

Just War and Pacifism in Our Lives

IMPORTANT NOTE:

These Small Group Ministry (SMG) topics are a bit different from the ones with which you are most familiar.

Right away you'll notice that they are more educational, and contain more material (to be read in advance) than most SGM topics. We included this material as a matter of accessibility --- to provide everyone with a common language base regardless of their background, knowledge base, or access to libraries.

The questions these topics ask may also require more than one SGM meeting to complete. This may not be new to many of you (we've heard about the "Mothers" topic taking six sessions!) We encourage you to take your time and not to rush the material or the topics.

We also invite you to create a question or discussion surrounding current events. This balance between peace and violence is ages old. And it will continue to be relevant for years to come.

It is intended that this workshop could be completed with a small group--such as other of our Small Group Ministry topics, or with a large group—such as a congregational project.

We also invite you to change the name of the workshop as you feel fits the mood of your community. We, the planners, have found it difficult to express the tensions of Just War and Pacifism as it plays in our society. Other titles we offer for you include:

Sustainable Peace, Enduring Security
Common Goals, Different Tactics
Balancing Peace

In the style of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) we ask these queries before we begin. These are questions. Not rhetorical in nature, but not intended to be answered in the conversation either. These questions are meant to guide our conversation and thought process as we explore these difficult discussions together. These are questions for you to privately meditate on and reflect upon the answers.

1. What brought you here today to talk about peace?
2. What would make the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) a "Peace Church"? Why would we want to become one?
3. What does it mean to promote peace in the 21st Century?

Chalice Lighting

Opening Words:

Do you know what astonished me most in the world? The inability of force to create anything. In the long run the sword is always beaten by the spirit. Soldiers usually win battles and generals get the credit for them. You must not fight too often with one enemy, or you will teach him all your art of war. If they want peace, nations should avoid the pin-pricks that precede cannon shots.

-- Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse.

-- John Stewart Mill (1806-1873)

Check-in

Opening Discussion and Exercise:

As we have explored the topics of Just War, Pacifism and Just Peace, we may see that none of these topics are easy. We may find ourselves drawn to pacifism at one point and just war at another. When we explore how these theories play into our lives, we see that Just War and Pacifism are not polar opposites. Instead, we see them on different sides of a spectrum. And we feel pulls from either end every day. This exercise—known as a power shuffle—will allow us to see how these theories play out in our daily lives. Please see attached file called “power shuffle”.

Further Discussion:

1. Please read over the worksheets on Just War, Pacifism and Strategic Peacemaking. **What does it mean to act on our convictions of peace and security? How do our feelings about Just War and Pacifism interplay in our lives? Do they pull on each other?**
2. In the past, a church required an explicit testimony toward peace, nonviolence, and good works in order to be considered a Peace Church. Some examples of traditional Peace Churches include the Society of Friends (Quakers), Church of the Brethren and the Mennonites. Many branches of Buddhism and Hinduism can be included as peace traditions. **How close does this definition put the UUA toward being a Peace Church? Does the Unitarian Universalist Church have a peace testament? Our sixth principle is “The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all”, what does it mean to work toward this goal?**
3. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and its sibling organization, the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) work diligently to end all wars and the tools of warmaking as well as easing the tensions of inequity, and yet, they recognize the occasional need for international peacekeeping and policing. The Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) sends young people in the world to support organizations that ease suffering in the world. **What does it mean to be a Peace Church today? Do these actions add to the service of the Peace Church or stem from it? What about progressive religious traditions that do not uphold a universal peace testament and yet have service organizations?**

4. Sometimes, we see non-violence can only be upheld by a violent, outside source that protects the movement. For instance, National Guard Troops protecting the Little Rock Nine. UN Peacekeeping troops protecting protestors in Cyprus are a similar example.

What can we learn from examples like this? Is there a role for violence, or the threat of violence, in the search for peace?

5. As we act as political citizens, which issues do we hold dear when considering our candidates? As people of faith, our moral integrity will often guide our decisions. On the issues of peace and security, what are we looking for in our politicians? What experience do we want to uphold? **If it our duty, as UU's, to be a powerful presence for justice—how does that look?**

Closing Words:

We, Veteran's for Peace, view peace as a positively active and creative process which requires courage, commitment, endurance, vigilance, and integrity. Peace is a struggle toward unity, and it is characterized by an absence of violence in all its forms, including discrimination based on gender, age, race, religion, social and economic status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Those who labor for peace are called peacemakers because they tirelessly pursue nonviolent solutions, work for economic and social justice, celebrate diversity, and strive to build relationships between adversaries through education, conflict mediation, and humanitarian relief. We recognize that peace is both a means and end simultaneously, and that it is never finally or fully achieved. This is because change and growth require some degree of tension or conflict. Historically, such conflict has provided the impetus for military solutions. Thus we, Veteran's for Peace, strongly believe that the greatest obstacle to peace is militarism with its reliance on violence and war. We further believe that peacekeeping action should only be accomplished by a legitimate international body.

