Imagine
Another World Is Possible

Building a Peace
with Justice Movement
in the United Church of Christ

Support Neighbors in Need

A RESOURCE MANUAL FOR CONGREGATIONS
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Background</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Use This Manual</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace with Justice: Making the Connections</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the Connections Between Peace and Justice</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is It Right?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing the Barricade</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Good Samaritan</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs of Dignity: The Magnificat and Rich Man’s House</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War: When a Single Word Becomes a Lie</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace with Justice: One Church’s Example</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace with Justice: Tools for Building the Movement</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Justice Peace and Action Network</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving from Charity to Justice: A Workshop for Local Churches</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in the Decade to Overcome Violence</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Education</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Youth Advocates</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Immersion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace with Justice: Zeroing in on the Issues</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacemaking</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Weapons</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Midst of Gun Violence</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Game Violence</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, War, and Peace</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison, Its Aftermath, and the Witness of Faith</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Do You Grow a Terrorist?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care for All</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministries of Workplace Justice and Community Economic Development</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for Justice in Public Education</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice in the Global Economy</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Democratic Process</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church-State Relations and Religious Liberty</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious Objection</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Racism</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Day</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgical Resources</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank Tabs</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Introduction

Another World Is Possible:
A Peace with Justice Movement for the 21st Century

At a World Council of Churches meeting in 2004, delegates from Latin America proposed to those assembled a theme for their common work: “Another World Is Possible.” This did not end up being the theme selected but Bernice Powell Jackson, a participant at that meeting and one of the Presidents of the WCC, was struck by the power and simplicity of this concept. Another world is possible — a world free from violence, free from poverty, free from hunger, free from discrimination and oppression. She brought back to Justice and Witness Ministries the idea that this proposed theme of “Another World Is Possible” could form a unifying concept for all of our efforts to build a peace with justice movement for the United Church of Christ. We are trying to usher in a new age of global justice and peace. This is the promise of God so clearly heard throughout scripture:

I am about to do a new thing: now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
(Isaiah 43:19)

I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.
(Ezekiel 11:19)

Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.
(Matthew 9:17)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.
(Revelations 21:1)

The old order of the world isn’t working very well, not when wars and civil conflicts continue to take innocent lives and create turmoil and instability. Not when human rights violations and genocide are ignored even by the United Nations. Not when our natural resources are being depleted and air, water and soil are being poisoned. Not when women continue to be beaten, raped, and prevented from educational and work opportunities. Not when children are forced to carry guns and gun manufacturers are making weapons light enough specifically for children to carry. Not when religious conflicts drive public policy and international relationships. Not when boys and girls are trafficked for profit. This cannot be the world God has entrusted to our hands, to steward, protect, and pass on to future generations. Another world must be possible! A strong, multi-issue peace with justice movement in the United Church of Christ must be possible! The things that will make for peace with justice are in us — our faith in God, our discipleship as followers of Jesus, our church communities of caring and committed people, and our desire for healing the breaches among us. The Holy Spirit is our advocate and ally, breathing new possibilities into our staleness and encouraging us to be bold in our faith and witness.

Won’t you join with others in the United Church of Christ in building a vibrant peace with justice movement? Just imagine!
History and Background

The United Church of Christ has declared itself to be a Just Peace Church for almost two decades. In 1985, General Synod 15 voted a "Pronouncement on Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church," an action which defined "just peace" as the "interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence." It also stated the UCC's opposition "to war, violence, and terrorism." This Pronouncement was the outcome of the actions of two previous Synods, which called upon the UCC to become a peace church (GS 13) and establish a Peace Theology Development Team (GS 14). The General Synod also adopted many resolutions that dealt with various aspects of peace: affirming nonviolent methods for conflict resolution, opposing the development of weapons of mass destruction, supporting war tax resisters and conscientious objectors, and establishing an all-church peace offering, to name a few.

Along with peace-oriented resolutions comes the rich history of the United Church of Christ's advocacy for justice in many others areas of social well-being: eliminating racism, sexism, and heterosexism; advocating for quality public schools in all communities; supporting universal health care for all; calling for the integrity of creation and lifting up the realities of environmental racism; ending violence against women and children; calling for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the life of the church and society; and advocating for the end of discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation, among others.

Our denomination has distinguished itself as a leader in the prophetic call for justice and peace. (Justice and Witness Ministries has a compendium of Social Policy Statements from 1993 to 2000 that summarizes actions of the General Synod during this time period. This is an addendum to The Prophetic Vision, a summary of similar actions from the years 1957 to 1992, a resource that is no longer in print. You can read some of the historical high points of the UCC and our predecessor bodies online at www.stillspeaking.org.)

A popular UCC bumper sticker reads, "To believe is to care, to care is to do." Our faith moves us to respond to God's vision of justice, wholeness, and peace for humanity through action—individual action, congregational action, and denominational action to right the wrongs of society. Action takes many forms—writing letters or sending e-mails, public witnessing, participating in efforts to end hunger and homelessness, circulating petitions, starting organizations or programs to advocate for the rights of those who face discrimination and marginalization, committing civil disobedience, and praying. The possibilities for taking action are limited only by one's imagination.

Why Do This Resource Now

The world has changed since 1985 and so has the United Church of Christ. That's why we need to revisit what we mean by a Just Peace church. Since the pronouncement was adopted, approximately 100 churches and Conferences in the United Church of Christ declared that they were Just Peace churches or conferences, and some are currently in the process of study and reflection. Follow up to the pronouncement included providing some resources and guidelines for congregations, but there was never a template or set of fixed criteria offered to help a church or Conference know that it would "qualify" as Just Peace. Not all churches informed the national setting of the UCC about being Just Peace. Unlike the
Open and Affirming process, there was never a database of local congregations and conferences that were Just Peace, nor clear understanding of what this commitment meant.

Most importantly, the Just Peace church idea never caught on among UCC churches whose memberships are predominantly persons of color even though many of these same congregations are actively engaged in justice-oriented ministries. The Pronouncement itself makes clear that there can be no peace without justice, describing social justice in the broadest sense of the word: The Fifteenth General Synod affirms justice as essential to a Just Peace. 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. Participate in community decision-making and the political process;
- g. Freedom of worship and religious expression;
- h. Protection from torture;
- i. Protection of rights without regard to race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national or social origin.

(From the Pronouncement Affirming the UCC as a Just Peace Church)

We had to ask ourselves why the Just Peace concept never caught on in those congregations. In doing so, we recognized that for the most part the peace movement in the United States in the 1970s and ’80s was primarily a movement led by white people. Communities of color were focused on a range of other issues and the peace movement did not at that time include those issues in its understanding of what contributes to peace in society. One of the first voices to articulate the significant relationship between the issues that impact people of color and peace was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his historic address to The Riverside Church in 1967. Dr. King risked alienating many African-Americans who had dedicated their lives to the civil rights struggle when he spoke out in opposition to the Vietnam War, and he challenged white peace activists who had turned from civil rights work to anti-war work to think again about the connections between racism in America and world peace. He said, “A nation that continues to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” (April 4, 1967)

The Rev. Jesse Jackson has said that “content without context is pretense.” We must understand not just the what's and wherefores of theories of social change or just peace theology but also the dynamics of the world in which we live, a world that is constantly changing. The context of the era of the Just Peace Church Pronouncement—coming more than a decade after the end of the Vietnam War—was a continuing Cold War between two superpowers, the proliferation of nuclear arms worldwide, and a policy of “low level” conflict in Latin America (remember the Contras and arms for drugs?). We were working to end apartheid in South Africa, boycotting Nestlé because of the way they aggressively promoted infant formula in developing countries, and beginning to feel the social and political impact of the feminist and lesbian and gay movements.

In the United States, we were not paying much attention to emerging realities in countries with majority Muslim populations, to issues in Asia or in much of the rest of Africa. The AIDS pandemic was only just appearing on the radar screen and most attention was initially focused on the white gay male population in the United States. Inflation was running high. We still felt invulnerable to attack on our own shores.

Today, in a post-September 11 climate, the context has shifted dramatically. Our country attacked Afghanistan trying to capture the perpetrators of 9/11 and invaded Iraq without much support from traditional allies or the United Nations. Furthermore, the stated reasons for the invasion of Iraq, namely the presence of weapons of mass destruction and a clear connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, have been proved wrong. The economy veered toward the edge of recession; more than a third of a million jobs were lost; anxiety over national security soared; and a national debt in the trillions began to accrue. The ongoing occupation and conflict in Iraq continues without a clear end point.
Our Church's Organizational Life in Relationship to These Issues

In 2000, the United Church of Christ's national setting restructured our organizational life, which had been on the drawing board for a decade. Previously, there were several "instrumentalities" that addressed a range of justice issues: the Commission for Racial Justice, the Office for Church and Society, the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society, and the American Missionary Division of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. In the new structure, one Covenanted Ministry, Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM), continues the legacy and mandates of these instrumentalities.

As we began to organize and coordinate our work in JWM, we realized we had the wonderful opportunity to understand more deeply how our issues were interconnected. We could not talk about racial justice without also addressing economic justice. We could not talk about health care justice without discussing the realities of gender, economic, and race-based disparities. We could not develop strategies for public policy advocacy without consulting each other, whether our office was in Cleveland, Washington, DC, or at the Franklinton Center at Bricks (in eastern North Carolina).

The question was raised: what about the Just Peace Church Pronouncement? What resources are needed now? How do we understand what it means to be a Just Peace church? Is the Pronouncement still timely? How do we understand this Pronouncement along side other major pronouncements and resolutions calling upon the United Church of Christ to be open and affirming, multiracial and multicultural, accessible to all, a whole-earth church, an anti-racist church? How do we weave new understandings of the realities of globalization into being Just Peace?

These questions and more kept coming. In response, JWM pulled together an advisory group of people with histories of activism in peace and justice issues, organized two conferences to sharpen our discussions, and incorporated into our strategic plan a specific goal of "building a peace with justice movement" in the UCC.

This resource guide is a result of our collaborations. Thanks be to God!

The LORD will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.  
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.  
(Isaiah 58:11-12)
How to Use This Manual

**WARNING:** This is NOT a curriculum! It is an invitation into a lifelong journey of responding to God's gift of peace and Jesus' call to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is a process of creating and sustaining the beloved community — the community where we live, our church community, and our global community. None of this can be accomplished overnight or by following a prescribed course of action. The world is complicated and beautiful. God's people are glorious, and many are suffering immensely from extreme poverty, from indignities to personhood, and systemic forms of oppression.

**Why It's Not So Simple**

Because God's vision for a world that is whole and holy, where all God's people live side by side in peace and harmony, is an invitation into a lifelong journey of doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God. Because there is no one way to be faithful to this calling. Because we are building a Peace with Justice Movement in the United Church of Christ and movements are essentially led by the Spirit. There will be surprises. There will be new insights. Some churches may discern that they want to be called a Just Peace congregation and some may discern that they don't but all are welcome as partners in this movement. This resource is a guide into this journey rather than a comprehensive How To Make the World a Better Place to Live book. In it you will find:

- Background information on how this guide came to be out of the United Church of Christ's commitment to be a peace with justice church (in the Introduction)
- Information on some specific justice issues with "Faith Actions" to get you thinking about how your congregation might get involved (in Making the Connections)
- A guide to having a workshop in your church to move your thinking from being charitable service providers to social change agents (see "From Charity to Justice" in Making the Connections)
- Theological and Biblical reflections

Liturgical resources:
- Examples from local churches
- Resources, resources, resources (website addresses, books, organizations, etc.) The three-ring binder format allows you to add your own information. We invite you to make it your own as your congregation engages the resources of our faith, assesses the needs of your community and the world, discerns right action to take, and evaluates your progress as an active part of the peace with justice movement.

Additional resources will be posted on the UCC website for you to download and copy. We seek your contributions as well — stories of what your church is doing, liturgical resources, examples of how you are building a peace with justice movement to inspire others, etc. Check for updates at www.ucc.org/justice.

This is a resource manual and is meant to be a guide, not the answer. The answers are within us if we are willing to allow the Spirit of God, God's wisdom, and the teachings of Jesus who broke down all the dividing walls of hostility, to lead us.

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.*

*(John 14:27)*
Peace with Justice: Making the Connections

Making Connections Between Peace and Justice

BY LOEY POWELL

There is no peace without justice. There is not justice without peace. No Justice! No Peace!

We have heard these words over and over again in rallies and speeches and sermons—but have we really heard them? Do we really understand them? What are the implications for us as we build a peace and justice movement in the United Church of Christ?

Too often our social justice movements have made the mistake of seeing issues from a narrow perspective. Maybe there has been a time when our separate efforts for civil rights or for women’s rights or for nuclear disarmament or for protecting the environment or for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender rights needed a sharpened focus to build momentum and empowerment, especially among communities historically marginalized, oppressed, or disenfranchised. But maybe that time is over—our work for social justice will continue as will the need for focused attention on particular struggles. But maybe our world, the world we see possible, is now pushing us out of our comfort zones and into new alliances and partnerships because when you get right down to it, our issues are connected.

For instance, when the Commission for Racial Justice in the UCC named the reality of “environmental racism” in 1987 both the environmental activists and the racial justice activists entered new ground with each other. An unlikely coalition of social justice advocacy was created and has continued to work together to address the life-threatening realities that communities of color and poor communities are the most common places where toxic wastes are dumped. Environmental advocates had to come to grips with the truth that to be an environmentalist meant that one had to address the institutional racism of our country and local governments. Racial justice activists had to come to grips with the fact that environmental issues were also theirs, particularly when the effects were impacting their own communities.

Nothing is disconnected from anything else. Spiritual leaders in many faith traditions have shown us how interconnected we are, that the web of life is strong when all of its parts are strong, and it is threatened when any part of it is. The apostle Paul gave us the imagery of the body and its parts:

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. … If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 26)

As we build our peace with justice movement, we must broaden our perspective beyond only that which we know to learn about what we don’t know, and never assume that we have all the answers.
Is It Right?

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

(These excerpts came from a speech given at Howard University's Divinity School Convocation in November 2004)

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his last Sunday sermon at the Washington National Cathedral, said "...on some positions, cowardice asks the question is it expedient. And then expedience comes along and asks the question is it politic. Vanity asks the question is it popular. Conscience asks the question is it right."

I believe that the world is at a turning point and that the United States in particular must take a critical look at itself and its actions and, quite frankly, I do not see any evidence that we are willing to do so. I see few of our elected leaders willing to go beyond expediency, beyond the political, beyond vanity, to the question of what is right.

Too many of us are not asking Dr. King's question, "Is it right?" Is it right to attack Iraq? Is it right to attack Iraq and not North Korea? Is it right to not only turn a deaf ear to our allies and the United Nations because they don't agree with us, but also in the process to try to discredit, demean, and devalue them just to win political points with the American people? Is it right that, in the weeks before the war, our government tried to use its economic and political and military clout to force Canada, Mexico, and nations in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe to vote for our war in the United Nations?

Is it right to send millions of dollars of American taxpayers' money to support the military regime of Colombia under the rubric of ending the drug trade, when we know that much of that money will only be diverted to para-militaries and used against the Afro-Colombians of that war-torn nation? Is it right that, in Nigeria, one of the world's largest suppliers of oil, many citizens cannot afford gas for their own cars or oil to light their own homes? Is it right that millions of Africans are still dying each year from AIDS when the drugs that can prolong their lives are available on the world market? Indeed, is it right that the whole continent of Africa is facing not only AIDS and government corruption but also starvation in east Africa? Is it right that the civil wars in the Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Angola use arms that we have sold them, the same light weapons that are killing our children in South Central Los Angeles and Southeast DC? In the words of Dr. King, conscience asks, "Is it right?"

I believe the United States has forgotten our own principles of democracy and freedom and has done little to engender them in other parts of the world. Too often, we equate capitalism with democracy and, in the process, lose our soul.

How could we support South Africa, which refused to recognize as citizens and human beings 85 percent of its own population? Because it has a rich supply of gold, diamonds, and minerals. How could we support Duralier, who used American dollars for his family and supporters and kept Haiti the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere? Because we wanted his silence. How can we continue to support nations of the Middle East where there is no democracy and where the majority of the people are oppressed and poor? Because we want their oil.

Or, today, how can we cite Iraq's many UN violations as cause for war, without acknowledging our own violations? In his last year, Dr. King often said that there is a far deeper malady within the American spirit. It is a spirit sickened by greed and by centuries of lies and half-truths about how America came to be the great power that it is. It is a spirit that has lost its zeal for democracy in its love for power. It is a spirit that has lost its humility in the midst of its own arrogance. It is a spirit that too often has used the Bible to rationalize taking over the world and too seldom has heeded the Bible's call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.
Dr. Howard Thurman, the Dean of Rankin Chapel here, believed that, as people of faith in this democracy, we have the right to question; indeed, we must have the right to question.

Dr. Thurman quoted one of Petrarch's letters in which he wrote: "When a word must be spoken to further a good cause, and those whom it behooves to speak remain silent, anybody ought to raise his voice and break a silence which may be fraught with evil..." Dr. Thurman's own response to those words was to write that so often we say to ourselves that because we are not famous or learned or powerful or articulate that our words mean nothing in the presence of injustice. But, he reminded us, there is no limit to the power of a single voice when it is the only outlet, the only channel for justice. We don't know, he wrote, what kind of energy is floating around us by which, if we dare tap it, we ourselves, little and insignificant as we are, may be energized.

In other words, we have the right to question. In *The Luminous Darkness*, Dr. Thurman wrote passionately about how so many "good" Christians remained silent during segregation, during lynchings, during the daily attacks on human dignity suffered by African-Americans across this nation. Because so often Christians do not question the misalignment of their faith and their politics, he wrote, it was entirely possible for a Christian to work for the redemption of people's souls and, at the same time, keep them out of their own neighborhoods, schools, and even churches. That was true in Dr. Thurman's day and it is true today.

Indeed, Dr. Thurman might have said not only do we have the right to question injustice done by those in the church when we see it, we have the responsibility to do so. The right and the responsibility to challenge the church when it preaches a message of hate instead of a message of love, a message of exclusion instead of a message of inclusion, a message of war instead of a message of peace. Sadly, the history of Christianity is full of stories of oppression, violence, and intolerance done while Christians sat silently by.

But Dr. Thurman did not stop there. He also pointed to the writings of one T. R. Glover, who attributed the fall of the Roman Empire to the fact that the average Roman citizen had lost his own sense of responsibility for the life of the empire; in other words, he had civic privileges but little civic responsibility.

We have the right and the responsibility as people of faith and citizens of this nation to challenge our country when it acts unjustly, when it acts undemocratically. Otherwise, we too will have the privileges of citizenship without the responsibilities. Privileges to buy inexpensive clothes at the expense of the women and children who work in sweatshops around the world. Privileges to pollute and cause global warming while denying that it even exists or making even the smallest sacrifice in our fossil fuel usage. Privileges not to ask the question of why most of those on death rows across this nation are people of color and why almost all of them are poor. Privileges to ignore the recent rise of those living in extreme poverty right here in our country while providing tax cuts for the wealthy.

We have the right and the responsibility to question. To question the war. To question the Patriot Act. To question the 2000 election. To question why the President and Vice-President's corporate friends get billions of dollars of unbid contracts in Iraq. To question every act of racism, every act of greed, every violation of human rights in our nation and in our world. Dr. King said we must ask the question, "Is it right?" Dr. Thurman might have said we have the right to ask the question. Dr. Thurman said it much more eloquently in a poem that appears at the beginning of *The Growing Edge*.

*All around us worlds are dying and new worlds are being born;*  
*All around us life is dying and life is being born.*  
*The fruit ripens on the tree;*  
*The roots are silently at work in the darkness of the earth*  
*Against the time when there shall be new leaves, fresh blossoms, green fruit.*  
*Such is the growing edge! It is the extra breath from the exhausted lung,*  
*The one more thing to try when all else has failed.*
The upward reach of life when weariness closes in upon all endeavor.
This is the basis of hope in moments of despair,
The incentive to carry on when times are out of joint
And men have lost their reason; the source of confidence
When words crash and dreams whiten into ash.
The birth of a child — life's most dramatic answer to death—
This is the Growing Edge incarnate.

Look well to the growing edge. It is not enough to remember Howard Thurman’s words. We must live them—on the growing edge.

