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Initial Statement Towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace

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World Council of Churches
Decade to Overcome Violence

**GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH
INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL PEACE CONVOCATION**

**Kingston, Jamaica
17 – 25 May 2011**

**Initial Statement
Towards an
Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace**

GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH

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GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH

MEDITATIVE INTRODUCTION:

1. The motto of the *International Ecumenical Peace Convocation* and this *Initial Statement towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace* is from Luke's Gospel. Shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem are the first to hear:

*"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, and this will be the sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men." (2:10-14)*¹

Why this motto?

2. It is often said that religions are accomplices to the violence that plagues our world. Therefore, we would be better off without them. We in the World Council of Churches, however, are convinced that the God who speaks to us through this baby lying in a manger is the foundation of everything we can say and do about overcoming violence and promoting peace in and with the earth.

3. We are aware of the fact that throughout its history Christianity has been involved in many acts and forms of violence. Therefore, everything that we say on the following pages is said in the spirit of repentance. What we express here is directed to our churches as much as it is directed to all readers of good will.

4. In the Gospel, angels are needed to tell us the good news that God has entered the world of humans in the form of an utterly dependant child, born to parents on the margin of the Roman Empire. This message goes against the human inclination to identify God with the powerful. It is a decisively different story: God enters the vicious circles of violence and greed, dependence and misery from below. Good news indeed. The Hebrew word "Immanuel" says it succinctly: God is with us, a gracious, forgiving, healing reality in our midst. God's grace, greater than human sin, God's compassion, deeper than human pride and despair. We can face our world in truth, love and hope.

5. The Christmas story in Luke 2 has become so familiar that we sometimes overlook its political relevance. In verse 1 it begins with a reference to the Emperor Augustus and it ends, in Verse 21, with the naming of the Saviour: Jesus. Hence the "oikoumene" of the Roman Empire is the violent reality against which the "oikoumene" of the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:5) is set. Here we see the perennial tension between the peace of God and the "pax romana" – and all the "peace-dictates" of imperial powers up to this day. We look at the life of Jesus, his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead and affirm: This is the alternative to the powers of the world.

6. The angel's song puts the emphasis on the earth as the location of peace, so as to indicate that the curse that was placed on the earth because of Adam's sin is lifted (Gen 3:17-19). We believe that Christ, the "second Adam", opens up new ways of dealing with the earth. Our salvation cannot be separated from the wellbeing of creation. This is the horizon for the churches' peace-building ministries. We wish to affirm this in the face of the dangerous realities of climate change, nuclear threats and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor.

7. The first word of the angel is: "Be not afraid!" These simple words occur again as the Risen Christ meets his fearful and dispirited disciples (Mt 28:10). We, too, are fearful people in fearsome times. We need to be embraced, encouraged and comforted. We pray for the peace of Christ Jesus to fill us from within. We want to be part of Christian communities which understand themselves as places of confidence and joy, truth and solidarity, forgiveness and healing.

¹ Here and in all quotes that follow the Revised Standard Version (RSV) is used.

PREAMBLE

Witnessing to Peace in a Violent World

8. At the end of the Decade to Overcome Violence, we find ourselves at a special moment, a *kairos* of grace. We wish to take stock at this time to reflect upon where this journey of struggling to overcome violence and to enable the churches to contribute to genuine cultures of peace has come: how the events in history have spoken to us, and how we as churches have worked to respond to them.

Events of History: Calling Us to Build Peace

9. God speaks to humanity in diverse ways (cf. Heb 1:1). The Word of God has come to us through the Scriptures and within the churches. But God also speaks to us in the events of history, bidding us to repent of our sinfulness and seeking a deeper conversion to Christ. We believe that events in the past two decades have been such a call to renew our commitment to the *shalom* of God for which so many people in our time cry out.

- With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the end of the Cold War between East and West that followed, it seemed as though a new era of peace and understanding might be upon us. At the same time, it reminded us of the damage to human beings and to society that forty years of repression and of threatened nuclear confrontation had wreaked upon the human family. The euphoria was soon replaced by an upsurge of intra-state violence in Europe, Africa, and Asia.
- The 1992 Year of Indigenous Peoples, declared by the United Nations, brought forward the plight of indigenous peoples, especially in Australia, New Zealand and the Americas. The deep wounds of half a millennium of colonialism and even genocide were impressed upon the consciousness of the world.
- Also in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development sent a worldwide signal in its concluding Declaration about the growing ecological crisis and the consequences of climate change for the planet. Thus began the mobilization of national governments to look seriously at carbon emissions and other factors of human origin damaging the environment irreparably.
- The Beijing Conference in the 1994 UN Year of the Woman brought to world attention the pervasive violence against women and children, both domestic violence and international trafficking and abuse in the workplace.
- 1994 was also the year when apartheid ended as the national policy of South Africa. On the one hand, it showed the triumph of non-violent action over a violent regime. On the other, it impressed upon South Africans and indeed the world the challenges of building a new and just society.
- The genocide in Rwanda that same year showed how a few weeks of murderous frenzy could wipe out decades of development work, calling into question the policies of relief and development agencies, both religious and secular.
- By the turn of the twenty-first century, the negative outcomes of globalization became ever more evident in the disruption of families by migration, the effects of economic dislocation, the globalization of crime and the glorification of violence in the media.

The Churches Respond: The Decade to Overcome Violence

10. All of these events pressed home the insight that peace and human well-being do not just happen: they require the grace of God and human cooperation with that divine gift. To be sure the Churches were already more than aware of the consequences of some of these events. Already in 1975 at the World Council of Churches' General Assembly in Nairobi, the issue of sustainability in view of environmental degradation had been sounded; the commitment to a "Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" was made already in 1983, long before the theme came to the wider attention of the rest of the world. The Vancouver commitment led to the Seoul Convocation in 1990 which formulated key affirmations and suggestions. In the 1990s, gatherings of churches and of church people at local and regional levels were exploring a wide range of themes around peace, peacemaking, and reconciliation. The notion of "just peace," going beyond the "just war" concept long associated with Christianity, became a guiding concept in many churches.

11. A significant step was made at the eighth assembly of the WCC in Harare in 1998, when delegates voted to establish The Decade to Overcome Violence. A Reference Group was assembled to guide the process, although all programme units of the WCC were involved. This led to a variety of activities in different parts of the world. The different manifestations of violence came into focus. Special attention was given to peace in families, in the marketplace and workplace, in the social and political sphere, in the virtual world, and with creation itself. Consultations were held about aspects of peacemaking, such as forgiveness, the healing of memories, the responsibility to protect, peace with creation, and others. Delegates at the ninth assembly in Porto Alegre in 2006 voted to conclude the Decade in 2011 with an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation. They also decided that an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace be elaborated and brought to the 2011 Convocation for discussion and action..

12. It is that moment in time we are now approaching. We believe it to be a *kairos* moment. It is a *kairos* moment because we see the world in which we live reaching a critical moment. Movements and forces that have threatened the further existence of our world from our immediate past are still very much with us, such as nuclear arms and the yawning gap between rich and poor. The emerging world food crisis and the acceleration of environmental degradation must now be added to that list. What makes this a critical time is the *interconnectedness* and *convergence* of all these deadly threats. The experiences and learnings of the Decade to Overcome Violence and the growing awareness of the critical convergence of destabilizing forces to our world have brought the churches to a new place as they consider how to carry out the ministry given to them by Christ to be servants and ambassadors of God's peace and reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20). Just Peace, for example, can no longer simply be a counterweight to Just War. What justice and what peace entail take on more comprehensive meanings in the face of all these interconnected and destabilizing forces on the one hand, and the need for an all-encompassing and seamless vision of God's peace with and for Creation on the other. The very fact that in the first decade of the twenty-first century two of the annual Nobel Peace Prizes were awarded for addressing issues of the environment is indicative of how peace and the integrity of creation are now inextricably bound up with each other. This Initial Statement is an attempt to consider how the churches need to understand peace at this *kairos* of converging and contending forces, and where discipleship calls them to commit themselves in the coming years.