-- Committee to Define Peace, Veterans for Peace

Worksheet on Just War, Pacifism and Strategic Peacebuilding

Just War-

Just War (*justum bellum*), as we know it today, is a theory and tradition from the early Christian philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas. However, there is evidence of a “warrior’s code” in almost every pre/non-Christian culture. In Aquinas’s work, *Summa Theologicae*, he attempts to justify the use of force that the early Holy Roman Empire used. While he acknowledges that war is unholy, there are times in which the use of war is just in order to retain peace.

There are two overarching themes in Just War- Justice in War (*Jus in Bello*) and Justice of War (*jus ad bellum*). The former refers to the rules of fair conduct by soldiers and leaders. And the latter refers to how wars are waged in a fair way.

Many scholars agree that the following points are the “equation” that makes a Just War.

Just cause

The reason for going to war needs to be just and can therefore be recapturing things taken or punishing people who have done wrong. A contemporary view of just cause was expressed in 1993 when the US Catholic Conference said: "*Force may be used only to correct a grave, public evil, i.e., aggression or massive violation of the basic human rights of whole populations.*"

Comparative justice

While there may be rights and wrongs on all sides of a conflict, to override the presumption against the use of force, the injustice suffered by one party must significantly outweigh that suffered by the other. Theorists such as Brian Orend omit this term, seeing it as fertile ground for exploitation by bellicose regimes.

Legitimate authority

Only duly constituted public authorities may use deadly force or wage war

Right intention

Force may be used only in a truly just cause and solely for that purpose—correcting a suffered wrong is considered a right intention, while material gain or maintaining economies is not.

Probability of success

Arms may not be used in a futile cause or in a case where disproportionate measures are required to achieve success;

Last resort

Force may be used only after all peaceful and viable alternatives have been seriously tried and exhausted.

Much thanks to the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* for information on Just War Theory. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/j/justwar.htm> For more information on Just War Theory from a UU perspective, please see <http://uua.org/peacemaking>

Pacifism-

Pacifism is the political and behavioral system of rejecting violence in all of its forms. Considering violence is found in direct, structural and societal forms, pacifism is more than just the rejection of military participation.

There is no one movement toward pacifism. Pacifists hold this structure for a variety of reasons; which may be spiritual, political, or psychological in nature. And while it is a historical movement, the nature of pacifism has changed over the years.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, pacifism comes from a simple commandment of “Thou Shalt Not Kill”. Jesus, later added to the commandment with “do not do unto others as you would expect they should do unto you.”- Also known as the ethic of reciprocity. Many Christians have taken their pacifism from the example of Jesus, who died on the cross without any resistance. Most notably in the Christian tradition, many denominations such as the Society of Friends (Quaker), Church of the Brethren and the Anabaptists (Mennonites) have taken a long tradition of pacifism in their daily lives.

In Hindu, Buddhist and other East Asian traditions, pacifism comes out of the holiness of all living beings. The destruction of life is not only the destruction of the divine, but also creates bad karma, which could offset one’s path toward enlightenment.

Modern pacifism takes much from the author, Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy, a Christian Pacifist, wrote many essays, stories and novels about the futility of war and violence. His work on non-violent resistance inspired many including Mahatma Gandhi, Dorothy Day and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

While traditionally, pacifism originally meant non-compliance with a military state, the definition has changed. Pacifists still reject participation in the military and war. However, rejection of violence has grown to also include rejection of racism, sexism, homophobia and institutions that uphold inequality of individuals and groups.

Today, many pacifists are not merely conscientious objectors (non-military personnel), but also vegetarians or vegans, anti-racist allies, advocates for survivors of violence, war tax resisters, and actively imagine new forms of government, economy and community.

Some critiques of pacifism involve the amount of abject privilege it takes in order to be a pacifist. Critics claim it is “easy” to be a pacifist when there is no violence being committed toward the pacifist. Critics also claim that pacifism allows greater injustices—such as genocide—to be preformed by lack of action from the pacifists.

Many pacifists respond by saying their way of life is not an opt-out of a violent society, but rather an opt-into a non-violent society. If all people participated in pacifism, there would be no need for retaliation or self-defense.