Climbing the Barricade
BY MARI CASTELLANOS

The most peace-full thing I’ve ever done was getting arrested. It began as an antiwar action, a peaceful protest but it became much more than that. It was an experience of deep joy and sparkling clarity.

In March 2003, the United States had just begun the second war on Iraq. Washington, DC, was resplendent in spring finery: a crisp, clear day, pink cherry blossoms against a bright blue sky. Sixty-eight religious leaders crossed the barricades in Lafayette Park to witness their opposition to our nation’s new doctrine of pre-emptive strikes and going to war without the support of the United Nations. I stood on the sidelines taking it in.

Earlier, while holding our signs, singing hymns, we had processed from the New York Ave. Presbyterian Church to the park. We had listened as church leaders voiced profound doubts about the wisdom and morality of this war. Then, one after another, the leaders of the Washington denominational offices (including my boss, Rev. Ron Stief), the leadership of the National Council of Churches, two bishops, two Nobel Peace Prize winners, and a number of ministers, laypersons, priests, and nuns crossed the National Park Police barricades and stood in a circle singing and praying. Still, I stood on the sidelines.

As a lifelong religious activist, I have marched and protested many times. In every instance, however, I carefully skirted the line beyond which I’d face arrest. Even as a pastor, my most difficult challenge was visiting someone in jail. Revolutions can traumatize a child. The Cuban revolution put a big dent in my childhood, particularly the night I watched my father being taken away by security forces. A strong fear of imprisonment remained with me.

So I stood on the sidelines that day in Lafayette Park, facing the White House that had refused to receive the religious delegations that every other government in the world had at least given a hearing. The depth of my conviction that the war was wrong made the decision. In a startling “if not now, when?” moment, I knew I’d join my brothers and sisters on the other side of the barricades.

With a lot of help from the crowd, I climbed over the barricades faster than the police could stop me. It was a deeply spiritual moment, kneeling alongside all those wonderful people, chanting “peace, salaam, shalom,” singing hymns and praying as one by one we were picked up, handcuffed, and carried away. In an instant of great transcendence, I felt I was reliving the moment of my ordination and I knew this was what it’s all about.

Suddenly, an ordinary, albeit beautiful, afternoon filled with deliverance, joy, and, yes, peace, sweet peace.
The Good Samaritan

BY WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN

(This talk was given at the National Just Peace Convocation, United Church of Christ, in November 2002)

It is my hope this morning to rescue from too much familiarity the story of the Good Samaritan and, as befits religion, to infuse the tradition with innovation.

You will recall that the story begins with an expert in Scriptural law asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. To this other-worldly question Jesus answers with a distinctly “this-worldly” story indicating that the sine qua non of religious life is compassion.

To Jews, Samaritans were heretics; Samaria was a dangerous place. Yet it was the heretic, the enemy, the man of the wrong faith who did the right thing, while the two men of the right faith flunked.

I think the story says a lot to our multi-faith nation. “Make love your aim,” says St. Paul. Wrote Abraham Joshua Heschel: “A religious person is a person who holds God and humanity in one thought, at all times, who suffers himself the harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion...” And “Kindness is my religion” says the Dalai Lama.

In short, the Good Samaritan is a multi-faith story that sees love/compassion/kindness as the core value of religion. It is bad religion to defy doctrines and creeds. While indispensable to religious life, doctrines and creeds are only so as signposts. Love alone is the hitching post. Doctrines, let’s not forget, supported slavery and apartheid; some still support keeping women in their places and gays and lesbians in limbo. Moreover, doctrines can divide while compassion can only unite. In other words, religious folk have both to recover tradition and to recover from it!

The Good Samaritan is a multi-faith story and one for the ages because it recognizes that the essence of human reality is ethical and love is its religious aim. With that understanding, many faiths can do all manner of good things together.

But now let us recognize that beyond individuals, there are whole communities—even nations—that have been stripped, beaten, and left lying in the ditch. And what these communities and nations need is not piecemeal charity but wholesale justice.

Had I but one wish for the churches of America I think it would be that they come to see the difference between charity and justice. Charity is a matter of personal attributes, justice a matter of public policy. Charity seeks to alleviate the effects of injustice, justice seeks to eliminate the causes of it. Charity in no way affects the status quo, which accounts for its popularity in middle-class churches, while justice leads inevitably to political confrontation. Especially I would hope that Christians would see that the compassion that moved the Good Samaritan to act charitably was the same compassion that prompted Biblical prophets to confront injustice, to speak truth to power, as did Jesus himself who, though more than a prophet, was certainly nothing less. And religious leaders such as Desmond Tutu and Martin Luther King have shown us once again how frequently compassion demands confrontation.

Christians are called so to live “that in everything God may be glorified” (1 Peter 4:11). Dorothy Day was once asked to comment on “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” She answered: “If we rendered to God all the things that are God’s, there would be nothing left for Caesar.” Taxation, trade, foreign affairs—they are not off limits to God. And if there is no spiritual cocooning, then religion and politics do mix and to claim otherwise is to misunderstand both. I underscore this for our presently tormented and endangered planet demands of far more religious people a politically committed spirituality.

President Bush rightly spoke of an “axis of evil” but it is not Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. A far more dangerous trio would be environmental degradation, pandemic poverty, and a world awash with weapons.
As regards the environment, it is well past time for the churches to re-wed nature to nature's God. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." A New Yorker cartoon once showed a portly man and his wife looking through their picture window at a scenic landscape. Says the man: "God's country? Well, I suppose it is. But I own it."

Wrong! The world doesn't belong to us, we belong to the world. Always have, always will. And prudence lest we squander precious resources—such caution is not enough for finally only reverence can restrain violence, be it violence against nature or against one another. Therefore, church members should not lose a step to environmental groups in pressing for legislation to embody the values and principles of a sustainable future for our sacred planet.

To understand pandemic poverty, picture—as did Attorney General Sutherland of Ireland—the world as a village of 100 citizens:

- 57 are Asian, 21 Europeans, 14 come from North and South America and eight are Africans.
- 51 are female and 49 are male.
- 70 are non-Christian, 30 Christian.
- 50 percent of the entire world's wealth is in the hands of only six people, all citizens of the United States.
- 80 live in substandard housing.
- 0 are unable to read.
- 50 suffer from malnutrition.
- One is near death, one near birth.
- Zero own computers.

Next, think of the six ingredients listed by the World Health Organization as essential everywhere:

- safe drinking water
- sufficient nutrition
- adequate sanitation
- primary health care
- basic education
- family planning for willing couples

Then ponder the price tag. According to the U.N. Development Program, the cost of providing these six ingredients would be only about $35 billion each year for 15 years. Rich countries could pony up that $35 billion, a year's equivalent of what the United States spent in '99 maintaining our nuclear capacity. So why don't they? I think it is one of the biggest lies in the world to say of a moral imperative that it is unaffordable.

The world's newest and therefore frailest democracies simply will not survive if they can't improve the standard of living of their people. That's why debt forgiveness is so important. Thanks largely to Bread for the World, Oxfam, and various church representatives, legislation was passed in America during the Clinton years that wrote off an initial $43.5 million and paved the way for further debt relief with the money saved to be used for basic services to the needy of each country.

Beyond relieving debt, it's also clear that rich countries must change their trade practices. For example, last spring President Bush and Congress passed a farm bill authorizing $100 billion in subsidies for cash crops including cotton, soybeans, and sugar. Those subsidies allowed agri-businesses to undercut small farmers in Latin America and Africa, causing enormous hardship. Let's face it, "free trade" is often tantamount to America's annexation of Third World economies.

Also, it's clear that the International Monetary Fund and World Bank must change their policies. In country after country they
seem to help the rich to get richer while most of the poor stay that way. I know precious little about economics but I believe the economist who said of his profession: “An economist is an expert who will know tomorrow why the things he predicted yesterday didn’t happen today.”

But policies can be improved, and change they must for the gap between rich and poor is “the greatest single problem and danger facing the world of the Third Millennium.” (David S. Landers)

As for our own country, capitalism, good at generating wealth, is poor at spreading it around. Free enterprise, the famed engine for driving economic growth, obviously needs a government steering wheel. When, in the richest country of the world, 33 million live in poverty, 43 million lack health insurance, and 3 million are homeless, it’s clear that we have reversed the priorities of Mary’s Magnificat, filling the rich with good things and sending the poor away empty.

Immanuel Kant was right: “Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made.” Still, with a quickened sense of conscience, Americans could vastly reduce world-wide hunger and poverty and American churches should embrace the goal of eliminating American poverty altogether. As things stand now, grim poverty in America is a tragedy that great wealth makes a sin.

To speak of a world awash with weapons is to recognize that beyond individual, communities, and nations, the world itself is on the brink of destruction. The recent Russian-American treaty calls only for storing—not for dismantling—thousands of nuclear warheads. When will we realize that only their world-wide abolition can prevent further nuclear proliferation? That is why Kofi Annan says “Global nuclear disarmament must remain at the top of the U.N. agenda.” Why shouldn’t it be at the top of the agenda of U.S. churches?

There is little we can do about other countries, but shame on us that our country does not want to lead the world in responsible, supervised, verifiable disarmament. Instead, the United States prefers being the world’s sole superpower. Our military expenditures are greater than those of the next eight largest military powers combined.

As for the threatened invasion of Iraq, it’s mind-boggling. A preemptive strike by the United States would be illegal, unwise, and profoundly perilous. Were the war fought in the towns and cities of Iraq, the carnage could be appalling, and, of course, carried by Arab television into millions of Muslim homes in many countries. To our allies, American leadership would be a source not of inspiration but resentment. To a legion of new terrorists, American institutions at home and abroad would become not models but targets. The churches must do all in their power to stop such a catastrophic conflict.

Fellow Christians: It’s hard to represent the Christian faith today in our beloved country. The cost of discipleship is rising. Christians believe in the force of law, not the law of force. Christians know that it was the Devil who offered Christ unparalleled power and wealth. It’s the Devil in all of us who makes us love being powerful. Christians press for a world governed by an urge for compassion, not by a will to power. Powerful nations have always to be reminded of Ezekiel’s lament over Tyre: “You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor,” and Shakespeare:

But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority
Most ignorant of what he’s most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

All this we Christians have to say clearly lest we ourselves strip our faith of its meaning and desert it by the wayside. But only by God’s grace can we speak and act spiritually. True, we have to hate evil, else we’re sentimental. But if we hate evil more than we love the good, we become good haters, and of those, the world already has too many. However deep, our anger, like that of Christ, must always and only measure our love.

A politically committed spirituality contends against wrong without becoming wrongly contentious. It confronts national self-
righteousness without personal self-righteousness. It cherishes God's creation, it serves the poor, it is not interested in the might of a nation but in the goodness of its people. A politically committed spirituality makes Christians confront injustice with the Samaritan's compassion.

Finally, as faith puts us on the road, hope keeps us there. We keep the faith, despite the evidence, knowing that only in so doing has the evidence any chance of changing. We feel inadequate, but remember Luther: "God can carve the rotten wood and ride the lame horse." So we continue to "run and not grow weary, walk and not faint," faithful to the end, enduring, until that day when by God's grace, "The earth will be full of knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea."

Songs of Dignity:
The Magnificat and Rich Man's House

BY THE REV. NOELLE DAMICO,
CATALYST, SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF THE POOR

In Luke 1:39-45, Mary, facing public humiliation from her pregnancy, flees (or is hustled off) to her cousin's house in the hill country of Judea. Far from the gossip of Nazareth, she is still with her family. But what an unexpected greeting she receives! Elizabeth's fetus leaps for joy and she proclaims in the Holy Spirit, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (v. 42). A mother-to-be under unusual circumstances herself, Elizabeth becomes the vehicle for God's blessing. Mary then understands that God has indeed blessed her and that she can bless herself without shame. It is an understatement to say that the Magnificat (Luke 1:47-55) is without shame.

It is a bold political manifesto. Beyond extolling herself reflexively, Luke portrays Mary as making the fierce theological claim that rich and powerful people will be brought down while lowly ones will be lifted up and hungry people will be filled with good things. This much-celebrated speech makes most middle-class churchgoers more than a bit uncomfortable. So much so that the reading is often abruptly cut at verse 50!

The ferocity of Mary's Magnificat is echoed in a song called "Rich Man's House," written and sung by members of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign. The Campaign is composed of more than fifty grassroots organizations led by poor people. It works to end poverty through education and nonviolent action to establish economic human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights include housing, a job at a sustaining wage, food, health care, and education. The song goes like this:

Well I went down to the rich man's house and I took back what he stole from me.
I took back my dignity, I took back my humanity.
And now it's under my feet (where?), under my feet (where?), under my feet (where?), under my feet!
Ain't no system gonna walk all over me!


When economically secure people, even allies of poor people, hear these words, the first reaction is usually shock, followed by offense. Responses include "Don't blame me for your problems," "God loves rich people too," and "Why can't we all live peaceably together?" The questions that often remain unasked are: "How do our actions trample those who are poor?" and "What are the names of the systems that 'walk all over' the people they ought to serve?" Loving liberals and compassionate
conservatives alike tremble at the repetitive metaphorical phrase “under my feet.” What might happen if the ones to whom assistance is offered should refuse to behave as “less fortunate?” What does “taking back” one’s dignity and humanity involve? Will rich and powerful people (like some of us) be toppled along with the system? This provocative song invites all of us to probe more deeply. How is the system dehumanizing both rich and poor people? How might God be calling us to work together to dismantle systems that rob us all of our human dignity?

In a recent School of Theology course at Auburn Theological Seminary, Glenda Adams, a leader of Poor Voices United in Atlantic City, explained how singing “Rich Man’s House” was a way to re-assert her dignity in the face of systematic disregard. Retelling the exodus narrative and linking it with Mary’s Magnificat, she described how God leads and liberates poor people in spite of phararchs and emperors. "This song is our song. It's about our story" she said. "It's about refusing to believe what the system says: that you are worthless. It's about remembering and announcing that we too are created as children of God. And it's about what our almighty God can do and will do." I rejoice, sings Mary, for through the conception of this child, God's promise of dignity and restoration shall be made good. All people shall call me blessed.

During the season of Christmas, God's blessing is too frequently associated with what we have or what we own. But, in these passages, God blesses those who have nothing and chooses them to lead God's people into new ways of living. To some, this may sound surprising. But as Willie Baptist, the co-Coordinator of the University of the Poor and a semi-homeless man says, "we are resource-less, but resourceful!" And God specializes in surprises.

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**War: When a Single Word Becomes a Lie**

**BY DANIEL C. MAGUIRE, MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY**

Words are like people: marry one and you get all the relatives in the bargain. The problem is that words are promiscuous and also polygamous, and so you get more and more relatives and in-laws to deal with.

What this means is that words are mutants. They can take on new meanings. Eventually they can become so loaded with deception that they can no longer be used innocently. To say the word is to be so steeped in lies that to use the word makes you a liar.

Take “war,” for example. Since ancient times, the word has been spotted as a mischievous misnomer: Desertum faciunt et belum appellant... they create a wasteland, but they call it “war.” In modern times Peter Ustinov put it this way; “Terrorism is the war of the poor; war is the terrorism of the rich.” Putting the violence of war and violence of terrorism together represents a candor that is not welcome.

The word war in modern times has become a lie. It says something that is not true. It can’t be used truthfully. “War” has been made to seem rational, productive, noble, inevitable, the path of honor, “an extension of statecraft by other means.” War is now so transformed into respectability that we use it in all sorts of innocent and lovely contexts: “the war on poverty,” “the war on cancer,” “the war on illiteracy,” etc. War is good and reasonable and we need lots of it.

What really helped all this to happen was the venerable “just war theory.” Putting the word “war” alongside the word “just” helped to baptize war, making it seem rational and good.

There are some words that have finally become accepted as denoting an evil: “torture,” “slavery,” “rape.” War is not in their company. The reality it covers is sneakily hidden from view since the word “war” is no longer descriptive of the mayhem and slaughter we are wreaking when we “go to war.” If the “just war theory” were called the “justifiable slaughter theory” or the justifiable violence theory, it would at least be honest. Maybe the slaughter and the human and ecological destruction and violence we are contemplating are justifiable, but at least we would be honest in admitting what it is we are justifying.
Military strategists, and ethicists embedded with them, drape an even thicker tissue of lies around military violence. They like to call it “the use of force.” That sugarcoats it handsomely. “Force,” after all, is nice. A forceful personality, a forceful argument: these can be nonviolent. But an atomic bomb hitting Hiroshima or Nagasaki or the leveling of Fallujah in Iraq, or settlements in Palestine needs a more honest word than “force.” “Force” is a malicious euphemism, as is war.

Maybe the horror that “war” fails to honestly describe can be justified. Or, more likely, maybe the horror it euphemizes is simply the pit we fall into by avoiding the tedious, unglamorous work of peace-making and justice-building. Maybe some slaughter to prevent greater slaughter might have been necessary in 1994 in Rwanda because there was no international interest in supporting the peace and reform efforts in Rwanda in the years preceding that. But don’t bring on decoits like “use of force” or “meeting the just war criteria” to dignify an unconsolable failure to do the advance work of peace and to disguise the total embarrassment of statecraft that state-sponsored violence is.

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Peace With Justice: One Church’s Example

CORVALLIS FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The things that make for peace and justice at our church begin with the strong commitment of our congregation to engage with relevant issues and to pursue meaningful actions that can lead to the peace and justice vision that God reveals to us through the teachings of Jesus the Christ. We have been an official Just Peace Church since our May 1993 annual meeting, at which time we covenanted with God and with each other to seek the ways of justice and peace as follows:

As a congregation of the church of Jesus Christ, we recognize that God is calling us to be about the work of bringing justice and making peace in our world, in our community, and in ourselves. Confessing that this call challenges our individual and corporate lives, we covenant among ourselves and with God to seek the ways of Justice and Peace, so as to make a difference in our lives and the lives of all who experience injustice and violence in our community, and the world, and to reach out to those people and to understand those problems and issues that are often overlooked.

Our church has a standing Just Peace Committee that is called to encourage and provide resources to help our congregation infuse peace and justice issues into all aspects of our church life. Some strategies include:

• A brochure, A Just Peace Church: What it Means to Us, is available to all members and visitors.
• A Just Peace bulletin board is kept current with information from the national UCC as well as local items.
• Regular Just Peace contributions appear in our weekly church newsletter.
• The Just Peace Committee provides some specific programs for our Christian Education’s Adult Forum each year.
• Specific action projects, such as sending Christmas cards to Wal-Mart CEOs, making contributions to Adept-A-Minefield, and helping out at the local food bank, are often tabled at Coffee Hour (where fair trade coffee is now being served).

The Just Peace Committee provides a descriptive summary of its activities each year in the church’s formal annual report, which is distributed in May.

We are blessed with many talented folks who extend the work of our church family out into local, state, national, and international arenas. Recognizing these efforts is also important to our Just Peace Committee.

To learn more about our just peace projects, you can request copies of our church annual reports or call the church and ask for the current Just Peace Committee chairperson. Contact Corvallis First Congregational United Church of Christ; 4515 SW West Hills Road; Corvallis, OR 97333-3339; (541) 757-8122.
Peace with Justice: Tools for Building the Movement

The Justice and Peace Action Network

The Justice and Peace Action Network (JPANet) is the grassroots organizing and electronic advocacy tool of the United Church of Christ, created and supported by Justice and Witness Ministries and Wider Church Ministries. Keeping with the UCC's vision of a Peace with Justice Movement, the JPA Network collectively advocates on public policy issues using biblical understanding, General Synod policy based on its resolutions and pronouncements, and the UCC's legacy of historical public witness. The Network currently includes more than 18,000 individuals and congregations from all 50 states and averages more than 200 new members per month.

JPANet Resources and Opportunities

Weekly "JPANet News" and "Action Alert" e-mails are sent to update members on policy issues and target public issues or legislation for electronic advocacy. It is also possible to generate letters to send to the editor of your local newspaper or to contact corporate CEOs on issues.

An annual Briefing Book is sent to the network. The book offers a comprehensive tool for public policy advocacy including summaries on targeted legislation and tips on how to organize and advocate through policy and the media. Regional and national gatherings are held across the country to build and strengthen the JPANet. They are organized collaboratively with Justice and Witness Ministries and Conferences.

