

Resources for Managing Value- Or Ideologically-Based Conflict in Congregations in a Post-September 11th World



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

A d v o c a c y a n d W i t n e s s P r o g r a m s

Congregational Advocacy and Witness
Washington Office for Advocacy

(617) 948-4607

(202) 296-4672

socialjustice@uua.org

www.uua.org/socialjustice

Compiled by Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

Much of the literature on congregational conflict is geared for resource-based conflict and conflicts around access to power. If identity-based conflict and conflicts rooted in radically different values or ideology is to be managed with minimal tension, a different lens and a different set of tools are required.

The following list of resources begin to address (a) identity-based and value-based conflicts (which are sometimes related); and to a lesser extent (b) content focused on the impending war with Iraq and other related aspects of "war" as defined by official Washington. While most of these resources are not designed specifically for faith-based groups, as a reminder of our religious values and heritage, it is suggested that leaders light a chalice and prepare words for centering and for closing.

ON-LINE RESOURCES

1. "Constructive Conversations about Challenging Times: A Guide to Community Dialogue," Watertown, MA Public Conversations Project, produced February 7, 2002, 44 pp. Download at <http://www.publicconversations.org> External Site Link. A process guide for facilitators who wish to convene a structured public dialogue on the state of the world since September 11, 2001. Includes brief discussion on the nature and benefits of dialogue, suggestions on how to organize a two-hour dialogue, basic facilitation skills, suggested agreements, and other helpful information. The Dialogue participants are asked to "speak from the heart and listen with appreciation and resilience-keeping their ears open even when they don't like what they hear." They are also asked to observe a set of guidelines "that foster an exploratory, respectful, and compassionate spirit." Though the initial suggested opening questions focused on the aftermath of the World Trade Center tragedy, the editors have recently added a set of starter questions for use in a dialogue about U.S. policy toward Iraq, which can be found at:

http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/resources/resource_detail.asp?ref_id=163. Also offers guidelines for replacing or adding to suggested questions.

2. "U.S. Policy Toward Iraq: What Should We Do? A guide for Public Dialogue and Problem Solving," Pomfret, CT, Study Circles Resource Center, October 1, 2002, 16 pp. Download at <http://www.studycircles.org/pages/issues/uspolicy.html> External Site Link. A 6-part process guide for a two and a half hour discussion about "the issues related to the current worldwide conversation regarding Iraq." Parts 1, 2 and 3 include: getting to know each other, setting the ground rules, and sharing our concerns and hopes. Parts 4 and 5 are keyed to a discussion of policy options developed by Choices for the 21st Century Educational Program at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies. Designed for high school students and teachers, but useful for adults as well. Includes links to related Choices resources, including: "Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy" and "Shifting Sands: Balancing U.S. Interests in the Middle East," and "Teaching with the News: Crisis in Iraq." Though these are designed for teachers, group facilitators may find them useful; each offers an overview, background reading, framework of policy options, and suggested five-day

lesson plan, which could be adapted for a single or multi-session discussion. Download at <http://www.choices.edu/>.

3. "Witnessing for Peace: Saying NO to a War on Iraq: Talking Points," Washington Office, Unitarian Universalist Association, Office of Advocacy and Witness, 4 pp. Includes highlights of two points: key issues in the promotion of disarmament without war, and alternatives to military action. Suitable for a group discussion, this resource includes five study questions. Download at <http://www.uua.org/news/2002/uuawo-talking-points-iraq-92002.pdf>. For statements of various public officials, activist and faith-based organizations, see <http://www.uua.org/news/2002/iraqresources.html>.

4. "Iraq Resource Guide," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia. Download at <http://www.afsc.org/iraq/guide/Default.shtm> External Site Link. Multi-linked site chock-full of helpful resources for dialogue or study. Most useful is a pamphlet, "Understanding the U.S.-Iraq Crisis: A Primer," by Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies, which includes the following subtitles: The U.S. Rush to War; The World's Response, the U.N. and International Law; The Consequences of War: Iraq and Beyond; The History of U.S. Iraq Relation; and Alternatives to War.

