

Peacemaking

UUA Congregational Study/Action Issue 2006-2010

Issue: Should the Unitarian Universalist Association reject the use of any and all kinds of violence and war to resolve disputes between peoples and nations and adopt a principle of seeking just peace through nonviolent means?

Background and Reasons for Study: As the human population has increased there has been a corresponding increase in contact between groups of people who were largely isolated from one another in the past. This contact, coupled with differences in politics, religions, moral values, and beliefs as well as economic injustices and competition for resources, have led to countless conflicts around the world. Humankind struggles to achieve peaceful coexistence economically, socially, politically, and spiritually.

Significance to Unitarian Universalism: Historically, Unitarian Universalists have agreed with the theory and practice of “just war,” or use of force in self-defense to preserve the life of another person. However, we have also supported peace and disarmament in over eighty resolutions since our merger in 1961. We offer counseling for conscientious objector status. We call on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi, the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Our principles are models for peacemaking yet we act as if violence is more effective than nonviolence in certain situations. As a religious denomination, we need to clarify our position and apply our covenant to affirm and promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Possible Study Questions:

- Should we, the Unitarian Universalist Association and member congregations, adopt a specific and detailed “just war” policy to guide our witness, advocacy, and social justice efforts?
- Should we, the Unitarian Universalist Association and member congregations, reject violence in any form?
- How should we, the Unitarian Universalist Association and member congregations, identify the form of humanitarian intervention we will support in a particular situation?
- How might globally cooperative institutions such as the United Nations create and maintain effective conditions for human rights, economic justice, religious tolerance, and sustainable environmental practices?
- How do we open our hearts and our congregations to divergent voices on this issue?
- What are the hallmarks of peaceful cultures?
- What role do human physiology and psychology play in the perpetuation of violence?
- What is the role of electronic media and their content in cultural violence?
- What successful models exist for the reduction of violence in situations of conflict?
- How can we promote peaceful coexistence and eliminate verbal, physical, psychological, and emotional abuse in civic, congregational, family, and personal life?
- To what extent, if any, do gun control or gun possession reduce violence?

Possible Actions:

- Develop and offer curricula on the theology and practice of mediation, peacemaking, nonviolence, and pacifism within our communities.
- Advocate for peacemaking initiatives at all levels of government.
- Advocate for more support from the United States of America for the United Nations in its work of international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance.
- Participate in nonviolent actions to promote peace including protest, public objection, civil disobedience, non-cooperation, witness, mediation, conflict resolution, and dialogue.
- Support the work of affiliated and associated organizations of the Unitarian Universalist Association involved in peacemaking, economic justice, human rights, interfaith cooperation, partnership building, conflict resolution, and disarmament.
- Join in the worldwide observance of A Season for Nonviolence.
- Honor and support the challenges of military and law enforcement personnel and their families.

Related Prior Social Witness Statements: Beyond Religious Tolerance: The Challenge of Interfaith Cooperation (SOC 1999); Establishment of the U.S. Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution (Gen 1983); Sharing in the New Call to Peacemaking (Gen 1979); and Disarmament (Gen 1970).