

Called to be Peacemakers

Action Guide

With so much violence and conflict in the world it is easy to feel that there is little that we can do. However it is important that we do not fall victim to a feeling of helplessness or hopelessness as we realise that violence seems to be at the heart of our culture. As Walter Wink puts it, “Our task is not to save the world. God alone can do that. Our task ... is to witness to the freedom of human life from the power of death, the threat of death and the fear of death.” In other words we need to truly believe that swords *will* be beaten into ploughshares, everyone *will* sit beneath their vine and fig-tree (Micah 4: 3-4), that God’s promise of peace and economic justice will be fulfilled.



If we respond to the call to be peacemakers we need to believe – and *act* out that belief. As a nation, we need to accept that our peace and security is best served, not by superiority of arms or a place at the high table of the United Nations Security Council, but by ensuring that everyone (and not just those who live within *our* borders) lives in justice and peace. For us as individuals it means speaking out for and sticking by nonviolent solutions in times of international crisis, even when there may not be a clear and obvious nonviolent answer at the time.

In this action guide, we look briefly at how to begin to take action for peace and justice in our world.

Peacemakers Petition

Enclosed with the *Called to be Peacemakers* pack you will find a petition calling on the government to be a positive force for human security in the world. Specifically, the petition calls on the government to end its support for the arms trade, reduce military spending and

withdraw support for the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) programme.

Why not ask family, friends or colleagues to sign the petition, or put it up on a noticeboard at church or college to collect signatures?

Ten Top Ways to Work for Peace

►1. Pray

Whilst to the secular world, praying for peace is seen as a waste of time, the reality is that it enables us to connect with the spirit of peace at a deep level, renewing and sustaining our efforts to build the kingdom. Why not organise a service for peace at your local Church?

►2. Educate yourself

It's easy to feel helpless and hopeless in the face of war and conflict. One way to counter this is to become better informed. See page two. Why not sign up for FoR's regular News email? (See back page)

►3. Join a local group

Where two or three are joined together... ! Working together in groups in local towns, cities, universities etc. enables us to have a much bigger impact.

Be Informed

To counter any feelings of helplessness about the amount of war and conflict in the world, a good first step is to try to be better informed. There are many organisations working on peace and conflict issues that produce a wide range of excellent, well researched and informative material (see panel right). Why not contact them and ask to go on their mailing list?

Pass it on!

Others in your church community will also be looking for information. Why not try to have a display in your Church on peace and conflict issues. This could be updated with material from the organisations mentioned above. It could also be used in connection with regular prayers for peace.

<p>●</p> <p>Fellowship of Reconciliation Eirene Centre Clopton, Kettering NN14 3DZ 01832 720257 office@for.org.uk www.for.org.uk</p>	<p>●</p> <p>Pax Christi St Joseph's Watford Way London NW4 4TY www.paxchristi.org.uk 020 8203 4884 paxchristi@gn.apc.org</p>	<p>●</p> <p>Anglican Pacifist Fellowship 11 Weavers End Hanslope. Milton Keynes MK19 7PA 01908 510642 www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk</p>
<p>●</p> <p>Church and Peace 20 The Drive Hertford SG14 3DF 01992 416442 www.church-and-peace.org</p>	<p>●</p> <p>Christian CND 162 Holloway Rd London N7 8DQ 020 7700 4200 ccnd@gn.apc.org www.cnduk.org.uk</p>	<p>●</p> <p>Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) 11 Goodwin St London N4 3HQ 020 7281 0297 enquires@caat.org.uk www.caat.org.uk</p>

Also see Network of Christian Peace Organisations website:
www.ncpo.org.uk

Raise Awareness

There are many ways of raising awareness about an issue—from TV adverts to hand-written notices on lampposts. Here we concentrate on just three—organising a public meeting, using the local media and running a street stall.

Holding a meeting

Whilst to many people the thought of organising a meeting on peace and conflict is a daunting task, with careful planning and preparation you could have a highly successful event and raise awareness about what is happening around the world. The most important elements of a good public meeting are a central venue, a good speaker, and lots of publicity.

FoR is always ready and willing to provide a speaker and can also help with publicity—for instance by letting other people in the area know about the event. It will also be worth informing other groups in the area—such as Amnesty International, WDM, Oxfam etc. about the event so they can help publicise the meeting. Also, don't forget to let the local press know that the meeting will be taking place.

Stalls

Street stalls or after-church stalls are a really important way to reach out to people about peace issues such as the arms trade. All that is required are some basic materials such as leaflets, petitions and

posters, together with a fold up table and you are pretty much in business.

Using the local media

Most local newspapers will be willing to publicise a local meeting about peace or come and take a photo of a stall.

In addition there always seem to be stories about cuts to services in our local newspapers. Why not write a letter about the amount of public money used to subsidise the arms trade or used for military spending, suggesting that the money would be better spent on improving local health or social services ?

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Lobby Government

Without a doubt, if we want to work for peace and reconciliation, we have to persuade the government to pro-actively support nonviolent resolution to international political problems as well as withdrawing support for increasing military spending and the arms trade.

