



WAR, PEACE and the LAMBETH CONFERENCE

A SET OF BRIEFING PAPERS PREPARED
BY THE ANGLICAN PACIFIST FELLOWSHIP
FOR DELEGATES TO THE
2008 LAMBETH CONFERENCE

- A review of resolutions regarding the Christian attitude to war made by Lambeth Conferences since 1930.
- An examination of the ethics of pacifism and just war in today's world.
- An urgent call to recognise that peacemaking is the heart of the gospel.

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REVIEW OF RESOLUTIONS

Conference 1930

The earliest Resolution from a Lambeth Conference which is relevant to the lives of current generations is that of 1930. Interestingly, [Resolution 25](#) is placed under the main heading of **The Life and Witness of the Christian Community – Peace and War** and reads:

The Conference affirms that war as a method of settling inter-national disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is followed by [Resolution 26](#):

The Conference believes that peace will never be achieved till international relations are controlled by *religious and ethical* standards, and that the moral judgement of humanity needs to be enlisted on the side of peace. It therefore appeals to the religious leaders of all nations to give their support to the effort to promote those ideals of peace, brotherhood and justice for which the League of Nations stands.

The Conference welcomes the agreement made by leading statesmen of the world in the names of their respective peoples, in which they *condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies*

During the decade which followed these Resolutions, British businesses and individuals, many of them ostensibly Christian, joined in the race to disinvest from the cotton mills of Lancashire, the woollen mills of Bradford and the coalmines of Nottingham and South Wales in order to invest in the German armaments industry in general and Krupps of Essen in particular.

Conference 1940 did not take place as Britain was engaged in World War II – a war which was to incur more civilian casualties than any before and which led to the development of ever-more powerful weaponry, culminating in the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Conference 1948 included:

[Resolution 9](#)

The Conference reaffirms [Resolution 25](#) of the Conference in 1930, “that war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

[Resolution 10](#) adds:

The Conference affirms that it is the duty of governments to work for the general reduction and control of armaments of every kind and for their **final elimination**, except those which may be necessary for international police protection

Despite these Resolutions, by 1950 our troops, including National Servicemen, were fighting in Korea at the behest of the US in the grip of paranoia regarding any form of Communism. For the first time, the action was not officially called a “war” but the euphemism which would become all too familiar, “armed conflict” was used.

Conference 1958

The question of war and peace was discussed ([Resolutions 100ff](#) under the more specific heading, **The Reconciling of Conflicts Between and Within Nations – Modern Warfare and Christian Responsibility**).

Particularly interesting, in the light of recent history, is:

[Resolution 104](#)

The Conference declares that the Church is not to be identified with any particular political or social system and calls upon all Christians to encourage their governments to respect the dignity and freedom of people within their own nations and the right of people of other nations to govern themselves.

This Resolution appears to call into question the right of any nation which prides itself on its democratic system of government to impose even that democracy on any other nation.

The Conference later states, once more, the Christian position on war:

Resolution 106

The Conference reaffirms that war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and declares that *nothing less than the abolition of war itself* should be the goal of the nations, their leaders and all citizens. As an essential step towards achieving this goal the Conference calls upon Christians to press, through their governments, *as a matter of the utmost urgency*, for the abolition by international agreement of nuclear bombs *and other weapons* of similar indiscriminate destructive power, and use of which is repugnant to the Christian conscience. To this end governments should accept such limitations of their own sovereignty as effective control demands....

The decade which followed the declaration of these two Resolutions saw armed conflicts of varying degrees of intensity throughout the world, including revolution in Colombia, violent encounters in Israel/Palestine, India/Pakistan and the continuing “troubles” in N. Ireland. In some of these, Christians including Anglicans, took an active part, and in many others they contributed to the severity and duration of the conflict by supplying sophisticated weaponry and money, sometimes to both the parties involved.

