bible shows a decisive difference to the myths of other ancient traditions. In fact, violence is absent from God’s creation which is considered to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Human beings are created in God’s image to share life in community with God and with one another (Gen. 1:26-27). After bringing forth all other creatures on the earth, God created humankind from the soil (*ha adamah*) and breathed life into it (Gen. 2:7). All human beings embody this tension: Made from dust and earth, they share in the vulnerability and mortality of all living things. At the same time they participate in God’s life, gifted with freedom and endowed with the calling to participate in God’s creating and sustaining work, cultivating life with other creatures for the flourishing of all.

**16** According to the biblical account the potential of violence enters at the moment when the first human beings, after having eaten the fruit from the forbidden tree, acquire the knowledge of good and evil, i.e., the capacity to judge and to discern. The presentation of the first occurrence of violence in the murder of Abel by Cain shows a remarkable characteristic: Cain cannot accept the failure of his sacrifice and feels rejected. The following dialogue between Cain and God de-mythologizes violence even before the act itself: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Gen. 4:6). The sin of violence has become a reality in the life of human community and Cain has been made responsible for the act of killing his brother. But then God protects him from revenge. He and his descendants are presented as the pioneers of human culture (Gen. 4:17ff.). Yet, as the early chapters of the Bible tell us, this first act of divine containment of the potential of violence fails and violence increases to

the point that God attempts through the flood to eradicate violence once and for all (Gen. 6:5ff.). Then God recognizes that violence cannot be overcome by means of violence (Gen. 8:21). God's covenant with Noah expresses God's will to maintain life even in the face of enduring violence (Gen. 9:8ff.). God's alternative to violence is the protection of human life through the gift of the law which centres around the prohibition of human beings killing each other (Ex. 20:13). The protection of human life is entrusted to the observance of God's law which remains the primary means of reducing and limiting the occurrence of violence<sup>13</sup>. Human beings are free to distinguish between good and evil; they can decide against the rivalry of coveting the other's life, property or being tempted by other gods; they are made responsible by God to control their potential of violence for the sake of life.

**17** While the active limitation of violence is the dominant theme of the biblical ethos, the ambiguity appears in passages which present God as the origin of war and violence, and especially in the passages about the wars of conquest connected with Israel's entry into the Promised Land. These wars, which are presented as executing a divine command, especially with regard to placing the ban on the conquered community, have often been characterized as "holy wars", thus seemingly giving a religious legitimization to war with highly questionable consequences in later history of wars fought with religious sanctioning. What is mostly being overlooked, however, is the fact that these wars are taken out of human control: war is not considered as a legitimate means of human politics. The fighting of war is under the exclusive control of God; it is God's ultimate means to save and protect the people who are urged to entrust themselves to God's power who will struggle for them. This becomes the basis of the prophetic criticism of the power politics of the kings of Israel and of the expectation of a final end to war and violence when people will no longer fight against each other but forge their instruments of war into tools for cultivation (Is. 2/Mic. 4).

**18** The other biblical context in which violent language is being used in direct reference to God are the many psalms of lamentation which call on God to destroy an oppressive enemy. These psalms are to be read first of all as a manifestation of the experience of violence, of being exploited, marginalized and treated unjustly. However, based on the faith conviction that revenging the victims of injustice and restoring the weak to their rightful place is in the hands of God (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19), these psalms present their anger and feelings of aggression to God instead of repressing them or acting them out against the enemy. They entrust retribution and retaliation to God as the final judge who will vindicate the

victims of violence. This conviction that God takes the side of those who suffer under, and become the victims of violence can be regarded as the common thread throughout the biblical tradition.

**19** The same critical discernment is needed in reading the violent passages in the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. These passages are to be read from the perspective of the victims of violent oppression. The language of the Apocalypse uses myths and symbolic images to identify the evil of violence and in this hidden form of communication it aims at strengthening and empowering the people in their resistance. It intends to uncover the real forces behind the prevailing manifestations of power and violence and to reveal the true power of God. Through this form of symbolic, religious interpretation the apocalyptic literature is able to transform the experience of real violence and thus to become a source of hope and encouragement. However, here we witness the ambiguity in the relationship between religion and violence, because some have tended to read the “hidden language” of the book of Revelation as providing religious legitimacy for the “political” scenario of the inevitable final confrontation between the forces of good and evil by referring to the mythical battle at Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

**20** The greatest challenge for the Christian interpretation of the relationship between religion and violence has been the violent death of Jesus and its significance. Was his death on the cross a necessary part of his mission or was it rather a sign of ultimate failure? Does the violence of his death have a place in God’s plan or was it rather the evidence of his having been abandoned? How to understand that God would allow the one who had completely entrusted his life and mission into God’s hands to become a victim of violence? If we approach these questions from the biblical understanding of God who seeks to contain violence, taking the side of and protecting the victims of violence, and if we consider Jesus’ own refusal to respond to violence with violent means, but rather to establish an alternative praxis of overcoming enmity and violence by love and forgiveness, we can understand his vicarious suffering and death as God’s way to unmask the logic of violence and its sacrificial legitimization and thus to break the cycle of violence and death. The violence which was meant to destroy and eliminate Jesus has lost its mythical sacred power through his very death and resurrection. Thus the link between religion and violence, the possibility of religious legitimization of violence, is abolished.

**21** *However, throughout history Christians and churches have fallen back into the tendency of legitimating violence on the basis of selective interpretation of the biblical tradition.* While the early Christian community followed the example of the alternative praxis initiated by Jesus and the

apostles and saw in the nonviolent witness of the martyrs the seedbed of the church, things changed when Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. The use of war and violence for the purpose of maintaining and expanding the unity of church, and empire became an accepted feature. The persecuted church of the first centuries became itself an agent of persecution, first against Jews in the Byzantine Empire, then in the form of the militant missionary expansion into northern Europe, leading to the compulsory baptism of whole peoples under the threat of the sword. These were followed by the crusades to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim rule and found their continuation in the Inquisition and the Reconquista in Spain, and finally the violent incursion of the Conquista into Latin America. This dark side of the Christian symbiosis of religion and violence culminated in the wars of religion in the period of the Reformation and post-Reformation in Europe. The traces of this unholy alliance of religion and violence are still with us in the crusading language of the “war on terrorism”, in the justification of the use of war and violence for the purposes of maintaining order and justice (“just war”), in the dualistic view of the human condition and of the world which operates with a clear distinction between good and evil, friend and enemy, often supported by arguments from apocalyptic language about the eschatological struggle between the rule of God and the powers of darkness.

**22** The task ahead of us both in internal Christian critical reflection and in interreligious encounter and dialogue is to unmask the logic and dynamic of violence and its dehumanizing and destructive consequences. In particular, the unholy alliance between religion and violence must be broken for the sake of life for all. The consequence must be an utter realism about the dynamics of violence in contemporary life and its roots in a view of human nature as being under the domination of the struggle for survival in which only the strongest and fittest will be able to maintain themselves. This alleged realistic view is a denial both of human freedom and responsibility as well as of the human capacity for sympathy and solidarity, for forming communities of mutuality and cooperation. All religions are trustees of the wisdom of nurturing and maintaining community and of shaping right and mutually sustainable relationships. Violence in all its forms, whether interpersonal, social or structural, constitutes a break and a denial of community. It reflects the inability or the refusal to live with differences, to acknowledge the otherness of the other. It arises from the urge to shape the other according to one’s own image, to dominate or in the extreme case to exclude or eliminate the other as a threat to one’s own identity.

**23** It is precisely the encounter with the holy, with God as the tran-

scendent other, which is the source of the basic trust in oneself, in other persons and in the world, and thus the basis of community in the sense of engaging in trusted relationships with those who are and remain different. Violence is not innate in human nature. Humans are capable of transforming the destructive energy of violence into a constructive force nurturing life. The struggle against the “spirit, logic and praxis of violence” includes more than the development and application of ways of peaceful, nonviolent means of resolving conflicts. It is a moral and spiritual struggle in which the religious communities have to take the lead, beginning with the critical assessment of their own involvement in the emergence of a culture of violence.

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## THE FACES OF VIOLENCE

**24** *During the Decade to Overcome Violence the Christian community has become aware of the contemporary reality of violence and has been obliged to acknowledge its complicity in maintaining the culture of silence regarding the presence of violence, even in its own life.* The voice of the victims of violence begins to be heard, but all too often violence is still hidden and entrenched in structures of injustice, and those responsible escape accountability. The commitment to follow the way of Just Peace requires the courage to unmask the dynamic of violence and its destructive consequences for the life of human communities and for the integrity of creation. It means making visible the victims and the perpetrators and to enable them to acknowledge their condition as a consequence of violence.

**25** However, the different faces and manifestations of violence and their complex interrelationships defy any straightforward “definition” or analysis. The task is further complicated by the fact that violence, power and force are very often used interchangeably. A purely descriptive or phenomenological account misses the hidden features. Philosophers, anthropologists and social scientists have offered interpretations of the nature and root causes of violence.

**26** The ecumenical movement has struggled with the reality of violence for many decades, focussing especially on the question of violence in the context of the struggles for justice and liberation. In its response to the 1973 report on “Violence, Nonviolence and the Struggle for Social Justice”, the central committee of the WCC stated: “In recent years we have learnt that violence has many faces. It is not merely a matter of physical harm intentionally inflicted upon an individual in an obvious, dramatic way. The ecumenical encounter, especially since the World Conference on

Church and Society (Geneva 1966), has sharpened our awareness of the violence which is built into many of the world's existing social, political and economic structures. There is no easy way of defining precisely this enlarged concept of violence and the terminological problem becomes infinitely more difficult when moving from one language, culture or distinctive political situation to another."<sup>14</sup> The Central Committee, therefore, called for continued work of conceptual and semantic clarification. However, even the subsequent efforts, especially in the context of the decade, have not removed the ambiguities surrounding the concept of violence.

**27** *In this present context of biblical-theological reflections on the vision of Just Peace, it is appropriate to start from the understanding of violence in the biblical tradition.* Violence as the opposite of *shalom* is a manifestation of evil which not only threatens the life of another human person but destroys the life-sustaining relationships within the community and with the created world. Violence is clearly associated with human action. It is the result of the sinful, intentional failure to be responsive to the demands of living in community with God, with one another and with the world of God's creation. While the physical harm inflicted intentionally upon another human person is the most dramatic manifestation of violence, the dynamic of violence has deeper roots in the perversities of the human heart; it begins with the emotions of anger, with deliberate insults or acts undermining the dignity of another person (Matt. 5:21ff.). God's gift of the law, especially in the basic form of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17), has the purpose to protect not only individual persons but the community and its vital relationships from the destructive influence of violence. The commandments establish a protective fence around the life of the community; each of the commandments – and not only the prohibition to kill another person – formulates basic rules for a life in community without the threat of violence<sup>15</sup>.

**28** Beyond the immediate purpose of protection the commandments implicitly point to social and political conditions in the form of basic social institutions that are meant to prevent the intrusion of violence into the community. Taken together they constitute an elementary social doctrine about the shape of a community that is able to minimize violence. The essential building elements of this social structure are: the family, work and property, public truth, freedom and observance of the law.

**29** This brief account of a biblical understanding of violence can help to identify the different faces of violence and their interrelationship. What is essential is the insight that acts of violence not only threaten or harm individual persons but that they undermine and destroy the life-sustaining relationships within the community and with the world of creation. At

**Violence manifests itself more indirectly and is often hidden in economic, social and political structures that limit or deny the basic guarantees for life.**

the *personal level* the most gruesome forms of violence are intentional humiliation and hurt, sexual abuse, rape and murder, abandonment and starvation. The concern for the victims of such acts of violence must not divert attention from the failure of social institutions to provide protection and to prevent the manifestation of violence. Particular attention must be given to the influence of the media in furthering a culture of violence.

**30** At the *level of societies* violence manifests itself more indirectly and is often hidden in economic, social and political structures that limit or deny the basic guarantees for life at least for parts of the population. These guarantees include, following a report of the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC in 1975, the entitlements to decent work, to adequate food, to basic health care, to decent housing and to education for the full development of the human potential. They correspond largely to the contemporary understanding of “human security” and their denial is considered as a manifestation of “structural violence”. The statement of the Central Committee quoted above indicates the problem of arriving at conceptual clarity with regard to this enlarged understanding of violence which is still surrounded by controversy. More clarity is needed regarding the question when structures of injustice in society become a manifestation of “structural violence” and where to place the (failure of) responsibility that is at the origin of any act of violence. However, an indirect support for this perspective on social violence can be found in the concept of “structural sin” that has found entry into the social doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>16</sup>

**31** The effects of structural violence have been aggravated by the impact of globalization on the social fabric and the economic and political structures of many, in particular developing countries. The consequences of adjustments policies imposed by the International Financial Institutions and the pressures to enter into inequitable trade agreements have furthered the accumulation of debts and have destabilized governments which lose the capacity to provide for the “human security” of their citizens. The victims of this form of indirect, structural violence include farmers committing suicide because of unmanageable debts, indigenous peoples deprived of their ancestral land through policies of land-grabbing, economic and environmental migrants suffering discrimination and exclusion. The most vulnerable among all these groups are women and children.

**32** At the *level of nations* and their relationships violence is experienced in acts of war, today especially the so called “new wars” fought by warlords

and supported by war economies; in organized criminal networks; in terrorism - including the "war on terror" - in the grim realities of millions of displaced people and refugees; in children being forced into soldiering and prostitution; in racism, ethnocentrism and the deliberate fuelling of enmity between peoples and ethnic or religious groups. Structures of enmity describe the fact that the fabric of societies is woven with conflicting interests and deep-seated divisions. They have at their basis imbalances and irresponsible uses of power and can become the seed bed of violence

**33** *Finally, violence also expresses itself in the irresponsible disregard for and intrusion into the delicate ecological balances in the natural world through reckless exploitation of common goods such as drinking water and fossil fuels, the felling of forests, the over fishing of the seas and oceans, the extinction of species. Some of these forms of violence have become as it were "habitual". This refers to abuses of human power which have become tacitly accepted, such as a thoughtless consumerist life-style, taking the gifts of nature for granted or treating human beings as "resource material" and "objects" of desire. Habitual violence is also reflected in the attitude that accepts wars as "natural" or in the belief of many victims, especially women, that abuses toward them are unavoidable. This expression of violence has been hidden for too long and is only gradually being acknowledged as the destructive consequences for human action become manifest, e.g. in the dramatic implications of climate change.*

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## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE WAY OF JUST PEACE**

**34** The way of Just Peace has to be traced continuously anew in the midst of the reality of violence, responding not only to its direct forms, whether in interpersonal violence or in armed, violent conflict, but also to its indirect expression as "structural violence", whether through governmental oppression and abuse of power or through business practises and economic systems which exploit vulnerable communities and the environment. In confronting these different manifestations of violence and destructive conflict, Christians and their communities, inspired by the Spirit of the Beatitudes and committed to the way of Just Peace, are called to be present in places where peace is endangered and to be God's ambassadors of reconciliation, to mediate in situations of conflict and to restore life and dignity to the victims of violence. The way of Just Peace takes its direction from the renunciation of violence which Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount and aims at challenging and breaking the cycle of

violence by transforming conflict and accepting the adversary or enemy as partner in the effort to re-establishing right relationships in community.

**35** *The brief survey of the biblical tradition has pointed to the gift of law as God's primary means of reducing and limiting violence.* Indeed, in all cultures law is the central instrument for nonviolent resolution of conflict. Supporting and strengthening the "rule of law", therefore, has to be considered an essential ethical guideline for the Christian community. The concept of the "rule of law" refers to the framework of principles, institutions and procedures that are considered essential to protect persons and communities from arbitrary rule or violence and facilitate life in dignity. Respect for and implementation of human rights forms the basic criterion for enforcing the rule of law and establishing just and sustainable communities. In many cases the violation of human rights is linked with manifestations of direct or structural violence. Overcoming violence and defending human rights, therefore, constitute two sides of the same responsibility.

**36** Addressing the challenges of nonviolence and reconciliation, the Harare Assembly of the WCC stated in 1998: "Violence arising from various forms of human rights violations, discrimination and structural injustice represents a growing concern at all levels of an increasingly plural society. Racism combines with and aggravates other causes of exclusion and marginalization. Conflicts are becoming increasingly complex, located more often within nations than between nations. Women and children in conflict situations represent a special concern. There is a need to bring together the work on gender and racism, human rights and transformation of conflict in ways that engage the churches in initiatives for reconciliation that build on repentance, truth, justice, reparation and forgiveness. The Council should work strategically with the churches on these issues to create a culture of nonviolence, linking and interacting with other international partners and organizations, and examining and developing appropriate approaches to conflict transformation and just peace-making in the new globalized context."<sup>17</sup> The statement concludes with the proclamation of the Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010.

**37** The "rule of law" presupposes an order of the community which strictly limits the use of force to cases where the legitimate authority and its agents are constrained to protect life and security of individuals or the community as a whole. Any such use of force stands itself under the rule of law and the demand for respecting human rights and those responsible have to be held accountable for their actions. Advocacy against the impunity of illegitimate use of force and the violation of human rights must be considered as an essential means of furthering Just Peace.

**38** *Responding to violence in the spirit of Just Peace aims at building and strengthening just relationships in the community through prevention of violence, transformation of conflict, and healing through restorative justice and reconciliation.* Prevention of acts of violence, whether in interpersonal relationships or within and between communities is not only the responsibility of the agents of public order, but it is shared by the churches and religious communities as bodies within civil society. An important element in this responsibility is *education for peace*, which is not simply about acquiring knowledge; it is about formation of character and building attitudes and habits to respond nonviolently in the face of provocation.

**39** Peace education needs to be part of religious instruction in the churches at all levels. It should to begin with children, but must be extended to adolescents and adults as well. The formation to be agents of peace begins by looking to models of those already engaged in peace-building. For children, parents must be the first agents of peace they encounter, who serve as examples not only in what they say, but in what they do. As children grow and mature into being agents of peace themselves, the churches must provide space, encouragement, and active support in this formation. This obliges the churches and their members to discern whether their choices, their actions, and their lifestyles do or do not make them servants of peace. It also means giving support to those who have recognized gifts for promoting specific pathways of peace - for these are gifts of the Spirit of Peace within the churches and for the sake of the world. Some will have distinct capacities for accompanying victims of violence; others, for mediating in disputes; still others, for caring for the earth. Such gifts should be recognized as special ministries that the churches offer to the wider community. Through such efforts the churches can help to promote the formation of capacities within civil society for prevention of violence and transformation of conflicts.

**40** Prevention of violence goes beyond peace education and forming agents of peace and reconciliation. *Basic to all efforts for preventing violence is the ceaseless work for justice in society and in the relations between communities.* The central criteria for justice are formulated by the standards of human rights, especially the social, economic and cultural rights. Their continuous and deliberate denial or infringement as a consequence of abuse of power or due to systemic causes constitutes the case of structural violence. Prevention under such conditions can take the form of prophetic advocacy and even active resistance. Churches and Christian communities must go beyond actions of caring for the victims, and be prepared to engage together with other civic organizations and movements in denouncing cases of structural violence and participate in

organized nonviolent resistance against such abuses of political or economic power.

**41** *Not all conflicts around issues of social, political or economic justice involve structural violence.* Tracing the way of Just Peace does not aim at a condition of life in community without conflict. Conflicts of interest or of basic value orientation need to be engaged publicly rather than avoided or repressed. If such conflicts can be resolved through cooperation, argumentation and reasonable compromise rather than through confrontation with the winner “taking all”, just relationships in the community will be strengthened. However, all conflicts, whether interpersonal or social, carry in them the potential of turning violent. In such situations, following the vision of Just Peace will take the form of *conflict transformation*. This involves acknowledging the legitimate interests of all sides involved and directing their attention to the common good of the community. Churches and religious communities are called to be particularly vigilant where the parties in social, political, or ethnic conflicts appeal to religious loyalties to give added legitimacy to and mobilize support for their strategies. Conflict transformation in such situations must expose the illegitimate use of religion for particular interests and point to the real causes of conflict; i.e. the opposing interests that require peaceful resolution through mediation, compromise or through a court of justice. Sometimes the responsibility of conflict transformation will have to begin by disturbing a false peace that covers up an entrenched conflict making the victims invisible. In that sense, prophetic advocacy can become an important way of preventing violence and furthering conflict transformation.

**42** Prevention and conflict transformation receive particular significance with regard to the use of natural resources and the conflict between the need of securing the life of the human community and the imperative to safeguard the integrity of creation. This conflict has remained hidden and unacknowledged during centuries while nature was being treated as a resource to be exploited for human interest. Through a one-sided interpretation of the biblical tradition Christianity has contributed to the consolidation of an anthropocentric view of nature forgetting about the fundamental vulnerability of human life and its dependency on the viability of ecological balances. The threat of dramatic consequences of climate change now brings into the open the conflict between the model of society based on industrial-technological development and the requirements of ecological sustainability. Increasingly, indigenous peoples are challenging the world community to acknowledge the violence done to the earth and to return to a caring approach. They have opened ways for Christianity to re-appropriate the biblical understanding of the earth as God’s creation

and to be attentive to the “groaning of creation” (Rom. 8:19). Together with the growing community of victims of ecological crises, especially ecological refugees, they are calling the churches to become advocates of ecological justice and through serious changes of life-styles to further the transformation of this conflict with its high potential of violence.

**43** The ultimate aim of preventing violence and transforming conflict is the *building of cultures of peace* in just and sustainable communities. The task of transformation reaches beyond preventing violence and reaching peaceful and cooperative settlements of conflict; it needs to confront the fact that the logic and dynamic of violence have become embodied in cultural patterns, in a “culture of violence”. Resorting to violence has become more and more acceptable in order to establish ethnic or national identity, to gain social recognition or access to scarce resources. The process of globalization which tends to subject all aspects of life to the rules of a competitive market society has contributed to the shaping of this “culture of violence”. The commitment of the ecumenical community, through the Decade to Overcome Violence, to cooperate in building a “culture of peace” aims at nothing less than a fundamental transformation of this cultural pattern.

**44** In accepting this commitment it is important to underline again that Just Peace is not simply the final result of a deliberate strategy, an end state of affairs to be reached, but rather a continuous process, a way of life under the promise of God’s peace revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Building and shaping a “culture of peace” will, therefore, manifest the same features of a dynamic, ongoing process. It will have to cultivate the capacity of openness to the other, the unexpected, the readiness constantly to transcend one’s position and to redraw the boundaries of peace, to make it more and more inclusive. It will, therefore, struggle against all forms of ethnocentrism, xenophobia and ideologies that fuel enmity. The process must be rooted in the fundamental recognition that all life is created for and sustained in community. It thus points to a continuous task of moral and spiritual formation strengthening the capacity for mutual recognition and reciprocity. It will acknowledge human vulnerability and thus the need for basic security; but rather than building up defensive barriers, it seeks to transform vulnerability into a mark of true humanity: the acknowledgement of mutual dependence and responsibility for one another.

**45** The cultural pattern oriented towards the vision of Just Peace will be marked by a strong commitment to truth and justice as vital dimensions for sustainable life in community. It will be very vigilant, however, not to succumb to the tendency of interpreting either justice or truth in a self-righteous manner which draws an absolute distinction between truth

**The Christian community needs to develop particular vigilance with regard to aggressive forms of Christian fundamentalism and the use of biblical teaching to legitimate aggression against those of other faiths.**

and error, right and wrong. True and just relationships in human community are constantly being undermined by the deeply rooted tendency to reduce the complexities of the human life-world to choices between either/or, between winning and losing, or to declare that “there is no alternative”. The moral and spiritual formation for a “culture of peace” will seek to recover the fundamental relationship between truth and trust, between justice and righteousness, and to learn that offering forgiveness is the way to restore right and just relationships in community.

**46** The effort of building a culture of peace will have to struggle constantly with the manifestations of fear and anxiety which often enough distort the perception of reality and thus nurture conflict or even violence. Whereas the culture of violence depends on creating victims who submit to this role, the cultural transformation towards a culture of peace starts with the refusal to accept the role of the victim. This does not mean to close one’s eyes to real threats or to one’s own fragility and vulnerability, but it restores them to their true proportions and thus involves an act of spiritual discernment which breaks through the distorted perceptions of reality.

**47** The need for a new ethical discourse and for critical discernment is felt particularly in situations of *armed, violent conflict*. With regard to political responsibilities, it has become customary to distinguish between pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict situations. They correspond to the previous proposal to consider the specific ethical demands of prevention, transformation and building or restoring a culture of peace. In *pre-conflict situations* attention must be focussed on preventing a violent turn of conflict and on education for peace, including the building of capacities for early warning and defusing initial inclinations for violent action. Violent conflict can be prevented if attention is drawn in a timely and consistent fashion to oppressive and unjust structures and practices that build the resentment which then leads to violent confrontation. In that process rumour control and dampening inflammatory rhetoric in the media and on the streets are of crucial importance. The Christian community needs to develop particular vigilance with regard to aggressive forms of Christian fundamentalism and the use of biblical teachings to legitimate aggression against those of other faiths.

**48** When people find themselves in the *midst of violent conflict* itself, peace-building has two aspects: protection and mediation. The *responsibil-*

*ity to protect* those directly endangered by conflict is beginning to receive greater attention today than in the past. Women in conflict situations have known about this responsibility for a long time, since it usually falls to them to protect the young, the aged, and the ill; at the same time they, together with their children, are most in need of protection. Churches need to explore how networks of congregations can become havens of protection not only from armed or urban violence, but also from domestic and especially sexual violence.

**49** Beyond offering support to those most vulnerable, protection must also include vigorous advocacy for the rule of law and the respect of human rights. Since several years the “Responsibility to Protect” is being considered as a new norm governing international relations. This norm underlines that the responsibility to protect a population from violence and abuse of human rights and to provide for “human security”, is an integral part of the claim to sovereignty of the respective government. In extreme situations, where governments are unable or unwilling to assume this task, the responsibility would fall to the international community and would provide legitimacy to actions of intervention, eventually by using armed force, to protect the endangered population in a situation of armed conflict. The ethical and political implications of such a norm have been controversially discussed within the ecumenical movement (cf. the statement by the WCC Assembly at Porto Alegre 2006: “Vulnerable Populations at Risk. Statement on the Responsibility to Protect”). In line with the “Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace” it is concluded here that the use of force in situations of conflict is likely to prevent or delay the transformation of conflict and thus becomes an obstacle on the way to Just Peace.

**50** *Mediation* in situations of armed conflict is an important and often delicate task that can fall to the churches and their leaders. It can take place at various levels. At the grassroots levels local leaders, both lay and ordained, are called upon to interpret the insights and perceptions of their congregations to those involved in the mediation process. Regional and national leadership of churches may be called upon to serve in mediating roles, especially in settings where Christians are in the majority or where effective interfaith councils are in place. Here, respect for the spiritual and moral integrity of the churches, represented by their leadership, can be a significant factor in ending conflict. Engaging in mediation is often delicate, keeping a balance between gaining and maintaining the trust of the parties on the one hand, and maintaining the degree of neutrality that makes mediation possible on the other. Especially in civil conflicts, when all other social institutions have been discredited or destroyed, churches

may be called upon as the sole surviving institution with enough credibility to be able to speak on behalf of the people.

**51** Apart from the responses of protection and mediation, *the most difficult ethical challenge facing the Christian community when confronted with the reality of war or armed, military conflict arises with the question whether war can (still) be considered an “act of justice”*. The first assembly of the WCC at Amsterdam, under the impact of the devastations caused by World War II, had in fact rejected war as a means of settling disputes, because “war is contrary to the will of God” and “incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ”. While this basic conviction has been reconfirmed and even strengthened in the period since then, the ethical implications continue to be discussed controversially. In a later section the two principal Christian Peace traditions and the search for a common pathway will be presented and analyzed. However, the vision of Just Peace as suggested here reaches beyond the effort of reconciling the tension between “pacifism” and the theory of “just war”. It stands for a fundamental shift of paradigm and a transformed ethical discourse that does not start from war in order to move to peace, but focuses attention on the praxis of nonviolent, peaceful resolution of conflict. In their commitment to the vision of Just Peace Christians and churches must, therefore, face “the challenge to give up any theological or other justification of the use of military power and to become a *koinonia* dedicated to the pursuit of a just peace<sup>18</sup>.”

**52** In *post-conflict* situations the churches face particular challenges and responsibilities. They are especially challenged as significant actors in civil society to promote truth-telling and to further the restoration of justice and respect for human rights. As signs and instruments of God’s peace they further need to nurture the willingness to forgive and serve as agents of reconciliation.

**53** Getting at the *truth* about what happened during the conflict and what were its causes is often an important step in the building of peace after overt conflict. The churches have been called upon in a number of instances in recent years to take leadership roles in truth-telling processes. Truth-telling is important in the rehabilitation of those who had been deemed enemies by a powerful state, but especially in allowing victims (or their surviving families) to tell their stories and witness to the pain and loss they have endured. Truth telling can be an important part of establishing a new regime of accountability and transparency where previously oppressive ideologies, arbitrariness and secrecy have prevailed. Truth telling is a many-sided and delicate process that, in deeply wounded societies, may not always be possible or even advisable. But without truth (not just in the sense

of veracity, but also in the biblical sense of trustworthiness and reliability), a new society cannot build on a firm foundation. Churches cannot credibly accompany truth-telling processes unless they are ready to acknowledge the truth about themselves and their implication in the conflict.

**54** Next to allowing the truth to be known and acknowledged, the most urgent need in post-conflict situations is to re-establish confidence that *justice* will prevail and that the human rights of all members of the community are respected. Those who carry responsibility for acts of violence have to be made accountable and the structures of injustice which generated the conflict have to be transformed. The experience of churches in recent post-conflict situations has given particular significance to the *search for restorative justice*. The main aim of restorative justice is the re-integration of the community. It focuses on people rather than on general norms of justice. Its objective is to restore the dignity of the victims of the conflict, but at the same time to bring those who have caused the break-up of relationships to acknowledge their responsibility towards the community and to prepare the way for their re-integration. While punitive justice is the prerogative of the courts of law, restorative justice is the concern of the entire community; the churches together with other religious and civic groupings can contribute significantly to this process and thus further the healing of the community.

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## JUST PEACE AS A SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

**55** *For the Christian community the approach of restorative justice implies the spiritual challenge to create the space for forgiveness and ultimately for reconciliation.* To promote *forgiveness* does not mean to avoid facing the truth or allowing justice to prevail. Rather, through forgiveness both the victims and their offenders are to be liberated from the burden of the past and painful memories can be healed. Forgiveness is a voluntary act that can neither be demanded or organized nor made dependent on a prior act of repentance. In fact, forgiveness can open the way to true repentance and reparation as is shown in the encounters of Jesus. Forgiveness is an expression of the spiritual courage that is rooted in the assurance of God's generosity and forgiveness of human sins and wrongdoings (Matt. 18:21ff.). Churches can create the space where victims and perpetrators can begin to trust the power of forgiveness; those involved in acts of violence also need to be liberated to forgive themselves. Without forgiveness, there is no way of coming free from the past. Christian forgiveness is not cheap forgiveness, but a change of heart and an active concern for the

welfare of the offender. Forgiving and being forgiven can release from the heavy burdens of anger, hatred, guilt and fear and thus re-establish community.

**56** Forgiveness does not erase the past but remembers the past in a different way. Promoting forgiveness, accompanying people on the long road to forgiveness, and providing a public ritual framework where especially social forgiveness can be enacted are all things that fall especially to the churches. To the extent the churches can live up to the praxis of Jesus, they can be effective instruments of God's forgiveness.

**57** Along the path to forgiveness, the healing of memories is of special significance. The healing of memories aims at being able to re-appropriate the past together in ways that will make forgiveness especially possible. Here the accompaniment of victims by the churches, of finding a way through their suffering by looking to the cross and resurrection of Christ, is one of the most important ways of serving the divine purpose of reconciling the whole creation.

**58** While forgiveness finds expression in the act of saying: "I forgive you!", *reconciliation* is both a process and a goal. The process is likely to entail exercises of truth-telling, the pursuit of justice, the healing of memories, and the extending of forgiveness. Reconciliation between individual persons focuses upon restoring the dignity of the one who has been offended and the mutual acceptance of responsibility for one another as members of the community. Social reconciliation may focus upon healing the memories or building a common future together: it may involve making sure that the deeds of the past cannot happen again, or building an alternate future. Through the process of reconciliation the community can overcome the trauma caused by the eruption of violence in its midst and reach out to the perpetrators, seeking to draw them back into the community, so that they can offer reparation and contribute again to the common life. Whenever reconciliation is achieved, the experience of it as a gift of free grace from God can be the most moving and effective way of speaking about God's design for the world, of how the world is being drawn back into God, its Creator.

**59** Practising forgiveness and engaging in processes of reconciliation, together with active, life-affirming nonviolence, are basic marks of the way of Just Peace. Peace-making is not simply assenting to a set of ideas about God's design for the world. To be agents of God's peace requires putting on the mind that was in Christ Jesus (cf. Phil 2:5): the emptying of self, embracing of vulnerability, seeking the fellowship of the excluded, thus responding to the call of costly discipleship. It requires being led by the Holy Spirit in the healing and sanctifying of the world. In order to

have that mind of Christ, peace-building requires entering regularly and deeply into communion with the Triune God, along the ways that Christ has set out for us. It is that presence in God that makes it possible for us to come to discern God's working in our world. It allows us to see those glimmerings of grace that may come to flash forth the love of God that heals and reconciles.

**60** Putting on the mind of Christ, being formed in Christ, involves spiritual practices and disciplines that embody peace in our own bodies:

- communal acts of worship in order to be nourished by God's Word and by the Eucharist;
- making prayers of intercession as part of our mindfulness of being formed in Christ;
- seeking and extending forgiveness, so as to create truthfulness in ourselves and to forge the space for others who need to seek repentance;
- washing one another's feet, so as to learn the ways of service;
- engaging in times of fasting, to review our patterns of consumption and relationships to one another and to the earth;
- consistent and sustained acts of caring for others, especially those most in need of healing, liberation, and reconciliation;
- consistent and sustained acts of caring for the earth.

**61** On the way of just peace, we are invited to sustain hope (Rom. 5:1ff; 8:18f; 1 Peter 1:3ff.). Building peace is often an arduous task, marked by disappointments, failures and setbacks. How do we find the reserves of strength to remain faithful and to keep forging on in the midst of adversity? Hope is not the same as optimism. Optimism is our assessment of how we can change the present and forge the future by dint of our own resources and strengths. Hope, on the other hand, is something that comes from God, who is the author of peace and reconciliation. Hope is something that we discover, drawing us forward into the mystery of peace. It manifests itself at times in unexpected places and in surprising ways. It can be perceived thanks to our communion with God – glimmerings of grace in the midst of adversity, acts of kindness in the face of ruthless self-seeking, moments of gentleness in the hardness of relentless aggression.

**62** A spirituality is something that agents of peace share, a web of practices and attitudes that bind a community together. In its own finite way, spirituality mirrors the loving relationships between the persons of the triune God who sustains, transforms and sanctifies a broken world.



**People around the world wait with eager longing that Christians become who they are.**

### **3. CONTEXTS OF JUST PEACE**

**1** A perennial and pervasive question of Christian life and history was placed high on the international ecumenical agenda for the first decade of the 21st century. Churches gathered in Harare for the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1998) called the international ecumenical community to observe a Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, 2001-2010.

**2** This short report of what has come to be known as “DOV” offers highlights from the ecumenical team visits of the decade, a year-by-year overview of regional and global initiatives, and a brief review of the decade and the ecumenical consensus on peace. [For more comprehensive information on these and other aspects of the decade, see the final report of the DOV.]

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#### **BUILDING A CONSENSUS FOR PEACE**

**3** Justice and peace have been ecumenical concerns for more than 100 years. The WCC has spoken out for and intervened in the interest of

justice and peace continuously since its foundation in 1948. Under the heading ‘War is contrary to the will of God’ the Amsterdam Assembly affirmed: “War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a degradation of man.”<sup>1</sup>

**4** One of the most comprehensive statements on the subject was issued by the Vancouver Assembly the WCC in 1983. It declared: “Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations, and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is, as the prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness.” It is also affirmed: “We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds....”<sup>2</sup>

**5** Responding to the growing threats to survival the same assembly at Vancouver initiated the conciliar process for *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Affirming the full meaning of God’s peace during that process the WCC convocation in Seoul (1990) declared: “We are called to seek every possible means of establishing justice, achieving peace and solving conflicts by active nonviolence. We will resist doctrines and systems of security based on the use of, and deterrence by, all weapons of mass destruction, and military invasions, interventions and occupations.... We commit ourselves to practice nonviolence in all our personal relationships, to work for the banning of war as a legally recognized means of resolving conflicts, and to press governments for the establishment of an international order of peacemaking.”<sup>3</sup>

**6** In the light of the new assessments after the end of the Cold War, and the failures in advancing an international order of peace with justice, and in the face of new wars and failing states, the WCC Central Committee at Johannesburg (1994) established a Programme to Overcome Violence. Its purpose was “challenging and transforming the global culture of violence in the direction of a culture of just peace”. The committee also declared that “in view of the need to confront and overcome the ‘spirit, logic and practice of war’ and to develop new theological approaches consonant with the teaching of Christ, which start not with war and move to peace, but with the need for justice, this may be the time when the churches, together, should face the challenge to give up any theological or other justification of the use of military power, and to become a koinonia

dedicated to the pursuit of just peace....”<sup>4</sup>

**7** The Harare Assembly of the WCC (1998) called for a Decade to Overcome Violence. In the message to the churches the Central Committee in 1999 said: “We offer with the Decade to Overcome Violence a truly ecumenical space for encounter, mutual recognition, and common action. We will strive together to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence. We will work together to be agents of reconciliation and peace with justice in homes, churches and societies as well as in the political and social and economic structures at global level. We will cooperation to build a culture of peace that is based on just and sustainable communities. The gospel vision of peace is a source of hope for change and a new beginning. Let us not betray what is promised to us. People around the world wait with eager longing that Christians become who they are: children of God embodying the message of justice and peace.... Peace is possible. Peace is practical. Make peace.”<sup>5</sup> [See “Overview of the Decade”, above, for information about the launch, the annual emphases and actions of the 2006 Assembly.]

**8** The Ninth Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre (2006), at the mid-point of the Decade to Overcome Violence, issued a Call to Recommitment which stated: “The respect for human dignity, the concern for the well-being of the neighbours and the active promotion of the common good are imperatives of the gospel of Jesus Christ.... Therefore, human rights are a basic element in preventing violence at all levels, individual, interpersonal and collective, and especially violence against women and children. This must include the effort to build and develop the rule of law everywhere. We shall further pursue the understanding of “restorative” or “transformative” justice with the aim of establishing viable and just relationships in communities.”<sup>6</sup>

**9** The 2006 Assembly further pledged: “To relinquish any theological and ethical justification of violence calls for discernment that draws its strength from a spirituality and discipleship of active nonviolence. We have committed ourselves to a profound common ethical-theological reflection and advocacy for nonviolent conflict prevention, civilian conflict management and peace consolidation. The praxis of nonviolence must be rooted in a spirituality that acknowledges one’s own vulnerability; that encourages and empowers the powerless to be able to face up to those who misuse power; that trusts the active presence of the power of God inhuman conflicts and therefore is able to transcend the seeming lack of alternatives in situations of violence.”<sup>7</sup>

**10** The Porto Alegre Assembly also asked the Central Committee “to consider a study process engaging all member churches and ecumenical

**The declaration is an attempt to proclaim the vision of 'Just Peace' at this critical time of converging and contending forces, and to spell out where their discipleship calls Christians and churches to commit themselves.**

organizations in order to develop an extensive ecumenical declaration on peace, firmly rooted in an articulated theology. This should deal with topics such as just peace, the Responsibility to Protect, the role and the legal status of non-state combatants, the conflict of values (for example, territorial integrity and human rights). It should be adopted at the conclusion of the Decade to Overcome Violence.”<sup>8</sup>

**11** The decade has brought to light the ramifications and the depth of the culture of violence which has been dramatized by the recent acts of international terrorism and the responses to it.

Violence has multiple and complex causes and the churches have reason to acknowledge and repent of their won complicity. The world is approaching a critical moment – and analysis that has already motivated the earlier ecumenical statement on “Economic Threats to Peace” and “Threats to Survival” (1974), as well as the message “Now is the Time” of the Seoul convocation (1990). Movements and forces that have threatened the further existence of our world in the past are still very much with us, such as nuclear arms and the yawning gap between rich and poor. The emerging world food crisis and the acceleration of environmental degradation must now be added to that list.

**12** What makes this a critical time is the interconnectedness and convergence of all these deadly threats. The experiences and the learning of the Decade to Overcome Violence and the growing awareness of the critical convergence of destabilizing forces to our world have brought the churches to a new place as they consider how to carry out the ministry five to them by Christ to be servants and ambassadors of God’s peace and reconciliation. Just Peace now can no longer be considered simply as a counterweight to Just War. What justice and what peace entail take on more comprehensive meanings in the face of all these interconnected and destabilizing forces on the one hand, and the need for an all-compassing and seamless vision of God’s peace with and for Creation on the other.

**13** Having arrived at the projected end of the Decade to Overcome Violence and building on the evaluation of learning and insights that emerged in the course of the decade, the Central Committee of the WCC has issued the *Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* for serious consideration by its member churches and final confirmation at the Busan Assembly in 2013.

**14** The declaration is an attempt to proclaim the vision of ‘Just Peace’ at this critical time of converging and contending forces, and to spell out

where their discipleship calls Christians and churches to commit themselves in the coming years. The declaration responds to the challenge of going beyond the attitudes of rejection and resistance to violence, since they remain caught all too often in the logic of struggle for power which opposes friend and enemy, and to invite the churches to commit themselves to the way of Just Peace and active peacemaking. What is required is a critical re-appropriation of the age-old wisdom: If you want peace, prepare for peace (not for war). The concept of Just Peace stands for a fundamental shift. The work of Just Peace is shaped by a different framework for analysis and guided by new criteria for action.

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## **OVERVIEW OF THE DECADE**

**15** The Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, 2001-2010, was built on long-standing WCC policies and programmes concerning peace with justice and the Christian response to violence. [See next section for a résumé of ecumenical policies and positions on key issues.] The most recent programmatic foundations were laid by the Programme to Overcome Violence and the Peace to the City campaign. In some countries these activities continued and made significant contributions to the DOV. In others places, foundational work and learning were not carried forward.

**16** The new decade was also inspired in a broad sense by the recently completed Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-98, during which violence against women received critical attention among many churches. That decade gave birth to the 'Living Letters' project, teams of people making solidarity visits to churches and communities across the membership of the WCC. This became an important legacy to the Decade to Overcome Violence.

**17** The solidarity visits of the decade for women found that a "culture of silence" in the church prevented women from telling the full story of the violence they experience. The decade ended with a call to the churches of the WCC to move from solidarity with women to accountability for violence in its various forms – "sexual, religious, structural, physical, spiritual, and military" – and for ending the "culture of violence" that affects the life and dignity of women. Member churches were urged to pursue on-going "conversation, conversion, prayer and action".

**18** Informed by experiences like these, the new decade began with a broad aim to "move peace-building from the periphery to the centre of the life and witness of the church and to build stronger alliances among

churches, networks and movements which are working toward a culture of peace”. To reach the goal churches would:

- Address holistically “wide varieties of violence, both direct and structural, in homes, communities and international arenas”;
- Strive to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence;
- Create new understanding of security in terms of cooperation and community;
- Learn from and work with communities of other faiths in pursuit of peace and to challenge the misuse of religion;
- Challenge growing militarization and the proliferation of weapons.

**19** Organizers in the churches were called to engage in study processes, campaigns, peace education, story-telling and inter-cultural sharing of worship practices and prayers celebrating peace and peace-making as a common concern. The decade was intended as an opportunity for churches, ecumenical organizations, groups and movements around the world to make a “positive, practical and unique contribution to building a culture of peace”.

