

## Lesson 8

# PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

*“I told them that I lived in that life and power that takes away the occasion for all war.”*

George Fox, Journal, 1694

*“We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world ... therefore we cannot learn war any more.”*

Quaker Peace testimony presented to Charles II, 1661 as A Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God, Called Quakers”

*“We should carry on this struggle on the lines of strict non-violence, i.e., by suffering in our own persons ... I want you to feel like loving your opponents, and the way to do it is to give them the same credit for honesty of purpose which you would claim for yourself.”*

Mohandas Karamachand Gandhi, Gandhi on Nonviolence

*“Nonviolence is a way of living every day, every hour in our personal choices as well as mass struggles for justice. Through it we affirm the divine Light in every human being and act on the belief that truth and love can overcome ignorance and hate. Nonviolence addresses the misuse and abuse of power in all spheres of life from quarreling to domestic violence to war. Our faith calls for us to be fully present to the person before us. History has shown us that when a future outcome however noble seems of greater worth than the human being before us any means, any atrocity, is possible. Nonviolence as a way of life is based on the realization that the means determine the end, that the means are how we live our lives.”*

*“When we act in the humble recognition that every party to a problem or dispute has some portion of the truth, our object becomes not winning but reconciliation. We seek methods to deal with conflicts such as mediation that build and develop cooperation and community. Conflict as an inevitable fact of life becomes creative opportunity when we can fashion from our differing approaches a combined vision that is closer to the truth than any of our original positions.”*

NYYM Faith and Practice

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### SUMMARY

Quakers have a saying “Waging Peace”. The Peace Testimony utterly denies “outward weapons”, but the spiritual struggle for Peace is ever ongoing and can be argued is the most important endeavor humankind engages in. It is an intense, enormous struggle but we have no choice but to engage in it. This lesson is but an introduction to this vast subject.

But how does peace actually happen? How do we “Wage Peace”?

Peace is like constructing a building. The site needs to be developed, the materials need to be gathered, the work needs to be done, and the building maintained after its built. Contributions get made by individuals, by local communities, and by governments. Building each peace is entirely different from any other.

### Laying the Groundwork:

Conflict is always a part of our lives, so even before a conflict happens, the groundwork for peace must be laid. Without a firm groundwork, war is much harder to prevent or peace to maintain. Some of the ways we lay a firm groundwork for peace are:

- Fostering friendships among individuals, such as Big Brother and Sister programs, Afterschool mentoring; sports teams, self-help and support groups;
- Establishing small clubs and interest groups so friendships can develop among communities; such as senior citizen centers; religious groups, unions.
- Sharing resources fairly among members of the community so that good schools, health care, child care and jobs are fairly distributed;
- Establishing fair police forces and justice systems that the community members can trust,
- Supporting art, music and theatre development which allow the community to gather together in deeply meaningful ways, creating a culture of empathy and understanding;
- Eliminating corruption in government, and establishing ways for the government to listen to the people and be held accountable, like fair elections and power sharing.
- In volatile areas, establishing trained Peace Committees and early warning networks
- Training in non violence by such groups as the Quaker Alternatives to Violence (AVP) or other anti-violence initiatives which establish process and best practices and afford participants practice in these disciplines;
- Safe guard responsible, competent independent journalism and media so that people can learn the truth about a situation and to guard against corruption.

QUERY: Are there groups we are part of or have started which help lay the groundwork for Peace?

### Identifying the Conflict Before it Becomes Violent

**Example:** In the spring of 2022, false rumors surfaced in a community in Darfur that a group of armed men from a neighboring village were planning an attack. Community members then began to arm themselves to carry out a preemptive attack and strike the neighboring

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community first. The neighboring village's Peace Committee realized that the other village was mobilizing and reached out to their other village counterparts through the early warning system. The two village Peace Committees were able to discuss the false rumors and convince each community to de-escalate. The trust between the Peace Committees and the early warning network prevented violence and the loss of innocent lives.

Identifying the sources of potential conflict and empowering people with the means and space to develop their own solutions is an important part of peacekeeping. Preventing violence is far easier than stopping it once it has started. Small disputes can quickly escalate into extremely destructive events. This takes listening carefully to everyone in order to build trust with those involved and trying to discern what is true, considering the history and background of the conflict.

### **How Violence is Prevented**

Violence must always be consciously averted. When a conflict is recognized a process of de-escalation may not be as simple as discounting rumors. It may be a very entrenched problem with people on all sides aggrieved. Each conflict is different, so peacekeepers need to discern what methods they need to prevent it from escalating. Such as:

- Mediation – asking the warring sides to meet with someone they mutually trust to engage in a dialogue of trust and work out a solution;
- Protection and safety – finding protection or arranging for safety as required for innocent people who are being harmed in some way;
- Creating spaces for change –finding ways to change spaces or change laws that can eliminate sources of conflict;
- Appealing to the laws of the land - knowing our rights and legal protections;
- Establish independent and responsible sources for data collection and news so people have access to the truth.
- Studying and taking advantage of the many conflict prevention studies, consultants and resources available.

QUERY: Have we ever managed to avoid a conflict through some form of intervention?

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### **Healing from Violence**

After an experience of violence communities must heal and reintegrate from the trauma. Ways for the community to heal include:

- Setting up Reconciliation Councils and/or Truth and Reconciliation Events;
- Engaging in worship, healing rituals, memorials, story telling, and shared artistic experiences, events and retreats;
- Establishing processes for future harms, such as documentation, regularly scheduled listening/sharing circles and providing for mental health & trauma care support;
- Establishing just courts, policing, and rooting corruption and favoritism out of local authorities.

QUERY: What is our own personal healing process? Have we ever participated in what we think was a successful healing process?