Conference 1968

Resolution 8 not only re-states the Conference’s position on warfare but proposes a course of action to be followed in order to achieve a world at peace:

War

This Conference

- a) reaffirms the words of the Conference of 1930 that “war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ”;
- b) states emphatically that it condemns the use of nuclear and bacteriological weapons;
- c) holds that it is the concern of the church (i) to uphold and extend the right of conscientious objection; and (ii) to oppose persistently the claim that total war or the use of weapons however ruthless or indiscriminate can be justified by results;
- d) urges upon Christians the duty to support international action either through the United Nations or otherwise to settle disputes justly without recourse to war; to work towards the abolition of the competitive supply of armaments, and to develop adequate machinery for the keeping of a just and permanent peace.

In the following year, the US was engaged in war in Vietnam – and it is at this point that we should remember that the Lambeth Conference, although held in the UK, is not a conference for the Church of England but for the whole Anglican Communion world-wide and that the bishops from the USA have always provided the largest contingent of those gathered there.

Conference 1978

This Conference issued a much fuller statement on the various aspects of warfare and the basis in scripture and tradition for the need for Christians in the 20th century to reject armed conflict.

Resolution 5

War and Violence

1. Affirming again the statement of the Lambeth Conferences of 1930, 1948, 1958 and 1968 that “war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ” the Conference expresses its deep grief at the great suffering being endured in many parts of the world because of violence and oppression. We further declare that the use of the modern technology of war is the *most striking example of corporate sin and the prostitution of God’s gifts*.

2. We recognise that violence has many faces. There are some countries where the prevailing social order is so brutal, exploiting the poor for the sake of the privileged and trampling on the people’s human rights, that it must be termed

“violent.” There are others where a social order that appears relatively benevolent nevertheless exacts a high price in human misery from some sections of the population. There is the use of armed force by governments, employed or held in threat against other nations or even against their own citizens. There is the world-wide misdirection of scarce resources to armaments rather than human need. There is the military action of victims of oppression who despair in achieving social justice by any other means. There is the mindless violence that erupts in some countries with what seems to be increasing frequency, to say nothing of organised crime and terrorism, and the resorting to violence as a form of entertainment on films and television.

3. Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has already won the victory over all evil. He made evident that self-giving love, obedience to the way of the cross, is the way to reconciliation in all relationships and conflicts. Therefore the use of violence is ultimately contradictory to the Gospel. Yet we acknowledge that Christians in the past have differed in their understanding of limits to the rightful use of force in human affairs, and that questions of national relationships and social justice are often complex ones. But in the face of the mounting incidence of violence today and its acceptance as a normal element in human affairs, we condemn the subjection, intimidation, and manipulation of people by the use of violence and the threat of violence and call Christian people everywhere:

- (a) to re-examine as a matter of urgency their own attitude towards, and the complicity with, violence in its many forms;
- (b) to take with the utmost seriousness the questions which the teaching of Jesus places against violence in human relationships and the use of armed force by those who would follow him, and the example of redemptive love which the cross holds before all people;
- (c) to engage themselves in non-violent action for justice and peace and to support others so engaged, recognising that such action will be controversial and may be personally very costly;
- (d) to commit themselves to informed, disciplined prayer not only for all victims of violence, especially for those who suffer for their obedience to the Man on the Cross, but also for those who inflict violence on others;
- (e) to protest in whatever way possible at the escalation of the sale of armaments of war by the producing nations of the developing and dependent nations, and to support with every effort all international proposals and conferences designed to place limitations on, or arrange reductions in, the armaments of war of the nations of the world.

In 1982 Britain went to war to retain possession of the Falkland Islands.

Conference 1988

This debated again the somewhat wider issue.

War, Justice and Violence

Resolution 27

This Conference:

1(a) reaffirms the statement of the 1930 Lambeth Conference that war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ;

(b) affirms also that there is no true peace without justice, and reformation and transformation of unjust systems is an essential element of our biblical hope;

2(a) supports those who choose the *way of non-violence as being the way of our Lord*, including direct non-violent action, civil disobedience and conscientious objection, and pays tribute to those who in recent years have kept before the world the growing threat of militarism;

(b) understands those who, after exhausting all other ways, choose the way of armed struggle as the only way to justice, whilst *drawing attention to the dangers and injustices possible in such action itself* and

3. encourages provinces and dioceses to seek out those secular and religious agencies working for justice and reconciliation, and to make common cause with them, to ensure that the voice of the oppressed is heard and a response is made so that further violence is averted.