Chapter 1

THE GOD OF PEACE AND THE PEACE OF GOD

13. When we join in the angelic exaltation in the Luke's Gospel, saying „Glory to God and peace on earth”, what does this mean in our violent contemporary world? Who is this God of Peace? And what is the peace this God is offering? Both the concept of God and the concept of God's peace are not self-evident or understood in the same way by all. Conflicts and violence are often perpetrated by people who believe in God and claim to be acting in the name of God and in the name of peace. Crusades and colonial and neo-colonial projects have been at different times carried out in the name of God. Realizing how much our own failings have tainted our understanding of God and God's peace, we need to turn to the Scriptures to listen again to the Word of God.

Key Biblical Concepts of Peace

14. In the Hebrew Scriptures *shalom* means „completeness, soundness, welfare, peace. “*Shalom* is a broad concept, embracing justice (*mishpat*), mercy, rightness (*tsedeq*) or righteousness (*tsedeqah*), compassion (*hesed*), and truthfulness (*emet*) all together. There is no peace without justice. But justice (*mishpat*) is not only about fair judgment and rectitude; it is also about giving what is right and just to the afflicted. Therefore, peace (*shalom*) is the effect of righteousness, and the practice of truth and justice. It is a condition where God leads nations to settle their conflicts and beat their swords into ploughshares (Micah 4:3; Isa 2:4). Ultimately, it is a condition where „the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them“ (Isa 11:6).

15. The Hebrew word shares linguistic roots with the Aramaic and Akkadian words *salamu*, and the Arabic *salaam*, which means „to have enough, to equalize“. These words share the literal meaning of being faultless, healthy, and complete. Broadly, *shalom* means wholeness and well being; it means safety, prosperity, and freedom from strife and political weal. It is about a holistic view of human security, a condition where one is able to live a healthy life, sleep soundly, enjoy one's children, and die serenely after a life lived to the fullest. The concept of *shalom* is inclusive of individual and communal peace. It encompasses the well being of human beings and the earth, the fullness of humanity's social relations and humanity's connectedness with the earth. The Hebrew Scriptures are clear in their understanding that peace is lost when illnesses, injustices, poverty, conflict, violence, and wars inflict wounds on the bodies and souls of human beings, on society and on the earth. But peace is more than the absence of conflict, as it is sometimes understood today. The absence of conflict and war does not exhaust the meaning of *shalom*.

16. The Hebrew concept of *shalom* is related to the Arabic notion of *islam*, which means submission of oneself to God. Seen in this light, peace can only be achieved by opening one's self to God's will and purpose. The Hebrew Scriptures give us the understanding that all peace is of God, and the wholeness of human life includes obedience to God who is just, merciful and righteous. Peace, therefore, is the fruit of righteousness and practice of justice. It is the effect of an upright life and faithfulness to God.

17. This comprehensive meaning of *shalom* is carried over into the New Testament and expressed with the classical Greek word *eirene*. Peace is God's gift, God's blessing. Prosperity and well-being are understood as outward, though by no means exclusive, signs of God's favour. They are regarded to be results of God's commandment to be just, merciful and righteous. (Thus, this is very different from the „Prosperity Gospel“ preached in some churches wherein prosperity is understood in terms of material wealth and financial success.) The Bible is very clear about the dangers of material riches (see f. i. Mt 6:19-21.24 and 1 Tim 6:7-10) and underlines that God's law is tested by the ability of leaders and of peoples to demonstrate just actions to build peace.

18. In the New Testament, Jesus himself is the source of peace. His life reveals the Spirit of Peace, a peace that the world cannot give. This peace he bestows upon his disciples: „Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid“ (Jn 14:27-28). The peace that Jesus is and gives is a central feature of the kingdom (*basileia*) which manifests itself in all forms of peace both in daily life and in the messianic fulfilment (Jn 14:27; 2 Thess 3:16). The peace of Jesus makes it possible to overcome enmity and division (Eph 2:14-16), for it is a peace that has come through the blood of his cross (Col 1:20). Through his death, Jesus has overcome the very sources of enmity, making it possible for all creation to be brought together in unity through him and to be reconciled to God (Eph 1:10; Col 1:16.19-20).

Peace and the *oikos* or Household of God

19. There can be no other setting of humanity's efforts for building peace than this world. The world is God's household or *oikos*. *Oikos* is a term that includes the habitation for all people; the affairs, relationships and common cause of the people in that *oikos*, as well as their dwelling place, their properties and environment (Eph 2:19-22). The members of the *oikos* have the basic responsibility of working for the good of all people (Gal 6:10). In the ancient Greek world, *oikoumene* was understood to refer to the whole world as an administrative unit and, for some time, was equated with the Roman Empire (Lk 2:1). Yet, for the followers of Jesus, it was understood to be the community of faith „built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone“ (Eph 2:20). It is the „church of the living God“ (1 Tim 3:15, 1 Peter 4:17). The church, however, does not exhaust the meaning of *oikoumene*. In a broader sense, the New Testament writers understood *oikoumene* as the earth and all of its inhabitants (Lk 2:10; 4:5; Acts 17:30-31). Seen in this way, the church is inevitably intertwined with the world, since each human being within the *oikos* is connected with the *oikos* of the church and the *oikos* of the world.

20. Peace and peace-building are important dimensions of life together in the household of God. If each is to live in harmony with the other, and all are to experience well being as fruits of living in truth, justice and peace in the household, then all must participate in the process of peace-building, spiritual strengthening and edification (*oikodome*). Each is called to be a builder of the house (*oikodomos*), building up and strengthening the *oikoumene* by helping each member to live responsibly and effectively. An *oikodomos* is a peace-builder, one who strives to make the community of faith a sign of healing and justice in the world, who renders service to bring healing, restore wellness and wholeness to the whole household of God (Rom 14:19, Lk 12:42f). The process of healing requires dismantling of cultures of abuse and violence. Jesus demonstrated through his life the work of such an *oikodomos*. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and comforted the lonely. He restored sight to the blind, and gave voice to those who could not speak.

21. Peace is God's gift to humanity. It both sustains history and leads history to its fulfilment. To have peace means enjoying God's gift of the fullness of life, security, and liberty (Ezek 34:25-31). God invites the people of God to come and be present in the places where peace is needed, to extend there the household of God. They are invited to be God's agents and to mediate situations of conflict, to give courage to the weary, and to comfort the suffering (Mt 5:4; 2 Cor 1:3f). One is sustained in this task if one remains steadfast in faith, and submits to the guidance and help of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26). Indeed, it is the promise of the Holy Spirit and the pouring out of grace upon us that keeps us in hope that manifests to us God's presence in settings where God seems to be absent. There the eschatological horizon of peace is revealed, drawing us in hope forward to a time when „God will be all in all“ (1 Cor 15:28).

O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to your church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts. Amen.

The God of Peace Revealed as the Holy Trinity

22. Who is this God who is revealed in the gift of peace? In the Hebrew Scriptures this God of Peace is revealed to us as a God of truthfulness, justice and mercy (Deut 32:4; Ps 145:17). In the New Testament, this is the God who sent the Word into the world (Jn 1:14), and the Holy Spirit for the strengthening and the guiding of Jesus' disciples (Jn 14:26). The early Church came to see this in a new and beautiful way: God as the Holy Trinity. The Mystery of God as the Trinity is simultaneously the Mystery of the all embracing reality of God. The eternal and dynamic co-inherence (in Greek: *perichoresis*) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, reveals on the one hand the all-pervading unity of the divine. This all-pervading unity of the divine is also on the other hand a unity with and within diversity, the eternal One in Three and the Three in One.

23. This also reveals the nature of creation: Creation is a seamless whole within its diversities, within the all-embracing *energeia* (the outward movements of the Trinity) that are designed to reveal in a sacramental manner the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The harmony and beauty of created existence, manifested through its diverse dynamisms, cannot therefore be detached from the all-embracing Trinitarian Reality of the God of Peace.

