

# Peacemaking: A Reflective Resource



Peace is not something that happens by chance; it is an intentional way of being, working and relating that must be cultivated and nurtured. Even when it seems impossible, peacemaking is appropriate because it works not just for the absence of conflict but for the presence of well-being for all. The absence of conflict is not necessarily peace; in systems of oppression there may be no obvious war or conflict but there is assuredly no peace either.

What is *peacemaking*, then? As a concept and practice, it is difficult to define because there are so many elements, so many ways to engage in it, and it is always contextual. Put briefly, peacemaking means working for a just and equitable end to the causes of conflict or harm, and towards healing and sustainable flourishing for all involved.

## A History of Peacemaking

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has a lengthy tradition of peacemaking and of understanding ‘peace’ expansively. Though its peacemaking work goes back much further than a few decades, the PCC developed a formal theological statement on peacemaking in the 1990s. Titled, “A Theology of Peacemaking” it was originally submitted by the International Affairs Committee to the General Assembly in 1992, underwent a period of study and comment with Presbyteries and other courts or committees, was revised, and then was adopted by the General Assembly in 1994. That statement is available for download on the Peacemaking page of the PCC’s Social Action Hub:

<https://presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/peacemaking/> While it was written some thirty years ago, many of the themes it touches on remain achingly relevant today.

The “Theology of Peacemaking” statement not only calls Christians to work to end armed conflict; it calls the church—and all within the church—to address the roots of conflict, which are found in such things as racism, xenophobia, economic exploitation, colonialism, and the impacts of human-driven changes to the earth’s environments and climate. A portion of the introduction to the statement sums up the need to look for the underlying causes of conflict in this way: “The task of seeking peace includes examining the root causes of conflict, poverty, disease, tyranny and environmental disasters. We are called to consider how the sinful desire for ever-increasing wealth and domination over others has produced a bitter harvest which disrupts true peace for everyone. Thus, we are called to seek justice in all areas of our common life—economic, political, social, etc.—in order that the conditions that make for peace are established everywhere.” (A&P 1994, p. 359)

The way The Presbyterian Church in Canada understands peacemaking flows from that commitment to “examine the root causes” as well as from the church’s commitments to justice, which are laid out in general terms in *Living Faith*. *Living Faith* is extensive in its description of justice. Among other commitments, it states that justice protects the rights of others and is concerned about concrete matters such as employment, education, health, fair laws justly administered, concern for both victims and offenders, and requires that courts and penal institutions are just and humane. The justice section closes by noting that justice stands with neighbours in their a struggle for dignity and respect and demands the exercise of power for the common good (summarized from *Living Faith* 8.4.1-6).

Pursuing all these things are forms of peacemaking. As we stand with our neighbour in that struggle for dignity and respect we do the work, with them, of re-humanizing all of us to each other. We do it too in contexts where the powers-that-be would try to dehumanize or make monsters out of whomever those powers label “other” instead of “neighbour.” And when we demand the exercise of power for the common good instead of simply the good of those with power, we support and nurture the creation of contexts for real peace—and justice, and equity—to grow. Without the pursuit of justice and equity there can be no peace; the root causes of conflict will only grow and crowd out all other possibilities.

## **Peacemaking Amidst Social Conflict**

Peacemaking works for equity, then, but does not necessarily call for neutrality or “balance.” This is because to address root causes of a conflict, peacemakers must accurately name those causes, which often exist in a context of already unbalanced power. Sometimes naming that power imbalance requires highlighting the concerns or plight of one group more than another, in order to correct an imbalance that is already present. For example, the church has a lengthy tradition of understanding Scripture as teaching preferential treatment of those experiencing poverty.