1991 saw the start of the first Gulf War from which cases of leukaemia, resulting from the contamination of large areas of land by spent uranium shell casings, are still coming to light.

In April 1994 Rwanda, a country whose population consisted of over 80% Christians of various denominations including Anglican, was decimated by tribal genocide.

Conference 1998

The most recent Conference sadly sounds a more uncertain note. The sentiments expressed are generally along the same lines as in previous years, but confidence that a more peaceful future can be achieved is clearly lacking.

Resolution 1.4

A Faithful Response to Aggression and War

This Conference:

(a) abhors the evil of war;

(b) repudiates and condemns the use of violence for settling religious, economic, cultural or political disputes;

(c) encourages the use of peacekeeping forces to prevent or forestall the escalation of conflicts, and to assist in their resolution;

(d) repudiates and condemns the use of terrorism;

(e) decries the production and proliferation of arms;

(f) commits its members to prayer, mediation, and any active, non-violent means we can employ to end current conflicts and wars and to prevent others; and

(g) urges the nations represented by our Churches and all those on whom we have any influence whatsoever to join us in this endeavour.

In 2003, the UK joined the US once more and initiated the Second Gulf War in which the casualties on both sides continue to mount, and from which the tide of violence can be seen advancing in several directions.

In 2008, the year of another Lambeth Conference, military action of all kinds is still killing members of armed forces and far greater numbers of non-combatants. Homes and the infrastructure for civilized living are being destroyed and large areas of some countries devastated and made non-productive.

Let us pray for the Peace of the World.

THE ETHICS OF PACIFISM AND JUST WAR IN TODAY'S WORLD

From a paper by Dr Tony Kempster, APF General Secretary given at the Modern Church People's conference 2008 and published in *Modern Believing: Church and Society*, Volume 49:2 2008.

Dangerous times

Who among us does not feel anxiety about the future? Can anyone offer any plausible prediction of events over the next twenty years within the relatively orderly areas of the Western world, to say nothing of the Middle East or Africa? Except that there will be conflict.

These are dangerous times because humanity faces several concurrent threats, each serious and together potentially catastrophic. The Oxford Research Group report, *Global responses to global threats* (Chris Abbot *et al*, 2006), identifies four groups of factors as the root causes of insecurity in today's world and the likely determinants of future conflict:

- Climate change
- Competition over resources
- Marginalisation of the majority world
- Global militarisation.

The report argues that these threats are likely to lead to global instability and to a loss of life unmatched by other potential threats. Terrorism is seen as a second-order issue, its effect dependent on how the global community deals with these "big four" threats.

Terrorist attack on 9/11

Did September 11 2001, really change the world? This question was being asked within days of the Al Qaeda attack, and it soon emerged that there was no consensus as political commentators set out their different positions.

But now, one thing seems clear: there are few political relationships – between states, between political leaders, between politicians and their electorates that have not suffered contamination from the fallout of that day. Some important political institutions – NATO, the UN – may now be in decline. This turmoil in global politics is a consequence of the exercise of political power in one of its most recognisable forms: the power of determined leaders of well-armed nations to seek security through force. History shows that the exercise of such power has serious and often unpredictable effects on the international community, and means what it has always meant – war. In this case the 2003 Iraq War.

As with many wars, the justification for the Iraq invasion played on people's fears and the demonisation of the enemy; and was promoted with scant regard for the truth by the leaders who were bent on waging it. Political support of a sorts was established, although events show that the *ad bellum* requirements of the Just War were not met. It was also illegal under international law which incorporates the requirements of just authority and last resort.

Whether the Just War could have been more influential in preventing the war depends on its relevance to the circumstances and how effectively it was employed at the time. The following discussion will attempt to throw some light on this question, as it examines the practical value of the tradition.