**20** A sampling of the actual contributions follows, year by year. Concurrently, long-standing work of the WCC would amplify the decade on peace from different angles: for example, under the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, *Peace-building and Disarmament*, studies and consultations on militarism, and *Impunity, Truth, Justice and Reconciliation*; the on-going work of *Justice, Peace, Creation and Poverty, Wealth and Ecology* with its substantial ecumenical heritage; and a study process of the Commission on Faith and Order, *Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the Way of Christ for the Sake of the World*.

### **2001 DOV launch**

**21** The global launch of the DOV took place in Berlin with public worship and festive celebrations on 4 February 2001. There were also regional, national and church launches in Latin America, West Africa, the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, USA, Germany, Denmark and elsewhere.

**22** When churches gathered to launch the Decade to Overcome Violence in Asia, they did so in Indonesia where one of the violent conflicts that marked the post-Cold War era was taking place. This was a war within a country – the independence struggle of East Timor. A WCC delegate described it as “military oppression...decades of pent-up hatred... religions abused...burning churches” and, embodying hope for peace, the National Council of Churches in Indonesia collaborating with Muslim

associations to hold a seminar on reconciliation.

**23** One international DOV project developed and shared resources in support of Christian world communions in their efforts to address violence against women and girls. Highlights of the work included a meeting in Scotland where participants from every major Christian tradition shared stories of concern and models of good practice, as well as resources for education, training, worship and theology. The conference drafted the *Dundee Principles* to guide prayer, study and action in overcoming violence against women, and made plans for dissemination of the resource in various church families.

### **2002 'September 11' and Palestine – Aftershocks and Occupation**

**24** The fearful and violent aftermath of 11 September 2001 influenced events and projects dedicated to the DOV. It coloured churches reflections on their own positions, attitudes and approaches to violence and peace. It fuelled a debate about religion, violence and power in the June 2002 event called “Interfaith Exploration into the Heart of Religion”, a consultation to identify traces of violence and peace in diverse religious traditions.

**25** September 11 also cast its shadow on a women-to-women solidarity visit to the Philippines related to DOV. Women from nine countries joined Filipino women in assessing the impact of militarization on women and children. A US-Philippines military operation was taking place against the Abu Sayyaf militant group at the time. Women from all churches formed an Ecumenical Women’s Forum to protest the presence of US troops and bases. The ecumenical visitors encountered many of the issue being identified at international DOV consultations – national consequences of the so-called ‘War on Terror’, international financial policies playing out disastrously in the lives of local communities, violence against women and children during armed conflict, and the marginalization of women during processes to end conflicts.

**26** Similar issues at the global level were debated by a consultation in Geneva, including the impact on women of racial violence and domestic violence, the role of media in normalizing violence against women, and the violence of governments spending far more on the military than on education, food and health combined.

**27** In the aftermath of September 11 – when violence was often portrayed as a clash of faiths – women in Syracuse, New York, USA, carried out a DOV-related inter-faith project called “Women Transcending Boundaries”.

**28** Meanwhile, a new WCC campaign and programme very much in the spirit of DOV took shape. The campaign *End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East* was launched to mo-

bilize member churches and ecumenical partners to address the causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel was the major outcome of the campaign. In it, churches and specialized ministries undertook to send civilians to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to Israel to be part of an on-going ministry of solidarity and presence with people suffering from and affected by the occupation. In addition, the ‘accompaniers’ would be witnesses in their own societies about what was happening under occupation and about the long-denied need, among both peoples, for peace with justice. The programme, convened and guided by the WCC, required recruitment, training, management and follow-up in each participating country as well. By the end of the decade some 700 people from about 15 countries had served as accompaniers.

### **2003 Sudan – *Healing and Reconciliation***

**29** The DOV turned to accompanying churches and movements in support of their peace work – through greater sharing of resources and with an annual focus which began with Sudan. The ‘healing and reconciliation’ foreseen for Sudan was meant to build on peace-building experience gained elsewhere in Africa. It was largely frustrated, however, because a peace agreement for Sudan was not signed as hoped in mid-2003. Nevertheless, connections to the churches involved in Sudan were strengthened and churches around the world learned about the healing and reconciliation ministries of Sudan’s churches. Other plans were precluded by the continuing conflict and uncertainty there.

**30** The DOV study guide “Why Violence, Why not Peace?” became a story with some 70,000 tellings. That was the number of copies of this resource eventually distributed or downloaded.

**31** Faith and Order held a consultation on *Interrogating and Redefining Power* (Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland, 10-13 December 2003), as part of the study process *Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence*.

### **2004 USA – *The Power and Promise of Peace***

**32** Churches, parishes and ministries in the USA learned about the DOV and took part in it in different ways. There was a Lenten Fast from Violence, a Scholars’ Retreat, and a Blessed are the Peacemakers Award, for example. *The Power and Promise of Peace*, the annual theme, shaped the public launch of the US focus in Atlanta and denominational, academic and local activities during the year. Participants sought to strengthen churches and movements working for peace in the USA and to generate resources to support them. Goals included deepening the understanding in the churches

of power, of militarism and of building peace at the community level.

**33** Canadian churches reached out to their own society with a DOV open letter, thanking God for courage of those who have “witnessed to truth, justice and peace in a time when fear, insecurity and manipulate patriotism have paralyzed so many”. They joined US churches in deploring discrimination against Arab and Muslim citizens, and in repenting of the violence done to America’s indigenous peoples. The Canadian churches expressed the hope was that “together we can break through barriers of isolation, and form bonds of unshakeable unity in justice and peace, so that as you make witness for the world God wants and has promised, you will know that you are not alone.”

**34** Meanwhile, the DOV began an annual event that was accessible to member churches in every region of the world. On 21 September 2004, for the first time, the WCC called churches and parishes to observe an International Day of Prayer for Peace, concurrent with the United Nations International Day of Peace. 24-hour peace vigils and prayers for the region of the annual focus were encouraged. The DOV web site carried messages on the theme, 500 resources and links to over 200 organizations working to overcome violence. There were 250,000 visits to the site in September.

**35** DOV resources included a new book in the WCC Risk series, “Axis of Peace” by Wesley Ariarajah and a video “Roots of Violence” about post-war Sierra Leone. Faith and Order’s DOV-related study process *Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence* held a consultation called *Affirming Human Dignity, Rights of People and the Integrity of Creation*.

### **2005 Asia – Building Communities of Peace for All**

**36** As the mid-point of the decade approached, churches and groups in all regions had been encouraged to take ownership of the DOV in their context. Depending on their response and the reach of WCC initiatives, the decade was now serving in some churches as a catalyst for peace studies and reflection, for awareness-raising and networking. In some cases there was grassroots ownership of the decade. Congregations, initiatives and Christian peace services had begun to develop various grass-roots projects in order to address the different forms of violence that are experienced today in families, schools, streets and civil conflicts. In all cases the decade was offered not as distant initiative but as a framework for churches to become involved. Groups beyond the WCC membership were welcome.

**37** A mid-decade review noted that there are churches, “and not too few”, who so far seemed to have made little new room in their life and praxis for nonviolent ways of thinking and action as a result of the decade. The DOV was hardly known in some regions.

**38** Events like the 2005 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism demonstrated the DOV's local-global dynamics and its bridging role. Pioneering aspects of the conference – Orthodox context and full participation of Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical delegates – resonated with the gathering's peace-oriented theme: *Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile: Called in Christ to be Reconciling and Healing Communities*. The DOV held a plenary on "Mission and Violence". The DOV motto, *Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace*, was echoed in the conference invitation to churches to approach mission in a more humble way and in its call for Christians to become 'ambassadors of peace'.

**39** The annual focus on Asia, *Building Communities of Peace for All*, was launched at the assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia in Thailand. Its purpose was to express solidarity with church peace efforts, move beyond stereotypes to deeper understanding of the challenges inherent in peace, and celebrate peace and reconciliation work being done in the region. Regional participants then carried the focus and its goals forward, for example, in programmes of national councils of churches, at an inter-religious conference in Indonesia and at the WCC Pre-Assembly meeting in Sulawesi.

**40** DOV also began cooperating with external peace-building initiatives at a global level. One was the Violence Prevention Alliance of the World Health Organization. WHO had come to see violence prevention and mitigation as an important priority in public health. As in other fields of health, there was much common ground with churches. DOV also began cooperation with the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

**41** A third example was a project called Global Priorities. Its purpose, in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals, was to shift a small portion of global military spending (which reached a record \$1 trillion in 2004) into child survival programmes. The vehicle chosen was to seek a bipartisan congressional resolution in the US, where half the world's military spending takes place. Steady progress has been achieved. In parallel DOV published a study comparing world military and social expenditures, the arms trade and development assistance.

**42** Two other new WCC publications made resources of the decade available for wider ecumenical use. *Streams of Grace* carried the *Dundee Principles* (on preventing violence against women, above), plus conference reports and policy statements about continuing work in this field. An online Lenten series, *Cries of Anguish, Cries of Hope: 40 Days to End Violence against Women* was produced with the World Student Christian Fellowship and the World YWCA as part of the decade.

**2006 WCC Assembly in Brazil; Latin America –  
And We Still Work for Peace**

**43** The DOV Latin America focus was launched at the WCC Assembly in Brazil. To observe the focus year, the Latin American Council of Churches called on churches to make a culture of peace a main item on their agenda and to encourage and support local congregations to become “households of peace” – contributing to peace projects locally, raising awareness about domestic violence and educating children about peace. The regional focus included development of a peace education curriculum. It drew on the experience of Latin American organizations in the WCC-led Ecumenical Network on Small Arms.

**44** The Porto Alegre Assembly decided that the decade should be completed with a consultative process to develop an ecumenical declaration on just peace and an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011. The Assembly also adopted a landmark policy document, “Vulnerable Populations at Risk: Statement on the Responsibility to Protect”. Some saw endorsement of this emerging norm as an appropriate response to genocide, mass killings and so-called ‘ethnic cleansing’. Others saw the ‘R2P’ norm in the tradition of Just War theory, providing justification for armed intervention at the expense of peaceful means of conflict resolution. Despite such differences, the new policy was an important step in the DOV and in the ecumenical debate about peace.

**45** The DOV Study Guide came out in its 13th and 14th languages – Arabic and Amharic. The DOV website received one million hits in September, the month of the annual International Day of Prayer for Peace. 2006 also included a Faith and Order consultation, *A Theological Reflection on Cruelty: The Ugly Face of Violence*, part of the study process *Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence*.

**2007 Europe – Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace**

**46** A steering committee of young adults chose the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi as the theme for Europe. Churches in Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia were among those active. The German Kirchentag devoted an entire day of its programme to the topic of overcoming violence. Swiss church initiatives addressed domestic violence, street violence and racism. In Greece, Orthodox churches staged a major consultation on reconciliation. The DOV call to peacemaking and to peaceful living also found expression at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Romania, a gathering sponsored by the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences. A consultation in Ireland dealt with healing of memories. A meeting in Germany focused on the Responsibility to Protect.

47 Beyond Europe, the World Student Christian Fellowship included the decade in their annual meeting. A conference in Tanzania analyzed the interactions between wealth, ecology and poverty. DOV participation continued in the Global Priorities campaign and the Violence Prevention Alliance of the World Health Organization (above). DOV encouraged members of the Ecumenical Network on Small Arm to continue their association and advocacy, even though coordination of the network had been suspended during the post-Assembly changes within the WCC secretariat.

48 For the International Day of Prayer for Peace the WCC once again invited churches worldwide to hold services, prayers and vigils. The invitation was accepted in Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa and Australia, including churches in North America that organized peace picnics on the day; churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo that held a conference on Violence and Human Rights; and Muslim and Christian leaders in Kenya who attended a workshop together.

#### **2008 Pacific – *Witnessing to God’s Peace***

49 The DOV theme for the Pacific was to witness to the peace of God. Launched at the Pacific Conference of Churches Assembly in late 2007, the focus highlighted the challenges that climate change poses to the peoples and churches of Oceania. The DOV reference group met in Fiji as part of the annual focus and the region developed material for the 2008 International Day of Prayer for Peace.

50 At the international level, the DOV formally joined the Violence Prevention Alliance of the World Health Organization. There were two consultations co-hosted by DOV and the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, namely, *Religions: Instruments of Peace or Cause of Conflict?* and *Human Rights and Human Dignity*. The DOV and the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network also organized two conferences: *Response of Women with Disabilities to Violence, HIV and AIDS* in Democratic Republic of Congo and *Women, Disability and Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean* in Cuba.

51 Meanwhile, seminaries and theological institutes were invited to contribute to the first draft of the Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace or to write just peace declarations of their own. Planning for the 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation also began.

#### **2009 Caribbean – *One Love: Building a Peaceful Caribbean***

52 The 2009 annual focus was developed by churches in the Caribbean under the leadership of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) and in cooperation with the WCC secretariat. The theme “One Love - Building a Peaceful Caribbean” embraced stories, actions and symbols from the

regional context that dealt with thanksgiving, confession, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing as well as injustice and violence. The theme was shared among the churches through events, prayers, posters and postcards. The Jamaica Council of Churches and the Jamaica Violence Prevention Alliance joined the CCC, national councils of churches and the WCC in sponsoring a regional seminar on the impact of violence, theological implications, and strategies for violence prevention especially by churches. The gathering also worked on regional issues, participation and contributions for the 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston. Resources were also collected within the region for the annual International Day of Prayer for Peace and used in Sunday services and special events around the world including at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva.

**53** The DOV office continued its networking with related global initiatives such as the International Coalition for the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. This included promotion of a declaration on Children's Right to Violence-free Education and to Peace and Nonviolence Education by UNESCO in 2011, and work on youth violence and evidence-based prevention measures at a World Health Organization conference. The WCC also rallied international church support for the Global Priorities Campaign which seeks passage of a US congressional resolution to reduce government spending on nuclear weapons and increase government support for child survival programmes. The 2009 accompaniment and facilitation of church and partner initiatives to reduce and prevent violence was both a culmination of nearly ten years of work and, increasingly, forward-looking preparation for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to mark the end of the Decade.

### **2010 Africa – *Work and Pray in Hope for Peace***

**54** The focus for the final year of the DOV – Africa – was launched in Addis Ababa by representatives of the All-Africa Conference of Churches, the African Union, Ethiopian churches, the WCC youth commission ECHOS, and the advisory group for the DOV. The panels and presentations modelled the goals for the year: to highlight churches, related groups and ministries working for peace in Africa and raise awareness of that in other regions of the world. The DOV newsletter, WCC and AACC websites and the annual International Day of Prayer for Peace on 21 September picked up the task thereafter. Church leaders from across Africa met in Nairobi for a festive worship service on the peace prayer day. During the year, church representatives from Africa took part in the development of the Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace in preparation for the Inter-

national Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011. A cross-section of African church peace projects was researched and contacted to raise awareness about the focus and for participation at the 2011 convocation.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LIVING LETTERS

**55** A rich ecumenical heritage of concern and engagement supported the World Council of Churches declaration of a Decade to Overcome Violence. One example was the teams of people who made solidarity visits to churches and communities across the membership of the WCC during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-98. Concerning violence, the visits had found that a “culture of silence” in the church prevented women from telling the full story of the violence they experience. In visit after visit these Living Letters teams also found that the life and dignity of women were affected by cultures of violence in society. Sending “Living Letters” became an important legacy from one ecumenical decade to the next.

**56** The Decade to Overcome Violence Living Letters began in 2007 during the second half of the DOV and as part of the lead-up to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation. The WCC started sending ecumenical teams of 4-6 men and women to countries experiencing violence on a certain scale or with recent histories shaped by endemic violence. The Living Letters teams went to listen, to learn, to pray together for peace in the community and in the world, and to share approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and in making peace. Living Letters teams visited 17 countries from 2007 to 2009. (During that period there were also eight ecumenical delegations sent out because of crises or emergencies affecting member churches.)

### Sri Lanka 2007

**57** The first visit by a Living Letters team was to the beautiful island of Sri Lanka. After nearly three decades of civil war the island’s beauty had faded and been replaced with ugly scenes of war. The team reported that thousands of people were displaced, homeless and starving, and disappearances, abductions and kidnappings were not uncommon – especially of civil activists.

- *Religion or leadership.* Religion and ethnicity were often cited as factors in the conflict, but many felt that political instability and leadership failures were the core problems of the country.

- *Minority, divided?* The minority status of Christians (six percent) limits the churches capacity to exert influence for justice and peace. The churches are divided along ethnic lines and are often unable to speak as one despite cooperation among different church groups.
- *Law or practice.* Although the constitution recognizes freedom of religion and the Government endorses this right, in practice this was not the case.
- *Recovery?* The long war (which ended militarily in 2009, after the team visit) serves to invite the ecumenical movement to pray and support Sri Lanka in the processes of rebuilding and reconciliation.

## USA 2007

**58** “We were deeply impressed by the faithful commitment of Rev. Khader El-Yateem and the people of Salam Arabic Lutheran Church ([www.arabicbible.com/salam/](http://www.arabicbible.com/salam/)) in Brooklyn, New York, whose decision to make their church home a place of welcome and a safe space for people of different faiths to find common ground, has enabled a whole community to live in peace against all odds.

**59** “Because of this faithful commitment to the gospel’s call to love one another, Muslim, Christian and Jewish neighbours had already come to know and trust each other before the crisis of 9/11 threatened to irreparably tear the fabric of interfaith tolerance in this Brooklyn neighbourhood. On that terrible day - because of the relationships already established over time between religious and civic leaders through meetings hosted by Salam Arabic Lutheran Church - the church became a literal sanctuary for a community fearing for its well-being and braced for retaliatory violence.

**60** “On the day that the Living Letters delegation visited Salam Arabic Lutheran Church, it was very evident that Muslim and Christian leaders alike, gathered in that place to greet us were mutually committed to overcoming violence and setting an example of respect and peaceful coexistence.” [Excerpt from the Living Letters USA report]

- *Church role.* The team noted valuable roles that churches and their communities play in building a more just and peaceful society.
- *Model harmony.* Models of inter-religious harmony can be learnt and used by others to promote good relations among members of different faiths.
- *Lead for peace.* Leadership by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and its witness to the stance of churches in the Middle East, was seen as a key influence in rallying churches

and other faith communities to oppose the war in Iraq.

- *Lesson in forgiveness.* The forgiveness practiced by members of an Amish community after a school shooting provides a lesson of mercy and grace for all Christians.

### Kenya 2008

**61** When violence broke out in Kenya three days after the 2007 presidential elections, many were shocked in Kenya and around the world. Churches were also influenced by the hate campaigns, divisions and animosity of the election, and only belatedly recognized their complicity. Hundreds of people died including 35 people who had sought refuge in a church. Homes and businesses went up in flames. The Living Letters team witnessed the aftermath of this violence firsthand.

**62** “We regret that as church leaders we were unable to effectively confront issues because we were partisan. Our efforts to forestall the current crisis were not effective because we as the membership of the National Council of Churches Kenya did not speak with one voice.... We have put in measures to enable us to overcome divisive forces and set off on a new beginning. As a church we will do our best in helping achieve the rebirth of a new Kenya.” [From an NCCCK statement during the violence, February 2008]

**63** Churches responded by providing shelter, food, clothing and other relief items. The NCCCK called political leaders to end the crisis by dialogue and for the public to exercise forgiveness and shun revenge. An inter-religious forum promoted mediation among leaders and called for peaceful co-existence among all Kenyans.

- *Church and hate.* In Kenya’s post-election violence, it was clear that churches had been influenced by the hate and division sowed during elections campaigns.
- *Public confession.* After the churches’ belated but courageous recognition of their complicity, prayers, dialogues and other efforts of the churches and the people helped to promote negotiation and progress in resolving the conflict.
- *Division and mission.* A clear lesson from the Living Letters visit to Kenya was that many churches carry a colonial and missionary legacy of division including denominational churches established on ethnic and regional lines.
- *Learning platform.* The 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation provides a platform where such lessons can be shared, learned and embraced by churches.

## Indonesia 2008

**64** “The members of the Living Letter Team met with a group of Young Ambassadors for Peace who belong to Christian and Muslim communities. Young Ambassadors for Peace...undergo peace-building workshops during which they live together [and] build or renew trust among themselves. Towards the end of each workshop, young participants draw up plans for community development projects related to agriculture and home-based industries such as sewing, carpentry and other income-generating activities in which the youth can work together as productive members of the community. Many of the leaders of the Young Ambassadors for Peace were combatants during the conflict.” The programme was established in strife-torn Ambon by a peace activist from the Uniting Church in Australia and leaders of a local organization, the Caring Women’s Movement.

**65** “During the visit, the Living Letters team was told that churches are still being destroyed or forced to close. A total of 966 churches have been burned or closed down since 1945. The highest number of church closures or burnings occurred in...areas most wracked by inter-religious conflicts. In West Java, it is very difficult to build new churches or obtain permits to use existing buildings for Christian worship.... Strong Islamic views are still prominent.... Certain laws, which set guidelines for regional autonomy, grant governors and mayors the power to close down churches. Christians also need official permits before they can build churches or worship in rented facilities. However, the government of West Java has granted permits to just four percent of the 1,965 congregations in the province, leaving the remaining 96 percent vulnerable to closure at any time. The situation is not helped by a lack of unity among Christians.” [From Living Letters Indonesia report]

- *Important context.* Indonesia is the world’s fourth most populous state and the largest Muslim state in the world.
- *Religions for peace.* Programmes in conflict zones that bring Christians and Muslims together to build trust and earn livelihoods are also building peace locally.
- *Islamization.* There is a growing concern among Christian over the trend toward Islamization in parts of the country and infringement of freedom of worship especially against Christians.
- *Moral movement.* According to certain Muslim scholars in Indonesia, the stigma of Islamic terrorism will only be shed through a moral movement among Muslims and building understanding among people.

## Germany 2008

**66** The Living Letters visit to Germany found many community projects which involved youth and volunteers in issues related to peace. For example, in Dresden an ecumenical centre helps young children to observe how life in local rivers is changing and how ecosystems support life. The children ask restaurants and shops about the food being sell and learn to bake their own bread. In Frankfurt, an ongoing “Respect Campaign” in schools and parishes promoted respect for all, regardless of gender, race, age or other differences. In Cologne, a playground built for Jewish, Muslim and Christian children is part of a campaign of the Armenian Church called “Do you know who I am?” The campaign promotes dialogue about fear, prejudice and ignorance of other religions. In Hanover, a project uses personal testimonies about violence, role plays, multimedia and other interactive activities to teach churches, schools and community organizations nonviolent approaches based on moral, ethical and biblical concepts. The Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany has a peace-building programme that links Germany, India and Africa, teaching young people skills in transforming conflicts and assisting them to conduct training in nonviolence in their communities.

- *More, together.* Cooperative projects demonstrate how much can be achieved when churches work together.
- *Levels of benefit.* Trans-national initiatives in peace-building also build relationships among the churches engaged. The benefits may extend to parishioners and their neighbours in the countries whose churches share an activity for the common good.
- *IEPC as opportunity.* The 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation provides an opportunity to network, build relationships and keep communication flowing among the WCC family. IEPC is also a place to hear and support calls from youth for a just peace.

## Uganda 2008

**67** Uganda has suffered social, economic and political strife under seven different regimes since independence in 1962. The Living Letters team visit in 2008 witnessed some of the consequences of past and current violence that continue to affect the country. They saw how church and other religious groups support the people through counselling, peace-building initiatives and other reconciliatory activities. These include the Anglican Church of Uganda’s efforts to rebuild and reconcile through contact and dialogue with rebels of the Lords Resistance Army, an insurgent group that has committed many atrocities, and Christian and Muslim leaders

working together in order to find a peaceful solution for the same conflict in northern Uganda. Some among these religious leaders have chosen to sleep in the streets of Gulu to show solidarity with children from the surrounding countryside, called “night commuters”, who sleep in the town seeking safety from rebel attacks and abductions.

**68** The Living Letters also visited internally displaced persons. They found similar challenges from place to place: People want to go back to their homes and need infrastructure, psychosocial and spiritual support to do so. The education of girl children requires special support. Among displaced people, one person in five is living with HIV/AIDS and needs testing, counselling and anti-retroviral drugs. The many traumatized people need counselling and social support networks. Armed groups may be willing to give up their guns, but the churches engaging them in dialogue must have the means to help them settle down after abandoning the life of a warrior. Religious leaders and NGOs may become overwhelmed by the demand for services and humanitarian support. They need effective advocates to engage the government for cooperation and assistance.

- *Peace points.* One WCC member church effort to rebuild and reconcile the country started by addressing four points:
  - to work for the renewal of faith of the people affected by the war;
  - to work for peace and reconciliation by advocacy with government and dialogue with the rebels;
  - to reduce poverty by self-help schemes, plots of land and education of children; and
  - to build the institutional capacity of the church in order to be able to respond as a church.
- *Inter-faith power.* An inter-faith leadership group can be a powerful vehicle for addressing the problems generated by conflict. The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative brings Christian and Muslim leaders together in order to find peaceful solutions for the situation in northern Uganda. It works hand in hand with local religious leaders and cultural institutions, local political leaders and other key players.
- *Ensure government action.* While the church gives hope to people, there is need for proactive strategies by the churches to ensure that the government performs its functions in support of adequate food, education, water and jobs.
- *IEPC as opportunity.* The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation is an opportunity for churches to learn from one another

and identify strategies for voicing such challenges on behalf of the people and calling upon governments to address them.

### **Liberia and Sierra Leone 2008**

**69** An estimated 200,000 people in Liberia and 50,000 people in neighbouring Sierra Leone were killed in the dozen years of civil wars that ended in 2003. Now churches are tapping into the reservoir of hope created by seven years of peace. The Living Letters visit was an eye opener for those involved. It was also a rare opportunity for the churches of Liberia and Sierra Leone to share their past experiences, to show how they were coping with their lives and their journey toward a more peaceful existence.

**70** One of the effects of war and conflict is division. The years of peace have seen the churches mending the divisions in their societies. It is a key role that the churches in both countries have played since war began. The war seemed to remind the churches of their divine call to unity, the Living Letters learned. Their efforts have led to a unique relation between the government and the churches. Churches are both close to the government and at a distance from it: close enough to cooperate with the government in reconciliation and peace building; far enough to criticize the government where they see a lack of integrity or accountability.

**71** When the Living Letters team met the president of Sierra Leone, he hailed the churches' contribution in bringing positive changes to the country. His sentiments were echoed by the Minister of Information in Liberia, Dr. Lawrence Bropleh, a former WCC staff. Bropleh expressed his government's deep appreciation for the role of the churches in Liberia in moulding virtues and instilling hopes during and after the war.

**72** Living Letters interacted with youth groups, women groups and theology students. The women in both countries were specific about what they would like to see in their societies, including business training and empowerment programmes, forums of women and men addressing domestic violence, legal prosecution of the perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence and global solidarity in prayer for women especially in Africa.

**73** During the visit, the United Methodist Church in Liberia gave the Living Letters a cake to take to the people and churches of Sierra Leone as a symbol of unity and reconciliation from their sisters and brothers in Liberia, and to share with the WCC.

- *Close enough.* Efforts by the churches to mend and heal social, ethnic and institutional divisions created by the war have led to a unique relation between the government and the churches – close enough for cooperation on reconciliation and peace building

work, yet far enough to criticize the government where they see laxity, lack of integrity or accountability.

- *Lesson for others?* This unique relation between church and government in the two countries is a lesson that could be instructive for others at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.
- *Global guarantor.* The global community of churches should play the role of the moral guarantor for weaker nations.
- *Mass education for peace.* The Ministry of Information in Liberia hosts a radio program, “Changing minds and changing attitudes”, as one of the ways of building a stable Liberia. Churches should utilize such opportunities and other forms of mass media to educate people on healing, reconciliation and other peace topics.

### Haiti 2008

**74** Haiti is witnessing the effects of decaying values and morals, according to the Protestant Federation of Haiti. Instilling values in people is a responsibility of the family, schools, the media, civil society and especially the church.

**75** Some churches have launched women’s empowerment and leadership programmes to counter domestic violence. The Protestant Federation organizes seminars on mediation and conflict resolution techniques in the community. The federation also emphasizes the importance of accompanying the victims and the perpetrators of violence, both of whom need spiritual and pastoral support. Churches have also focused on natural disasters, calling for urgent response to preserve the environment and being among the first to respond with relief for victims.

- *Tolerance and dialogue.* Haitian and Dominican churches have been encouraging tolerance and promoting dialogue among their people.
- *Overcoming violence.* Actions taken by churches to overcome violence include mediation in kidnapping cases, providing counselors for young people and those in need, and teaching mediation and conflict resolution techniques at the community level.
- *Moral media.* Some churches have Radio and Television programmes which offer people civic and moral education.
- *Gospel values.* The church has been involved in lobbying government to enact laws that reflect gospel values.
- *IEPC sharing.* The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation takes place in Jamaica, a neighbouring country. This provides Haitian and Caribbean churches a unique opportunity to share some of their peace initiatives.

## Israel and Palestine 2009

**76** The Middle East is rich in culture, history and traditions. It is hailed as the cradle of civilization and birthplace of the Abrahamic religions. It is the part of the world where Christ walked, where he taught about unity and peace, loving God with our whole self and loving our neighbours as ourselves. Today, that message of love and peace is mired in intolerance and injustice. Recurrent wars and the acquisition of land by one people at the expense of another have marked the land of Jesus and the wider region in the 60 years since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

**77** The Living Letters team witnessed the restrictions of movement of people in their own territory. They saw the diminishing presence of Christians in a place where Christians have lived for 2000 years. They understood the consequences of inaction by the international community on the basic questions of peace with justice for Palestinians and Israelis.

- *Challenge to theology.* The Living Letters team appealed to brothers and sisters in Christ wherever the church is found to confront all theologies that justify the occupation of Palestine.
- *Voice for voiceless.* The IEPC is a unique opportunity to deepen understanding about the plight of both peoples in Israel and Palestine. It is also an opportunity for the WCC family to continue being a voice for the voiceless in Israel and Palestine and a constant reminder to the international community to act for the good of the people in the region.
- *Israeli solidarity.* The Living Letters team was impressed and inspired by the courage of Israeli peace and advocacy groups who resist the settlements and the demolition of Palestinian homes with nonviolence, challenge Zionism and engage their government. Their voices give hope though they acknowledged that they are a small minority.
- *Appreciation of WCC.* The Living Letters team has come away proud of the efforts of the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre and of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel-Palestine and particularly of the ecumenical companions who, on behalf of the churches all over the world, work in difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine.
- *Faith justice.* Christians of the Middle East remind church visitors of the power of reconciliation and justice embedded in the Christian faith.

## Angola and Mozambique 2009

**78** “Almost every family has been affected one way or another by the long decades of war,” the pastor in charge of women’s work at the Council of Christian Churches in Angola told the Living Letters team. In this context, she said, women pay the highest price: “They live with former combatants, now demobilized, or with relatives who have suffered amputations or other injuries, and in many cases they live under the poverty line.”

**79** In the capital, Luanda, such women typically leave home at 3 a.m. to look for saleable goods, and often walk through the whole city, sometimes pregnant or carrying little children”, she explained. “When they reach home, at about 10 p.m., they might have earned 200 kwanza (less than 3 US dollars), but if sales were not good, there may not be anything for dinner.”

**80** The team also heard that domestic violence and rape cases have been on the rise. “The causes of this increase are complex,” a church leader told them. “The war has left a heritage of misery as well as an impact on the culture, and domestic violence is one of its outcomes.” Women in a YWCA literacy programme testified to the role of education in empowering them. A young mother of five told the Living Letters team the difference that being able to read has made in her life. “A husband shows a different kind of respect if you are able to read,” she said. “And you do not have to take it anymore from anyone who lies to you”, another young woman added.

- *Post-war toll.* Angolan pastor: “In Angola, we do not have an open conflict right now...but guns keep taking their toll.”
- *Impact on culture.* Church leader: “The war has left a heritage of misery as well as an impact on the culture, and domestic violence is one of its outcomes.”
- *Educate women.* Education is an essential tool in empowering women.

## Bolivia and Uruguay 2009

**81** Bolivia and Uruguay have suffered military juntas like certain other Latin American countries. Opposition to the regimes was met with brutality and even death. Despite democratization since the 1990s, the effects of those dark days are still felt. Living Letters visitors were grateful to the churches and peoples of Bolivia and Uruguay for sharing their pains, struggles and hopes. The team summed up their visit in the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, by identifying several areas to be addressed. These include:

**82** Deep-rooted violence against women where social structures themselves are “hostile”, ecumenical women’s organizations in Uruguay and Bolivia say, because they are based on hierarchical relations that tend to polarize men and women and therefore provide a breeding ground for the abuse of power and all kinds of violence against women. Especially in Bolivian society, which is in transition to a new, more participatory and equal order from a patriarchal order based on the power of men to command and the obligation of women and children to obey, violence is a sad accompanying phenomenon.

**83** Violence against indigenous people is still common in Uruguay and Bolivia despite the creation of new United Nations and other legal instruments to protect indigenous people’s rights. The Living Letters team conducted several meetings with a range of Christian denominations who are committed to promote the rights of indigenous people. Such advocacy is needed there and elsewhere in the world.

**84** Violence against children and youth – An ecumenical centre supported by the Lutheran church, Salvation Army, Pentecostals and the council of churches of Uruguay caters for orphans, school drop-outs and rebellious youth. It provides food, free counselling sessions and youth friendly activities. It helps rehabilitate some young people to go back to school. The team also visited a Methodist centre for disabled children and Lutheran and Catholic ministries for orphans and families who cannot afford basic needs. The numbers of children in need of such support is many.

**85** Poverty, diversity and violence – In Uruguay one-third of the population is impoverished. In Bolivia, where poverty is even more prevalent, those who have economic power ignore the laws related to the rights of indigenous and aboriginal people, going as far as threatening to divide the country. Churches that transform themselves to become peaceful and just entities can help eliminate such discrimination and violence from society. A significant number of Christians and churches are also asking governments to work harder for the common good.

**86** Political Violence – There are still many unresolved cases of crimes committed by past military and dictatorial regimes. Many people in Latin America yearn for justice from their judicial systems and truth from their political leaders.

- *Equality consciousness.* Ecumenical women’s organizations call upon their churches to create a consciousness of equality and dignity between women and men by investigating the cultural roots of discrimination against women, addressing patriarchal

interpretations of the Bible and overcoming their own hierarchical structures that lead to the exclusion of women.

- *Misuse of theology.* Ecumenical women's organizations in Uruguay and Bolivia raise a concern that the Theology of the Cross is abused by some people who emphasize suffering as the way to salvation and at times justify women's suffering theologically.
- *Media stereotyping.* Church women's networks in the two countries criticize the mass media for promoting stereotypes of women and call for the churches to speak out openly against such programming.
- *Indigenous vulnerability.* In both Uruguay and Bolivia, violence against indigenous people is common despite the existence of international instruments of human rights that seek to protect people's rights.
- *Voice of voiceless.* Living letters strongly recommend treatment of the issue of political violence in South America at the convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, in order to give a voice to the voiceless or those who were silenced in the past.

**87** Several other solidarity visits took place in the last three years of the decade. There was a Living Letters visit to India in 2009 which focused on the persistence of discrimination against Dalits in society and within religious communities, despite local and global efforts to eradicate it. There were also crisis-related fact-finding or pastoral delegations to Nicaragua, Colombia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, and Georgia and Russia, which are similar to Living Letters in some respects.

**88** The Living Letters model was admired by many as a unique way for the World Council of Churches as a community to accompany its members during or after difficult periods. The visits brought encouragement to places that have seen much despair and were able to give and receive hope in various ways. The visits offered churches opportunities to deepen contacts among themselves in the cases of Germany, Liberia and Sierra Leone. More people became informed church peacemaking ministries and some were willing to become part of these efforts. Media reports of Living Letters trips generated interest from churches. In the case of the Israel-Palestine trip, people contacted WCC wanting to know how they could help or support peace projects in Israel-Palestine.

**89** A limited budget was used to support a considerable number of visits. However, questions have been asked whether the duration of the visits is enough to understand the scope of the problems and challenges

facing the people visited. Another challenge of the programme was follow-up work which has seemed to be lacking, among both the ecumenical community and those visited. These are some of the questions to consider after the decade and in view of future ecumenical peace projects of a similar nature. As one of those visited in Uruguay told the team, “Though the decade is coming to an end, it does not mean that violence has been overcome.” Creative and substantive ways are still needed for churches of the WCC to support and accompany each other in the search for reconciliation and peace – to be ‘living letters’ and more.

The aim of building an international order of peace that addresses the needs of people for human security and life in just and sustainable communities and strengthens the rule of law requires the development of new forms of global governance.

## 4. JUST PEACE CHALLENGES

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### ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE

**1** *About Violence.* If we could calculate exactly the devastating tragedy and human destruction caused by violence, it would be enough to convince the world of the need to study the methods and philosophy of nonviolence. The loss of productivity, creativity and vital resources in our societies and institutions due to violent and antagonistic conflicts is incalculable.

**2** *Myths about nonviolence.* There are myths about nonviolence that must be dispelled: among others that nonviolence is soft and passive, that it is the opposite of violence, that it can only be practiced by persons with a long spiritual tradition who live in a democracy, or that it is simply a subcategory within strategies of confrontation and direct action.

**3** *What nonviolence is.* Contemporary approaches to nonviolence owe a great deal to the theory and practice of Mohandas K. Gandhi, a great Hindu leader, and the inter-religious, intercultural movement he

led. His term for “nonviolence” was *satyagraha*. It is the proactive and affirmative effort to nonviolently change institutionalized policies, practices and conditions that deny persons their full dignity as human beings. Nonviolence resists and challenges the passive acceptance of unjust conditions. Nonviolence proceeds from a long tradition of disturbing the peace and challenging unjust or degrading aspects of the status quo.

4 Nonviolence also analyzes conflicts in a different manner than the simplistic notion of “us against them,” or “good vs. bad,” which are polarities that characterize our cultures. Nonviolence seeks to understand the factors that underlie the problems at hand in order to create an effective strategy to manage or change them. This strategy is based on universal values that are deeply rooted in all the world’s great religious traditions.<sup>1</sup>

5 *Examples of nonviolent resistance during WWII.* During World War II in a hidden village in the mountains of Southeast France, called Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, a “conspiracy of kindness” organized by a Protestant Reformed pastor by the name of Andre Trocmé helped save the lives of 5000 Jews from Nazi and Vichy France persecution and death camps. There, at great personal risk, the whole town, committed to the preservation of human life, took in, cared for, lodged and sent on to safety as many Jews as the population of the whole town. Ordinary people, many of them suffering from great poverty themselves, resisted the policies of the Nazi and French collaborationist governments by hiding strangers, not for days, but for years. Their humanitarian sense was so deep that no resident of Le Chambon ever rejected, denounced or betrayed a single Jewish refugee.

Pastor Andre Trocmé served as a moral compass for the town. He showed the population of Le Chambon practical and effective ways to resist. When the Vichy authorities demanded that these activities cease, since it was impossible to hide such large scale and long-term actions, the pastor answered: “These persons came in search of help and refuge. I am a pastor. A pastor does not abandon his flock. I don’t know what a Jew is. I only know human beings.” Although Trocmé was arrested and after having been released and having had to hide from the Nazis, and although his cousin Daniel died in a concentration camp, his wife carried on with the solidarity work. An elder in the town later recalled: “We did not protect the Jews because we were moral or heroic persons. We helped them because it was the human thing that had to be done....”

A similar kind of resistance occurred in Denmark after the Nazi occupation. When the Danish people realized in 1943 that the occupiers had issued orders to round up and deport to concentration camps the 7,500 Danish Jews, a massive citizen effort went into effect. From all sec-

tors of society, clergymen, fishermen, farmers, housewives, professionals, factory workers, the Lutheran church, the population mobilized to hide, transport and protect the Jews from the Nazi plans. 99% of Danish Jews were saved, most finding refuge in Sweden. Although the attractive story of King Christian X wearing a yellow star on an armband, thus rallying a similar solidarity of all citizens with their Jewish compatriots so they could not be identified, is inspiring, it seems to be legendary. However as Danish Queen Margrethe II is quoted in the book *Queen in Denmark* by Anne Wolden-Raethinge, “To me, the truth is an even greater honour for our country than the myth.”

6 Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., Baptist pastor, student and practitioner of Gandhian nonviolence, who drastically changed the course of history in the United States through his leadership of the nonviolent movement for civil rights of the Afro-American population, identifies six principles that characterize nonviolence and its practitioners which are useful to keep in mind<sup>2</sup>:

- *Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.* It is nonviolent resistance to evil; it is spiritually, mentally and emotionally proactive; it seeks to persuade the opponent of the justice of its cause.
- *Nonviolence seeks to achieve understanding and friendship.* The final results of nonviolence are redemption and reconciliation; the purpose is the creation of the Beloved Community.
- *Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not persons.* Nonviolence recognizes that those who do evil are also victims and not bad people.
- *Nonviolence believes that absorbing undeserved suffering redeems, and has immense potential to educate and transform.* Nonviolence accepts suffering without returning it, and, if necessary, receives violence but never inflicts it; nonviolence willingly accepts the consequences of its acts; absorbs suffering and has the power to convert the enemy when reason or argument fails.
- *Nonviolence chooses to love rather than hate.* Nonviolent love is active, not passive; does not stoop to the level of the person who hates; believes that it is in loving the opponent that we demonstrate our love for ourselves; it is infinite in its capacity to forgive and restore community; it resists injustice and knows that the response may be hostility; recognizes that all life is interrelated.
- *Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.* The person who practices nonviolence has a profound conviction that sooner or later justice will prevail; believes that God is a God of justice.

- *Biblical basis of nonviolence.* The biblical story begins with God's loving purpose of well-being for the world. God saw his creation and saw that it was very good. There was plenty, there was harmony, there was life.

**7** But the first chapters of Genesis reveal the violence and evil that lurks in the heart of humankind. Although Cain murders his brother in chapter 4, before doing so God pronounces a hopeful and empowering word. God tells Cain that although sin (murderous violence) is awaiting an opportunity to pounce and dominate him, Cain can master it.

**8** Later in the same chapter, Cain's descendant, Lamech, boasts about the vengeance he will take – not life for a life, but seventy times seven, which is, of course, the same number that Jesus gives Peter to teach him unlimited forgiveness.

**9** Active, loving nonviolence starts with a God who takes the initiative to bridge the gap with an alienated and violent humankind to forgive, restore and reconcile.

**10** Peace and nonviolence are at the centre of the Good News, because God chooses to forgive his enemies instead of destroying them, goes to any length in order to seek and save them, and gives up his Son Jesus Christ to suffer unjustly in order to call us back to the Father's household. Without this way of treating enemies, there would be no gospel, no good news – only the perpetuation of the endless cycle of vengeance and destruction.

**11** Jesus in his teaching, life example, and his voluntary death, becomes the model of nonviolent living for the early church. "Love your enemies, return good for evil, imitate your heavenly Father, forgive, place your life at the service of others," he teaches.

**12** When on trial, Jesus confronts those who were mistreating him by asking them to point out when he had spoken wrongly, or to the contrary, to explain why they had struck him. With this question Jesus confronts his adversaries with their humanity, with their reason and with their moral formation.

**13** In his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus absorbs without retaliation, all that was done to him and in so doing, leaves the door open for conversion, from the thief on the cross down to this very day.

**14** The New Testament writers unanimously reveal a church that followed in the footsteps of Jesus: Stephen in his martyrdom, Paul in Romans 12:19-21, Peter in 1 Peter 2:21, James in 1:20 and 3:18 and the book of Revelation, where a slain Lamb is the nonviolent warrior (Rev. 5:12).