Regional JPANet organizers are available to assist local churches, associations, and conferences become trained and active in public policy advocacy through the JPANet. Biblical, theological, and liturgical materials are made available to help congregations explore how to bring justice themes and public advocacy into Christian life and worship.

How can you build the Justice and Peace Action Network?

Sign up online at www.ucctakeaction.org and seek to get "100 percent participation" by your friends, family, and congregation.

Multiply your voice by taking action on all of the weekly "Action Alerts." You can sign up for specific areas of policy that interest you if you so choose.
Moving From Charity to Justice: A Workshop for Local Churches

What is Charity?

Many United Church of Christ congregations are engaged in outreach ministries of compassionate response to people in need. Charitable activities such as soup kitchens, clothing closets, Habitat for Humanity projects, prison visitation ministries, and maintaining emergency funds for the pastor to assist families with heating costs in the winter or other critical needs are vitally important ways for the church to show people that we care and that God cares. Other projects undertaken by churches might have a global locus such as sponsoring children or families in poor countries, sending books to schools in other parts of the world, or sponsoring a refugee family. Through such efforts, members of our congregations have the opportunity to learn about life in another part of the world and meet real human needs.

What is Justice?

Ministries of compassionate outreach are needed in our communities because they are a direct response to Jesus’ call for us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison and those who are sick, and give shelter to the shelterless (Matthew 25:31-46). Our faith, however, also calls us to do more. We are challenged to see the big picture in which people are struggling to live with dignity. A justice response asks the questions: What is causing people in our town to be homeless? Why are so many people coming through our weekly feeding program? Why are so many unemployed? Why are the basic health care needs of people not being met? What is creating the need for so many people to flee their countries of origin and seek refuge in ours?

By asking these questions and actively seeking the answers, congregations begin to address the root causes behind the insecurity and poverty we see at our own doorsteps and that which occurs in other parts of the world. By expanding our perspective outward and to all sides to see the context of human suffering, our congregations move from providing assistance only to stepping into the public arena as advocates for systemic change and justice so that the cycle of poverty or violence can end.

How Do We Get There?

In this workshop, participants will discuss how to become more effective advocates for justice and peace, addressing root causes through work in public policy, partnerships, and witness. They will explore what helps us and hinders us from responding to God’s call to “do justice.” They will use their own situations as case studies to help build from the experience of charitable assistance toward justice advocacy and partnerships, while sharing “what’s working” in other congregations.

Participants will leave with concrete ideas and resources for implementation in their own settings, including the Justice and Peace Action Network, UCCTakeAction.org, and other tools for the peace with justice movement in the UCC.
The Workshop

Welcome/Sign-in

Have participants sign up on one list. Pass the list around as people are waiting for others to arrive. Ask them to print clearly include the following information: name, telephone, e-mail, mailing address, local church, and its location. Be sure to start the workshop on time so that you can end it on time. If you need to begin and everyone has not signed in, just have them keep passing the sheet around. It’s helpful to have a sheet attached to a clipboard or have it be a part of a larger pad so that people have something hard to write on.

Workshop Overview (by the leaders)

Share your name and say something about your advocacy work, why it is important to you, and your connection with the Justice and Peace Action Network, Justice and Witness Ministries, Conference-based advocacy committees, etc. Indicate that you hope that the biblical materials and the analysis that will be done in this workshop will be replicated in their own congregations and communities. Participants should expect to get to know other participants and their ministries, distinguish between charity and justice, and be introduced to force field analysis as one way to assess best ways to move your congregation from charity to justice.

General Introductions (of participants and leaders)

Ask participants to share their names, local churches, and one of their church’s justice ministries (meaning any of the wide range of congregational responses to issues, concerns, and human needs). List the ministries named on newsprint.

Thanksgiving for the Work

Offer a brief prayer of thanks for the named ministries.

Bible Studies (to be done in either small groups or the whole group, depending on setting)

Look at the Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 passages. (See the Biblical Reflection section on page 22. It can be copied and handed out.) Though you may only get to the first two or three questions on the sheet, be certain to ask the third question: “Who are the rebuilders, the oaks of righteousness?” in the Isaiah 61 passage. The answer indicated in the Bible is the poor, oppressed, grieving. Ask how this effects the way in which we do justice work.

Share a Story Differentiating Charity from Justice (showing the need to address root causes)

Share the factory story as a general illustration of the need to address root causes (or page 22). Share a story about how it only takes a small number of people to make a difference in advocacy. This is a good spot to have a brief moment of sharing from a local church if it can be arranged ahead of time.

This is also a good time to say that a variety of words describe justice, including these key words, advocacy, solidarity, and accountability:

Advocacy is working on behalf of another or for a goal, especially legislative activity. Solidarity is accompanying someone in need, sharing that person’s lot and joining with them as a partner in advocacy.

Accountability is holding corporations, governments, and other institutions that promise change accountable to those promises, ensuring that those who claim to represent the best interests of “the people” indeed are working for the common good in demonstrable ways.
Share Isaiah 58:6-9 Passage

Emphasize moving from charity to justice. Isaiah tells the followers not just to loosen the bonds of injustice and undo the thongs of the yoke but to break the yoke of injustice completely; to remove it totally from among our midst and allow the oppressed to go free. Loosening the yoke of injustice can be likened to our charitable work of direct service to those in need. It helps people survive but it doesn’t remove the conditions that create the problem in the first place. Breaking/removing the yoke of injustice can be likened to the work of justice whose goal is to eradicate those structures and systems that perpetuate suffering, violence, and need.

Emphasize that charitable assistance that addresses immediate needs is always important. When someone is injured and bleeding before you, you don’t respond by talking about health care for all. You bind up the person’s wounds. However if we are to “break the yoke”of economic insecurity and violence in our world, then we must also address the root causes of these problems.

Introduce Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis looks at a goal (in this case moving congregations toward justice action) and then assesses what forces help move an individual or group toward that goal (helps) and what forces push an individual or group away from the goal (hinderances). There are sheets that people can fill out individually. Give them about 8 minutes. Then begin with hindrances and ask them to share. Alternatively, if you don’t have a lot of time, you can just ask folks to call out hindrances and helps. Don’t combine helps and hindrances (though you will notice sometimes they are related); do each separately. Begin with the hindrances. It’s always easier for people to talk about what’s not working or hard to do.

Helps ➔ Charity ➔ Justice ➔ Hindrances

Force Field Discussion

With the input of the group, choose one help and one hindrance. Explain that there is time to only discuss one help and one hindrance, but that they can use the process to explore the others when they return home. Begin with the hindrance. Ask those gathered to brainstorm together how the group might overcome this hindrance or turn it around into a help. List the responses on newsprint. If there is time, do the same with the help.

Summary of the Workshop

Promise to collate responses and provide a summary of the workshop to a local person who will then distribute it to attendees. Promise to share with all who attend (and with the Conference) the contact information of those present. Lift up specific actions that participants have agreed to do. List other follow-up steps the group may want to identify.

Revisit Membership in the Justice and Peace Action Network

Emphasize partnership and community.

Provide sign-up cards for the JPANet and talk about UCCTakeAction.
Closing Litany of Commitment

WRITTEN BY THE REV. NOELLE DAMICO

Leader: Then let us covenant anew to be faithful followers of God. With what shall we come before the Lord?
People: Shall we come with burnt offerings?
Leader: Will God be pleased with sacrifices?
People: Shall we give our firstborn for our sins?
Leader: God has told you, O Mortal, what is good.
People: What does the Lord require but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God? (Micah 6:8)
Leader: God, we are excited and emboldened on this day of commitment.
People: We long to serve and strengthen those who are suffering.
Leader: In this world of injustice, violence, and hate, it is easy to become apathetic.
People: But we refuse to pretend that we can do nothing to change the "way things are."
Leader: We know sometimes change takes a long time.
People: We are prepared to keep walking with you and those in need as together we live in a new way that reflects your intention for creation.
Leader: We yearn to know you more completely, God.
People: May this journey of service, advocacy, and worship form us anew in your image.
Leader: Inhabit our sanctuary and our streets with your presence
People: Inhabit our hearts and our actions with your compassion.
Leader: Through prayer and song, study and work, we seek always to grow closer to you by growing closer to one another.
People: May our worship and our work be one, proclaiming your justice, mercy, and faithful presence in this world.

Closing Song

We Dare Proclaim (to the tune of Amazing Grace)

N. Damico

We dare proclaim a whole new world is springing up today. A world of justice, joy, and peace, abundant with God's grace!

Benediction

As we leave this place of learning and of inspiration, let us take the peace that God has already given us to the world around us, and may we believe that justice shall roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. Amen!

Share a sign of Christ's peace with others as you leave.
**Biblical Reflection**

on Our Role as Faithful Witnesses to God's Justice and Peace

**ISAIAH 61:1-4**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because God has anointed me; God has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoner; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor; and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn in Zion — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord to display God's glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

**LUKE 4:16-21**

When he [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

What values/practices/cultural assumptions are supported by these biblical passages?
What values/practices/cultural assumptions are challenged by these biblical passages?
Who are the “oaks of righteousness”? Are they the rebuilders? How do we become part of God’s rebuilding group? What is the church’s role? Where/how do you see the themes of these passages playing out in our everyday life?
What do these passages imply for our role as people of faith in the public square?

**Story Showing Difference Between Charity and Advocacy**

There was a factory where thousands of people worked. Its production line was a miracle of modern engineering. It turned out thousands of machines everyday, but the factory had many accidents. The machinery was just not safe. Day after day people came out of the factory with squashed fingers, cuts, and bruises. Sometimes a person would lose an arm or a leg. Occasionally someone was crushed to death.

Soon people began to see that something needed to be done. First on the scene were the churches. They set up a small first-aid tent outside the factory gate. With the help of the council of churches, it grew into a proper clinic. It was able to give first aid and to treat quite serious injuries. The town council became interested and local charity groups helped out. The clinic grew into a small hospital with modern equipment, operating rooms, and full-time doctors and nurses. Several lives were saved.
Finally, the factory owners saw the good that was being done. They wanted to show that they cared, so they gave the hospital their official backing with unlimited access to the factory, a small amount of money, and an ambulance to speed the serious cases from the factory to the hospital.

But each year the number of accidents got higher. More and more people were hurt, and in spite of everything the hospital did, more and more people died. Only then did some people begin to question if it was enough to treat the injuries while leaving untouched the greater problem of the machinery that was causing the problem.

**Reading**

The importance of this reading and the discussion that follows is to help distinguish between charity (immediate, spontaneous response to human need, as in the case of famine or natural disaster) and justice, actions that promote change (actions that address and attempt to correct the causes of injustice and human need). The intent of the discussion is not to imply that charity is unimportant (i.e., that we do not need hospitals) but rather to stress that meeting immediate needs without changing the root causes of problems is not enough.

**Discussion:**

What was the problem in the factory?

What did the people do to deal with the problem? How do you feel about what they did?

What would you have chosen to do?

Did the way people acted help to change the cause of the problem (justice) or help to deal with the results of the problem (charity)? Which kind of approach would have been better in the long run? What might the church have done first?

What kinds of things could have been done by the workers, the factory owners, and community people to help change this situation? In what other world situations, do you think charity is important? Change (justice) is important? Both charity and advocacy/justice are important?

Can you think of a situation in your own community where charity is important? Where change (justice) is important? Where charity and change/justice/advocacy are important?

Here are two further situations (you can also use your own that relate to the UCC):

Every summer, Sanitown has a problem with a polluted beach. Donations are being collected to build a swimming pool. The school in Bigerton has a big problem with vandalism. The principal of the school announces tough new rules to suspend anyone caught destroying property.

Are the solutions proposed a response to immediate need or are they likely to change the situation?

Participating in the Decade to Overcome Violence

ADVANCE

The Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (DOV) is an initiative of the World Council of Churches that calls churches, ecumenical organizations, and all people of goodwill to:

- Work together for peace, justice, and reconciliation at all levels—local, regional, and global. Embrace creative approaches to peace building that are consonant with the spirit of the gospel.
- Interact and collaborate with local communities, secular movements, and people of other living faiths toward cultivating a culture of peace.
- Walk with people who are systematically oppressed by violence and act in solidarity with all struggling for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.
- Repent together for our complicity in violence and engage in theological reflection to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence.

The Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010) stems from the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) passionate engagement with the issues of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, while relentlessly exploring the purpose of Christian unity in a broken world.

The churches meeting for the Eighth WCC Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, at the end of the most violent century in human history, committed themselves to a pilgrimage of peace. The Assembly called the churches, ecumenical organizations, and all people of goodwill, to work together to overcome violence through peace and justice.

The WCC encourages churches and communities to address issues of violence in their own contexts and to work together for peace, justice, and reconciliation in the Decade to Overcome Violence.

In 2001, the General Synod passed a resolution of support for the DOV that called on our churches to participate. Why Violence? Why Not Peace? is an excellent study guide that is available through the DOV website (www.overcomingviolence.org). Go to “About DOV” and then scroll down the page to Resources. An adult study group in your church could use this guide to deepen an understanding of our fascination and repulsion with different forms of violence and ways to create alternatives to violence.

There are many other thoughtful resources listed on the site as well, including teaching peacemaking to children, understanding the roots of violence, biblical and theological reflections, violence against women and children, etc.

Each year, DOV focuses on a different region. For example, in 2004, the focus was on the United States and the theme for the year was “The Promise and Power of Peace.” One project in 2004 invited churches to nominate individuals who demonstrated creative and courageous peacemaking to receive a “Blessed Are the Peacemakers Award.” These awards will continue to be offered throughout the decade. More information and nomination forms are available on the DOV website.

In 2005, the focus is on Asia with the theme “Building Communities of Peace for All.”

Faith Actions

(Prospect information on specific actions can be found on the DOV website, www.overcomingviolence.org.)

Use the study guide, Why Violence? Why Not Peace? in an adult study group as a way to understand the roots of violence, think about alternatives to violence, and incorporate biblical and theological understandings in work to overcome violence.

You can download this study guide from the DOV website, or call or write the U.S. DOV office at U.S. DOV Committee; World Council of Churches; 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 1370; New York, NY 10115; Telephone: (212) 870-2522 or (888) 212-2920.
Participate in the annual Lenten Fast from Violence as a congregation. Meet weekly during Lent in small groups to talk and pray about the Fast. Involve younger members of your church community to also refrain from "consuming violence" by not watching violent TV shows, playing violent video games, engaging in violence or hurtful speech, going to violent movies, or listening to music with hateful, demeaning, or violent lyrics. Do more than just refrain—talk about it. Become aware of how pervasive such violence is in your everyday lives. Take action by contacting the producers of this violence and letting them know how you feel about it. Don’t buy products like video games that contain such violence.

Consider nominating someone, or a group or local church, to receive the Blessed Are the Peacemakers Award and choose a time for a special celebration. The occasion could be the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, the International Day of Prayer for Peace, or another time when your congregation comes together with a focus on peace with justice. Make an assessment of your community in terms of violence. Find out more information about what can be done to overcome violence with justice making. Join with other partners to address the situation and be peacemakers. Some ideas might include developing better resources for handling domestic violence situations in your community, starting job training and educational enhancement programs where unemployment is high, or making your neighborhood safe from gun violence. Be creative! Know that you do not have to do this alone, but that it must start somewhere.

Engage your Sunday School and youth groups in activities that will help them learn more about peace, peaceful resolution to conflict, and the ways their own lives are affected by violence (video games, movies, television, etc.).

Check the DOV website frequently for new information and ideas, and share the stories from your experience as a congregation with the DOV online.

Beginning in November of each year, DOV holds On the Wings of a Dove, a 16-day campaign that focuses on ending violence against women and children. You can use DOV's resources to bring attention to the issue in your church and community. In 2010, hold a program, action, or public witness to culminate the DOV decade. Consider creating the event with other churches and organizations in your community.

Voter Education

"Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!"

(Isaiah 58:1)

While it is true that churches, as 501(c)3 organizations, cannot support or oppose a candidate for political office, this does not mean that congregations cannot engage in dialogue about the issues at stake in the elections, including global security, economic policy, environmental safety, public education, and health care policy. In fact, participating in educational activities that help one to become a well-informed and thoughtful voter is a key responsibility for any citizen. Congregations can use many ways to create forums and spaces for dialogue, discussion, and faithful reflection on the issues at stake in the elections.

In Worship and in Church Education

Address issues and concerns in the worship life of the congregation, through prayers, sermons, and Scripture. Invite members of the congregation with various kinds of expertise to speak about the issues from their experiences and perspectives. For example, invite public school teachers to talk about public education issues or health care workers to talk about health care issues. Discuss the issues in light of scriptural teaching and the resolutions of the UCC General Synod.
Guidelines for Faithful and Respectful Discussion on the Issues

Realize that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the conversation and has given each participant a part of the truth you are seeking to discern.

Follow the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," even when you disagree with them. Listen respectfully and carefully to others. State what you think you heard someone say and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure to understand each other.

Speak honestly about your thoughts and feelings. Share personal experiences that help others to more fully understand your concerns and perspectives on the issues. Conversation can be passionate and still be respectful, civil, and constructive.

Speak for yourself, rather than as a member of a group. Use "I"-statements rather than "you"-statements.

Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence, or integrity.

Lift up points of agreement as well as disagreement.

Create space for everyone's concerns to be spoken, even when they disagree.

Seek to stay in community with each other even though the discussion may be vigorous and perhaps tense.

Keep an open mind and heart. You may not hear if you judge too quickly.

Pray for God's grace to listen attentively, speak clearly, and remain open to the vision God holds for us all.

Adapted from "Ground Rules for Conversation" (Evangelical Lutheran Church Department for Communication) and "Seeking to be Faithful Together" (adopted by the 204th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA)

Faith Actions

Hold a candidate forum at your church.

Visit nonpartisan websites that provide background on the issues and candidate positions such as the League of Women Voters website.

Sharing the task of finding and gathering issue information makes it easier and more fun!

Gather a group of people willing to be researchers, then have each person take an issue and follow that issue discussion in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Share your findings with each other.

Invite Sunday School children and youth to share their hopes and concerns on the issues.

Organize a group from your congregation to attend candidate events and town hall meetings, then share your reflections with each other after the event. (You can bring a question or two in written form with you.)

Watch the candidate debates with other members of the congregation; afterwards, share your impressions, reflections, and questions with each other.

Post issue education material on church bulletin boards and include information in your church's newsletter.

Talk about the issues with family members and friends.
Developing Youth Advocates

I feel now, after witnessing firsthand just a few of the atrocities of Tijuana and the border-land reservations, that I am personally responsible for the well-being of my global brothers and sisters.

Gabrielle Meury, Claremont UCC, Southern California/Nevada Conference

Gabrielle’s statement exemplifies the passion and energy of the eight young people from the Southern California/Nevada Conference of the UCC who gathered in San Diego, California, United States, and Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Ranging in age from 18 to 25, these young people made up an Environmental Justice Young Adult Team and they were gathered for intensive training and an immersion experience on the issue of environmental racism. How can we, as a people of faith, combat environmental racism and work for justice?

We hoped that the four participants from Puerto Rico would take their learning home and put it to work for environmental justice in the Caribbean context and we wanted the four young people from Southern California and Nevada to see and examine environmental racism in their own region in order to work for environmental justice in that region. The group was multiracial/multiethnic, which added to the learning experience. Joe Zarro, Community Church of Manhattan Beach, Southern California/Nevada Conference, wrote about how he experienced that connection:

My week with the EJ team taught me the power of the environment, and the sacredness of the earth, and what it is like to confront injustice. But my week with the EJ team was also a truly spiritual event. The camaraderie between my UCC brothers and sisters, and seeing their compassion and commitment to strangers facing adversity, explicated the Holy Spirit — the connectivity between all people and the earth.

The San Diego/Tijuana border region was chosen for the immersion experience because it illustrates so clearly the challenges caused by environmental racism. The young adult group began by learning about environmental racism issues. Then the group visited the Chipacingo area of Tijuana to examine the poor health conditions caused, in large part, by toxic waste from the maquiladoras or factories, which often use sweatshop labor, surrounding the neighborhood. The team also went to the coastline near the Mexico/United States border to see the pollution and dumping that make the Mexico beach areas hazardous. A visit to the La Jolla and Pala Native American reservations in San Diego County allowed the team to see the effects of diverting water away from the reservations and into the cities and the landfill dumping that has caused a legal battle.

