

## Unitarian Universalist Congregational Peacemaking Study/Action Issue Program

### Our Commitment to Peacemaking: The “Peacemaking” and “Center for Peacemaking” Pledges

#### Introduction

The following has been developed for use in creating formal congregational commitments to peacemaking. It is envisioned that this concept will be refined over the next year and once the Peacemaking Statement of Conscience has been adopted, congregations will be encouraged to develop such commitments during the Year of Implementation mandated by UUA bylaws. (The adoption of the Peacemaking Statement of Conscience will occur at the General Assembly in June 2009, unless the Statement is delayed for an additional year of study.)

The Peacemaking Congregational Study/Action Issue Core Team, a network of volunteers facilitating the Study/Action Issue, would welcome any suggestions in improving this program, and would also welcome actual pledges that are adopted, to post on the Peacemaking website. Please send comments and adopted pledges to Holly Zeeb at [hollyzeeb@rcn.com](mailto:hollyzeeb@rcn.com) or Judy Morgan at [judymorgan711@yahoo.com](mailto:judymorgan711@yahoo.com).

#### Description

The Peacemaking Pledge provides a way that congregations can affirm peacemaking as an integral part of their mission and day-to-day congregational life. The Pledge is a commitment to play a role in building a culture of peace – a society in which the values of inclusiveness, compassion, respect and reverence for all people, all life, all existence, are held paramount over the values of domination, depersonalization, and militarism.

Congregations are encouraged to develop their own Pledge in a creative and inclusive way, engaging the whole congregation in discussion about what peacemaking is and how we can be effective peacemakers as individuals and as a community. A variety of resources for study and discussion are available at [www.uua.org/peacemaking](http://www.uua.org/peacemaking).

A sample Peacemaking Pledge is provided below that could be used as a starting point or congregations may choose to create theirs completely on their own. You may, for example, wish to focus on a particular arena of Peacemaking of concern to your congregation rather than seeking to address all the potential dimensions of the topic.

Some congregations may wish to play a more public and visible role in peacemaking. Congregations choosing this option could become “Centers for Peacemaking” by pledging to offer education, resources, and leadership on peacemaking to the wider public. Congregations who begin by affirming peacemaking through the Peacemaking Pledge may be drawn to this more ambitious commitment over time.

We suggest that the Pledge be for a limited period, such as five years, so that it is periodically revisited, revised, and renewed.

#### **“PEACEMAKING PLEDGE” - SAMPLE**

[Can be used as a starting point in developing your own congregation’s pledge]

*On \_\_\_\_\_, the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ formally pledges itself to building a culture of peace over the next \_\_\_\_\_ years. We pledge our commitment to peace in the following ways.*

### ***Inward Peacemaking***

*We pledge to continue to learn as a community to create deeper peace within ourselves as individuals. In building our own inner harmony, self-acceptance, compassionate understanding of our own needs and feelings, we increase our capacity to provide that to others. Inner peace empowers us to build outward peace.*

### ***Interpersonal Peacemaking***

*We pledge to create deeper peace in our relations with others, through learning to: listen more deeply; communicate our feelings and needs in effective, non-blaming and non-shaming ways; handle conflicts skillfully and respectfully; see always the ‘inherent worth and dignity’ in the other despite differences.*

### ***Congregational Peacemaking***

*We pledge to create deeper peace within our congregation through:*

- *building norms of respect and understanding for those who differ from us by belief, ethnic background, culture, gender orientation, or style*
- *making congregational decisions in ways that build consensus through finding common ground and ‘win-win’ solutions, avoiding power struggles and factions*
- *having in place an effective process for resolving conflicts within the congregation.*

### ***Societal Peacemaking***

*We pledge to build a deeper understanding of systemic violence and to be active in the wider community in reducing systemic causes of violence. We do this through:*

- *participating in local, regional, and national efforts to build a more peaceful and just society*
- *addressing racism, classism and other forms of cultural and economic oppression*
- *working toward changes in life style and policies that lead us toward greater harmony with our natural environment*
- *envisioning and working toward a society that respects the inherent worth and dignity of each person.*

### ***International Peacemaking***

*We pledge to build a deeper understanding of the causes of, and ways to prevent, war and intercommunity violence. We pledge to learn about and support:*

- *peaceful approaches to international conflicts*
- *international programs that encourage healthy and balanced economic development in all countries*
- *international efforts that address the causes of violence – poverty, economic instability, lack of education, etc..*

***We commit ourselves to the following specific actions in these areas over the next \_\_\_ years:***

[Note: A list of examples of activities that have been undertaken by congegations is attached.]

## **“CENTER FOR PEACEMAKING PLEDGE” – SAMPLE**

In addition to the general commitments to peacemaking in the Peacemaking Pledge, there would be an additional section along the following lines:

### ***Creating a Center for Peacemaking***

*We pledge to use our congregation's resources to not only become effective in peacemaking within our congregations, but to be a recognized resource for peacemaking education, training, mediation services, and leadership in our wider community.*

***We commit ourselves to the following specific actions in these areas over the next \_\_ years:***

These actions might include any of the following examples:

- Offering classes in Nonviolent Communication open to the public
- Creating a mediation team of congregation members, trained in mediation, who could then be resource people for disputes within the community.
- Initiating community-wide peace education programs
- Advocating for programs in effective communication and conflict resolution in areas of the community experiencing violence.
- Advocating for effective conflict management education at all levels of the educational system.

### **ATTACHMENT – EXAMPLES OF PEACEMAKING ACTIONS CONGREGATIONS HAVE UNDERTAKEN**

[Note: Also see “Success Stories” at [www.uua.org/peacemaking](http://www.uua.org/peacemaking), for more detailed accounts of some inspiring examples.]

#### **Inward Peacemaking**

- Created ongoing programs for individual spiritual development each year, such as meditation, yoga, reading and discussion of spiritual texts
- Included inner spiritual development as a regular theme in Sunday services

#### **Interpersonal Peacemaking**

- Sponsored workshops and classes in Nonviolent Communication and other conflict resolution approaches
- Created a formal procedure for handling conflicts between members of the congregation
- Held workshops in deep listening and empathy

#### **Congregational Peacemaking**

- Held a film series on the subject of peace
- Dedicated several worship services a year to peace and justice
- Had a majority of the congregation sign the UNESCO Pledge for Peace at [http://www3.unesco.org/manifesto2000/uk/uk\\_6points.htm](http://www3.unesco.org/manifesto2000/uk/uk_6points.htm)
- Dedicated a children's chapel to peace
- Sponsored a peace essay, poetry, and art exhibition for children and adults
- Developed a Covenant of Right Relationship, including guidelines for handling conflicts
- Provided training in decisionmaking approaches, such as consensus, that are inclusive and respectful of divergent perspectives.

#### **Societal Peacemaking**

- Held a vigil for peace that was publicized to the community
- At Sunday services sold fair trade products, such as coffee.
- Wrote letters to the editor for the local paper on peace issues

- Organized a public forum, workshop or conference on peace issues
- Sponsored an interfaith peace festival, with music, booths, etc.
- Networked with other peace organizations
- Invested some of the congregation's assets in "socially responsible" funds.
- Had workshops on approaches to social justice, such as fair trade, living wage, universal access to health care, etc.

### **International Peacemaking**

- Held workshops on topics such as the UN Millennium Development Goals, which seek to reduce extreme poverty by half and provide universal primary education by 2015
- Wrote letters legislative officials on issues of peace
- Organized a group to go to large demonstrations for peace
- Held a petition drive for important legislative peace initiatives
- Commemorated International Peace Day September 21st