**15** *Practical Applications: Alternatives to Violence Programme (AVP)* – The AVP was developed by the Society of Friends or (Quakers) for the formation in nonviolence, conflict resolution and peace-building, originally in prisons, through a series of three participative workshops which in the end produce multipliers of the concepts.

**16** The training builds capacity in four areas: 1) discovering the spiritual force in each person to confront conflict in a creative and nonviolent way; 2) strategies of communication which permit responsible and non-violent claims; 3) encouraging the sense of community, participating in it and acknowledging other people in all their worth as human beings; 4) stimulating cooperation which values the contribution of each person and develops the skill of consensus decision-making for the benefit of the group.

**17** In Colombia the AVP has given training to church groups of different communions during this last decade. In a country which suffers from so many levels and types of violence, this programme has become a bridge for reconciliation as well as a valuable tool for conflict transformation and for breaking down barriers between persons, families, working groups, internally displaced people, young students, former participants in armed groups, community day-care mothers, lawyers, teachers and church leaders.

**18** Among different groups this program has achieved personal, family and community transformations which constitute true instances of nonviolence and peace, which assure a new way of responding to conflict. It builds on a new awareness of the capacity to respond in a nonviolent fashion that is inherent to every person.

**19** AVP has been enriched by a new program to help persons who have suffered violence of any kind, but especially the violence of displacement by armed conflict, to accompany them in their process of mourning. It is not easy for a person who has suffered violence to process those feelings which include anger, desire for revenge, impotence, negation and deep sorrow, which remain buried and at times result in acts of violence against the surrounding persons. AVP and other projects, in an effort to overcome violence have initiated these trauma-healing workshops in order to process past grief and build future.

**20** Some of the testimonies that we have witnessed are deep transformations in interpersonal and family relationships and in communities of displaced families who, after formation, have served as bridges for mediation or reconciliation in different circumstances.

**21** The results have been transformed work relations between supervisors and workers where authoritarian models have changed into egalitar-

ian and democratic ones; community work where participants are taken into account by the leaders; groups of displaced women who transform the violence suffered in armed conflict in processes that create life and hope in healthy relationships based on nonviolence, self-confidence and creative conflict transformation; legal circles where lawyers and peace judges found valuable alternatives in communication with people in conflict situations, inviting them to utilize responsible ways of speaking to transform a situation of conflict in an opportunity for building bridges in the midst of differences.

**22** Other testimonies speak of changes in self-awareness that involve the participant's language, gestures, ways of resolving conflicts, ways of seeing and valuing other people; of learning to affirm self and others, of increasing the ability to listen, of arriving at consensus, in sum, of adopting nonviolence as a lifestyle.

**23** In like fashion the workshops work on changes in attitudes on gender, human dignity, human rights, assertiveness, forgiveness, self-esteem, all of which are aspects of peace-building. The emphasis on community building opens the possibility of promoting social change, in a collective way, in an assertive and nonviolent way in the direction of an alternate society.

**24** The AVP has been well received in Protestant, Roman Catholic and ecumenical circles. In this way it becomes a valuable experiment in bridge-building which in itself constitutes a concrete exercise in peace-building. It becomes a respectful and tolerant encounter in the midst of differences, which in turn is a sign of peace and hope among churches.

**25** These actions on behalf of a nonviolent and alternative lifestyle are seeds of peace which little by little are planted in sectors of the population where violence is a daily affair. Nevertheless it becomes imperative to motivate churches, communities, governmental and nongovernmental organizations to support this work and help follow-up with these persons and communities who have adopted nonviolence as a lifestyle, so that the seeds that have been planted yield a permanent harvest.

**26** Few persons know of *the role played by the churches* in the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989. In 1983, Pastor Christian Fuhrer of the Lutheran Church of Saint Nikolai in Leipzig (East Germany), had initiated prayer meetings, open to the public every Monday at 5:00 p.m. In each meeting, those in attendance read the Beatitudes together: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." Later a Reformed church in Leipzig joined in and also began a prayer vigil, as well as churches in East Berlin, Dresden and elsewhere in Germany. By 1989 the attendance at these Prayers for Peace had increased considerably. These prayer meetings formed the nucleus of the nonviolent protest movement

that emerged. In September of that year, the New Forum movement was founded in which topics that were generally off limits were debated in East Germany. It did not take long for the protest movements to grow into massive events each week. In October, long-time strongman Erich Honecker resigned, and in November the Wall fell. Through it all, in the midst of the events and situations that changed daily, the churches constantly advocated nonviolence and dialogue. A young person in East Germany said that the amazing thing about the transition and reunification was not that it had occurred, but that it had occurred in such a peaceful fashion without a single life lost.

**27** In Colombia, many churches have prayed for peace. In the year 2000, the *Mennonite Church of Teusaquillo in Bogotá*, initiated a weekly time each Wednesday from 12:30-1:30 p.m. called a Moment for Peace. The time is divided between prayer and Bible reading (half hour) and reflection and discussion on a topic related to peace and national affairs, combining in a sense the two actions of the churches and New Forum in East Germany. The Moment for Peace has brought together a wide representation of persons from different walks of life, but mainly of victims of the armed conflict, to pray for the peace of Colombia, to be strengthened in the Word of God, and to seek ways to work to make justice, peace, and solidarity real. From this initial experience the local church has invited churches in Colombia and abroad to open their doors to a weekly time of prayer, to change together the course of history in the country. One church in a very conflictive area of Colombia expressed it in writing this way: "The new history of Colombia will be written on our knees."

**28** The *Foundation for Reconciliation* sponsors Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation. Although they grow out of the experience of violent conflict in Colombia, they have spread to different countries of the world. Under the leadership of a Consolata priest, Fr Leonel Narvaez, they hold that when the pain of the past petrifies a person's walk, it is difficult to think of a future. This calls for overcoming a memory that seeks retaliation, vengeance and death, for life cannot flourish when it is rooted in the dark labyrinths of pain and tragedy. The Foundation considers that without denying the just demands of the impoverished of the earth, none of the human contradictions merit shedding human blood.

Desmond Tutu said, "Without forgiveness there is no future." The schools point to the need to follow a methodology to work through trauma, bitterness, anger and thirst for vengeance, and, building on a person's inner spirituality move toward the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation in order to build a new future.

**29** The *Peace-Building Communities of the Philippines* is a Christian-

**Even what appears to be isolated charity work needs to be and can be placed in a larger framework, seeing its relationship with the larger world and the structures that cause the problems as well as the long-term and holistic solutions called for.**

based organization that seeks to be a community of peace-building, training and strengthening each other to “devote the same discipline and self-sacrifice to nonviolent peace-making that armies devote to war”. In a country affected by social injustice and corruption, insurgent responses, religious factionalism and liberation movements, the Peace-Builders Communities seek to train both church and non-church people to be leaders to multiply effective peace and reconciliation teams and communities that can be relevant to the peace-making needs of their country.

**30** A somewhat different alternative to violence are the *Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)*, a community made up of trained volunteers from different cultures that forms part of an international, ecumenical organization. Their work is designed to interfere with the plans and actions of violent groups, whether legal or illegal that cause pain and suffering to the people who dwell in areas of conflict. In the Middle East they have been present in Hebron and the rural area of Palestine for a number of years, witnessing and “getting in the way for peace” in the ongoing aggression of Israeli settlers against the Palestinian population. In Colombia they are based in, though not limited to, the Middle Magdalena region of Colombia. They work together on grassroots initiatives to expose and transform structures of domination and oppression through active nonviolence in order to make possible a world grounded in respect, justice and love, even of enemies.

**31** In Palestine, *The Popular Committee of Bil'in* along with local residents, Israeli activists, and internationals, have for over six years been demonstrating against the illegal wall which has separated the village from their farmlands. They have carried out weekly demonstrations with many injuries, arrests and the deaths of some nonviolent protesters. Although the demonstrations are often met with aggression from the Israeli Defence Forces, the voice of the Bil'in townspeople is not silenced due to their persistence and to the constant communication of one of the leaders, Iyad Burnat, head of the popular committee against the wall, to an international audience in cyberspace called Friends of Freedom and Justice in Bil'in. The use of internet and the different platforms available to do so is a new way to expose injustice and create networks of solidarity around the world.

**32** Although the examples of peace-making, peace-keeping and peace enforcement are endless, it is also necessary to understand that even what appears to be isolated charity work needs to be and can be placed in a

larger framework, seeing its relationship with the larger world and the structures that cause the problems as well as the long-term and holistic solutions called for. An example of this is a feeding programme by one local church. It operates a feeding programme, called Bread and Life, for street people and in two marginalized, violent and impoverished neighbourhoods in the city of Soacha (Colombia). But it has twelve guiding principles to help it understand itself as a prophetic word to the structures which cause hunger in the world and the need to change. These are:

- Food is the right of every human being. God gives enough for everyone.
- There is sufficient food in the world for everyone. Every person should be able to eat.
- The image of God is in each person and must be protected.
- Feeding the hungry is not a matter of charity. It's a matter of justice.
- The priorities of society are mistaken. They must be corrected. More bread, fewer arms.
- A lasting peace requires people without hunger.
- Feeding others does not, in the first place, require money, but working together in community.
- Feeding others does not, only require writing up projects; it requires decision.
- Giving food to the hungry with love and respect, transmits the love of God, points to Jesus the Bread of Life, and is the mission of the church.
- Giving food requires reflection on land ownership, distribution of wealth, social structures, and
- What God wants for humankind.
- We give food to empower people to leave behind their prostration caused by economic and socio-political structures that keep them in that situation.
- The changes that must be made are political decisions made by human beings. Since things can be changed, keeping people hungry is a crime.

**33**     *Seven commitments to a nonviolent life.* In one country the churches have proposed to their society a seven-fold commitment to nonviolence which they distribute freely, particularly on 21 September, International Day of Peace, Nonviolence and Ceasefire. In formulating the commitment they have taken out “churchy” or religious language and seek to

propose a way of life that can be assumed by all people for the good of a society in which all can enjoy life. The seven commitments are:

- I commit myself to cultivate a personal and family spirituality of love and nonviolence.
- I commit myself to respect and protect the dignity of human life in all its forms as well as to the care of creation.
- I commit myself to practice nonviolence in all my family relations, rejecting physical, verbal, and psychological mistreatment.
- I commit myself, in love toward my neighbour, to resolve conflicts in a nonviolent fashion.
- I commit myself to build solidarity and to work towards an alternative economy that promotes holistic and sustainable human development.
- I commit myself to not carry arms nor participate in militaristic projects.
- I commit myself to place my gifts, talents, abilities, time and resources at the service of constructing a society of life, justice and peace through nonviolent action.

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## **BEYOND JUST WAR VS. PACIFISM**

**34** In their search for reconciliation and peace and their efforts to discern the way of “Just Peace” Christians and their communities have been struggling to resolve the tension between the two major Christian peace traditions that has shaped much of the ecumenical discussion for the last more than 60 years, i.e. the position of those in the historic majority churches who follow the theory of the “just war” and those in the Historic Peace Churches who advocate a position of nonviolence and Christian pacifism. The approach developed here with regard to the issues of war and peace, violence and nonviolence builds on the conviction that the Christian community as the body of Christ is to live as a prophetic sign of peace in a violent world. By its calling and vocation the Christian church is to be a peace church. This conviction is itself the fruit of a long process of critical self-assessment in the Christian community that has taken place in and through the ecumenical movement. It indicates a fundamental paradigm shift in theology and Christian ethics that has gradually taken the discussion beyond the old debate between the just war theory and pacifism towards the vision of Just Peace and the commitment to just peace-making. The “Ecumenical Call to Just Peace” is meant as a public signal

of this shift and as an invitation and encouragement for the churches and their partners in civil society as well as in other religious communities to join the way of Just Peace.

**35** However, this transformation of Christian thinking about war and peace, violence and nonviolence is itself a complex and ongoing process in which the two historical traditions with their different emphases still continue to shape the approach to contemporary reality and the manifestations of violence. Even though the former opposition between the positions of the just war theory and Christian pacifism has given way to the recognition of a gradual convergence, the two positions still remain distinct and find themselves engaged in a pilgrimage where the pilgrims are at different places along several routes. It is important, therefore, to recall where we come from in this process.

**36** There is a common recognition that in the beginning the Christian community followed the paradigm of active nonviolence based on the account of the alternative praxis of Jesus and his followers in the gospels. The early church tended toward pacifism and the peace-builders' calling to love and serve the neighbour. Church historians remind us that for its first three centuries the early church disapproved of war and military participation because of how it understood the agency and action of God in the world in light of the parables, prophetic teachings and pastoral ministry of Jesus. In the fourth century AD, Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and a reassessment became institutionalized in how Christians are to act in the service of an imperial power. As a direct consequence, the public ethics of the church shifted precipitously.

**37** Beginning in the fourth century, a transformation took place where the symbols, images and core principles of Christian self-identity were seen as symmetrical with imperial power. And it is here in western history, in the age of Constantine first, that an emerging cross and sword ideology was gaining congruence with the mission and witness of the church. In a remarkably short period of time in the church's history, the symbols, images and principles of the church crystallized into fixed and wedded structures of ecclesial and state power. The further development of these structures to imperial gain is what scholars refer to as Christendom. The long age of Christendom took manifold forms through the centuries, where religious rituals and civic narratives reframed the Christian story into one that sanctioned imperial power. Theologians and leaders of the faith constructed this self-understanding within reflections on what eventually became identified as a discourse around "just war". These reflections on "just war" originally represented a broad attempt to justify Christians taking up arms for the sake of the state or governing entity, as the phrase implies.

**Both Christian pacifism and the just war tradition have evolved historically and have responded to changing historical circumstances. Neither of the two represents a fixed system of theological or ethical affirmations.**

38 Within Christendom, theologians and politicians argued “just war” not merely for abstract reasons. There is no doubt that real and present dangers were a sober reality for Roman and, later, medieval daily existence. Early on, threats to the Empire of barbarian invasions led Christian leaders to ask how they could responsibly join their Christian emperors in wars that might protect their interests, vindicate justice and ultimately preserve peace. The New Testament offered little counsel on these intransigent realities, so thinkers blended their evolving Christian attitudes on the virtues of political life in a state sympathetic to their religion, with the ideals of war and peace in

classical antiquity and in the Hebrew Bible.

39 In the spirit of these realities, the function of “just war” theory was never to simply license war but to place careful ethical limits on warfare in service to the eventual goal of peace and justice in society. Medieval scholastic theology systematically developed the theory by emphasizing that a “just war” must meet the following requirements: it must be directed by a legitimate authority (*legitima potestas*); it must have a just cause (*causa justa*); it must be governed by a right intention; i.e. to restore peace and the re-integration of the adversary into the lawful order (*recta intentio*). Later developments of the theory added the requirement of proportionality of the means employed, the reasonable assurance of success, and the just conduct during warfare. Indeed, the criteria for justifiable warfare are so demanding that political scientists and peace studies scholars today agree that a truly ‘just war’ is quite near impossible to ascertain, as a truism that applied to the Roman Empire and up to and through the thirty-years war of the seventeenth century, and as much as to our post-modern religious and national realities today. Nevertheless, the culture of Christendom reinforced structures of power to the point that the theory of “just war” was used to provide religious principles for sanctioning violence against other human beings.

40 While the theory of just war remained the guiding framework for the historic majority churches in their (critical) response to the role and action of states that considered war as a legitimate right in defending their sovereignty and pursuing their national interest, Christian pacifism has always been the ethical position of dissenting and minority groups, beginning with the monastic orders, through the radical reform movements in the medieval church up to the Anabaptist movement and

the contemporary grouping of Historic Peace Churches. Like the just war position, Christian pacifism has incorporated ideas and influences from secular political philosophy. However, at its core Christian pacifism seeks to be obedient to and follow the teaching and the example of Jesus, particularly his blessing of the peacemakers in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:9), his witness for God's reign of peace and justice and his practice of non-violent love, even of the enemy. In its commitment to radical discipleship Christian pacifism has always been critical of the alignment of church and state in the Christendom era and has sought to distance the church as an alternative community from any involvement with state power. The most visible manifestation of Christian pacifism has been the conscientious objection to service in armed forces and the refusal to bear arms.

**41** Both Christian pacifism and the just war tradition have evolved historically and have responded to changing historical circumstances. Neither of the two represents a fixed system of theological or ethical affirmations, even though in their origin they clearly reflect different understandings of the nature and mission of the church and of its calling in the world. Both have been subject to frequent misrepresentations and misunderstandings that have questioned their validity as genuinely Christian peace traditions. Referring to the active involvement of the historic majority churches in actions of warfare, from the crusades, the Reconquista in Spain and the violent incursion into Latin America up to the wars of religion in the 16th and 17th centuries, the just war tradition has been (mis-)represented as providing ecclesial and moral legitimacy to war, acts of conquest and the deliberate killing of enemies. The followers of Christian pacifism have been (mis-)represented as failing adequately to address the demands of justice in a world of radical evil by withdrawing into the attitude of non-resistance and by refusing to participate in efforts to restore justice through the use of force. It is important, therefore, to underline that in their contemporary expression both traditions want to respond to the Christian calling to promote peace with justice, and both acknowledge the preference for nonviolent peace-making and the gospel call to love one's enemy; both also respect the biblical injunction that killing another human person is a violation of the will of God and that the use of lethal violence in war is sinful and can never be called just.

**42** The point where they have parted ways is the question of how to respond to the reality of violence in human community life. The Christian realism of the just war tradition would maintain that there are situations where the use of armed force is the only responsible way of responding to violent manifestations of power threatening the life and security of

a community. It would emphasize, though, that armed force may be used only as a 'last resort' after all other nonviolent and peaceful ways of resolving the threat have been exhausted. And even then the decision to use armed force would be considered as the choice of the lesser of two evils. Christian pacifism on the other hand would maintain that genuine peace with justice cannot be achieved with violent means, that the possibilities of nonviolent peacemaking have been underrated and that the argument of using armed force only as a 'last resort' very often continues the cycle of violence and thus creates conditions that inhibit the achievement of justice. The pacifist commitment to nonviolence is ultimately grounded in an eschatology of trust in the God's victory over evil revealed in Jesus' life, teaching, death and resurrection.

**43** In the twentieth century, numerous Christian leaders and professional scholars of religion around the world reveal a growing recognition that we are at twilight in Christendom. It is difficult to overestimate the simultaneous ecclesial significance and social dissonance of this emerging disconnect between the Christian self-identity on war, and the structures of political power. There are manifold areas in the world where religion is manipulated by the state, of course. But the emergence in world Christianity of a broadening consensus on war, and the independent Christian response to rejecting war as a *Christo*-civic responsibility, is relatively new. The ecumenical movement has been instrumental in promoting this shift in Christian self-understanding with regard to war and the structures of political power.

**44** The first assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting at Amsterdam in 1948 in the aftermath of World War II declared under the headline "war is contrary to the will of God" that:

*"War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a degradation of man. We recognize that the problem of war raises especially acute issues for Christians today. Warfare has greatly changed. War is now total, and every man and woman is called for mobilization in war service. Moreover, the immense use of air forces and the discovery of atomic and other new weapons render widespread and indiscriminate destruction inherent in the whole conduct of modern war in a sense never experienced in past conflicts. In these circumstances the tradition of a just war, requiring a just cause and the use of just means is now challenged. Law may require the sanction of force, but when war breaks out, force is used on a scale which tends to destroy the basis on which law exists.*

- *“Therefore the inescapable question arises – can war now be an act of justice? We cannot answer this question unanimously. Three broad positions are maintained:*
- *There are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian’s duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction can never be an act of justice.*
- *In the absence of impartial supra-national institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary.*
- *Others, again, refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God and they desire that the church should speak to the same effect.*

*“We must frankly acknowledge our deep sense of perplexity in face of these conflicting opinions, and urge upon all Christians the duty of wresting continuously with the difficulties they raise and of praying humbly for God’s guidance. We believe there is a special call for theologians to consider the theological problems involved. In the meantime, the churches must continue to hold within their fellowships all who sincerely profess such viewpoints as those set out above and are prepared to submit themselves to the will of God in the light of such guidance as may be vouchsafed to them.”<sup>3</sup>*

**45** Faced with the question how Christians and their churches should respond to the reality of violence in the contemporary struggles for justice and liberation, particularly the struggle against racial oppression, the Central Committee of the WCC in 1973 received the report of a study on “Violence, Nonviolence and the Struggle for Social Justice”. Reviewing the different positions that study comes to a similar conclusion as the Amsterdam assembly. The report states:

*“It is in the context of this reality that the methods of resistance to unjust and oppressive political and economic power must be considered. There are among us three distinct points of view about methods:*

*(a) Some believe that nonviolent action is the only possibility consistent with obedience to Jesus Christ. They recognize that this discipline is hard and will often be unsuccessful....Nonviolence is for them a witness to the transcendent power of God in Jesus Christ, a way of faith which will be justified by him and his power alone.*

*(b) Some are prepared to accept the necessity of violent resistance as a Chris-*

*tian duty in extreme circumstances, but they would apply to it criteria similar to those governing a just war. . . . Violence will then be considered as the ultima ratio. It is the act of freedom which can only be undertaken, with the guilt it brings, confident in the final judgement of God.*

*(c) Some find themselves already in situations of violence in which they cannot help but participate. Nonviolence does not present itself as an option unless they would withdraw totally from the struggle for justice. In this situation the problem becomes to reduce the sum total of violence in the situation and to liberate human beings for just and peaceful relations with each other. . . . The problem of Christian responsibility, then, is to humanize the means of conflict and to build structures of peace wherever possible within it.*

*We have not been able to reduce these three radically different points of view to agreement. We are convinced however of three things:*

*(a) There are some forms of violence in which Christians may not participate and which the churches must condemn [ranging from conquest of one people by another to torture and the indiscriminate killing of non-combatants].*

*(b) We are convinced that far too little attention has been given by the church and by resistance movements to the methods and techniques of nonviolence, in the struggle for a just society. . . .*

*(c) We reject, however, some facile assumptions about nonviolence which have been current in the recent debate. Non-violent action is highly political. It may be extremely controversial. . . . A non-violent movement may produce peripheral violence and have the problem of controlling it. . . .”<sup>4</sup>*

**46** In 1975 the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC in a statement on the “World Armaments Situation” addressed the following appeal to the churches: “The churches should emphasize their readiness to live without the protection of armaments, and take a significant initiative in pressing for effective disarmament. Churches, individual Christians and members of the public in all countries should press their governments to ensure national security without resorting to the use of weapons of mass destruction. . . .”<sup>5</sup> And following an international hearing on “Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament” in 1981 the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC strengthened this position by declaring:

*“We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds. . . .*

*We urge the churches to press their governments, especially in those countries which have nuclear weapons capabilities to elaborate and ratify an international legal instrument which would outlaw as a crime against humanity the possession as well as the use of nuclear arms...*

*On the same basis, and in the spirit of the 5th Assembly's appeal to the churches "to emphasize their readiness to live without the protection of armaments," we believe that Christians should give witness to their unwillingness to participate in any conflict involving weapons of mass destruction or indiscriminate effect.*

*It is with a deep sense of pastoral responsibility that we make these affirmations. To live up to them will be no simple matter for any Christian or church, but we recognize that the consequences of taking such positions will be far more serious for some than for others. We state these convictions not as a condemnation or in judgment of others, but confessing our own weakness, calling on the churches and Christians to support one another in love as in these ways we seek together to be faithful to our common calling to proclaim and serve our one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Life of the World.<sup>46</sup>*

**47** Finally, the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation at Seoul (1990) in its affirmation on "the Peace of Jesus Christ" declared:

*"... We are called to seek every possible means of establishing justice, achieving peace and solving conflicts by active nonviolence.*

*We will resist doctrines and systems of security based on the use of, and deterrence by, all weapons of mass destruction, and military invasions, interventions and occupations [as well as] doctrines of national security which are aimed at the control and suppression of the people in order to protect the privileges of the few... [and we commit ourselves] to practice nonviolence in all our personal relationships, to work for the banning of war as a legally recognized means of resolving conflicts, and to press governments for the establishment of an international order of peace-making."<sup>47</sup>*

**48** This brief review of major official statements by the World Council of Churches is evidence of the fundamental transformation that has taken place in the ecumenical position on war and peace, violence and non-violence. This development has affected the traditional positions of both the advocates of the just war theory and of Christian pacifists who have found themselves to be working allies time and again. In fact, all weap-

ons of mass destruction violate both just use and pacifist criteria, so these Christian peacemakers have stood side-by-side in opposition to nuclear arms and worked together for nuclear disarmament. They joined in anti-apartheid campaigns in Southern Africa and anti-regime campaigns in Eastern Europe. They sought truth and reconciliation processes in several countries, as well as other ways to help heal memories of past violation and remember its victims in public ways (through memorials, museums, school curricula and interfaith worship, for example). For the so-called “war on terror,” they have rejected the crusade tradition whereby any just cause justifies all means necessary to achieve it.

**49** In fact, the decision by the World Council of Churches in 1994 to launch a “Programme to Overcome Violence” and the subsequent decision by the Harare Assembly in 1998 to broaden this initiative to the “Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010 – Churches seeking Reconciliation and Peace” is an indication that the ecumenical community has begun to leave the traditional positions of the just war and pacifism behind and focus its attention on the vision of “just peace”. The programme to overcome violence was established by the Central Committee in 1994 “with the purpose of challenging and transforming the global culture of violence in the direction of a culture of just peace...” In its decision the Central Committee declared; “that, in view of the need to confront and overcome the ‘spirit, logic and practice of war’ and to develop new theological approaches, consonant with the teaching of Christ, which start not with war and move to peace, but with the need for justice, this may be a time when the churches, together, should face the challenge to give up any theological or other justification of the use of military power, and to become a *koinonia* dedicated to the pursuit of a just peace. ...”

**50** This assessment has been strengthened as a result of the Decade to Overcome Violence. Today, the churches in the ecumenical movement are virtually unanimous not only in condemning nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, but also in the affirmation that war can no longer be considered an act of justice. The commitment to confront and overcome the “spirit, logic and practice of war” has in fact rendered the traditional theory of ‘just war’ obsolete and thus leads to the resolve to give up any theological or other justification of the use of military power. And in fact, the traditional institution of war has lost its legitimacy in international law as a consequence of Art. 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations which states: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations”. While Art. 51 of the Charter

recognizes the right of member states for individual or collective self-defence in the case of an armed attack, Chapter VII reserves for the Security Council the ultimate authority to decide about appropriate ways to respond to threats to threats to peace and acts of aggression, including measures involving armed forces.

**51** The need to develop new theological approaches which start not with war as a given and inevitable reality, but with the need for justice also challenges Christian pacifism which, at least in the past, has sometimes been an excuse to retreat from public responsibility and a betrayal of the biblical mandate to seek the peace of the city. The determined pursuit of a just peace must be prepared to respond when the order of just relationships in the community is being challenged and must be able to rely on the possibility of sanctioning those who deliberately violate this order, if necessary by the force of coercion. Under the rule of law, the civic or state authorities are accorded the ‘monopoly’ of the use of coercive force in order to maintain peace with justice in the community. In any given community this normally is the responsibility of police agents. In the international community the authority to decide on the use of coercive force, including the use of armed forces, has been accorded to the Security Council of the United Nations; however, given the continuing weakness of the rule of law in the international community, this principle has often been overruled by states following their national interest.

**52** Ecumenical dialogues, in particular the Catholic-Mennonite dialogue, have pointed out the important difference between an army and a police force, including an international police force operating through institutions backed by international law. Police are embedded in a community whose members assume that the police force is working on their behalf. While police know how to use arms they, unlike soldiers, are not trained primarily for armed combat and use arms only as a last resort. Many police officers pride themselves on how infrequently they have to draw a gun and how often their work overlaps with and allies with the work of people in other helping professions. Their specialty is saving life, not destroying it. They do not kill their way to victory. If killing is involved, it is not to achieve “victory”; it is to prevent further harm to the innocent.

**53** As the German Mennonite Congregations in 2009 declared: “We distinguish military violence from actions of force and protection used by police. The latter must adhere to the principles of law, respect all human rights and aim at the reduction and de-escalation of violence. Wherever possible police actions should desist from employing weapons and using violence.” The report, however, adds the observation that “to date there

**The end of the Christendom era brings profound possibilities for the churches to re-claim their calling as the body of Christ.**

are no international police troops who have been trained in the principles of law and justice, the use of proportionate means, techniques for deescalating and limiting violence, and who stand under the control of international legal institutions. A further problem...is the criteria for employing such troops, which are reminiscent of the dogma and intentions of 'just war'. We fear that in the

actual deployment these international police forces could easily be caught up in the conflict and might then use military violence. Together with the community of churches we wish to work toward ways of ensuring that both in definition and in practice such 'international police troops' do not incline toward violence."<sup>8</sup>

**54** It is in this context that the concept of "just policing" has been put forward as a proposal to overcome the tension between the positions of just war and of Christian pacifism.<sup>9</sup> While the implications of this concept are still being worked out, not only for the ongoing debate about ethically appropriate ways of responding to threats to international peace but also for the structures of maintaining the rule of law in any society, the concept strengthens the need to distinguish between violence and the lawful use of force which in principle is directed towards protecting and saving life rather than killing and destroying. An ethics of lawful force needs to be based on clear moral criteria. In the discussion many refer to the traditional criteria of the "just war" as a possible framework for developing an ethics of lawful force. However, if this ethics is to be conceived as guiding the practice of just peacemaking, a new and different ethical imagination may be needed than the one reflected in the theory of just war.

**55** The end of the Christendom era brings profound possibilities for the churches to re-claim their calling as the body of Christ. But the churches and their pastors, elders, theologians, sociologists, missiologists and other thinkers and dreamers will need to rethink almost every aspect of church life through a post-Christendom lens – including Christian understandings of war. This is a task of vital importance and pressing urgency.

**56** Just war theory has been used unjustly to promote and defend too many wars. Likewise, Christian pacifism has sometimes been an excuse to retreat from public responsibility into sectarian reservations of spiritual life which betray the biblical mandate to seek the peace of the city. Just war theologians and Christian pacifists alike agree that to love our neighbour means we have some responsibility for our neighbour's welfare and well being. We want to serve the public good but the old dialogues and debates between just war and pacifism no longer seem to capture Chris-

tian imaginations that are most alive and awake. Persons of artful and ethical faith understand that *we live only what we can imagine*. The passionate pursuit of a just peace is inviting us beyond the tired categories of pacifism vs. just war. Cognitive scientists, poets and prophets all remind us that reason has a history; reason can only follow the paths that are first broken open by the imagination. A prophetic realism is now pointing to the yet unimagined possibilities of just peacemaking. The past century of ecumenical engagement and constructive work has been calling forth new Christian imaginaries as we together rediscover the poetic and prophetic vision of the Christian story of peace-building.

**57** The church is the Body of Christ, and its mission and witness is to be a peace-building fellowship (*koinonia*) of Christ in the world. Through the centuries and for manifold reasons, the fundamental *ethos* of the church, central to the activity of peace and reconciliation, was minimized and manipulated. The wound to the church remains wherever this central mission and witness are abrogated in the world. The church today must reclaim its message without appealing to categories of simplification between “just war” and “pacifism”.

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## **RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (R2P)**

**58** For the longest period the ecumenical discussion on the ethics of war and peace was shaped by the political condition of the super-power confrontation during the Cold War, focussing on the threat of a potential nuclear war and stressing the need for disarmament. The ethical and theological issues in the debate between advocates of just war and of pacifism were considered with regard to military conflicts between states. As reported in the previous section, this evolving discussion led to the implicit consensus that war in the traditional sense can no longer be considered an act of justice and that the “spirit, logic and practice of war” has to be overcome. This does render the classical theory of “just war” obsolete and finds expression in the resolve to give up any theological or other justification of the use of military power.

**59** It was also pointed out in the previous section that the Charter of the United Nations, while accepting the right of member states for actions individual or collective self-defence against aggression by other states, reserves for the Security Council of the United Nation the ultimate authority and right to decide about appropriate measures to respond to any threat to international peace and security, including the eventual use of armed forces. Under the conditions of the Cold War this authority

given to the UN Security Council under international law could hardly be invoked and remained politically ineffective. Nevertheless, the ecumenical community of churches has always affirmed and defended the authority of the United Nations as the only available expression of an international rule of law over against a situation characterized by the law of force.

**60** The end of the Cold War and of the bipolar system of international relations created a new situation. A new international order of peace under the authority of the United Nations appeared as a realistic possibility for the first time since the end of World War II. Significant steps for disarmament were implemented and long lasting conflicts in Southern Africa, Central America and in Asia could be settled peacefully. The international response to the invasion of Kuwait by neighbouring Iraq was seen as proof that the system of international security as envisaged by the Charter of the UN was workable.

**61** However, a series of new, essentially internal conflicts within states placed the international community before fundamental challenges. The aborted intervention in Somalia, the dramatic events in Rwanda leaving the United Nations paralyzed, the conflicts on the former Yugoslavia and especially the NATO intervention in Kosovo without Security Council authorization all called for a fundamental reconsideration of the rules and criteria regarding the use of military force in response to violent conflicts. There were persistent calls for “humanitarian intervention” in situations where the human rights and the security of people are gravely endangered. The United Nations in responding to such situation was faced with the dilemma inherent in its charter, i.e. the tension between the prohibition of intervention into the internal affairs of sovereign states (Art.2.7) and the affirmation of the universal validity of human rights and the recognition that the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is essential for international peace (Art.1.3 and 55c). Neither the Charter nor the Universal Declaration on Human Rights provided the United Nations with appropriate instrumentalities and with the authority judicially to pursue violations of human rights. Only the convention against genocide of 1948 placed an obligation on the member states to prevent and to punish genocidal actions as a crime under international law. However, this convention so far has never been applied.

**62** It was against this background that the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in 1994 initiated the Programme to Overcome Violence, and in several statements considered whether, and under what conditions, the use of coercion is an acceptable tool to enforce human rights and the international rule of law in violent or potentially vio-

lent situations. In a “Memorandum and Recommendations on International Security and Response to Armed Conflict”, formulated especially in the light of the Kosovo experience, the Central Committee in 1999 called for a study “on the ethics of so-called ‘humanitarian intervention’, taking into account the legitimate right of people to be free of undue interference in their internal affairs and the moral obligation of the international community to respond when states are unwilling or incapable of guaranteeing respect for human rights and peace within their borders”. The report of this study was presented to the Central Committee in 2001 at its meeting in Potsdam/Berlin, the very meeting when the Decade to Overcome Violence was officially inaugurated. The report under the title “The protection of endangered populations in situations of armed violence: toward an ecumenical ethical approach” was controversially discussed by the Central Committee, redrafted and eventually received and commended to the churches for further study, reflection and use. In the discussion the concept of “humanitarian intervention”, it was strongly criticized (and deliberately avoided in the title) and the well known differences with regard to the use of force for the purpose of protection of endangered populations came to the fore.

**63** While the study report was being considered in the member churches, an international commission sponsored by the Canadian Government (ICISS), in response to a request by the General Secretary of the United Nations, presented a report which placed the debate on the issues of humanitarian intervention on a new basis. Under the title “The responsibility to protect” the report successfully shifted the terms of the discussion from the question of the legality or a presumed ‘right to intervention’ to the “responsibility to protect”, from the interests of states to the concerns of the people living under the threat of armed violence, and thus from the emphasis on state security to the comprehensive understanding of human security. Since then the responsibility to protect the human rights and human security of people has been gradually accepted as a new norm under international law. It leads to a new understanding of state sovereignty as responsibility, and in cases where states are unwilling or incapable of meeting their responsibility for the human security of their own people, this responsibility shifts to the international community. The report from the international commissions emphasized the primary concern for prevention. When prevention fails or has failed any reaction on the part of the international community has to be guided by clear criteria which follow the traditional rules of the just war theory. No decision about reaction should be taken without a clear perspective for rebuilding.

64 The study report of the WCC which had already anticipated the shift from the concern about “humanitarian intervention” to the emphasis on ‘protection of endangered populations’ proposed basic considerations and criteria for actions to protect people in situations of armed internal conflict. Its understanding of the Christian approach is expressed in the emphasis on “just peacemaking”. The report states: “Just peacemaking requires that Christians not endorse any coercive policy, whether economic or military, before seeking positive incentives to promote peace among aggrieved adversaries. For Christians the aim must always be the building or restoration of just, peaceful and humane relationships.” With regard to the specific question of using military force for the purposes of protection the report restates the different ethical and theological convictions that have been presented already in the previous section. However, it tries to offer detailed criteria that could guide the competent authorities to arrive at ethically responsible decisions.

65 The report elicited only a limited response among the member churches. Substantial reflections were received from the Church of Norway, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), as well as from a representative meeting of members of Historic Peace Churches. While the responses from Norway and Germany offer important additional considerations and suggest refined criteria, the statement from the Historic Peace Churches expresses concern about the document and its insufficient theological basis. In five points they formulate their response:

1. *A biblically and theologically grounded pacifism regards seeking God's justice as central and integral to a non-violent philosophy of life. To state the issue as if we have to choose between nonviolence and justice is a false dichotomy.*
2. *We can identify a number of normative practices for seeking justice within principled pacifism.*
3. *The use of violent force as a ‘last resort’ to secure justice creates conditions that inhibit the achievement of justice. Too often we work under the false assumption that, if we cannot find a non-violent solution to a conflict, the use of violent force will take care of the problem.*
4. *We call on the churches to emphasize the distinctive witness to the world that flows from our commitment to the Spirit of Jesus Christ and our identity as the body of Christ in the world.*
5. *The pacifists and those reasoning with ‘just war’ principles should make more modest claims about their ability to guarantee success. Though both traditions seek justice, neither tradition can guarantee that justice will be accomplished. Both traditions involve faith visions about how to ‘secure’*

*a future in which justice is more likely to be achieved. The pacifist commitment to nonviolence is ultimately grounded in an eschatology of trust in the victory over evil of God revealed in Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection.*

**66** One of the consequences drawn from the analysis of the responses to the study report is the need to develop further the concepts of just peace and just peacemaking in the course of the Decade to Overcome Violence. While all ecumenical documents and statements underline the priority of non-military instruments in safeguarding peace, there remains the basic difference of opinion regarding the potential use of military force for the purpose of protection. Some continue to specify further the criteria for the use of force as a last resort; the Historic Peace Churches disagree, as indicated above. Can the vision of Just Peace offer a perspective beyond this disagreement?

**67** In April 2005 the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs organized an expert consultation on the ethical and theological issues regarding the responsibility to protect with the aim of “forming the ecumenical mind and addressing ethical dilemmas on prevention and protection of people in peril”. As a result of this consultation a revised statement was prepared for consideration by the WCC assembly at Porto Alegre in 2006. The statement under the title “Vulnerable Populations at Risk. Statement on the Responsibility to Protect”, after reviewing briefly the course of the discussion both in the ecumenical movement and in the international community, begins by reaffirming the calling of the churches to a ministry of healing and reconciliation. This implies the commitment to the primacy of nonviolence and the special responsibility to protect the vulnerable. The statement affirms the shift of the debate from intervention to responsibility and declares: “To be faithful to that responsibility to protect people means above all prevention...although churches have different views on the use of force for human protection purposes, they agree on the essential role of preventive efforts to avoid, and if possible, tackle the crisis before it reaches serious stages. Protection becomes necessary when prevention has failed. Hence, the churches emphasize the necessity to concentrate on prevention.”<sup>10</sup>

**68** The statement underlines the necessity to distinguish prevention from intervention. For the international community “the responsibility to protect is first and foremost about protecting civilians and preventing any harmful human rights crisis.” But then it continues with the following very carefully worded declaration:

*“In calling on the international community to come to the aid of vulnerable people in extraordinary suffering and peril, the fellowship of churches is not prepared to say that it is never appropriate or never necessary to resort to the use of force for the protection of the vulnerable. This refusal in principle to preclude the use of force is not based on a naive belief that force can be relied on to solve intractable problems. Rather, it is based on the certain knowledge that the objective must be the welfare of people, especially those in situations of extreme vulnerability and who are utterly abandoned to the whims and prerogatives of their tormentors. It is a tragic reality that civilians, especially women and children, are the primary victims in situations of extreme insecurity and war.”*

**69** The statement adds that there is no guarantee of success for the option to resort to force for protection purposes and takes note of the fact that “some within the churches refuse the use of force in all circumstances. Their form of responsibility is to persist in preventive engagement and, whatever the cost – as a last resort – to risk nonviolent intervention during the use of force. Either of these approaches may fail too, but they both need to be respected as expressions of Christian responsibility”.

**70** Having on ethical grounds allowed consideration of the option to resort to force, the statement concludes, not by continuing the discussion about criteria, but rather by specifying the “limits of the use of force”. These become apparent in the following points:

- *“The churches do not... believe in the exercise of lethal force to bring in a new order of peace and safety. By limiting the resort to force quite specifically to immediate protection objectives, the churches insist that the kinds of long-term solutions that are required...cannot be delivered by force...”*
- *“The use of force for humanitarian purposes can never be an attempt to find military solutions to social and political problems...Rather, it is intended to mitigate imminent threats and to alleviate immediate suffering while long-term solutions are sought by other means...In the long run, international police forces should be educated and trained for this particular task, bound to international law...”*
- *“The force that is to be deployed and used for humanitarian purposes must also be distinguished from military war-fighting methods and objectives. The military operation is not a war to defeat a state but an operation to protect populations in peril...It is more related to just policing...in the sense that the armed forces are not employed in order to ‘win’ a conflict or defeat a regime...”*

- *If churches call for protective intervention by the international community they will expect a discerning and decision-making process strictly bound to international law. Such calls are likely to be reluctant, “because the churches, like other institutions and individuals, will always know that the current situation of peril could have been, and should have been avoided. The churches in such circumstances should find it appropriate to recognize their own collective culpability in failing to prevent the crises that have put people in such peril”.*

**71** In its resolution the assembly affirmed the principles put forward in this statement and asked the Central Committee to consider further developing guidelines for the member churches. It underlined prevention as the “key tool and concern for the churches... Because churches and other faith communities and their leadership are rooted in the daily physical and spiritual realities of people, they have both a special responsibility...to contribute to the early detection the assembly emphasized the need for the international community and national governments to strengthen their capability in preventive strategies and violence-reducing intervention skills, and to invest much greater resources and training for nonviolent intervention and accompaniment of people.

**72** The recommendations conclude with the request to the Central Committee “to consider a study process engaging all member churches and ecumenical organisations in order to develop an extensive ecumenical declaration on peace - dealing with topics such as just peace, the Responsibility to Protect, the role and the legal status of non-state combatants, the conflict of values (for example: territorial integrity and human life), - to be adopted at the conclusion of the Decade to Overcome Violence in 2010.” It is in response to this recommendation that the “Declaration on Just Peace” and this companion document have been prepared.