The training/immersion experience galvanized the young people to lead the fight against environmental racism. Wilson Rivera González, Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Romero, Puerto Rico Conference, said, “We are counting on every single one of our churches to take a stand against anything that is injustice and to not be afraid to let the world know that we are all God’s people, and that we won’t be taken down without a struggle — without our voices being heard!” Xiaomary Rodríguez Fuentes, Iglesia Evangélica Unida Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico Conference, wrote that remaining silent is no longer an option “while confronting the toxic realities of our communities of color. When we lift up our voices, we also lift up our value and dignity as
part of God's creation. To remain silent would be like offering ourselves as victims of fear without giving ourselves the opportunity to fight the good fight. When we lift up our voices, we must do it with a mentality of impact, strong commitment, and disruption of the status quo. ..

The experiences of the Young Adult Team has several strengths which make it a viable model for the development of youth/young adult justice advocates.

**Training/discussion on a particular issue area**

- immersion
- Small group model
- Youth leadership

**Cross-setting/cross-conference interaction, including hosting by a local congregation**

How can young people in your community mobilize justice efforts on a particular issue? How can older adults partner with younger people in such efforts? May the Creator bless our young people as they offer their energy and leadership in changing the world!

**Faith Actions**

**STUDY; IMMERSE; MOBILIZE!**

*Study* the situation. Read history that does not "rubber-stamp" the view of the dominant paradigm. Learn as much as possible on the nature of a particular problem, the injustice being committed, etc. Find out what action has been taken in the past, and what action is happening currently.

*Immerse* yourselves in the experience. Visit locations of injustice. Speak with those being affected by a situation, with those mobilizing on it. Discuss how the immersion experience affected your group—what emotions were generated and reactions caused, how one’s faith understanding relates to the experience, etc.

*Mobilize* on the issue. Tell others—your family and friends, church family, colleagues, schoolmates—about your experience. Explain why you consider it important. Invite them to learn more about a given issue, and to be active in addressing it. Organize people to act on the issue. Celebrate what you are able to do, process the lessons learned, and then do it again, even better!

**International Immersion: Developing a Justice Ethos**

*I realized the true reason I had attended a United Nations event in South Africa... I remembered how it felt to want to do nothing but change the world. To me, that is what the entire event was about, to find how to allow the passion to fight discrimination to overtake you and, most of all, to show your passion through love.*

Emily Barrows, UCC Southern Conference

The impact of an international experience can be so awesome, so helpful in developing a justice ethos and a sense of world community. The words of Emily Barrows demonstrate how energizing an international trip can be. As a young adult, she participated in a delegations sponsored by the United Church of Christ to the World Conference Against Racism (2001), in Durban South Africa. She and other young people who attended the Conference returned dedicated to combat racism and oppression in all its forms. As the group formed themselves into Youth Against Social Injustice, they committed themselves to return to their communities to educate and empower young people to take action and change society.
An international immersion experience can be beneficial for people of all ages who wish to strengthen their justice advocacy. It fosters interaction with folk from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. It helps provide insight into—and helps build solidarity with—God's people worldwide. It allows for better analysis and understanding of one's own country, individual and communal contexts, and the realities and values that have shaped one's own life. We can understand better what it means to do justice if we know more about how the actions of our home country impact the rest of the world. We can mobilize more strongly for change by being in solidarity with those with whom we've interacted through international experience.

**Faith Actions**

Discern with your church group what issues you would like to learn about, where you might go to learn about them, and what would be required to go there. Find out what international opportunities may be available. Discuss possibilities with the Common Global Ministries (www.globalministries.org/) of the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and with Justice and Witness Ministries.

Organize for the experience. Plan logistics of time, budget, participants, etc. Have the group study an issue or region before the trip. Plan how you will communicate the experience after your return.

Be sure to stand in partnership with the people, faith groups, and organizations of the world—not in some feigned superiority. International immersion abandons pejorative ideas of coming to "rescue" the poor people; instead, it embraces the principles of learning from others, and walking in solidarity as we do justice together as the family of the Creator.

Enjoy the experience! Let your hearts and souls be open to change and growth. Celebrate what was learned in the experience, and use that learning to work for justice!
Peace with Justice: Zeroing in on the Issues

The following pages contain information and advocacy suggestions ("Faith Actions") on a variety of issues being addressed by Justice and Witness Ministries. It is in no way a complete or comprehensive listing of issues. Additional information on specific issues will be made available periodically through the website postings, and many current, timely issues are posted to the Justice and Peace Action Network (JPANet) at www.uccTakeAction.org. Sign up today for the JPANet to receive these postings.

Wider Church Ministries of the UCC is also a partner in JPANet. Global and international issues are part of our e-advocacy as well, and many of our local congregations are very much concerned with global issues, including immigration, refugees, global warming and other environmental issues, economic globalization, conditions of women around the world, and international peace and conflict resolution. JWM and WCM work together to address these issues and provide educational and advocacy resources for the UCC.

Resources (websites, books, organizations, etc.) for further study follow some of the issues pages and additional resources can be found in the Resources section of this manual.
Nuclear Weapons

Stopping the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

A Statement of the Executive Committee of The World Conference of Religions for Peace

We, the international Governing Board of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, appeal to the governments participating in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Conference to take urgently needed steps to advance common security.

The existence of nuclear weapons poses enormous and incalculable danger to peace, security, and our shared environment. Long-standing efforts in the international community to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons are currently being undermined or complicated by extremely worrying developments: some of the Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) may have reduced their strategic arsenals, but they still maintain large numbers of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, and continue to research the development of new nuclear systems. Three states, not bound by the NPT, have acquired nuclear weapons without evident penalty. Other states are known or alleged to have active nuclear weapon programmes. And, there is great fear that non-state actors are seeking nuclear weapons.

We appeal to the governments represented in the Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference to reaffirm the commitments already undertaken to accomplish nuclear disarmament; to retain what is valuable in existing treaty arrangements; and to pursue new options to assure that an international non-proliferation regime may become, once again, an instrument that moves the world toward peace and security for all.

As religious leaders, we are convinced that preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons can only be achieved by a realistic and comprehensive framework that is designed to provide for common global security. There can be no lasting security for any state or group of states if there is not a framework designed to protect the security of all states.

As we urge governments to find the creativity and political will to advance an effective and comprehensive non-proliferation regime, we also pledge our own action. We represent different religious traditions, but we are united in a shared commitment to advance the moral values that can guide just relations among persons, communities, and states. We will work among our own communities to build the moral foundations for justice, peace, and security.

Religions for Peace builds, equips, and networks Inter-Religious Councils to harness the untapped power of religious communities to transform conflict, promote peace, and advance sustainable development. Founded in 1970 as an international, non-sectarian organization, Religions for Peace is now the largest coalition of the world’s religious communities, with affiliated Inter-religious Councils in four regions and 55 countries. For additional information regarding this statement or for more details about Religions for Peace, please contact us at info@wcrp.org.

Background

The United States has slowly been decreasing its stock of nuclear warheads and the Bush Administration plans to continue this trend. The Pentagon presented their report, Findings of the Nuclear Posture Review, to Congress as required, in January 2002. The good news was that they planned to decrease the number of operationally ready nuclear warheads from about 6,000 to between 1,700-2,200 and to convert four ballistic missile submarines to a tactical role using cruise missiles.

The great majority of our nuclear warheads are currently targeted on Russia in continuation of the long-outdated strategy of mutually assured destruction. At the same time, we are heavily engaged in helping Russia to destroy their nuclear arsenal. Considering the weakness of Russia as a nuclear threat, a far more dramatic reduction in nuclear weapons is justified. A further problem with this reduction in operationally ready nuclear weapons is that the Bush plan is not to destroy the weapons but to put them in storage so that they could be made operational again in a short time.
The most troubling aspect of the report is that it justifies the creation of a new type of nuclear weapon to penetrate deep into the ground to knock out deep command centers or weapons storage areas. Such weapons might be used against Iraq or North Korea, for example. The President's budget for FY 2003 had a small line item in the Department of Energy budget to start inventing such a weapon.

The report also deals with the problem (to the Pentagon) that there are no longer significant enemies to justify even 1,700 strategic nuclear weapons. Instead, the report justifies the U.S. nuclear arsenal as a capability to respond to currently unknown threats and as a deterrent to other nations who might try to gain nuclear dominance if the United States reduced its arsenal to zero. Since a strategic nuclear threat depends just as much on missiles, planes, or submarines as on warheads, and only Russia has more than a token strategic capacity, there is little to fear from an unknown future. When Russia is no longer a strategic threat, a few dozen strategic nuclear weapons would be more than enough to serve a deterrence function based on a threat of retaliation for a country that launched a small surprise attack.

At a time when the Pentagon is asking for significantly more funds to serve other military purposes, it is fair to ask for a much sharper reduction in strategic weapons that have lost most of their reason for existence.

General Synod 14 passed a resolution on weapons of mass destruction calling on all nations to stop the development, testing, and deployment of nuclear weapons and particularly called on the United States and the Soviet Union to reduce the number of existing nuclear warheads. Additionally, the Just Peace Church Pronouncement, affirmed by the General Synod 15 in 1985, says that "[w]e reject any use or threat to use weapons and forces of mass destruction and any doctrine of deterrence based primarily on using such weapons." It further states, "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 towards dismantling their military arsenals, calling upon other nations to reciprocate; c) develop mechanisms for international law, international peacekeeping, and international conflict resolution."

**Faith Actions**

Urge the president and your representative and senators to destroy and not merely store superfluous nuclear warheads to reach the Nuclear Posture Review goal of 1,700 to 2,200 nuclear weapons, and to adopt a goal of far fewer weapons. Further urge them to sharply reduce the number of planes, submarines, and missiles that are designed for delivering strategic nuclear weapons. Particularly urge the president to follow the lead of previous presidents by declaring a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons.

Support international efforts to reduce, and eventually eliminate, all stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

Monitor the effects in your community from uranium mining and/or the transport of nuclear materials through your community. Work with others to declare your city or town a "Nuclear Free Zone," through which no nuclear materials can be transported, produced, researched, or stored.
Living out a Peace with Justice Vision
In the Midst of Gun Violence

"From the least of these to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

(Jeremiah 6:13-14)

Jessica Bradford knows live people who have been killed. It could happen to her, she says, so she has told her family that if she should get shot before her sixth-grade prom, she wants to be buried in her prom dress. Jessica is 11 years old. She has known since she was in fifth grade what she wanted to wear at her funeral. "I think my prom dress is going to be the prettiest dress of all," Jessica said. "When I die, I want to be dressy for my family."

Excerpted from a November 1, 1993 Washington Post article, "Getting Ready to Die Young," written by DeNeen L. Brown

Since 1993, when "Getting Ready to Die Young" appeared in The Washington Post, much has been said about gun violence. But it hasn’t gotten much better. In May 2004, an eight-year-old girl named Chelsea Cromartie was killed while watching television at her aunt’s home in Washington, DC, when bullets from a gun fight outside the house shattered the living room window. Her grieving mother could only say, "If only that bullet hit me." Chelsea loved rollerskating, Barbie dolls, and the color blue, in a city where police seize five guns a day with bullets that do not discriminate in taking victims. Earlier in the same year, a student was shot and killed outside Washington’s Ballou High School. So far this year, 13 children have died as a result of gun violence in the nation’s capital. Over the years, people have faithfully witnessed to the hurt caused by gun violence. They have called for real healing from the pain of gun violence. From the thousands of pairs of empty shoes displayed on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol through the Silent March to End Gun Violence, to the gathering in 2000 of nearly a million mothers and others urging stronger action to end gun violence, to the 2004 Million Mom March and Halt the Assault summer cross-country caravan, people from all walks of life have tried to lift up the pain of gun violence so that true healing can take place. Yet five years after Columbine, and four years after the first historic Million Mom March in Washington, there has been little to no movement toward public policies that would help to stem the tide of gun violence. While people have borne witness to the wounds of gun violence, our leaders have cried "Peace" where there is no peace.

When the United Church of Christ affirmed its identity as a Just Peace Church in 1985, the Pronouncement spoke to the layers of global violence that undermine the possibilities for security and reconciliation. The Pronouncement references weapons of mass destruction, nuclear arsenals, and war among nations, but it also recognizes that we live out on an interpersonal level the violence, fear, and despair that fuel conflicts between nations. The levels are interconnected and inseparable. Real healing requires us to peel back the layers of violence and understand the connection. Healing gun violence requires identifying and understanding the connections, living at the intersections of issues and realities.

This recognition was powerfully lifted up in “Violence in Our Society and World,” a 1995 General Synod resolution:

Violence touches all of us. Its roots are deep and entangled around issues related to race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and economics, among others. Violence pervades our past, shapes our present reality, and threatens our future. Violence is not far removed from our lives. It is very close to home, indeed, it is often in our homes. Indeed a lack of hope is often at the root of violence, and it is all the more essential for us, as people of faith, to identify and lift up the source of hope and healing along with the possibilities of faithful action which we can bring to the epidemic of violence. "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy... As a church let us assess the toll that violence levies against us all. Then may we proceed to invert the descending spiral of violence into an uprising of hope."
The Realities

In 1998 alone, licensed firearm dealers sold an estimated 4.4 million guns, 1.7 million of which were handguns. Additionally, it is estimated that one to three million guns change hands in the secondary market each year, and many of these sales are not regulated.

In 1998, 30,708 people in the United States died in firearm-related incidents; in comparison, 33,651 Americans were killed in the Korean War, and 58,193 were killed in the Vietnam War.

In 2000, a total of 3,042 young people were killed by firearms in the United States, one every three hours.

Firearms are the second-leading cause of death (after motor vehicle accidents) for young people 19 and under in the United States.

Eight children and teens are killed by firearms in America every day.

A study released in 2002 from the Harvard School of Public Health shows that children, five to 14 years old, are dying at dramatically higher rates in states with more guns.

Five years after Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 students and one teacher with an arsenal that included a Hi-Point Carbine assault rifle and TEC-DC9 assault pistol, assault weapons continue to threaten America's police and public—in spite of a 1994 federal law intended to ban these military-style weapons. The law expired on September 13, 2004. Today, gunmakers are manufacturing and selling "post-ban" versions of AR-15s, AK-47s, Uzis, MAC-10s, and other assault weapons.

Assault weapons are not hunting weapons. They are designed to kill large numbers of people quickly, and are built with that capacity. Using assault weapons for hunting, noted one gun violence expert, is like "fishing with dynamite." The ban can work. Statistics show that the number of assault weapons banned by name in the law has plunged by 66 percent as a percentage of overall crime gun traces since 1994.

Guns kill or injure more than 90,000 Americans each year. Yet guns are virtually the only consumer product not regulated for health and safety. Stuffed teddy bears and rubber ducks are more heavily regulated than guns.

We cannot offer the possibility of healing until we are willing to get a clearer sense of who is hurting, what is causing the hurt. We are called to ask the questions that lead to real healing. We can also hear God speak to us in the words and images of Jeremiah: Don't run away, don't try to do it alone. Trust in the one who is free to reshape us, restore us, and redeem us.

Questions for Reflection

In what ways have you been shaped by your personal experience of violence?

What does safety and security mean for you? What do you think it means for others?

Some say "Guns don't kill, people do." Others say, "People with access to guns kill." What is your response?

The United States is one of the leading weapons suppliers in the world. Is there a connection between arms trade among nations and small weapons sales in communities?
Overcoming Violence
Video Game Violence

Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone?
Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake?

Matthew 7:9-10

We live in a world that conveys conflicting messages about the value and role of our children. We romanticize our children, yet we often neglect to create environments in which all children can thrive, learn, be healthy, and realize the gifts God has given them. A case in point is the availability of mature-rated, violent videos to children and young teens. Are we in fact offering our children stones and snakes in the form of violent video games? By looking the other way when our children purchase and play violent video games, are we abdicating our responsibility for creating an environment that is healthy and safe for children?

Our children now live in a society where homicide, suicide, and trauma are leading causes of death for children, adolescents, and young adults up to age 21. Interpersonal violence— as victim or as perpetrator—is now a more prevalent health risk than infectious disease, cancer, or congenital disorders for children, adolescents, and young adults. A 2001 study by the American Academy of Pediatrics found that American children between 2 and 18 years of age spend an average of six hours and 32 minutes each day using media (television, videos, movies, video and computer games, music, Internet, and print media). This is more time than they spend on any other activity, with the exception of sleeping.

It is clear that violence has become a commodity to be sold in all forms of media and entertainment venues. And, not unlike tobacco and alcohol, the video game industry is specifically targeting children and young teens in their marketing practices. Is media violence a toxin in a child's environment, not unlike lead poisoning, tobacco, alcohol, or drugs? A look at the statistics and studies done on video violence provides compelling evidence that the answer is yes.

Is there a connection between viewing violence and increased aggressive behavior?

Three major national studies have confirmed a connection between viewing violence and increased aggressive behavior. The Surgeon General's Commission Report (1972), along with studies conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health (1982) and the American Psychological Association (1992), were collected in a joint statement issued in 2000. The Impact of Entertainment Violence on Children:

Viewing entertainment violence can lead to an increase in aggressive attitudes, values, and behavior, particularly in children. Its effects are measurable and long-lasting. Moreover, prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward violence in real life. In 2001, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued its Media Violence Policy Statement, which found that “the strength of the correlation between media violence and aggressive behavior is greater than the correlation between calcium intake and bone mass, or the correlation between lead ingestion and lower IQ.”

Perhaps the most sobering observation comes from a retired military officer. In his book On Killing, Army officer Dave Grossman writes: “Violent video games hardwire young people for shooting at humans. The entertainment industry conditions the young in exactly the same way the military does.”

Who plays video games and how are they marketed?

Video and computer games have become a highly profitably segment of the entertainment industry. Annual sales in 1995 were $3 billion. In 2002, annual sales of video and computer games totaled $10 billion.

An October 2002 Wall Street Journal survey found that 146 million people play video games in the United States. Of those,
45 percent are children and teens, with 20 million aged 12 or under. A 2000 report by the Federal Trade Commission found that 40 percent of those who play mature-rated (M-rated) games (rated for age 17 and older) are under 18. The best-selling game of 2002, "Grand Theft Auto III," was an M-rated game.

Advertising for violent video games sends the message that murder is fun, as reflected in these advertising clips for video games:

"Meet people from all over the world, then kill them." (Subspace, rated K-A for Kids to Adults)

"More fun than shooting your neighbor's cat." (Point Blank, rated T for Teen)

"Let the slaughter begin." (Destrega, rated T for Teen)

"As easy as killing babies with axes." (Carmageddon, rated M for Mature)

In December 2001, the Federal Trade Commission issued its report "Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children." As part of the report, a secret shopper survey found that 78 percent of children were able to purchase M-rated games in retail stores. Even among those stores with programs to restrict sales to minors, 73 percent of the unaccompanied children were able to buy violent M-rated games.

The report concludes: "Do the industries promote products they themselves acknowledge warrant parental caution in venues where children make up a substantial percentage of the audience? And are these advertisements intended to attract children and teenagers? For all three segments of the entertainment industry, the answers are plainly 'yes.'"

**Faith Actions**

Watch the games your children are playing. Talk with them about it.

Working with your congregation's Christian Education committee, organize a forum on video violence and children. Consider organizing a community-wide education and awareness campaign regarding violent videos. This would be especially effective during the holiday shopping season (October - December), the time when most video games are purchased. Reach out to groups in the larger community that might be interested in these efforts: the PTA, local school board, teachers, mental health care workers, and others.

Exercise your power as a consumer and hold retailers accountable. Visit local video game retailers. Find out if they enforce regulations related to purchasing M-rated games and R-rated movies. Find out how they display the games. Retailers and rental shops must separate games with ratings of "E-Everyone," "T-Teen," and "M-Mature" to make it easier for parents to shop for appropriate products for their children.

Check the advertising for video games in newspaper circulars (from stores like Toys "R" Us, KB Toys, etc.). The E-, T-, and M-rated games should be separated so that it is clear what game is intended for each age group. Tell retailers to clearly display the ratings system developed by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB).

Remember, the solution is not necessarily censorship but making available the information parents and children need to make informed choices about what they purchase. Consumers must hold retailers accountable. If you disagree with a video game's rating, contact the retailer and the Federal Trade Commission: 600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20580; (202) 326-2222; www.ftc.gov.