"The triumph of just war theory (and the dangers of success)"

Michael Walzer, the Just War guru made some significant points in a 2002 lecture (published in *Arguing about war*, 2004). He said that the just war theory was a "triumph". Having been revived from religious obscurity during the Vietnam War by the anti-war camp and academic left, it came to provide the accepted structure and language for debate about future wars.

(Incidentally, the Just War met well the needs of Vietnam anti-war lobbyists because they were campaigning to stop a brutal and protracted war that was on the way to being lost. This says nothing about the tradition's effectiveness in preventing war.)

Walzer then went on to caution about "the dangers of success", referring to the softening of the tradition's critical function and truce making between theorists and soldiers. He spelt out the need to argue for the strengthening of the constraints that justice imposes on warfare. "Even if we (in the West) have fought just wars", he says, "that is no guarantee, not even a useful indication, that our next war will be just". Prescient words written before the 2003 invasion of Iraq!

It is interesting that Walzer was one of the 40 intellectuals who signed a public letter, entitled "What we're fighting for" published in February 2002, which used the just war theory to justify the US-led war on terror. This was followed two

months later by a letter signed this time by 128 US intellectuals which referred to the “reflexive hyper-nationalism” of the first letter and challenged its interpretation of just war. (The second letter was entitled “US intellectuals call for European criticism of US war on terror” because the earlier letter had received wide publicity in the European media.)

This illustrates that that the interpretation of Just War can differ markedly and suggests that the success to which Walzer refers has been mainly in the realm of academic debate rather than in giving clear guidance and offering practical restraint to unjust wars.

Confusion in the practical application of the just war tradition

This lack of clarity in application is evident in the way the Church of England (CofE) tends to deal with issues of militarism and war. It considers that its role here is to deepen and broaden the discussion but not polarize it by finding in favour of a specific judgement or policy. Church leaders express their views but consensual guidance is often lacking. Some would argue that this approach can be valuable if it informs a more ethical foreign policy; but there is little evidence that it does. If anything, it confuses matters particularly at times like this when major changes are taking place in international politics.

In his book, *Just war: changing society and the churches* (2004), Charles Reed sets out, in a clear way, how the Churches reacted politically to the two Iraq wars. He emphasises that opinions given were often very different, as the following quotes from his two relevant chapters show:

First Gulf War: triumph without victory

“The churches’ confused and mixed response was a tension between a Christian realist and a Christian pacifist understanding of the just war tradition.”

Second Gulf War: victory without triumph

“While the churches’ opposition to the war was unprecedented, a closer examination of the underlying logic suggests more divergence than consensus as to when it is acceptable to use force.”

The transatlantic dialogue, set up in 2005 by the CofE with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, seems to have added to the confusion – so far at least. It involved British and American ethicists and theologians, and had the stated aim of doing the groundwork “to rework the just war tradition to respond to the new challenges to international security represented by the end of the Cold War and the impact of terrorism”. In the event, it has been published as a set of papers in an edited book, *The price of peace* without synthesis or attempt to say what a reconstituted just war tradition might mean in practice. The editors Charles Reed and David Ryall do, in fact, state that: “several authors disagree sharply about vital contemporary issues such as the Iraq War” and emphasise that the book: “avoids deliberately the quest for consensus”.

They also say: “It is essential to see just war thinking as a dynamic tradition for reflecting the nature of international society rather than as a set of prescriptions to be rigidly applied to crises, a sort of checklist that can be ticked or crossed”. Fine words, but many Christians will look to the Churches for some guidance when next the war drums begin to beat. They would like to be sure that any future war is “just” and rule-governed. It should not derive from a condition of lawlessness where leaders and their like-minded ethicists use the flexibility of the just war tradition to defend the morality of their policies - which brings me to George Weigel.