**73** As was to be expected, the discussion has continued after this official statement by the assembly of the WCC. The fact that the present effort to develop the vision of Just Peace has its origin in a recommendation concluding the statement on the “Responsibility to Protect” has discredited is credibility in the eyes of students of an ethics seminar in the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminar at Elkhart/Indiana, USA. While appreciating the priority emphasis placed on prevention they disagree with any endorsement of the use of military or police violence in seeking to protect the neighbour and with the reasoning behind. Also Church and Peace, the European network of Peace Churches, has carefully considered the statement by the Porto Alegre Assembly and has made a declaration including the following points:

- *“Based on our understanding of Christian discipleship and peacemaking, we oppose that section of the Concept (scl. Responsibility to Protect) which allows the use of military force to ensure the protection of threatened peoples. Even if military force is held only in reserve for use as a measure of last resort, this influences the planning of civil action during the earlier phases of conflict by consuming a disproportionately high share of the resources available for aiding civilians. Also its availability strengthens the traditional attitude that military force is the inevitable answer.*
- *We maintain our rejection of using violent means to attempt to create good outcomes, even when under the guise of policing. In conflicts referred to under R2P, the use of military weapons is assumed and these weapons would kill and wound without distinguishing between those people involved in the violence and those not, and their use has nothing in common with procedures governing police interventions under international law.*
- *Even in situations where no solution seems possible and where violence is so endemic that a call to counter it with further violence rises among victims and within us too, we persists in recommending the use of non-violent means towards every human being, means which as disciples of Christ we have in abundance... Violence in any form can never serve to bring about lasting peace with justice. Only the path of loving one’s neighbour and loving one’s enemy holds any promise. We invite all churches to resist together with us the temptation of justifying the use of deadly weapons even as a last resort.”*

**74** One of the expert consultations during the second half of the Decade to Overcome Violence focussed on the Responsibility to Protect. In their conclusions the participants underlined that the discussion on the responsibility to protect “obliges the churches as the universal body of Christ to redefine their appropriate public role vis-à-vis nation states and the international community. The churches have to overcome the Constantinian captivity seeing themselves as appointed partners of the respective political institutions, sharing in their responsibility for maintaining public order. This implies to articulate afresh the “grammar” of Christian discipleship, i.e. what are the decisive marks of following Christ in a world of violence.”

**75** They emphasized that even maximum protection efforts cannot remove the fundamental vulnerability of human life. “In fact, it can lead to mutual isolation and thus undercut the ties within and between communities which are the basis for the sense of trust and security.... Since the effort to attain invulnerability is not only illusory but also destructive of com-

munity it is imperative to acknowledge the limits of the R2P norm. The possibility of failure in the effort to provide security and protection has to be considered realistically. Acknowledgement of failure can even strengthen the sense of legitimacy; on the other hand, any claim of moral superiority has to be avoided on the part of those called to exercise the R2P.”

**76** The consultation also addressed the concept of Just Peace. “The ecumenical declaration is expected to focus on and to develop the concept of a ‘just peace’. This will require reopening the discussion about the relationship between peace and justice. In biblical thought both are inseparably related: ‘shalom’ embraces both peace and justice. However, in the effort to shape a viable order of life in community justice and peace can enter into conflict. The concept of a ‘just peace’ calls for a critical re-assessment of traditional notions of both peace and justice. How can this be translated into the context of operating under the R2P norm? Can the responsibility to protect be limited to cases of massive violations of human rights in the sense of threats to the physical integrity of life? How do we deal with other dramatic threats to human security arising from economic ‘structural violence’? What are the appropriate forms of ‘intervention, reaction, and rebuilding’ in such cases? A ‘just peace’ can only be built on right relationships in community. How can the concepts of ‘restorative’ or ‘transformative’ justice be applied to the search for building a ‘just peace’.”

**77** In discussing the political and practical challenges involved in the proposed new international norm the consultation addressed the issues of prevention, reaction and rebuilding. With regard to reaction it emphasized “that reaction must include the effective resort to nonlethal means of coercion in instances where prevention fails. The (Working) Group appreciated the exploration of policing as a model for coercive action in response to intense crisis and people in extreme peril. Much more attention should be paid to the ethical dimensions and criteria for any intervention that potentially involves lethal force. Intervention criteria inevitably involve political judgments, much more so than they do juridical judgments. Issues of right authority are obviously paramount in any reaction that engages lethal force and the Group emphasized the need for broad ecumenical reflection on questions of governance linked to the resort to force. The Group also noted the importance of further reflection on the nature of force that is authorized, a concern that links to the policing discussion”. The consultation repeated the conviction that the churches have a special role both with regard to prevention and to rebuilding. “The Christian ecumenical community is a worldwide community linked by common values and concerns, as well as by functioning communications mechanisms, and the North-South character of this community is espe-

**The dilemma faced by the United Nations as the guardians of the international order of peace is inherent in the principles of its Charter which is an expression of the state-based understanding of international order.**

cially relevant to prevention and rebuilding elements of the responsibility to protect”

**78** The proposed new norm of the Responsibility to Protect was fully endorsed by a High Level Panel on “Threats, Challenges and Change” established by the Secretary General of the United Nations and recommended in the report by the Secretary General on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. Since then little progress has been made in the international community in reaching agreement on its implications. This brief review of the parallel discussion in the ecumenical movement shows both the potential

and the difficulties associated with this concept. For the churches these difficulties relate less to the issues of legality and more to legitimacy, especially of the option of using force for purposes of protecting people in peril. The repeated suggestion to differentiate between the use of military and police force appears to provide a way forward but it clearly implies a fundamental shift in approaching situations of armed conflict. So far the vision of Just Peace has not been appropriated seriously in this discussion even though there have been frequent references to it. It would certainly strengthen the case of those who are insisting that the potential of alternatives to violence in the response to situations of armed conflict has so far not been seriously explored.

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## **AN INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF PEACE**

**79** The preceding section on the proposed new norm of the “responsibility to protect” has already pointed to one of specific challenges regarding efforts to build an international order of peace. The challenge arises from the state-based understanding of international order which considers peace as the absence of armed conflict between sovereign states. However, in the contemporary situation the threats to peace are no longer limited to potential inter-state conflicts. In fact, since the end of the Cold War we are confronted with the reality of “new wars” which have broken out within states and in which non-state actors are the prime adversaries. These internal conflicts which oppose government forces and armed groups fighting for autonomy or trying to impose cultural, ideological or religious hegemony, often under the leadership of war lords, do not pose an immediate threat to international peace but severely endanger the security of the

people and the peace of the community. How can an international order of peace be built that protects not only state security and serves to manage or resolve conflicts between states in a peaceful manner, but that serves the interest of the people to live in peace and protects human security?

**80** As has been pointed out in the preceding section, the dilemma faced by the United Nations in view of the internal conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda and Kosovo prompted a discussion about an intervention from outside in the interest of protecting endangered people in situations of armed conflict. The dilemma faced by the United Nations as the guardians of the international order of peace is inherent in the principles of its Charter which is an expression of the state-based understanding of international order. It is based on the willingness of sovereign nation states to cooperate with each other, to refrain from interference into their internal matters and especially to refrain from the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of another state (Charter of the UN Art. 2.4 and 7). The conventions of international humanitarian law, especially the Geneva Conventions, are legal agreements between nation states addressing specific limitations of the use of force in inter-state conflicts. Non-state actors in internal conflicts are not party to these conventions.

**81** At the same time, the Charter of the United Nations affirms the universal validity of human rights and recognizes that the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is essential for international peace (Art 1.3 and 55c). The preamble of the Charter explicitly states:

*“WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED*

- *to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and*
- *to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and*
- *to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and*
- *to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom...”*

**82** The acknowledgement of human rights as developed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and in the subsequent International Covenants on civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights constitutes the core of the international rule of law and the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states explicitly that the recognition of the “inherent dignity and of the equal and in-

alienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. The fundamental challenge for an international order of peace is to bind together the basic aims of peace and justice, the concern for security and the recognition of human rights under the universal rule of law.

**83** In a “Memorandum and Recommendations on Response to Armed Conflict and International Law” the Central Committee of the WCC in 1999 addressed the serious questions arising for the churches and the ecumenical movement in relation to the international intervention in the Kosovo crisis, the Committee. The memorandum recalled that the World Council was formed “in response to appeals like that made in 1920 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate which urged the churches to join together to give witness to the nations with respect to the need for a just, peaceful world order and effective international institutions to promote and sustain it. Thus, from the earliest beginnings the ecumenical movement’s commitments to church unity, human rights, peace and justice, and the international rule of law have been bound together.” In 1983 the Vancouver assembly had said that without justice for all everywhere we shall never have peace anywhere – an affirmation which remained true with respect to the lasting, comprehensive peace Christians receive from God. “Yet the conflicts of the past decade have shown that action for peace in the more limited sense of controlling armed conflict becomes an unavoidable priority in the face of today’s massive threats to justice and life itself. The churches and the international system need to consider more deeply in the present context how the complementary and interrelated needs of people for both peace and justice can be more effectively related.”

**84** The same memorandum then went on to discuss concerns regarding the international response to situations of armed conflict which had become urgent since the end of the Cold War pointing to:

- *“the erosion of the authority and capacity of the United Nations and its institutions created to develop, codify and guarantee respect for the international rule of law;*
- *the unwillingness, especially of influential states, especially in the West, to revise appropriately their policies and actions on international peace and security in the light of the new needs and opportunities created by the end of the Cold War;*
- *the tension between principles in the United Nations Charter of non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states, and the obligation of the international community to intervene on humanitarian grounds when states fail to respect the human rights of people within their borders;*

- *the complex interrelationship between the need for justice as the essential basis of peace, and the need for peace as essential for the pursuit of justice; and*
- *the ever more pressing challenges confronting churches in particular national and international conflicts, and the ecumenical movement as a whole, in efforts to promote non-violent approaches to conflict transformation and resolution, and post-conflict healing and reconciliation.”*

**85** More than ten years later, these concerns have become even more urgent. Even though, the affirmation of the WCC’s commitment to the United Nations as expressed in 1966 by the Geneva Conference on Church and Society remains valid:

*“The UN is the best structure now available through which to pursue the goals of international peace and justice. Like all institutions it is not sacrosanct and many changes are necessary (for it) to meet the needs of the world today. Nevertheless we call upon the churches of the world to defend it against all attacks which would weaken or destroy it and to seek out and advocate ways in which it can be transformed into an instrument fully capable of ensuring the peace and guaranteeing justice on a worldwide scale.”*

**86** In fact, the commitment to building an international order of peace and justice goes back to the very early years of the ecumenical movement at the beginning of the last century. Initially it focussed on the League of Nations responding to the devastations caused by the First World War and was further developed by the ecumenical conferences at Stockholm (1925) and Oxford (1937). At the end of the Second World War the principles for a future world order developed at Oxford served as the basis for the ecumenical contributions to the process of shaping the Charter of the future United Nations as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The important story of the involvement of ecumenical leaders in this process is being recalled in a memorandum adopted by the Central Committee of the WCC on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1995. However, the same memorandum also refers to some of the new challenges regarding a viable international order. In fact, through its involvement in the struggles for justice and liberation the WCC and other partners in the ecumenical movement progressively turned away from the preoccupation with international structures to movements of people with the aim of building up an “oikoumene of solidarity” over against the “oikoumene of domination” represented by the existing political, economic and financial structures. Attention focussed

more and more on the “peoples’ agenda” and on the new role of non-governmental organizations and of civil society organizations.

**87** Since then, the consequences of the process of globalization and the crisis of the global financial and economic system pose new challenges to the ecumenical search for a viable international order of peace and justice which would be able to counteract the further weakening of multilateralism as a consequence of the dominance of national interest and to stem the tide of increasing fragmentation of the international order and the exclusion of large sectors of the population. Ecumenical declarations responding to the challenge of globalization have called for a radical transformation of global structures focussing their critical analysis on the fact that the claims of hegemonic power manifested by the prevailing global economic system threaten to erode all previous political efforts of building a viable international order of peace and justice. The WCC assembly at Porto Alegre (2006) in its “Call to Love and Action” in the interest of an “Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth” (AGAPE) pointed to the fact that “people all over the world experience the impact of imperial forms of power on their communities” and expressed the commitment on the part of the churches “to reflect on the question of power and empire from a biblical and theological perspective, and take a firm faith stance against hegemonic powers because all power is accountable to God.”

**88** The aim of building an international order of peace that addresses the needs of people for human security and life in just and sustainable communities and strengthens the rule of law requires the development of new forms of global governance including a fundamental reform of the system of the United Nations. The WCC assembly at Porto Alegre (2006) declared in its “Statement on UN Reform”: “The changed global situation ...obliges the UN and member states to engage in a serious process of reform in order to retain the capacity to respond to the basic mandate of the UN and to the aspirations of the people of the world. The reform process must continue beyond the framework of the UN organization and aim at improving global governance based on the principle of multilateralism.” Referring to the outcome of the summit meeting on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the UN the statement affirmed: “One significant achievement of the summit was the acknowledgement that the realisation of peace/security, development/social and economic justice and the implementation of human rights are inseparably linked. This should serve as the fundamental framework and policy orientation for the continuing process of reform. In fact, for people on the ground it has always been obvious that there can be no security in a situation of utter deprivation; that eco-

conomic development at the expense of the recognition of human rights, in particular the rights of the marginalized, women, children, indigenous and differently-abled people does not serve the cause of social justice; and that without basic human security and the satisfaction of human needs the affirmation of human rights loses its meaning.”

**89** After commenting critically on the efforts to translate the inseparable linkage of the three pillars of security, development and human rights into institutional and policy changes the statement refers particularly to the role of non-governmental organizations in the process of reform. “Non-governmental organisations play an important role at the UN providing crucial information, monitoring decision-making processes, creating opportunities for the voices from the grassroots, often the victims of international policies, to be heard and to overcome attitudes of narrow self-interest and promote the spirit of multilateralism. Churches are called to continue and strengthen their efforts to play a part in this vital role of engaging with the UN and holding it and member states to account for their decisions and policies. The unique role that religions or religious organisations could play in addressing conflict, and working for peace, human rights and ending poverty is not yet fully realised. There is an urgent need for the UN and member states to strengthen the capacity to deal with the growing interaction between religion and politics. There is also an urgent need for the churches and the WCC to strengthen their own capacities to continue and improve their engagements with the UN... The real test for any steps in this reform process will be whether it increases the chances for life in dignity and sustainable communities for the people on the ground. This is the privileged context for the work and witness of the churches. They are entrusted with a message of life and hope that can dispel suspicion and paralysing fears and set people free to gain courage and confidence in their capacity to transform their lives in community.” The vision of Just Peace as presented here aims at giving shape to this message and to the common calling of the churches in the World Council of Churches.



**Education for peace is more than mere instruction in the strategies of work for peace. It is a profoundly spiritual formation of character.**

## **5. JUST PEACE PRACTICES**

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### **PEACE EDUCATION**

**1** Every church, irrespective of its doctrine, is responsible for a good education of all its members and for a good example to all persons in the world around. The process of peace – education must develop permanently throughout our lives. As the earliest place of education, the family plays an important role. The school and all political structures must also be involved in the processes of peace – education. Persons who are being educated today will take decisions tomorrow. The process of peace – education requires a long effort, but if it is being fulfilled, it will have many good consequences for all of creation. (response from Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland)

**2** Education for peace is more than mere instruction in the strategies of work for peace. It is a profoundly spiritual formation of character that happens over a long period of time. Growth in the biblical understanding of peace, learning about the temptations that lead people away

from peace into violence, examining our narratives about how we describe to ourselves those who may be our potential enemies, learning to engage in practices of peace (especially for children and adolescents), learning to care for the earth as a way of cultivating peace, and making prayer for peace a prominent part of our worship: all of these things promote peace. Peace education is not simply acquiring certain items of knowledge; it is about formation of character and building reflexes into behaviour that will respond non - violently in the face of provocation. (Initial statement)

**3** Peace is a habit of mind. Therefore it can be “taught”. Such peace education – as it is understood in Christian terms – should eventually become “applied theology”, that is, everyday life practice. For this reason, all Christian teachers should translate the peaceful message of God into a kind of universal language and practice, which all students in school should gradually be able to acquire and make their own. Peace education implies the process of kindling in young people the desire to build a more and more peaceful world – a world based on a responsible relationship with oneself, on peaceful relationships among people and among peoples, and between human beings and the natural environment (as promoted e.g. by Assisipax International). It is not a question of merely offering contents related to peace, but a question of teaching methods and attitudes. These are ways of bearing witness to one’s belief in the value of all human beings and ethical principles. If they are based on transparency, on mutual respect, and positive attitudes towards the other, they provide a solid basis on which peace education may be promoted. In each individual there is something positive, as little as it may be, even just a gleam, since each person was created in God’s image. Thus “positiveness” involves discovering and developing this gleam.<sup>1</sup>

**4** Peace education needs to be part of religious instruction in the churches at all levels. It needs to begin with children, but must be extended to adolescents and adults as well. The formation to be agents of peace begins by looking to models of those already engaged in peace - building. For children, parents must be the first agents of peace they encounter, who serve as signs of peace not only in what they say, but in what they do. As children grow and mature into themselves being agents of peace, the churches must provide space, encouragement, and active support in this formation. That involves introspection of all members of the church, into how their choices, their actions and their lifestyles do or do not make them servants of peace. It means also giving special support to those who have special gifts for promoting specific pathways of peace - for these are gifts of the Spirit of Peace within the churches and for the sake of the world. Some will have distinct capacities for accompanying victims of

violence; others, for settling disputes; still others, for caring for the earth. (Initial statement)

5 Every worship service can and should educate for peace. In principle, the whole of the Christian Church - especially its Protestant manifestations - can be seen as an institution of education, if we understand 'education' as not limited to a merely cognitive transfer of knowledge but encompassing a holistic process of character formation. This understanding of education comes from the recognition that human beings are made in God's image. It therefore means essentially "formation of the heart", and includes educating and nurturing for peace. Alongside the life of worship, over the centuries churches have founded many educational institutions for children, young people and adults at every stage of life. The education given at these institutions always encompasses both that fundamental element identified above and an explicit inculcation of the values and standards that grow out of the Christian faith. The formation of the heart, ethical guidance and practical work for peace belong together and cannot be separated.<sup>2</sup>

6 Education simply cannot begin too early in human life. A Christian understanding of education will therefore seek to inculcate values of peace and justice from the very beginning. Thus, bringing children up to value peace needs to form an essential part of the elementary Christian education that largely takes place in nursery schools. The aim of the practical work of these facilities is firstly to show how peace and justice have their roots in the Christian religion - for instance by the example of Jesus and to make that understandable to children. Secondly, it is to enable them to put the Christian understanding of peace into practice in real - life, everyday situations. This is why it is important for the social, linguistic, cultural and religious difference found within nursery schools to be admitted, taken seriously and used as a starting point for these educational processes. This includes knowledge of one's own roots, respect for what is different or unknown, and the development of a culture of fair, constructive debate. Education and nurturing for peace is a lifelong task.<sup>3</sup>

### Examples

7 In Korea the churches conduct Youth Peace Camps during school breaks. They invite people to the only zone of neutral waters in the Korean peninsula and offer them a chance to experience first - hand the armistice situation of the Koreas through a trip to the restriction line for civilian passage. Participants encounter officers, UN personnel, and learn about humanitarian activities from workers of international NGOs and religious organizations. In the process young people also begin to reflect about the

historical background and the political and societal situations which can lead to the breaking out of war. They learn to analyze and resolve conflicts in homes, schools, and the society through workshops and role plays.<sup>4</sup>

**8** The Dutch Mennonite Training and Mediation Centre (Geweldloos Samenleven) trains mediators to train others in mediation and for work in church and society. It offers courses in resolving church conflicts and does mediation work and coaching in congregations. The curriculum of the Bienenberg Theological Seminary in Switzerland includes courses on the peace witness of the church. In 2009 it established a special institute, Compax, devoted to training in spiritually – based conflict transformation. The German association Oekumenischer Dienst Schalomdiakoniat (OeD) has set itself the task of providing learning opportunities in the area of non – violent conflict transformation for women and men from different churches, countries and occupations. Participation in OeD courses qualifies them for professional or voluntary work for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. People who have attended OeD courses work in projects in their own countries or abroad, on a longer or short – term basis. The Brussels–based Association *Sortir de la Violence* offers seminars to parishes and groups that want to deal with conflict in a constructive way.<sup>5</sup>

**9** The EKD sees its responsibility to educate as continuing throughout people's lives, taking various forms and involving different kinds of institutions. Alongside nursery schools, church schools, the provision of religious education in the state school system, children's services and work with children, young people and confirmation candidates, are particularly significant. Church journalism and its presence in the media – including on the internet – make their own contributions.

**10** The Evangelical Mission Agency in South-West Germany (EMS) organized two workshops on nonviolent conflict transformation, one in 2005 in Ghana, another one in 2006 in South Africa. The aim was to train trainers in methods of nonviolent conflict transformation, enabling the participants to carry out workshops on this topic in their local churches and pass on their knowledge to others. Participants in Ghana were 28 youth workers of the PCG, four delegates of the international EMS Youth-Network and two delegates of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon. In South Africa 30 youth workers of the MCSA and three delegates of the international EMS Youth-Network took part. The workshops were planned in cooperation with the hosting churches. The facilitators of both workshops came from local NGOs working in the field of peace building. Participants conveyed that their expectations have been met and that they acquired a lot more knowledge on the topic of nonviolent conflict transformation. The subject of nonviolent conflict transformation became

more important and turned into a project which they want to carry on in their community. They don't just see the idea of nonviolent conflict transformation as a challenging goal but also as a credo everyone should be committed to.

**11** A special and comprehensive form of peace education is offered by the many Christian Peace services that train and send out volunteers to be present as living witnesses for peace and reconciliation in crisis situations of civil conflict. Well known is the work of the Christian Peace Maker Teams who have been formed since the mid-1980s by the Historic Peace Churches in the USA. Together with the Christian International Peace Services and Eirene International they belong to the larger Network of Christian Peace Organizations which also includes the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Church and Peace, Pax Christi International and other initiatives.

**12** The World Council of Churches has created a similar service through the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). Each year since 2002, EAPPI has sent around 100 "ecumenical companions" (EAs) from different countries to vulnerable communities in Palestine, where their task is to protect and show solidarity with the latter, and advocate on their behalf. They also accompany the Israeli Peace movement in their activities. The project co-ordinates, places, oversees and trains the EAs, and engages them together with national co-ordinators in advocacy activities upon their return to their sending countries. Through the work of the EAs and their local partners, it exposes the violence of the occupation, violations of human rights and humanitarian law, and advocates for their end. Together with the Jerusalem Interchurch Centre (JIC), EAPPI arranges international ecumenical visits to join EAs for short gatherings and solidarity actions, like observing checkpoints, gate watches at the wall, accompanying children to school etc. Creating awareness of what churches and peace groups in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel are hoping for, and encouraging more churches and partners to do advocacy that might affect their countries' foreign policy on the Middle East are other objectives of the project.

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## **INTERCHURCH AND INTERRELIGIOUS PEACE WORKS**

### **Interchurch Peace Work**

**13** Jesus prayed in his last moments of life for unity among his followers at that time and of his future followers. This has been interpreted in different ways. Some have thought that this unity should be reflected

in organic or institutional unity. For others, what matters is doctrinal unity. Still others consider that ultimately it is unity in love and respect towards other Christians and church communions that should be strived for. Yet others would add to this dimension of love and respect, unity in a shared effort to work towards the establishment of the will of God on this earth for all of creation.

This last emphasis would place the accent on interchurch unity in the proclamation and work toward what the Lord's Prayer requests: the coming of God's kingdom and the fulfilment of God's will on earth as it is fulfilled in heaven.

**14** The advantage of this interpretation of Jesus' prayer is that it can bring about unity in effort and work among God's Christian family even without organic, institutional or doctrinal unity, all of which are extremely difficult to achieve. At the same time it sets aside all differences in the interest of giving testimony to Christ's reconciling work on the cross and of him as resurrected Lord and Prince of Peace for all eternity. It permits churches to work together towards God's purpose of justice and peace and in this way give a common witness not only of love and cooperation among the people of God but also of love and commitment toward a very needy world. Many churches and denominations have found it very useful to cooperate together on behalf of working toward a just peace.

**15** Between 1988 and 2003 the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity of the Vatican and representatives of Mennonite World Conference gathered once a year to study, pray and discuss around the general title of "Healing of Memories." But at the end of these conversations what emerged was a document entitled "Called to Work Together for Peace". When one considers that the past consisted of fear, suspicion and hostility towards one another it is remarkable that these two church families found a common ground in work for peace on behalf of the world which God loves.

**16** But there is more. In 2007 these two churches in Colombia, a country torn apart by a 40 year war between insurgent forces and the established government and characterized in the past by religious intolerance and persecution, initiated a joint project called "Building Peace through Community Transformation". The project identified 18 ongoing local church actions on behalf of their communities, nine in the Roman Catholic tradition, and nine operated by various Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. These local church projects were seen as yeast organisms and ranged from community feeding programs to peasant organizations to community development work and similar actions. Representatives from the yeast organisms gather twice a year to receive train-

ing by resource persons and to learn from each other. These representatives in turn are committed to return to their communities and multiply the training in different peace attitudes and methodologies from leadership formation to nonviolent conflict resolution on the biblical basis of non-violence.

These local efforts lead to the formation of social “platforms” which are organized interfaith community-based groups which gather to plan, organize and work for the transformation of their violence-ridden neighbourhoods and towns.

**17** In one marginalized sector with scarce government presence, a barrio called San Nicolás, in the city of Soacha, violence and homicide was the way problems were resolved; there was recruitment for illegal armed groups, there was gang fighting and the murder of common delinquents. But the community social platform took on the name of “Peacemakers” and initiated marches for life and against violence, prayer vigils, concerts with young people and courses that sought to break the cycles of violence. The community felt empowered, began to lose their fear and impotence, the young people felt that someone paid attention to them and abandoned their gang life. The levels of violence dropped and the neighbourhood began to change.

**18** As a result of this emphasis, persons from the Peacemaker platform led the way in proposing and organizing the celebration in their city of some 800,000 inhabitants, of September 21, proclaimed by the United Nations as international day of peace, nonviolence and cease fire. An interchurch and community steering committee was named. Invitations went out. A programme was organized. When the day arrived, the walk for peace stretched for blocks, led by the mayor and his wife, children from the feeding programme and church dignitaries. Behind them followed the dancing groups, the marching bands, schools and citizens.

**19** Soacha has been known for its high levels of violence and homicides, gang warfare, extra-legal assassinations, drug problems, corruption. But that day the mayor backed by the churches, synagogue and Islam proclaimed that Soacha would be a territory of peace. This is an enormous step, as it involves a change of mentality, change in self-perception, and a change in understanding of what should be expected in a city that is now a peace territory. And this process is led by church people working together for a Just Peace.

**20** Not only in Soacha is there a September 21 peace emphasis. Historic Protestant churches, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Colombia have joined together to celebrate this day. The churches decided that the UN proclamation was a perfect excuse to organize public acts that

**Peace is not just an abstract word. In Colombia, as the war drags on, it became clear that a lasting peace has to do with economic justice. Without economic justice there can be no real or lasting peace.**

give testimony to the words of Jesus and the will of God for peace. So in dozens of places and actions around the country, churches organize walks for peace, peace education in schools, prayer vigils, talks and discussions, concerts for peace, distribution of literature, and they call on the onlookers to take up seven commitments to nonviolence in their lives.

So the churches call the International Day of Peace, Nonviolence and Cease Fire, simply “Pan y Paz” (Bread and Peace). That day thousands of pieces of bread are handed out to surprised pedestrians to remind everyone that what we need is “more bread, fewer bullets”.

Interchurch peace work is carried out as churches deliberately frame their mission and action under the consciousness of being Sanctuary of Peace churches. This means being a people of peace, having a message of peace, and being a place of peace. It is often dangerous to be peacemakers in a country at war. But taking a clear stand for nonviolence and announcing publicly that your church is a Sanctuary of Peace, can be a means of protection. Not that the church can't be attacked anyway (in violation of International Humanitarian Rights) but at least it has been clear in its nonviolent position and work for peace.

And here international solidarity by sister church relationships becomes important. Sister churches across national borders share their pilgrimage, their struggles for justice and peace, the threats and attacks against them, and prayer on each other's behalf. Visits by sister churches are important ways of making a strengthening and comforting statement concrete. The Decade to Overcome Violence Living Letters visits to different countries racked by violence, warfare and human rights abuses are interchurch actions that convey powerful messages.

In our countries there are different small groups that gather in “collectives” in which the participants respect their doctrinal differences and meet to study the Bible, participate in social forums, seminars, liturgies for peace and even marches and demonstrations on behalf of different topics. These include human dignity, gender issues, justice and peace, human rights, disarmament, military bases, conscientious objection, communication and conflict transformation. Adult women, men, and young people whose understanding of the faith includes openness and

dialogue and a common walk participate; they consider that each person contributes and enriches the other with his/her own experience of faith. We can mention such groups as the Ecumenical Collective for Peace, the Sorority Collective, Ecumenism and Democracy, the Ecumenical Network, the Collective for Biblical Reflexion, the Commission for Life, Peace and Restoration among others. Church leaders or members of Lutheran, Presbyterian, Mennonite, Roman Catholic, Assemblies of God, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Independent churches participate.

**25** An important annotation is that cooperative peace work has been a valuable experience for the historic Protestant churches and for Roman Catholic Church. Moreover ecumenical and interchurch work has been carried out more on the informal level of grassroots believers of one or another denominational background rather than by the denominational leaders. Here, sisters and brothers move out to encounter one another, to reflect and to act together not only on the Bible but also on aspects of socio-political-economic realities illuminated by the Word of God.

### **Interreligious Peace Work**

**26** Can the world's religions be a force for peace instead of strife and warfare? Unfortunately, history provides many negative examples that would seem to deny this possibility: Christians against Muslims; Christians persecuting Jews; Muslims against Christians, Muslims against B'hais, Muslims against Jews; Hindus against Muslims; Hindus attacking Christians; Jews against Muslims, Jews against Christians; Buddhists against Hindus. The historical panorama is not very encouraging.

**27** More recently we saw a Christian pastor threatening to burn the Qur'an in retaliation for the 9/11 attacks nine years earlier; and the (justifiable) fear that this action would awaken untold violence of offended Muslims against Christians. In the Indian state of Orissa, militant Hindus attacked and burned Christian churches, killed dozens of Christians, and intimidated thousands. Currently there is the constant confrontation between Jews and Muslims in Israel and Palestine. Not too encouraging.

**28** And yet the great religions of the world carry a powerful potential for peace in their message and practice. All the great religions teach peace and good will. Under the spotlight of the spread of fundamentalist Islam, attention has been focused on passages of the Qur'an that espouse violence against "infidels" or non-believers. But certainly the Hebrew Bible (and Old Testament in the Christian tradition) abounds in violent language and practices against pagans (people of other religions) and "enemies." All of which suggests that followers of different religions don't

have the moral authority to point fingers at others, and that holy writings need to be interpreted critically.

**29** In spite of all of this, the flame of hope and faith in the possibilities of religions uniting around the common good of humankind refuses to die out. While shrill voices of distrust and even hate rise in one part of the world, in another part of the world, leaders of various faiths gather together to pray for peace (e.g. in Assisi, Italy), promote a million minutes of prayer for peace on world peace day, work together to stop warfare, and meet to talk and share in efforts to break down barriers of hostility.

**30** The initiative of Pope John Paul II to invite leaders from the world's religions for the first World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986 has since 1987 been continued by the Community of St. Egidio in organizing annually the "International Meetings - Peoples and Religions". These international meetings are inspired by the strength of peace of the religions - "weak strength" in the evangelical sense, but specifically for this reason different than the worldly strength which provokes war. Prayer is at the heart of this weak strength, in the awareness that "only peace is holy" and that the great religions must work together towards its construction in conscience as well as in public life. St. Egidio believes it is necessary to continue to make the spirit of Assisi blow in every place, facing the problematic subject of the involvement of the religions in conflicts and of the necessity that these, strengthened by mutual solidarity and friendship, may not become instruments of violence and prejudice and may not be mocked by evil.

**31** The best known international organization dedicated to interreligious peace work is the World Conference of Religions for Peace, meanwhile known as "Religions for Peace – International". Founded at its first assembly in Kyoto in 1970 Religions for Peace is the largest international coalition of representatives from the world's great religions dedicated to promoting peace. Respecting religious differences while celebrating our common humanity, Religions for Peace is active on every continent and in some of the most troubled areas of the world, creating multi-religious partnerships to confront our most dire issues: stopping war, ending poverty and protecting the earth. It is based on the recognition that religious communities are the largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world, claiming the allegiance of billions across race, class, and national divides. These communities have particular cultural understandings, infrastructures and resources to get help where it is needed most.

Religions for Peace enables these communities to unleash their enormous potential for common action. Some of Religions for Peace's recent successes include building a new climate of reconciliation in Iraq;

mediating dialogue among warring factions in Sierra Leone; organizing an international network of religious women's organizations; and establishing an extraordinary program to assist the millions of children affected by Africa's AIDS pandemic, the Hope for African Children Initiative.

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## **GENDER, PEACE AND SECURITY**

### **Men and Women Together against Gender-based Violence**

**32** Peace needs to be tackled at all levels; home, school and community levels and in the social political set-up. The balance of power and powerlessness, pride and humiliation, always has to be discussed. Therefore both men and women do have an important role to play in promoting just peace. Women do have specific *gifts* related to this issue, and have important *experiences* that cannot be ignored on any level.

Together, men and women complement each other, and the challenges of the world have to be dealt with through interaction. Now is the time to reflect on our gender structures and gender mentality and focus on constructive behaviour.

**33** The reports from the solidarity visits, *The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988 – 98)*, focused on women as victims and were silent about their empowerment as peacemakers. But at the same time, concerning violence, the visits found that a “culture of silence” in the church prevented women from telling the full story of the violence they experience. In visit after visit these Living Letters teams found that the life and dignity of women were affected by cultures of violence in society. There is still a great work to do here. Violence against women and girls is the most widespread violations of human rights, cutting across geographical boundaries, affecting women of all ages, race, and culture. It takes place everywhere, even in the most traditionally accepted and supposedly ‘safe havens’ of homes, churches, on the streets, in schools, the workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, during conflicts and crises. It has many manifestations — from the most universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices, abuse during pregnancy, so-called honour killings and other types of femicide. This is a challenge of women and men together. Men have to use their skills and influence to work against destructive mentality of masculinity and women have to raise their voice and tell what kind of men they want and need.

**34** Women also suffer disproportionately from effect of militarized economies in which governments choose to devote scarce resources to arms and wars. When government shifts money from education to mili-

tary spending and foreign debt has been well documented: and it is women and children who suffer the most from economic and social consequences of this.<sup>6</sup> Military spending not only creates an economic injustice for women, it supports an “ethic” of violence against women.

**35** During the *Decade to Overcome Violence 2001- 2010*, though, women’s skills have been more and more discovered. There is a growing need to emphasize women’s contribution in peace building, not only as victims, but as *empowered* mentors and actors.

### **Women in our Scriptures and Tradition**

**36** Deborah, Hulda, Dalila, Esther, Hannah, Miriam, Ruth, Abigail, mother Mary and Mary from Magdalene are just few examples of women in the Bible who still inspire us. Ruth used her creativity and strength to save a future for her mother-in-law and herself. Deborah was a judge: a good example of a wise person people trusted and asked for advice. The same with Hulda. Dalila used the power of Samson’s love to disarm him, and Esther knew how to change the attitude of the king. Hannah showed a unique piety and the story of Abigail (1 Sam. 25:32-35) affirms that women have some skills in conflict resolution. If she had not intervened at the right moment, King David would have killed her husband and slaughtered all the sheep and goat that they had. Abigail reacted wisely and promptly, showing exemplary courage in seeking audience with the King himself, and by using language that brought out her sincerity and evoked the forgiveness of King David. Not only did she gain the goodwill of King David, the highest authority, who promised to remain the benefactor and protector, she also saved the life of her husband and his worldly possessions that had made him a rich man. Mother Mary was a young girl who got a very heavy burden and task from God. Through her, God became human in an infant child. Also Mary from Magdalene near the Sea of Galilee is an example of a woman who is disciple of Jesus. She was even the first witness of the resurrection of Christ.

**37** There is need to re-examine what roles women played in the past and build on them for both a better today and a better tomorrow.

### **Why Women?**

**38** Traditionally women were assigned various roles. Chief among these was the role of child-care; giving birth and then caring for the young ones from cradle to responsible adulthood. Women therefore played the role of educators of the children, and both boys and girls have received responsible upbringing and socialization from the mothers. In this set-up, practical moral teachings were transmitted, and both sons and daughters were

taught behaviour and ethos of society. Important values such as respect, honesty, uprightness, patience, self-control and compromise were all transmitted through the mother. Women were therefore peace-builders through positive child-care and through social capital transmission of values.

**39** Apart from the important roles in child-care, women also have provided for their families' needs and participated in conflict mediation and conflict transformation within the family: Elderly women and often also networks of women at a community level. Traditionally women's roles in peace-building may not have been loud, but they were recognized and ever so often in conflict situations, women were asked to talk to their sons especially when all other approaches seemed to have failed. Often the women's quiet diplomacy bore fruits, and the community recognized this contribution. But in modern times, women have to find the chance to speak up as they are often the forgotten voices yet they usually bear the brunt of any conflicts simply because they are women, or because they are daughters, mothers and wives of the men who are involved in the violent conflict.

**40** Due to the traditional culture of quiet diplomacy, many women are still afraid to raise their voices for fear of victimization or isolation. Yet women voices need to be heard both at local, national and international levels especially within the modern day challenges of water issues, health concerns, food insecurity, economic challenges, moral disintegration and other issues of concern that affect wellness.

### **Practices/Stories of Women in Faith**

**41** "Faith" is well placed to cause positive changes in any society, due to its ability to reach a varying spectrum of people, that is, the young and the old. According to UNIFEM, "...religious institutions ... play key roles in gender socialization, and can act as agents of transformation.... In religious institutions, spiritual leaders can act as role models who value compassion and community building over more constraining gender roles."<sup>7</sup>

**42** Faith-based organizations and places of worship are increasingly becoming places of solace. According to Amnesty International, "for countless women home is not a refuge but a place of terror." In this respect the church must become a place of refuge and a place of healing. However, the church has kept silent about gender-based violence. Yet some members of the congregation are victims of violence who may be hurting and in need of support. Places of worship need to create an atmosphere of openness and acceptance, as people need a place where they can be comfortable in sharing their pain. The openness of this can only be achieved

**The church and indeed the religious institutions are uniquely placed to play a decisive role in the prevention and elimination of the different forms of violence against women and children.**

if the leaders will break the silence against gender-based violence.

**43** The silence and apathy towards gender based violence has largely been caused by the fact that many religious leaders are ignorant about where to send the survivors who may share their experience with them for further assistance either legally, in matters of health or otherwise. Yet, these are essential services that a woman or a child who has undergone any form of violence needs to ensure that holistic healing takes place.<sup>8</sup>

**44** This is then what forms the basis of the Tamar Campaign facilitated by Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA).<sup>9</sup> The campaign acknowledges the existence of Gender-Based Violence in the society, with particular focus on sexual and domestic violence and seeks to challenge and equip the Church to break the silence around this vice. Breaking the silence around gender based violence, then breaks the cycle of violence and reduces incidences of violence. Therefore, the Tamar Campaign is an example of a bridge linking the churches with the advocates of gender-based violence issues. In addition to this, Tamar Campaign aims at being a resource centre for the church leaders equipping them to handle biblically the topic on gender-based violence.

### **About Tamar Campaign**

**45** The Tamar Campaign acknowledges that “...to respond adequately to the needs of battered women and rape survivors, it is imperative that the clergy learn about violence against women and reach out to secular advocates and services. Likewise, it is imperative that the secular advocates and counsellors appreciate the importance of women’s religious backgrounds and reach out to clergy and religious groups to find resources to meet the needs of victims.”<sup>10</sup>

**46** The Campaign was launched in 2005 February, when it became increasingly evident that FECCLAHA could not continue to work in the area of peace building in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa without seeking to address more specifically Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This was an issue that was gravely affecting a huge portion of the population, mainly women and children in this region. Tamar Campaign in Kenya adopted the model from Ujamaa Centre in South Africa where contextual Bible Study/theological reflection has been adopted as a methodology of dealing with gender based violence. FECCLAHA in collaboration with

St. Paul's United Theological College and World Council of Churches (WCC) then launched the Tamar Campaign. The Campaign's vision is a continent, free from sexual and domestic violence, in which men and women relate as equal partners made in God's image. In addition, the Campaign's mission is to demonstrate God's compassion and justice to women and children who suffer indignity and violation through sexual and domestic violence.

**47** What makes the Tamar Campaign faith-based is use of the scriptures; the guiding principles of the faith to react to the high numbers of human rights violations experienced. The Tamar Campaign is developed from a story in the Bible of the incestuous rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-22), the text is a hair-rising narrative that describes only too accurately much of the dynamics of sexual violence experienced by women across the world. This is not only a text about gender violence; it is also a text about the failure of family and governmental structures to protect women and about the effects of gender violence on other aspects of life. An issue that stands out in the story of Tamar is silence of the survivor and the impunity.... The survivor is denied justice by the systems that be – this same pattern is replicated in many conflict, post-conflict and even countries in peaceful situations.

**48** Churches and faith based organizations comprehensively addressing GBV will publicly speak out against GBV and engage governments in combating GBV, they will put in place policies against GBV and other forms of violence, develop programs with a GBV focus and make the link between GBV & HIV and AIDS within these programs. The use of scripture to address issues of GBV and particularly the incestuous rape of Tamar enables readers to engage with issues such as the silencing of women who have been raped, the cultural determinants of sexual violence within communities and the impunity that surrounds sexual violence. The Tamar narrative also helps participants to study African cultures and religion alongside the Bible which have been used negatively but, if well articulated, have liberating messages just like the Bible.

**49** The church and indeed the religious institutions are uniquely placed to play a decisive role in the prevention and elimination of the different forms of violence against women and children. They have the clout and the capacity to minister to the needs of those who have been abused as well as those who are perpetrators. The church and these other religious institutions can provide opportunities for healing of the victims for example by providing emotional and spiritual support, counselling and shelter. This would complement the efforts of hospitals, civil society organizations and the police. They can also provide sanctions and deterrent measures

for perpetrators for example by holding them accountable for their deeds. The faith institutions can play a pro-active role through its preaching and teaching about the evil of gender-based violence, thereby setting standards for societal values that protect the well-being of women and children.

**50** The church has to be a good example and look at its own structure and traditional patriarchy. It is also important that women get the chance of using their own expressions and behaviour. Differences in communication and attitude must be recognized as a resource. It is said that women in the army change the army, but research rather makes it clear that the army changes the girls to become more like their male colleagues.

### **Liberian Women Peacemakers**

**51** An interesting example is from the women's peace movement in Liberia, brilliantly documented in a film titled "Pray the Devil Back to Hell". This brings out some of the most interesting and inspiring steps women have taken to create and maintain peace within Africa and their initiatives in post conflict-rebuilding. It is the extraordinary story of a small band of Christian and Muslim Liberian women who came together to stop a bloody 14-year civil war between rebel groups and the Liberian army. After years of endless fighting, for the first time in the country's history, a group of ordinary women, both Christian and Muslim, came together for a common cause. They sang and prayed in a city square for days trying to get the attention of President Charles Taylor. They took on the violent warlords and corrupt Charles Taylor regime, and won a long-awaited peace for their shattered country in 2003. As the rebel noose tightened upon Monrovia, and peace talks faced collapse, the Christian and Muslim women of Liberia, armed only with white T-shirts and the courage of their convictions – formed a thin but unshakable white line between the opposing forces, and successfully demanded an end to the fighting. They barricaded the site of stalled peace talks in Ghana and announced they would not move until a deal was done. Faced with eviction, they invoked the most powerful weapon in their arsenal – threatening to remove their clothes. It worked. Voluntary nudity from an older mother-like figure in Liberia is the greatest of offenses. The women threatened the men by saying that if they did not finish in two weeks, they will bring thousands of women to the talks. Two weeks later the peace talks concluded. Once the war ended the women of Liberia continued their work by campaigning and getting Liberians to register to vote. A woman was later elected the first female head of state in an African nation. The women of Liberia are living proof that "moral courage and nonviolent resistance can succeed, even where the best efforts of traditional diplomacy have failed." *Inspiring, uplifting, and most of all motivat-*

*ing, this story is a compelling testimony of how grassroots activism can alter the history of nations.* They continue to focus on healing and rehabilitating women and girls, mending broken relationships between survivors and offenders of the civil war, and increasing the number of women involved in post-war peace building and reconstruction.