24. God and creation are thus not set at infinite distance from each other. Rather they are in profound relationship with each other, as the differences within the beauty of creation mirror the

perichoresis or co-inherence of the Three Persons that are the Trinity. It is that encircling, mutual, embracing set of relationships between them that reveals to us the reality of God - creating and sustaining, healing and redeeming, bringing to fulfilment and reconciliation in peace.

25. The *oikos* of the world and of the Church, the *oikoumene* of God's design and purpose therefore, are not arbitrary constructs. The *oikos* finds its meaning and purpose in the Trinitarian *perichoresis*, an embrace of love, peace, and beauty. Building peace is our participation toward that *perichoresis*, that eternal dance. Therefore, peace-building is not just about repairing what has been broken, but about expanding and completing relationships that make the *oikos* the mirror of the Trinity.

26. What does this tell us, then, about God, about peace, and about ourselves?

- That God is Triune reveals a commitment to communion, to the fullness (*pleroma*) of creation, and the difference and diversity of creation.
- God is at once a God of peace and justice, of mercy and truthfulness, all of which are in profound embrace (Ps 85:10-14).
- Peace is an embrace of all creation. Our relations with God, with one another, and with the earth are not bonds of contract or arbitrary choice. They are the bonds of love.
- The refusal of creatures to enter that embrace brings forth God's wrath - an anger that flows from God's steadfast commitment, and God's desire to sway the hard-hearted back to justice and love.
- The Word has entered our world, knows our brokenness, embraces our vulnerability, and is reconciling all things in himself (Col 1:19-20).
- Christ is our peace (Eph 2:14), who in his own flesh has made us one with one another and with himself.
- As created in the image of God, we have the potential to bring peace and overcome violence. As created in the likeness of God, we are called to mediate and build up God's reconciliation and peace.
- „Glory to God“ and „Peace on earth“ are held together in cruciform fashion - emblematic of the cross of Christ that stands as a sign of our reconciliation with God (the vertical beam) and with all creation (the horizontal beam). Ascending praise is answered by descending peace. Glory to God (*doxa*) is only revealed in the building (*praxis*) of peace.

Human Beings – Earthlings in God's Image

27. Together with our ancestors-in-the-faith we believe that every human being is created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27). After bringing forth all other creatures on the earth, God created humankind from the soil (*ha adamah*) and breathed life into it (Gen 2:7). All human beings embody this tension: They are created in God's image and at the same time earthlings - indeed the last of all the earthlings to be made. Made from dust and earth, they share in the vulnerability and mortality of all living things. At the same time they participate in God's life, gifted with freedom and endowed with the calling to participate in God's creating and sustaining work, cultivating life with other creatures for the flourishing of all. Thus they are made to build a just and peaceful world, in the likeness of God whose work is peace and in close solidarity with the earth and all of creation.

The Mystery of Evil and the Perversities of the Human Heart - Faces of Violence

28. However, the human propensity to turn away from God - what we call sin - reaches back to the very beginning. There is this perplexing estrangement from the Creator - the mystery of evil - that manifests itself in shame and guilt, accusation and lies, refusal of communication and murder, cheating and revenge, fear and anxiety, desire and rape, plundering and looting. All these are indications of humanity having lost their original image and distorted their primordial calling. With this evil propensity the many forms of violence have entered our world.

Violence and the Reality of Trespassing

29. Basically, violence is a violation of limits, a trespassing into the space each living thing rightfully requires for the unfolding and fulfilment of its *raison d'être*. It is thus the violation of integrity and harmony of the myriad relationships by which the fabric of creation is sustained.

30. Violence has untold expressions. At the personal level the most gruesome forms are intentional humiliation and hurt, sexual abuse, rape and murder, abandonment and starvation. At the level of societies and nations violence is experienced in acts of war and terrorism - including the „war

on terror“ -, in the grim realities of millions of displaced people and refugees, in children being forced into soldiering and prostitution, in farmers committing suicide because of unmanageable debts.

31. Violence also expresses itself in the violating of the diversities of the natural world, in the reckless exploitation of common goods such as drinking water and fossil fuels, the felling of forests, the overfishing of the seas and oceans, the careless disposal of waste, and the death of birth itself - the extinction of species.

32. In such and many other ways the perversities of the human heart play themselves out in and under economic globalization, ethnocentrism and cultural exclusivism. An insatiable consumerist life-style contributes to the uprooting of indigenous cultures. The impact of former adjustments policies and the pressures to enter into inequitable trade agreements further the accumulating of debts and the destabilizing of national and regional autonomies. The links between the militarization of the world's economies and the spreading of extremely violent and pornographic entertainment products are alarming and contribute to what must be called „structural“ or „systemic“ violence.

33. Furthermore, there is need to address what can be called „habitual“ violence. This refers to abuses of power which have become habitual or customary, such as taking the gifts of nature for granted or treating human beings as “resource material“ and „objects“ of desire. Habitual violence is also reflected in the attitude that accepts wars as „natural“ or in the belief of many victims, especially women, that abuses toward them are unavoidable.

Abusing our Powers

34. The ubiquitous and subtle forms of violence can also be expressed by referring to the abuses of power. Generally speaking, power is the strength or energy with which each living organism affirms and claims its existence. All parents know how rigorously a baby, utterly dependent though it is, is capable of crying out for the attention it needs for its growth! This basic power turns into violence when it goes over and against the realm of power of other creatures or in those instances where a necessary sharing of power is withheld.

35. More precisely, we can speak of the power that human beings have „over“ other persons and things. This capacity can take the form of maturity in the handling of relationships, but it can also turn into an abuse whenever this power over others becomes oppressive, demeaning and murderous.

36. We can also speak of the power „with“ other persons and objects. This is the energy with which we can create and sustain communication with others, offer help and provide care. This „power with“ turns into violence whenever we begin to dominate others or wherever we consciously withdraw from others and withhold our sustenance. Love denied is a subtle expression of violence!

37. Related to this is our „power for“ others. This is expressed in our capacity to empower others. It becomes violent when and where we create situations and structures of dependency and repression or when and where we overuse the powers of others by withholding our own.

38. This way of speaking of power „over“, „with“ and „for“ others applies equally well to the personal, social, economic and political levels. At all these, forms of power can have a useful and even redemptive meaning, but can also exert its damaging and indeed perverting might.

Forms and Structures of Enmity

39. Another way of addressing the realities of violence is to look at the forms and structures of enmity that pervade, and cut through, our lives. These „dividing walls of hostility“ (Eph 2:14), whether visible or invisible, keep people from sharing the cosmic good. Structures of enmity describe the fact that the fabric of society is woven with conflicting interests and deep-seated divisions. They have at their basis imbalances of power and irresponsible uses of power which turn an Irish Protestant against an Irish Catholic, Hindus against Muslims, Muslims against Christians, Palestinians against Israelis, Hutu against Tutsis and so on. No soul is immune from this enmity. No zone is enemy-free. We are all on someone's enemy list.

40. Earth, too, can be treated as though it were an enemy. In recent decades we have grown keenly aware that cumulative abuses of human power have placed nature's welfare in jeopardy. Nature's own requirements for its own renewal and regeneration on its own terms and time-lines have been subordinated to excessive human demands. Earth has been treated as though its treasures were the spoils of an unending war.

41. Sometimes these structures of enmity are seen but often they are not. In many cases the realisation of such walls of division is avoided and their impact denied. People in one part of society live in a different world from those in another. Mutual exposures are being avoided, and therefore the differences between the guilty and the innocent, the perpetrators and the victims do not seem to matter much. The air, the water can be poisoned, bombs can be dropped, children can be turned into soldiers and prostitutes without wider sectors of humanity caring to look.

42. Under these circumstances, the old question appears more urgent than ever: Can there be an effective ethic for the overcoming of these manifold enmities? Can there be peace across all these deep divides? Or to sharpen these questions, as Jesus did, are we not commanded to love the enemy as the only way to shalom and a new creation? When great oceans and high mountain ranges no longer put anyone or anything out of reach and destruction can be wrapped up in small packages and delivered at an instant, it certainly seems so.