Weigel of the Ethics and Public Policy Centre in Washington has a prominent chapter in *The price of peace* which challenges certain aspects of the generally accepted view of the just war tradition. He insists, for example, that just war does not begin from a presumption against war, because it can be a duty to pursue war if it is undertaken for justice. He also argues that al-Qaeda should be regarded as capable of engaging in war in the just war sense, something which many Just War theorists do not recognise. Further, one of his principal arguments seems to be to justify preventive military attacks against rogue states. What did Michael Walzer say about the dangers of softening the tradition’s critical function! (Brian Wicker develops these points in “George Weigel on just war in the 21st century” in *New Blackfriars*, 2007.)

The editors of *The price of peace* do express a hope that the report “will contribute to a wider public conversation about the nature of moral responsibility in this critical area”. This is commendable, but one might add the rider: “and make the tradition more practically relevant to peacemaking in the 21st century”. I will now make some suggestions from the pacifist perspective to point the way.

The Christian position on war

Whether one holds pacifism or the just war tradition to be the more ethical approach, most Christians would agree that steps should be taken to reduce the incidence of wars. Such an aim is implicit in a statement by the 1930 Lambeth conference and reaffirmed by later conferences: “War as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ”. The conference of 1968 condemned emphatically the use of nuclear weapons, and the conference of 1988 appealed “to all governments with nuclear forces to cease the production of nuclear weapons and plan together an international programme for the dismantling of such weapons”. The Catholic Church’s position has moved along similar lines to John Paul’s II’s condemnation of war as a “totally unacceptable” means of settling international disputes.

The Lambeth Conferences' 1968 and 1988 statements on nuclear weapons contrast surprisingly with the rather weak resolution from the CofE General Synod on Trident replacement which (clause b) 'calls on Christian people to make an informed contribution to the issues raised in its report, "The future of Trident" in the light of Christian teaching about Just War and (clause c) suggest to Her Majesty's Government that the proposed upgrading of Trident is contrary to the spirit of the United Kingdom's obligations in international law and the ethical principles underpinning them'. There was no clear statement that nuclear weapons are inadmissible as their use would be immoral under the requirements of the just war tradition. Instead the issue is again presented as a matter of debate.

Nevertheless, there is a feeling in some quarters that the Churches are beginning to take a political stance which is anti-war. This has led to the charge of "functional pacifism" by Charles Reed in *Just war*, and several authors in *The price of peace*. The concern is that the bar of acceptability for the Just War is now being set too high.

Towards the abolition of war

A dynamic reworking of the Just War could be the road towards demilitarisation and the ultimate abolition of war. This would begin by recognising the seriousness of the threats outlined at the beginning of this article. Future wars will take place in a highly-stressed environment with declining natural resources. Consequently, they are likely to involve mainly non-combatant casualties and lead to unprecedented food shortages, disease and refugee migrations. There is also a real possibility that a conflict will escalate to nuclear war. (I have discussed the pacifist case against nuclear weapons in a chapter "The bomb is not a holy weapon of peace" in *Britain's bomb: what next?*, 2006

Against this background, one would expect to see a progressive tightening of the just war requirements, particularly 'proportionality' which would be applied rigorously to the war as a whole.

Just War and pacifism

The horizon where the pacifist and just war positions deviate is not reached until other possibilities of preventing war have been exhausted, so pacifists and non-pacifists have common interests in using the just war tradition to reduce the incidence of wars. Differences do exist, nevertheless, over the morality of maintaining an army (other than for policing purposes or, possibly, as part of an international peace-keeping capability). But, there is still substantial common ground here because the US and UK have excessive military budgets which could be reduced significantly. The UK has an annual military expenditure of \$59 billion, second only to the US with a massive \$528 billion according to the *SIPRI Yearbook 2007*. Both countries also have powerful military-industrial complexes and an extensive involvement in the global arms trade. All this raises serious questions about the extent of their commitment to the use of non-military means of conflict resolution .

And on pacifism *per se*

I am not going to argue the pacifist cause here but would like to make some general points about how pacifism is presented because it is relevant to the theme of this talk.

