

UU Peacemaking Congregational Study Action Program - Small Group Session Plan

Session 3 - Building a Culture of Peace

Chalice/Candle Lighting

Opening Words:

We can no longer afford to confuse peaceability with passivity. Authentic peace is no more passive than war. Like war, it calls for discipline and intelligence and strength of character, though it calls also for higher principles and aims. If we are serious about peace, then we must work for it as ardently, seriously, continuously, carefully, and bravely as we now prepare for war.

-- Wendell Berry

Check-in/Sharing

Discussion (brief readings are attached that can be read aloud for each question):

- A) **From your experience, what do you believe causes violence (physical, emotional, and institutional) in our society?**
- B) **What strategies or programs do you believe would be effective in preventing violence and building a culture of peace within communities?**
- C) **What are specific ways that you or your congregation could help create a 'culture of peace' in your community?**

Select the topic and location for the next meeting

Check out/Likes and Wishes

Closing Words:

Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds. Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.

Let us be aware of the source of being, common to us all and to all living things.

Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion – towards ourselves and toward all living beings.

Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other.

With humility, with awareness of the existence of life, and of the sufferings that are going on around us, let us practice the establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth.

Thich N'hat Hanh, in *Singing the Living Tradition*, #505

Closing Ritual/Extinguish Chalice

Prepared by Judy Morgan of the Peacemaking CSAI Core Team, February 2007

OPTIONAL READINGS FOR DISCUSSION

Question A:

Researchers have found that violence is linked with a variety of economic, family, and community factors. For example, a fact sheet on youth violence, from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, lists the following as correlated with violent behavior.

Individual Risk Factors

- History of violent victimization or involvement, violence within the family
- Attention deficits, hyperactivity, or learning disorders
- Involvement with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco
- Low IQ, poor behavioral control
- High emotional distress

Family Risk Factors

- Authoritarian childrearing attitudes
- Harsh, lax, or inconsistent disciplinary practices
- Low parental involvement
- Low parental education and income, lack of employment
- Parental substance abuse or criminality

Community Risk Factors

- Diminished economic opportunities
- High concentrations of poor residents
- High level of transiency and family disruption
- Socially disorganized neighborhoods, lack of sense of community

Adapted from: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/yvfacts.htm

Question B:

Blueprints for Violence Prevention is a federally funded project at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado whose purpose is to identify effective models of violence prevention. Following are some approaches that have been found to be successful:

- New mothers in communities with high levels of violence receive regular visits from trained nurse educators, starting in the mother's pregnancy through the first two years of the child's life, to provide: good basic health education, information on infants' developmental needs, training in parenting and communication skills, conflict resolution training.
- Programs are provided for schoolchildren teaching conflict resolution, communication, and other cognitive and emotional skills that give them improved understanding of emotions, increased ability to tolerate frustration, decreased anxiety, decreased behavioral problems.
- Interventions are provided for families of violent children, to teach better parenting and communication skills, assist with substance abuse problems and employment, and to establish ongoing support from the community (churches, mental health groups, etc.).

Adapted from: www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/index.html

Question C: The following is from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Culture of Peace program:

...the Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation ... For peace and non-violence to prevail, we need to:

foster a culture of peace through education

promote sustainable economic and social development

promote respect for all human rights

foster democratic participation

advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity

support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge

promote international peace and security

From: www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_sum_cp.htm