43. Troubled by what we see in and around us, we turn to the Bible, the foundation of our faith, and to the witness of our ancestors in the faith. They have shown us the glory of God embodied in the Child of Bethlehem. In Jesus we discover the messianic witness. „...he is our peace who has made us one“ (Eph 2:14). It is in the light of this liberating alternative that we see the profound predicament in which humanity finds itself. On the one hand we do not wish to overlook the admirable efforts of so many women and men who work for peace in families and homes, who bring respect, uprightness and dignity to schools and universities, factory shops and government offices and who work diligently for creative solutions to illnesses, social injustices and ecological disasters. On the other, however, we are faced with a world at the brink of ecological catastrophe, with warfare over the access to shrinking resources such as drinking water and fossil fuel, with half of the earth's people in shocking poverty. Above all, the threat of an all-out nuclear disaster is still with us.

44. Where does the Church stand in all of this? It cannot pretend not to be seriously affected; for indeed all the abuses to which we have referred are also to be found within Christian communities. Some among us are inclined to see this predicament as an indication of the end-times referred to in the apocalyptic writings of the New Testament. Therefore, they tend to resort to the message that nothing can and should be done about these „tribulations“; for they are part of God's design for the ending of world history. Rather, they extort their followers to put all their hope in the coming Christ and the new creation that is to come once the old one has been done away with.

45. In contrast to this view this Statement wants to emphasize the inseparable connectedness of creation and salvation. The peace of God can not be severed from peace on earth and with the earth. It is to the service of this profound unity that the discipleship of the Church Universal is called, to take the side of the poor and the powerless, to witness to the truth, even when it puts our lives at stake, and to be communities and agents of healing and salvation.

Question:

Can you agree with this account of the Biblical sources, the Trinitarian conclusions and the reflections on human sin and the nature of violence?

Chapter 2

In the Name of Christ: The Churches as Communities and Agents of Peace building

"O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us; remember the fruits we have brought, thanks to this suffering - our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this, and when they come to judgment, let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness."

This prayer by an unknown prisoner in the concentration camp near Ravensbruck/Germany was left beside the body of a dead child.

The Nature and Mission of the Church

"The Church is the communion of those who, by means of their encounter with the Word, stand in a living relationship with God, who speaks to them and calls forth their trustful response; it is the communion of the faithful" (§10).²

46. The Church is a gift from God, who has sent the Son and the Spirit among us. As such, it is a divine reality, a creation of both the Word and the Spirit (§11, §13). Made up of finite persons who are sinful and redeemed, it is a human reality as well. The New Testament does not give us a systematic theology of the Church, but offers up a host of metaphors and images that try to evoke the reality of the Church, at once both earthly and transcendent. Among the most striking images are the Church as the People of God, the "People of the Way" on the move through history toward history's consummation of all things in Christ; as the Body of Christ, the living presence of the Word among us; as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, where the holiness of God dwells on earth; and as communion, mirroring the communion of the Persons in the Holy Trinity (§19-24).

47. As a creation of the Word and the Spirit, the Church participates in their mission to bring all creation into communion with the Triune God. "The Church exists...to serve the reconciliation of humankind" (§33). "The Church is called to heal and reconcile broken relationships and to be God's instrument in the reconciliation of human division in the world" (§40).

48. The Church is "sign and instrument of God's intention and plan for the whole world" (§43). It is meant to be a prophetic sign, pointing beyond itself to the *missio Dei*, to what God is doing in the world. As an instrument of God, the Church exercises a ministry of reconciliation that has been entrusted to it by God in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:18). At the same time the Church is also *mysterion* or sacrament—a sacrament of the world in holding up the eschatological hope that manifests God's reconciling design for the world, and a sacrament of the divine presence and mission in the world as the Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit.

49. We saw in Chapter 1 that the Church is also the house or *oikos* of God, where the harmonious relations between the Persons of the Trinity are to be mirrored in the relations that should prevail among all members of the Church. Christians are keenly aware how far they often are from realizing this communion with one another and with the Trinity. Yet that acute awareness of how they have fallen short should lead them to repentance and to seeking anew God's energizing grace to draw closer to that destiny to which they are called.

The Vocation and Ministry of Peace-building in the Churches

50. Peace is a gift of God. The churches' responding to that gift reveals their vocation to be peace-builders in the *missio Dei*. As sign, instrument and sacrament of God's intention and plan for the world, one can see different dimensions of the peace-building vocation of the churches.

51. At the same time, the churches have often mistaken their participation in the reconciling *missio Dei* for a narrow ecclesiocentric agenda of aggressive proselytizing and an arrogant destruction of cultures. Arrogance here needs to be replaced with repentance, and with a refocusing upon what God is doing in the world rather than on what the immediate benefit to the churches might appear to be.

² Faith and Order Commission, "The Nature and Mission of the Church. A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement" (Faith and Order Papers no. 198; published in 2005). Paragraph references hereafter in this section are to this document.

The Church as Sacrament of Peace

52. At its most fundamental level, the Church is a sacrament. That sacramental character is centred in its being a sacrament of the Trinity: the Creator's sending the Word and the Spirit into the World, and God's reconciling the world through Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit. This fundamental fact is represented and re-presented in the liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist. The liturgy is an act of memory of what God has already done for us in Christ's Incarnation, life, death and resurrection. It is also the window on the eschatological hope of the bringing together of all things in Christ that has been promised to us. This ritual act - where sin is confessed and forgiven, where God's Word is once again heard, where praise of God recalls God's great works, where the needs and the suffering of the present are commended to God, and where the Great Thanksgiving is enacted and shared in the banquet of Christ's presence in our midst - this ritual action draws us back into the Trinitarian life itself, that Life which is the beginning and end of true peace. In the Divine Liturgy as celebrated by the Orthodox churches, peace is named („the peace from on high“, „peace for the whole world“) and extended to one another again and again. The sharing or passing of the peace is a common ritual feature in many of the Churches. And the injunction to go forth from the Eucharist in the peace of God is a mandate to carry God's peace into the world. So the Eucharistic benediction of the Syrian Orthodox Church says: "Go in peace, our brethren and our beloved ones, as we commend you to the grace and mercy of the Holy and glorious Trinity, with the provisions and blessings which you have received from the altar of the Lord." This carrying forth of God's peace into the world is what Orthodox theologians have called „the liturgy after the liturgy“ and Roman Catholic theologians „the liturgy of the world“. Such expressions remind us that the liturgy and the world are not separate entities. They are both enfolded in God's design for creation.

53. The liturgy, then, is the source and font of peace from which the Church lives, and which it in turn seeks to extend into the world. Indeed, the only peace that it can offer is that peace that has been given to it in trust by God. The mystery of peace - in both senses of the term „mystery“ as at once surpassing our understanding (Phil 4:7) and a *mysterion* that leads us along a pathway of transformation and illumination - is what the Church is enjoined to transmit to the world, despite all the Church's shortcomings and failures to do this adequately.

54. The sacramental character of that peace - a manifestation of peace that points not to itself, but to the peace that emanates from the loving relationships of the Persons of the Trinity - is to be lived out in the lives of individuals, in families, and in communities. Its manifestation in all those

places is always limited and subject to the perversities of the human heart but, as imperfect as it may be, it is offered to others and to the world as an invitation to enter into the peace of God.

55. That the Church is a sacrament of God's peace is the source of its being able to be a prophetic sign and instrument of God's peace in the world.