Writing letters

It is estimated that every handwritten letter received by a politician represents about 80 people who care but haven't got around to writing.

That is why politicians take notice of letters.

The best way to have influence through letter writing is to write to your own MP asking them to raise the issue with the relevant Minister. That way your MP becomes aware of the issues as well as the Minister. By convention, a letter forwarded by an MP to a Minister must receive a Ministerial reply. Some tips for writing to your MP include:

- ▶ Be polite and concise—try to keep to one side of paper.
- ▶ Write in your own words. Don't just copy the text from somewhere else—make it personal.
- ▶ Don't forget to ask for a reply!

One way to multiply pressure upon the government is to encourage lots of people to write in—you could set up a stall with papers, envelopes and stamps—either after a church service, in your local

town centre, or at a festival.

Meeting your MP

A step further than writing to your MP is arranging for a small group to go and visit and lobby him or



her. For this it is important to be prepared and it is always worth contacting the FoR office so we can discuss what you may want to talk to your MP about.

Tips for visiting your MP include:

- ▶ don't just turn up. Give plenty of notice;
- ▶ a group of about 4-6 people is probably a good size—you will be able to have a good discussion without it being too intimidating;
- ▶ know your subject—contact FoR before you go to be well briefed.

Don't forget to follow up the meeting with a letter of thanks and let the FoR office know how the meeting went.

▶4. Investments

Money talks. Make sure that any money you or your church has, is invested ethically. This includes the funds of any institution that you are connected with such as your local authority, university etc.

▶5. Talk about it

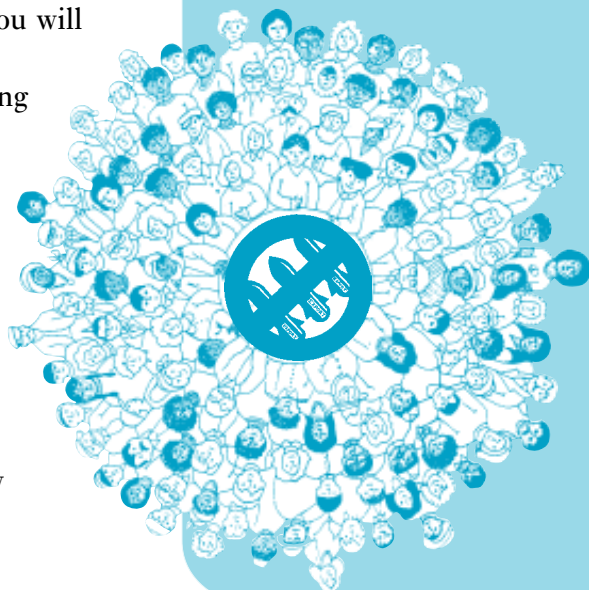
The Good News of the Peace of Christ needs spreading. One-to-one conversations are far and away the ones that have the most lasting impact.

▶6. Support national campaigns

The UK's peace organisations and their campaigns need our support (and not just our money). Get involved!

▶7. Organise a discussion in your Church/youth group.

There are plenty of people who will be willing to come and kick start a discussion about peace and peacemaking. Contact FoR for ideas and details.



Every day is a good day for peacemaking

.... but it can be useful to tie your efforts – whether it be a meeting, a service for peace or collecting signatures on a petition – to a particular day. Some useful dates are:

27 Jan	Holocaust Memorial Day
1st March	Landmines and Cluster Weapons Day
15 May	International Conscientious Objectors Day
4 June	UN Day for Child Victims of War
6-12 June	Arms Trade Week of Action
6 Aug	Hiroshima Day
21 Sept	Peace One Day
12-19 Oct	Week of Prayer for World Peace
20 Nov	Universal Children's Day
10 Dec	Human Rights Day
28 Dec	Holy Innocents Day

Online Resources

NEWS SOURCES

One World News:	www.oneworld.net
Indymedia	www.indymedia.org.uk
Project Ploughshares	www.ploughshares.ca

EVENTS

Network For Peace:	www.networkforpeace.org.uk
Peace Exchange:	www.quaker.org.uk/peace/exchg/peaceact.html

MISC

Nonviolence.org:	www.nonviolence.org
International FoR:	www.ifor.org.uk
USA FoR:	www.forusa.org

Keep in Touch: Sign up for FoR's Email Bulletin

If you would like to receive our monthly email news bulletin, simply send an email with subject 'subscribe' to:

emailnews@for.org.uk

►8. Visions of Peace

Art can inspire and touch us on many levels. Communicating the message of peace is not restricted to words alone. Organise an art exhibition around the theme of peace and conflict. Don't forget to invite the media

►9. Organise a peace service

Get people together to reflect and pray for peace in your church. You can use some of the prayers and resources in our worship guide.

►10. Raise your voice

Speak out against war and war-making. Commit yourself to nonviolence and speak up for alternatives to war and nonviolent solutions to conflicts. Make a call to the local radio phone-in programme.



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