### **Maintaining Peace**

Local, community based peace initiatives are extremely important; its what global peace movements are built on. This can mean setting up farming associations, workers unions, religious organizations, book clubs, affinity groups, civic organizations of all kinds all the way up to the United Nations. These organizations establish nonviolence as the standard solution to conflict and promote leadership that all sides can trust. When warring factions can see that nonviolent solutions may solve their problems they are more likely to consider them as a possible solution when conflicts arise. American Friends Service Committee along with other Quaker groups such as the Quaker United Nations Office have often been at the forefront, providing important resources world wide to avoid conflicts and maintain peace. Many other civic, media, and religious organizations are also involved in these efforts.

- Educate people to stop using violence as the normal solution to conflict and adopt other methods; (AVP workshops; school workshops)
- Finding ways to establish greater empathy towards and understanding of people from the other group through each other's cultures and challenges, history, religions, food, healing rituals; music; dance, humor, art, etc.

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### **LESSON**

We all want to live in a world where we and our families can be safe, happy and grow up to be what we want to be. But war and violence can make that impossible. And war affects children in many ways worse than adults. Query: What are some of those ways?

- Children are dependent on the care and attention of adults who love them. When adults leave home to fight or are killed, children's lives are disrupted. Children can be left orphaned by war and violence.
- Children don't go to school, may have to leave home or live in refugee camps with no water, food, homes or heat.
- Children can be more easily killed or injured by war. They may become sicker than adults since they are more vulnerable when medicine is unavailable and doctors and hospitals are destroyed.
- Children can be taken advantage of, coerced and enslaved by adults. Children can be forced to be soldiers. There are thousands of young people serving in militias in about 60 countries.

### **BUILDING A PEACE PALACE**

How do we make sure the world is a peaceful place for children to grow up and thrive? Peace is like building a palace. The ground needs to be solid, the bricks need to be collected, the work needs to be done, and the palace kept safe after its built. Everyone contributes to keeping the peace. Let's construct a Peace Palace out of legos.

QUERY: What do we need in our palace?

#### **Some ideas:**

- We need a building outside to lock all the weapons away and throw away the key!
- We need a doorway everyone can get in – even disabled people, big people, little people etc.
- We need a great big dining table everyone can feel comfortable in and with a seat at the table and can eat healthy food.
- There should accessible bathrooms that everyone feels comfortable using.
- There should be good acoustics so everyone can hear each other.
- There should be a big toy room where everyone shares fairly.
- There should be lots of small activity rooms for people to share their interests and hobbies.
- A wonderful library with lots of books everyone can share.
- A concert hall for music and dance.
- A court of justice and police department which is fair.
- A bank where everyone can get a loan fairly
- A School that everyone can get into.

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- an independent media and journalism center

So, by providing for all these things, we're like builders, making sure our palace of peace is strong. And when we have a strong foundation for peace, it's much easier for everyone to get along and be happy, just like you and your friends when you are together.

Some other activities:

**Write your own Peace Testimony:** Read the Quaker Peace Testimony and write out your own version.

**Yarn toss.** The first person thinks of something they can do for peace, wraps a few strands around their hand, and then tosses the ball of yarn to someone else. Repeat. Eventually you have a trampoline through which you can feel the interconnectedness and strength of many small peace initiatives.

**Tug of Peace.** Seat your group on the floor. Provide enough rope, 5/8th inch or thicker, to be circled around the entire group on their laps. Tie a secure knot and ask each person to grasp the rope and stand up (carefully) pulling back on the rope.

**A What? game.**

Cut out Happy Faces and Hearts for everyone in the group, or any two different objects, such as a pen and a shoe. Have the group sit or stand in a circle with two facilitators opposite each other, each supplied with half of the Happy Faces and Hearts. Pass a Happy Face to the person on your right, saying, "This is a Happy Face." Ask that person to say back to you, "A what?" You reply, "A Happy Face: pass it on." Let them pass it on using the same dialogue. Let the group pass it to three or four people.

After people have the idea, ask that the Happy Face be returned to you. Go to your left saying, "This is a Heart." Hopefully the person on you left will say, "A what?" and you'll say, "A Heart; pass it on." Explain that your co-facilitator will also be passing out Happy Faces and Hearts. Each facilitator will pass out Happy Faces and Hearts alternately. The challenge is to see if we can keep things straight. Let the passing continue until everyone is receiving both Happy Faces and Hearts at the same time.

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### ACTIVITIES

**Write letters to our members of congress** urging peace initiatives.

**Be a “Silent Witness”** for Friends Committee on National Legislations” meetings with congressional leaders.

**Write letters** of support to children in places where they are experiencing war.

**Fund Raiser.** Discern a cause we are concerned about and do a fund raiser.

**Stage a Peace Ceremony** and invite people to attend.

### FIELD TRIPS

**United Nations Office or QUNO**

**American Friends Service Office**

**9/11 Memorial and Museum:** Visit the 9/11 Memorial and Museum to commemorate the victims of the September 11 attacks and learn about the importance of tolerance and unity in the face of adversity.

**The Museum of Jewish Heritage:** Learn about the Holocaust, Jewish history, and the importance of tolerance and combating hatred and prejudice.

### READING AND RESOURCES

Wangari’s Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa by Jeanette Winter

A Little Peace by Barbara Kerley

Amazing Peace by Maya Angelou

The Seed of Compassion by His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Why War is Never a Good Idea Alice Walker

The Sky We Shared by Shirley Reva Vernick

A Peacemaker for Warring Nations: The Founding of the Iroquois League by Joseph Bruchac

Peacemaker by Joseph Bruchac (novel of the above)

For Beautiful Black Boys Who Believe in a Better World by Michael W. Waters

Enemy Pie by Derek Munson