The difference between committed pacifists and adherents of the Just War is largely a matter of the personal interpretation of scripture and the emphasis placed on tradition and reason. The pacifist position is more consistent with scripture and the life of Jesus but it is seen as idealist by most Christians. (*Demanding peace* by A. E. Harvey (1999) provides a valuable analysis of the different Christian responses to war and violence.)

In my view the pacifist case would contribute more to the arguments set out in this paper if it is made as rationally as possible, even if this means admitting occasional scepticism about its value in specific circumstances. We may believe as Christian pacifists that love is the way to resolve international conflicts; but this does not mean that the use of military force will always fail and contribute more to the sum of human suffering than it prevents. The words of Jesus tell us how to live a good life but do not promise that good actions will always produce the best outcomes.

Admitting to the possibility that successful military action might occur, does not imply support for going to war. Besides the commitment to Jesus' message, there is the crucial issue of whether it is ever possible to judge the justness of a war beforehand. We also know from hindsight that few, if any wars have fully met the just war criteria, particularly *jus in bello*. Once a war begins, the end normally justifies the means however brutal they may be.

Redefinition of the just war doctrine – the next stage of the transatlantic dialogue

Difficult as this may be, the initiative of the transatlantic dialogue should now be developed with this aim in mind. This would involve discussion with all interested bodies.

Among the areas that require particular clarification and refinement are right authority and proportionality, including a tightening of the requirement to minimise non-combatant deaths. But of most significance is the issue of pre-emption. From a Christian perspective, one might accept the risk that an attack has to be made before any military action is taken. Whatever the case, to err on the right side on this matter would be a step forward.

In the context of a religious doctrine, the outcome needs to be more clearly underpinned by theological reflection - *The price of peace* is surprisingly thin on theology. Further discussion should not simply be a strategy which aims to provide national security at the expense of all other considerations. This issue turns on the willingness of Christians to sacrifice for others, often those in other countries far away.

Beyond this, there is a case for placing the just war tradition within the context of an ethical foreign policy. At the moment it is concerned essentially with the waging of war and does not cover associated military activities which can be equally dangerous and immoral. The main ones are as follows.

1. The incitement and potential fuelling of military conflict in other countries by the international sale of arms. There has been an almost 50% increase in the major conventional arms sales over the past four years. The UK and particularly the US are major players (SIPRI, 2007).
2. Clandestine involvement in military conflict by providing intelligence and support of mercenary soldiers.
3. Provocative action which threatens other nations and leads to an increase in global militarism, as, for example, the development of the US missile shield with bases in Eastern European countries.
4. Non-involvement with or reneging on international agreements to reduce armaments.

This proposition has parallels with points made by Mary Kaldor in *The price of peace*, where she argues that the whole language of Just War in the modern interconnected world usually needs to be replaced with that of "human security". We should be less concerned with fighting enemies than with providing a safer more secure world.

Furthermore, as the transatlantic dialogue has highlighted, it is important to do something about war endings. Once we have intervened militarily, even with positive consequences, there are bound to be negative consequences which have to be dealt with. These might well include the devastation of food production, the economy in ruins; and the people hungry and afraid with no effective authority.

So in a sense, this argument brings us full circle. The just war tradition developed as a means of justifying Christian involvement in war would evolve and bring us back through functional pacifism to a committed pacifism.

The fact that the argument for pacifism, or at least functional pacifism, can be made rationally does not detract from the Christian pacifist belief based on the teachings of Jesus. "To love one's enemies" is not a command without purpose and to reach it through a path of self-interest is unlikely to be a sin, particularly if the self interest in question is enlightened and extends to the whole of humanity.

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PEACEMAKING – HEART OF THE GOSPEL: AN URGENT CALL TO THE LAMBETH BISHOPS OF 2008

Pacifist (literally peacemaking) witness is integral to the Gospel and to the nature of the Church.

If the purpose of the church as the Body of Christ is to present the Gospel of Christ then its witness is weakened if it presents less than the full Gospel. In other words, the pacifist or peacemaking witness within the church is for the purpose of strengthening the church so that it may be faithful to Christ.

A holy movement in a holy church.