That said, peacemaking seeks to address conflict, not increase it. For that reason, peacemaking is the antithesis of practices like polarization, disinformation and scapegoating. Polarization purposefully works against peace to divide people or groups into opposing, conflict-oriented, “sides.” Often, polarization is pursued through oversimplification of issues, denial of common ground, and painting “the other side” as hostile or immoral. Disinformation is intentionally spreading false or misleading information, which can significantly contribute to conflict. It can take the form of outright lies but it can also function through giving only part of a story, with the intent to lead people to a conclusion they might not have come to if they had all the facts. Lastly, scapegoating is the practice of falsely accusing a person or group of being the cause of serious harm or suffering—usually to deflect blame from an actually blameworthy source. Scapegoating often draws on both polarization and disinformation in order to shift blame and consolidate power. It can have deadly results.

Peacemakers must reject practices like polarization, disinformation and scapegoating because peacemaking is concerned with restoring just peace and shaping societies and communities that are equitable. It does not shy away from naming and working to address power dynamics that have become harmful, but it cannot be interested in simply shifting blame or consolidating power.

## **Peacemaking & War**

Peacemaking is also, of course, working to end violence, conflict, and war. Proponents of “Just War” theory (historically developed through theologians like Augustine and Aquinas, but which continues today and includes such provisions as that the war must be a last resort, must be just, and must be proportional to the harm it seeks to address/end) might argue a particular war is ethically “justified”—but even were a war to be considered “just” it always comes with unimaginable suffering and consequences far beyond what one might expect simply from the conflict itself. Due to the immense destruction, harm and suffering they cause, war and armed conflict are themselves roots for more conflict, often even after they are ended. Without a very intentional process of healing that works for justice as well, the wounds of hatred and fear that war and conflict leave fester—and that is to say nothing of the social, economic and ecological cost war and conflict exact.

The PCC's "Theology of Peacemaking" statement reminds us that "the Church cannot participate in the justification of human warfare as good and holy. Nor can Augustine's [Just War] teachings be used to justify war where 'collateral damage' is a code word for children, women and men being killed, injured and sentenced to years of poverty, disability and disease. God does not glorify our wars, nor allow us to freely take joy and satisfaction from defeating our enemy. The loss to our world of human and natural resources is too great." (p. 362, A&P 1994; Statement adopted p. 29) *Living Faith* states too that "the tragic evil that comes with war, the slaughter of men, women, and children, must rouse us to work for peace" (8.5.2).

We are told to judge a tree by its fruits (Matthew 7:15-17). The fruits of war and armed conflict include not only the deaths of all those killed in the conflict but also trauma that can linger for generations; homelessness; increased hunger not only where the conflict happened but also in areas around the world who may depend on food or trade from areas involved in the conflict; environmental effects and toxins left in the soil from armaments and weapons; destroyed lives, intergenerational anger and broken trust. Wars never solve problems, but they do cause a lot more of them. Peace-sustainable and just peace-is what solves problems. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus taught us. Like justice, working for peace is a vital part of Christian discipleship.

### **Some of the PCC's Commitments & Actions to Peace & Peacemaking**

Though we can always do better, and have certainly stumbled many times, the PCC has tried to demonstrate peacemaking as part of its life of discipleship. To help understand how peacemaking can be pursued it is worth looking at examples of different ways the PCC has engaged in peacemaking in a variety of contexts over the last several decades. This is not an exhaustive list but has been selected to show some of the breadth of work.

Some principles of peacemaking and actions flowing from them focused both on specific conflicts and on root causes that the PCC has adopted or taken between 1960 and 2024:

**1960:** The General Assembly urged the Government of Canada to use its influence in international affairs to: stop the testing of nuclear weapons; halt the production of nuclear weapons under conditions of international inspection and control; press for the prohibition of nuclear warfare and accelerate international co-operation in the development of atomic power for peaceful purposes. (A&P 1960, pp. 304, 50)

The General Assembly called on provincial governments to disallow discrimination in rental units based on race, colour, creed, religion, national origin or place of birth and asked the Government of Canada to include "no discrimination" provisions in National Housing Act transactions and Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation loan agreements. (A&P 1960, pp. 304, 50)

**1965:** The General Assembly adopted a report with a section on poverty stating that as a matter of justice "all people, whatever their colour or class, condition or creed, [should be] able to live in a manner in keeping with those who have been made in the image and likeness of God and for fellowship with Him." (1965 A&P 342; 99)