[The Churches as Prophetic Sign in Peace-building](#)

56. As a prophetic sign, the churches are called to speak out against injustice and to advocate peace. In the denunciation of injustice, in the solidarity with those who are oppressed, and in the accompaniment of victims, the churches participate in the *missio Dei* of mending the world and bringing it toward the "new creation" of the reconciled (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). By preaching Christ crucified and risen, they show the pathway through rejection and suffering to transformation in the newness of life. How the churches choose to live in the world, and where they draw the line in the face of violence is part of that prophetic witness. Here the historic peace churches play a particularly important role. Refusing to condone violence, and following a way of non-violence indicate how Christians are to respond to a world replete with violence. Jesus met his own violent death with non-violence, and his way remains the model for Christians to follow in overcoming violence.

57. To be a prophetic sign of peace in a violent world takes commitment, courage and consistency. These are virtues that the churches have not always displayed in the face of violence. Here the churches must confess their sin if they are to be credible vessels of the prophetic message of peace. Churches have at times allied themselves so closely with violent policies that they have legitimated them. When the churches have embraced the banner of nationalism or ethnicity and have blessed the oppression and extermination of "enemies", they have wandered away from their true purposes. When they have adopted violent apocalyptic beliefs that legitimate violence as a way of cleansing the world or as a purported instrument of the wrath of God, they have betrayed the vocation God has given them. When they have casually turned away from suffering, either to seek or protect their own prosperity or not to get "involved", they are like those who left the wounded man in the ditch (Lk 10:31-32). And the very disunity on central elements of identity within the churches themselves - such as witness to the sacraments - has undermined the churches' credibility to others as true signs of peace. Churches must be ready constantly to examine their actions - and their inaction - in the vocation of peace-building to see if they can serve as credible voices for God's work in the world. They must repent and seek forgiveness, not only to make themselves worthy vessels of God's work but also, as a prophetic sign, of what wrongdoers must come to do as well if they are to enter God's Reign. To that end, the service or *diakonia* of the churches must show the disinterestedness in self, the willingness to embrace vulnerability, and the unwavering commitment to the poor and marginalized that marked the ministry of Christ. It is in such *diakonia* that the churches' witness as prophetic sign of the peace of God gains credibility.

[The Churches as Instruments of Peace-building](#)

58. The churches are also called to be instruments of God's purposes in the world. That calls them to very concrete actions in the service of peace-building. In the medieval Western church, the just war theory was developed as a way of trying to curb the predatory activity of a warrior class. Proclaiming the "Peace of God" ("Treuga Dei") as days on which fighting could not take place was another way of containing violence. The understanding of the church building as sanctuary, where violence could not be perpetrated is yet another.

59. A common way of speaking about peace-building today is to see specific tasks in pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict situations. These tasks can be seen in the light of the vocation to peace-building as well. The meaning of conflict here focuses upon armed and violent conflict. There are social conflicts - such as those that arise between individuals and within or among communities - that are nodes of tension that may form around deeply held values. Such conflict is not something that needs to be avoided or repressed, but is rather an invitation to grow in one's humanity and in human relationships. These kinds of conflict must be engaged. What follows here will focus rather on armed, violent conflicts.

60. In the pre-conflict situation, the tasks of peace-building are especially aimed at preventing violent conflict and at making peace education possible. The churches have important roles in both of these. Violent conflict can be prevented if attention is drawn in a timely and consistent fashion to oppressive and unjust structures and practices that build the resentment that leads to violent confrontation. Religious leaders must also draw attention to and deflate ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and the demonization of outsiders as ways of fuelling passion against those different from the people they serve. In that process rumour control and dampening inflammatory rhetoric in the media and on the streets are of crucial importance. Debunking ideological twisting of Christian teachings (such as: suicide bombers claiming to be “martyrs” or erroneous claims to have discerned “God’s will”), and the use of Christian faith to legitimate aggression against those of other faiths must be confronted head on.

61. Education for peace is more than mere instruction in the strategies of work for peace. It is a profoundly spiritual formation of character that happens over a long period of time. Growth in the biblical understanding of peace, learning about the temptations that lead people away from peace into violence, examining our narratives about how we describe to ourselves those who may be our potential enemies, learning to engage in practices of peace (especially for children and adolescents), learning to care for the earth as a way of cultivating peace, and making prayer for peace a prominent part of our worship: all of these things promote peace. Peace education is not simply acquiring certain items of knowledge; it is about formation of character and building reflexes into behaviour that will respond non-violently in the face of provocation.

62. Peace education needs to be part of religious instruction in the churches at all levels. It needs to begin with children, but must be extended to adolescents and adults as well. The formation to be agents of peace begins by looking to models of those already engaged in peace-building. For children, parents must be the first agents of peace they encounter, who serve as signs of peace not only in what they say, but in what they do. As children grow and mature into themselves being agents of peace, the churches must provide space, encouragement, and active support in this formation. That involves introspection of all members of the church, into how their choices, their actions, and their lifestyles do or do not make them servants of peace. It means also giving special support to those who have special gifts for promoting specific pathways of peace - for these are gifts of the Spirit of Peace within the churches and for the sake of the world. Some will have distinct capacities for accompanying victims of violence; others, for settling disputes; still others, for caring for the earth.

63. When people find themselves in the midst of violent conflict itself, peace-building has two tasks: protection and mediation. The responsibility to protect those directly endangered by conflict has begun to receive greater attention than in the past. It is something that women in conflict situations have known for a long time, since it usually falls to them to protect the young, the aged, and the ill. Churches need to explore how networks of congregations can become havens of protection in the face of violence. This needs to involve not only armed violence or urban violence, but must include domestic violence as well. Churches that sponsor emergency relief agencies must be prepared especially to engage in the work of protecting most openly those exposed to harm and abuse.

64. Mediation of armed conflict is an important and often delicate task that can fall to the churches. It can take place at various levels. At the grassroots levels local leaders, both lay and ordained, are called upon to interpret the insights and perceptions of their congregations to those involved in the mediation process. Regional and national leadership of churches may be called upon to serve in mediating roles, especially in settings where Christians are in the majority or effective interfaith councils are in place. Here respect for the spiritual and moral integrity of the churches, focused now in their leadership, can be a significant player in ending conflict. Such positioning is often delicate, a balance between gaining and maintaining the trust of the parties on the one hand, and maintaining the perceived disinterestedness that makes mediation possible on the other. Especially in civil conflicts when all other social institutions have been discredited or destroyed, churches may be called upon as the sole surviving institution with enough credibility to be able to speak on behalf of the people.

65. The post-conflict situation serves up a host of tasks for the churches as peace-builders: truth telling, pursuit of various kinds of justice, helping bring about forgiveness, and longer-term reconciliation all figure into the agenda.

66. Getting at the truth about what happened during the conflict and what were its causes is often an important step in the building of peace after overt conflict. The churches have been called upon in a number of instances in recent years to take leadership roles in truth-telling processes. Truth telling is important in the rehabilitation of those who had been deemed enemies by a powerful state, but

especially in allowing victims (or their surviving families) to tell their stories and witness to the pain and loss they have endured. Truth telling can be an important part of establishing a new regime of accountability and transparency where oppressive ideologies, arbitrariness and secrecy have prevailed. Truth telling is a many-sided and delicate process that, in deeply wounded societies, may not always be possible or even advisable. But without truth (not just in the sense of veracity, but also in the Biblical sense of trustworthiness and reliability), a new society cannot build on a firm foundation.

67. For the churches to accompany truth-telling processes, they must first be able to tell the truth about themselves. Dietrich Bonhoeffer imposed a discipline of daily confession of sins on the students in the Confessing Church's seminary at Finkenwalde because, as he said, how can we hope to recognize the lies all around us if we cannot speak the truth about ourselves? The churches, thus, need to exercise a spiritual discipline about and within themselves if they hope to aid others in doing so.

68. Of the different forms of justice in which the churches may engage in the peace-building process, restorative justice and advocacy for structural justice stand out especially. In restorative justice, focus is upon the victims' rehabilitation. (In punitive or retributive justice, focus is upon the wrongdoers; this should be the prerogative of the legitimate state.) Special care for victims is the natural expression of the work of God that focuses upon those who have been marginalized. As its name suggests, restorative justice seeks what has been wrested away from the victim in terms of material goods, but also the restoration of their human dignity.

