

**THE MEANING OF PEACEMAKING IN OUR LIVES:  
INTRODUCTION TO THE UU PEACEMAKING STUDY ACTION PROGRAM  
Guide for Facilitators  
February, 2007**

**Introduction:** The purpose of this workshop is to 1) engage congregation members in an initial sharing of personal experiences and views relating to peace and violence, and 2) to build awareness of, and interest in, the Peacemaking Congregational Study Action Issue program.

Following is the suggested format for the workshop, with notes for the facilitator provided in italics. Also attached is a handout that can be provided to all participants. Feel free to adapt this format for your congregation.

The workshop can be adjusted to take 60 to 90 minutes. If 60 minutes, the small group discussion (steps 5-8) should only be 30 minutes and the individual sharing (step 9) should be only 5 minutes. If 90 minutes, the small group discussion (steps 5-8) can be 50 minutes and the closing individual sharing can be 15 minutes.

1. Chalice Lighting

2. Opening Reading:

**Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds. Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.**

**Let us be aware of the source of being, common to us all and to all living things.**

**Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion – towards ourselves and toward all living beings.**

**Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other.**

**With humility, with awareness of the existence of life, and of the sufferings that are going on around us, let us practice the establishment of peace ...**

*Thich N'hat Hanh, in *Singing the Living Tradition*, #505*

3. Introduction to Workshop – *Share the following or similar welcome.*

**Thank you for your interest in this workshop. The content has been provided by the national UU Peacemaking Congregational Study Action Issue (CSAI) Program. At the June 2006 General Assembly, the topic of Peacemaking was selected as a CSAI for four years of study and action by UU congregations. This workshop today is intended to provide an initial exploration of peace and violence, and how we are affected personally.**

**In addition to this workshop, the national Peacemaking CSAI Program is providing other options for involvement in peacemaking during 2007 – and encouraging congregations to develop their own initiatives! Available from the UU website –**

**[www.uua.org/csw/issues\\_pm.htm](http://www.uua.org/csw/issues_pm.htm) - are the following:**

**1) a set of small group discussions on key peacemaking topics, including interpersonal, congregational, societal, and international aspects. These can be used within existing covenant groups, or to create new peacemaking discussion groups.**

**2) a Resource Guide that has numerous books and other resources that could be selected for peacemaking study groups.**

**3) a listing, within the Resource Guide, of curricula from other organizations, that could be used for serious study of peacemaking concepts and skills.**

**It is anticipated that additional materials will be available in September 2007.**

**The volunteers who are working on the Peacemaking Study/Action Program hope that UUs will find this study of peacemaking to be a powerful experience, that it will provide tools and concepts useful for building greater trust and harmony in all relationships and organizations, including our congregations. Feedback and suggestions are very much invited, as noted in the handout you have received.**

**The handout also describes other resources and activities relating to the Peacemaking Program. This church is planning [describe whatever other Peacemaking-related programs are being offered].**

4. Ground Rules – *Share the following ground rules:*

**For the purpose of this workshop we will use the following ground rules:**

- **Listen respectfully to each speaker without interruption**
- **Keep an open mind, be open to new insights**
- **If you disagree, share what you believe rather than criticizing the other viewpoint**

**Thanks for your cooperation in observing the ground rules.**

5. *Break into small groups of 6-10 people each if more than 10 or 20 are participating in the workshop. Identify volunteer facilitators in advance for the small groups, who will help the groups observe the ground rules and discuss the questions below. You could say something like:*

**We are going to explore today some key aspects of peacemaking and violence. In order to have sufficient time for sharing and discussion we're going to break into small groups. Please divide up into circles of \_\_\_ people.**

6. Check-ins – *The group is asked to each briefly share their name and how they got that name [or use another question of your choice]. If the workshop is intended to be only 60 minutes, ask people to say only a sentence or two. If intended to be 90 minutes, people can take a minute or two.*

7. Reading for discussion: *Have each person in the group take turns reading the attached “**Reading for Discussion**” aloud, paragraph at a time.*

8. Discussion questions (*give each person the attached handout, so they can refer to it during discussion*). *Read the question and invite responses.*

*Under each question are listed some prompts, in case people are reticent or unclear about the meaning of the question. If any one person speaks at great length or tends to dominate the group, say something like, “Let’s hear some other perspectives on that,” or “Would anyone else like to comment?”*

*Be sure to get through Questions A and B; do C if you have time remaining.*

**A) “First reflect on someone in your life to whom you feel grateful for their love, concern, and support. [Give a moment for reflection.] Now reflect on a very different situation; think of a time that you felt physically or emotionally hurt by someone, or by a group. Recall how you felt. [Give a moment.] What did you understand to be the cause of**

**that person’s or group’s hurtful behavior at the time, and how do you understand it now?”**

*Additional prompts: For example, some views of the causes of violence are:*

- evil
- emotional wounds from the other person’s past
- not having communication and interpersonal skills to meet core human needs in a healthy and effective way
- having learned violence as a strategy to have power
- prejudice, discrimination

**B) “What was an example that impressed you of someone responding to hurtful behavior in an effective way? (This could be physically or emotionally hurtful, and it could be someone in your life, a public figure, a group, or a movement.) What made it effective, and what did you learn from that example?”**

*Additional prompts: For example, some might think of an experience with a parent, a teacher, a friend, or Gandhi or Martin Luther King*

**C) “Is a world free of violence, or with less violence, possible? What would be required to create a world with less violence, or free of violence?”**

*Additional prompts: For example, some views of what would be needed are:*

- a just economic system, so that everyone’s core human needs are met
- universal education in conflict resolution and communication skills
- a spiritual understanding of our interconnectedness

