



Peacemaking 101

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What is peacemaking? Some insights gleaned through almost thirty years of peacemaking with Presbyterians, congregations, governing bodies, secular groups, ecumenical and interfaith partners, and national and international colleagues.

Peacemaking is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peace is a gift from God. The biblical vision of peace encompasses the justice and wellbeing that God intends for all creation. In a world wounded by sin, God offers healing, wholeness, mercy, and justice. God calls the followers of Jesus Christ to share the gospel message of peace by seeking to heal brokenness wherever they encounter it. God calls the followers of Jesus Christ to be peacemakers.

Peacemaking is our calling in all arenas of life.

Peace is not just the absence of war or conflict. The biblical concept of shalom proclaims that peace involves wholeness and right relationships in all of life. Peacemakers seek to offer peace wherever we encounter brokenness: in individual lives, families, congregations, communities, between nations, and with creation.

Peacemaking is the task of the whole church.

Peacemaking is not just the ministry of individuals or of a committee. Effective peacemaking is integrated throughout the life of congregations and governing bodies in the worship and educational experiences, in the ministries of the various groups and committees, and in the ways people relate to one another.

Peacemaking is an enterprise of justice.

Peace will never be achieved as long as injustice exists. The biblical witness repeatedly affirms that those who are committed to peace are called to stand with those who are poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged and to advocate for justice for all of God's creation. Peacemakers confront injustice wherever it is encountered and work for change.

Peacemaking is proclaiming Good News.

Peacemakers work out of their experience of God's peace in Jesus Christ. Individually, we know God's peace as salvation. Corporately we share that peace when we engage in ministries that promote justice and righteousness. When we support safe houses for those affected by domestic violence, build bridges of understanding across the chasm of racism, advocate for laws that promote just and equitable lives for all people, learn how to work in the interfaith arena, or listen to a friend from next door or around the world, we connect peacemaking and evangelism.

Peacemaking is working in partnership.

We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. We find partners in ministry in our families, congregations, community, denomination, and faith-based and secular organizations in this country and around the world. We pray for each other, cooperate on projects, and provide encouragement as we each seek to respond to God's call. Peacemakers may work individually but they rarely work alone.

Peacemaking is a lifelong journey.

An old union song reminds us that "step by step the longest march can be won." Peacemaking is a long haul commitment to a way of living, not a program that is done once and for all. At different times, faced with different situations, we engage in different ministries of peacemaking. Peacemakers recognize that individuals, congregations, and groups are at different places on that journey and seek to meet them where they are.

Peacemaking is joyous and hopeful.

Peacemakers are too well aware of humanity's potential for sin to be optimists. Instead, peacemakers are people of hope, connected to God's vision of peace that reminds us the world does not need to be the way it is. God's vision calls us to imagine new possibilities. God's vision sustains us as we work to bring those possibilities into reality, reminding us that God's will, will be done.

Peacemaking is fun.

Peacemaking involves laughter, smiles, dancing, and singing. Peacemakers make wonderful colleagues and friends. Celebrating small steps, little victories and moments of grace amazing, helps sustain peacemakers for the long haul.

Peacemaking is best done peaceably.

The ends are always inherent in the means. Peacemaking is not just about what we do, it is about how we live and how we relate to others. Peacemakers do not avoid conflict but develop healthy processes for working through conflict and skills for dealing with tough issues. Respect for others, especially those with whom we disagree, plays a key role in peacemaking.

Peacemaking is an act of trust.

Inspired by God's vision, peacemakers engage in ministry as we are called using the gifts God has given to us. Peacemakers seek to bring God's promised future into being, trusting God to guide and bless our efforts-sometimes in ways we cannot even begin to imagine!