**1969:** The church adopted a recommendation calling the courts and congregations of the church to take more seriously the social implications of the gospel and alert them that poverty is a great destroyer of human rights and one of the greatest causes of tension in Canada and the world. (A&P 1969, pp. 315, 355, 33)

**1972:** The General Assembly approved recommendations affirming that any form of segregation based on race, colour or ethnic origin is contrary to the gospel and that all forms of racism and apartheid are contrary to the mind and will of Christ. (A&P 1972, pp. 269-270, 59)

The General Assembly noted that the Government of Canada ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and asked the government to sign and ratify: The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the Optional Protocol on Civil and Political Rights. (A&P 1972, pp. 302-303, 70)

**1973:** The General Assembly adopted a recommendation affirming that a guaranteed annual income is a necessary component in the alleviation of poverty. (A&P 1973, pp. 274-278, 282, 40)

**1975:** The General Assembly adopted a report affirming that all human beings are valuable persons and any attempt to measure the value of human life in economic or educational terms provides an opportunity for a display of injustice, prejudice, arrogance and racism. (A&P 1975, pp. 469-475, 40)

**1978:** The General Assembly adopted a statement on northern development calling on the Government of Canada to assure that “it will not present serious hazards and threats to the delicate northern environment” and that it be done only with the full involvement of Indigenous peoples, including the recognition of their legitimate rights and claims. (A&P 1978, pp. 402, 34)

**1982:** The General Assembly endorsed a statement affirming that everyone should have equal access to the best available health care regardless of ethnic, religious, sexual, age or economic distinctions; the right to expect the implementation of those social, economic, occupational and environmental measures which encourage health; and the right to effective participation in health decisions to ensure and maintain high quality individual and community health. (A&P 1982, pp. 326-327, 99)

**1983:** The General Assembly approved recommendations affirming that no nation, including our own, has the right before God to resort to nuclear weapons, either offensively or defensively and urged Presbyterians to commit themselves before God to work for peace, to pray for peace, and to be a peacemaker in the fullest possible way. (A&P 1983, pp. 372-374, 44, 78)

**1984:** A report on crime was adopted by the General Assembly stating that our ultimate goal after a crime must be the reconciliation of those caught in the conflict as well as reconciliation within the community as a whole. (A&P 1984, pp. 367-368, 46)

The General Assembly approved a report regarding acid rain which stated it “represents a major force destructive of God’s creation”; endorsed the “United States/Canada Citizens’ Agreement on



Acid Rain” statement, and adopted a number of recommendations aimed at curtailing emissions. (A&P 1984, pp. 363-367, 26, 46)

**1985:** The General Assembly appealed to the Government of Canada to speak strongly through its diplomatic contacts against invasion of the territory of others, such as the invasion of Afghanistan by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. (A&P 1985, p. 35)

**1987:** The General Assembly approved a recommendation affirming the importance of church involvement in initiatives that seek peace, reunification and the reuniting of separated families on the Korean peninsula. (A&P 1987, pp. 343-344, 33)

**1989:** The General Assembly approved a report condemning the research, production and use of any biological warfare agents by any country and adopted a recommendation, to be sent to the Government of Canada and the United Nations, that research and development of biological weapons should cease, and present stocks of such weapons be destroyed. (A&P 1989, pp. 347-348, 69)

The General Assembly adopted a recommendation that the Government of Canada be urged to undertake its own initiatives to reduce the militarization of Korea by such measures as suspending the export of military or nuclear goods to the region until a mutual non-aggression pact is concluded between North and South Korea. (A&P 1989, pp. 375, 63)

The General Assembly considered a report on the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania re-affirming that the church abhors political repression wherever it is found and approving a recommendation that the Government of Canada be asked to protest in the strongest terms the well-documented repressive policies of the Romanian government in relation to political expression, religious freedom, and discrimination against ethnic minorities. (A&P 1989, p. 377, 63)