69. Structural justice, the changing of those structures of society that have contributed to injustice and the conflict that has arisen, is often necessary to assure that conflict does not happen again. As a moral voice, the churches are called upon to advocate for these structural changes and have them embedded in the legal system of the land. Writing new constitutions, developing the policies of political parties and governments, and seeing to enactment of the structural changes are part of the work that will lead to a lasting peace.

70. Promoting forgiveness, at both the personal and the social levels, is a task pre-eminently suited to the churches. The teachings on forgiveness central to Jesus' own preaching and ministry form the basis for this. Forgiveness, as it is also for peace, is a gift of God. Without forgiveness, there is no way of coming free from the past. Christian forgiveness is not cheap forgiveness, but a change of heart and perception that allows for a different kind of future. Forgiveness does not erase the past but remembers the past in a different way. Moreover, forgiveness can help create the social space in which wrongdoers may be able to come to forgiveness. Promoting forgiveness, accompanying people on the long road to forgiveness, and providing a public ritual framework where especially social forgiveness can be enacted are all things that fall especially to the churches. To the extent the churches can live up to the praxis of Jesus, they can be effective instruments of God's forgiveness.

71. Along the path to forgiveness, the healing of memories is of special significance. The healing of memories aims at being able to remember the past in a different way that will make forgiveness especially possible. Here the accompaniment of victims by the churches, of finding a way through their suffering by looking to the sufferings of Christ, is one of the most important ways of serving the *missio Dei* in the reconciliation of all creation.

72. Reconciliation is both a process and a goal. The process is likely to entail exercises of truth telling, the pursuit of justice, the healing of memories, and the extending of forgiveness. Individual forgiveness focuses upon the restoring of the humanity of the victim in the image and likeness of God. Social reconciliation may focus upon healing the memories or building a common future together: it may involve making sure that the deeds of the past cannot happen again, or building an alternate future. Whenever reconciliation is achieved, the experience of it as a gift of free grace from God can be the most moving and effective way of speaking about God's design for the world, of how the world is being drawn back into God, its Creator.

73. As instruments of God's peace, the churches are indeed vessels of clay. When peace does occur, it becomes clear that "the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor 4:7). But it is usually also clear that, in most instances of conflict, the churches do not live up to their great and challenging vocation. Particularly in conflicts that happen within countries rather than between them, churches will find themselves to have been complicit in many different ways. At times church leadership will have failed to speak out against injustice or have even blessed the violence that occurred. Members of the churches are likely to find themselves on both sides of the divide. In long-standing oppressive regimes, there will be those in the churches' ranks - both as leaders and as members - who have been hidden accomplices in maintaining the oppression by spying upon others

or regularly reporting their actions. Some have done this out of fear; others may have been forced or blackmailed into it. Unless the churches have thrown themselves completely into siding with and abetting the aggression, they may still have some role in the post-conflict peace-building process. At the very least, they can model the repentance that will be needed in the wider society. More often, especially in the case of protracted conflicts where everyone at one point or another has been both victim and wrongdoer, they mirror the ambivalences that evil and violence create. They might be able both to accept punishment but also advocate forbearance in a situation where no one's hands have been utterly clean.

The Spiritual Practices of Peace

74. Peace is not simply assenting to a set of ideas about God's design for the world. To be agents of God's peace requires putting on the mind that was in Christ Jesus (cf. Phil 2:5): the emptying of self, the embracing of vulnerability, the walking with the wounded which marked the Second Person of the Trinity's entry into our world. It requires being led by the Holy Spirit in the healing and sanctifying of the world. The Incarnation and the sending of the Holy Spirit are an extension of the embrace of the *periochosis* of the Trinity to enfold into itself those who have been broken by sin, oppression, and injustice. In order to have that mind of Christ, peace-building requires entering regularly and deeply into communion with the Triune God, along the ways that Christ has set out for us. It is that presence in God that makes it possible for us to come to discern God's working in our world. It allows us to see those glimmerings of grace that may come to flash forth the love of God that heals and reconciles.

75. Putting on the mind of Christ, being formed in Christ, involves spiritual practices and disciplines that embody peace in our own bodies:

- making prayers of intercession as part of our mindfulness of being formed in Christ;
- seeking and extending forgiveness, so as to create truthfulness in ourselves and to forge the space for others who need to seek repentance;
- washing one another's feet, so as to learn the ways of service;
- engaging in times of fasting, to review our patterns of consumption and relationships to one another and to the earth;
- consistent and sustained acts of caring for others, especially those most in need of healing, liberation, and reconciliation;
- consistent and sustained acts of caring for the earth;
- communal acts of worship in order to be nourished by God's Word and by the Eucharist.

76. Peace is not just a view of life. It is also a way of life. In a world beset by violence and threatened by all kinds of destabilizing forces, it means cultivating a spiritual posture, a spirituality. By spirituality is not meant a pick-and-choose of preferred elements to craft a unique or distinctive lifestyle. Spirituality here means deepening a mind-set and engaging in those spiritual practices, especially communal ones, that lead one deeper into the mystery of Christ.

77. An important task of this spirituality is sustaining hope. Building peace is often an arduous task, marked by disappointments, failures, and setbacks. How do we find the reserves of strength to remain faithful and to keep forging on in the midst of adversity? Hope is not the same as optimism. Optimism is our assessment of how we can change the present and forge the future by dint of our own resources and strengths. Hope, on the other hand, is something that comes from God, who is the author of peace and the One who brings about reconciliation. Hope is something that we discover, drawing us forward into the mystery of peace. It manifests itself at times in unexpected places and in surprising ways. It can be perceived thanks to our communion with God - glimmerings of grace in the midst of adversity, acts of kindness in the face of ruthless self-seeking, moments of gentleness in the hardness of relentless aggression.

78. A spirituality is something that agents of peace share, a web of practices and attitudes that bind a community together. In its own finite way, a spirituality mirrors the relationships of Trinitarian life - sustaining, transforming, and sanctifying a broken world.

Questions:

What are the ways in which your church engages in peace education for all its members, especially the children and young people?

Can you share successful projects and experiences which would be helpful for other churches?

In which ways have you become involved in peace building ministries? Can you give us examples?

In which ways are you expressing the calling of the churches to care for creation? Does it have an impact on the theological training of your ministers and on the management of your buildings?

Chapter 3

On the Way towards Just Peace – The Scope of the Churches' Engagement

79. God is never glorified by our violence. Nor is our humanity ever honoured through it.

80. *“For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility...that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. (Eph 2:14-17)*

81. Jesus in the power of the Spirit created new community among enemies. It was the reconciliation of a Samaritan woman and a Jew, a Roman soldier and a Palestinian peasant, the leprous and the clean, the stranger and the resident, Jew and Greek, tax collector and exploited farmer, male and female, bond and free. In the Spirit they broke bread together, they shared the kiss of peace together with their goods and their lives, and they resisted the empire's powers of division. First called the People of the Way, they lived a way that transformed their relationships with one another and purged the violence within as well as the violence without, the violence of their hearts and souls as well as the violence of their hands and feet. They learned to treat the Earth gently. They learned an ethic for enemies.

82. More precisely, they learned an ethic for the *end* of enmities. Jesus and his community were realists. They knew we are often enemy to one another and to ourselves, trapped by dividing walls of hostility we create and malignant “principalities and powers” we perpetuate. They knew that no soul is immune from harm and no life free of violation.

83. They also knew that there is more grace in God than sin in us. We can, by God's grace, live together as wounded healers.

84. And they knew that this life together is by way of a community in which enemies suffer each other's pains and joys to become a single humanity sharing a common world (*oikos*). Those afar and those near become one body through the cross.

85. This reconciliation of enemies who dismantle walls of separation and purge the violence within and without displays the scope of just peace. Just peace requires making just peacemakers. Just peace also requires building just institutions and ways of life.