**52** Some of the leaders of this movement are *Vaiba Flomo*, who, working with the Lutheran church's trauma healing program, brought the faith groups together with the message: "Does the bullet know Christian from Muslim?", and *Leymah Gbowee*, who joined the Woman in Peace-building Network WIPNET, brought women of Christian Churches together into the Christian Women's Initiative and then formed a coalition with the women in the Muslim organizations in Monrovia and eventually Liberian Mass Action for Peace came into being.

**53** As women continue to involve in peace movements and prove that they are not just vulnerable but necessary components in peacekeeping efforts and post conflict rebuilding, there is hope that there will be a more resilient and safer world.

### **Columbia and Women Peacemakers**

**54** For decades, Colombia has suffered through an ongoing civil war in which countless innocent civilians have perished in the fighting and its accompanying war on drugs. Though there have been noteworthy developments in recent years in Colombia's conflict situation, the peace processes are stalled and violence continues to escalate throughout the country as demobilized paramilitary disturb local communities.

**55** The Catholic Church and Protestant churches have been involved in efforts to bring peace to the beleaguered country. Women from the Catholic and Protestant communities have also been operating in the midst of some of the most conflict-ridden parts of the country in order to bring humanitarian assistance and empowerment to the displaced and victims of conflict. These women, working through local churches, their religious orders, or faith-based organizations, often have a sophisticated understanding of conflict dynamics and have been able to create effective local programs to build pockets of peace and justice.

Many women's groups in Colombia use the UN Security Council Resolutions relating to women's roles in peace-building and peace-making (resolutions 1325, 1820, and 1880 in particular) to educate the public about women's contributions in this realm, to equip women to participate in future peace talks in Colombia, and to ensure women's political representation in governance.

### **Women Peacemakers in Congo**

**56** The Democratic Republic of Congo has rich deposits of diamonds, gold, cobalt, timber, and other natural resources. It also contains 85 percent of the world's coltan ore from which is derived the element Tantalum, which is essential to the manufacture of laptop computers and cell phones. Intentional destabilization by vested interests prevents Congo from being at peace and gaining control over its resources. Since 1996, nearly four million people have died in Congo from a conflict that has involved several rebel armies, the militaries of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Namibia, Angola and their proxy militias. The armed groups and the official Congolese army have shifted alliances, split apart and regrouped under other names, but they all have important aspects in common: they target civilians and they all use rape as a weapon of war.

**57** Congolese churches and civic groups have attempted to provide medical care, counselling, and job training for the rape survivors, but they are overwhelmed by the staggering numbers of raped and displaced women. Girls, some as young as eighteen months, are raped by neighbours, brothers, taxi drivers and teachers. Christian organizations have responded by training 36,000 children to resist rapes and teaching parents never to let their daughters go anywhere alone or be alone with a man, even a teacher.

**58** The use of rape as a weapon of war has had broader ramifications for the people of eastern Congo. Since armed groups often attack women when they are working in the fields, many women are afraid to leave their homes. Thus, in fertile lands with a year-round growing season, people in the country are beginning to go hungry.

### **Women Peacemakers in Nepal**

**59** In the Nepal Initiative, women were absolutely essential. When the King took over the country in February 2005 and ended belief in a constitutional monarchy, Nepal essentially disappeared off the world screen. All communications were cut off for 10 days. The following year changed the future as literally thousands and thousands of people took to the streets in nonviolent protest as they had done once in the late 1980s to secure a more democratic government. *And in this process, it was the women who were the bravest and took many risks. They went straight up to the soldiers, saying: "You are my son, why are you behaving this way?"*

As none of the parties had included women in their leadership, some of the missing voices came from the women on the streets. Overall the women continued to be instrumental in trying to get that voice that could lead to a more just peace, one that could deal with the fractious caste and class divisions that excluded so much of the population and

left root causes of conflict unaddressed. They helped to break the barriers and bring in the voices of the survivors from outside Kathmandu into the power centre.<sup>11</sup>

### Challenges

**60** The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, in Argentina, are an example of how the women use their strength and experiences as mothers to put pressure on the policy of the government. This method is very unique for women. On the other hand history is full of examples on how women are participating in the traditionally male activities as militarization. We also know how e.g. Hitler and Pinochet mobilized women to support their regimes by appeals to “defence of the family”.

**61** Thus some feminists are critical of building a peace movement on women’s identity as mothers. Women play many roles in society and justification based on biology reinforces patriarchy. A common attitude is that women in the army change the army, but research rather makes it clear that the army changes the girls to become more like their male colleagues. The issue is complex. Women are not a monolithic bloc: they are divided by class, race, culture and life experiences. Not all women are nurturing, peace - loving and anti - war; just as not all men are militaristic war - mongers. Generalizations are impossible. Yet sometimes the connections pop up in the most unexpected places.<sup>12</sup> We see examples of mothers who have experienced physical or psychological violence in their own childhood also may practice the same behaviour on their children.

**62** Unfortunately women have throughout history been an exposed group in society. There are too many examples on how they have physically and psychologically been abused to the fullest, in all levels of society, and all from domestic to international conflicts. Also men experience sexual violence, especially in all-male contexts such as prisons, but it thus seems that violence like rape affects women exclusively. The church has a responsibility to protect and has to play a role as a sanctuary.

**63** Most forms of physical violence are done by men and can be considered to be related to gender - whether men’s violence against women or men’s violence against other men. Even self-directed violence may have a gender dimension: some accounts of men’s suicide attempts suggest that men commit or attempt suicide when they feel they are not able to live up to the mandates or societal demands of being real men<sup>13</sup>. In countries characterized by violence, war or high levels of gun possession, older men may give young men guns as part of a rite de passage from boyhood into manhood.<sup>14</sup> It has to be put under the spot that also men often are victims and actors at the same time.

## Where Do We Go From Here?

**64** The UN Security Council now recognizes that women's exclusion from peace processes contravenes their rights and that including women and gender perspectives in decision-making can strengthen prospects for sustainable peace. This recognition was formalized in October 2000 with the unanimous adoption of Resolution 1325 on *women, peace and security*. The landmark resolution specifically addresses the situation of women in armed conflict and calls for their participation at all levels of decision-making on conflict resolution and peace building.

Since the agenda was set with the core principles of resolution 1325, three supporting resolutions have been adopted by the Security Council — 1820, 1888 and 1889. The four resolutions focus on two key goals:

### *A. Strengthening women's participation in decision-making—*

Resolution 1325 (2000) calls for strengthening women's agency as peacemakers and peace builders, including their participation in conflict prevention and peace processes, early recovery, governance and in peace operations. Resolution 1889 (2009) complements 1325 by calling for the establishment of global indicators to measure progress on its implementation.

### *B. Ending sexual violence and impunity—*

Resolution 1820 (2008) calls for an end to widespread conflict-related sexual violence and for accountability in order to end impunity. Resolution 1888 (2009) focuses on strengthening leadership, expertise and other institutional capacities within the United Nations and in member states to help put an end to conflict-related sexual violence.

*Together, these resolutions provide a powerful framework and mandate for implementing and measuring change in conflict-affected societies. The United Nations has, in fact, detailed the ways in which women can contribute in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict situations, which if implemented and monitored properly, will usher in a new era of peace.*

**65** UNIFEM observes that all problems and practices point to paying lip service to UNSCR 1325 and 1820, and unless there is a paradigm shift, we will have little tangible results in the next decade too. There is only a very few countries that have started making action plans. Till now these plans are also lacking concretization.

**66** Problems of implementing UNSCR 1325 are at all levels and in-

clude: limited appreciation of the contribution that women do make to peace processes because they are often informal initiatives; the design of peace negotiations favours representation based on the power of the gun; limited knowledge of the contents of the resolution, limited participation of women in development of action plans; limited presence of women in peace operations; limited skills in understanding of security issues and for increased participation in post conflict action plans.

**A combination of the spiritual, legal, psychological, and health support goes a long way in aiding the holistic healing of a violated survivor.**

**67** There are some churches that have started though. The mentioned churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa have recognized the need to address 1820 gender-based violence through the TAMAR campaign movement and have organized awareness raising workshops on 1325. The ecumenical movement has the obligation to increase its literacy on 1325 and subsequently advocacy to state domestication and implementation of the resolution.

**68** The modern woman in developing countries is faced with various challenges which are both economic and social. There are now problems associated with the disintegration of the traditional networks as women take on new roles and yet continue to be excluded from socio-economically viable positions in the society. Women have to constantly rise to the occasion and question this exclusion yet traditionally they played a crucial role which was recognized. It is a fact that if e.g. African countries are surviving economic crisis, it is largely due to the ingenuity of women who are fulfilling their roles as well as those of the men who are away or caught up conflict. Women have innate qualities which in the modern days are not fully tapped in peace-building processes including conflict prevention and resolution and modern countries can no longer afford to exclude women in peace processes.

**69** Apathy and hush tones regarding matters of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) within the family; the church and other institutions in the society often encourage violence against women and children. A combination of the spiritual, legal, psychological, and health support goes a long way in aiding the holistic healing of a violated survivor. The church should emphasize on the kind of education (spiritual, religious and moral) that retains Christian values, promotes religious diversity and teaches peace and respect for human rights, with priority given to girls and grass-root women. We should also emphasis on documentation that highlights women's contribution to interfaith collaboration for peace in an empowering manner and not manipulatively.

70 After the learning from the *Decade in Solidarity with Women*, and the during the ten years of UNSCR 1325, the focus is now no longer women in isolation, but rather on the interaction between the genders. The role of the church is to make sure that both women and men together look at the gender patterns, both masculinity and femininity, to make sure that gender roles are developed in a healthy way for the best of society.

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## INDIGENOUS MATTERS

### It matters

71 The title for this section, “Indigenous matters,” aims to provoke the thinking and commitment of readers of this *Companion*. It is important to stress here that thinking of and reflecting on *indigenous matters* are necessary, but not enough. Appropriate and responsible actions are also required, from individuals, churches and communities. There are two ways in which *indigenous matters* may be understood:

72 First, the title of this section invites readers to affirm the significance of indigenous peoples, practices and values -- *they matter*. We should live, talk, think and interact in ways that affirm the importance of indigenous people. This calls upon us all to be especially conscious of our personal and collective biases against indigenous people. For instance, we should guard our minds and lips from thinking or speaking of indigenous people as if they are not wise, and as if they are only beneficiaries of charities. Indigenous people are keepers of wisdom traditions that go back hundreds and thousands of years. The Yothu Yindi song titled “*Gone is the land*” (*Garma*, 2000) hits the mark on the head of this matter: “This land is not 40,000 dollars or more, but 40,000 years of cultures here.” Indigenous peoples throughout the world live on lands whose values are not based on dollar signs, but on cultures and memories. Consequently, we should not relate to indigenous people according to “market economy” but according to “economy of cultures.”

73 This section is therefore a reminder of the rich cultures that indigenous people the world over hold. There is no time more crucial for learning and embracing this richness than the present time, as the effects of climate change threaten the creation and life in general. Indigenous people have lived responsively with creation for many generations, learning to listen, adapt and survive crises and abundances for many generations. Indigenous people in different parts of the world have different ways of living and diverse circles of wisdom teachings, of course, and it would be wise not to try to stereotype them but to seek them out in their different settings. Readers

will find that indigenous people are not far from where they are, whether in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia or Oceania, and that they have much wisdom. Indigenous people are everywhere, and they matter!

**74** Second, the title indicates that this section privileges the matters, the concerns and interests, of indigenous people. There is no time more crucial for this attention than now, for indigenous people have made the least contribution to the world's carbon collection but they suffer the most from the blisters of global warming. This is most suffocating in smaller island nations, especially in the Pacific and Caribbean oceans, and the Bay of Bengal. Hectares of land have been washed away from islands, and islanders are being relocated, most recently from Lohachara and Ghoramara at the Bay of Bengal, Carteret in Papua New Guinea, and many more are waiting for their turn (e.g., Tuvalu, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall, St. Andres and more). As they are moved, their lands and the roots of their identities abandoned, the wisdom and ways of their ancestors will in time be lost. They too are victims of the carbon civilization.

**75** This section is therefore a call for accountability toward indigenous people, customs and cultures. *We should no longer be deaf, blind and dumb when it comes to indigenous matters.*

### **Christian churches and indigenous peoples**

**76** Since its inception, one might argue, the Christian Church existed and worked among indigenous peoples. Whether among the First Nations in North and South America, the Adivasis in India, or among the colourful tribes in Asia and Africa, Christian churches have survived because of indigenous people.

**77** Unfortunately, Christian churches, for the most part, especially in the early days, participated in the so-called war of *Christ over culture*. This is the assumption that the message and ways of Christ are preferred over against other human teachings and cultures, so the whole of humanity needed to be converted, sometimes by means of persecution, to the culture of Christ. In this war of cultures, indigenous peoples are seen as pagans whose ways needed to be exorcised and cast away. Christian churches marched out as if they were hosts of saints sent forth to save the pagan world. For centuries, as a consequence, indigenous peoples and their customs were unfairly demonized and ostracized.

**78** From the perspective of indigenous matters, the Christ over culture wars were fought across colour lines, because Western Christian churches were predominantly white while the indigenous peoples were shades darker, brown, coloured and black. The unconsciousness of the Christian churches to its "whiteness" raised in later years the question whether God

is colour-blind, or as colour-blind as the church. This charge is open for debate, but as far as indigenous matters go, the issues of colour and race can no longer be sidestepped.

**79** Christian churches remain, notwithstanding, the most fertile grounds for the seeds of indigenous matters. Christian churches are, so to speak, on the ground with indigenous peoples and they can continue to work with grass-root peoples.

**80** Christian churches are invited to rethink and mend their ways especially in relation to indigenous peoples. This invitation is most urgent now, as younger generations of people, indigenous and non-indigenous, are becoming bored and disillusioned by the purposes and practices of Christian churches.

**82** *Will there be a time when Christian churches cease its drive to convert indigenous people long enough to learn and embrace, and be delivered by, indigenous matters?*

### **WCC and indigenous matters**

**83** The World Council of Churches is among the leaders in calling attention to indigenous matters. It does this, first of all, by recognizing the burden that has befallen indigenous people. On the WCC website is the following statement of solidarity (cited December 11, 2010):

*Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world have always faced discrimination, exclusion and even threats to their survival as peoples. The WCC has been their committed and consistent partner. It has stood in solidarity with them in their struggles for land, identity, language, survival of indigenous cultures and self-determination.*

**84** The WCC works in many ways to manifest its solidarity with indigenous people, through workshops, conferences, statements, aids and so forth. For further information on the work of WCC, see: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-peoples.html>

### **CWM and indigenous matters**

**85** The Council for World Mission also works very closely on indigenous matters, through its many projects and mission. CWM continues to send teachers and workers to the peripheries where indigenous people exist, and its *Oikotree* project (<http://www.oikotree.org>) is committed to the interests and wisdom of indigenous peoples.

For further information on the work of CWM, see <http://www.cwmission.org/>.

### **United Church of Canada and indigenous matters**

**86** One of the churches committed to indigenous matters is the United Church of Canada, which has issued this statement on its official website (cited December 12, 2010):

*The United Church of Canada is committed to seeking right relationships with Aboriginal Peoples and to support First Nations in their struggle for self-government and Aboriginal rights.*

**87** It is worth registering here that, through the Rt. Rev. Robert Smith in 1986, the UCC issued an apology, which deserves being quoted in full (cited December 12, 2010):

*Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your Elders an understanding of creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich, and to be treasured.*

*We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.*

*We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ.*

*We imposed our civilization as a condition for accepting the gospel.*

*We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be.*

*We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.*

For further information on the work of UCC on indigenality matters, see <http://www.united-church.ca/aboriginal>.

### **Uniting Church in Australia and indigenous matters**

**88** Along similar lines, the Uniting Church in Australia (<http://www.uca.org.au>) works through the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (<http://www.uaicc.org.au>) to highlight the need to attend to, and be transformed because of, indigenous matters.

89 One of the recent developments in the work of the UCA is the proposal at the 2009 Assembly of a new Preamble to its Constitution. The proposed Preamble acknowledges the presence of Aborigines as First peoples, with their rich religiosities, prior to the arrival of the First Fleet, and seeks to heal the hurt caused by the arrival of the Christian mission to Australia (recognizing that Christianity arrived alongside Colonization). The proposed Preamble may be accessed online at <http://assembly.uca.org.au/images/stories/resources/0909preambleqafinal.pdf>

### **Lest we forget**

90 Christian churches in different parts of the world have different programs and ways of interacting with indigenous peoples and indigenous matters. This short section can't name all of those, but lifted up the above examples in order to highlight the need for intentional attention to indigenous matters.

91 Christian churches have also benefited from the leadership of indigenous peoples, as teachers, ministers, healers, administrators, and so forth, both as lay and ordained people. Their gifts are welcomed, and may future generations continue to be welcomed.

Just Peace and indigenous matters

92 To travel the way of Just Peace without attending to indigenous matters would be like passing a victim on the side of the road without stopping to give a hand. Who will be the neighbour for that person? Who will be the neighbour for indigenous peoples?

93 May we be inspired to attend to, and work for, individually and communally, indigenous peoples and indigenous matters. And may we, together, always remember that indigenous peoples, cultures and customs are included when we pray ... *"May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven ..."*

**Chapter 2**

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4. Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, New Edition (San Francisco: Harper & Collins, 1994).
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7. Benedict T. Viviano, “The Gospel according to Matthew”, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1999), 659.
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# APPENDIX I

## Expert Consultations – 2007-2010 Key Learning

In view of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) that is scheduled for May 2011 in Kingston (Jamaica), a wide consultative process was launched in 2007. These expert consultations were aimed to feed the process leading to the IEPC, and also to add flesh and substance to the International Declaration on Just Peace (IDJP) that is being prepared by the Drafting Group. The purpose of this report is to extract the major learning from these various gatherings.

This report attempts to look at these consultations through the lenses of the four major themes of the IEPC, namely: Peace in the Community, Peace with the Earth, Peace in the Market Place, and Peace among the Peoples.

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### PEACE IN THE COMMUNITY

#### Just Peace and Healing of Memories<sup>1</sup>

Christian discipleship means following Jesus' example of nonviolent symbolic and direct actions, as we stand in solidarity with the oppressed, refuse to allow our differences to become divisions, and bear witness in our life together to the possibility of peace and reconciliation among people.

Restorative values carry forward communities on the path of healing memories. This path is only made possible when we deeply value the other and recognise the divinity and sacredness of our sisters and brothers, even if they are our enemies. Our narratives of history and societal memories had to take into consideration the perspective of the others to transform our narratives.

When dealing with healing of memories as a process, two central elements need to be taken into account: *witnessing* and *retelling the story*.

Witnessing is the moment when a community decides to address painful memories. It is an act of fidelity towards the dead, for it rescues those who have died from the "second death" of being forgotten. Through lament, witnessing attests to loss and absence. It begins a quest for the truth and builds a new and shared narrative of the community that moves from loss to redemption.

Retelling the story is the process of constructing that narrative. It involves gathering testimonies, engaging in truth-seeking and truth-telling processes, and producing a narrative that is not fixated on the toxic character of past events but rather provides a horizon

for the future – a horizon that takes the landscape of the past into account.

In the aftermath of grievous loss, times and spaces of rituals are important sources of healing. Commemoration is an intrinsic aspect to our humanity. Memory can conjure up, filter and highlight feelings of security and joy, or of confusion and hurt<sup>2</sup>. Memory is more than reminiscence. There is a moral significance to remembering; as long as we remember reflectively, experiences of failures or the encounter with limits can enable us to grow and to reach out. Memory nurtures the capacity to contemplation. Some have experienced in acts of remembrance and acknowledgement a restoring of relationship, truth, forgiveness and justice<sup>3</sup>.

In order to be successful or complete, the process of healing of memories requires three dimensions: a cognitive dimension (people need to understand what happened, through processes of truth-telling), a psychological dimension (there must be a process of emotional healing that changes the affective relationship with the traumatic events), and a spiritual dimension (that locates the traumatic events in the web of relationships with others, with the world and with God).

With regard to truth and justice, they are widely acknowledged as central elements in the process leading to reconciliation. Truth is more than the negotiation between conflicting memories and forensic evidence, forgiveness more than trade-off with confession and truth-telling. “Reconciliation” is a notion that can be understood in different ways: it can describe a process of building peace and overcoming the past, and can also denote the final state of that peace.

As for amnesty (i.e. deciding not to pursue crimes committed in the past) and pardon (which is the lifting of punishment on crimes committed), they are strategies that are sometimes used to begin processes of healing. They are often unsatisfactory solutions, particularly for the victims.

Forgiveness is generally assumed to require an expression of remorse on the part of the wrongdoer. Forgiveness is not merely the result of human will and achievement. When it actually happens, forgiveness is a sign of great generosity on the part of the victim, and can never be required or be forced upon victims. Reconciliation is an essential part of the process of forgiveness, for it requires mutual awareness and the willingness to repair, in which justice is the framework. It is a dynamic marked by mutual commitment.

Mercy has two meanings in reconciliation discourse. In its modern, juridical sense, it means shortening the right to punish altogether. The older (and biblical) sense is one of unbounded love, a love that trumps all other considerations. The generosity that such mercy conveys can be important step in enlarging the social space in which efforts at reconciliation are undertaken.

#### **Just Peace and Racism, Caste-Based Discrimination, and other Exclusionary Practices<sup>4</sup>**

Participants of the Cleveland conference on *Racism Today and the Rationale for continued ecumenical engagement* noted the persistence of discrimination in its various expressions as it still continues to plague members of our churches and societies throughout the world. Despite human rights activism and liberation movements, and as a result of insidious forms of economic, social, cultural, and political exclusions, people of African descent, Dalits in South Asia, Indigenous Peoples, as well as various minorities – ethnic, linguistic and religious – in many countries still continue to be more marginalised than before. If churches would be negligent in their mission to address the issue of racism and discrimina-

tion, they will fail to heed the cry of those who suffer under the oppression of racism and other forms of exclusion.

Racism is sin. It denies the biblical witness of Genesis 1:26-27, which affirms that the human being is created in the image of God. It denies the blessedness of the rich diversity within the Creation itself, where each living thing was named and pronounced “good” (Gen 1). Diversity is an expression of the triune God, who creates, preserves, and loves in freedom and abundance. It is a gift designed to bless the churches and the communities which they serve. Rejecting these instances of God’s fecundity and abundance amounts to denying the very nature of the God we claim to profess.

The church has the prophetic duty to denounce vehemently all forms of discrimination which constrain the reality of the abundant life which God offered to us in Jesus Christ. If it fails to do so, the church will lose credibility in its claim to be the Body of Christ as such failure would constitute disobedience to God.

Faithful discipleship, rooted in the principles of justice, reconciliation, and unity, can transform local and national churches, which in turn, can bring about the elimination of racism and other forms of discrimination. Although some churches continue to consider themselves as the body where the Word of God is correctly preached and where the sacraments are administered adequately, one has to admit that such a narrow understanding of the nature and function of the church fails to recognise that the preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments are not ends by themselves but rather tools which empower us to exercise our love of the neighbour by being attentive to the spiritual, bodily, and communal needs of people. When discrimination in its various forms are allowed to persist in both obvious and subtle forms, then the local and national churches have failed in their mission. Continued denial or ignorance of discrimination in its various forms condemns the most vulnerable of our societies to extreme poverty, to economic, political and social disparities, to unequal access to educational opportunities, quality healthcare, decent housing, gainful employment, and can also contribute to death and destruction of those who suffer under various forms of exclusion.

Advocacy should be a concrete expression of our Christian discipleship. As Christians, we must be ready to become “agents of discomfort” within our communities of faith to enable and facilitate the spiritual transformation required to participate in the struggle of liberation from racism, caste-based discrimination, and other forms of exclusion. The church must challenge the systemic structures of society which nurture exclusion and hold those in power accountable. Such advocacy is a prophetic activity of the churches that constitutes concrete support to people who experience the violence of exclusion in their bodies, minds, and spirit.

The proclamation of the coming of God’s *shalom* and His redeemed community denounce personal conduct, communal practices, and systemic structures of exclusion, and encourage those who long for just relationships to remain steadfast in the struggle. True worship leads us to seek the well-being, dignity, and fullness of life for those among us whose existence is constantly challenged by the kind of discrimination that leads to economic, cultural, social, religious, and political marginalisation (Is 58). Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves impels us to empathise with the suffering of our sisters and brothers.

### **Just Peace and Transformative Masculinities**

The consultation in Blantyre (Malawi, 13-20 September 2008) introduced a shift in the

current discourse on gender disparity, discrimination and violence against women, in the sense that it envisioned a possible partnership between men and women when addressing gender-related issues. Rather than having only women reflect on issues relating to violence against women, it is necessary to include men in the process and redefine masculinity as a transformative and gender-sensitive attribute.

During the consultation, the sharing of experience was placed in the socio-cultural and religious context of the participants (Africa, Asia, and Caribbean) in order to reflect how local traditions have shaped – and are still shaping – discriminative thinking vis-à-vis women, in spite of the influence of globalisation.

The workshop placed the discourse within the Malawian matrilineal context and the reality of the paradox between the domination that seems to be embodied in masculinity socialisation and the experienced vulnerability in an environment that belongs to these men's wives and relatives. Patriarchy – as a form of social organisation – and socialisation (through upbringing in the household, the clan and in the wider community) have been instrumental in shaping traditional and oppressive masculinities. They have pervaded all spheres of life, be it cultural, political, economic and social, thus resulting in de facto discrimination against women. As they did not address patriarchy and socialisation critically, churches too were not spared from this phenomenon, and have been complicit at times of gender discrimination and violence.

As a result of the current changing context of globalisation and modernisation, traditional forms of masculinities are constantly challenged in view of gender equity. Women are slowly freeing themselves from traditionally subjugating roles, therefore at times instilling fears and ill-reactions among men. It is therefore essential to re-socialise men in transformative and gender-sensitive masculinities, in order for them to better cope up with the rapidly changing global context.

### **Just Peace and Inter-Religious Dialogue**

The Goteborg consultation particularly focussed on dialogue and cooperation among Christian and Muslim women. Participants acknowledged that people from both faiths are closely working worldwide in order to address ills within their respective communities, whether in relation to women or to the society in general. Dialogue between Christian and Muslim women is an established reality. It is necessary to rediscover the energy of the feminine, the receptacle that holds the space for a vital and life-giving transformation.

The consultation highlighted the constructive role of religion in societies, so as to create greater balance by allowing feminine principles to guide visions and understandings of “bringing the change” for a just and peaceful society. Participants identified several issues where women can concretely become active peacemakers in view of promoting a just society of men and women. Members of the group from Iran agreed to implement an action plan concerning HIV/AIDS prevention in their country. Another group proposed an educational project that will develop a guide which will include four case studies about women engaged in inter-religious dialogue and their contribution to peacemaking in Bosnia, Iran, Sweden and the USA.

On the importance of inter-religious dialogue at the global level<sup>5</sup>, the Leros Pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox consultation stressed that peace and justice are notions that call the churches to contextualise their message. Christian churches cannot ignore that the world today is highly interdependent, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and therefore irreversibly pluralistic. In such a context, in order to be agents of peace and reconciliation, churches

must find ways to communicate and to collaborate with people and communities of other faiths, ideologies, cultures and beliefs.

The peaceable vocation of the Orthodox Church should be carried on in collaboration and joint projects with other Christian churches and faith communities<sup>6</sup>. By contributing her gifts and efforts to the ongoing process for peace and justice, and learning from the experiences and the insights of others. Such collaboration requires religious communities not to abandon their particular unique claims about the origins and meaning of peace, but rather to develop a theology of involvement and cooperation with other religious communities. Religious communities should reflect on how the fullness of the world in all its diversities reflects the dynamic presence of God's transforming grace.

An interfaith collaboration in peacemaking and peace-building efforts presupposes that the communities of living faiths have acquired and developed the necessary theology and conversational skills that enable them to recognise and respect the integrity of other people's beliefs, practices and communal life. Peace has no religious frontiers. Religious communities through interfaith dialogue and collaboration must strive to overcome misunderstandings, stereotypes, caricatures and other prejudices, inherited or acquired. Their voices in favour of peace must be heard in the public realm, and together they must take initiatives that promote justice and peace in the world. The universal message of peace, that each religious faith community embraces, should enable their followers and other people to see one another not as enemies, but as brothers and sisters across religious, national, racial and cultural frontiers.

Religious communities become credible agents of peace after they have examined and assessed critically their past and present performance in situations of conflict. Such a critical approach would humble them and help them recognise that their declarations about peace are not always proportionate to their passivity, indifference or action in situations of conflict and injustice. A critical assessment of their present and past performances could free them from multiple ideologies – nationalistic, political, racial, etc. – that religious leaders sometimes evoke for the purpose to advance their own goals and interests.

The complicity of religious believers and communities in acts of violence is also greatly influenced by the collective and personal insecurities that guide their interpretation of religious texts and traditions. It is not uncommon for people in violent situations and conflicts to profess faith in God's peace and at the same time to give legitimacy to their violent acts as their contribution to God's cause for the world. In all these situations such people and their religious communities have forgotten that wars and divisions between people are the most immediate and visible expressions of sin and evil.

### **Just Peace and the Cloud of Witnesses**

The symposium at the monastery of Bose reflected on the understanding and meaning of witnesses (*martyrs*) and the "great cloud", i.e. people who witnessed to Christ throughout their lives but did not face violent death<sup>7</sup>. The witness is someone who is faithful to the baptismal faith expressed in life, through the death and resurrection of Christ, and is ready to remain faithful even to death. Although all Christians are called to follow the path of Christ, some witnesses demark themselves and become "Orators of the Spirit" who inspire others by their authentic interpretation of the Beatitudes.

Holiness is not an individual journey: witnesses are shaped in discipleship by living in a particular community of faith. They offer us a foretaste of the kingdom of God and its justice. Through their lives, they unite us in Christ with the past, the present and the future,

and draw us near to His mystery. The Eucharist (*anamnesis*) is the remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ, through the mystery of the Holy Spirit; when celebrating it, we are surrounded by the Cloud of Witnesses and angels.

How do we assess those who engaged in violent actions in their pursuit of justice and peace, and consequently suffered torture and death? How do we deal with those who have suffered without the support of their Christian community or its leaders? How do we approach those who have suffered torment and death at the hands of other Christian communities, including our own? Our pilgrimage of faith requires a willingness to recognize ourselves as victimisers as well as victims. Commemorating such witnesses together brings about a reconciliation of painful memories of the past and is a step forward in our pilgrimage to visible unity.

Witnesses are central during our journey in faith, for they invite us to empathise with Christ, i.e. with the violence he endured and overcame, thus drawing us deeper together into the life of the crucified and risen Christ. As we contemplate those whose lives were committed to peace we understand better our call to be peace makers and peace builders. Every time we commemorate the lives of holy men and women who have witnessed to the faith, we are confronted with our own failures and therefore called to repentance and to a deeper conversion to Christ and to one another in Christ.

### **Just Peace and Entertaining Violence**

Although there is much to celebrate and to commend in contemporary media, violence in entertainment (films, games) and news media can become quite pervasive to the extent that it can seem unavoidable, powerful, irresistible and fascinating<sup>8</sup>. Common reaction to violent media is often either passive acceptance or fearful withdrawal. This has serious implications for how the world is perceived and how communities act in the face of real suffering.

Most media are too often a corporate profit-driven business with clearly-defined markets. The framing and depiction of violence in the *news* media can easily be determined by market concerns rather than by accuracy or by human dignity. The *film* industry too often resorts to predictable storylines that glorify violence and do not engage into critical consideration. Even though violent *gaming* alone is not a direct cause of violence, recent research in neuroscience suggests that along with other risk factors, such games may constitute an additional factor toward real violence.

The role of profit in production, the temptations of uncritical consumerism, and a common emphasis on individual fulfilment over the common good are elements that affect the Christian view of respect for the dignity of all human beings. An uncritical production and consumption of media allows and even fosters portrayals of violence that are different from the larger historical, social, contexts in which real people live and where real violence rends the fabric of communities.

*News* media are often sensationalistic, seeking out the easy story to tell and the easiest explanation. The line between news and entertainment has become blurred: many news media frame stories in such a way that hidden or chronic forms of violence are ignored. In addition, government influence, political pressure or economic constraints – search of profit by news corporations – can shape the news content.

In *films*, several factors fuel different forms of violence: the corporate nature of mainstream filmmaking, the intrinsically exciting nature of violence and the fascination of violent stories, and the need of media producers to continually heighten sensation and esca-

late spectacle. Viewing films being a common form of recreational escape, it can encourage the uncritical and passive consumption of violent images portrayed on the screen.

*Digital gaming* can be the most immersive media type of media since the player is not a passive spectator but rather an active participant. Too often, games leave out the possibility of non-violent resolution of conflict. Some researches suggest that aside from being potentially addictive, in certain conditions<sup>9</sup>, games can encourage players into aggressive thought processes and disrespect for others as well as narcissistic preoccupations that encourage the illusion that we humans are more independent than we really are.

Unlike Christian values that move us toward community, love and hope, many media today reinforce autonomy, narcissism, and violence. The love of God is the root of all reality, and transpires as the love of others in a wide range of social contexts. Empathy – in opposition to disconnected, self-centred, violent behaviour – is at the heart of a loving relationship. A theology rooted in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth points toward the redeeming love of God.

Today, the Christian family is critically reflecting upon the violent stories of the Bible. Participation in God's peace involves judgment and discernment, and the ability to distinguish between media which promote violent fragmentation from those which promote peaceful resistance. Churches can play a major role in encouraging communities and individuals to act as a pressure group to hold the media to a higher standard and to make deliberate, careful, healthy choices about how to spend their time and money. They can offer the space for reflective dialogue and constructive criticism rooted in careful listening, respect and humility, or use new Internet based technology to suggest alternative perspectives on important current issues, and therefore contribute to media productions that can help to build peace.

It is essential to contextualize and deconstruct different media: church leaders can shape critical media awareness by providing the larger context for important news stories. Such an attitude can help determine whether military, nationalistic, colonialist, ethnocentric, sexist, racist, uncritically capitalistic, or other agenda are being promoted. Churches can also develop guidelines for protecting children and young people from possible harmful effects of violent media while recognising that not all exposure to violent entertainment is harmful.

Christians' communal life provides an opportunity for groups to have collective in-depth discussions to foster critical thinking. Such discussions can involve the oversimplified portrayal of others that violent media offer, the need to cultivate empathy for suffering as opposed to the desensitising effect of violent media to real suffering, the stereotypical portrayal of women in video games and films, etc.

It is nonetheless important to acknowledge the fascination of many forms of violent media in order to analyse the hidden desires that violent media fulfil. We can then ask ourselves how we could fulfil those desires in healthier, more community-oriented ways. This being said, we must also acknowledge that there are some forms of violent media that are simply not healthy to be consumed, due to the degree of violence that is portrayed.

Engaging with media actively and deliberately is a positive and productive alternative to media violence. Instead of being fearful of media violence, we need to frankly acknowledge its appeal and think about how to reframe and respond to it in more positive and pro-social ways. A win-win situation would be the production of common projects such as films that expose injustice, news media coverage that is in-depth and balanced, online role-play experiences in conflict resolution, sponsorship of competitions for youth-produced film projects, peace journalism, or pro-social video games.

## **Just Peace and Peace Education to Children**

The consultation in Chavannes-de-Bogis provided a platform for young leaders working with children to share experiences and dialogue on issues related to child rights and interfaith cooperation. Several activities were proposed to the participants. For instance, “Walking in Someone else’s shoes” is an activity where one exchanges shoes with another, in order to get an impression of how we feel when we are put in the position of another person. It was a good reminder for all that each person has his/her own shoes to fill and it can therefore be a challenge when trying to fill someone else’s shoes.

Participants were also trained on how to organize, develop and facilitate these activities use the Learning to Live Together manual (developed by the Global Network of Religions for Children – GNRC) as the guide. The manual offers various modes and techniques of delivery to encourage interactive participation and successful workshops.

After much discussion on an approach to participate in the IEPC, participants were challenged with the responsibility to coordinate a project focusing on children and their understanding of a world of peace.

## **Just Peace and People Living with Disabilities**

The Bukavu consultation pointed out that the Great Lakes region has been a theatre for sexual violence against women for many years. Women with disabilities were much more vulnerable than the rest of the population. Factors such as poverty, lack of education and information also add on their risk of being HIV/AIDS positive. However, despite the numerous international organisations and civil society actors present in the region, little interest is given to the issue of disability in general.

Wrong cultural and religious perceptions of disability add on the discrimination that people with disabilities face. Rather than being complicit of this stigmatisation, churches must propose a positive and valuing reading of the Bible that shows concern and compassion to people living with disabilities.

Taboo, gender inequality, stigmatisation, discrimination, shame and violence are, to name only a few, some of the challenges faced both by people living with disabilities and people who are HIV/AIDS positive. Conditions of women in the region are exacerbated by cultural, religious, social, economic and political factors. Despite all this, they must not take their condition for an excuse and remain passive. They need to be empowered in order to alleviate their economical condition, and equally have access to opportunities and resources, participate in decision-making.

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## **PEACE WITH THE EARTH**

### **Just Peace and the Wholeness of Creation<sup>10</sup>**

The consultation at the John Knox Centre showed that the environmental crisis affects human life in general, for it directly results from human cultures and economic systems. The economic progress that is encouraged by the “modern” era results in a severe depletion of the earth’s resources that are used to serve human need and greed.

It goes without saying that the impact of climate change is severely felt by poor and marginalised communities. The same political and economic systems – capitalism, consumerism, militarism, globalisation, etc. – which cause poverty and exclusion are also responsible for the violence that is caused to the earth. Hence, violence against the earth and violence against the poor are intrinsically related.

Social and ecological forms of domination and violence are inter-related. Both are connected with a fascination to the exercise of power and the capacity to inflict pain and destroy dignity. They refuse to recognise the selfhood and moral agency of the other, and reduce the potential for life to flourish and survive.

In addition to the Christian emphasis on personal sin, it is now important to consider structural and social sins. These two promote domination and violence, and thus require a cultural repentance. The destruction of the earth's life communities requires an understanding of ecological sin, as well as of ecological repentance. *Metanoia* is an opportunity to reconcile ourselves with God's creation. As Christians, we need to encourage and adopt an ascetic practice of living within limits, as opposed to living with greed that binds the consumer and crushes the lives of others.

Christian theology teaches us that creation is the house of life within which human beings are called to dwell. Hence, churches have the framework to bring about ecological justice for communities, because they are the best placed to advise and guide their members on the path to an ecologically informed *metanoia*.

Churches ought to work for eco-literacy, i.e. awareness raising, information, analysis and theological understanding of the depth and extent of the ecological crisis. They should also develop an ethic of intrinsic worth of all creation, and educate communities for lifestyles that are in harmony with nature. This of course entails behavioural change such as simplicity, mutual concern and sharing.

### **Just Peace and the Resettlement of Climate Displaced People<sup>11</sup>**

The Fiji meeting showed that the ecumenical understanding of climate change encompasses the various dimensions of the climate change crisis (ecological, social, economic, political and ethical), and calls for a holistic approach. It stresses climate change as a matter of justice, since those who are – and will be – increasingly affected are the impoverished and vulnerable communities of the Global South, due to their dependence on natural resources and limited means to adapt to change.

The consequences of the global warming are being felt at an alarming pace: at this stage, the crisis can no longer be avoided. It is estimated that in 2050, there will be more than 150 million of people displaced because of climatic factors. This in turn will of course feed the vicious circle of degradation, forced displacement, conflict and poverty. Hence, responding to the climate crisis in a sustained way is a matter of survival.

It is time to face the destructive potential of inaction on climate change and resettlement. Human induced climate change is being aggravated primarily by the current development pattern with the prevailing economic strategy of promoting endless growth and production of goods, and the high consumption lifestyles of the richer industrialised nations and wealthy elites throughout the world.

The wholeness of creation and the commitment for justice are the two main biblical imperatives which guide the ecumenical concern on climate change. As churches, we need to cater for these people who are forcibly displaced due to climatic degradation.

Justice is at the heart of the Bible, for God is a God of Justice (Deut. 10:18-19). The

quest for justice is intimately linked to the rights of the oppressed and vulnerable people. Jesus himself through his life expressed his care for the vulnerable ones (Luke 6:20ff, Matthew 5:3ff).

The international law of victims' rights applies to victims of climate change, i.e. people who are forced to relocate themselves – and their entire families and communities – due to climatic changes that forced them physically displace themselves. These victims have:

- a right to know the truth about climate change. It's a collective right which will prevent further victimisation to occur in the future;
- a right to justice that will enable climate change victims to prosecute those at the origin of the climatic change, establish their guilt and punish them; and
- a right to reparation for all the loss they have suffered, through restitution, compensation and rehabilitation.

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## PEACE IN THE MARKETPLACE

### Just Peace and PWE

The Poverty, Wealth and Ecology (PWE) annual consultations are part of a series of church encounters that are scheduled to take place in the different continents from 2007 to 2011. These encounters aim at deepening the Alternative Globalisation Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE) process of the WCC<sup>12</sup>.

The following major points have been addressed during these annual regional gatherings<sup>13</sup>:

### Just Peace and the "Greed Line" (Poverty and Wealth)

The current context of neo-liberal economic globalisation, together with patriarchal structures and militarization, have undermined African sovereignty, wresting away people's communal ownership and control over productive means, natural and biotic resources. The concentration of resources – especially capital – in the hands of powerful nations, international financial institutions and multinational corporations working together with African elites, is adding on the socio-economic disparities between Africa and rich nations.

Human beings have been created in God's own image and likeness and have the responsibility to take care of God's good Creation. The Christian notion of *oikos* resonates with the African understanding of *ubuntu/botho/uzima* (life in wholeness) and *ujamaa* (life in community). They embrace the values of fullness of life, and full participation life processes including in the economy and ecology. It further entails the just care, use, sharing and distribution of resources and elements of life. Where the above and life-affirming relationships have been violated, principles of justice, reparation, restoration and reconciliation, forgiveness, mutual love and dignity for all of God's Creation should be promoted ecumenically as bases for constructive critique of global capitalism, which increasingly violates life-in-abundance (John 10:10).

Churches have not always been faithful in witnessing to the questions of justice in the economy and relationships among people. They have failed to address the structural sins of greed, exploitation, racism, dehumanisation and inequitable sharing of power which re-

sult in trivialisation of poverty where the poor are blamed for their plight. Churches must therefore challenge the life-denying relationships and practices which create poverty in the midst of wealth and dehumanise people. In all cases, churches should develop guidelines for Christians on wealth line and greed line that can guide them to avert excessive use of resources but also to think of limits to what the planet can offer.

World per capita income has currently reached heights: it could comfortably satisfy basic needs and eliminate world poverty if there were an adequate social redistribution of wealth. However, 40% of the world population is currently living in poverty. This profound inequity has increased on a world scale, reducing the share of developing regions, except for China and India. In particular, Latin America and Africa have seen their share of world income fall. The increasing social inequality in the world has been accentuated by globalization and the implementation of neo-liberal policies on a planetary scale.

The imposition of the neo-liberal model, which gives priority to capital accumulation, has increased the gap between the few who are rich and the millions who are poor. This model has looted and destroyed creation with the only goal being excessive accumulation. This model has become a great machine to produce poverty and misery. Governments are also responsible for promoting the interests of capital and the economic power groups, to the detriment of the majority of peoples.

The neo-liberal model promotes a drastic reduction of the state's role in the economy, fiscal austerity, privatization, the adoption of policies favourable to the free market and the opening up of the international economy. It affects communities as a whole, and particularly women, whose poverty is exacerbated by the privatisation of health and education services, unequal pay, increased working hours and the increasing price of basic goods, etc. Their invisible and unrecognised domestic work subsidizes the global economic model.