BOOKS

Process References

1. Dudley Weeks, *The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution*, (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Books, 1992), 285 pp. From a renowned professor of international relations (American University), this book is based on the hope that differences and conflicts can be dealt with in ways that nurture mutual development. Particularly valuable are chapters on the ingredients of conflict (including differing needs, perceptions, power dynamics, values and principles, feelings and emotions) and Appendix A, Handling Frequent Problem Areas (including dealing with anger, when one party thinks there is no conflict, feelings about confrontation, when one party may not want a resolution, dealing with people who only want things their way, dealing with conflicts involving injustices, dealing with seemingly unresolvable conflicts, and when to seek an outside facilitator.) The principles outlined are applicable to group conflict more than individual.

2. Jay Rothman, *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict* (in "Nations, Organizations, and Communities" (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 186 pp. The author provides a useful framework for understanding and transforming conflict that is rooted in cultural, religious, ethnic or social identity. The model addresses four of the major concepts in conflict management as they relate to identity: antagonism; resonance, invention, and action. The author has applied this method in the Arab-Israeli conflict and worked with Unitarian Universalists.

3. David B. Lott, *Conflict Management in Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2001), 163 pp. A primer on church-based conflict, this book includes essays by twelve contributors, many of whom are well-regarded consultants. The book explores the nature and dynamics of conflict, responding to conflict, and dealing with conflict in particular cultural contexts.

4. Richard S. Gilbert, *The Prophetic Imperative: Social Gospel in Theory and Practice* (Second Edition) (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2000). This book examines the "role of social justice work in our churches, exploring the connections between spirituality and social action and offering a historical review of our justice-making efforts." Includes a section (pp. 54-57) about social reformer and Unitarian minister John Haynes Holmes. When the nation was on the brink of two world wars, Holmes and the board of trustees of his congregation, the Church of the Messiah (now The Community Church of New York) held radically different positions. Also useful for discussions of the pros and cons of war is a chapter (pp. 133-149) on Congregational Mobilization for Justice that includes models of

congregational social responsibility, and discussions on the role of the church in social and political action.

Content References

1. John Howard Yoder, *When War Is Unjust* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 168 pp. A Mennonite theologian and pacifist, the author systematically explores ethical, historical, and theological questions: "Can any war really be considered "just"? If so, which wars, and under what circumstances? If not, why not?" (from the back cover). In addition to outlining the acceptable conditions that must be satisfied before a war is deemed "just" in traditional Christian theology, he offers a critical framework for evaluating these conditions, and "holds proponents [of just war theory] accountable." Includes detailed ethical questions from which to analyze the validity of any reasoned argument-whether by a pacifist or a crusading warmonger. Appendices include The Laws of War in Modern Treaties, and a bibliography on both just-war tradition and nonviolent defense alternatives.

2. Walter Wink (ed.), *Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 295 pp. "From Mahatma Gandhi to Dorothy Day to Thich Nhat Hanh, [this book] provides an indispensable collection of writings from the greatest peacemakers of our time" (from the back cover).

WAR ISSUES AND YOUTH: FOR PARENTS

Compiled by Jesse Jaeger, Youth Programs Director and Ethan Field, Youth Office Administrative Assistant

How Teens Prepare for War by Shepherd Smith
<http://www.youthdevelopment.org/articles/op090201.htm>

The Institute for Peace and Justice <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/>

The Institute for Peace and Justice (IPJ) is an independent, interfaith, nonprofit organization, begun in 1970 by Jim and Kathy McGinnis, as a response to the realities of war, racism and global economic injustice. We are committed to the challenge, "If you want peace, work for justice," by helping people find learn-able and doable alternatives that incorporate justice and reconciliation into an active quest for peace in their everyday lives.

Parenting for Peace and Justice Network (PPJN) is an interfaith, interracial, transnational association of families of all descriptions who see "Shalom" - well-being, wholeness, peace, justice - in our own living situations and in the broader community. We recognize that the well-being of our families is tied to the well-being of our global family and the earth itself. <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/PPJN--2dNEW.htm>

Families Against Violence Advocacy Network (FAVAN) is a broadly based network of organizations, families and individuals committed to violence prevention and the promotion of alternatives to violence in our families, schools, parishes, congregations, youth groups, colleges and prisons. <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/FAVAN--2dNEW.htm>

* Concerned about youth violence? Learn about our newest program, Teens Acting for Peace (TAP), to engage youth in working for alternatives to violence. <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/tap/index.html>

WAR ISSUES AND YOUTH: FOR YOUTH

Compiled by Jesse Jaeger, Youth Programs Director and Ethan Field, Youth Office Administrative Assistant