Strategic Peacebuilding-

Strategic Peacebuilding is an approach that incorporates both the pacifist commitment to seek peace at all times, and the acknowledgment from just war theory that in extremely rare cases the use of force is needed to protect innocent lives. It asserts that war and violence are always preventable if the groundwork has been done to build a culture of peace, a culture that addresses the needs for understanding, justice, and mutual respect that, if unmet, would otherwise lead to violence.

History and Rationale for Strategic Peacebuilding

From the Friends Conference on National Legislation (*If War is Not the Answer, What Is?*, available at http://www.fcnl.org/issues/int/sup/ppdc_booklet.htm):

The international community, along with peace and conflict scholars, began to develop the concept of peaceful prevention of deadly conflict in the early 1990s. The failures of the global community to effectively prevent the genocide in Rwanda, mass killings in Srebrenica, and humanitarian crises in Somalia and elsewhere pushed many to search for a new approach to managing conflict in the post-Cold War world. The publishing of the report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict in 1998, followed three years later by the release of the Secretary-General's *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict* and the report *Responsibility to Protect* by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty marked important steps in the development of peaceful prevention.

In 2001, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for the development of new capacities within national governments, multilateral regional organizations, civil society, and the UN to undertake genuinely preventive actions in all stages of conflict--from latent tensions to hot wars to post-conflict peacebuilding. Such actions include developing early warning systems and enhanced preventive diplomacy capacities, strengthening international law and good governance, reducing the proliferation of weapons and protecting human rights, supporting sustainable development and the fair distribution of resources, ending poverty, tackling HIV/AIDS and other public health crises, reducing ethnic tensions, building strong institutions of global civil society, and ensuring basic human security for all the world's people.

In July 2003 the UN General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution in which Member States, including the U.S., committed to working towards the prevention of armed conflict, and laid out the roles of states, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector in preventing armed conflict.

As health professionals and firefighters have already learned, early prevention is more effective and more efficient than late response. Preventing conflict from erupting into violence saves lives in the short-term and enhances security in the long-term. It is also less expensive than responding to crises after they have erupted and rebuilding shattered communities. Peaceful prevention frees up resources that can be used to meet basic

human needs. Its benefits extend beyond any single state's borders. One country's armed conflict can result in economic destabilization and undermine human security for an entire region. At the same time, successful prevention of violent conflict in a country can contribute to the stability and resilience of the surrounding region. Communities and societies with the capacity to peacefully manage conflict can often better address other issues such as economic development, human rights, and political stability.

Just War and Pacifism Power Shuffle

It is the intention of this exercise for participants to actively think about the ways pacifism and just war play into our daily lives. As complex people living in a complex world, we can no longer allow false dichotomies rule our thinking. With this exercise, we will see how each of us, as individuals and a collective, think about issues of war and peace, security and responsibility to protect.

Many people have participated with Power Shuffles before. This one has a twist. Rather than plotting oneself on a simple, one dimensional spectrum, this one adds another dimension in order to explore the different reasons why people think they way they do.

To prepare the space for this event- Use either a breakout room or clearing the furniture from the middle of the room you are currently in. Using tape, create a big cross (XY Axis) in the middle of the room. This divides the room into four quadrants. On opposite ends of the X axis, place signs that say “Agree” and “Disagree” respectively. On opposite ends of the Y axis, place signs that say “Moral/Spiritual” and “Intellectual/Political”.

Invite participants to plot themselves onto the quadrants according to their responses to the statements given below. For instance, if one strongly Agrees with a statement for Moral or Spiritual Reasons, the participant would plot herself closer to those signs. But another participant could strongly Disagree for Political or Intellectual reasons. And she would plot herself closer to those signs. While another may find herself drawn somewhere toward the middle because she slightly Agrees for both Intellectual and Spiritual Reasons.

Invite participants to note their location on the grid along with the locations of the other participants. Please allow time and space for people with mobility issues to move about the room or participate with their own comfort level (possibly by plotting their mark on a piece of paper or a chalkboard).

Statements-

I am a pacifist.

I think international diplomacy should always come first.

Some people only understand violence or force.

Conflict is a natural part of living.

People should express their frustrations more.

Environmental degradation is an acceptable byproduct of saving people.

Some people are better suited for war.

Peace can be “too expensive”.

War is inevitable.

We should stop people from joining the military.

A more equitable economy could prevent war.

The situation in Darfur requires government policing.

Some wars have made the world a better place.

I would go to war if it meant protecting my friends and family.