In addition, the work-production-domination system results in various forms of exploitation, with human beings at the service of production rather than production at the service of human beings. Proclaimed by the Bible as a gift and source of human fulfilment, work has been diminished in terms of its dignity and spiritual content. There has been a marked increase of migration from rural to urban areas and abroad because of the lack of local opportunities to make a living. The result is broken families, violence and the uprooting of people from their cultures.

Despite all these processes of social, economic, religious and political exclusion, people continue to resist and provide alternatives for satisfying their goal of living well. Some governments that defend national and popular interest are slowly emerging.

### **Just Peace and the Ecological Debt**

The climate crisis has been caused by human beings, especially by the industries of the countries of the North, which are mainly responsible for the greenhouse effect. Although several countries have signed the Kyoto Protocol and other European Community agreements, many of them do not have the political will to commit themselves to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Some of these agreements have set medium and long-term targets for the implementation of their policies, which is not enough to stop damage to the environment.

Production is an area that needs to have a limit consistent with what ecology can supply in a sustainable manner. There cannot be peace without economic justice. The current inequality under the neo-liberal market economies creates artificial divisions which breed conflict and hence results in lack of peace. The gap between the “haves” and “Have Nots”

will always breed violence.

In the pursuit of super-profits, the neo-liberal system of wealth creation and accumulation has not only produced poverty, it has also generated tremendous social and ecological debts, i.e. debts owed to Mother Earth. As a result of their forms of production and irresponsible consumption, Northern post-industrial countries and institutions that reproduce patriarchal models in Southern countries owe a social and ecological debt to humanity and the Earth. This debt has accumulated in the course of centuries of looting that have caused destruction, death and poverty. It has created a system that puts the market at the centre rather than human beings and nature.

Impoverishment, enrichment and ecological destruction are inter-linked. The ecological debt is due to the destruction of ecosystems for purposes of human consumption. This destruction is caused by oil, gas, mining and timber companies, etc. that exploit natural resources to sustain a model that endangers local communities and the planet as a whole. The international financial institutions also bear great responsibility because they finance this extraction of resources while paying little attention to its social and environmental consequences.

Churches have often neglected to challenge the death-dealing effects of the degradation of God's Creation and the unjust sharing of God's resources. They have not always offered balanced theologies and praxes on stewardship of life. They have often promoted narrow perspectives which place ecological issues at the periphery of daily life and have neglected to proclaim in truth the promised wholesome abundance for all (John 8: 32). God calls us to care for Creation (Psalm 148), requiring a new understanding which affirms that caring for Creation is mandatory, not optional.

The Orthodox Church firmly believes that all forms of life and natural resources are essential elements of God's Creation and, therefore, partake in the blessedness and goodness of God (Psalm 8)<sup>14</sup>. They must be treated with awe, care and respect. Peace among the peoples of the earth and peace with the earth are intrinsically interconnected. Therefore, it follows that it is inappropriate for us and disrespectful to the Creator to use them as mere objects of greed and selfishness. In facing the current global crisis, the Orthodox Church exhorts a greater sensitivity by policymakers for the poor and the environment as they suffer the most. She encourages creative policies that work toward preservation of the environment and just distribution of wealth. This implies a careful management of the Church's own resources.

### **Just Peace and the Food Crisis**

Although the world exports agricultural produce are estimated to reach \$500,000 million per year, eight million people die every year from starvation and diseases associated with hunger and 840 million people, including farmers and agricultural workers, suffer from a lack of food. During 2007, world production of grains increased four per cent in comparison with 2006. The problem of hunger in the world is not therefore due to a lack of food but rather to the fact that millions of human beings cannot buy it. The central problem (high production of food and increases in the price of food) results from the increasingly monopolistic concentration of the world agricultural-food industry.

The search for non-fossil fuels has led to the increasing use of wheat, soya and corn for the production of agro-fuels, which increases the price of grains and reduces the population's access to grains for consumption. At the same time, transnational companies are trying to control the other element that is essential to the cycle of life: water.

## Just Peace and the Financial Crisis

The origin of the global financial crisis lies in the usury and endless accumulation that are in the very nature of capitalism. Exacerbated by neo-liberalism, this system has had serious negative global consequences. According to the experts, the cost of the \$700,000 million (or even more) United States rescue package for the banks will be borne by the people because of the capacity of transnational capitalism to transfer its crises to the system's peripheral countries. This domination by finance capital is unprecedented and goes hand-in-hand with speculation and the indebtedness of peripheral countries, from which the central countries extract immense flows of resources, thereby limiting social investment in, for example, health, education, housing, roads and drinking water.

Because Asia's system of wealth creation is centred on the global economy, the region has been heavily battered by the current global financial and economic crisis caused by heightened "financialisation" (or the de-linking of finance from the real economy). Factory workers in export processing zones have been retrenched in large numbers. The remittances sent home by migrant workers are dwindling. Many governments too are indebted and cash-strapped to respond with even the barest of social protection.

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## PEACE AMONG THE PEOPLES

### Just Peace and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Participants gathered at the Arnoldshain consultation discussed Christians' international responsibility to protect other people who are facing large scale imminent peril and mass atrocities. How ethically and how effectively can such responsible protection take place? The deliberations mainly dealt with the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept – including its three components: prevention, reaction and rebuilding - and particularly with the use of force for humanitarian purposes in extreme and very extraordinary cases when certain thresholds and criteria have been met.

The R2P discussion implies a shift of paradigm, from right to responsibility in the understanding of sovereignty, from politics based in the nation state to the international community, and from the understanding of the church as a national body to the ecumenical community as the "household of God". A new and modern understanding of Christian discipleship is needed, and requires the Church to reflect on the decisive marks of following Christ in a world of violence.

The innovation introduced during this consultation concerns the nature of the use of force that is opted for in extraordinary instances: rather than perceiving it as a mere militaristic intervention, it should rather be understood more as a matter of policing, and precisely of just policing; the goal being "to impose and to secure the rule of law and protect the vulnerable people, rather than to defeat and annihilate the enemy"<sup>159</sup>. Prof. Tobias Winright here reiterates what Mr Ernie Regher had previously explained in various articles: the use of force for humanitarian purposes that is referred to when discussing R2P is mainly about *policing*.

It is interesting here to note that in comparison to the extensive attention that has historically been given to the pacifist and just war Christian traditions to the problem of

war, “the moral status of (just) policing has been somewhat of a lacuna in the Christian tradition”. Winright introduced “policing approach as an alternative to passivity (...) and militarism<sup>16</sup>”. It takes the form of a “social peacekeeper model”, and involves partnership between the police and the community, and seeks to foster a relationship of mutual trust and common purpose, rather than an adversarial stance. It is proactive – rather than reactive – and aims at adopting a more preventive approach to crime.

Just policing differs from warfare in that it aims at protecting populations rather than defeat the perpetrators. Its aim is not to defeat and liquidate the “enemy”, but rather to stop the prevailing violence and to bring to justice those responsible for the violence. The use of force in this case “would be governed by the moral principles of policing, so that it would be the force of law rather than the law of force<sup>17</sup>”.

### **Just Peace and Orthodox Peace Ethics**

The Bucharest consultation revealed that the status of Orthodoxy as a majority or minority faith tradition in a given country and part of the world was a key shaping factor in how the church responded to the challenges raised by nationalism or the prospect of war.

As of today, although no branch of Orthodox Christianity has an explicit just-war theory, several churches have in practice accepted wars of national defence as tragic necessities in a fallen world. In certain instances, some Orthodox Christian churches have been so closely identified with national identity, to the extent that their church leaders have blessed wars and weapons of wars. Such endorsement, however, has never amounted to an officially sanctioned “holy war” or crusade.

A canon of St. Basil the Great calls for soldiers who kill in war to repent and to abstain from receiving Holy Communion for three years. Though this canon has rarely been applied strictly, it stands as a reminder that taking life – under any circumstances – has damaging spiritual consequences that threaten to separate us from God and our neighbour. In this light, participants discussed the pastoral challenges of helping soldiers find spiritual healing from the inevitable trauma of war<sup>18</sup>.

The Leros Pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox consultation highlighted that<sup>19</sup> in the Orthodox tradition, peace is inextricably related to the notion of justice and freedom that God has granted to all human beings through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit as a gift and vocation. The dynamic nature of peace as gift and vocation does not allow its identification with stagnation, passivity and the acceptance of injustice.

Peace is more than the absence of war. It does not deny conflict, which is an element of human relationships, nor does it identify conflict with violence, for it is not the only way to resolve conflicts. Peacemakers are constantly striving to find ways in which people and communities can resolve their differences without physical violence. Peace is a dynamic process, not an absolute end point.

The renunciation of violence and war as destructive elements of human lives becomes a credible expression of the Church’s faith only when it is complemented with ethical practices that point to their prevention. The peaceable witness of the Church in situations of conflict and war cannot be limited only to its ethical judgment about the legitimacy and rules of conduct of war or even its unconditional renunciation. Peace requires much more than a military action or passive pacifism.

Churches ought to develop just peacemaking practices that move their ethical discourse from theories that justify or regulate the use of violence to preventive actions that contribute to the building up of a culture of peace. The Orthodox churches understand

peace and peacemaking as an indispensable aspect of their faith and of their mission to the world. They ground this faith conviction upon the wholeness of the Biblical tradition as it is properly interpreted through the Church's liturgical experience and practice. The Eucharist provides the space and the hermeneutical perspective by which one discerns and experiences the fullness of the Christian faith.

Orthodox ascetical tradition insists that violence and war begins primarily in people's hearts with pride, rancour, hatred and desire for revenge, before it is translated into armaments, open violence and deliberate destruction. Thus, peace starts with the formation of consciousness, with the conversion of hearts.

Although the early Christian church of the first three centuries was primarily pacifist, grounding its attitudes on the Sermon of the Mount (Mt 5-7; Mt 26/52), the Fathers of the church later in situations of conflict without abandoning the pacifist attitude of the early Church, had justified defensive wars without developing theories of just war or giving theological legitimacy to violence. The Orthodox Church gives far more attention to the question of how to establish and maintain peaceful and just societies than it does to justify, or even tolerate, any instance of war. It has rather a dynamic commitment to the praxis of peace.

Placing the tradition of the Orthodox Church on peace in the context of the development in peace studies, Orthodoxy has never elaborated theories of just war nor has it embraced absolute pacifism. The absolute or "purist" pacifism is distinct from the more widely accepted tradition of pragmatic or conditional pacifism, which opposes war in principle but accepts the possibility of using force for self-defence or the protection of the vulnerable.

Pacifism is a passionate commitment and political program for social change. A Pacifist is someone who is personally committed to take action, to work for peace and reduce the level of violence. The ethos of Orthodoxy therefore is much more related with pragmatic or conditional pacifism. The Orthodox people, as a result of their faith, are called to be active peacemakers as St. Nicholas Cabasilas states: "Christians, as disciples of Christ who made all things for peace, are to be 'craftsmen of peace.'" They are called a peaceable race since "nothing is more characteristic of a Christian than to be a worker for peace."

The conference in Saidnaya<sup>20</sup> stressed the Orthodox understands of peace as intrinsic to salvation (Rom 16:20; 1 Thess 5:23). Peace is communion with God and Jesus Christ is our peace, since He is the bond of communion (Eph 2:14-17). The mission of the Church is to live in and preserve God's peace and, despite human failures, to communicate prophetically the peace of God to the world as a blessed peace-maker. The Church has the mission to communicate the peace of God to the world in situations of conflict, violence, injustice, and oppression, and to strengthen her contribution to ongoing efforts for transformation of persons and society toward greater justice, peace, and communion. The peace-making mission of the Church is an intrinsic element of her ongoing commitment and active work toward the unity of all who confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Together with other peace-makers, Christians are proactively involved in a permanent process of becoming more conscious of their responsibility to incarnate the message of peace and justice in our globalised world as a witness of the authenticity of their faith.

Peace and justice are inextricably related (Is 32:17; James 3:18). The Orthodox Church understands justice as being restorative and distributive (Rom 3:25-26). By rewarding the good and disciplining the wrong, a peacemaker ought to be proactive in strengthening good will and promoting the spirit of reconciliation to prevent evil consequences, just as God with His compassion and forbearance reconciled us and made us righteous through

the ‘blood of Christ’ (Rom 3:25-26, 5:9, Eph 1:7). Justice should promote a sense of community and fairness, and at times requires just compromises.

When Christians fail to witness to justice, they fall short of their mission. The Church is called to console and stand by the poor and the weak (Mt 25): in addressing situations of injustice, the Church appeals to the spiritual implications of abusing the weak. In some instances, the Church may make this witness by refraining from supporting abusive authorities.

### **Just Peace and the Israel-Palestine Conflict**

The international theological conference on the “Promised Land”<sup>21</sup> addressed biblical and theological issues that are directly connected to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The aim of this gathering was to analyse and explore the Scriptures in relation to the meaning and understanding of land and the promises of God.

The conference challenged and engaged Christian theologians to further study and re-think life-affirming visions and responses to the conflict that has lasted for several decades. Participants were asked to reflect on topics such as God’s promises, Abraham’s paradigm, the Church and Israel, and the “people of God” from their respective contexts, vocations and perspectives. There was clear distinction between biblical history and biblical story, between the Israel of the Bible and the current state of Israel. Sadly, the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict resonates with biblical metaphors.

The Bible must not be used to justify oppression and sacralise conflicts; rather, it should be analysed in the current geopolitical, social and economic context in view of promoting justice and peace. Manipulations of Scriptures should be pointed out. Instead, peaceful readings of the Bible that promote justice, peace, reconciliation and forgiveness for the fullness of life should be encouraged.

Theologians are encouraged to further discuss the theology of land, life on the land and living together in the land, in order to promote respect within intra-Christian and also in inter-religious contexts. It is essential to critically examine and open a dialogue on controversial notions of the Bible that “nurtured” the conflict and justified practises such as dispossession, oppression, exclusion and landlessness.

A 2010 international colloquium in Balamand, Lebanon, took one step further the discussion on the semantic implications and the current relevance of the “People of God” in the Bible and in Tradition<sup>22</sup>. With regard to biblical implications, the colloquium showed that the notion of “people of God” should not be understood – even from a critical historic point of view – as a genealogically based ethnic entity, nor as a fixed status, but rather as an ongoing process of becoming faithful to God’s call. Because of their faithfulness to God’s plans, even those who do not belong to an “ethnic Israel” are part of the people of God in as much as they worship God in the obedience of His word. The concept of election is not a privilege, but rather implies obedience to the faith and to the Covenant. The “people of God” is a messianic metaphor, guided by the Spirit of God, towards His Kingdom, which is not a historical reality but an eschatological one. A truly theological interpretation of the “people of God” gives no room to any form of exclusive identification with one specific community, be it religious, ethnic, or else. The catholicity or universality of the Church has to be understood as implying a fundamental respect of the “otherness” of other communities involved in the “people of God”, on our common way towards God’s future.

Land has a functional dimension in the Bible: it can be either blessed or cursed by God, depending on the behaviour of the faithful. Land as a gift, within the frame of the

Covenant, presupposes the absolute sovereignty of God. The Book of Acts clearly shows that the “people of God” does not need a designated land to proclaim God’s revelation.

As far as the Christian understanding of the “people of God” is concerned, although the writings of the early Apostolic Fathers show a clear distancing move taking place between Jews and Christians, Christians have nonetheless continued to quote the Old Testament as their own authoritative scripture, while interpreting it in an allegoric way. The same can be said about many Christian liturgical texts.

This being said, the colloquium showed that the contemporary Christian penitential guilt over anti-Semitism has produced a regressive theology of a land that represents God as dwelling in a geographical location and favouring a particular people. Such theology justifies the human rights abuses of the State of Israel and tends to create a barrier to faithful actions by Christians to oppose this injustice. Theology should be responsible to historical context but not determined by it: if context determines theology and becomes normative, the message of God will be lost. In contrast, a theology of land in a non particularistic view of the promise would have enabled Christians and people of all faith to work for a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. It is therefore crucial to challenge the dominant post-holocaust theology with thorough academic researches that offer alternative readings.

Language plays an important role in diffusing the message of the Church: the terminology used by the churches and the way it is understood by congregations and the wider society should be taken seriously in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings. Such endeavour should take promote the unity in diversity of the Church and its catholicity, through an ongoing dialogue and communication that takes into consideration the current contextual diversity of Christians.

## **Just Peace and Peace, Security, Development and Human Rights**

### *Human Dignity and Human Rights*<sup>23</sup>

Jesus Christ struggled to restore human dignity through his teachings and ministries. He wanted to reinstate the concept of the Kingdom of God by reforming society through its fundamental human value of fellowship. Jesus took an elevated humanistic, yet unpopular, approach of welcoming the Greeks and Hellenistic culture, although they were rejected by the Jews. He subordinated his Jewish identity and its particularities as part of recognising and appreciating the dignity of others.

The establishment of the Church was when Paul himself transitioned from a committed Pharisaic Jew to becoming the leader of the Christian movement, demanding equality for the Jews and Gentiles. He preached the Gospel to the Greeks standing firm on his convictions that both Jewish and Greek Christians were equal in Church and that no cultural or religious factors of one group should be considered as binding for other groups. Paul’s reformed commitment stood for the equality of rights and dignity for all humans.

The concept of human rights and human dignity is plentiful in the letter of James within the context of a new society established through Christ. Alienation and discrimination against the poor and marginalised contradicts with the ministry of Christ (James 2: 14-17).

Human rights are independent of any particular religion or philosophical tradition. In our current world, the global endorsement and significance of the notion of human rights and human dignity has created reflection on its relevance beyond the boundaries of the Judeo-Christian world and of western secular thought. New voices – especially those from Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Traditional communities – with

their unique insights, values and interpretation, need to be heard in order to contribute a great deal to a global enhancement of the notion of human dignity and rights. Defining the framework of human dignity and human rights is therefore a multidisciplinary, multi-religious, and multicultural exercise.

This conversation among religions alone will not advance the cause of increasing human dignity throughout the world: respect for human dignity and recognition of human rights demands the development of a culture of peace and justice. It is difficult to speak about human rights and dignity in societies that lack the constitutional process that will give them meaning and measure. They have little rigour in communities that lack ethos to render human rights violations a source of shame and regret, value responsibility, reconciliation and restitution.

In the Christian world, although Orthodox theologians have not addressed as such the issue of human dignity and rights, the Orthodox view of human dignity supports the idea of human rights. Dignity is intrinsically inherent to all human beings as we are all created in God's image (Gen1:27); fundamental rights of the human being, such as the right to life and freedom of conscience, are at the heart of the Gospel and essential in the practice of the Church<sup>24</sup>. More so, Orthodox churches living in oppressive contexts as persecuted and oppressed minorities appeal to the notion of human dignity and rights for their survival and participation in the communal life with dignity and freedom. The recognition that the notion of human dignity and rights has captured the imagination of people throughout the world constitutes an invitation for Orthodox theology to contribute its spiritual resources and insights.

The Orthodox critique of human rights tradition focuses on their reduction to a basis that fortifies the self, leads to self-centeredness, and legitimises self-gratification. This, in their view, contributes to social fragmentation that endangers human solidarity, love and communion - necessary elements and norms for a compassionate and just community. Yet, even the most severe critic of the human rights tradition recognise their value and desire to place them in the context of a communal or ecclesia framework and ethos.

While the criticism of Orthodoxy against the philosophical and theological grounds of human rights tradition may be an important remedy to its current crisis, Orthodox theologians must also be critical of oppressive communal structures of dominance that do not allow people to be different in their communal life. The Orthodox emphasis on communal life and the primacy of relations is also respectively an equally important corrective to western individualism and social fragmentation. The conversation of Orthodoxy with other Christian traditions, religious and secular ideologies on the notion of human dignity may bring a certain freshness and clarity to theological anthropology.

With regard to the Catholic Church, Chapter Three of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)'s Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church is dedicated to human rights, and begins with the statement that the human person is created in the image of God, as "imago Dei". Thereafter unity, uniqueness and transcendence of the human person are introduced as the basis of affirming human dignity. Rights of the humans should not only be seen from a judicial perspective given from State and public powers, but also from an ethical perspective. The ultimate source of human rights lay in hands of human beings and God as the Creator.

The RCC recognizes the importance of international law as the basis of peace. Therefore the RCC also takes it beyond the rights of the individual and includes the rights of the people. It also states the church's mission to defend and promote human rights by committing to ecumenical cooperation, dialogue with other religions, governments and

non-governmental actors at the national and international level.

Concerning the Protestant church family, equality is the key concept that unifies civil, political and social rights. Luther suggests that the image of a body, which is formed by different members, has different functions, but no difference in worth. We are all created and born equal in the image of God. The universal sinfulness has an inherent failure common to all humans, independent of their social status.

Individualism, which is also known as a Western concept, is prominent in the Protestant church. The Protestant individualism was influential in establishing norms that protected individuals against governmental power – which we understand as civil rights in modern thinking. Luther puts it in the first of his famous sermons on Invocative in 1522: nobody can stand for another when it comes to death and salvation.

Equality of political participation was perceived differently between Luther and Calvin since both lived in different places under different governance. Calvin expanded on the equality of economic support from the state, while Luther's theory of the state restricts its role to protect the state from outside enemies. Calvin states that the function of the state is to protect its weakest members, in which he anticipates the later development of social rights. Justice has two different meanings in the original Hebrew language: *righteousness*, i.e. to take charge of the innocent, to defend and avenge them, and set them free; and *judgment*, i.e. to withstand the audacity of the wicked, to prepress their violence and punish their faults.

### *Peace, Security and Development*

The Seoul consultation stressed the urgent need to redefine the concept of “human security”, for it has been misused by the economically dominating powers as well as by several governments, thus creating a “myth of security”. Achieving human security must include all human voices, especially the voices of the marginalised. The so-called “war on terror” led by the USA, to which many governments have become part of for the sake of security, is generating a growing militarisation of foreign politics. These developments are in fact raising the level of insecurity for all instead of enhancing human security.

In many countries in the world, US military bases occupy lands, violate the self-determination of the host communities, cause environmental damage, and lead to the loss of indigenous cultures. Above all, women and children suffer terrible sexual violence and rape by the foreign soldiers. These violations of human rights and of human security are accepted in the name of “national security” and defending democracy as the rationale of the US military presence. Combat and sexual violence are essentially tied together; militarised national security is closely linked with patriarchy, racism, and gender discrimination, since violence is intrinsic to the very structure of the military that controls others by force.

In order to bring peace to the world, God made himself vulnerable by becoming human (Col. 1:19-20). This informs us about our own vulnerability and the limits of human-made securities. We are *created* beings, and therefore intrinsically vulnerable. Hence, vulnerability is not to be deplored, but to be accepted and appreciated, for its counter-side is our capacity for love, compassion, and sympathy. The promise of “security” cannot prevent people from suffering or feeling fear. As Christians, our primary goal should never be to achieve a high-scale security at the cost of some – nor by violent actions, but rather to work for peace and to strive to overcome violence and insecurity for all, starting with the weakest of society. “There is no way to peace on the way of safety... Peace is the opposite of security” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

## Just Peace and Nuclear Disarmament

The Hwacheon conference was held with the aim of strengthening the ecumenical movement vis-à-vis the new challenges posed by nuclear developments and to work towards a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons, in addition to analysing the state of nuclear affairs in North-East Asia and understanding the implications of these for a world without nuclear weapons<sup>25</sup>. Although international affairs in the past years gave hope for a possible movement towards nuclear disarmament today, it is only when concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament will occur that the credibility of these statements will be verified and instils trust among the people.

The conference showed that unless effective international disarmament machinery is set up, the way towards nuclear disarmament will be paved by various types of obstacles. Transparency and accountability need to be at the heart of nuclear affairs: intra-states openness and verification – both with regard to disarmament and to the non-diversion of nuclear materials and technologies from peaceful to military uses – must be consistent and strict. Although recent calls by the United Nations Security Council to the nuclear weapon states which have not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea – to sign it were welcomed, the fact that these countries were asked to sign as “non-nuclear-weapon states” brought about a new crisis which was mainly due to the lack of willingness or capacity of these states for nuclear disarmament as stipulated in Article VI of the NPT.

A quick glance at the international geopolitical scene enables us to draw the following lessons. Despite the media's current focus on North Korea's nuclear programme, one should remember the central role played first by the United States and then by the Soviet Union in the long history of nuclearisation in the *Korean peninsula* since the 1950s: nuclear weapons have become an integral part of the military order in North East Asia. As for the *Pacific*, the region was sadly used for several decades as the test site of imperial nuclear nations, such as the USA, United Kingdom and France, who conducted atmospheric and underground tests to experiment their weapons of mass destruction. With regard to nuclear weapon states in *South Asia*, the triangular relations and tensions between China, India and Pakistan make the situation particularly sensitive; this is particularly true for India and Pakistan who have a long history of war, and are now engaged de facto in an aggressive nuclear and missile race, and still remain out of the NPT. When it comes to the *Middle-East*, nuclear proliferation can hardly be prevented in the region: although Iran has lately caught international attention, Israel has been a nuclear weapon state for long, thus giving the impression that America's “friends” can have nuclear weapons unlike its “enemies”. The current nuclear doctrine of the *U.S.* is closely linked to the new stage of nuclear proliferation: national missile defence program emphasises the utility of nuclear weapons in *U.S.* military strategy, considers new uses of such weapons and claims that they may be used in any war, including preventative wars.

In as much as it involves elements of secrecy, non-transparency, and highly concentrated undemocratic decision-making power, the technocratic setup of nuclear technology strengthens and aggravates the worst tendencies in our societies such as elitism, hierarchical rule instead of fostering meaningful, participatory democracy. In addition, patriarchy and nuclearism are closely linked: nuclearism is the most extreme form of a culture of militarism that has been fortified by an ideology of power and hyper-masculinity. In other words, the worst manifestations of patriarchal and sexist behaviour are reinforced through the ideology of militarism and nuclearism. Not to mention the economics of nuclear ar-

maments: in a world of endemic hunger, disease, poverty, over-consumption, pollution and climate change, enormous allocation of financial resources to the world's deadliest weapon system is unconscionable and represents a heavy burden on coming generations.

More than six decades after, people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are still suffering from the after-effects of the nuclear bombs. Instead of being an eye opener for the world, tears and cries of the survivors have been ignored by nations which went on acquiring more nuclear weapons. Less known to the public is the high human cost paid by people living in areas where nuclear tests were conducted: people were uprooted and relocated from their homelands without being given the full and adequate information on the nature of nuclear activity. High carcinogenic diseases, excessive burns, widespread pollution and devastation on land and marine sources have been the fate of those exposed to radiations, thus causing forced displacement and reducing their chances of returning to their homelands. The last straw that broke the camel's back was the governments' refusal to take responsibility for their part in contributing towards health problems, displacement, pollution and "invisible contamination" passed on to future generations.

From its first assembly in 1948 until the latest one in 2006, the ecumenical response and contribution to the nuclear issue has been to call for the abolition of nuclear arms as weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction endangering humanity and the whole creation. It has maintained a consistent stand with regard to the elimination of nuclear weapons within the framework of a broader commitment to seeking peace with justice and with respect for the integrity of creation, in faithfulness to the teachings of the Gospel. In its various Assemblies, the ecumenical family identified the main elements of what later on became the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty; called for no-first-use of nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapon-free zones, i.e. two concrete steps that still define disarmament progress; and encouraged churches to lobby their governments to negotiate for security instead of seeking it through nuclear weapons.

The concept of shared human security, i.e. the interconnectedness of threats and challenges as well as our shared responsibility for each other's well-being, is a reference point for ecumenical policies and programmes that address the critical transnational issues of this century such as climate change, chronic impoverishment, over-consumption, nuclear threat, etc.

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**ANNEX**  
**LIST OF EXPERT CONSULTATIONS**  
**(SINCE 2007)**

**Consultations organised by IEPC staff in Geneva,  
in collaboration with other partners**

International Conference on "*Forgiveness, Peace and Reconciliation*"  
Volos (Greece), 17-20 May 2007

*The Responsibility to Protect: International Ecumenical Consultation*  
Evangelische Akademie Arnoldshain, Schmitten (Germany), 16-18 November 2007

International Peace Symposium on *“Peace and Human Security: Global Insecurity and Overcoming Violence”*  
Seoul (Korea), 31 March – 4 April 2008

*Peace on Earth is Peace with the Earth. Peace of Creation*  
Geneva (Switzerland), 14-18 September 2008

*Ethics of Peace. An Orthodox Christian Consultation*  
Bucharest (Romania), 29 June – 3 July 2009

*Pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox Consultation*  
Leros (Greece), 15-22 September 2009

*Violence in Media and Entertainment: Challenges and Opportunities*  
Boston, USA, 23-26 June 2010

*Orthodox Contribution to a Theology of Just Peace. Developing the principles of a Just Peace*  
Saidnaya, Syria, 18-22 October 2010

### **Consultations co-organised by IEPC staff in Geneva and other WCC programmes**

*Healing of Memories – Reconciling Communities*  
Dublin (Ireland), 1-4 October 2007

*Peaceful Living for Children and Young People*  
Chavannes-de-Bogis (Switzerland), 26-29 November 2009

### **Consultations contributed by other WCC programmes**

*Ecumenical Conference on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology*  
Daar es Salam (Tanzania), 5-9 November 2007

*Religions: Instruments of Peace or Causes of Conflict?*  
Ecumenical Institute Bossey (Switzerland), 11-16 May 2008

*Human Rights and Human Dignity,*  
Ecumenical Institute Bossey (Switzerland), 26 May – 1 June 2008

*Response of women with disabilities to violence and HIV and AIDS: Social transformation approach*  
Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo), 17-20 June 2008

*Women as Peacemakers Through Religion*  
Diocese of Gothenburg (Sweden), 4-7 September 2008

*International Theological Conference on the “Promised Land”*  
Berne (Switzerland), 10-14 September 2008

*In Partnership For Gender Justice: Towards Transformative Masculinities*  
Blantyre (Malawi), 13-20 September 2008

*Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology: Latin-American and Caribbean Perspectives*  
Ciudad San Cristóbal (Guatemala), 6-10 October 2008

*Women, Disability and Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean*  
Cardenas, Matanzas (Cuba), 20-22 October 2008

*A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for Ecumenical Commemoration*  
Monastery of Bose (Italy), 29 October – 2nd November 2008

*Security, Peace and Development in South Asia*  
Bangalore (India), 30 March – 3 April 2009

*Climate Change*  
Nadi (Fiji), 20-24 April 2009

*Healing of Memories-Reconciling Communities*  
Ecumenical Institute Bossey (Switzerland), 17-23 August 2009

*Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology: Asian-Pacific Perspectives*  
Chiang Mai (Thailand), 2-6 November 2009

*Nuclear Weapons, North East Asia and Beyond: Re-vitalizing the Ecumenical Movement*  
Hwacheon (South Korea), 3-7 December 2009

International Colloquium on “*The People of God in Bible and Tradition. Semantic Implications and Modern Relevance*”  
Balamand, Lebanon, 25-30 May 2010

*Racism Today and the Rationale for Continued Ecumenical Engagement*  
Cleveland, USA, 26-29 August 10

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## NOTES

1. This part is based on the learning drawn from the consultations in Volos, Dublin and Bossey.
2. *A Time for Birth: Commemorating the Future, Atoning the Past*, paper by Geraldine Smyth at the consultation on Forgiveness, Peace and Reconciliation, Volos (Greece).
3. Ibid. 2
4. Learning for this part was drawn from the *Statement from the WCC Conference on Racism Today and the Rationale for Continued Ecumenical Engagement*, Cleveland, Ohio, August 26-29, 2010.
5. Input taken from “Peace and Peace-Making as an Inter-Faith and Ecumenical Vocation: An Orthodox View”, a paper presented by Emmanuel Clapsis, during the PREPC Inter-Orthodox Consultation in Leros (Greece).
6. From the conference on *Orthodox Contribution to a Theology of Just Peace: Developing the Principles of a Just Peace*, Saidnaya, Syria, 18-22 October 2010.
7. Learning derived from the outcome document of the consultation on “A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for Ecumenical Commemoration”, Monastery of Bose (Italy), 29 October – 2nd November 2008.
8. Learning drawn from the report of the consultation on “Violence in Media and Entertainment: Challenges and Opportunities”, Boston, Mass., U.S.A., 23-26 June 2010.
9. Violent video games exist alongside other risk factors for violence, such as domestic

abuse, peer violence, social dysfunction, failure of self-regulation, and a lack of strong social support systems.

10. Elements taken from the Memorandum that was issued at the end of the consultation on “Peace on Earth and Peace with the Earth”, John Knox International Reformed Centre, Geneva (Switzerland). [Date??]

11. Elements taken from *Ecumenism and Climate Change*, a paper presented by Guillermo Kerber at the consultation on Climate Change, Nadi (Fiji). [Date??]

12. As a result of this process, the “Statement on Eco-Justice and Ecological Debt” and the “Statement on Just Finance and the Economy of Life” have been adopted by the Central Committee in September 2009.

13. For this entire part, the learning has been drawn from “The Dar Es Salaam Statement”, “The Guatemala Statement” and “The Chiang Mai Statement”.

14. From the conference on Orthodox Contribution to a Theology of Just Peace: Developing the Principles of a Just Peace, Saidnaya, Syria, 18-22 October 2010.

15. From “*R2P and Just Policing: A Roman Catholic and Yoderian Perspective*”, paper presented by Tobias Winright during the consultation on the Responsibility to Protect, Arnoldshain (Germany).

16. Ibid., 9.

17. Ibid. 9.

18. “Report on the ‘Orthodox Peace Ethics’ Conference in Bucharest”, Philip LeMasters, *Boston Theological Institute Magazine*, Fall 2009.

19. Learning mainly drawn from “Peace and Peace-Making as an Inter-Faith and Ecumenical Vocation: An Orthodox View”, paper presented by Emmanuel Clapsis during the Pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox consultation in Leros (Greece).

20. Learning derived from the conference on Orthodox Contribution to a Theology of Just Peace: Developing the Principles of a Just Peace, Saidnaya, Syria, 18-22 October 2010.

21. Learning for this part was derived from *The Bern Perspective*, i.e., the final document of the international theological conference on the “Promised Land..

22. Learning from the International Colloquium on the People of God in Bible and Tradition: Semantic Implications and Modern Relevance.

23. Learning from the Bossey consultation on Human Rights and Human Dignity, and from the Pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox consultation in Leros.

24. From the conference on Orthodox Contribution to a Theology of Just Peace: Developing the Principles of a Just Peace, Saidnaya, Syria, 18-22 October 2010.

25. Learning from *The Hwacheon Call*, outcome document of the conference on “Nuclear Weapons, North East Asia and Beyond: Re-Vitalizing the Ecumenical Movement”, Hwacheon (South Korea).

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## APPENDIX II

### Select Bibliography of Peace Statements

#### CHURCH STATEMENTS ON PEACE WITH RELEVANCE TO "JUST PEACE"

*English-language documents or translations; WCC documents not included*

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## **APPENDIX III**

### **Sample Church Peace Statements**

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# 1.

## „GUIDE OUR FEET INTO THE WAY OF PEACE“

### **Declaration on Just Peace of the Union of German Mennonite Congregations (Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden, VDM)**

A submission to the ecumenical  
“Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2011:  
Churches Seeking Reconciliation”

#### **Foreword**

*“Friedensstifter wolln wir sein, Christus lädt uns dazu ein...  
Tochter, Sohn von Gott geliebt, trage weiter, was er gibt”*

*(“We seek to be peacemakers, Christ has invited us to join this task...  
Beloved daughters, sons of God, carry on what he has given us.”)*

We have taken up the invitation of Christ from hymn 488 of the German Mennonite Hymnal (Mennonitisches Gesangbuch, 2004), and in a variety of ways we have set out on the path toward a peace declaration. There is no comparable document in all of the nearly 125 years of the Union of German Mennonite Congregations (VDM).

This peace declaration was formulated in a cooperative process that listened to the voices of many of our congregants, in accordance with our theological conviction of the “priesthood of all believers”. And so this result has great importance for us. Many people contributed suggestions, and the final text was then agreed upon by congregational delegates at a special general assembly of the VDM. This peace declaration also serves as our contribution to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation of the World Council of Churches to be held in Jamaica in 2011, at the close of the Decade to Overcome Violence.

My thanks go out to all congregations that participated in the process, to all individuals who gave of their time and energy in our struggle to give expression to our faith, and to the Mennonite Peace Center Berlin and its advisory board for having guided the entire process. We also wish to thank James Jakob Fehr of the German Mennonite Peace Committee for having provided the English translation of this text.

The process is not at an end: Now we are called to continue working for a Just Peace within our Mennonite community, within the larger ecumenical fellowship and indeed in all of society. In all our exertions we trust in God’s guidance and seek to orient ourselves on the message of peace in Jesus Christ. And so we pray: “Lord, guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:79)

Pastor Corinna Schmidt  
Chair of the Union of German Mennonite Congregations  
(Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden)

## **„GUIDE OUR FEET INTO THE WAY OF PEACE“**

*... to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
in the forgiveness of their sins,  
through the tender mercy of our God,  
when the day shall dawn upon us from on high,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

*Luke 1:77-79*

The following text is the product of a concentrated process of discussion within the Union of German Mennonite Congregations (Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden, VDM). Along the path toward a common peace declaration our insights were deepened by numerous conversations and group discussions. We set ourselves three goals:

- to deliberate on and articulate the convictions held within the congregations of the VDM,
- to make our peace witness transparent for others and to raise our voice concerning the social and political issues of our day, and
- at the close of the Decade to Overcome Violence to make a contribution as one of the Historical Peace Churches<sup>1</sup> and as charter member of the World Council of Churches on the way toward the International Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica in 2011.

This peace declaration stands in the theological tradition of those who have reflected on the biblical concept of “just peace”.<sup>2</sup> Using as a guideline the seven shared faith convictions of the Mennonite World Conference<sup>3</sup>, it interprets each of these from the viewpoint of a Just Peace theology.

Outline:

### A. The Theology of Just Peace and Nonviolence

1. Shalom of God – The Promised Peace
2. Reconciliation in Jesus Christ – Freed from Violence
3. The Responsibility of the Church – The Witness of Peace

### B. The Proving Grounds of Just Peace and Nonviolence

1. The Task of Peace within our Congregations
2. Peace as the Task of our Congregations in their immediate Social Context
3. The Task of Peace at National and International Levels

## A. THE THEOLOGY OF JUST PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE

*By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice:*

### 1. Shalom of God – The Promised Peace

“Shalom! Peace be with you!” are the words with which Jesus greeted his companions.<sup>4</sup> This salutation, an integral part of daily life for the people of Israel, means completeness,

*1. God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.*

wholeness, well-being, and it has its well-spring in justice. “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”<sup>5</sup> Shalom encompasses peace with God, peace among human beings and also peace with and within all of creation. Shalom

is the promised and just peace of God: all broken and unjust relationships are to be made right, as they were originally intended in creation. Justice means freedom from oppression<sup>6</sup>, as well as just treatment for those suffering injustice, the poor and the foreigners<sup>7</sup>. Whoever trusts in this divine justice will experience shalom, God’s just peace<sup>8</sup>.

We live in a world in which shalom is still incomplete. However, through God’s own self-revelation, we know that the Kingdom of God is already beginning to take on substantial form in our world. This is the foundation of the hope that is actively transforming our present-day world. “Thus says the Lord: Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance will be revealed.”<sup>9</sup> For this reason we witness to God’s will for “peace, justice and the integrity of creation” in our worship, ministry and mission – in the midst of all brokenness and human frailty.

### 2. Reconciliation in Jesus Christ – Freed from Violence

Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God revealed his will for just peace and has made his Kingdom into a reality for us.

*2. Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world, and offers eternal life.*

We see this in the way that Jesus allies himself with the poor and suffering, the persecuted and with all who long for justice<sup>10</sup>

including those who are burdened by guilt. Jesus’ manner of living is our paradigm and an invitation to follow him along the path of love, reconciliation and overcoming violence<sup>11</sup>. God pledges his messianic peace to the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness<sup>12</sup>.

God reveals his love for enemies in the way of Jesus toward the cross and in his rejection of violence<sup>13</sup>. Jesus shows how God’s justice aims at reconciliation, not retribution, vengeance or destruction. In our faith we thus experience freedom from guilt.

In the resurrection of Jesus God's love proves victorious even over the power of death. All "principalities and powers" are exposed as limited and insufficient, because God's compassion is not halted even by death. Divine justice prevails through mercy.

In this way God restores his relationship to humanity, so that we can experience healing among ourselves and with all of creation. God's justification liberates us so that we can walk the path of love, nonviolence and reconciliation –however weak and imperfect our efforts may be<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. The Responsibility of the Church – The Witness of Peace

By God's grace we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives. In baptism we receive and confess the reconciliation in Christ and express our will to follow Jesus along the path of nonviolence. In this reconciled community we acknowledge our solidarity with all fellow Christians; together we seek to bring reconciliation where violence and injustice still hold sway.

*3. As a church, we are a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith, and follow Christ in life.*

A shared interpretation of the Bible is also possible through fellowship with Christians from other cultures and traditions. This exchange shields us from arrogance, complacency and self-righteousness. In a "life of obedience" we want to listen to God's liberating instruction and to each other. This will open our eyes to our own responsibility for those who are suffering or threatened in any given situation.

*4. As a faith community, we accept the Bible as our authority for faith and life, interpreting it together under Holy Spirit guidance, in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.*

Together with our brothers and sisters of faith from other cultures and traditions we want to seek shared opportunities to overcome violence and to live just lives. To this end we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek the will of God.

We confess that we often do not act in accord with God's will for shalom. In this imperfect world we are confronted with difficult decisions, where we can even bear guilt through our nonviolent actions or through our failure to act. Therefore we seek counsel, comfort and courage in the community of believers, so that we do not fall into resignation. In all our decisions and actions we trust in the gracious and merciful forgiveness of God.

There is no sphere of life in which our faith in Christ should not be the ultimate court of appeal for our decisions and actions<sup>15</sup>.

*5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice, and share our possessions with those in need.*

We understand the call to be peacemakers as our responsibility to the world. We resist any attempt to legitimate violence theologically: The commandment "thou shalt not kill" and Jesus' call to love our enemies are directly relevant for contemporary political

disputes. We oppose the use of military violence. Because all humans are created in the image of God and consequently their dignity is inviolable, violence can never be a legitimate instrument for human beings, and thus also not for governments. Hence, we oppose

military service and encourage each other to participate in peaceful civilian services.

We see our calling as a peace church and therefore we support conflict prevention, nonviolent interventions during conflicts and reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of conflict<sup>16</sup>. We realize that following this path can in the end lead to endangering our own lives.

We are conscious of our responsibility toward persons whose lives are threatened, whether they are suffering violence that is politically sanctioned, whether through military, economic or terrorist means or through criminal activity.

We distinguish military violence from the actions of force and protection used by police. The latter must adhere to the principles of law, respect all human rights and aim at the reduction and de-escalation of violence. Wherever possible police actions should desist from employing weapons and using violence<sup>17</sup>.

We know that members of our congregations may have struggles with their conscience, should they decide to serve in police or military forces. In such situations we want to offer help towards a decision that is oriented toward the Gospel and Christ's love of enemies. As congregations we are committed to accompanying our members and respecting their decisions.

In the local congregation we experience spiritual strengthening, assurance in our journey of faith and ethical direction. We celebrate the Lord's Supper as a meal of reconciliation, remembering the restored fellowship in Christ, and as a meal of hope, envisioning the promised shalom of God.

*6. We gather regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountability.*

In this way God's Spirit calls us to a life of peace.

We regard the local congregation as the primary context in which we practice and experience a culture of nonviolence. In the immediate experience of community we are responsible for one another and seek patterns for living in just relationships. And we believe that these patterns hold promise for all of humanity, for as the Scriptures say "there is no distinction"<sup>18</sup>.