9) Closing sharing: **“What was a new idea or insight on peace and violence you gained from this discussion?”** ( *If the workshop includes a larger number of people and you have broken into small groups, you can either have people do their closing sharing in the small groups, or bring them back together to share in the whole group. For the 60-minute workshop option, allow up to five minutes in total for individuals to share -- either in the small group, or invite just a few people to share on in the large group. For the 90-minute version, 15 minutes can be allowed for Step 9 – you may want to bring people back to the whole group so that more people can share and be heard by the whole group.*)

10) Closing reading [*the facilitator may read this or ask someone else to*]:

**This is the mission of our faith:**

**To teach the fragile art of hospitality;**

**To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;**

**To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;**

**And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands.**

**William F. Schulz, in *Singing the Living Tradition*, #459**

11) Extinguish chalice

*Prepared by Judy Morgan with input from the Peacemaking CSAI Core Team, February 2007*

## READING FOR DISCUSSION

*The following reading is an excerpt from the Introduction to the UU Peacemaking Study Action Issue Resource Guide written by Rob Keithan, Director, UUA Washington Office for Advocacy:*

The issue of Peacemaking...kick[s] off a new chapter in the Unitarian Universalist Social Witness Process, thanks to major bylaw revisions made at the 2006 General Assembly. The primary rationale for those changes was to give Unitarian Universalist congregations, groups, and individuals more time for thoughtful engagement of the issue, including time for implementation, in a way that could be better supported by UUA staff. The new Congregational Study/Action Issue process will last for four years (rather than two), and allows for a full year of implementation for statements of conscience approved by the General Assembly. For more information...[including a Peacemaking "Resource Guide"], visit the website of the Commission on Social Witness at [http://www.uua.org/csw/issues\\_pm.htm...](http://www.uua.org/csw/issues_pm.htm...)

I believe that "Peacemaking" is an issue that is ideally suited for this new process. It demands urgent actions and begs for long-term engagement. It's equally relevant to our most intimate relationships and to international relations. It calls us to look inward and to speak out.

I anticipate that many congregations will wrestle with the question of when to look inward and when to speak out. I believe that it is critical to view both of these activities as vitally important; not as mutually exclusive but an ongoing cycle of education, action, and reflection. I believe that our religious movement is long overdue for a thoughtful and challenging discussion of our history and theology related to issues of war and peace. To be successful, this discussion has to be personal. We must hear each other's stories and honestly reflect on our experiences and beliefs—and why we have them. We must be willing to disagree with each other in ways that are healthy and respectful. We should pay special attention to those who have suffered and continue to suffer the effects of violence, hearing their stories and providing support when possible.

Our world is also overdue, for a path that leads us away from the suffering and violence in the Middle East, in Darfur, and in our own communities and homes. Action is needed. The world we seek and the world we live in are not the same, but it is only through our human actions—and for some of us the grace of God—that we make our vision closer to a reality...

Whatever the action, I simply hope that congregations choose to do something! ... The success of the Congregational Study/Action Issue Process depends on congregational participation.

Enjoy, and Good Luck!

*Rob Keithan*

*Director, UUA Washington Office for Advocacy*

## Peacemaking Congregational Study/Action Issue Introductory Workshop Handout

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Check-in – Each person shares briefly
- Reading for discussion – Group members take turns reading paragraphs
- Discussion questions:

**A) First reflect on someone to whom you feel grateful for their continuing love, concern, and support. .... Now reflect on a very different situation; think of a time that you felt physically or emotionally hurt by someone. Recall how you felt. .... What did you understand to be the cause of that person’s hurtful behavior at the time, and how do you understand it now?”**

**B) What was an example that impressed you of someone responding to hurtful behavior in an effective way? (It could be physically or emotionally hurtful, and it could be someone in your life, a public figure, a group, or a movement.) What made it effective, and what did you learn from that example?**

**C) Is a world free of violence, or with less violence, possible? What would be required to create a world with less violence, or free of violence?**

### GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION

- **Listen respectfully to each speaker without interruption**
- **Keep an open mind, open to new insights**
- **If you disagree, share what you believe rather than criticizing the other viewpoint**

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -- WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PEACEMAKING STUDY ACTION PROCESS:

- **Participate** in small group discussions using session plans available at the CSW website, [www.uua.org/csw/issues\\_pm.htm](http://www.uua.org/csw/issues_pm.htm).
- **Read** one of the books listed in the Peacemaking CSAI Resource Guide available at the CSW website. Or organize a study group to read through a book or several books.
- **Give feedback** on the Peacemaking Resource Guide and other aspects of the Peacemaking Program by using the online feedback form at [www.uua.org/csw](http://www.uua.org/csw) (click on Submissions) – or you can send suggestions to John Hooper at [jhooper@optonline.net](mailto:jhooper@optonline.net) or Judy Morgan at [judymorgan711@yahoo.com](mailto:judymorgan711@yahoo.com).
- **Create** a peacemaking program in your church with other interested people – for example: provide music or art related to peace; organize a study group on Marshall Rosenberg’s book, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*; or set up a workshop by a local conflict management expert that’s open to the public. ...Let your creative energies flow freely! And let us know what you come up with (at the above addresses), so we can publicize it to other congregations!
- **Join** the UUA List to be part of a network of people interested in the Peacemaking CSAI, by going to <http://lists.uua.org/> and clicking on ‘Peacemaking-network.’
- **Volunteer** to help with the CSAI – a list of volunteer options is at the above CSW website.