**1990:** The General Assembly adopted recommendations condemning the use of violence and any justification for it in Northern Ireland, welcoming all efforts to find a just political settlement that would recognize the rights of both the Protestant and Catholic communities and the equality of all citizens under the law, and welcoming the efforts of peacemakers in Northern Ireland with their attempts to break down personal barriers and foster reconciliation. (A&P 1990, pp. 407-410, 62)

The General Assembly approved a recommendation to urge the Government of Canada to encourage the U.S. administration to accept responsibility for the damages caused by its invasion of Panama and make reparations giving priority to the needs of the poor; (A&P 1990, pp. 392-394, 62)

**1991:** The General Assembly adopted a recommendation that the government of Canada be urged to implement the publicly stated view that strong steps must be taken to limit arms sales to the Middle East; that it be asked to consider ways by which a better balance be achieved between funding for peacemaking research on the one hand and military research on the other. (A&P 1991, 308, 57)

Following the OKA Crisis, the General Assembly requested federal and provincial governments to place a high priority on developing a comprehensive process for just settlement of outstanding

Native land claims and governance issues, and establish an Aboriginal Rights Commission. The General Assembly urged that resource development should not take place on unsurrendered land without settling land claims or negotiating acceptable terms. The Government of Canada was requested to resume constitutional talks including representatives of First Nations as full participants and to include on the agenda of the next First Ministers' Conference a commitment to entrench Aboriginal rights—specifically: 1) the enforceable right of Aboriginal peoples to self-government, 2) an adequate land and economic base arising from Aboriginal title, Aboriginal rights and treaty rights; and 3) the requirement of consultation with Aboriginal peoples on all future constitutional amendments affecting such rights—in the Canadian constitution. (A&P 1991, pp. 291-292, 50-1)

The General Assembly adopted a recommendation that the Government of Canada be urged to participate actively in negotiations on an international convention on world climate, which is expected to be signed at a United Nations conference on environment and development to be held in 1992. (A&P 1991, p. 331, 57)

**1992:** The General Assembly adopted a recommendation that the Government of Canada be urged to take further specific steps to ameliorate the broken peace in Central America, including by maintaining an open door to Central American refugees whose fears remain legitimate and linking aid and development money with human rights performances. (A&P 1992, pp. 355-356, 42)

The General Assembly praised the Government of Canada for ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. (A&P 1992, pp. 341-357, 42)

**1994:** The church made a confession for its role in colonialism and residential schools. (A&P 1994, pp. 365-377, 29, 69, 71a)

The General Assembly adopted a statement called the “Theology of Peacemaking” which includes reflection on “Just War” theory and articulates responsibilities for Christians as peacemakers. (A&P 1994, pp. 358-364, 29)

**1995:** The General Assembly adopted a recommendation that, to reduce the contribution of trade in small arms to fueling and prolonging conflict, international criteria should be established in which nations adopt global transfer principles or criteria that would prevent the shipment of small arms to countries at war or where there are serious human rights violations. (A&P 1995, pp. 263-264, 33)

The General Assembly adopted recommendations that the Government of Canada be encouraged to support and assist the establishment and enforcement of a worldwide United Nations convention banning the production, sale and use of all landmines and that the Government of Canada be urged to undertake further initiatives in rehabilitating victims of landmines. (A&P 1995, 263, 33)

**1998:** The General Assembly approved a report affirming that Christians should support the universal Declaration of Human Rights and encouraging awareness of its provisions. (A&P 1998, pp. 283-298, 33)

**2005:** The General Assembly urged the Government of Canada to affirm that access to clean, safe water for personal use is a basic human right. The General Assembly also voted to endorse the

KAIROS/Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) “Water Declaration” stating: “water is a sacred gift that connects all life; access to clean water is a basic human right; the value of the earth’s fresh water to the common good takes priority over any possible commercial value; and fresh water is a shared legacy, a public trust and a collective responsibility.” (A&P 2005, pp. 303-304, 14-15)