The unity afforded by our faith in Christ breaks through all barriers that might separate us. In its actions and in its witness to the gospel, the community of faith addresses itself to the larger context of living with others in the world.

*7. As a world-wide community of faith and life we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender and language. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation, and inviting all people to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.*

We are part of a nation and its institutions, and so we participate in and take on responsibility for it. We acknowledge the important service of the state in protecting the weak and defending the rule of law –

among the latter this includes protecting human rights, freedom of conscience and religion, conscientious objection to military service and freedom of opinion<sup>19</sup>.

The institutions and laws of the state should not be regarded as absolutes. It is the responsibility and calling of the church of Jesus Christ to raise objections to inequality, to work for justice and to assist in the development of means for nonviolent conflict resolution. A clear and unambiguous separation of church and state is indispensable, in order that the church can apply its ethical capacities for solidarity and critical discernment within the state.

Among the duties of the church within society is the issue of addressing and overcoming the causes of violence. This includes counterposing to a globalization that is dominated by economic interests the concept of “accountable stewardship”<sup>20</sup>, which directs our action not by motives of power and profit-making, but by solidarity and mutual responsibility. This stewardship extends to the created order that has been entrusted to us, so that all may have access to clean air and water and so that nature’s resources may be preserved for all of humanity.

One of the challenges of a pluralistic society is the possibility of nonviolent coexistence of people from diverse religions, as well as those without any confession. A significant hallmark of the authenticity of our peace church witness is our capacity to give voice to this witness in the encounter with persons having other convictions. We believe that genuine dialogue is grounded in our faith in Christ. In these situations we witness to our own faith and at the same time take seriously the beliefs of our counterpart.<sup>21</sup>

*In these convictions we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the 16th century, who modelled radical discipleship to Jesus Christ. We seek to walk in his name by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we confidently await Christ’s return and the final fulfilment of God’s kingdom.*

Anabaptists and Mennonites have expressed their faith and their understanding of following Jesus in various ways over the centuries. Some have lived in intentional communities and shared their wealth, others as a scattered alliance of like-minded persons in societies dominated by other confessions. Some have separated themselves; others have been open to other views and have witnessed within that context. Some have strictly opposed any kind of violence; others have acknowledged the legitimacy of the use of violence by the authorities. Indeed, in some cases they have themselves used violence to protect others and themselves (so, for example, in the case of Mennonites in Russia who organized their self-protection against irregular troops in 1918-1920).

We regard the numerous ruptures among Anabaptists and Mennonites both as admonition and as obligation to live in tolerance and acceptance of one another in our differences, even as Christ has accepted us “for the glory of God”<sup>22</sup>. In our working together and in our candid disputes with one another, we seek that which brings about reconciliation and communion. When disagreeing about the appropriate means to reduce and overcome violence or about how to witness faithfully for peace, we want to abide in conversation with each other and allow ourselves to be challenged by one another.

The New Testament directs our attention to the life and path of Jesus Christ. We are called to follow him, to learn how to love our enemies and take the path of reconciliation. The call to discipleship challenges us as individuals and as congregations to take the path of nonviolence.

## B. THE PROVING GROUNDS OF JUST PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE

The task of peace is not restricted to ending violence. It also seeks to establish structures that will contribute to a just and long-lasting peace. The church's peace work includes activities in various areas and at all levels of human interaction:

- between individuals and within families
- within congregations
- in the immediate social context
- at the workplace, at schools and training centres
- within institutions and movements
- at various governmental levels
- at the international level

Hence, working for peace is not a supplementary activity, but rather the common thread of all human engagement that enables us to build a culture of peace. "Since wars begin in the minds of human beings (men), it is in the minds of human beings (men) that the defences of peace must be constructed."<sup>23</sup> Peace is a constant goal for life and instruction. The goal is to:

- communicate techniques for peace
- motivate capabilities for peace and
- teach practical skills for peace

Central to the task of a comprehensive peace-building is a decisive response to violence. What is required is both creativity and the will to break through the chains of violence when reacting in a nonviolent manner to violent situations. This includes:

- prevention – preventing conflicts
- mediation – intervening in conflicts
- reconciliation – healing after conflicts

Congregations are confronted by various circumstances and so they need to apply divergent solutions to their contexts. Consequently, the challenges facing urban congregations may not pose any great problem for rural congregations, and vice versa. And yet the issues of conflict, violence and peace remain relevant for all congregations, no matter what their concerns.

### 1. The Task of Peace within our Congregations

*Conflict transformation* – Congregations that practice nonviolent resolution of conflicts are engaging in prevention and reconciliation, when they:

- talk directly with each other instead of talking about each other
- involve as many persons as possible in their decision-making processes, and
- speak to and deal directly with conflict, in order to halt or prevent the loss of caring and respectful
- communication with one other.

*Healing and reconciliation* – Congregations work as agents of healing when they offer themselves as a “sheltered space”, where persons feel safe to end their silence and to talk about their experiences of violence, for example in cases of domestic violence<sup>24</sup>. This safe space should be made available to all concerned parties, both victim and offender. We can develop practices of reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict.

*Integrity of creation* – Each congregation can engage in exemplary actions within its own environment, for example by purchasing fair trade products or by using its buildings in an ecologically responsible manner.

## **2. Peace as the Task of our Congregations in their Immediate Social Context**

There are various opportunities for encounters within one’s neighbourhood, depending on the respective social context of each congregation. Through cooperation agreements and networking we can work together in the areas of preventing violence and together take steps to work for peace and reconciliation. We support projects that are committed to teaching nonviolent approaches in dealing with conflict<sup>25</sup>.

*Local ecumenical activities* – We support the observance of joint worship services with other confessional churches, for example on the International Day of Prayer for Peace (September 21), the Ecumenical Peace-Decade (Ökumenische Friedensdekade, Ecumenical 10 Days of Peace in November) or the Women’s World Day of Prayer (first Friday in March). Where there is a local association of Christian churches, this can provide a platform for joint activities in the immediate social context.

*Intercultural and interreligious encounters* – Wherever we witness outright or hidden racism, we must object to it forthrightly and openly. We want our congregations to be places that are known for their warm hospitality<sup>26</sup>.

Developing a peaceful and open relationship to persons of other religious convictions is an area of growing importance in present-day society. Together with other churches we are striving for more open encounters and for inter-religious dialogues that are marked by mutual respect<sup>27</sup>... Our churches should be meeting places for these events.

Because of the inseparable connection between the Jewish and Christian faiths and because of the painful historical experiences of the 20th century in Germany, we hold the Jewish-Christian dialogue to be of great importance, in order that we may give genuine expression to our peace witness and our service of reconciliation.

We regard every form of discrimination as a real danger for peace in our society. We want to offer our protection to all its victims and offer them a home in our congregations.

## **3. The Task of Peace at National and International Levels**

“Introducing elements of an ideal society into the raw realities of a world full of violence“ – with these words the Mennonite Central Committee<sup>28</sup> described its motivation for registering itself as an NGO at the United Nations Organization. This challenge can be turned into reality at different levels and through various kinds of institutions and organisations.

Some examples of this are included in the following list:

- German Mennonite Relief Agency (Mennonitisches Hilfswerk) – The project “Le Pelican” in Kabul, Afghanistan trains young people as bakers and assists them in setting up their own businesses<sup>29</sup>.
- German Mennonite Missions Committee (Deutsches Mennonitisches Missionskomitee) started a project to build a well in Hammady, Ghana<sup>30</sup>.
- Mennonite Voluntary Services (Christliche Dienste). Volunteers work in various parts of the world caring for children and the elderly, building homes for the homeless, working in soup kitchens and food distribution – for the sake of peace and reconciliation. Afterward they bring their newly won perspectives and experiences back into their home settings<sup>31</sup>.
- German Mennonite Peace Committee (Deutsches Mennonitisches Friedenskomitee). Seminars for young people teach them how to engage nonviolently in conflicts<sup>32</sup>.
- Military Counselling Network. American soldiers who want to leave the military receive counselling and legal aid for court cases<sup>33</sup>.
- Mennonite Peace Center Berlin (Mennonitisches Friedenszentrum Berlin). Membership on the advisory council of the advocacy worker appointed by the Union of Evangelical Free Churches (Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen) at the seat of the German government in Berlin affords the opportunity to participate directly in the daily work of political policy and decision-making, cooperating with other religious and non-religious representatives<sup>34</sup>. This follows the model of the MCC’s advocacy offices at the US government (Washington D.C.) and the United Nations (New York)<sup>35</sup>.
- Institute for Peace Church Theology at the University of Hamburg, Germany, offers training for students of peace theology and cooperates with other faculties and the social sciences in the field of peace education<sup>36</sup>.
- Center for Peace and Justice at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg/VA, USA, offers special intensive training programmes for professional peace workers from all parts of the world, including non-Mennonites and non-Christians<sup>37</sup>.
- Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), sends long-term teams of trained peace workers into regions of conflict. The teams focus on documenting and publishing cases of human rights abuses, offer protective accompaniment of endangered persons, mediate contacts between local and/or international human rights organisations and develop nonviolent alternatives to resolving conflicts. CPT has had a continuous presence in Palestine’s West Bank since 1995, in Columbia since 2001 and in Iraq since 2002. Periodically, teams and delegations are sent to other places of conflict, for example, supporting local groups working to overcome racial violence against First Nations groups in Canada<sup>38</sup>.
- World Council of Churches (WCC). Through the VDM’s membership in the WCC and through its delegate to the WCC’s Central Committee, we give a voice to the peace

churches at an international level, for example in initiating the ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence<sup>39</sup>.

*„Guide our feet into the way of peace“*

May this prayer motivate, guide and accompany us in all our efforts, planning and action.

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Agreed upon in Hanover, December 5, 2009  
General Meeting of the VDM

Translation: James Jakob Fehr

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*Notes*

1. The term “Historical Peace Churches” designates those Protestant confessional churches for whom nonviolence is an integral part of their ecclesial identity. The term “historical” refers back to the long ecclesial traditions of these three denominations: the Mennonites, the oldest Protestant free church, which originated among the Anabaptists of the Reformation era, the Church of the Brethren, which emerged from the Pietist movement of the 18th century and the Society of Friends (also known as Quakers) whose roots are among the Puritans of the 17th century. Cf. Fernando Enns, “Friedenskirchen, Historische/Mennoniten”, in: Taschenlexikon Ökumene, Frankfurt (2003), p. 107f.
2. The concept of a “just peace” gained currency as a conceptual model for Christian peace ethics through the ecumenical assemblies of Magdeburg (1988) and Dresden (1989) in East Germany. This model, developed through the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, distinguishes itself from earlier conceptual frameworks for peace that focus primarily on weapons reduction and just war theory for the sake of preventing or curtailing war. The Just Peace model criticizes these earlier models for being too narrowly focussed and for not adequately integrating justice with peace. Cf. “Zum Begriff des gerechten Friedens – ein kurzer Überblick zur Genese des Begriffs“, [http://www.menno-friedenszentrum.de/fileadmin/downloads/Der\\_Begriff\\_des\\_gerechten\\_Friedens.pdf3](http://www.menno-friedenszentrum.de/fileadmin/downloads/Der_Begriff_des_gerechten_Friedens.pdf3)
3. Cf. [www.mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org). Quotations of these “Shared Convictions” as adopted at the General Assembly in Pasadena, California on March 15th, 2006, are set in boxes at the appropriate places in our text.
4. See John 20:19. (Quotations are from the NRSV, except where otherwise noted.)
5. Is 32:17 (NIV); see also Rom 6:18.
6. See Ex 3:7
7. See Ex 22:20-26; Is 32:16.
8. See Ps 37:37
9. Is 56:1 (RSV).
10. See Mt 5:6.
11. See Mat 5:39ff; Mk 10:42; Rom 12:17-21; 2 Cor 5:16-21.

12. See Mt 5; Mt 11:28-30.
13. The term “violence” (in German: Gewalt) is used here in the sense of harmful action toward others whether in physical or psychological manner, whether in direct or indirect forms through structural or cultural violence.
14. 2 Pet 2:21.
15. See Mt 6:24
16. 2 Cor 5:16-21
17. In the United Nations Organization and the World Council of Churches the possibility of intervention by the international community in cases of severe human rights violations or genocide is being deliberated. However, to date there are no international police troops who have been trained in the principles of law and justice, the use of proportionate means, techniques for deescalating and limiting violence, and who stand under the control of international legal jurisdiction. A further problem with this concept is its criteria for employing such troops, which are reminiscent of the dogma and intentions of “just war”. We fear that in the actual deployment these international police forces could easily be caught up in the conflict and might then use military violence. Together with the community of Churches we wish to work toward ways of ensuring that both in definition and in practice such “international police troops” do not incline toward violence.
18. See Rom 10:12, Gal 3:28.
19. See Rom 13.
20. Included within the concept of „accountable stewardship” are the following criteria: respecting the integrity of the environment (or creation), social needs, peaceful coexistence and the needs of the different generations. Cf. “Unsere Verantwortung für Gottes Schöpfung“, EKD-Text 52, Hannover 1995.
21. See 1Pet 3:15f.
22. See Rom 15:7.
23. See the preamble to the UNESCO Constitution of 1945 in the expanded version of 2001: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001337/133729e.pdf#page=7>
24. This definition comes from Bremen’s general medical council: Diagnose: Häusliche Gewalt. Ein Leitfaden für Ärzte und Ärztinnen, ed. Ärztekammer Bremen in Zusammenarbeit mit der TK, May 2006: „Domestic violence refers to violence among adult partners within a relationship and includes physical violence (e.g. blows, kicks, strangulation, the use of weapons, deprivation of food), psychological violence (e.g. sleep deprivation, constant verbal abuse, humiliation, threats), sexual violence (e.g. forced sexual relations, rape by the partner), social violence (e.g. confinement, forbidding social contacts), economic violence (e.g. refusal of financial needs, forbidding employment). Often more than one form of violence will be used by the offender. Children frequently observe these actions or are also its victims. Victims and offenders come from all social and economic backgrounds, independent of education, income, social status, culture, origin or age.”
25. An example of this is the project “Faustlos” (= Fistless), a school curriculum that develops social and emotional competence and thwarts aggressive behaviour in schools and kindergartens: [www.faustlos.de](http://www.faustlos.de). The church programme, “Schritte gegen Tritte” (= Steps against Kicks), works to prevent violence among teenagers beginning at age 13; it deals with structural, ethnic and person violence and trains teenagers in methods of nonviolent conflict resolution, using materials that are adapted for the gender-specific needs of young persons: [www.schrittegegentritte.de](http://www.schrittegegentritte.de).

26. For example, the “Café International”, a joint project of the German Mennonite Relief Agency (Mennonitisches Hilfswerk), the Berlin Mennonite Church and the Council of African Christians in Berlin and Brandenburg.
27. For example, the project called “Weißt Du, wer ich bin?” (= Do you know who I am?), a joint project of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) and the Association of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK), [www.weisstduwerichbin.de](http://www.weisstduwerichbin.de).
28. MCC is an international relief organisation directed by North American Mennonites: [www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org).
29. See [www.menno-hilfswerk.de](http://www.menno-hilfswerk.de).
30. See [www.mission-mennoniten.de](http://www.mission-mennoniten.de).
31. See [www.christlichedienste.de](http://www.christlichedienste.de).
32. See [www.dmfk.de](http://www.dmfk.de).
33. See [www.mc-network.de](http://www.mc-network.de).
34. See [www.menno-friedenszentrum.de](http://www.menno-friedenszentrum.de).
35. See [www.mcc.org/us/washington](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington) and [www.mcc.org/un](http://www.mcc.org/un).
36. See [www.theologie.uni-hamburg.de/afk](http://www.theologie.uni-hamburg.de/afk).
37. See [www.emu.edu](http://www.emu.edu).
38. See [www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org).
39. See [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org) and [gewaltueberwinden.org/de](http://gewaltueberwinden.org/de).

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## 2.

### **A Korean Theologians' Response to Initial Draft of Just Peace**

*A group of theologians teaching at different seminaries and universities of the Presbyterian Church of Korea met together from 19-20 January 2010 to reflect on the Initial Statement of Just Peace that the WCC has prepared for the forthcoming International Ecumenical Convocation to be held in May 2011 in Kingston, Jamaica.*

1. The God in which we believe is the God of Life who desires all creation to enjoy life in all its fullness (Jn 10:10). Therefore, the destruction of life is a destruction of peace and a blasphemy before God. Denying the right of life that is a gift for all creation is not only unfaithfulness to God but is also the cause of violence.

In the world today, however, we see the life of all creation being threatened with utter destruction by human greed. The livelihood of creation itself is at stake as the toll of human activities to manipulate creation for its own benefit and consumption. The human desire to manipulate God's creation and God-given characteristics of life is a denial of life and a blasphemy against God.

Therefore, we reject any kind of human attempt to manipulate or distort God's created universe according to human greed and avarice. We also reject all theologies and doctrines that justify human domination of creation as "divinely inspired" and attempts to legitimate the corruption of creation. Such human corruption is a distortion, destruction and violation of life, the God-given right of life of all creation.

We, as Christians, once again affirm that we are part of God's created world and are called to live in harmony and peace with all God's creatures in God's created world (Is 6:3).

2. The God in which we believe is the God of Reconciliation who dismantles the walls of division between individuals and communities (Eph 2:14).

In the world today, however, we see innumerable divisions which continue to threaten the life and peace of people and earth. We live in a world deeply torn apart and divided by the historical residues of colonial exploitation, the continued imposition of artificial boundaries by Empire and its militarism fuelled by greed, resulting in violence and war. The cries of the people who bear the brunt of such violence and who are constantly struck by the sharp end of the spear ring out in the regions thus divided, Palestine and the Korean peninsula providing very specific examples. The imposition of this artificial division is a sin which severs those who suffer its traumatic effects from the fullness of life, a gift from the God of Life.

Therefore we reject all ideologies, political policies, practices, theologies, religious beliefs and any other human forces which do not recognize the inherent value of the other, demonizing that which is not familiar, and seeks to justify one's peace at the cost of the suffering of the other. Peace for oneself based on the suffering of the other is a denial of the worthiness of the other and disregards the fact that we are cohabiters on earth.

As theologians who live and bear witness to the God of life in the midst of division we adamantly reject the global and geo-political system which perpetuates the current state of division on the Korean peninsula. The division of one part affects the entire global community. As such, Christians are called to break down the walls of division and heal its pain, to overcome the legacy of colonialism and the remnants of the Cold War which still cling to our communities like the stench of death.

**3.** The God in which we believe is the Sovereign who reigns over all powers and principalities and yet emptied Godself to become one of us, to serve rather than be served (Mk 10:45; Phil 2:5-11).

In the world in which we live, however, we see the ideologies and practices of the Empire that aspires to dethrone God and enthrones itself to extend and keep its influence over the geo-political market through military power. We hear the cries of the victims of violence, the refugees who have lost homes and livelihoods because of war.

Therefore we reject the US Empire and all other Empires which seek to usurp the sovereign authority of God. We reject the arrogance of Empire which perpetuates a life-killing civilization and even aspires to colonize Space; to subjugate entire communities of people with the threat of war based on a new concept of war which unilaterally utilizes the ideology of pre-emptive strikes.

We affirm that we are called to live in this world as God's people, to serve and glorify God only. We have been called to listen to the cries of the victims, to empathize with their pain and to walk in solidarity with them in their quest for just peace and fullness of life. We are called to be witnesses of Jesus Christ who suffered under the violence of Empire (Jn 19:19; 1 Cor 2:8).

**4.** The God in which we believe is the God of the Basics; who feeds all God's creation (Mk 6:30-44; Rom 8; Is 65:17-27).

In the world we live in today, however, we see the evils of the current global economic system which is exclusionary in nature. It thrives on the monopoly of capital and market by the rich few and worships the god of development at the expense of the erosion of earth's ecological health. It colonizes the consciousness of the people through media and the promotion of consumerism, forcing us to worship Mammon in the place of God. It perpetuates the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, exploitation of human labour, enforced poverty due to underemployment and holds people hostage with the constant threat of unemployment as more and more people are demoted to cogs in the wheel, disposable labour at the mercy of the global economic machine. Many are degraded to economic refugees in spite of the fact that many work, albeit partially. The tyranny of multinational corporations has created an environment in which people no longer receive their

rightful fruits for their labour. The current economic injustice and inequality shatter peace among individuals and within communities. Peace is economic justice for all – equalizing the distribution and sharing of grain to each mouth. The exclusion of any from basic economic activities is a denial of the blessing and peace of life together.

Therefore we reject the current dominant capitalist economic system which denies the rights of the majority to work for the benefit of a few, erodes ecology, promotes greed and the false belief that unlimited economic growth is possible, and places Mammon on the throne of worship instead of God.

We are called, in a context where the multitude are excluded and the ninety nine sheep are lost, to “re-member” them into their rightful place of life; to work for and accompany the economically disenfranchised of society who constitute the majority of contemporary global society (Mk 8:1-10; Lk 14:21; 16:19-31).

**5.** The God we believe is the God of Creation. The Created world is not ours to own but that of the Creator God. The Psalmist declares “The earth is the Lord’s and in it, and all who live in it.” (Ps 24:1)

The world in which we live today is a world in which this creation is threatened by climate change and the ensuing ecological crises (Is 24:5). We have reached a critical point where not only the life of humankind but all of creation is at risk. The effects of the ecological crises which we face today can be felt all around us. It is no longer mere scientific prediction but a daily experience in our everyday lives. We are fast approaching the irreversible point where the extinction of species and the greatest violence is that perpetuated by humans against all creatures.

Therefore we reject the mistaken belief which regards creation as the possession of humankind refusing to acknowledge that it is God’s creation. We reject the dogma of developmentalism and its false ideals of unlimited growth. We reject the lies of science which promises wealth and health as it is based on the basis of tampering with the ecosystem. We reject the current monopolization of agriculture by multinational corporations who regard the earth and agriculture as the objects of economic exploitation. We call into question the governments and corporations who claim to be “eco-friendly” by promoting “green growth” as this in itself is self-contradictory and merely a façade attempting to camouflage their unswerving adherence to the dogma of developmentalism and unlimited growth.

As Christians we are called to promote not only peace on earth but also peace with earth. Therefore we repent our ecological sin and confess that we are called to repay our ecological debt. Humankind must embrace a fundamental shift from the current fossil fuel based civilization; transform the current consumerist life-style; reduce its appetite for consumption of material resources and practice a frugal life-style which seeks to consider the needs of neighbours as well as the livelihood of future generations (Mk 1:15; Joel 2:12-13).

**6.** The God we believe is the God of all people created in God’s image. We re-affirm that the *raison d’être* of all religions is to give fullness of life, compassion and comfort; to practice mercy, love of neighbour and self-denial; and to promote peace and harmony. Religion in itself is not violent in nature (Lk 10:27; Acts 17:23-27).

The world in which we live today, however, is one in which religion has lost its basic character and is corrupt, often becoming an instrument of violence in the service of political ideologies and secular interests, justifying its sins through distorted fundamentalist theologies. Religion is sometimes abused for political ends and has become a source of violence. Conflicts between religions are threatening global peace and endangering the lives of individuals and entire communities.

Therefore, we reject exclusivist fundamentalism, patriarchy in all religions, religion subverting itself to secular interests, any political manipulation of religion and distortion of its values. All religions must be free from being abused by politics and liberated from fundamentalism.

We as Christians are called to be advocates of God's peace, bearing witness to each religion's basic teachings and tenets, conducting ourselves in a spirit of mutual respect, and solidarity and cooperation.

**7.** The God we believe is God, the Spirit. God renews our spirits and provides us with new energy. God provides us with the spirituality of peace which seeks repentance of sins and forgiveness of faults. This spirituality is expressed in action which is non-violent. This spirituality is more than the deepening of individual faith but is a public spirituality, a social spirituality. It seeks to establish peace, refusing to utilize means and methods which are themselves violent and therefore "un-peaceful" (Jn 4:24; 2 Cor 3:17).

The world in which we live today, however, is one in which the acts of resistance by the victims is labelled "terrorism" and the violence of the perpetrators is called "the norm", "social order" and "governance". We live in a world where Mammon rules and the spirit of consumerism shackles the souls of people and enslaves them as commodities of the neo-liberal global economic order. Within this spirit only the machinations of Darwinian competitiveness dominates the hearts of individuals who are pitted against each other, forced to market themselves as commodities.

We reject the culture of violence which pervades our society. We reject the violence of governments and politicians as a means of extending their power. We reject the structural violence so prevalent in our societies. We reject all cultures, educational systems and structures which justify unlimited competition in the name of progress and development. We reject the violence of dehumanizing cultural mechanisms, such as patriarchy and racism, which degrade differences into discrimination.

We are called to develop a spirituality of resistance which empowers the marginalized and weak. This spirituality is different from the nonviolence advocated by the traditional peace churches. It is the spirituality of transformation that leads to action, such as that embodied by Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. It is a spirituality which not only resists against what is wrong but also presents an alternative. It is a world transforming spirituality, not an other-worldly spirituality. The spirituality which we are called to embody is a spirituality of poverty. It is following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, emptying our self and giving of ourselves to voluntary poverty as an act of prophetic witness and solidarity (Mt 5:3-12; Gal 3:28).

8. The God we believe is the God of the Faithful, and at the same time is a faithful God. Our God is the God who presents all creation with Shalom, Salaam, peace based on justice. However, the Church must confess that throughout its history it has failed to establish the peace to which it has been called by God, excluding the other, justifying war and aligning ourselves to the exploitations of colonialism and imperialism. Far too often the Church has stood as the vanguard of violence as it sided with the powerful. Rather than living out the peace of God it has justified the false “peace” of Empire.

The time has come for the Church to repent of its sins, especially the sin of murder and pillage committed during the Crusades, the sin of theologically justifying the burning of innocents during its witch hunts, legitimizing the slave trade and the annihilation of the native residents of America, Australia, Africa and other regions. The Spirit of repentance to which the Church is called must include an in-depth and serious study of Christian Scripture. Far too often the violence within Scripture has been overlooked or interpreted as a means of legitimizing the domination of the other. The Church is also called to repent of its divisions which express itself in violence, verbal and physical, against the other. The in-fighting of the Church is one of the primary reasons for violence which disrupts and destroys peace all around the world. Although the Church is called to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel of Peace it has lived and acted according to precepts which contradict it, such as triumphalism and the prosperity gospel. The world does not believe because of our divisions and because of our self-contradictory lives. The divisions which plague the church, and to which we must confess, are not only historical. They also exist within congregations between men and women, the strong and weak, the powerful and the marginalized.

Therefore, as we confess our sins of the past and renew ourselves for the future we reject all theologies, doctrines or narratives that justify violence, war and the unjust invasion of sovereign territory. We also reject any theology or discourse which justifies the logic of power and destroys peace.

We acknowledge that the Church is called once again to take up its prophetic role in society. The Church has been called to be the ambassador of reconciliation in a world of division and conflict. The Church is called to be the salt and light of this world, existing as an alternative society and distinctive community transforming the world as the Body of Christ, filling everything with the fullness of Christ (Eph 1:23). The Church exists not to extend itself but as a sign and symbol of the Kingdom of God in the world.

### *Closing Remarks*

In presenting this document for inclusion in the review process of the Statement of Just Peace that the WCC is preparing for the forthcoming International Ecumenical Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, we convey our thanks to those who came together and gave of their time and expertise in formulating its contents. All of us who participated in this process wish to express our appreciation of the wider global process presently being conducted and hope that our contribution will provide a building block for a more substantial final document. As Christian theologians and as people living in the midst of violence and division perpetuated by Empires we put forward our confession and commitments as a call to action for ourselves and those with whom we journey in the quest for justice. The

immediacy of our violent and divided context as a threat to life on the Korean peninsula compels us to look with greater expectation and aspirations toward the final results coming from Kingston. As such we expect great things to transpire as a result of the Convocation, results which will continue to inform and be included in our theological reflection and formation throughout the months leading to the 2013 Busan General Assembly of the WCC. We pray that as a result of our efforts new avenues for building peace in our lands and among our peoples will be discovered. Toward this end we will continue to journey in solidarity with all those who are working to realize God's Kingdom here on earth for the fullness of life for all.

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*List of Participants*

Prof. Bae, Hyunju, Busan Presbyterian University  
Prof. Han, Kook-Il, Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary  
Prof. Hwang, Hong-Ryeol, Busan Presbyterian University  
Prof. Chang, Yoon-Jae, Ewha Womans University  
Prof. Chung, Byung-Joon, Seoul Jangshin University  
Prof. Jeong, Gyeong-Ho, Youngnam Theological University and Seminary  
Prof. Jeong, Sung-Han, Youngnam Theological University and Seminary  
Prof. Jeong, Won-Bum, Daejeon Theological Seminary  
Prof. Kang, Suny-Ryul, Honam Theological University and Seminary  
Dr Kim, Dong-Sung, Saemoonan Presbyterian Church  
Dr Lee, Seung-Ryeol, Church and Diakonia Department, Presbyterian Church of Korea  
Prof. Lim, Hee-Mo, Jeonju Jangshin Theological Seminary  
Prof. Park, Seong-Won, Youngnam Theological University and Seminary (Convener)

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### 3.

**World Council of Churches  
Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Consultation  
Towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC)  
15-22 September 2009 - Leros, Greece**

**CALLED TO BE 'CRAFTSMEN OF PEACE AND JUSTICE'<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Preamble**

1. Responding to the invitation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to offer a theological contribution to the process leading to the 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in Kingston, Jamaica, an Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Consultation was held in the island of Leros, Greece, 15-22 September 2009.
2. The gathering was graciously hosted, on behalf of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, by H.E. Metropolitan Paisios of Leros, Kalymnos and Astypalaia, in the Dodecanese islands, Greece.
3. The meeting brought together twenty-five participants from nearly all Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, hierarchs, priests, members of monastic communities, university professors, lay persons male and female, and WCC staff. Leadership was provided by H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate).
4. The encounter took place in the context of daily prayer and in the spirit of Christian fellowship. Participants in the consultation experienced the genuine hospitality of the local church, the civil authorities and the people of the island of Leros who welcomed them warmly into their communities. They had also occasion to witness the traces – ancient and contemporary – of the extraordinary encounter of cultures, faiths and histories in this place.
5. The consultation provided an opportunity to deepen the understanding of peace and justice in the light of the Orthodox Tradition. The deliberations, in plenary and group discussions, were inspired by presentations, focusing on the Convocation's motto "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" and also exploring its four main themes. Participants were invited to reflect together and grasp the richness of Orthodox theology, spirituality, liturgical experience and witness to the contemporary world, which is full of rapid and radical changes; it is also tormented by the violence of wars, conflicts, poverty, violation of human rights, and ecological disaster, and longs for reconciliation and peace.
6. The consultation acknowledged the importance and significance of the process leading to the IEPC as a harvest of Churches' contribution to reconciliation and peace and, more concretely, as a celebration of the Decade to Overcome Violence which had already begun in 2001. Highlights of the conference included the planting of an olive tree as a symbol of

the Inter-Orthodox contribution to the IEPC and the celebration of the International Day of Prayer for Peace (21 September).

**7.** The core message the Consultation would like to convey is that Orthodox understanding of peace and justice embraces all dimensions of human existence and speaks to the entire world. Such an understanding goes beyond earthly realities, but has to be seen also as God's continuing work in history, manifested through the Church of Christ under the guidance and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

**8.** The Consultation intended (a) to introduce a deep theological and ecclesiological content to the concepts of peace and justice, (b) to explore concrete ways for cultivating and communicating peace in the present global situation, and (c) to offer some basic reflections, practical recommendations and examples of the four sub-themes of the IEPC.

**9.** Participants particularly expressed their hope that churches will reaffirm their commitment to reconciliation for a non-violent, peaceful and just world.

**10.** In 1986, the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference had already provided a solid theological and pastoral support meant to encourage and guide the Orthodox public witness and involvement. However, it was recognized that there is still the need to develop and learn practical ways, pastoral projects and opportunities that would allow Orthodox churches and faithful to actively participate in nurturing and defending a culture of peace.

**11.** Thus, the Report of the Consultation is offered as a contribution to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation and invites Orthodox churches to prayer, further study, and action.

## **I – PEACE AS GOD'S GIFT AND VOCATION**

**12.** In an increasingly complex and violent world, Christian churches have come to recognize that working for peace constitutes a primary expression of their responsibility for the life of the world. They are challenged to move beyond mere rhetorical denunciations of violence, oppression and injustice, and incarnate their ethical judgments into actions that contribute to a culture of peace. This responsibility is grounded on the essential goodness of all human beings by virtue of being in God's image and the goodness of all that God has created. Peace is inextricably related to the notion of justice and freedom that God has granted to all human beings through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit as a gift and vocation. It constitutes a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God's love for the world. The dynamic nature of peace as gift and vocation does not deny the existence of tensions, which form an intrinsic element of human relationships, but can alleviate their destructive force by bringing justice and reconciliation.

**13.** The Church understands peace and peacemaking as an indispensable aspect of its life and mission to the world. It grounds this faith conviction upon the wholeness of the Biblical tradition as it is properly interpreted through the Church's liturgical experience and practice. The Eucharist provides the space in which one discerns and experiences the fullness of the Christian faith in the history of God's revelation. It reflects the image of God's Trinitarian life in human beings and relates in love with the totality of the created world.

**14.** This eschatological experience of being in communion with God and participating in God's love for the created world provides the hermeneutical key by which the community existentially interprets the fullness of Christian tradition, including Scripture, and structures the Church's life and mission to the world. Love is the core of God's revelation as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. Thus, in the Patristic tradition the violent texts of Scripture were understood to refer to the spiritual struggle of the believer against the devil, evil and sin. This interpretation implies that in their view the God of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith cannot be identified with violence.

**15.** Peace in Scripture, as well as in the liturgical life, is a blessing and a dynamic grace-giving word (cf. Jn 20:19-21); it signifies communion with God, which leads to salvation. Jesus Christ is the peace of the world, since He is the bond of communion (cf. Eph 2:14-17): "We live in peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). God's peace is accessible to the world through the active presence of Holy Spirit in it that guides all into unity (cf. Acts 2:1) and grants peace, justice, love, and joy (Rom 14:14).

**16.** The Christian understanding of peace and how it is advanced in the life of the world is guided by the eschatological peace that God grants to the world through the Church, the reality of being with God and participating in the glory of His reign. It is a subversive principle that questions every necessity that legitimates violence. Those who have been reconciled and united with God long for the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven and embrace in love all human beings who constitute an indivisible unity because of the active presence of God's breath in them.

**17.** Since peace is constitutive of the Christian Gospel, Christian believers are involved in a permanent process of becoming more conscious of their responsibility to incarnate the message of peace and justice to the world as a sign of their unity with Christ. This is clearly stated by St. Basil: "Christ is our peace," and hence "he who seeks peace seeks Christ... [W]ithout love for others, without an attitude of peace towards all men, no one can be called a true servant of Christ."<sup>2</sup> Orthodox do not only pray for peace and believe that God has destined the world to live in justice, peace and unity, but as a result of their faith they are called to be active peacemakers. As St. Nicholas Cabasilas states, "Christians, as disciples of Christ who made all things for peace, are to be 'craftsmen of peace.'" They are called a peaceable race since "nothing is more characteristic of a Christian than to be a worker for peace."<sup>3</sup>

**18.** It has always been contrary to Orthodox theology to elaborate systematic theories that justify violence under the pretext of a just war or crusade. It has instead developed a dynamic commitment to the *praxis* of peace. One has to speak of the Christian peace concept and its contribution to the general peace movement not as an absolute one in a general religious, self-sufficient sense, but as a radical particularity which is unique in that it goes to the primary causes of war and violence. While military intervention may be tragically necessary to sustain a just peace in given circumstances, such uses of force fall short of normative Christ-like ways of responding to evil.

**19.** The Church may tolerate the limited use of force as a tragic necessity for the defence of justice and the preservation of the imperfect, yet still imperative, peace that is possible among the nations and peoples of the world in given situations. In every dimension of

life, the faithful are called to embody the way of Christ as fully as possible in the circumstances that they face: to forgive enemies; to work for the reconciliation of those who have become estranged; to overcome the divisions of race, nationality, and class; to care for the poor; to live in harmony with others; and to use the created goods of the world for the benefit of all.

**20.** Whenever there is harmony, justice, forgiveness, respect for human dignity, generosity, and care for the weak in the common life of humanity, people witness a blessing of the Lord and catch a glimpse - no matter how dim and imperfect - of the peace of Christ. Orthodox Christians should work for and welcome even broken and obscure manifestations of “just peace” which fall short of the fullness of the eschatological Kingdom of God. The uniqueness of the Christian claims about the eschatological nature of peace and justice could definitely become a necessary and positive counter-balance against all kinds of unilateral, human-centred and godless peace making.

**21.** It is important to differentiate the gift of God’s peace and how this gift is received, acknowledged, and communicated by the Church and the faithful to the world. While the gift of God’s peace is given through the Church to all by virtue of their identification with Christ, it is not equally true that the faithful or even the churches are always the vehicles of God’s grace and peace to the world. Christian responses to situations of violence are always subject to God’s judgement that compels the Churches and the faithful to ask God’s forgiveness for all their failures to be active agents of His peace to the world. Whenever people or communities resort to violence to resolve their conflicts, they are putting at risk their unity with God and they are in danger of losing their humanity. In the midst of violence, fragmentation, and injustice, Christian faith recognizes the active presence of God’s Spirit that leads all to unity in God’s justice, peace and love.

**22.** Peace is not a moral good by and in itself; it is linked with the most basic human values and practices as a permanent improvement of the human condition on all levels. The Christian churches, while they support all human efforts that repudiate the logic of violence and war, must not forget their greater mission to lead the world to address the deeper issues that plague human existence and life. Defending the dignity of every human person and the sanctity of life cannot be disengaged from the quest for greater justice and freedom as the foundation, source and origin of real and permanent peace. The exploitation of the natural world and the abuse of the resources of the creation disclose a pattern of life that leads to death, the ultimate consequence of sinful relation with God, creation, and humanity. The abuse of nature based on greed and self-serving interests and pleasures gives rise to wars and struggles, for they make nations and peoples competitors for scarce natural resources. If human beings wish to be at peace with one another, they must also be at peace with the environment.

**23.** The contribution of the Orthodox Church in advancing peace with justice and freedom depends upon their total commitment to the Gospel of love and reconciliation and on their courage to speak and act accordingly beyond any kind of temporary affiliations in the socio-political realm. Alienation based on age, class, race, and nationality may be overcome. St. Paul wrote, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

## II – CULTIVATING AND COMMUNICATING PEACE

**24.** The Orthodox Church, in light of its Trinitarian theology, cultivates peace by affirming unity within diversity (Jn 17:21) and rejecting imposed uniformity in a globalized context. It is important to oppose trends that threaten to endanger the uniqueness of the spiritual experience of particular churches, communities, and individuals. Christian education and pastoral guidance help people grow in acceptance of appropriate diversity among persons, nations, and religious and ethnic groups. There is much truth inherent in these different traditions, cultures, and communities. It is important to begin dialogue with what unites our communities, rather than with what divides them.

**25.** By always encouraging ecumenical dialogue and cooperation that recognize unity within diversity at the local level, congregations welcome migrants, asylum seekers, and other displaced and marginalized persons. As peacemakers, Christians need to look actively for the highest good of others. At local and international levels, they witness to the peace of Christ by showing love and service to everyone in need without being ignorant of or aggressive toward other religious communities. Examples of such compassionate witness to peace are abundant in the lives of churches in countries where Christians constitute a minority.

**26.** Spiritual formation cultivates peace within oneself, with God, and with others. An initial resource is liturgical life. The beginning of the Christian life is baptism in which one puts on Christ, “for He Himself is our peace” (Eph 2:14). The Eucharist nourishes the members of the Church to manifest Christ’s peace in the world. According to the Tradition, they are called to reconcile with their enemies before receiving Communion, for they cannot be at peace with God until they are at peace with our brothers and sisters. As St. John wrote, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 Jn 4:20).

**27.** By addressing the causes of the fragmentation of the family, peace is cultivated. Helping people to develop a healthy view of the place of marriage and parenthood in the Christian life offers an alternative lifestyle in which broken relationships can be restored. The ascetical practices of fasting and almsgiving play a significant role for the healing of passions and broken relationships with others. As St. James wrote, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” (James 4:1). The Christian life is a permanent process of repentance and forgiveness in which people confront their conflicts with others and work to overcome them.

**28.** The cooperation of the Orthodox Church in the past with people of other faiths and with movements for disarmament, resource justice, and care of the environment has produced positive results. In order to cultivate and communicate peace, such collaborative efforts need to be continued. The cultivation of peace requires cooperation with secular and other religious movements. Christ’s peace is manifested worldwide whenever enemies are reconciled. The Church welcomes insights from the social sciences and various philosophies and cultural traditions that share the same concerns about establishing peace in the world. It encourages the laity to work creatively in their professions and other endeavours to promote peace.

**29.** The call for communicating the Christian message of peace is underscored only by love. Compassionate understanding of and insight into the actual life situations of people to whom the message is addressed are essential for effective communication. Apart from the conventional channels of communication, such as sermons, catechism, Sunday school, and programs for youth and students, Christians are called to open new channels to reach people by means of blogs and groups on the internet, printed media, TV, and all other means of mass communication. Theological institutions and seminaries can play a key role in promoting and disseminating the peace message.

**30.** The Orthodox Church cultivates peace by supporting ministries and services to victims of violence and abuse. Social plagues such as domestic abuse, drug addiction, and alcoholism create victims who need help in order to stop the cycle of violence. In order to address these issues, clergy and laity should cooperate with local organizations and agencies that have expertise in this area.

**31.** Orthodox cultivate peace with the environment by recognizing that they are part of God's good creation which has been redeemed by the blood of the crucified Christ. As St. Paul wrote, "For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross." (Col 1:19-20) When the environment is abused, human beings fall short of their original vocation to be good stewards of God's world. They also produce the causes of conflict and war by selfish consumption of scarce natural resources. Individuals and institutions should discern how to practice environmental stewardship in a way appropriate to the circumstances of their life.

### **III – GOD'S PEACE CONNECTS ALL THE SPHERES OF LIFE**

**32.** In this concluding section, some basic reflections, practical recommendations, and examples are offered on the four sub-themes of the IEPC. The aim is to emphasise their interconnectedness and mutual relationships, as the vicious cycles of violence invade and damage all aspects of life, from the personal to the global.

#### **A. Peace in the Community**

**33.** "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they are called God's children." (Mt 5:9)

**34.** Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation and called us to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:18-20). Peacemaking has therefore become a challenge and a commitment of the Church through its ministers and members, and a testimony of our faith and discipleship to Christ. The way of peace is to respond to the action of the Holy Spirit within us and in our life, for peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

**35.** Peace begins with ourselves, our families, and our neighbours. From an Orthodox theological point of view, the Trinitarian model of relationship and the Eucharistic practice (*liturgy after the Liturgy*) leave no space for aggressiveness, violent behaviour or injustice. They leave no space for a passive attitude, but only for a dynamic dialogue and action for the change and transformation of oneself and the world. However, there are critical questions of theology and anthropology that need further and more profound analysis. On the

basis of Tradition and patristic heritage, Orthodox must grow in our self-understanding, especially in relation to the challenges raised by domestic violence and the ongoing quest for peace in the community. Important theological texts by Fathers of the Church, such as Sts. John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, address the need for mutual respect and love among the members of the family and the broader community. Unfortunately, they have not been given the necessary attention, but should be used either as educational material or as sources of reflection and spiritual development.

**36.** Orthodox pursue ways in which to make the forgiveness, justice and mercy, and love of God visible in *the community* by which "one may edify another" (Rom 14:19).