Facts on Military Service and Conscientious Objection
UUA Washington Office

Peace Games: Peacegames empowers students to create their own safe classrooms and communities by forming partnerships with elementary schools, families, and volunteers.
<http://www.peacegames.org/>

American Friends Service Committee - Peacework <http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org/>

Peacework is a monthly journal published since 1972 by the New England Regional Office of the AFSC. Originally it covered resistance to military conscription and war tax resistance, but after the war in Southeast Asia it branched out to coverage of other issues, from nuclear power to the freedom movement, from disarmament to economic justice, from simple living to community organizing. Today it covers the full range of "Global Thought and Local Action for Nonviolent Social Change," with a special focus on the northeastern United States.

Act Now to Stop War and End Racism
http://answer.pephost.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ANS_homepage

Excerpt:

FEBRUARY 13: Teach-ins, forums, and youth and student action on the 12th anniversary of the deliberate destruction of the Amariyah Bomb Shelter. On this day in 1991, the U.S. unleashed an unprecedented massive assault, a pinpoint attack by two precision missiles launched from a stealth bomber against an air raid shelter. Hundreds and hundreds of young people, mainly children, and some of their mothers, were incinerated in this calculated effort to terrorize the Iraqi people in the Gulf War.

HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITH A FAITH-BASED RESPONSE TO FEAR AND WAR

Compiled by Rev. Pat Hoertdoerfer, Children, Family and Intergenerational Programs Director

As a community of faith, we Unitarian Universalists covenant "to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; a free and responsible search for truth and meaning; the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large; the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." The foundations of our faith are based on the value of reason and the precept of love. In these difficult and uncertain times, we are called to implement these principles and live faithfully.

If you want peace, work for justice.

The UUA published a lifespan curriculum series in **Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program** (Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6, Junior High, Senior High, Adult) in the early 1990s. The rationale of this series linked peace and justice, each requiring the other. Although the adult, senior high, and junior programs are currently out of print, they are available from the UUA RE Loan Library and many district loan libraries. The two programs for children explore concepts of fairness, enemies/friends, conflict resolution, and earth stewardship and these curricula are available from the UUA Bookstore.

In the face of escalating violence, escalate love.

As intergenerational communities of faith the most important ingredient of help we provide is our presence with one another. Communication and respect are the guidelines. In the face of escalating words/acts of hate, anger, and revenge, we can escalate our willingness to listen and our words of kindness toward others. In our families we can LISTEN to the words and actions of children and youth; AFFIRM their feelings and worries; SHARE our mutual feelings and expressions of love; RESPOND through safe outlets of communication, play, and touch; ACT in collective ways through family prayers, UU educational forums and gatherings, and interfaith services.

www.uua.org/families for faith-based family resources and Family Matters Task Force endeavors.

Institute for Peace and Justice and Parenting for Peace and Justice Network External Site Link is an independent, interfaith educational organization. Their K-12 grade resources include Educating for Peace and Justice, Educating for a Just Society, Building Shalom Families, Families Against Violence Advocacy Network, and more. <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/>

Educators for Social Responsibility External Site Link offers comprehensive programs and K-12 grade resources on social and emotional learning, character education, conflict resolution, violence prevention and intergroup relations. <http://www.esrnational.org/>

Public Conversations Project External Site Link provides two guides for parents and leaders to help facilitate dialogue about our post-September 11th world. Their online resources are Constructive Conversations about Challenging Times: A Guide to Family Dialogue and Constructive Conversations about Challenging Times: A Guide to Community Dialogue. <http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/index.php>

YES! A Journal of Positive Futures External Site Link is an independent, nonprofit organization that supports people's active engagement in creating a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world. Two back issues #20 Can Love Save the World? (Winter 2001) and #21 What Does It Mean to Be an American? (Spring 2002) contain many thought-provoking essays and inspirational poems to enhance family discussions and intergenerational dialogue. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/>

Children's Defense Fund External Site Link has resources for talking with children about tragedy and violence as well as advocacy strategies for Leave No Child Behind legislation initiatives. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageServer>

Talking With Kids About Tough Issues External Site Link is a Web resource for parents and teachers to help facilitate communication and health around tough issues, such as the news, violence, crisis, and more. <http://www.talkingwithkids.org/>