**2008:** The General Assembly adopted a report that considered the role of economic advocacy in the context of Palestine and Israel. The report stated that economic advocacy is a non-violent action that may contribute to peaceful change. (A&P 2008, p. 278)

**2009:** The General Assembly approved a recommendation that the Moderator write to General Electric (in which the church held shares) to inquire about the use of Apache helicopters in the Occupied Territories, and to express concern about the apparent use of Apache helicopters in attacks in densely populated civilian areas in Gaza on January 7, 2009. (A&P 2009, pp. 294, 18); the report reaffirmed the position on economic advocacy stated in the 2008 report, writing: “Economic advocacy measures offer non-violent options to support peace with justice in what seems like an intractable conflict.” (A&P 2009, p. 289)

**2011:** The General Assembly recommended that church courts discuss and take part in the “It Matters to Me” campaign in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (A&P 2011, pp. 369-70, 31)

**2013:** The General Assembly approved a recommendation that the Moderator write to General Electric and Caterpillar requesting information on their respective policies to ensure their products are not used in situations where human rights are violated (A&P 2013, pp. 284, 22). This was specifically related to these corporations producing products that were sold to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which were alleged to be subsequently used by the IDF in actions that violated the human rights of Palestinians; the General Assembly also approved a recommendation that the Moderator write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs inquiring what measures Canada takes to persuade Israel to lift the restrictions it places on the movement of people and goods that hamper economic development in the West Bank. (A&P 2013, p. 282, 22)

**2016:** The General Assembly adopted a recommendation that the Moderator write the Minister of Foreign Affairs, requesting information on how the Government of Canada will ensure that military equipment sold to Saudi Arabia will not be used against civilians engaged in peaceful protest activities in Saudi Arabia or in other countries, and also requesting that the most recent report on human rights in Saudi Arabia be made public. (A&P 2016, pp. 314, 23; there are four years worth of advocacy around the issue of selling arms to Saudi Arabia, from 2015-2018)

The General Assembly encouraged the Government of Canada to continue calling for an end to violence against LGBT people and for the respect of human rights of all people regardless of sexual orientation and/or gender identity in relevant international fora. (A&P 2016, pp. 313, 23)

**2017:** The Moderator wrote to the Prime Minister of Canada urging the Government of Canada to comply with the order of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal pertaining to the elimination of

discrimination against First Nations children regarding funding for social services and education for children on First Nations reserves. (A&P 2017, p. 47)

The General Assembly encouraged the Government of Canada to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. (A&P 2017, pp. 309, 20)

**2019:** The church repudiated concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and affirmed that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating for superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust. (A&P 2019, pp. 377, 35)

The church also affirmed it seeks to engage in relationships with Indigenous peoples that reflect the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the basis for right relationships. (A&P 2019, pp. 377, 35)

**2020:** In consultation with the National Indigenous Ministries Council, the Moderator issued a statement addressing anti-Indigenous racism and policing agencies, calling for an end to race-based violence against Indigenous peoples and suggesting ways Presbyterians can center Indigenous peoples and their experiences in order to fight systemic racism.

The church wrote to the Government of Canada advocating that the government prioritize the needs of vulnerable people as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are addressed (including access to vaccines, health care, increased support for basic needs, addressing human trafficking and supports for people who experience violence at home).

**2021:** The General Assembly adopted a report on violent encounters between police services and Black and Indigenous people, discussing systemic racism and its impacts on targeted violence toward Black and Indigenous people, and the disproportionate numbers of Black and Indigenous people in the justice system. (A&P 2021, pp. 430-432, 38)

The Moderator wrote to the Government of Canada encouraging the creation of a centralized, national data collection system to record race-based data with policing, including use of force; and to provinces and territories advocating that responsibility and funding for wellness checks is reallocated away from police to community and healthcare-based crisis intervention workers. (A&P 2021, pp. 430-432, 38)

The General Assembly adopted a report affirming that poverty (along with racism, misogyny, social and economic marginalization and gun violence) breaks down community safety, health and wellness. The report advocated that social programs must proactively address these things to encourage community wellness. (A&P 2021, pp. 432-436, 38)