What is involved in this issue is the very meaning of the Christian Gospel and the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ. It is saying that a certain way of life is integral to the Gospel and this way of life entails an attitude of meeting and facing evil which is not only opposed to war but to many other worldly ways of doing things. Pacifism is only one facet of this way of life. If we reject pacifism or if we rely on worldly methods in this area of our lives, we are more vulnerable to accepting worldly methods in other areas. We have allowed a weakness to develop in our Christian armour, an inconsistency which will split and divide both our individual witness and that of the church to which we belong. The key concept is not one of political analysis but of faithfulness and holiness. Ormond Burton, founder of the Christian Pacifist Society in New Zealand, said of the pacifist witness that it was a “holy movement in a holy church.” In simple terms, by looking to Jesus we and the whole church reflect His glory and are salt and light to the world. The church if it is faithful to Christ speaks to the deepest needs of humankind.

Peacemaking and the present needs of humankind.

Peacemaking reveals the essential nature of God. What the Church has to offer is both the theology and practice of peacemaking. It could be said in the past that the church’s response to its calling of peacemaking has been massively faithless. This is because such a way of looking and working is as revolutionary now as it was in Jesus’ time, as counter-cultural and counter-intuitive. The church now has a chance to move forward from our earlier connections with the “establishment” be they national, cultural, colonial or ecclesial. Do we really conceive of God as vengeful or retributive? Do we believe that any violence is redemptive, that any wars are “just” even as “a last resort”? Do we deny the reality of structural violence, saying that sin and salvation are purely personal matters?

A new approach to resolving conflict.

Training and preparation in conflict resolution and in new ways of approaching old dilemmas are needed. The Dublin Action Agenda on the Prevention of Violent Conflict of 2004 concludes: “Historically, the emphasis has been on strengthening the institutional capacity for military response. The emphasis now needs to be on strengthening the institutional capacity for non-violent civilian response...Efforts to generate a sustainable culture of peace must be rooted deeply in the population... Education for peace is a fundamental element of this transformation.” The establishment of the National Peace and Conflict Studies Centre at the leading New Zealand university has been initiated for this purpose by members of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship.

TWELVE THEOLOGICAL REASONS FOR REAPPRAISAL

Let us now look at the close connection between the central beliefs of our faith and our vocation as peacemakers. In this process we will find both a reappraisal of current ways of thinking and a call to explore new methods. In other words, penitence and a call to action are inseparable.

1. The Scriptures

We believe that the New Testament through the teaching and example of Christ sets out a way of living in love and non-violence, a way which is foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Isaiah 53 – the suffering servant) and is incompatible with participation in modern war. As the Lambeth Conference has five times unanimously stated: “modern war as a means of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[For consideration: Old Testament role models of the Holy War and isolated texts used to justify our participation in war and war preparation.](#)

2. The Cross

We believe that Christ alone atones for our sins on the Cross, that he “made there by his one oblation of himself once offered a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” (Consecration prayer at Communion Service in 1662 Book of Common Prayer). In Christ alone is the forgiveness of sins, the facing and overcoming of evil, the reconciliation to God and to one another (Ephesians 2:13-18).

[For consideration: The myth of redemptive violence which believes that the power of military force is the only way to overcome evil.](#)

3. The Resurrection

We believe in the resurrection by which Christ’s victory over sin and death is assured and his way of love and non-violence is vindicated (Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:55).

For consideration: Our faithlessness in the power of divine love to overcome evil.

4. The Holy Spirit and prayer

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit which enables us to live a new life in the power of Christ's resurrection (Romans 8:14-17) and to claim his victory in our own lives (Romans 8:37-39) By prayer we hasten the breaking through of His kingdom on earth as in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

For consideration: The implications of claiming the power of the Spirit to change and to heal in the field of international conflict.

5. The Holy Communion and the commandment of love

At the Holy Communion we celebrate the New Covenant inaugurated by Christ who at the same time commanded his followers "As I have loved you, so you are to love one another." (John 13:34 and 1 Corinthians 11.25) . Those who commit themselves in faith to the victory of the cross have no choice but to live in terms of the new humanity (2 Corinthians 5:17), being prepared to take up their cross and follow in the same way as Christ (Matthew 16:24).

