

Military Ministry Workshop 3

Handout 4: Peacemaking

This handout is from the UUA Tapestry of Faith program [Resistance and Transformation](#): Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History, [Workshop 5](#).

The 2006-2010 Study/Action Issue for the Unitarian Universalist Association asks the question: "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?" This Study/Action Issue was proposed as an effort to develop an alternative to both just war theory and pacifism. As the Unitarian Universalist theologian Paul Rasor writes, "we should avoid getting caught up in a debate between just war and pacifism." Unitarian Universalist ethicist Sharon Welch agrees and suggests that "a third way" exists that includes "joint efforts to prevent war, stop genocide, and repair the damage caused by armed conflict."

Welch calls this third way peacemaking and Rasor describes it as prophetic nonviolence. Whatever its label, the strategy seeks to "move beyond old divisions and adopt a position that integrates critical elements from both traditions." Welch identifies the third way as having three components:

- Peacekeeping — early intervention to stop genocide and prevent large-scale war.
- Peacemaking — bringing hostile parties to agreement, negotiating equitable and sustainable peace agreements that include attention to the pressing need for post-conflict restoration and reconciliation.
- Peacebuilding — the creation of long-term structures for redressing injustice and resolving ongoing conflict as well as addressing the root causes of armed conflict, economic exploitation, and political marginalization.

This third way calls for the use of violence only as a last resort. It draws some of its inspiration from earlier Unitarian and Universalist thinkers such as William Ellery Channing and Adin Ballou. Channing advocated 19th-century versions of just war theory and observed that "peace without can come only with peace within." Ballou's pacifism was deeply nuanced; he advocated for the use of "uninjurious force" in cases of self-defense or to protect society from violent criminals.

Peacemaking or prophetic nonviolence seeks to position itself as an alternative to both just war theory and pacifism. It is a relatively new theory, and one to which Unitarian Universalists are making an important contribution. Whether it is able to provide an alternative path and help bring stability and peace to our planet remains to be seen.