Find out about media violence laws and legislative initiatives in your municipality and state. Visit the Citizens for Responsible Media website at www.mediaslegislation.org to find out what policy responses are being offered in your town or state. Since 2001, 16 states have introduced legislation to outlaw rental and sale of violent video games with excessively cruel and realistic violence to people under the age of either 17 or 18 (jurisdictions differ in the age they choose).
Women, War, and Peace

War is devastating all the way around: to those who fight and survive, often with physical, psychological, and spiritual damage; to those who fight and die; to civilians killed or injured; to those forced to flee their own country; to the economies of the countries engaged in conflict; to the environment destroyed by chemical residue, buried landmines, deforestation, and the toll of heavy equipment and bombs; and to the psyche of the rest of the world. The long-term effects can be equally devastating, especially in poor countries that have few resources for rebuilding.

Women encounter particular threats unique to them when armed conflict arises. They do not have to carry weapons or wear a uniform in order to be “conquered” by an enemy. Civilian women are often regarded as the “spoils of war” by invading forces. They face being raped, even when they are as young as five or six years old, and are forced to endure horrendous treatment at the hands of the enemy that seeks to demonstrate to the males against whom they are fighting that they cannot even protect their women. Rape under such circumstances is a war crime, a violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, yet attempts to try cases of systemic rape during war in the international criminal court system often are met with dismissal.

“Women’s bodies are not battlefields” reads one of the buttons produced by the UCC in response to the tribunals held as a result of women being raped during the Bosnia civil war. (You can obtain these buttons by contacting Justice and Witness Ministries.) We know, however, that Bosnia is not the only conflict where women were systemically brutalized. The Japanese forced Korean women to serve as sex slaves during World War II (euphemistically called “comfort women”); American troops have been accused and convicted of rape; U.N. Peacekeepers were charged with exchanging food for sex with underage women in the Congo; women in the Sudan were raped by opposing forces; women in Indonesia were raped by the ruling military regime; and on and on.

It is “war’s dirty secret,” as Anne Llewellyn Barstow calls it in her book, which has that title (Pilgrim Press). Women also are left with caring for their children during wars, trying to keep them safe from harm, fed, and sheltered. When forced to flee to refugee camps, where food can be scarce and diseases plenty, women sometimes confront sexual assault from the same people responsible for relief work or with protecting the encampment from the enemy.

Situations of violence bring out the worst in human beings, and war is one of the most extreme forms of violence. When women are seen as the “spoils of war,” demeaned and intimidated by male “enemy” soldiers, and when societies are informed by oppressive systems of sexism that place more value on the lives of boys and men than on those of girls and women (i.e., “boys will be boys”), women are vulnerable to attack and lack recourse for addressing the violent sexual crimes perpetrated against them.

United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted by the Security Council in 2000, is a significant step in bringing greater awareness to the unique threats to women and children in conflict situations and to the need to include women at all levels of decision-making in efforts to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. While not a directive, which implies greater obligation on the part of U.N. member states, Resolution 1325 names the issues clearly. For example, it “calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse.” It also states: “Recognizing an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation on the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.”

Not only should women and girls be protected, they should also be active participants in peacemaking efforts. And, indeed, in many places of conflict, women are playing a significant role in peacemaking and conflict resolution. Resolution 1325 asks that the “role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution” be studied
and reported by the Secretary General. "Peace by Peace: Women on the Frontlines" is a documentary of women peacemakers in Afghanistan, Burundi, Argentina, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the United States whose courageous efforts have made a difference. It was presented at the United Nations in 2003.

Reflection Questions

What do you see as some of the root causes of violence against women during war and armed conflict?

What connections do you make between this reality and the lives of women in the United States?

Jesus regarded women as full partners in his ministry. What role does the church have in addressing the role and status of women in the world?

Faith Actions

Check with the United Nations Human Rights Commission to see if there is evidence in a particular armed conflict that women are being systematically assaulted. If so, start or join a campaign to put an end to the violence against women and/or to bring charges against the perpetrators. Ask that Resolution 1325 be enforced.

Find out what special efforts are being organized to support women who have been victimized by sexual violence during armed conflicts and support them with dollars. The U.N.'s Commission on the Status of Women often has information on such efforts.

Celebrate International Women's Day (May 8) by demonstrating support for women in current conflict situations.

Order the documentary video, "Peace by Peace: Women on the Frontlines" and set up a viewing and discussion session at your church. Start or join a Peace by Peace women's circle. (For more information on the documentary and women's circles, go to www.peacepeace.org)

Prison, Its Aftermath, and the Witness of Faith

Our country imprisons more of its citizens than any other country on earth. As you read this, more than 2.1 million Americans are in prison or jail.

But the number of Americans under the supervision of the criminal justice system is far greater than 2.1 million. An additional 7 million people are on probation (supervised sentences served outside of prison) or parole (early release under supervision) right now.

In all, more than 13 million people living in the United States today have served time in prisons; 7 percent of the adult population of America has a prison record.

People of color and people who are poor are arrested, incarcerated, and executed completely out of proportion to their numbers. African-American men are 6.5 times more likely and Hispanic men 3 times more likely to serve time than white, non-Hispanic men. Among African-American men, 12 percent have a felony record.

Imprisonment without rehabilitation devastates families, communities, social economies, and the lives of children of prisoners. This devastation is centered in our communities of color and among the poor.

It reflects who we are as a society.

Mandatory sentencing has produced record numbers of prisoners, so many, in fact, that our facilities will not hold them. Have we forgotten that nearly all prisoners will eventually be released? Are we preparing them or the communities they will return to for that reality?
Former prisoners are now returning to our communities at a rate of more than 630,000 a year—a little under 2,000 people a day. They are escorted to the prison walls and given a small amount of cash, and that is the end of it. What are they to do? People who return to the community after time in prison face almost insurmountable barriers. It is difficult to find housing. It is difficult to find a job. People with drug convictions can no longer receive aid for food and shelter. Without these basics, parolees are not able to maintain custody of their children. In many states, people returning from prison after serving their time are not allowed to vote. Without that right, they are not able to participate in the larger community in a representative way, and they are not represented by our elected leaders. People become isolated and desperate.

And what will we do about it?

**Faith Actions**

Prisoners are often moved a distance from their homes. Families are hard-pressed to visit, especially when they are without a main income earner. We can offer transportation.

With one of their parents in prison, children may be left without mentors and guides. We can tutor kids. We can build after-school activities. We can arrange picnics and comfortable social events for families in similar situations.

When people are released from prison, they face obstacles in finding work. We can advocate for jobs and assist in finding opportunities.

*We can encourage housing arrangements. We can assist with clothing and furniture.*

*We can work on adult literacy and GED preparation where they are needed.*

*We can identify parenting programs. We can provide child care. We can stay in touch.*

*We can be a community working alongside people who are trying to reinstate themselves after incarceration.*

*We can write to our representatives, senators, and governors and demand that the fundamental right to participate in government through voting be protected for people who have served their time.*

**How Do You Grow a Terrorist?**

Americans tend to think of Iraq in terms of the War on Terror, although Iraq has never been implicated in any of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, or those leading up to that day. In a pre-emptive strike based on faulty intelligence, the United States overthrew the Iraqi government. We have killed thousands of Iraqi citizens. We have imprisoned hundreds more without access to counsel. The Red Cross reports that between 70 and 90 percent of those held in prison by Americans are innocent. In the interim, the world has been assaulted by photographs of Americans sexually taunting Iraqi prisoners, and reports of the many ways in which these prisoners have been forced to condemn their own faith.

The situation in Iraq and the training grounds for terrorists were not the same, but they are becoming the same as a consequence of our invasion and occupation, as a consequence of the lack of electricity, work, safety, and joy, and as a result of our demonstrated contempt by some of our own for these people.

**How do you grow a terrorist?**

In Palestine, terrorists fight back against what they regard to be the entities that robbed them of their land, their livelihood, their families, access to their holy places, and devastation to their children. Many of them live in abject poverty. They believe they are treated with contempt, and they have evidence to support this belief. The more hopeless their plight becomes, the more desperate the measures they use to fight.
in the 1980s, Afghanistan fought a long war with the USSR. We supported the Afghan rebels in that war. When it was over, we left the Afghan people to fend for themselves in attempting to rebuild their economy, and their homes, schools, and families. They were left in such chaos and poverty that their country became an opportunity for control by people who would provide some security in exchange. Their country became, literally, a training ground for terror.

After 9/11, our country fought terrorism in Afghanistan, the same country we had left to devastation and terror. In the course of that war, our country captured and detained hundreds of Afghan people, along with suspected terrorists from other places, and years later, continues to hold them in prison at Guantanamo Bay without access to legal representation, isolated and distant from their countries, families, work, and what we might think of as reasons for living.

Our system of criminal justice is a way to separate people who have committed crimes from the general course of society. As it has evolved, early ideas of rehabilitation have been replaced by increasingly draconian measures: mandatory sentencing, long periods of isolation, prisons run by private industries not accountable to the public, fewer allowable appeals, overcrowding, and commonplace rape and violence. The aftermath of the prison experience tends to be unemployment, loss of family ties, poor housing, poverty, and hopelessness. Former felons are ostracized.

**Christian Values: Responding to Terrorist Violence**

**THEME 1**

*God loves and cares for me, my family, my community, my country, and everyone else in the world.*

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

No one has the right to engage in terrorist attacks on the United States and the United States has no special right to terrorize others.

**THEME 2**

*Even when a nation goes to war to protect itself, there is no right to engage in acts that go beyond the need for self-protection.*

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Civilized nations created rules for warfare called the Geneva Convention and the Convention forbids the targeting of civilian populations.

**THEME 3**

*We believe in the possibility of healing and transformation, that one-time enemies can become friends.*

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Even while resisting aggression, we should respect and seek the best interests of those who see themselves as our enemies so that a peace can be created that truly ends the threat of war.

**THEME 4**

*We believe that sin is a common human condition.*

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Whether we are victors or victims we must ask what we have contributed either individually, or as part of the United States, to the enmity that created the aggression.

**THEME 5**

*Misunderstanding can create mistakes.*
POLICY IMPLICATIONS
We should become better informed about the issues and the yearnings and hopes of everyone involved.

THEME 6
God is actively engaged with everyone who truly seeks divine presence and guidance.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
When religious differences contribute to the creation of enmity and misunderstanding, Christians recognize they have a responsibility to initiate or support the kind of interfaith dialogue that draws everyone closer to God.

THEME 7
Those with the most power have the most responsibility.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
While acting to protect the people of the United States, the federal government should be careful and self-restrained as it considers policy options, should place the goals of justice and peace above the expressive release of hurt feelings and indignation.

Faith Actions
How can I counter ostracism? How can our faith community engage in respectful discourse with other faith groups who are threatened by the Patriot Act, imprisonment, or isolation?

We can be knowledgeable. We can read about U.S. policies and actions from a wide variety of perspectives, and identify who is most at risk for loss of liberty and the degradation of human rights.
We can get to know other faith communities in our area that have people at risk for prison and warfare.
We can communicate fully with our Muslim sisters and brothers, to keep lines of discourse open.
We can come to understand more about other faith traditions, and in the process, come to know and love the people who live by them.

Health Care for All

"Health access and coverage is an issue that cannot wait for the war on terrorism to end. It needs attention from the president and Congress. And it needs it now."


What does not make for peace and justice in health and health care?
When: More than 43 million people (one in seven) are without health care.
More than 11 million children are without health care.
More than 18,000 Americans die prematurely every year (about two deaths per hour) because they cannot afford private health care insurance.
Preventable medical errors are the eighth leading cause of death.
Americans are going broke trying to fund their health care costs.
America ranks 37th in the world for worst health outcomes.
A young mother learns her newborn has disabilities because of inaccessible prenatal care.

An older adult has to choose between life-saving prescription drugs and food.

One’s skin color or ethnic background translates into inexcusable disparities in health care access.

Quality health care for all is undermined by excessive concern for health care industry profits.

The federal budget’s health care proposals give tax cuts to the richest while increasing health care costs to the poorest.

If health care is a human right, then why is there unrest, anxiety, turmoil, anger, stress? Why is there no justice, no peace? The United States is facing serious challenges in health care. Health care in the United States is among the world’s most expensive, yet it leaves millions without health insurance and with inadequate care. The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee access to medical care for its citizens.

The United Church of Christ’s campaign, “Health Care For All,” is still a priority. The Church speaks prophetically that health care is a basic right and that our health care system must provide comprehensive, quality, affordable, accessible, and available health care for all. Key United Church of Christ General Synod Resolutions and Pronouncements bear out our prophetic vision calling for a national health care policy for the United States. Our churches are called upon to actively work towards the creation of a national health care system and to affirm the moral and justice imperatives of equal access for all people. The Pronouncement challenges the Church to deepen its involvement in advocating for health care for all as one way to respond to the priority that health care is a justice issue and as such, all parts of creation deserve to be healed when broken, injured, or sick. All persons regardless of race, ethnic origin, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, income legal status, health status, or geographical location deserve to be tenderly touched by concerned healers whenever in need. The United Church of Christ seeks to follow the example of Jesus Christ and be faithful to the Gospel. Therefore, it is clear that the whole church is involved in the mission of health and welfare. The whole church is itself the creation of God’s compassionate mercy in Christ, and, as such the instrument of God’s intention for all human kind.

*What are the things that do make for peace and justice in health and health care? When:*

People of faith no longer remain silent as 43 million suffer because they lack access to adequate health care.

We as people of faith confront the injustices of our health care delivery system.

Everyone has access to quality health care.

Health care is comprehensive — a full range of service is provided to combat illness/maintain health.

Health care is affordable; out-of-pocket expenditures do not create financial barriers to needed care.

Health care is publicly accountable; appropriate oversight is given to ensure the proper use of health care dollars. All children have access to health care. We all raise our voices to change the system.
Faith Actions

How might a church raise its voice to work for peace and justice in health care? By:

Endorsing the Health Care Access Resolution—House Concurrent Resolution 99, Senate Concurrent Resolution 41—that calls on Congress to provide affordable access to health care for all and pass a comprehensive health care plan by October 2005. Go to www.uctakeaction.org to access this Resolution.

Participating in Cover The Uninsured Week, a national mobilization around the issue of the uninsured sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Plan a faith-based media event calling attention to the uninsured in your community. Go to www.covertheuninsured.org for more information.

Joining with state councils of churches and grassroots organizations to work on health care for all at the state and local levels. They need the faith community!
(Call JWM for a list of these groups.)

Helping us build a “Wall of Pain.” Collect stories of the pain that members of your congregation have experienced because of the inequities in the health care system.

Writing to your senators or sending an op-ed to state and local newspapers making the case that TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) must give states the flexibility to help move families with multiple barriers into the workplace, provide more education and training, serve legal immigrant families, and provide more federal child care assistance and more monies for SCHIP (State Child Health Improvement Program). Let them know that the TANF Reauthorization bill must be improved to better serve families.

Holding a candlelight vigil for those in your community who are without or have limited health care insurance.

Letting elected officials and those seeking public office in your community know that you are concerned about the health care crisis and that you will not vote for any candidate that does not have a plan to address health care for all.
Ministries of Workplace Justice
and Community Economic Development

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, 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 1:76-79)

Luke promises that through God’s mercy, the dawn will break upon us, bringing light to those in darkness and guiding us into the way of peace. In God’s reign on earth as it is in heaven, God’s people sit in the light, not the darkness, and walk in the way of peace. How can we live into God’s reign, into the light and into the ways of peace? We know that God’s reign rests on love, our love of God and for each other. But are we living in love when we allow some people to live in poverty? To suffer without health insurance? To endure a three-bus, two-hour commute twice a day? To worry about children left alone at home while they are at work? To struggle with unemployment? To endure abusive or oppressive work situations? People of faith are called to build communities where all God’s people participate fully in a life-giving economic system. We are called to improve the economic well-being of those who are marginalized and disadvantaged so that everyone shares in God’s abundance. We are called to create a just economic system so that charity, no matter how kindly offered, is not needed. We are called to love our neighbors and create a just economic system so that all may walk in the light and the ways of peace.

Community Economic Development

A ministry of community economic development (CED) strives to change the institutions and conditions that keep far too many Americans outside the economic and social mainstream. It covers a wide range of activities: providing child care, job training, or services for the homeless; building affordable housing or renovating existing structures; starting small businesses; meeting with local supermarket chains or banks to convince them to open outlets in under-served areas; working on a living wage campaign; or lobbying the city council so that bus service meets the needs of inner city residents to reach jobs in the suburbs.

Faith Actions

There are many ways to engage in ministries of community economic development and the UCC’s CED Resource Team is available to help. For more information about CED and the Resource Team, go to www.ucc.org/justice/community.pdf.

CED is also an important way to strengthen the spiritual life of the congregation and contribute to church growth. See www.ucc.org/evangelism/e2-10.pdf. Churches can also participate in coalitions that engage in CED. Congregation-based community organizing mobilizes congregations and the community to work for needed change. These organizations exist in many locations. The Gamaliel Foundation (www.gamaliel.org/index.htm) is typical and describes itself as “a network of
grassroots, interfaith, interracial, multi-issue organizations working together to create a more just and more democratic society. The organizations of the Gamalel Network are vehicles that allow ordinary people to effectively participate in the political, environmental, social, and economic decisions affecting their lives. A list of affiliated organizations is at www.gamalel.org/Affiliates/AffiliatesIndexbak.htm. Other similar networks include PICO (www.piconetwork.org), DART (www.thedartcenter.org/index.html), and the Industrial Areas Foundation (www.industrialareasfoundation.org) with 55 local affiliates.


**Workplace Justice**

Far too often, worksites in the United States are not places of justice. Some workers face unsafe conditions on the job: each year, 14 out of every 100 poultry processing workers are injured or become ill due to their jobs and more than one out of every four meat-packing workers suffers a work-related illness or injury that requires medical attention beyond first aid. Others are paid poverty-level wages. Over one-quarter of all jobs pay a wage so low that even someone working full time earns too little to lift a family of four above poverty. But more education is not the answer. If every American had an advanced degree, not everyone could find jobs as doctors or engineers. So people trained to be lawyers or chemists, but who were working to clean hotels and hospitals, wait on tables, or care for our young children, would still receive poverty-level wages. Only regulations to improve the quality of bad jobs will help. Some 44 million people lack health insurance, most of whom are workers or their dependents. Only about half of all employers provide pensions or retirement savings accounts for their employees. And untold numbers of workers suffer indignities and abuse in their workplaces.

**Faith Actions**

Given these situations, there is much a congregation can do to demonstrate love for their neighbors.

- Get involved in a local living wage campaign. Support a labor-organizing drive.
- Join the UCC’s Justice and Peace Action Network (www.uc.org/justice/jpan.htm) to periodically receive information about workplace injustices and suggestions for action.
- Honor workers and lift up justice issues on Labor Sunday, the day before Labor Day.
- Hold education/action sessions on topics of worker justice.
- Get involved with Jobs with Justice, a national network of local coalitions that connect faith-based, labor, community, and student organizations to work together on workplace and community social justice campaigns. Go to www.jw.org/LocalCoal/contact.htm.
- Join the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, a network of local interfaith groups concerned with workplace justice and other labor issues. Find a local group at www.nicwj.org/pages/outreach.LG.html.
Working for Justice in Public Education

How can a church group get a handle on the complex justice concerns in public schools? What does it really mean to work for justice in public education? How would a “just” public school look different than so many schools today? The authors of a new book that explores public education and the American Dream charge that, “Americans want all children to have a real chance to learn, and they want all schools to foster democracy and promote the common good, but they do not want those things enough to make them actually happen.” (The American Dream and the Public Schools, Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick) In many ways, this very simple statement crystallizes the need for the voice of the church in a nation that isn’t really paying much attention to whether there is justice for children.

How can we possibly set up our huge system of public schools to ensure that all children have access to opportunity? Public schools are, after all, our nation’s largest civic institution: 15,000 local school districts with 92,000 public schools that educate 50 million children. Bringing justice to public schools means embedding the call to love our neighbors as ourselves into the very structure of our society. Here is what theologian Philip Wogaman writes about justice in Christian Perspectives on Politics, Revised and Expanded: “…justice is the community’s guarantee of the conditions necessary for everybody to be a participant in the common life of society. Ultimately, that notion has theological roots. If we are, finally, brothers and sisters through the providence of God, then it is unjust to treat people as though they did not belong. And it is just to structure institutions and laws in such a way that the communal life is enhanced and individuals are provided full opportunity for participation.” How does our faith speak to the way public schools embody attitudes about race and poverty, power and privilege? And how do disparities in public investment reflect these attitudes? How can our nation realize the dream of creating educational opportunity for all children, instead of merely saying we don’t want to leave children behind?