**37.** At home, members of the family are called upon to monitor their own behaviour, reactions and spirituality; they are called upon to cultivate a culture of peace within the family, and avoid any kind of domestic violence, through dialogue which creates an open channel of communication both with family members and others. They have to be engaged and committed to practices of peace, forgiveness, human solidarity, the well being of all creation, and mutual understanding.

**38.** The Orthodox Church, likewise, has a positive role to play. It should bring the members of the body of Christ and all the creation into union with the Head (cf. Acts 20:28). The Church is called to alleviate and heal the suffering of its members, to support the oppressed, to extend help to those in need, to advocate peace and to reject conflict. These tasks may be accomplished not only through sermons, lectures and preaching, but also through activities that speak in another way to minds and hearts. The Church serves peace in the community by encouraging people to overcome racism, sexism and similar practices that violate the lives of so many, as well as by establishing pastoral care institutes, counselling centres, peace camps, special magazines, virtual chat rooms, TV channels, university youth groups, and programs and ministries for women.

## **B. Peace with the Earth**

**39.** Orthodox theology affirms that God created everything out of His own will and love. It also affirms the Scriptural teaching that the human being is created in God's own image and likeness. The Church Fathers made the connection between the image of God in every human being and all creation, which also received the seal of God's love and will. There is no humanity without the rest of creation; there is no meaningful creation without the human being in God's image (cf. Rom. 8:21-22).

**40.** According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, the Church is one and the creation is a cosmic church.<sup>4</sup> Orthodox theological reflection on creation begins with the fundamental unity of all created reality rooted in the Holy Trinity. In the Divine Liturgy, the recurring peace-blessing "Peace be to you all" is usually understood as addressing the faithful gathered in the Church. However, according to the spirit and scope of the Holy Liturgy, this peace gesture is given to all creation. It makes a radical difference in our attitude and understanding if this peace blessing is perceived to be extended beyond the immediate liturgical community to all human beings and their daily struggles, to all living beings and their environments, to the whole cosmic order and its continuous unfolding. The peace that passes all understanding has to be received, nourished, and radiated by human beings

in God's image and likeness. A very profound ethical and spiritual responsibility is placed on every member in the simple act of peace-giving in the liturgy.

**41.** The unity between human beings and the whole creation is also expressed in the Orthodox tradition through different prayers and blessings for parts or all creation. We would also like to underline that the Orthodox care for creation has been very clearly expressed during the last period of time though the many ecological actions initiated by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who has been called for the action "the green Patriarch". In order to promote the concerns and responsibility for the whole creation, the Orthodox Church has proposed 1 September as the day of the protection of the environment.

### **C. Peace in the Marketplace**

**42.** Humanity nowadays is facing challenges, born by the globalising economies grown into the Global Market, which make all people without exception its participants. Globalization has not only political, legal, economic, and cultural-informational dimensions; it also has spiritual repercussions. "This is a crisis of values, of the worldview. History unambiguously confirms the fact that the ways of resolving political, economic and humanitarian problems of today's humankind are to be sought not only in the realm of material resources' reallocation or in improving management technologies, but in the spiritual dimension."<sup>5</sup> The Orthodox Church is called to reflect on and to take initiatives, which would not only address the current financial crisis, but would also promote economic justice and peace in the market. It is called to propose a fairer model of sharing goods, mineral resources and energy.

**43.** The Orthodox Church, while calling people to seek first "the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt 6:33), does not forget about their need for "daily bread" (Mt 6:11); it believes that everyone should have resources sufficient for a life in dignity. At the same time, the Church warns against the extreme attraction to wealth, denouncing those who are carried away by "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Lk 8:14). The Orthodox attitude to property does not ignore material needs; but neither does it praise the opposite extreme, the aspiration for wealth as the ultimate goal and value of life.

**44.** The Church proclaims that overcoming the present crisis is possible. According to theology and Tradition, "it is very important to bring the economic system closer to the needs of an average individual, creating possibilities for his/her active and creative involvement in economic life... the new model of world development should be based on the principles of justice, efficiency and social solidarity ... on the values of ... self-limitation, moderateness, self-sacrifice."<sup>6</sup>

### **D. Peace among the Peoples**

**45.** Building peace among peoples is a major task for the churches, which requires openness, willingness and the respect of difference. In light of this commitment, the Orthodox Church reaches out to other faith communities and secular institutions. There cannot be peace among peoples and cultures without peace among religions; and peace between religions demands sincere dialogue between faith communities. Dialogue enables religions to rediscover their forgotten human values and practices.

**46.** Protection of human rights is a vital ingredient of a culture of peace and a major challenge for all religions. The peace commitment of the Orthodox theology of peace includes the promotion of human rights as a precondition of human dignity, freedom, and social and environmental justice. The commitment to human rights is an expression for the conviction that peace is more than the absence of war.

**47.** Together with the other Christian churches and faith communities, the Orthodox Church is ready to work against war, as well as violence in all its destructive forms. Therefore, the Third Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Conference in Chambésy/Geneva (1986) affirms: “war, in particular nuclear war, causes destruction of creation and annihilation of life on earth...Nuclear war is a crime against humanity and a mortal sin against God.”

**48.** A primary task is also to contribute to the delegitimization of warfare on religious grounds, to oppose fanaticism and fundamentalism, and to promote mutual understanding and cooperation at all possible levels. As the Primates of the Eastern Orthodox Churches affirmed: “Orthodox Christians share responsibility for the contemporary crisis of this planet with other people, whether they are people of faith or not, because they have tolerated and indiscriminately compromised on extreme human choices without credibly challenging these choices with the word of faith. Therefore, they also have a major obligation to contribute to overcoming the divisions of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

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*Notes*

1. Cf. St Nicholas Cabasilas, *Life in Christ*, PG 150, 676.
2. Letter 203,2
3. *The Life in Christ*, PG 150, 676
4. *Mystagogia II*, PG 91, 669
5. *The Statement of the Experts' Council "Economy and Ethics" under the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia*, 27 July 2009
6. Ibid.
7. Message of the Primates of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, Phanar/Istanbul, 12 October 2008, p. 6.

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## 4.

### **Ecumenical Network in Germany PROPOSED DECLARATION**

#### **Life in Just Peace**

Humanity and the earth are undergoing a unique crisis. Above all, this is manifested in the form of the financial and economic crisis, in the food crisis, the social crisis (the growing gap between those who are becoming poorer and those becoming richer), the energy crisis, the climate crisis, the crisis of the extinction of species and the crisis of increasing violence at all levels – from the family and schools to imperialist wars. The causes of these crises are clearly related to the dominant civilisation, which from the “West” has conquered the entire globe in the areas of economics, politics, ideology and the understanding what it means to be human. This crisis is threatening life itself. As we see it, just peace must therefore be understood as leading toward a new culture of life at all levels – from institutional to spiritual life.

The necessary turnaround toward a life in just peace includes at least three dimensions:

- a spiritual vision of a new, emerging culture of life, based on faith or a humanist motivation
- the fundamental rejection of the dominant economic, political, violence-producing culture and world order, for the sake of the integrity of faith and the very being of the church
- short, medium and long-term steps toward realising this vision.

We therefore present the following declaration, which is based on the biblical message and affirms decisions by the assemblies of ecumenical organisations, inviting all churches, congregations and Christians to embrace it and to publicly advocate for the implementation of its demands.

#### **1. Which god shall rule?**

*We believe* that God created the whole universe in love inviting all people to cooperate with God’s ongoing creative work in mutual solidarity and respect for God’s gifts. “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Ps 24:1). With faith in God’s Trinitarian dynamic we confess with all Christians the sociality of God as the source of the unity of all creatures.

*Therefore, we reject* the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism – using both structural and direct violence. We reject every claim to an economic, political and military empire that attempts to subvert God’s order of life and whose actions stand in contrast to God’s love and justice. We reject an economic system and way of life which exploits nature and propagates unlimited growth so that the conditions of life for

future generations are forcibly destroyed and the survival chances of the entire earth are threatened.

*The power of God's Spirit frees us* as individuals and churches to resist the ruling political-economic-cultural system and to work for crucially necessary alternatives.

## **2. God's good gifts for all should not be privatised by force.**

*We believe* that God is a God of life and desires the fullness of life for all creatures. "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

*Therefore we reject* a policy, which through the privatisation of collective and common goods produces wealth for the capital owners but scarcity and poverty for the vast majority of the world's population – the worst kind of violence (Ghandi) – and which exploits and even destroys nature. With particular emphasis we reject the patenting of seeds and of medicines which are necessary to meet people's basic needs; no to the privatisation of genes as well as acts of biopiracy; no to the privatisation of water and other gifts of nature; no to the privatization of services of general interest such as energy, transportation, health, education; also no to the destruction of solidarity-based social insurance systems through privatisation; no to their submission to profit-oriented insurance companies and at the same time to speculative finance markets. All of this is structural violence at the service of the rich. But especially we reject the direct violence of a policy which wages wars to realise these private interests and wastes immeasurable resources on armaments.

*The power of God's Spirit frees us* as individuals and churches to work for the democratizing of the economy and the solidarity-based social systems towards serving life, among ourselves and in society, so that all might have enough, so that neither hardship nor excessive consumption prevails and that the earth can remain intact for future generations. Economic systems should be for the common use and not for the expansion of capital. For this reason goods and services for basic needs as well as global common goods must be publically run for mutual benefit, so that in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights all governments recognize their responsibility for the welfare of their citizens. We pledge to struggle for an order at all levels, in which economics and politics are put at the service of life for all and thereby overcome the fundamental causes of violence.

## **3. God's good earth should not be destroyed by greed.**

*We believe* that God entrusted human beings with a rich and beautiful earth. "The Lord took the human beings and put them in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15).

*Therefore, we reject* an economic and social order which converts God's gifts into commodities and in so doing increasingly destroys them. We especially call on Christians, congregations and churches in the industrialised countries to recognize their enormous ecological debts, particularly their destructive climate debts, toward people who have been living in impoverished regions for the past 500 years and at least offer symbolic compensation, to radically reduce their harmful greenhouse emissions and to oblige their governments to pass national and international laws to keep global warming under two degrees and to stop the extermination of species.

*The power of God's Spirit frees us* as individuals and churches to set an example and reduce our consumption of energy and the environment as well as to force our governments to establish binding rules for reduction under international law (allowing for transitional arrangements for newly industrialised and developing countries). All in all, we will work for a cyclical economy which makes the gifts of nature available for a just and sustainable use.

#### **4. God liberates working people from violent exploitation.**

*We believe* that God intends human labour to become participation in God's creative power and as a means for self-sufficiency in human societies, without exploiting working men and women. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other Gods before me" (Gen 20:2).

*Therefore, we reject* an economic order, in which working people, especially women are (structurally or directly) violently exploited and driven into unemployment. We reject governments which tax workers more and more but levy less and less taxes on capital gains from profits and fortunes and refuse to abolish tax havens.

*The power of God's Spirit frees us* as individuals and churches to struggle in cooperation with labour unions for legal systems and economic decisions in which those able to work can find useful employment and socially meaningful jobs – and, owing to increased productivity – comprehensive reduced working hours. In reaching these decisions all of those involved in the productive process must have a voice.

#### **5. God does not want any accumulation of wealth beyond that which is necessary for life.**

*We believe* that God despises the accumulation of wealth for the few at the cost of the majority. "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Mt 6:24). "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, nor ox nor donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour" (Ex 20:17).

*Therefore, we reject* an economic order which stimulates and rewards greed, which is dependent on nature-destroying and socially antagonistic growth, because it makes money and capital a commodity and its increase an end in itself.

*The Spirit of God frees us* as individuals and churches to overcome the violent power of money and especially its speculative misuse as a "financial weapon of mass destruction". We ourselves will only use money at the service of genuine economic activity. In concert with social movements we will struggle to induce political institutions to make money a national and international public good which only serves useful economic activity and to ensure that all use of property becomes socially and ecologically beneficial to all.

#### **6. God wants to create human security through justice rather than through military means.**

“This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). “...until a spirit from on high is poured out upon us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever” (Is 32:15-17).

*Therefore, we say no* to the institution of war, which – under the conditions of present day weapons technology – cannot be justified under any circumstances; no to the more than one billion US dollars wasted annually for armaments while more than 30 million people die from the causes of hunger. Arms do not murder only when they are used but already while they are being produced. In particular we reject the imperialist wars, which stand in violation of international law, such as those against Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the unlimited “War on terror”. Therefore we reject the presence of more than 800 US military bases, under whose protection authoritarian and pseudo-democratic regimes such as the Philippines and Columbia commit notorious violations of human rights and also the arming of the European Community with international rapid intervention forces. When the international community needs to intervene in individual countries and regions because of notorious violations of human rights this must only be done by police forces under the umbrella of a democratised United Nations.

*The power of God’s Spirit frees us* as individuals and churches to refuse to cooperate in any way with waging war. Instead, in the spirit of Jesus and Gandhi we wish to confront all injustice with readiness to accept conflicts and suffering, to cooperate in reconciliation processes therapeutically and in terms of prevention and contribute to a political stance which seeks to outlaw war.

## **7. Weapons of mass destruction are blasphemy against God.**

*We believe* that weapons of mass destruction are blasphemy, since human beings are created in the image of God. “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in God’s own image God made humankind (Gen 9:6)”.

*Therefore, we reject* unequivocally the production, deployment and use of means of mass destruction which always shed innocent human blood and can even eliminate all life on earth. We reject the strategies of the USA and NATO; which claim the right to a nuclear first strike and already are making use of enhanced munitions with disastrous effects for the people targeted.

*The power of the Spirit of God frees us* to refuse to collaborate under any circumstances in the production, deployment or the use of weapons of mass destruction or to vote for any political party which has not declared its support for the complete abolition of any means of mass destruction. We call on all members of Christian churches to do likewise. Especially we call on the government of the USA as well as on other governments to make deeds follow their words and to create a nuclear-free world. Only then can governments now working to achieve a nuclear capacity be prevented from realizing their plans.

## **8. God has created a people, which has invited all peoples to a life with a just peace.**

*We believe* that God has called us to be a people which lives a life of justice and peace and can so become the light of the world, the city on the hill and salt of the earth (Mt 5:13-16). “Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that God may teach us God’s ways and that we may walk in God’s paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Is 2:3-5, NRSV).

*Therefore, we reject* all misuse of the name of God and Christ for achieving power, be it by governments, political parties, groups, theologies or churches. We especially reject prosperity theologies, fundamentalist crusade theologies, and ideologies, which in the name of freedom increase the wealth of capital owners and even support the use of imperialist violence to this end.

*The power of God’s Spirit frees us* as individuals and churches to follow Jesus and to participate in building God’s domination-free kingdom, God’s life-affirming order with a human face. This includes collaboration in developing

- (1) a new economic approach based on solidarity and serving life
- (2) the practice of non-violent behaviour for conflict resolution and therapy, avoiding and reducing violence at all levels, from the family to a world peace order, and
- (3) a style of life which promotes ecological and social justice.

We seek the company and cooperation of people of other faiths or of none, who respect and promote the lives of the most humble human beings and of the endangered earth. In the name of Jesus we ask God for the spiritual power to rejoice at the wonderful gifts of creation, to lead a life of justice and peace and to work toward the day when this will be enjoyed by all people.

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## 5.

### **A Mennonite and Catholic Contribution to the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

An international dialogue between Catholics and Mennonites took place between 1998 and 2003, beginning with the theme “Toward a Healing of Memories”, and concluding with a report entitled *Called Together to be Peacemakers* (CTBP). In the hope that, on the basis of that dialogue, Catholics and Mennonites may together offer suggestions for the World Council of Churches’ *Decade to Overcome Violence* (DOV), and especially in reference to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in 2011 with which it culminates, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Mennonite World Conference sponsored a brief conference 23–25 October 2007 in consultation with the DOV office. It took place at the Centro Pro Unione in Rome. As a result we now submit some theological reflections which Mennonites and Catholics, committed to overcoming violence, may affirm together as a witness to peace in the ecumenical context. We hope these reflections can be useful to others as preparation continues for the IEPC.

We begin by identifying biblical and theological foundations of peace. These appear under the sub-headings of *Creation, Christology, and Ecclesiology*. Then follows a section on peace and discipleship. We conclude with some challenges and recommendations which might be considered as the focus of workshops at the IEPC.

#### **I. BIBLICAL–THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PEACE**

##### **A. Creation: Peace as gift and promise**

From the beginning of creation, the God of shalom “who from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26), has destined all humanity for one and the same goal, namely, communion with God. This harmonious relationship reminds us that since human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, we are called to a life of unity with one another through reciprocal selfgiving (cf. Gen 1:26; Jn 17:21f.). Although sin has marred our harmonious relationship with God and with one another, redemption through Christ has restored to creation the possibility of peace marred by sin (Gen 9:1-17; Col 1:19f.; Rev 21:5). As God’s new creation, Christians are called to life in peace with one another, with all humankind, and with all creation (Acts 10:36; 2 Cor 13:11; Rom 12:18).

The depth of the shalom offered by Jesus is seen in his farewell address to his disciples (Jn 14:27-31). It is customary, in Jewish leave-taking, to offer peace as a parting gift. Jesus goes deeper by offering the gift of peace by way of a participation in his very self. The peace of

Christ flows from his very being, which is united to the Father in love. The world cannot give this peace because it does not know this intimate “being-in-peace” with the author of all peace. The peace that Jesus gives is the peace infused by the spirit of the Beatitudes. This peace makes nonviolence possible, since its true claimants speak and act in accordance with the logic of the selfless love of Jesus Christ.

The biblical vision of peace as shalom includes the protection of the integrity of creation (Gen 1:26-31; 2:5-15; 9:7-17; Ps 104). The Church calls people to live as stewards of the earth, and not as exploiters. The gift of peace flows from the very being of a gracious God and touches all of creation. As God is generous and faithful to his promise of peace, we in turn need to receive this gift and employ it responsibly in our relationship with God, who has entrusted each other and the whole of creation to our care.

## **B. Christology: Jesus Christ, the foundation of our peace**

The peace witness of both Mennonites and Catholics is rooted in Jesus Christ. He “is our peace, who has made us both one... making peace that he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross” (Eph 2:14-16). We understand peace through the teachings, the life, and the death of Jesus Christ. He taught us to turn the other cheek, to love our enemies, to pray for our persecutors (Matt 5:39ff.), and not to use deadly weapons (Matt 26:52). In his mission of reconciliation, Jesus remained faithful even unto death, thereby manifesting the peace-making dimension of divine love and confirming the depth of God as a lover of humanity. Jesus’ fidelity was confirmed in the resurrection.

### *Peace and the cross*

God revealed his love for humanity in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as a consequence of his message of the Kingdom of God. The cross is the sign of God’s love of enemies (Rom 5:10f.). For both Catholics and Mennonites the ultimate personal and ecclesial challenge is to spell out the consequences of the cross for our teaching on peace and war, and for our response in the face of injustice and violence.

In looking upon the cross of Christ we come to realize what the atonement means for us. As the apostle Peter wrote: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet 2:24). That is, through the cross Jesus makes our peace with God who offers us the shalom of a new creation while we are still sinners (Rom 5:8). At the same time the cross beckons us to follow in the steps of Jesus who “did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited” (Phil 2:6). Rather, “when he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly” (2:23). Thus, “in Christ, there is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17) in which we now take up our cross and follow his way of peace and righteousness.

### *Peace and suffering*

We acknowledge suffering as a possible consequence of our witness to the Gospel of peace. We do not live in a utopian world. Following Christ will require costly discipleship. Mennonites and Catholics live with the expectation that discipleship entails suffering. Jesus challenges us: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34). The faith that love is stronger than death sustains

Christians in their suffering. Yet, we are called to suffer and to alleviate suffering rather than to compound it. Catholics affirm with Pope John Paul II:

*“It is by uniting his own sufferings for the sake of truth and freedom to the sufferings of Christ on the Cross that man is able to accomplish the miracle of peace and is in a position to discern the often narrow path between the cowardice which gives in to evil and the violence which, under the illusion of fighting evil, only makes it worse” (Centesimus annus, 25; cf. Gaudium et spes, 42 and 78).*

Reflecting the same conviction, a recent Mennonite confession of faith states:

*“Led by the Spirit, and beginning in the church, we witness to all people that violence is not the will of God... We give our ultimate loyalty to the God of grace and peace, who guides the church daily in overcoming evil with good, who empowers us to do justice, and who sustains us in the glorious hope of the peaceable reign of God” (Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (Scottdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 1995, Art. 22).*

Both Mennonites and Catholics take their inspiration from Gospel texts such as Mark 10:35-45 and Luke 22:24-27, where Jesus invites his followers to offer up their lives as servants. We note with joy our common appreciation for martyrs, “the great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1), who have given their lives in witness to truth. Together, we hold that “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor 1:25). This commitment has implications for how we understand the church and what it means to be the church in the world.

### **C. Ecclesiology**

The ecclesiological marks of the peace church derive from her message of reconciliation, her commitment to nonviolence, her freedom, her mission, her oneness, and her hope of salvation.

#### *Peace and reconciliation*

Together Catholics and Mennonites affirm that the true vocation of the church is to be the community of the reconciled and of reconcilers. We accept this calling “from God, who reconciled us through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18). Our similar identities as “peace churches” (Mennonite) and as a “peacemaking church” (Catholic) derive from our commitment to be followers and imitators of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace and Lord of the Church. By their baptismal commitment to Christ, all Christians are called to the way of peace and reconciliation.

#### *Peace and nonviolence*

In the midst of a world that has not known how to accept or employ the peace that Jesus brings, it is the holy calling of the church to witness, by its very being, to the way of peace and nonviolence. The Church is called to be a peace church. This calling is based on the conviction we hold in common as Catholics and Mennonites, that the Church, founded by Christ, is to be a living sign and an effective instrument of peace, overcoming every form of enmity and reconciling all peoples in the peace of Christ (Eph 4:1-3). We hold the conviction in common that reconciliation, nonviolence, and active peacemaking belong

to the heart of the Gospel (Mt 5:9; Rom 12:14-21; Eph 6:15). Mennonites and Catholics affirm that the power of Christ overcomes divisions between peoples (Eph 2:13-22; Gal 3:28). On this basis, the Church bears the responsibility, in the name of Christ, to work at overcoming ethnic and religious violence, and to contribute to the building of a peace culture among races and nations.

Together Mennonites and Catholics agree that the path of violence is no solution to the problem of enmity between persons, groups or nations. Christian peacemaking embraces active nonviolence in the transformation of conflict in both domestic and international disputes. Furthermore, we regard it as a tragedy and a grave sin when Christians hate and kill one another. The availability of resources for the practice of nonviolence to individual groups and governments reduces the temptation to turn to arms, even as a last resort.

#### *Peace and freedom*

Together, Catholics and Mennonites share the conviction that the Church should be independent of society's human organizations. That is, the Church should enjoy religious freedom and self-government under the Lordship of Christ, the Prince of Peace. The freedom of the Church from state control enables her to witness without encumbrance to the wider society. In virtue of their dignity as children of God, moreover, all men and women possess the right to freedom of religion and conscience. No one should be forced to act contrary to conscience, particularly on questions of military engagement.

#### *Peace and mission*

Mission is essential to the nature of the Church. Empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit, the Church brings the Good News of salvation to all nations by proclaiming the Gospel of shalom in word and in deed to the ends of the earth (cf. Is 2:1-4; Mt 28:16-20; Eph 4:11f.). The Church's mission is carried out in the world through every follower of Jesus Christ, both ministers and lay people.

A significant dimension of the mission of the Church is realized in the very constitution of the Church as inter-ethnic communities of faith. The Church is one people of faith, called into being from peoples of many tongues and nations (Gal 3:28; Eph 4:4-6; Phil 2:11). Mission requires that Christians seek to become "one" for the sake of their witness to Jesus Christ and to the Father (Jn 17:20-21), and that they make "every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). It belongs to the mission of the Church to proclaim the peace of Jesus Christ to the world, and to extend the work of Christ, the shalom of God, to women and men of good will everywhere.

#### *Peace and oneness*

One of the essential marks of the Church is her unity. This unity is a reflection of the very unity of the Triune God. Therefore, together with other disciples of Christ, Catholics and Mennonites take seriously the Scripture texts that call Christians to be one in Christ. Our witness to the revelation of God in Christ is weakened when we live in disunity (Jn 17:20-23). How can we ask the world to live in peace when we ourselves fail to heed the call to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3)? Together we ask: What does it mean for the churches to confess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph 4:5-6)? The Catholic-Mennonite dialogue report is entitled *Called Together to be Peacemakers*. This title stands as a hope-filled sign of "the unity of the Spirit."

### *Peace and salvation*

Catholics and Mennonites agree that the Church is a chosen sign of God's presence and promise of salvation for all creation. Catholics speak of this by affirming that the Church is "the universal sacrament of salvation at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for humanity" (*Gaudium et spes*, 45). Mennonites express the promissory character of the Church by proclaiming that "in God's people the world's renewal has begun" (Douglas Gwyn et al., *A Declaration on Peace* (Scottsdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 1991), and that "the church is the new community of disciples sent into the world to proclaim the reign of God and to provide a foretaste of the church's glorious hope" (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Scottsdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 1995, Art. 9). While the Church is still underway toward the peaceable kingdom of God, here and now the Church manifests signs of its eschatological character and thus provides a foretaste of the glory yet to come. This glory is none other than the very shalom of God who, as the lover of humanity, invites us "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God" (cf. *Micah* 6:8).

## **II. PEACE AND DISCIPLESHIP**

In light of the reflections just made concerning the biblical and theological foundations of peace, it is our mutual conviction that to be a disciple of Christ is to be a witness to peace. Christian discipleship is based on a spirituality which roots the disciple in the life of Christ who "is our peace" (cf. *Eph* 2:14–16), and leads to action for peace.

### **A. Spirituality**

For Christians, spirituality consists in following the teachings and the life of Jesus, making his manner of life our own. "Christian peace witness belongs integrally to our walk as followers of Christ and to the life of the Church as 'the household of God' and 'a dwelling place of God in the Spirit' (*Eph* 2.19)" (CTBP, 181). As imitators of Christ, we are called to love of enemies and the practice of forgiveness (cf. CTBP, 180). Peace must be built up by the practice of peace. For that reason, the church must be a school of virtue where "the peaceable virtues" are valued, taught, practiced and revived. These include: "Forgiveness, love of enemies, respect for the life and dignity of others, restraint, gentleness, mercy and the spirit of self-sacrifice" (CTBP, 184). We would like to call attention in particular to four virtues that contribute to peacemaking: nonviolence, forgiveness, repentance and prayerfulness.

### *Nonviolence*

Empowered by their union with Christ, and imitating Christ as his followers, Christians are called to practice nonviolence in their efforts "to overcome evil with good" (*Rom* 12:21; cf. *Centesimus annus* [CA]). Catholics have increasingly emphasized nonviolence as central to the gospel and to their witness in the world; and Mennonites have likewise expanded their understanding of principled non-resistance to include the exercise of active nonviolence. Since Christian peacemaking is carried forward under the sign of the cross, suffering is inevitable as the price that must be paid in a sinful world for loving one's enemies in a sinful world (cf. CTBP, 182; CA, 25)

For both Mennonites and Catholics, peacemaking through nonviolence, while an individual vocation, is also a communal activity. Each of our communities understands its "responsibility to discern the signs of the times and to respond to developments and events

with appropriate peace initiatives based on the life and teaching of Jesus” (CTBP, 181). In the Mennonite Church this discernment is exercised at both the congregational level and by larger church bodies, though sometimes too in specialized agencies like the Mennonite Central Committee. In the Catholic Church, it takes places at multiple levels and in a variety of settings: in parishes, in lay and religious communities, in diocesan and national justice and peace commissions, in synods of bishops and on the part of the hierarchy (cf. CTBP, 181). Inspired by the gospel, this communal discernment guides disciples in being church in a world of conflict. Through such reading of the signs of the times and the activities that result from it, the church can be salt and light to the world (Matt 5:11-16).

### *Forgiveness*

In addition to nonviolence, discipleship entails forgiveness as a primary expression of the Christian life. Jesus taught us to forgive one another, and in his death gave the ultimate example of forgiveness (Lk 23:34) Accordingly, the church has a special role in the promotion of reconciliation. The church, especially the local church, is the place where both our communities learn forgiveness: Catholics in the sacrament of reconciliation; Mennonites, in the way the church teaches and exemplifies forgiveness and reconciliation in everyday life and practices mutual correction in the context of the Lord’s Supper. We are conscious of our own duty to ask and grant forgiveness, individually and corporately. We acknowledge that in the past our churches too often failed in this regard.

We applaud the spread of public acts of forgiveness in our day and the growth of programs of reconciliation in civil and international conflicts. As Pope John Paul II wrote, there is “no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness” (World Day of Peace, 2002). These initiatives represent an advance in public life at which Christians can only rejoice. At the same time, Christians ought to be a leaven for peace in the world by practicing forgiveness in their own lives and by promoting public forgiveness as a necessary element of peaceful reconciliation. By enacting forgiveness, the churches build up the culture of peace for the world.

### *Truthfulness*

Just as peace requires justice, genuine reconciliation requires truthfulness. We learned in our own dialogue, as others have learned in their efforts at reconciliation, that the painful history of division cannot be overcome and healing cannot be effected without a purification of memories and a spirit of repentance (CTBP, 190-198) First, healing of memories involves readiness “to move beyond the isolation of the past and to consider concrete steps toward new relations” (CTBP, 191). Secondly, the purification of memory consists of allowing our consciences to be purged of all forms of resentment and violence inherited from our past and inviting the renewal of our way of acting (cf. CTBP, 192). Finally, the penitential spirit is manifest in the determination to resolve future differences through dialogue (cf. CTBP, 198). If they are to be convincing models of reconciliation in Christ to the world, Christians must repeatedly undergo this process of healing, purification and repentance.

### *Prayer*

Finally, prayer is essential to Christian peacemaking. Down through the centuries, Christian peacemakers have drawn the inspiration and strength for their witness from their prayer, contemplation of the life of Christ and attentive openness to God’s Spirit. There by God’s grace they experience “the peace that exceeds all understanding” (Phil 4:7). So also

prayerfulness is a mark of the peacemaker in our own day. Furthermore, the ecumenical witness of the churches in prayer, where divisions are overcome and we experience communion with God, is a blessing both for Christians and for the world (cf. CTBP, 185).

## **B. Action**

The practice of prayer, in private life as well as in the public worship of the church, yields immeasurable fruit in peacemaking as individuals and communities participate in the church's witness for peace. Together Catholics and Mennonites share the common conviction "that reconciliation, nonviolence and active peacemaking belong to the heart of the gospel (Matt 5:9; Rom 12:14-21; Eph 6:15)" (CTBP, 179). Promoting nonviolence in the resolution of domestic and international conflicts, advancing programs of conflict resolution and conflict transformation and fostering reconciliation between adversaries, sometimes in conjunction with their secular counterparts, sometimes without, Christians find ways to realize "the gospel of peace" in today's world. Nurturing the love of enemies and the spirit of forgiveness, they also contribute to building a lasting culture of peace in our times.

We understand, however, that in the absence of justice and human rights, peace is a mirage, a mere absence of conflict. For that reason, we believe "that justice, understood as right relationships, is the inseparable companion of peace" (CTBP, 177). Accordingly, "the gospel's vision of peace includes active nonviolence for defense of human life and human rights, for the promotion of economic justice for the poor, and in the interest of fostering solidarity among peoples" (CTBP, 178). Active nonviolence plays a decisive role in transforming the unjust social conditions into a more just order reflecting the values of the kingdom of God. (cf. CTBP, 178-179, 184). For this reason, the education, training and deployment of Christians in the practice of active nonviolence is an essential contribution of the church and church-sponsored organizations in our time. It is the responsibility of the church to building a peaceable world in keeping with the biblical ideals of shalom and the Kingdom of God (cf. CTBP, 177, 184).

## **III. PARTICULAR CHALLENGES/ RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR POSSIBLE WORKSHOPS DURING THE IEPC**

Besides offering the theological reflections just made, we would also suggest some particular challenges which might be subjects of specific sessions or workshops during the IEPC. They are based on the fact that the ecumenical movement, in seeking to reconcile separated Christians, is by its very nature a movement of reconciliation and peace.

- (1) The ecumenical movement, for over a century, has contributed to the reconciliation of Christian communities which have been divided for centuries. Since the reconciliation of Christians is itself a contribution to peace, we recommend that the convocation provide opportunities for the participants to learn of some of the most important achievements of the ecumenical movement which have led to the breaking down of barriers of disunity, and the creation of new relationships between Christian communities which had previously been divided from one another.
- (2) In the background of the centuries-long divisions among Christians there are bitter memories resulting from the conflict among Christians which led to those divisions

at various times in the history of Christianity. Various ecumenical dialogue reports have addressed the question of the purification and reconciliation or healing of memories. We recommend that study be undertaken to ascertain the different approaches to the healing of memories which have been developed in the dialogues, or by specific churches, with the goal of fostering common witness by Christians to this important factor which is necessary for peace.

(3) We affirm Jesus' teaching and example on non-violence as normative for Christians. At the same time, we recognize that Christians have adopted different perspectives and positions in the course of history, and today, in dealing with serious conflict in society. These include theories of just war, forms of active non-violence, and pacifism.

We recommend that the Convocation in 2011 work toward the goal of achieving an ecumenical consensus on ways Christians might advocate, together, to replace violence as a means to resolve serious conflict in society. We suggest, as a step in that direction, that the various positions which are alternatives to violence, and are currently advanced, be studied and critically evaluated together. These include, for example, (a) the right, for all men and women, of conscientious objection to participation in war; (b) the right of selective conscientious objection, which is the right and duty to refuse to serve in wars considered unjust, or execute orders considered unjust; (c) the position taken up recently by the WCC, described as The Responsibility to Protect; (d) the idea of "Just Policing" (cf. Gerald W. Schlabach, *Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence*, Liturgical Press 2007).

(4) In recent decades, Christians have participated with members of other world religions in giving witness to peace, e.g., the meetings in Assisi (1986, 1993, 2002) at the invitation of Pope John Paul II, or the efforts of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and others. With the understanding that cooperation among the religions of the world is vital in the search for peace today, we recommend that the convocation in 2011 organize opportunities for study of these initiatives with the hope of learning from these initiatives and building on them.

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*Participants in the Mennonite-Catholic Conference, 23–25 October 2007*

*Mennonites:* Ricardo Esquivia, Lenemarie Funck-Spüth, Helmut Harder, Nancy Heisey, Henk Leege, Larry Miller, Paulus Sugeng Widjaja

*Catholics:* Joan Back, Gosbert Byamung, Drew Christiansen, SJ, Bernard Munono, James Puglisi, SA, John A. Radano, Teresa Francesca Rossi

*World Council of Churches:* Hansulrich Gerber, Fernando Enns

*(January 19, 2008)*

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## 6.

### **Declaration on Just Peace by the Graduating year of 2008 Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership Dunedin, New Zealand**

In order to speak of 'Just Peace' we begin with God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. He is the bearer and telos of our humanity. In Him, with Him and through Him we are drawn into God's Story; the Story where 'Just Peace' finds its deepest meaning and grounding.

We speak as New Zealanders, residents of a land not afflicted by war or revolution. Yet as Tangata Whenua, 'People of the Land' (Indigenous) and Manuhiri, 'Visitors' (Subsequent Settlers), bound together by the Treaty of Waitangi, we understand that it is not only bullets that can disrupt peace. Injustice and conflict take many forms and as a Church we have too often remained silent. Here in Aotearoa, 'Just Peace' has a bearing on how we live together as many peoples in one land; it helps us move beyond scrambling for what is 'ours' and toward living generous, open lives with those neighbours God has blessed us with; it helps us honour and draw out the Imago Dei which every person bears.

#### **We believe Just Peace:**

##### **Is Trinitarian**

Relationality is essential to God's own being as Trinity. We are not called to mimic the harmony and unity of the Trinity, but to be drawn up into it through the work of the Spirit. Consequently we are not called to create our own 'Just Peace', but to embrace, and be embraced by the peace of the Godhead.

##### **Embodies Shalom**

'Just Peace' will not merely be the absence of conflict, but will ensure holistic wellbeing for persons, families, communities, nations and the rest of the created order. To this final end, 'Just Peace' must include a commitment to the stewardship and healing of the natural world.

##### **Is God's Initiative and Commitment to humanity**

The realisation of 'Just Peace' is an outworking of God's covenant commitment to humanity.

##### **Is Redemptive and Grace-full**

God is the one primarily violated by sin, yet He freely reconciles the world to Himself, and calls us to join Him in this task.<sup>1</sup> Consequently 'Just Peace' cannot be reduced to the meeting of certain conditions, but is received grace-fully and worked out grace-fully.

##### **Is Restorative**

In a world torn apart by corruption and enmity, we proclaim that in Christ, God desires restoration. 'Just Peace' will not ignore sin, or pretend that it is insignificant, but will declare that in Christ, sin is overcome and death no longer has the final word.

### **Is Intentional**

There is nothing accidental about 'Just Peace' in the coming Kingdom of Heaven. God intends for us to love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with Him.<sup>2</sup> Our purposes must be aligned with His. Those committed to 'Just Peace' will participate in Christ's ministry of reconciliation, and so become peacemakers.<sup>3</sup>

### **Shows Partiality**

True justice is not blindfolded, it cannot be confused with 'fairness'. In God's story we see special care for the vulnerable, the poor and the ostracised.<sup>4</sup> We are called to be a part of God's desire to redress imbalances, which will involve working and praying for justice for the oppressed and liberation for the oppressors.

### **Is Doxological**

'Just Peace' is not to be reduced to human activism but rather is bound up with the act of worship as God's people celebrate God's reconciling work through Christ in the world.

### **Is Eschatological**

The Church uniquely proclaims to the world God's vision for 'Just Peace' and prays for its realisation as it embodies the reality of the 'already but not yet' nature of the Kingdom of God.

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#### *Notes*

1. 2 Cor 5:18-20
2. Micah 6:8
3. Matthew 5:9
4. Matthew 5

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## 7.

### **Pronouncement on affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church (1985)**

#### *General Synod 15 pronouncement*

85-GS-50 VOTED: The Fifteenth General Synod adopts the pronouncement “Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church.”

#### **Summary**

Affirms the United Church of Christ to be a Just Peace Church and defines Just Peace as the interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence. Places the United Church of Christ General Synod in opposition to the institution of war. ...

#### **STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION**

...

**B. The Fifteenth General Synod affirms the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church. The General Synod affirms the following as marks of a Just Peace Church, calling upon each local church to become:**

A community of hope, believing a Just Peace is possible, working toward this end, and communicating to the larger world the excitement and possibility of a Just Peace.

A community of worship and celebration, centering its identity in justice and peacemaking and the Good News of peace that is Jesus Christ.

A community of biblical and theological reflection, studying the Scriptures, the Christian story, and the working of the Spirit in the struggle against injustice and oppression.

A community of spiritual nurture and support, loving one another and giving one another strength in the struggle for a Just Peace.

A community of honest and open conflict, a zone of freedom where differences may be expressed, explored, and worked through in mutual understanding and growth.

A community of empowerment, renewing and training people for making peace/doing justice.

A community of financial support, developing programs and institutions for a Just Peace.

A community of solidarity with the poor, seeking to be present in places of oppression,

poverty, and violence, and standing with the oppressed in the struggle to resist and change this evil.

A community of loyalty to God and to the whole human community over any nation or rival idolatry.

A community that recognizes no enemies, willing to risk and be vulnerable, willing to take surprising initiatives to transform situations of enmity. A community of repentance, confessing its own guilt and involvement in structural injustice and violence, ready to acknowledge its entanglement in evil, seeking to turn toward new life.

A community of resistance, standing against social structures comfortable with violence and injustice.

A community of sacrifice and commitment, ready to go the extra mile, and then another mile, in the search for justice and peace.

A community of political and social engagement, in regular dialogue with the political order, participating in peace and justice advocacy networks, witnessing to a Just Peace in the community and in the nation, joining the social and political struggle to implement a Just Peace.

.....

**D. The Fifteenth General Synod affirms justice as essential to a Just Peace.**

1. We affirm all nations working together to insure that people everywhere will be able to meet their basic needs, including the right of every person to:

- a. food and clean water,
- b. adequate health care,
- c. decent housing,
- d. meaningful employment,
- e. basic education,
- f. participation in community decision-making and the political process,
- g. freedom of worship and religious expression,
- h. protection from torture, and
- i. protection of rights without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or national or social origin.

2. We affirm the establishment of a more just international order in which:

- a. trade barriers, tariffs, and debt burdens do not work against the interests of poor people, and developing nations,
- b. poor nations have a greater share in the policies and management of global economic institutions.

3. We affirm economic policies that target aid to the most needy: the rural poor, women,

nations with poor natural resources or structural problems, and the poor within each nation.

4. We affirm economic policies that will further the interests of the poor within each nation:

- a. promoting popular participation,
- b. empowering the poor to make effective demand on social systems,
- c. encouraging decentralization and greater community control,
- d. providing for the participation of women in development,
- e. redistributing existing assets, including land, and distributing more equitably future benefits of growth,
- f. reducing current concentrations of economic and political power, and
- g. providing for self-reliant development, particularly in food production.

5. We affirm nations transferring funds from military expenditures into programs that will aid the poor and developing strategies of converting military industries to Just Peace industries.

6. We oppose the injustices resulting from the development of national security states that currently repress the poor in organizing society against an external enemy.

7. We affirm a free and open press within each nation, without hindrance from government.

**E. The Fifteenth General Synod affirms common security from violence as essential to a Just Peace.**

1. We affirm that national security includes four interrelated components:

- a. provision for general well-being,
- b. cultivation of justice,
- c. provision for defense of a nation, and
- d. creation of political atmosphere and structure in which a Just Peace can flourish and the risk of war is diminished or eliminated.

2. We affirm the right and obligation of governments to use civil authority to prevent lawlessness and protect human rights. Such force must not be excessive and must always be in the context of the primary responsibility of the state in creating social justice and promoting human welfare. Any use of force must be based in the participatory consent of the people.

3. We affirm that war must be eliminated as an instrument of national policy and the global economy must be more just. To meet these goals, international institutions must be strengthened.

4. We affirm our support for the United Nations, which should be strengthened developing the following:

- a. more authority in disputes among countries,

- b. peacekeeping forces, including a permanent force of at least 5000, able to police border disputes and intervene when called to do so by the U.N.,
- c. peacemaking teams, trained in mediation, conflict intervention, and conflict resolution,
- d. support for international peace academies,
- e. a global satellite surveillance system to provide military intelligence to the common community,
- f. international agreements to limit military establishments and the international arms trade,
- g. an international ban on the development, testing, use, and possession of nuclear and bio-chemical weapons of mass destruction, and
- h. an international ban on all weapons in space and all national development of space-based defense systems and Strategic Defense Initiatives.

5. We affirm our support for the International Court of Justice and for the strengthening of international law ...

8. We declare our opposition to all weapons of mass destruction. All nations should:

- a. declare that they will never use such weapons,
- b. cease immediately the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons,
- c. begin dismantling these arsenals, and
- d. while the process of dismantling is going on, negotiate comprehensive treaties banning all such future weapons by any nation.

9. We declare our opposition to war, violence, and terrorism. All nations should:

- a. declare that they will never attack another nation,
- b. make unilateral initiatives toward dismantling their military arsenals, calling on other nations to reciprocate, and
- c. develop mechanisms for international law, international peacekeeping, and international conflict resolution.











## JUST PEACE COMPANION

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The *Just Peace Companion* is a resource document that builds on *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace*. It expands on the biblical, theological and ethical considerations of the Call, invites further exploration and offers examples of good practices for building peace with justice.



World Council  
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Publications



ISBN 978-2-8254-1561-0