86. The disciplines of soul-craft create and sustain just peacemakers. (This was discussed above as peace education). Soul-craft, the slow formation and transformation of character and conscience in a thousand ways, many barely noticed in the routine of growing people up. Soul-craft is the ancient practice of shaping an authentic self; it is one prayer at a time, one offer of hospitality at a time, one planting and watering at a time, with one child at a time. Soul-craft is the moulding of convictions and morality and greatness of heart befitting peacemakers as the blessed children of God.

87. If we do not make peacemakers, peace itself will not be made. Soul-craft is as vital to peacemaking as statecraft.

Christian Peace Traditions

88. Before we turn from soul-craft to building just institutions and ways of life, we need to track recent developments in Christian peace thinking and peace practices. Only then can we appreciate the enhanced scope of the tasks before us.

89. ***Different traditions, a common pathway.*** From the differing traditions of Christian peacemaking, just peacemaking has created a common pathway appropriate for our time. The older traditions of Christian pacifism and just war theory no longer control peace thinking.

90. To see why, we need to know what these traditions shared and where they parted ways. Just as “pacifism” - one family of traditions - is wrongly taken by some to mean “passive non-resistance,” so “just war” - another family of traditions - is misleading. “Just war” is not about justifying war; it is about limiting its occurrence and limiting the ways in which it is carried out. “Justified use” or “just use” is the better term, since the effort is to determine whether there are *ever* morally *exceptional* uses of deadly means, wherever they may occur - in self-defence, as the responsibility to protect innocent

populations, in police actions, in circumstances when rebellion or revolution may be justified, or in tragic cases at the beginning and end of life (whether euthanasia, assisted suicide, or medical abortion). “Justified use” is about the *exceptional* and highly occasional use of lethal means as *the last resort*. After all, both pacifism and just use traditions, including just war, share the same Christian norm for the use of force - nonviolence. Both share a same common task - the reduction of violence. And both dedicate themselves to the same goal - overcoming violence.

91. Just as important, both agree on fundamental tenets of Christian faith: The way of Jesus rejects arms as the manner of God’s reign and instead gathers enemies into covenantal intimacy by forgiving and reconciling them. The shared calling of all Christians is the ministry of reconciliation. And desired and true reality is a peaceable kingdom in which the well-being of each creature is bound to the security of all.

92. Both families of Christian peace traditions also acknowledge that force is sometimes necessary to peace and justice in a world of stiff-necked peoples who bypass few chances to organize their own lives at the expense of their neighbours. And both contend that there should be guards against unchecked power: Any use of force should be held to the lowest required levels, should be accountable for the consequences, and should respect the humanity of those on the receiving end. Not least, both agree that the welfare of others, the enemy included, is to be placed within the same moral framework as one’s own and guided by the same standards. This is the meaning of Jesus’ command that we should love our neighbours as ourselves.

93. Where Christian peacemaking traditions have parted ways, despite their shared distrust of all violence, is over the question of the exceptional use of one kind of force - killing violence. Just use advocates say there are morally permissible uses of exceptional, deadly violence in stringently limited ways. Just use theory has elaborated a set of criteria for measuring that.³ The Peace Churches and other pacifists argue the non-exceptional rejection of killing violence and do so, on both prudential and theological grounds. The prudential argument is that lethal violence is self-defeating for society in the long run and usually the short run as well. It breeds relationships that generate estrangement, harbour hostility, work from grudges, promote revenge, dehumanize the parties involved, and issue in further violence, which then tends to spiral and escalate. The theological argument is that Christians are called to a community whose way of life should not include killing anyone whom God regards as unqualifiedly precious and for whom God suffers in patient love; and there is no one for whom this is not the case, including those sitting in prison on Death Row, awaiting execution for capital crimes. One killing is always one too many. Violence, even when it is used as a last resort to stop other violence, never achieves genuine justice or lasting security.

94. **Working allies.** In recent decades pacifists and just use advocates have found themselves to be working allies time and again. All weapons of mass destruction violate both just use and pacifist criteria, so these Christian peacemakers have stood side-by-side in opposition to nuclear arms and worked together for nuclear disarmament. They joined in anti-apartheid campaigns in Southern Africa and anti-regime campaigns in Eastern Europe. They sought truth and reconciliation processes in several countries, as well as other ways to help heal memories of past violation and remember its victims in public ways (through memorials, museums, school curricula, and interfaith worship, for example). For the so-called “war on terror,” they have rejected the crusade tradition whereby any just cause justifies all means necessary to achieve it. And they have sought to shift the thinking from a military focus to policing.

95. On this last item - the “war on terror” and other cases of overt, deadly violence - the Catholic-Mennonite dialogue, fed by both just use and pacifist streams, draws the important difference between an army and a police force, including an international police force operating through institutions backed by international law. Police are embedded in a community whose members assume that the police force is working on their behalf. While police know how to use arms they, unlike soldiers, are not trained primarily for armed combat and use arms only as a last resort. Many police officers pride themselves on how infrequently they have to draw a gun and how often their work overlaps with and allies with the work of people in other helping professions. Their specialty is saving life, not destroying it. They do not kill their way to victory. If killing is involved, it is not to achieve “victory”; it is to prevent further harm to the innocent.

3 The criteria are legitimate or competent authority, just cause, right intention, announcement of intention, reasonable hope of success, proportionality, and just conduct.

96. A nonpartisan study of how terrorist groups come to an end reinforces the Catholic-Mennonite position. 648 terrorist groups operating over the period 1968 – 2006 were studied. Military force was not the best instrument to bring such groups to an end. The battlefield solution was less effective than law enforcement and intelligence agencies cooperating for international policing. Yet even policing was not the most effective means of all. Most effective was the dissolution of terrorist groups when their members were absorbed into the political process.⁴ Diplomacy rather than war, and police rather than soldiers - these means far surpassed military solutions.⁵

97. It is important to understand why this is the case, since the common rationale for employing military force is that it serve as a defence force and a peacekeeping force. What kind of thinking is war-thinking, even war-thinking that is directed to peacekeeping, and how does it compare with peace-thinking directed to peace-building?

98. When peace is conceived with a military focus, it is an activity tied essentially to one thing - armed violence, its threat and use. Consequently, as long as this paradigm is used all peacekeeping efforts must adhere to physical, mental, and organizational conformities of all kinds, for the sake of the mission itself. This implies that only a few of the gifts of the total citizenry are used, and those in tightly controlled ways - the skills of the soldier, the politician, the weapons scientist, and the diplomat. When peacekeeping is a subset of war-thinking most of the gifts of peacemaking, and the vast majority of peacemakers, are simply irrelevant. Hence parents, children, teachers, students, farmers, business people, scientists, artists, clergy, doctors and nurses, the young and the old, the physically able and the infirm - all these potential peacemakers are largely left out when war-thinking reigns, rather than peace-thinking for peace building.

99. **Enhanced scope.** Yet the larger point is that just peace and the working alliance of pacifist and just use traditions now has achieved a much broader scope, a scope that reflects attention to violence on many more fronts than that of overt, armed, inter-group conflict. It includes a focus on violence in the home and on child abuse, on human rights violations, on anti-racism work, on gender violence, on gang conflict, on promoting processes of truth and reconciliation in transition societies, on healing the memories of past violations, and on developing the means of conflict resolution for home, school, church, community, and workplace. These efforts supplement the previous and almost exclusive focus on war and civil conflict.

100. When we add to this the formation of peacemakers (soul-craft), the scope of just peace - building effectively encompasses the whole of earthly life. Christian peacemaking is far more than a firewall for containing conflict; it consists in practices that constitute a whole way of life for the People of the Way. It is, in a word, discipleship.

101. There is more. "The whole of earthly life" carries a broader meaning now than the one we have usually given it. More than ever, we realize that planetary creation is a vast, seamless, vulnerable, and threatened web. Our small *oikos* - all of it, both biosphere and atmosphere - can be altered, scarred, torn, injured and impaired by us, as well as revived and restored through its own powers and with our cooperation. Therefore, the scope of justice is not only human flourishing. It is the flourishing of planetary creation as a whole. Moreover, while the rest of nature might flourish apart from human flourishing, human flourishing is not possible on a despoiled planet. This also applies to peace. Earth might know a peace without us, but we cannot have peace if land, sea and sky are stripped of life.