It can seem pretty overwhelming to think about changes to something as big as public education. After all, schools are still paid for at the state and local levels and established primarily in state law, but the federal government has imposed new goals and demands in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). While imagining a whole new way of funding schools and setting expectations may feel overwhelming, there are many entry points for churches seeking to support institutional justice.

Educate your congregation about how justice and public policy intersect at the school house door. Bernice Powell Jackson, Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries, describes the role of the church: “For people of faith, public policy is never merely politics, never merely economics. It is one way we try to plow the Biblical vision of shalom into the soil of our history.” Our role in the church is special, for few other advocates are talking about public ethics and school policy. Begin by separating the many-layered issues:

The policies of our federal government as expressed in the No Child Left Behind Act...

NCLB reshapes the goals and philosophy of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, passed in 1965 as part of the war on poverty. Framed in the language of business, NCLB demands that public school teachers become increasingly efficient at producing better and more uniform products — the students who demonstrate education “outputs” in their test scores. This law attempts to improve school performance by ranking and rating schools and then penalizing so-called “failing” schools. Its mandates are woefully under-funded by the federal government.

…Superimposed upon budget crises across our states...

Because public schools are the biggest endeavor of state governments, the budget crises in many states as we begin the 21st century has reduced or frozen school funding. Churches need to lift up the role of taxes and public services for the creation of a good society.
...Superimposed upon school funding crises in many states...

While 45 of the 50 states have been in litigation at one time or another in the last quarter century to address school funding, vast inequities persist. Ongoing dependence on local property taxes for school funding means that wealthy districts continue to spend 23 percent more per child than poor districts. Our society spends the most on privileged children and the least on children in poverty.

...Superimposed on a growing civil rights crisis in education...

Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education, America's public schools remain separate and unequal. According to the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, "In many districts where court-ordered desegregation was ended in the past decade, there has been a major increase in segregation... The vast majority of intensely segregated minority schools face conditions of concentrated poverty, which are powerless related to unequal educational opportunity."

...Superimposed on a lack of attention to the role of poverty in school achievement and a welfare reform policy designed to punsh parents without attention to the needs of children...

**Faith Actions**

One church organized a Lenten Series on public education justice. The first week consisted of biblical and theological reflection. In the second week, a state education official and legislator spoke. And in the third week, a superintendent, principal, and teacher came to the series while the fourth week featured parent activists.

Another church set up visits to two schools in the area and met afterwards to reflect on what they experienced. Such visits will help members of your congregation listen and learn about the community's expectations for children as well as the community's hopes and dreams for itself. What can this visit tell you about school funding? How much is enough after all? For a guide to setting up school visits, consult the UCC website: www.ucc.org/justice/eps.pdf.

Many UCC congregations partner with a local public school to offer support. The possibilities are limitless, but an important first step in any honest partnership is to talk with the school's staff about what the school needs. Trust the school's principal and teachers to tell you what they need. A few of the possibilities may include things like:

- A financial donation
- Donated stocked backpacks in September
- Readers for kindergarten classes
- Tutors
- A computer lab in your church basement where the children can come in the evening to teach your congregation's senior citizens about the Internet
- Science fair judges
- Mentors for middle-school students
- An extra site where the school's after-school program can provide music lessons supported by a financial donation from your congregation
- Funding for an artist-in-residence

You will also want to offer the members of your partnership ongoing opportunities to reflect on the public policy that affects your partner school. After reflecting about your partner school, you can provide a ministry of presence when this school needs to speak to the school board, or perhaps you could help your elected officials better understand the needs in this school. If your congregation finds a way to expand opportunity for children who have been left behind, you will be doing justice.
Justice in the Global Economy

In the Cleveland Plain Dealer on March 22, 2004, it was announced, to no one's surprise, that the retailing giant Wal-Mart again beat out all competition as the largest publicly traded company in the world. This comes as no surprise to most people "in the know." With its corporate practice of starting new stores in a given area; offering unrealistically low prices; hiring part-time, minimum-wage workers; and offering most of those workers no benefits, Wal-Mart is able to drive out all competition, most of which are locally owned, small-time businesses. Once all or most competitors are left in ruins, prices creep up.

Wal-Mart, to be sure, is not the only company to use this draconian, hardball style. Home Depot, the hardware giant, is another that comes easily to mind. Neither Wal-Mart nor Home Depot work outside the rules, either. They simply know how to "work the system" the best. Therein lies the rub: the rules. Our world, for better or worse, is an economically connected one. It has always been so, as far back as biblical times or even earlier. But today's world, connected by instant communication and advanced technology, makes previous incarnations of the global economy pale in comparison. The rules that govern the global economy are carefully prescribed by bilateral, multilateral, and international agreements. Most of these agreements share the common influence of what is called neo-liberalism or the Washington Consensus. The institutions that constructed these rules—the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and, more recently, the World Trade Organization—wield tremendous economic power and leverage in constructing the global economy. They have forced governments to accept the neo-liberal prescriptions in order to receive loans and grants necessary to develop their economies.

What are the results of this global economic strategy? Statistics demonstrate that the rules of economic globalization have worked to the advantage of an elite few, while driving billions of others into a kind of poverty unknown to previous eras. Of the 100 largest economies in the world in 2002, 51 were not countries, but private corporations. On the other side of the ledger, more than one billion people live on less than $2 a day. And the loans that were supposed to propel countries into the prosperity of the global economy? Developing countries use valuable financial resources to service these loans and are not able to build adequate social infrastructures to serve their people. Country after country in the developing world that has tried to use the neoliberal path to prosperity has found itself in deeper and deeper poverty and debt. Argentina is one well-known example of a country that used the neoliberal model and whose economy collapsed as a result.

The international community cannot expect that a world of peace can be constructed on the foundation of economic disparity and unacceptable poverty. As long as people suffer in hunger, health crisis, lack of education, homelessness and landlessness, and inhumane working and living conditions, anger, violence, and leaders who manipulate people will result.

The Bible makes clear that God does not find acceptable a world of economic inequities. The Hebrew prophets pronounce judgment on systems that build personal wealth on the misery of others. Micah renounces the leaders: "Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat, but declare war against those who put nothing into their mouths..." (Mic.3:5) Or, "Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds... they perform it, because it is in their power. They covet fields, and seize them, houses, and take them away; they oppress householders and house, people and their inheritance." (Mic.1:2) Such greed is incarnate in those who "sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way..." (Amos 2:6-7) Such greedy economic practices result in the judgment of God, these prophets promise.

Most of those who will read these words probably do not fall into the categories condemned here. Yet Jesus makes clear that if we simply "walk by on the other side," (Luke10:31), we do not practice the love required of those who seek to walk in discipleship. Even as we do not practice justice toward "the least of these," we abuse God and deny the ways of God's realm (Mt. 25:31-45).
Faith Actions

Advocate, advocate, advocate. Join the Justice and Peace Action Network, if you are not already a member and take advantage of the opportunities you find there to advocate for just policies. Join by going to the Justice and Witness web page at www.ucc.org.

Use your power as a consumer to buy goods that are good for workers, the environment, and businesses that use ethical business practices. Invest in socially responsible investments. Shop, if at all possible, at locally owned businesses. Buy fairly traded coffee through the UCC Fair Trade Coffee Program. Good consumer choices can do immeasurable good and help lead to a more just and peaceful world.

Church-State Relations and Religious Liberty

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..."

The results of America's policy on church-state relations can be seen all around us. Thanks to the separation of church and state principle, Americans enjoy an unparalleled amount of religious freedom. In some nations, churches remain dependent upon government for support and aid. Religious life in these nations is often devitalized, and many churches are near empty on Sundays. Other countries merge religion and government into theocracies. Religious liberty cannot flourish under that system either; attempts by the government to enforce a version of religious orthodoxy foster only repression. By contrast, religious liberty has flourished in America and the principle of separation of church and state can take the credit.

Church-state separation does not mean hostility toward religion. Rather, it means that the government will remain neutral on religious questions, leaving decisions about God, faith, and worship attendance in the hands of its citizens.

Our Founding Fathers understood that efforts by government to “help” religion usually end up hurting it in the long run. Thanks to their vision, America has struck the right balance. Religious groups are supported with voluntary contributions, not tax dollars. Houses of worship are free to seek new members and spread their religious messages but they must use their own resources to do so. Institutions that serve Americans of many religious faiths and none, such as public schools, are free from sectarian control. The government cannot force or coerce anyone to take part in religious worship or prayer services. Americans have the right to join whatever religious group they like or refrain from taking part in religion at all. No one can be forced to support, aid, or fund religious groups.

Today, we are an open and free society of nearly 300 million Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, atheists, and others. However, there are still questions and challenges to the separation of church and state principle and religious liberty, including faith-based initiatives, religion in public life, houses of worship and political campaign activity, religious school funding (vouchers), religion in public schools (prayers and Pledge of Allegiance), religious symbols on public property, and marriage.
General Synod Teachings and Policy

The UCC has a long and respected history of upholding religious freedom and the separation of church and state while valuing creative cooperation between churches and the state (from "A Call to Christian Action in Society," the Second UCC General Synod). Over the years, UCC General Synods have spoken strongly for religious freedom and the need to protect religious expression from government interference in the following resolutions.

A Call to Christian Action in Society

For maintaining the independence of the churches and the state, and for creative cooperation between them. —GS2

A Call for Christian Citizenship

Therefore, we call upon the members of our churches as Christians and citizens, in addition to individual and voluntary efforts, to recognize the rightful role of government in promoting freedom and welfare and to work through their governments at all levels: ... (4) to protect and respect freedom of religion of all. ... —GS4

Restoration of Religious Liberties

Whereas, the United Church of Christ is made up of people who came to this country from many places in order to find a place where freedom of religion could be practiced, and the United Church of Christ intends to keep this freedom at its center. ... Therefore, be it further resolved, the Eighteenth General Synod: ... (2) Endorses the principles contained in the Religious Liberties Restoration Act, introduced in Congress in 1990 ... to restore prior Supreme Court decisions by requiring the government to demonstrate that any law restricting the free exercise of religion (1) is essential to furthering a compelling governmental interest and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that interest ... (4) Urges all church people to work even harder to insure freedom of religion at a time when the Supreme Court is making this fundamental challenge to religious liberty.—GS18

On the Need for Educating Members of the United Church of Christ about the Principle of Separation of Church and State

... As people of Christian faith within a multicultural nation, we believe that we have a responsibility to protect the right of all to believe and worship as conscience dictates and to oppose efforts to have government at any level support or promote the financial or other needs of religious institutions ... —GS20
As a Just Peace Church, the United Church of Christ recognizes that every alternative to the use of war must be explored first. Our members believe many different things about the use of war, avoidance of war, justification for war, and the role of military service, but we would all agree that if war can be averted and justice realized, a better road has been taken.

While there is no selective service at present in the United States, there may be a day when it is re-introduced or an alternative model of mandatory national service for both men and women proposed. A person faced with mandatory military service cannot one day wake up and say, “I’m opposed to war.” Someone considering conscientious objection must demonstrate—and present documentation—that he/she has engaged in an intentional process of discernment about his/her position in relationship to war and the violent actions often required of military personnel, and how his/her faith and value system informs that position.

The U.S. Committee on the Decade to Overcome Violence issued the following statement in June, 2004:

**Conscientious Objection and Military Conscription**

During the 20th Century, many members of the churches in the United States refused to serve in the military for reasons of conscience, believing that serving in combat was contrary to their faith. If there is to be military conscription again, we anticipate that as before individuals within our churches will believe themselves called to conscientious objection to participation in training for, and participation in, military service.

Recognizing both the difficulty and the necessity of discerning God’s will for oneself in a particular context, the churches and other faith communities have regularly exercised pastoral concern for those members who have been led to refuse participation in military training and service.

The U.S. Committee for the Decade to Overcome Violence of the World Council of Churches urges churches to continue to consider the integrity of the position of conscientious objection under any new military conscription and to seek to ensure that conscientious objectors are offered humane and socially productive alternatives to military service, as has been done in the past.

*U.S. Decade to Overcome Violence Committee
June 2004*

**Faith Actions**

It is never too early to begin thinking about one’s personal relationship to these issues.

Church Sunday School and youth group programs can offer study programs and opportunities to explore and discuss war and military service.

Youth group leaders and pastors often counsel young people about their feelings about war and military service, and these conversations, appropriately documented, can become a significant part of a young person’s request for conscientious objector status, if so chosen.

Use the Leader’s Packet available from the Church of the Brethren to explore this issue more completely. www.brethren.org/gentbd/witness/ConscientiousObjection/LeadersPacket.htm.
Environmental Racism: The "Not So New" Reality

Environmental racism can be defined as the racial discrimination in environmental policy making and the enforcement of regulations and laws: the deliberate placement of toxic and hazardous waste facilities in communities where most residents are people of color; the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities; and the history of excluding people of color from the leadership of the environmental movement (from The Historical Significance and Challenges of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, Benjamin Chavis).

It is important to understand the problem of environmental racism from its historical context. "The exploitation of people of color has taken the form of genocide, chattel slavery, indentured servitude and racial discrimination — in employment, housing, and practically all aspects of life. Today, we suffer from the remnants of this sordid history, as well as from new and institutionalized forms of racism."
(Statement by Charles Lee, as quoted in E Magazine, May/June 1992) As Aaron Sachs has noted, a growing number of today's crimes against humanity have been in fact environmental in nature. As mining, logging, oil drilling, and waste-disposal projects push into more and more regions and ecosystems, people are seeing their basic rights compromised. They are losing their livelihoods, their traditional cultures, and even their lives. Their human rights have been violated and the reasons are clear: it is cheaper to pollute if you do not have to clean it up. The communities affected are communities of color and with limited political and economic power to prevent such pollution in the first place. A double standard exists as to what is acceptable depending on the resources and political clout of specific communities or cities.

In the United States, the victims of environmental racism are African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders, who are more likely than whites to live in environmentally hazardous conditions. As a consequence, the residents of these communities suffer shorter life spans, higher infant and adult mortality, poor health, poverty, diminished economic opportunities, substandard housing, and an overall degraded quality of life.

Environmental racism, therefore, is a manifestation of historic racial oppression. (Deborah M. Robinson in Echoes 17, 2000)

What is Environmental Justice?

The environmental justice movement seeks to combat, and bring an end to, environmental racism—the discrimination observable in matters related to unsustainable development and the implementation of policies, regulations, and laws that affect the quality of our environment. The environmental justice movement defines "environment" as the place where we live, work, play, and relax. The movement sees the ecosystem as the base for human life and well-being; it is made up of the interrelation of the natural, social, cultural, and spiritual spheres.

Environmental racism is vulgarly observable in the deliberate selection of communities of color for use as toxic waste dump sites or as preferred places for the establishment of contaminating industries. These communities of color are commonly excluded by traditional environmentalist groups, by gatherings in charge of environmental decision-making, and by regulatory commissions and bodies. The history of the United States confirms the intimate relationship that exists between the exploitation of land and the exploitation of people. Many industries, especially the petrochemical industry, have yielded few jobs for local communities, destroyed the natural environment, and brought a host of illnesses attributed to emissions from the plants. Many of these communities are examples of environmental racism—the targeting of communities of color for undesirable facilities.
A number of studies suggest that such claims are not unfounded. Nationally, a 1987 study by the United Church of Christ's Commission on Racial Justice found blacks were four times more likely to live in areas with toxic and hazardous waste sites than whites. A 1992 investigation by the National Law Journal found that when government does enforce environmental regulation and fine companies, fines are much higher when white communities are adversely affected than when African-American communities are affected. In Louisiana, reports by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and an unpublished report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region Six have raised concerns about the location of chemical plants and their possible impact on the health of their neighbors, who are primarily people of color.

In the Gulf Region, communities are fighting the expansion of plants like ShinTech which have spread like cancer along the Mississippi River. There have been more than 14 expansions of PVC plants in the past few years. Most take place in low-income, minority communities in the South. Many of these companies have polluted the air and fueled the water while promising economic benefits that never materialized. In addition, these companies use their enormous economic and political clout to buy scientists, politicians, and public relations firms to counter activities of communities and groups struggling for the most basic of rights: clean air and clean water.

For these communities, it is about survival. Down the Mississippi River, towns like Sunrise, Reveille, and Morrisonville no longer exist. Contaminated and bought out by Dow Chemical, Georgia Gulf, Placid Oil, and other companies, these communities were once safe havens for ex-slaves. Now they are toxic ghost towns. Years ago, Louisiana officials struck a deal with the chemical industry; today, black residents are paying the price with their health, their communities, and their very history. A former resident of Morrisville summed up the experience: "They moved outwards slowly... They weren't always this close. But before you realize it, they were building right outside your door... Suddenly, every blade of grass is important to me. My husband planted those pine trees in the yard. You have to live another lifetime to get all this back."

Environmental issues include, but are not limited to, recycling, global warming, protecting endangered species, and saving trees and open spaces. Each setting, whether it is rural, urban, suburban, or exurban, will have its own particular circumstances and realities but we must recognize that we live on one earth. The same earth. Environmental justice is about our communities' quality of life. Everything in our ecosystem is interconnected. Chemicals produced in industrialized countries affect indigenous people in the Arctic. Urban sprawl contributes to deterioration of inner-city areas. Lead poisoning leads to lower school performance. Exported pesticides return as residues on imported food. Allowing people to live in degraded and hazardous environments corrupts everyone's sense of values and spirit.

As Native Americans remind us, what we do today should be done with future generations in mind. Or as a Talmudic saying goes, "My ancestors planted before me so that I might enjoy this earth. I plant to leave this place better for those who will follow me."
Our commitment to environmental justice calls us, as a people of faith, to work for:

**The right to know.** Everyone has the right to know what toxins are being used in their neighborhoods and workplaces so that they can effectively protect their health and the environment.

**The amendment of NAFTA.** The North American Free Trade Agreement has been a boon for business but a bane for workers and the environment because nearly all of its provisions for protecting workers and the environment are unenforceable and weak. NAFTA must be amended so that health and safety assurances are an integral part of the pact.

**The right to participate.** Every community has the right to participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating projects that affect their quality of life, public health, and overall environment. Governments and corporations should establish a process that requires public participation in decisions affecting everyone.

**Toxic cleanup.** The economic boom has left a hazardous mess in need of restoration. Progress cannot be claimed when heavy metals, acids, solvents, and many other toxins pollute the ground, poison the water, and contaminate the air in many communities. These sites ought to be cleaned up in health-protective ways that restore environmental quality.

**What should we do if we have an environmental justice problem?**

- Talk to members of your church and others in the community.
- Research all the facts.
- Develop a good description of the problem.
- Collect good documentation of issues and activities.
- Consult with other communities with similar issues; don’t reinvent the wheel.
- Select the most appropriate resource persons and organizations.
- Identify government agencies that are supposed to help.
- Clarify the legal, scientific, and medical issues involved. Hold community meetings to share information and strategize.
- Prepare educational materials for your community.
- Formulate an action plan. Form partnerships with universities, environmental, health, and other groups.
- Devise a media strategy.
- Don’t be intimidated or overwhelmed; you are the expert on your community.
- Network with other environmental justice groups.

**Faith Actions**

Identify the community environmental justice groups that are active in your local area. You can find them by the community centers in a particular area in the phone book. Call them, visit them, and find out which environmental groups are based there and which of them are working in your specific area of interest.

Call the group you have selected and find out how they feel about the issue you are interested in.

Avoid using jargon that they might not be familiar with (for example, environmental theology). Be sure to incorporate their views/ideas into a campaign. Develop a learning partnership. Hold a meeting with the interested individuals in your congregation to discuss the development of a campaign and agree on common aims, strategy, and tactics.

Raise the issue of environmental racism and injustice when working with mainstream environmental groups like the Sierra Club, Earth First, or the Nature Conservancy. Educate them about the disparities that exist when communities of color are affected. Build new coalitions that are multiracial and multicultural to work toward achieving environmental justice.
Earth Day

The Sunday before Earth Day (held annually on April 22) is always designated in the UCC Calendar as "Integrity of Creation" Sunday.

