



## Worksheet 6: Peacemaking

Scripture reveals that the reign of God, proclaimed and embodied by Jesus, is characterised by compassion, justice and peace. Essential to Christian discipleship is the call to strive towards the fulfilment of the reign of God in our world today.

In light of this, the Uniting Church holds "that God came in the crucified and risen Christ to make peace; and that God calls all Christians to be peacemakers, to save life, to heal and to love their neighbours; and that the Church is committed to be a peacemaking body". (*Uniting for Peace*, Tenth Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia)

### Why is peacemaking important?

Whether we realise it or not, we live in a 'culture of violence'. Violence permeates our society not only in global conflicts but in interpersonal relationships and local communities. Domestic abuse, physical and sexual assault, violent crime and child abuse are commonly recognised forms of violence. Racism, persecution and bullying are also common forms of violence. Further, violence in the form of human rights abuses, discrimination and exploitation still takes place in Australia. Globally we see on the news every day the effects of war, terrorism and human rights violations. Individually and collectively we all participate in violence against the environment. The need for peace in our world today is evident and urgent.

### Our responsibility

As Christians we all have a responsibility to transform our world's culture of violence into a culture of peace. This responsibility of peacemaking is integral to our Christian discipleship. As a result, the Uniting Church has a commitment "to work together for peace, justice, and reconciliation at all levels - local, regional, and global". (*Uniting for Peace*, Tenth Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia)

### Peace and justice

Peace and justice are inextricably connected. "The Uniting Church believes that true justice can only be achieved through means that do not consist of violence, nor perpetuate the cycle of violence, and that true security can only be achieved through non-violent means that seek to build trust and relationships of understanding and acceptance between nations and people." (*Uniting for Peace*, Tenth Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia)



### What can I do?

Peacemaking starts with each one of us: within ourselves and in our relationships with our families and communities. We all have a responsibility to examine our own lives and continually strive towards more non-violent ways of relating. Even Gandhi acknowledged that he "first learned the concepts of non-violence in [his] marriage". Personally, we can deepen our commitment to peace through our spiritual practices and we can develop the skills of non-violent communication and conflict resolution.

Locally, we can be peacemakers by speaking up about decisions in our workplaces and communities that have an impact on creating a culture of either peace or violence. We can give our time, money and resources to organisations that make a positive difference in our community by contributing to the culture of peace.

We can also have an impact on national and global matters of peace by our civic and church participation. We can educate ourselves and our congregations about current issues that impact peace and justice, we can encourage government to make decisions that promote peace instead of violence, and we can participate in organisations that work towards the goal of peacemaking.



#### Note

This sheet is part of a series on theology in the 21st century. It is prepared for the National Assembly by the Working Group on Doctrine as a discussion starter for small groups, in congregations, faith communities or other settings. It may also be used for personal reflection. Low resolution copies of this sheet can be downloaded free of charge from the Doctrine website: [www.assembly.uca.org.au/doctrine](http://www.assembly.uca.org.au/doctrine).

# “AS CHRISTIANS WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD’S CULTURE OF VIOLENCE INTO A CULTURE OF PEACE.”

## Promoting peace

Violence sometimes takes the form of prejudice and racism in local communities. In late 2007, a proposal to build an Islamic school in the Sydney suburb of Camden was met by significant tension in the local community. Opposition included large protests and public meetings, written objections, and what was labelled a “display of hatred” by the NSW Community Relations Committee: two pigs’ heads were rammed on to metal stakes and an Australian flag draped between them on the site of the proposed school. When the proposal was ultimately rejected planning reasons were cited. However, it was evident that fear and prejudice were factors in the public opposition of this school. UCA President Gregor Henderson made a public statement discouraging “inciting prejudice and distress in the community when there is no need for such fear”.

In another case in 2008, there was a proposal for an Islamic school on the Gold Coast which was also met with opposition and protests, some of which were based on religious prejudice. However, in this case, the local council approved the school in early 2009 and suggested a sporting fixture as a way to promote harmony after the divisions in the community. Gold Coast City Council Mayor Ron Clark pointed out that, in the local suburb of Arundel, “we’ve got a whole series of churches, including a mosque, and the congregations get on very well together... The Imam is very popular and plays on the local soccer team and he often has cups of tea with the minister from the Presbyterian church”. This is one example of the many small but important ways that we can promote peace in our own communities.



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## Quotes

*“True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.”*

(Martin Luther King, Jr)

*“Stability and peace in our land will not come from the barrel of a gun, because peace without justice is an impossibility.”*

(Bishop Desmond Tutu)

*“Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith.”*

(Pope John Paul II)

## Questions

- » What are some examples of violence that you see in your community, Australia, and the world?
- » In what ways does Australian culture support a culture of violence? What can we do (as individuals, a church and a society) to change this?
- » How are your views on peace and justice informed by the biblical witness and especially the life and teaching of Jesus?
- » What are some ways you can be a peacemaker in your relationships and your community?



## Resources

Christopher C. Walker, *Peace like a Diamond: Facets of Peace*, Spectrum, 2009.

Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, Fortress Press, 2003.

John Dear, *Put Down Your Sword Answering the Gospel Call to Creative Nonviolence*, Eerdmans, 2008.

John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: the Art and Soul of Building Peace*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

Manchala Deenabandhu (ed.), *Nurturing Peace: Theological Reflections on Overcoming Violence*, World Council of Churches, 2005.

National Council of Churches in Australia, *Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace Resources*.

[www.ncca.org.au/special\\_projects/decade\\_to\\_overcome\\_violence](http://www.ncca.org.au/special_projects/decade_to_overcome_violence)

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