The General Assembly adopted recommendations that the Moderator write to the Government of Canada encouraging that Canada pressure Israel to adhere to international law related to annexation of the occupied territories and the right of return of the Palestinian people, convey



dismay regarding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and other areas of the Palestinian Territories, and that the Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations be given authority to take stronger action in support of recommendations on Palestine. (A&P 2021, pp. 351-360)

**2022:** The General Assembly adopted a Confession to God and LGBTQI People, confessing the harm caused by homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism and hypocrisy in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and committing the church to a true change of heart and behaviour. (A&P 2022, p. 280-284, p. 19)

**2023:** The PCC endorsed a joint interfaith statement on the Treaty to ban nuclear weapons. General Assembly adopted a Confession acknowledging that racist values assuming the superiority of the dominant culture [white Europeans] has shaped the church and restating the church's commitment to turn from the sin of racism. (A&P 2023, pp. 33, 240-4)

The General Assembly adopted a recommendation from the National Indigenous Ministries Council (NIMC) that the church develop a renewed apology for its role in colonization and in the operation of residential schools, to be presented to the 2024 General Assembly. (A&P 2023, pp. 29, 222)

The General Assembly adopted a motion supporting the safety and well-being of LGBTQI+ people, including a recommendation that congregations be encouraged to consider responses in their local communities to acts of hate and harm towards the LGBTQI+ community and sponsorship support of LGBTQI+ refugees. (A&P 2023, p. 23)

The General Assembly received a report on environmental racism (the influences of systemic racism and colonization that lead to disproportionate impacts of climate change and environmental toxins from waste on racialized and Indigenous communities) and requested that the Moderator write the Minister of Environment and Climate Change expressing support for the development of a strategy to examine the links between race, socio-economic status and environmental risk and address environmental racism in Canada. Presbyteries, congregations and individuals were invited to write their local member of parliament for the same purpose. (A&P 2023 174, 24)

The General Assembly passed a recommendation that commended congregations and individuals for their generous support in their response to the Ukraine Relief appeal. (A&P 2023, pp. 24, 194)

In October of 2023, the Moderator wrote a letter urging the Prime Minister of Canada to call for a ceasefire, the safe release of all hostages, a safe corridor for humanitarian aid, de-escalation of violence and an end to the blockade in the ongoing violence between Hamas and Israel.

**2024:** The PCC joined a call by sixteen global humanitarian and human rights organizations demanding all UN member states halt arms transfers to Israel and Palestinian armed groups fueling the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip.

The General Assembly adopted an apology for the church's role in residential schools and colonization which included five fundamental commitments: We will continue to listen and learn from Indigenous people, leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, welcoming and engaging voices from

both within and beyond The Presbyterian Church in Canada; We will continue the work of reconciliation, responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the work of reparation that we have begun; We will respect traditional Indigenous spiritual practices; We will listen to and tell the truth about the past; We will work to support Indigenous led healing and wellness initiatives and be in solidarity with Indigenous people and communities. (A&P 2024, Report of the Special Committee re Renewed Apology re Role in Colonialism and Residential Schools)

The General Assembly also adopted a recommendation that \$100,000 be provided for Gaza Food Relief, as well as recommendations giving financial support to Defense for Children International and the Olive Tree Campaign. (A&P 2024, Report of the International Affairs Committee)

*For more information and resources regarding the PCC's history of engagement with peacemaking, see the Social Action Hub: <https://presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/>*

### **What does peacemaking look like in the church today?**

The brief history above shows how, in the broadest and most wholistic sense, peacemaking is working to strengthen bonds within and across community difference, and to provide for contexts allowing all to flourish. It is always concerned with ending war and conflict and with establishing just contexts that sustain peace, but it also must always be concerned with working to end the root causes of conflict: things like racism and oppression, poverty, marginalization, and the destruction of the earth through both war and climate change.