This is a good opportunity for your local church to engage in study and action about the stewardship of the earth and its resources. Children and youth can provide excellent leadership in your congregation on these issues so make sure that they are included in any planning groups you might establish for celebrating Earth Day.

Faith Actions

Do an energy audit of your church building and begin to assess what you need to do to conserve energy use. Contact your local municipality building inspection office for recommendations on doing an energy audit.

Do you recycle at the church? If not, how could you reduce the amount of waste and trash generated?

Is there a neighborhood in or near your community that is a toxic site or brown field? Is any work being done to clean up the area and make it safe for those who live and play nearby? Can your congregation partner with other community groups to make this happen?

Put together a public forum on topics such as environmental racism or global warming. Invite the community to learn, discuss, and develop solutions together. Bring in representatives from various segments of your local community who might have an interest in improving the quality of life: public officials, business leaders, manufacturers, health professionals, and teachers as well as those who are known to be active in environmental issues. Use methods such as Appreciative Inquiry to seek common goals for improvement.
Peace with Justice: Liturgical Resources

Just Peace Hymns

These hymns use familiar tunes from the New Century Hymnal (The Pilgrim Press, 1995) with new text written by Gunnar Wikstrom about just peace. See the chart after the hymns for the tunes.

Gunnar Wikstrom is a member of Mayflower Church (United Church of Christ) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, sings in the choir, and plays an active role in Mayflower's Just Peace Task Force. He is also a member of the American Swedish Institute Male Chorus in Minneapolis and resides in Fridley, Minnesota. His e-mail address is gunnarwik@aol.com.

Commit Your Hearts To Peace

Text: Gunnar Wikstrom, 2004
Tune: MARON S.M., with refrain
Arthur H. Messiter, 1883
("Rejoice, You Pure in Heart")

Com-mit your hearts to peace,
Your feel-ings in joy-ful song,
The world seeks jus-tice built on what is right
Tri-um-phant o-ver wrong.
Just Peace (Just Peace), Just Peace (Just Peace),
Just Peace for all the world.

Com-mit your minds to peace
For all the world to see
The thoughts of jus-tice, cou-pl ed with God's love,
Brings gra-cious har-mo-ny.
Just Peace (Just Peace), Just Peace (Just Peace),
Just Peace for all the world.

Com-mit your souls to God,
Who brings all the world to peace.
If now we lis-ten to God's word of love,
Dis-har-mo-ny would cease.
Just Peace (Just Peace), Just Peace (Just Peace)
Just Peace for all the world.

Com-mit your lives to peace,
Al-though 'tis a fleet-ing goal,
We must do jus-tice, Je-sus' great com-mand
With heart and mind and soul.
Just Peace (Just Peace), Just Peace (Just Peace),
Just Peace for all the world.
God, come to us, we seek You,
And give us strength to find
Those ways of peace and jus-tice
With lives that are en-twined.
Bring hope and joy to others
In service to set free
All those who are in bond-age
Without un-ans-wered plea.

God, come to us, we seek You,
To show us how to live.
By doing peace and jus-tice,
So in our lives we give
To those who live in squal-or
Or rav-aged all by war,
Un-fair-ness is their bur-den,
How much can they en-dure?

God, come to us, we seek You
And show us how to be
Giv-ers of peace and jus-tice.
Let that be our de-cree
As we go forth to serve you.
'Tis only right to do,
Re-stor-ing hope with Your love
With Christ's help we re-new.

God, come to us, we seek You
To mend our hearts and souls
De-signed with peace and jus-tice
Trans-form-ing lives, our goals.
Lea-ven of love with-in us
For jus-tice to in-crease
Through ho-ly in-spir-a-tion
Re-lease Christ's Dove of Peace.
God Who Comes In All Your Mercy

Text: Gunnar Wikström, 2004
Tune: STUTTGART 8, 7, 8, 7.
Attrib. to Christian F. Will
Psalmodia Sacra, Gotha, 1775
(O My Soul, Bless Your Creator)

God who comes in all Your mer-cy,
In Your pre-sence we con-fess,
Often peace fails for we’re hu-man
In a world of deep dis-tress.

Where in-tol-er-ance is pre-sent
Only fear and hate in-stilled.
Help us o-ver-come deep dis-cord
Show us how peace is ful-filled.

Ev-ery na-tion, ev-ery cul-ture
Dif-fer-ing in some de-gree
Search-ing yet for paths of Just Peace,
Whole-ness for hu-man-ity.

Give us cour-age, hope, and wis-dom
To be tol-erant day by day.
Just Peace to be-come our watch-word,
God with love in Christ, we pray.

O When Shall Peace Come To This World?

Text: Gunnar Wikström, 2004
Tune: ST. ANNE C.M.
Willism Croft, 1708
(O God, Our Help in Ages Past)

O when shall peace come to this world,
where strife and hate pre-vail?
Com-mun-i-ty of faith and love,
we’re chal-lenged not to fail.

Each day we seek paths of just peace,
and lives that are made new,
In this good world that God has made,
we look for guid-ance true.

In our time like the years be-fore,
our brok-en world in need.
To o-ver-come in-jus-tice now,
let fair-ness reign, in-deed.

So let our prayers reach ev-ery-where,
that peace reigns with God’s grace.
The bur-dens of in-jus-tice gone,
a new age we em-brace.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Hymn Title</th>
<th>Original Tune</th>
<th>Familiar Hymn With Page #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commit Your Hearts To Peace</td>
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<td>Rejoice, You Pure in Heart #55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>AURELIA 7,6,7,6</td>
<td>The Church's One Foundation #386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God Who Comes In All Your Mercy</td>
<td>STUTTGART 8,7,8,7, Attrib. to Christian F. Will Psalmodia Sacra, Gotha, 1715</td>
<td>O My Soul, Bless Your Creator #13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O When Shall Peace Come To This World</td>
<td>ST. ANNE C.M. William Craft, 1708</td>
<td>O God, Our Help in Ages Past #25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Christmas Prayer

The Reverend Mary Susan Gast, Conference Minister, Northern California-Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ, wrote this prayer. Used with her permission.

Prayer at Christmastime

Bright Christmas Star,
You soared across the velvet black reaches of space
To live in our hearts.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
You are born among us, as one of us.

Love embodied. Word incarnate.
We give You thanks for the many ways You have been present to us,
The many forms in which You have approached us,
With love beyond fleeting sentiment,
Love that etches each of us more clearly with Your unique design for us,
Yet joins us in blessed community so that we are more than we could be alone.

We pray for healing.
Staunch the bleeding of our severed friendships,
Re-weave the ragged fabric of our torn families,
Mend our bruised hearts, cool our fevered minds,
Wipe fatigue from our bones and misery from our spirits,
we pray that we may be strengthened and energized
To replace greed with grace
And to incapacitate oppression with the exhilaration of liberation.
Great joy to all the people! For to us is born this day a saviour,
Who is Love most unsettling and profound.
A Mother's Day Proclamation

This original, pre-Hallmark, Mother's Day Proclamation was written by Julia Ward Howe in Boston in 1870.

Arise then, women of this day!
Arise all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be of water or of tears!

Say firmly:

"We will not have questions decided by irrelevant agencies.

"Our husbands shall not come to us reeking of carnage for caresses and applause.

"Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience.

We women of one country will be too tender to those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.

"From the bosom of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own, it says 'Disarm! Disarm!'

"The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.

"Blood does not wipe out dishonor, nor violence indicate possession.

"As men have forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel.

Let them meet first as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.

Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, each bearing after his time the sacred impress not of Caesar, but of God.

In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without limit of nationality be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace.
Our Mother and Father

who are everywhere,
You are with us, within us and in our homes and churches;
you are in Indonesia among the rubble and the tears,
in the villages buried under sand and debris by the tsunami waters;
you are in Baghdad and Bogota, in Darfur and Beirut;
you are with those made homeless by the elements
and by the hardness of human hearts.

Holy be your name.
Holy is the memory of Jesus and Mary of Nazareth,
Paul of Tarsus, Mary of Magdala,
Martin Luther King of Georgia, Dorothy Day of New York,
Oscar Romero of El Salvador, Teresa of Calcutta,
Dietrich Bonhoeffer of Germany, Black Elk of the Lakota,
and of our parents and grandparents who gifted us with our faith.

Your kin-dom come, the commonwealth of your kin,
a kin-dom with no borders, where all cultures are honored;
a kin-dom where all children are safe and loved,
where music and dance are communion with you;
a kin-dom of freedom and justice,
where all labor has dignity and just reward;
a kin-dom of harmony between all of your creation.

Your will be done on earth as in heaven,
as we commit ourselves to restore your creation
from the ravages of continued desecration;
as we seek to honor our elders for their courage and wisdom;
as we heal the woundedness caused by fear and greed;
as we surrender our dayplanners to your eternal vision.

Give us this day our daily bread,
grant us bread without fear:
may we share our frijoles, our corn and soybeans;
may the harvest of abundance be rich in compassion;
may the food in our bellies bring peace to our hearts.
May our communion bread be pan de justicia,
the justice-making Body of Christ.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us;
may we forgive ourselves for our real or imagined failures,
for thinking ourselves unbeautiful, for not conforming to some imaginary standard;
may we forgive the parents who abused us or neglected us,
and those whose very best was not enough for us;
may we forgive the spouses who don’t make us whole,
and the children who do not live up to our dreams for them.
Forgive us our self-reliance, our lack of trust in you.
Forgive our arrogance and our greed,
our dividing your children into winners and losers.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;
the temptation of self-righteousness, the evil of judging others;
the temptation to think of people as statistics, the evil of war and hunger;
the temptation of global governance, the evil of systemic injustice;
the temptation to decide what is good for others, the evil of oppression and tyranny;
the temptation to hoard resources, the evil of poverty;
the temptation to put our faith in progress, the evil of a polluted world.

For yours is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory:
yours the reign of justice and peace,
of passion and compassion, of laughter and innocence;
yours the pow-wow of all nations under one God;
yours the power to empower,
to right all wrongs, to lift up the lowly
and dethrone tyrants;
yours the glory of art, poetry, and song;
the radiance of every color of the rainbow,
yours the everlasting glory of creation,
in its magnificent, chaotic design.
forever and ever glory to you our God.

Amen.

Note: For congregational use, the first lines may be freely updated to reflect current events.
The term “kin-dom” was first suggested by Franciscan Sister Georgina Wilson in 1987. It has been
been popularized in the work of muerista theologian Ada Maria Ibas Diaz.
A Litany of Justice

Scripture urges us to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with our God. What would our world look like if we all truly worked for justice? Oh, how we long for that new day!

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.
The issues are complex, but, God, we ask for justice, peace, and understanding in our world. God, we pray for an end to the fighting in the world. Oh, how we long for that new day!

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.
There are many in our world who thirst today. In many places in our world, there is not enough water, and in other places the water is polluted and unsafe to drink, including places under siege of flooding waters. God, may there be healing, safe waters for all. Oh, how we long for that new day!

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.
Racial strife is still present in our world. For the peoples, we pray. For all those who are discriminated against because of the color of their skin, we pray. For all people to see and acknowledge race, color, and culture and to acknowledge that all are created in the image of God, we pray. What a day it will be when people can truly respect each other and can live and work together in peace! Oh, how we long for that new day!

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.
We give thanks for those places in the world that have made progress in granting full human and civil rights to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Oh, how we long for that new day! We pray for our brothers and sisters in this country and in others who live with a constant threat against their lives because of who they are and whom they love. We pray for their safety, for their courage, and for their dreams of justice to become real. Oh, how we long for that new day!

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.
For the refugees and homeless of our world, we pray. For the malnourished and starving of the world, for the global economics that means a sharing of the world’s resources, we pray. Oh, how we long for that new day!

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.
For the planet, the environment, and justice for all God’s creation, we pray. Oh, how we long for that new day!

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.
God has promised us a new day of justice for all, a day of Jubilee. But it takes all of us working with God—loving mercy, doing justice, and living humbly with our God. Together let us commit to working for that new day when all shall say:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.

Other languages for the refrain:

Je vis un ciel nouveau et une terre nouvelle, car les premiers ont disparu. (French)
Ich sah einen neuen Himmel und eine neue Erde; denn das Erste war vergangen. (German)
V' un cielo nuevo y beunatierra nueva; porque las primeras cosas ya pasaron. (Spanish)
Resources

There is a great deal of information at the Justice and Witness Ministries section of the United Church of Christ website, including an index of issues covered: www.ucc.org/justice/index.html. Explore what is available on the web.

Also available through the web is the complete text of the Pronouncements and Resolutions of the General Synod. These documents are central to the UCC’s commitment to being a peace with justice church:

Just Peace Church Pronouncement
www.ucc.org/justice/jpc.htm

Open and Affirming Resolution
www.ucccoaltion.org/Programs/ONA/1985.htm

Pronouncement on Being a Multiracial and Multicultural Church
www.ucc.org/justice/mrmc/synod.htm

Resolution on Being an Anti-Racist Church (text found in the minutes of GS 24)
www.ucc.org/synod/gs24minutes.pdf

Resolution proposed to GS 25 to be recommended to the implementing body on being a church that is accessible to all

Many of the books published by the Pilgrim Press address peace with justice issues. Visit the website for Pilgrim Press (www.thepilgrimpress.com) or call for a catalogue at (216) 736-3768. The United Church of Christ Desk Calendar also lists many resources that relate to peace with justice.

Peacemaking

Participating in the Decade to Overcome Violence

The Decade to Overcome Violence
U.S. DOV CommitteeWorld Council of Churches
475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 1370
New York, NY 10115
Telephone: (212) 870-2522 or (888) 212-2920
www.overcomingviolence.org

Nuclear Weapons

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036-2103
Telephone: (202) 483-7600
E-mail: info@ceip.org
www.carnegieendowment.org

The Carnegie Endowment offers excellent background materials on the nuclear weapons issue. Go to www.carnegieendowment.org/npp for background information and to sign up for their Proliferation Network, an e-mail network on nuclear weapons and other proliferation issues.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation
245 Second Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-5795
Telephone: (800) 630-1330, ext. 142
E-mail: field@fcnl.org
www.fcnl.org

The Friends Committee publishes At the Crossroads: Disarmament or Re-Nuclearization, which describes the nature of the current nuclear weapons danger. Copies are available free. To receive copies, send an e-mail to field@fcnl.org or call 1-800-630-1330, ext. 142. It is also available on the website at www.fcnl.org/issues/arm/nuclear_intro.htm.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation does a superb job of keeping people informed about nuclear weapons legislation before Congress and providing action alerts when letters and phone calls are needed. Sign up for the free network on the website.
Nuclear Reduction/Disarmament Initiative
Churches’ Center for Theology and Public Policy
4500 Massachusetts Ave.
Washington, DC 20016
Telephone: (202) 885-8648
E-mail: info@nrdi.org
www.nrdi.org

Congregations and conferences can use For People of Faith: An Urgent Call to End the Nuclear Danger, a tool offered by the NRDI that describes the nuclear danger as a profoundly religious issue and offers several policy suggestions for addressing it. It can be used for study and also provides an opportunity for endorsements by individuals, congregations, and conferences. Rev. John Thomas, president and general minister of the United Church of Christ, was an early endorser. To see a copy, go to www.nrdi.org/For_People_of_Faith.pdf. You can also order hard copies without charge by e-mailing info@nrdi.org.

Overcoming Violence
(includes in the Midst of Gun Violence and Video Game Violence)

Citizens for Responsible Media
P.O. Box 503593
San Diego, California, 92150-3593
www.medilegislation.org

Entertainment Software Rating Board
317 Madison Avenue, 22nd Floor
New York, NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 759-0700
www.esrb.org

Women, War, and Peace
Peace x Peace
2086 Hunters Crest Way
Vienna, VA 22181
E-mail: globalnetwork@peacexpeace.org
www.peacexpeace.org

Learn how to become part of a global circle of women who are part of a world-wide peacemaking movement.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
304 East 45th Street
15th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 906-6400
www.unifem.org

UNIFEM also has Resolution 1325 and excellent information and resources on women’s global issues and gender equality.

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
UN Office
777 United Nations Plaza, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 682-1265
E-mail: info@peacewomen.org
www.peacewomen.org

This organization monitors and works toward rapid and full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security.”

The League has the text for United Nations Resolution 1325 (www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html).

PUBLICATIONS

War’s Dirty Secret: Rape, Prostitution and Other Crimes against Women by Anne Llewellyn Barstow
(Pilgrim Press: www.pilgrimpress.com)

Human Rights

American Civil Liberties Union
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004
E-mail: media@aclu.org
www.aclu.org

Bill of Rights Defense Committee
241 King Street, Suite 216
Northampton, MA 01060
Telephone: (413) 582-0110
E-mail: info@bordc.org
www.bordc.org

Center for Constitutional Rights
666 Broadway, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10012
Telephone: (212) 614-6464
E-mail: info@ccr-ny.org
www.ccr-ny.org
Human Rights Watch  
350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor  
New York, NY 10118-3299  
Telephone: (212) 290-4700  
E-mail: hwnycc@hrw.org  
www.hrw.org  

The Sentencing Project  
514 Tenth Street, NW, Suite 1000  
Washington DC 20004  
Telephone: (202) 628-0871  
www.sentencingproject.org  

U.S. Department of Justice  
Bureau of Justice Statistics  
810 Seventh Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20531  
E-mail: askbjs@ojp.usdoj.gov  
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs

Community  

Ministries of Workplace Justice and Community Economic Development  

The Center for Community Change  
1000 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Telephone: (202) 342-0519  
www.communitychange.org  
This organization helps low-income people, especially people of color, build powerful, effective organizations through which they can change their communities and public policies for the better.  

Direct Action Research and Training (DART) Center  
314 NE 26th Terrace  
Miami, FL 33137  
Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 370791  
Miami, FL 33137-0791  
E-mail: DARTCENTER@aol.com  
www.thedartcenter.org  

The Gamaliel Foundation  
203 N. Wabash Ave, Suite 808  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Telephone: (312) 357-2639  
E-mail: Gamalielus@sbglobal.net  
www.gamaliel.org  
From the site: “a network of grassroots, interfaith, interracial, multi-issue organizations working together to create a more just and more democratic society. The organizations of the Gamaliel Network are vehicles that allow ordinary people to effectively participate in the political, environmental, social, and economic decisions affecting their lives.”  

Industrial Areas Foundation  
220 West Kinzie Street, 5th floor  
Chicago, IL 60610  
Telephone: (312) 245-9211  
E-mail: iafii@ix.netcom.com  
www.industrialareasfoundation.org  

The PICO National Network  
171 Santa Rosa Avenue  
Oakland, California 94610  
Telephone: (510) 655-4816  
www.piconetwork.org  

UCC Community Economic Development Resources  
www.ucc.org/justice/community.pdf and  
www.ucc.org/evangelism/e2-10.pdf  

Working for Justice in Public Education  

NATIONAL GROUPS  

American Federation of Teachers  
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
Telephone: (202) 879-4400  
www.aft.org  

Center on Education Policy  
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 522  
Washington DC 20036  
Telephone: (202) 822-8065  
E-mail: cep-dc@cep-dc.org  
www.ctredpol.org  

Children’s Defense Fund  
25 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001
Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding
100 S. Third Street
Columbus, OH 43215
Telephone: (614) 228-6540
www.ohiocoalition.org

Good Schools Pennsylvania
Gove Business Center
226 Paul Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15211
Telephone: (412) 481-1161
www.goodschoolspa.org

Wisconsin
Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools
www.excellentschools.org

PUBLICATIONS

Education Week
www.edweek.org

The Future of Children
www.futureofchildren.org
The Future of Children is a publication of The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and The Brookings Institution. It seeks to promote effective policies and programs for children by providing policymakers, service providers, and the media with timely, objective information based on the best available research.

Children, Families, and Human Sexuality
Advocates for Youth
2000 M Street NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 419-3420
E-mail: questions@advocatesforyouth.org
www.advocatesforyouth.org

The Advocates for Youth website allows youth and their parents/guardians/teachers to access medically accurate information on issues related to sexuality.