For consideration: Our receiving of the sacrament of His Body and Blood when we are in a spirit of hatred or unforgiveness both as individuals and corporately.

6. The love of God

We believe in the all embracing sovereign love of God for all humanity (John 3:16) We hold that the common factor in all humanity is our shared alienation from God. "None is righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10) We believe in our single new humanity in Christ which is beyond all differences in education, status, race or nation or sex or culture or ideology (Colossians 3:9-11).

For consideration: The extent to which we are (unconsciously) influenced by prevailing national, ideological, racial or cultural agenda which incite violence towards others.

7. The forgiveness of Christ

We believe that through the cross of Christ God's forgiveness is open to all and that we as members of the church are his instruments of healing and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Love and forgiveness of our enemies is the first step to reconciliation and to the resolution of conflict (Matthew 5:44)

For consideration: Our corporate acceptance of the way of revenge towards those who wrong us.

8. The principalities and the powers

We believe in the sovereignty of Christ over all powers and principalities, people and nations (Colossians 2:15) We acknowledge the power of corporate evil in the world which originates from the powers and principalities. The fear which drives nations to arm themselves against each other comes from this source. We believe that hatred and fear can only be overcome by the power of divine love exercised through prayer (2 Corinthians 10:4 and Ephesians 6:12)

For consideration: Our failure to recognise and to take corporate action in Christ against the power of corporate or national or systemic evil.

9. Speaking truth to power

We believe that all authority comes from God (John 19:11) and we believe in the prophetic power of the church to speak truth to those in authority so that they may better fulfil their role as God's servants (2 Samuel 12:7-15).

For consideration: Our avoidance of the prophetic ministry in our preoccupation with our own affairs or in our concern for public acceptance.

10. Seeking social and international justice

We believe that we as members of the Church are called to follow Christ in seeking justice (Luke 4:18). Nor is justice incompatible with peace (Ps 85:10-13) because it is based on the concept of shalom or peace which comes from right relationships in society. Justice, righteousness and shalom are close in meaning. The righteousness which Jesus gives (Romans 5:17) means the restoration of right relationships with God and with one another. Justice in the Christian sense therefore is seen in the restoration of relationships rather than in retribution.

For consideration: Our perception of justice as basically retributive in the area of international tension and conflict.

11. Peacemaking or resolving of conflict

We believe that the causes of conflict lie often in our own fallen nature (James 4:1-2) and there is wisdom needed in peacemaking (James 3:17-18). The recognition of wrong attitudes and actions on both sides will facilitate an honest assessment of the situation and help to set in place a fair long term solution.

For consideration: The exploration of the concept of peacemaking (bringing two sides together) as opposed to peace-keeping (keeping two sides apart by armed force) and the training of police and peace keeping forces in the methods of conflict resolution.

12. The care of the poor and the weak and underprivileged

As Christians (unlike Cain) we are called to be “our brother’s keeper” (Genesis 4:9-10). We and the nations to which we belong are also called to act justly (Amos 5:24, Ps. 41:1-2. 72:1-4) Hence the church world-wide is called to support the Millennium Development Goals set by the UN in 2000 and expected to be achieved by 2015. The cost of these goals is estimated at a small fraction of the money which the world’s nations (influenced by fear as in 8 above) spend on defence.

For consideration: The abolition of war and the arms trade as a concomitant goal with the MDG goals.

It is our prayer that the world-wide Anglican Communion by its rejection of what is incompatible with Christ and by its exploration of new ways of peacemaking may be more fully part of the Body of Christ and may more perfectly fulfil its mission to the world.

Written by the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship New Zealand Branch, Lent 2008 with acknowledgement to “Violence and the Gospel – an invitation to debate: Seven Reasons why War and Armed Violence are incompatible with the Christian Faith” nailed with permission to door of Canterbury Cathedral by APF 1978.