102. This we know. Earth can industrialize but once in the manner and on the scale it has. The present throbbing world cannot replicate itself multiple times and be extended indefinitely. For one thing, the costs cannot be met. Maintaining what we already have is driving communities into poverty, even destitution. Nor are natural resources present in the abundance or availability they once were. Even allowing for human creativity and material substitutes, a single factor such as the end of the petroleum era, the lack of further fertile lands, unrealizable demand for freshwater or altered climate will yield huge problems and much suffering. Then there is population, a world of now seven, then eight, then nine or ten billion people. Whatever else that means it is a multiplier of all other problems, from poverty, unemployment and refugee agonies to overconsumption, resource depletion, and destruction of habitat. Not least, psychic energy is largely spent among many people. The bright side of the agricultural, industrial, and information revolutions was their lure and drive. Now, facing their

⁴ "Strategy Against Al-Qaeda Faulted: Report Says Effort Is Not a 'War'", by Joby Warrick, *Washington Post*, Wednesday, July 30, 2008: A04.

⁵ See the commentary by Nicholas D. Kristof in "Make Diplomacy, Not War", the New York Times, August 10, 2008: WK12. The Study was conducted by the Rand Corporation.

destructive downside, a global fatigue wears away at millions. Renewable moral-spiritual energy, together with the renewable energy of hope, is needed.

103. Furthermore, all this happens at the very time that the expectations of billions of people for a life of sufficiency and enough have not yet been met. The bottom two billion cannot be told that their hopes are not realizable. Least of all can their hopes be dashed by affluent societies smugly protecting their privilege.

104. Just peace-building thus confronts a double challenge that most Christian peace traditions have neglected: the challenge of securing, on a healthy planet, the goods of the community of *all beings* God has created; and, at the same time, the challenge of addressing the obscenity of superfluous wealth and the offense of needless poverty with a view to the dignity and well-being of all God's children.

Just Institutions in a Just Order

105. The enhanced scope and reconceptualising of peace across the whole of earthly life returns us to the subject of just institutions and ways of life. Our historical moment, some arenas of concern, and the task before us are being discussed here. Further matters of importance are hoped to come from the contributions and suggestions of readers in the WCC Member Churches and beyond.

106. No one can be whole in a broken world. For that reason, we turn to peace-building and just institutions in a just order. Institutions, policies, systems, and the ways in which our lives are organized, shape who we are, how we experience the world and see it and what we are able to do in it. Every part of our being, from imagination to habits of the heart to ordinary and extraordinary action, is affected by the worlds that we inhabit and that inhabit us. If we are to be whole, so, too, must they be. Thus peace-building at the levels of just institutions in a just order is the indispensable partner of soul-craft.

107. The economic order has always altered and shaped the planet and its peoples. It has done so with great force and effect since the Industrial Revolution and the globalization of recent decades, affecting not only the biosphere's community of life but the atmosphere and climate itself. In the face of this, the AGAPE process of the WCC (Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth) asks for a vision of the oikoumene that would energize the ecumenical movement to help overcome unconscionable levels of inequity within the human community and between humans and the rest of the community of life. AGAPE rightly understands that both economic and ecological peace and justice must be addressed together, with sustained participation at all levels. Only then might a genuine "economy of life" be realized.

108. The AGAPE process joins a worldwide awareness that we face a dangerous historical moment and a long, hard transition period. It might be described as follows.

109. The big, orienting ideas driving the imagination and activity of so many peoples after World War II were human rights, economic growth, and the advance of freedom and security in the form of democracy. While these sometimes worked against one another and worsened conditions for vast numbers of peoples, these were also treasures that benefited millions, even billions. Human rights found their way into constitutions in many societies and advocates in every society, a vibrant middle class emerged where there had been none, there was no World War III or nuclear holocaust, and the Berlin Wall and borders fell. For both better and worse, these big, orienting forces formed and shaped the world of the last sixty years and brought us to this *kairos* moment. It is a time of decision because these forces, with some of their roots deep in the Industrial Revolution, have also given us global warming and unprecedented human numbers on what has now become an overheated and overcrowded planet. These ideas and forces were strangely blind to the needs of the life systems upon which all this tumultuous activity utterly depended.

110. Now everything has flipped. No peace and security, no sustainable economic growth, no enjoyment of human rights and no righting of remaining wrongs is now possible apart from new attention to the primal elements of earth (soil), air, fire (energy), and water. A just peace cannot be achieved apart from developing clean energy, mitigating the effects of accelerated and extreme climate change as best we can while adapting to what we cannot change, bringing to a halt the crime of extinction and the loss of indispensable biodiversity, and creating political, economic and social structures that treat Earth as that standing miracle which gives births to us and sustains us. These elements have not been considered essential to past peace and justice traditions. They are now.

111. In like manner the powerful forces of modern science and technology need to find a way out of their captivity to forces that have been, on balance, destructive. While the benefits have been momentous - in fighting disease, extending lives, increasing yields -, science and technology have largely been in the service of dirty energy (fossil-fuels), deadly weaponry, and economic and political forces that overwhelm Earth's carrying capacity. Their misdirection stems from the fact that modern science and technology have largely joined forces that view nature as a "collection of objects rather than a communion of subjects" (Thomas Berry).

112. In sum, our historical moment and context necessitates peace-building as economic, social and political reconstruction. At the same time it necessitates the tending and keeping of the garden commanded of humans in Genesis, as well as redirection of the major investment and uses of science and technology. The widely-cited norms of **justice**, **peace**, and **integrity of creation** can be used to guide and measure this redirection and reconstruction. A similar set of norms is found in the Earth Charter Guide to "Religion and Climate Change":

- **Solidarity** with other people and creatures,
- **Sustainability** in development, technology and production,
- **Sufficiency** as a standard of equitable consumption and organized resource-sharing,
- Socially just **participation** in decisions about how to obtain sustenance and to manage community for the good of all.

113. All this is obviously a task for generations. It requires a peace-building spirituality that spans generations as well. It is helpful to remember that the Christian faith was born in a clash of the ages at a turning time. "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" came as the Christmas evangel at just such a time. The way of Jesus for a People of the Way had all future generations in mind, until the end of time. Its spirituality knew it would face the inevitable corruptions and defeats that plague the life of sinful human beings. Yet it never doubted the triumph of life lived by the grace of God.

Conclusion

114. In summary we might say: We are born to belonging. Earth is our home. We are star seed and microcosms of the macrocosm in the stunning creation of God. "Peace on Earth" is the message of heaven for Earth and us as earthlings.

115. We are also born to longing. Our home is not what it might and will be. While life in God's hands is irrepressible, peace does not yet reign. The principalities and powers, though not sovereign, still enjoy their victories, and we will be restless and broken until peace prevails. Thus our peace-building will of necessity criticize, denounce, advocate, and resist as well as proclaim, empower, console, reconcile, and heal. Peacemakers will speak against and speak for, tear down and build up, lament and celebrate, grieve and rejoice. Until our longing joins our belonging in the consummation of all things in God, peace work will continue as the flickering of sure grace.

116. In short, both the world within – peace-building as soul-craft - and the world without – peace-building in and with just institutions - cry for peacemakers. Earth cries for Christians who will join others to make peace within creation in the same moment they make peace with creation.

117. *"For the palace will be forsaken, the populace city deserted;
the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, the joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks;
until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.
Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.
The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.
My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places".
(Isa 32:14-20)*

Questions and requests:

How do these approaches to "Just Peace" correspond to traditions and thought forms in your Church? Which elements do you wish to add?

Please share relevant stories and concrete recommendations with the Office of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation! Be certain to include both peace-building as soul-craft and as crafting just institutions and a just order.

Please direct all correspondence, requests and suggestions to the following address:

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