### **Some Ways that Christians Can Become Involved in Peacemaking Today Include:**

- Working locally to address marginalization and increase safety nets through things like mutual aid and advocacy for safe and affordable housing, food security, a guaranteed livable income, and meeting the needs of vulnerable people;
- Acknowledging where the church has been a cause of harm or conflict, animating the apologies and confessions we have made and supporting associated efforts for healing, amends and reparation;
- Advocating with elected officials for peacemaking initiatives on any number of issues the church has spoken on, for example: the need for funding for community programs addressing the roots of violence, the Arms Trade Treaty and nuclear disarmament, promoting environmental sustainability for the future of the earth and a just transition to a low carbon economy or safeguarding refugees and asylum seekers driven from their homes due to conflict. (For letter templates on these issues and more visit [presbyterian.ca/resources/advocacy/](https://presbyterian.ca/resources/advocacy/));
- Working with key decision makers to support efforts for corporate social responsibility and fair living wages (for example, though groups like SHARE: Shareholder Association for Research and Education, an organization the PCC has previously partnered with).

Lastly, one of the greatest things the church can contribute to peacemaking today is speaking out against hate and demonstrating the care that comes from loving our neighbour. Wherever hate is allowed to flourish, conflict and violence will have deep wells to sustain themselves; demonstrating love gives communities different, healthy wells to draw from.

Expressions of hate are incompatible with peacemaking. Christians are called to love all neighbours, regardless of how different their beliefs or lives are, as Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan shows. It did not matter to the Samaritan who the wounded man on the road to Jericho was, what he had done, or whether they were related through familial or community bonds. It only mattered that he was wounded and in need of help and protection. Peacemaking today, then, looks at who society has allowed to be set upon like the man on the road to Jericho, and then actively works to care for the safety and concrete needs of those people most under threat—even and especially when we are not necessarily part of those targeted communities.

### **Food for Thought: Reflecting on Some of Our Commitments**

This resource has set peacemaking in a broader context of dealing with the root causes of conflict rather than simply the absence of active war or conflict. Having spent some time engaging with some of the church's history of peacemaking and the reflection provided here, take a look again at the following two quotes taken from *Living Faith* and "A Theology of Peacemaking" and then consider the following questions.

"The task of seeking peace includes examining the root causes of conflict, poverty, disease, tyranny and environmental disasters. We are called to consider how the sinful desire for ever-increasing wealth and domination over others has produced a bitter harvest which disrupts true peace for everyone. Thus, we are called to seek justice in all areas of our common life - economic, political, social, etc. - in order that the conditions that make for peace are established everywhere." ("A Theology of Peacemaking" A&P 1994, p. 359)

We protest against the world arms race that diminishes our ability to fight hunger, ignorance, poverty, and disease. We fear nuclear war and the devastation it would bring. We affirm that God is at work when people are ashamed of the inhumanity of war and work for peace with justice. We pray for peace to him who is the Prince of Peace." (*Living Faith*, 8.5.3)

### **Some Questions for Study & Reflection:**

- This resource has highlighted the connectedness of peace with justice. In what ways have you seen the roots of conflict at work? In what ways have you seen people working to address them?
- As you read through the brief history of positions the PCC has taken with regard to peace included here, did any surprise you or give you pause? Why?
- What are some areas of peacemaking you can think of that this resource hasn't covered?
- Think of a particularly volatile or entrenched conflict. Having reflected on what has been said here on peacemaking, what principles do you think would be good to ground yourself in as you work toward peacemaking?

In closing, consider this peacemaking prayer or use of your own:

### **A Prayer for Peace**

In closing, consider this peacemaking prayer or use one of your own:

*Enliven us Christ with your unfailing love  
and bring peace and gentleness  
and joy to this world.*

*From hate  
from violence  
from arrogance and fanaticism  
keep us and save us oh God.*

*Comforting Spirit, give us love to counter all hate and fear  
And strength to work for justice and peace for all.*



*This resource was produced through the Life and Mission Agency; for more information  
please contact Justice Ministries ([justice@presbyterian.ca](mailto:justice@presbyterian.ca)) or visit the Social Action Hub at  
<https://presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/>*