Annie E. Casey Foundation
701 St. Paul St.
Baltimore, MD 21202
Telephone: (410) 547-6600
www.aecf.org

Kids Count Data (www.aecf.org/kidscount/) is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
Telephone: (202) 628-8787
E-mail: cdfinfo@childrensdefense.org
www.childrensdefense.org

National Center for Children in Poverty
215 W. 125th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10027
Telephone: (646) 284-9600
E-mail: info@nccpp.org
www.nccp.org

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
1025 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 1130
Washington, DC 20005
Telephone: (202) 628-7700
E-mail: info@rrcc.org
www.rrcc.org

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice website invites readers to relate their faith with various issues of reproductive health, including issues of reproductive choice, education, and advocacy.

The Sexuality Information and Education Council
SIECUS NY Office
130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350
New York, NY 10036-7802
Telephone: (212) 819-9770

SIECUS DC Office
1706 "R"Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Telephone: (202) 265-2405
E-mail: siecus@siecus.org
www.siecus.org

The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States website contains information related to human sexuality. This is an excellent site for determining what type of sexuality education should be offered and what education should be taught at a particular age.
The Democratic Process

Church-State Relations and Religious Liberty

Americans United for Separation of Church & State
518 C Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
Telephone: (202) 466-3234
E-mail: americansunited@au.org
www.au.org

Founded in 1947, the organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.

The Interfaith Alliance
1331 H Street, NW, 11th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Telephone: (202) 639-6370
www.interfaithalliance.org

This interfaith group of religious leaders works to promote interfaith cooperation around shared religious values to strengthen the public's commitment to the American values of civil participation, freedom of religion, diversity, and civility in public discourse and to encourage the active involvement of people of faith in the nation's political life.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life
1150 16th Street, NW, Suite 775
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 955-5075
E-mail: info@pewforum.org
www.pewforum.org

A nonpartisan, non-advocacy organization, The Pew Forum seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. The Forum functions as both a clearinghouse and a town hall. As a clearinghouse, it gathers and disseminates objective information through polls and reports on topics related to religion and public policy. As a town hall, it provides a neutral venue—through its various issue roundtables and rapid response events—for discussions of important issues where religion and politics intersect.

UCC Faith-Based Initiative/Charitable Choice
Web section
www.ucc.org/justice/cc

PUBLICATIONS

Building on Faith, A United Church of Christ
Perspective on Charitable Choice explores the legal, ethical, theological, and practical issues of Charitable Choice. Read the brochure online at www.ucc.org/justice/cc/ucc.htm. For a hard copy of the brochure, contact the Public Life and Social Policy Ministry Team at (202) 543-1517.

Keeping the Faith—The Promise of Cooperation, The Perils of Government Funding: A Guide for Houses of Worship, published by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Interfaith Alliance Foundation, offers guidance about whether and how religious organizations should accept public funds or cooperate with the government in the delivery of social services. Download the brochure at www.interfaithalliance.org/ReligiousResources/ReligiousResources.cfm?id=4582&c=36. For a hard copy of the brochure, contact the Public Life and Social Policy Ministry Team at (202) 543-1517.


Conscientious Objection

Center on Conscience & War (NISBCO)
1830 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Telephone: (202) 483-2220 or (800) 379-2679?
E-mail: nisbc@nisbc.org
www.nisbc.org

The CCW maintains up-to-date information about the status of attempts to introduce selective service, resources for persons considering conscientious objector status, and other helpful resources for understanding conscientious objector status in relationship to war and violence.
Church of the Brethren
1451 Dundee Ave. Elgin, IL 60120
Telephone: (847) 742-5100 or (800) 323-8039
www.brethren.org

This historic peace church has a complete leader’s packet for church leaders working with young people on the specific steps to take in order to register as a conscientious objector, resources for discernment, and other helpful information, which can be downloaded from www.brethren.org/gentld/witness/ConscientiousObjection/LeadersPacket.htm.

Friends Committee on Legislation (Quakers)
245 Second Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-5795
Telephone: (202) 547-6000 or (800) 630-1330
E-mail: fcni@fcnl.org
www.fcnl.org

Environment

Environmental Defense
www.environmentaldefense.org

This is a good site for advocacy and information on the environment. Environmental Defense also has a site about the ocean (www.oceansalive.org), which includes a pocket seafood selector that details earth-friendly seafood choices. Another page offers ways people can help "undo" global warming:
http://actionnetwork.org/ct/vb1aHAh51oXN2/.

Permaculture Activist magazine
P.O. Box 1209
Black Mountain, NC 28711
Telephone: (828) 669-6336
www.permacultureactivist.net

Working with Youth

UCC Environmental Justice Young Adult Team Report
www.ucr.org/youngadults/EJYoungAdultTeamv2.pdf

World Conference Against Racism
United Nations site:
www.un.org/WCAR
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) site:
www.racism.org.za/index.html

One of the historic peace churches, the Quakers have a deep tradition of conscientious objection.

Mennonite Church
P. O. Box 525
Mountain Lake, MN 56159-0525
Telephone: (507) 427-3105 or (888) 336-9599
E-mail: questions@MennoLink.org
www.mennolink.org

Another of the historic peace churches, the Mennonites also have helpful information on the discernment process and practical needs of conscientious objection:
http://peace.mennolink.org/articles/co_advice.html.

This magazine is celebrating its 20th year promoting the design of sustainable community in 2005. The Activist is North America’s leading permaculture periodical offering articles on permaculture design, edible landscaping, bioregionalism, aquaculture, natural building, earthworks, renewable energy, and much more. It provides a current listing of upcoming permaculture design courses and serves as a valuable global networking tool linking students to teachers and information, homeowners to designers and consultants, homeseekers to community, organisms to habitats, life to soil, and hope and help for all who imagine a culture that cares for the Earth and people.
General Resources

Peacemaking
American Friends Service Committee
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Telephone: (215) 241-7000
E-mail: afscinfo@afsc.org
www.afsc.org

This site includes information on many justice and peace issues such as immigration, youth and militarization, nuclear disarmament, globalization, conscientious objection, and specific current conflict situations.

Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America
4800 Wedgewood Drive
Charlotte, NC 28210
Telephone: (704) 521-6051
www.bpfna.org

The BPFNA publishes Baptist Peacemaker, a quarterly newsletter that contains good articles and reviews of resources. This is a group for those affiliated with the various Baptist conventions in North America but is a good source of information and ideas.

Catholic Worker
www.catholicworker.org

The Catholic Worker Movement, founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in 1933, is grounded in a firm belief in the God-given dignity of every human person. Today, more than 185 Catholic Worker communities remain committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken. Catholic Workers continue to protest injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms.

Center for International Policy
1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 801
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 232-3317
E-mail: cip@ciponline.org
www.ciponline.org/colombia

The Center promotes a foreign policy based on cooperation, demilitarization, and respect for human rights.

Coalition for Peace Action
41 Witherspoon St.
Princeton, NJ 08542
(609) 924-5022
www.peacecoalition.org

Common Dreams News Center: Breaking News and Views for the Progressive Community
www.commondreams.org

Eastern Mennonite University
1200 Park Road
Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2462
Telephone: (540) 432-4490
www.emu.edu/ctp

Located in Harrisonburg, Virginia, Eastern Mennonite University offers an annual Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) of intensive seven-day courses for professional training or credit. Participants come from all over the world. A Masters of Arts degree and a 15-hour Graduate Certificate in Conflict Transformation are also available through EMU.

Institute for Peace and Justice
4114 Lindell Blvd., #403
St. Louis, MO 63108
Telephone: (314) 533-4445
E-mail: jimppjn@aol.com
www.ipj-ppj.org

"Peace Pieces" is a free monthly e-resource from the Institute for Peace and Justice offering faith reflections on peace and justice issues, new resource information and samples, action suggestions, and important links to other sites. Good for Christian education, family ministries, youth ministries, and peace and justice ministries. To subscribe, go to www.ipj-ppj.org/e-resource.htm.

The Mennonite Church
http://peace.mennonlink.org

This is the link for their peace and justice resources and information and the Peace and Justice Support Network. The site is a good source of guidance on conscientious objection to the draft.

Methodists United for Peace and Justice
1500 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
www.mupw.org

This national membership association of laity and clergy is drawn from Methodist denominations in the United States. In their public policy agenda, they favor nuclear disarmament, oppose war against Iraq, and seek justice as the foundation for peace.
National Council of Churches of Christ (USA)
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 880
New York, NY 10015
Telephone: (212) 870-2141
www.nccccusa.org

The NCC produces resource materials for justice and peacemaking, many of which are available through its website: news and inspiration, worship resources, reflections, and other faith responses to war, violence, racism, sexism, environmental racism, etc. You will find many of these resources at the NCC site and at Church World Service: www.churchworldservice.org.

The NCC, in partnership with the Center for Community Change and local, regional, and national anti-poverty and faith based organizations, coordinated a campaign called “Let Justice Roll: Faith and Community Voices Against Poverty” during the 2004 election season. This campaign’s work to eliminate poverty and raise its visibility as a public policy issue continues. More information can be accessed at www.councilofchurches.org/letjusticeroll.

Nonviolence.org
www.nonviolence.org

Nonviolence.org features writing and analysis from a nonviolent viewpoint.

The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202
Telephone: (868) 728-7228, ext. 5784
www.pcusa.org/peacemaking

UCC Collegium of Officers Statement
You can read the statement by the Collegium of Officers of the UCC at the beginning of war in Afghanistan at www.ucc.org/911/101601b.htm

United for Peace & Justice
P.O. Box 607
Times Square Station
New York, NY 10108
Telephone: (212) 868-5545
www.unitedforpeace.org

This coalition of more than 800 local and national groups throughout the United States have joined together to oppose our government’s policy of permanent warfare and empire building.

United States Institute of Peace
1200 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 457-1700
E-mail: usiprequests@usip.org
www.usip.org

This organization promotes the peace resolution of international conflicts.

Voices in the Wilderness
1460 W. Carmen Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
Telephone: (773) 784-8065
E-mail: info@vitw.org
www.vitw.org

This organization campaigns to end economic and military warfare against the Iraqi people and to promote nonviolent resolution in other conflict situations. Observer teams are sent to conflict areas.

Whispers on the Wind: A Film for Peace
www.whispersonthewind.org

"Whispers on the Wind" is a documentary that features both ordinary people from many countries and world peace leaders and activists talking about how we can make peace in our time. Filmmakers Ann Crawford and Ann Battaglene also starred the Whispers on the Wind Foundation. The movie contains wonderful answers, from the very simple to the very erudite, as to how we can create world peace. The Foundation is a tool to implement those answers, specifically in the areas of diversity, economics, environmental protection, equality, peace, and social justice. You can get a free copy of the movie with a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation. (If you cannot access the site, call (415) 459-3952 or send a check to IF/Whispers on the Wind, 1007 A Street, San Rafael, CA 94901.)

The Wisdom Fund
P.O. Box 2723
Arlington, VA 22202
www.twf.org

The Wisdom Fund advances social justice and interfaith understanding by presenting The Truth About Islam.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches
150 route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Telephone +41-22-791-6240
www.warc.ch
The purpose of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is to strengthen the unity and witness of Reformed churches, to interpret and reinterpret the Reformed tradition, to work for peace, economic and social justice, human rights, and the integrity of the environment, to promote fully inclusive community, and to further dialogue with other Christian communions and other religions.

World Council of Churches
U.S. Office
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1371
New York, NY 10115
Telephone: (888) 212-2920
www.wcc-coe.org

Peace and justice issues are dealt with in a global context.

The World Peace Prayer Society
26 Benton Road
Wassaic, NY 12592
Telephone: (845) 877-6093
E-mail: info@worldpeace.org
www.worldpeace.org

PUBLICATIONS


Steps Along the Way: Living as Peacemakers in a Violent World by Jan Arnov and Arch Taylor (published by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program)

Rumors of Peace (Nonviolent Peaceforce) newsletter
425 Oak Grove
Minneapolis, MN 55403
Telephone: (612) 671-0005
E-mail: info@nonviolentpeaceforce.org
www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org

Arms Control
The Council For a Livable World
110 Maryland Ave NE
Washington, DC 20002
Telephone: (202) 546-0795
www.clw.org

The Council provides excellent resources.

Economists for Peace and Security
at the Levy Institute, Box 5000
Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504

Telephone: (845) 758-0917
E-mail: info@epsusa.org
www.epsusa.org

This organization seeks to promote objective economic analysis and appropriate action on global issues relating to peace, security, and the world economy.

Washington National Cathedral
Massachusetts and Wisconsin Avenues, NW
Washington, DC 20016-5098
Telephone: (202) 337-6258
www.cathedral.org

The National Cathedral is coordinating an effort that has produced an excellent resource packet for use in local congregations.

Nonviolence Education Resources

Fellowship of Reconciliation
521 N. Broadway
Nyack, NY 10960
Telephone: (845) 358-4601
www.forusa.org

"Deepening the Roots" is a two-part training program offering first a holistic approach to the foundation of nonviolence, followed by more specific and specialized training and resources.

Gene Sharp Resources
http://65.109.42.80/organizations/org/198_methods.pdf

This comprehensive list provides 198 methods of resistance and organizing strategies.

PUBLICATIONS

The Activist Handbook is a resource for budding activists and a good primer for people wanting an introduction to activism.

Just Law Collective is a legal handbook with useful terminology, flow charts, and preparatory materials for direct action and potential legal consequences.

Peacemaking Resources for Parents and Youth Leaders
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
www.aacap.org/publications/factsfan/disaster.htm

This site provides suggestions for ways to help children after a disaster with links to good sites on teens and stress.
Children's Hospital in Washington DC
www.dcchildrens.com
The site has a fact sheet about ways to help children cope with war.

Educators for Social Responsibility
www.esrmetro.org

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
www.elca.org/dcr/youth/resource/bibletext/biblestudy/thisweek.html
This website features FAITH LENS for youth. It is a weekly reflection on the lectionary texts with connections to world events. There are also several good links.

Federal Citizen Information Center of Pueblo Colorado
This site offers a good guide to age-specific reactions to disasters.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
www.fema.gov/kids
This site is designed for children to learn about how to prepare for disaster. FEMA also gives tips about talking with children about disasters at www.fema.gov/kids/terrorism.htm.

Helping Children Cope with Evil
www.thepresbyter.org/Devotional/Helping_Children_Cope.html
This is an excerpt from a talk by theologian and activist Robert McAfee Brown.

Helping Children Cope with Grief
www.childrensgrief.net/info.htm

Institute for Peace and Justice
www.ipj-pji.org
This site contains resources for Parenting for Peace and Justice.

National Association of School Psychologists
www.nasponline.org/NEAT/caregivers.html
This site helps caregivers deal with children during a national crisis.

National Center for PTSD
www.ncptsd.org/facts/specific/fs_family.html
This site offers signs of post traumatic stress disorder and suggests ways to find help.

National Mental Health and Education Center
www.naspcenter.org/safe_schools/coping.html
This site describes common emotional reactions to disaster and positive ways to face stress.

North Carolina State
This site offers strategies for families and teachers to help children face stressful periods:
www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ces/humandev/disas3.html and provides ways to recognize stress:
www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ces/humandev/disas1.html.

Of War and Words, Talking to Children about Conflict
The site offers suggestions, as well as a list of books for children on this topic.

Parenting Press
www.parentingpress.com/violence/10tips.html
This site offers ten ways to help children cope with violence.

Parenting Press
www.parentingpress.com/violence/talk.html
This site suggests ways to talk about feelings.

Peace Action
www.peace-action.org/home/children.html
This page on the Peace Action site offers "Nine Actions We Can Take to Help Children Deal with War in Iraq."

Purdue University Extension Services
www.ces.purdue.edu/terrorism/children/index.html
An article on this site discusses how to help children when war is in the news.

Sesame Street's Parent
www.sesameworkshop.org/parents/advice
A page for parents on this site lists age-specific ways to talk to children about fear, signs that your child might need more help, and books for you to read together.

Talking With Kids About War
http://www.familyeducation.com/topic/front/0,1156,62-29610-1,00.htm?yf_home

UNICEF
http://www.unicef.org
UNICEF has a number of resources available on its site.

War Child
http://www.warchild.org
War Child is a network of independent organizations working across the world to help children affected by war.

WebMD
http://my.webmd.com/content/article/61/67258.htm
"Telling Your Kids About War: Get Them to Open Up, Treat Fears as Real, Help Them Cope" is a WebMD article that provides suggestions for parents on how to treat their children’s fear about war.

PUBLICATIONS

Educating for Peace and Justice K-5, by James McGinnis, includes a section called "Help Children See the Human Consequences of Violence and War." The "Be Courageous—Confront Violence and Injustice" section has a section on helping children deal with their fears.

Gleam and Glow, by Eve Bunting, is a gorgeous picture book.

Lisette's Angels by Amy Littlesugar

Peace and the Threat of Nuclear War from Winston Press. Lessons explore such things as: war and peace, civil disobedience, the peace crane (story of Sadako), resources and arms, whether war is right or wrong, constructive/destructive toys, the United Nations, and contemporary peacemakers.

Peace: Just Live It, published by Faith and Life Press

Peacemaking Creatively Through the Arts by Phyllis Vos Wezeman (Educational Ministries, Inc.) has a unit on peace in the world with a variety of activities which might be adapted to address the current situation.

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes is a powerful story about the long-term effects of war (available in print and video) and can be coupled with the video "How to Fold a Paper Crane."

Teaching Peace: Skills for Living in a Global Society by Ruth Fletcher

The Yellow Star by Carmen Agre Fro

Violence of the Nations, from the Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Office for Peace Education, has a lesson that explores the variety of religious perspectives on war.

War and Peace Lesson Plan, created by Carl Donald, UCC Massachusetts Conferencel taught a junior high group a four-week module on War and Peace. For the first session, we laid out a variety of art materials and just asked each youth to create a picture of war and another of peace. Because it was opened-ended, it afforded them the opportunity to be as creative as possible. We then shared the visuals and decorated the room with these visuals and referred to them weekly. Considering the state of our world currently, this could be a great opportunity for youth to release some of their fears and feelings. We then spent the next few weeks in discussion and activities about conflict and how we as Christians can respond in nonviolent ways.

Whole People, Whole Earth, a video-based curriculum resource from Mennonite Media, has a number of sessions that might be appropriate.

Young Peacemakers Project Book by Kathleen Fry-Miller and Judith Myers-Walls (Brethren Press), has two lessons: "Be a Peace Hero" is designed to help children understand how peace and violence or war impact a child's daily life and to introduce children to peace heroes; "Peace Heroes to the Rescue" is designed to help children understand the impact of public activism by thinking about peace marches, murals, etc. Youth in Peacemaking, published by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

Domestic and Sexual Violence

The FaithTrust Institute
2400 N. 45th Street, #10
Seattle, WA 98103
Telephone: (206) 634-1903
E-mail: info@faithtrustinstitute.org
www.faithtrustinstitute.org

The Institute was formerly the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. It offers materials in Spanish and some Asian languages as well as English.

Racism

A New Church/A New World
This racial justice resource and study guide is for churches and communities that want to begin the journey of becoming anti-racist. It is available for $10.00 (plus shipping and handling) from Justice and Witness Ministries. Facilitators trained by JWM are also available to assist your group.

The Black Commentator
Publishers
Suite 473
93 Old York Road
Jenkintown PA 19046
Telephone: (202) 318-4032
www.blackcommentator.com

This site features commentary, analysis, and investigations on issues affecting African-Americans.

The core of JPANet's work is the UCC "take action" web page at www.ucctakeaction.org, where you can sign up for the network and follow JPANet legislative campaigns.
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Support Neighbors in Need

“The cost of discipleship is rising…”
— William Sloane Coffin

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but not without the strong support of people of faith like you.

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“Faith puts us on the road,” wrote William Sloane Coffin, “hope keeps us there.”

Your generous gift to the Neighbors in Need offering in the United Church of Christ has never been so important. Many congregations receive Neighbors in Need on the first Sunday of October. You can also donate online at any time—and find out more about Neighbors in Need—by logging on to www.ucc.org/nin.

Neighbors in Need funds organizations and congregations that address the whole range of social issues and concerns: poverty, economic development, human rights, peacemaking, violence, racial and economic justice, environmental concerns, and advocacy for public education, multiracial, multi-cultural implementation and public policy. Neighbors in Need also supports the work of the United Church of Christ’s Justice and Witness Ministries. One-third of the offering supports the UCC’s Council for American Indian Ministry, including our 20 American Indian UCC congregations.