

## UU Peacemaking Congregational Study Action Program - Small Group Session Plan

### *Session 1 - Peacemaking Concepts and Definitions: An Introduction*

#### Chalice/Candle Lighting

##### Opening Words:

"I found one day in school a boy of medium size ill-treating a smaller boy. I expostulated, but he replied: 'The bigs hit me, so I hit the babies; that's fair.' In these words he epitomized the history of the human race."  
--- Bertrand Russell, *Education and the Social Order*

"Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. the foundation of such a method is love" --- Martin Luther King, Jr., in *Singing the Living Tradition*, #584

#### Check-in/Sharing

##### Discussion questions:

A) **What are examples of everyday violence and peacemaking that you have experienced?**

Following are definitions that some have developed for violence and peacemaking, which could be used for this discussion:

**Violence:** That which causes harm - physically, psychologically, or through economic and social systems (such as through institutionalized racism and classism).

**Peacemaking:** The process of building trust, harmony, collaboration, mutual security, mutual understanding of differences, where there might otherwise be divergence and conflict.

B) **To what extent do you believe conflict and violence are caused by human nature and human physiology and to what extent are they socially created?**

C) **When do you believe violence or war are justified? Do you believe a world without war is possible?**

#### Select the topic and location for the next meeting

#### Check out/Likes and Wishes

**Closing Words:** A human being is part of the whole, called by us the 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. [All of us] experience [ourselves], [our] thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest--a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.-- Albert Einstein

#### Extinguish chalice/candle

*Prepared by Larry Shafer of the Peacemaking CSAI Core Team, February 2007*

## OPTIONAL READINGS FOR DISCUSSION:

### Question A:

Emotional or physical violence is often a response to perceived threat – to our sense of self-worth and social status as well as physical survival. We are certainly threatened when someone attacks us physically. We may also feel threatened by the perception that someone else is trying to get the promotion we want, that someone on a church committee is trying to dominate with their agenda, that someone we admire is seeming to snub us. Perceived threats can bring up psychologically violent responses – resentment, hostility, judgmentalness, avoidance – as well as inclinations toward physical violence.

– *Judy Morgan, PCSAI Core Team*

The inner-city riots of the 1960's brought community, business, education, labor and government leaders together out of a concern over high drop-out and unemployment rates among Philadelphia's youth. From this union was born the Academy Model for school reform. As a result of the success of the Academy Model, Philadelphia, business leaders commissioned a study to evaluate how the City might further benefit from this successful education model. Today the Academy Model is flourishing with enrollment at approximately 8,000 students. --- *History page for non-profit Philadelphia Academies, Inc. website*

### Question B:

In the early 1960s, a rising star of primatology, Irvan DeVore, of Harvard University, published the first general overview of the subject. In this work, the savanna baboon became, literally, a textbook example of life in an aggressive, highly stratified, male-dominated society. Yet within a few years, members of the species in this Forest Troop had demonstrated enough behavioral plasticity to transform a society of theirs into a baboon utopia. Among humans...Sweden spent the seventeenth century rampaging through Europe, yet it is now an icon of nurturing tranquility. Humans ... lack the type of physiology or anatomy that in other mammals determine their mating system, and have come up with societies based on monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry. And we have fashioned some religions in which violent acts are the entrée to paradise and other religions in which the same acts consign one to hell. Is a world of peacefully coexisting human Forest Troops possible? Anyone who says, "No, it is beyond our nature," knows too little about primates, including ourselves.

-- *Robert M. Sapolsky "A Natural History of Peace" in Foreign Affairs, January/February 2006, at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20060101faessay85110-p0/robert-m-sapolsky/a-natural-history-of-peace.html>*

### Question C:

Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty. – *2002 U.S. National Security Strategy*

We conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed ... Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors. Just as 'wars begin in the minds of men', peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

--- *Statement of International Panel of UNESCO Scientists, Seville, 16 May 1986 (subsequently adopted by UNESCO at the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference on 16 November 1989)*