

The Way of Peace

Anzac Centenary Edition 1915-2015

#1 Growing a Culture of Peace

The expression “culture of peace” was adopted in 2000 by the UN for the International Decade for Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

“In order to make possible a future of peace for coming generations, our first task is to educate for peace in order to build a culture of peace.” Pope Benedict XVI

“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” Nelson Mandela

April 25th, 2015 will mark the Centenary of the terrible battle at Gallipoli. World War 1 was supposed to be the war to end all wars. One hundred years after that period of suffering, death and destruction that gave rise to the ANZAC tradition, what have we learned about peace?

We know that war doesn't bring lasting peace. The Twentieth Century was the most violent in the history of the world. The 21st Century has already had its share of violence. In fact it could be said that we are living in a culture of violence. Violence is a consequence of a fundamental commitment to an acquisitive mode of being, thinking, doing. Peace is an evolutionary process of a fundamental commitment to a contributive mode of being, thinking, doing.

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Rom 14:19

Peace may be understood in many ways:

Negative peace

- Absence of war or violence
- Absence of structures which may cause violence to people, eg. economic structures
- Absence of cultural violence, eg. racial discrimination

Positive peace

- Personal peace, eg. inner well being
- Structural peace, eg. structures which allow development or collaboration
- Gandian peace or active non-violence in the face of oppression
- Cosmic or Christic peace, eg. sense of interconnectedness and solidarity with all living things and the Earth.
- Right relationships, eg. reconciliation

Violence comes in many forms

- Violent response to violence eg retaliation
- Verbal abuse or bullying on social media
- Domestic violence
- Destruction of the natural world
- Structural poverty and disadvantage
- War or threat of war
- Torture or slavery
- Sexual assault or harassment
- Denial of basic human rights

Culture is the shared, learned, symbolic system of values, beliefs and attitudes which shapes and influences perceptions and behavior.

A Culture of Peace includes a culture of life, a culture of human rights and responsibilities and a culture of ecological awareness and living.

Growing a Culture of Peace implies that the seeds of peace have been planted and are being nurtured at the personal, local, national, regional and international levels. This takes courage and effort and honours the memory of those who suffered and died in war.

...Peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth and the larger whole of which we are part...

Earth Charter www.earthcharter.org



Cartoon source: Pontius Puddle: www.pontius.com

Profile of a Peacemaker



Doug Hewitt, a member of the Uniting Church, taught for many years at Australian Catholic University, where he introduced several courses in peace and justice for teacher education students. On his retirement, he worked with the National Council of Churches and the NSW Ecumenical Council. He is passionate about causes for peace with justice, particularly for the Palestinian peoples. In the Hunter region he has been involved in prayer vigils and other actions. For over 25 years Doug has been a committee member of the international development agency of the National Council of Churches, now called *Act for Peace*.

As a committed ecumenist, he attended his third World Council of Churches Assembly in Busan, Korea late in 2013. All participants were invited to go from there on a *Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*. The NSW Ecumenical Council accepted that challenge, and with Doug's inspiration, in August 2014 a forum, *Achieving Peace with Justice*, was held. Faith based justice and peace agencies came together to affirm and strengthen their commitment to continue striving for peace with justice, and to act in solidarity for those oppressed by inequitable structures in our society.

Fact File

The Tent of Nations Farm near Bethlehem in Palestine, in the face of unjust aggression by the Israeli military, lives out its motto, "We refuse to be enemies". Instead it builds bridges across different cultures and religions through education and farming. www.tentofnations.org

Much is made of sacrifice in war. Not a lot is heard of those who sacrificed to prevent war. Franz Jagerstatter was an Austrian farmer who refused to co-operate with what he saw as the evil of the Nazis. He was executed in 1943 during World War 2 and has been declared a saint. www.catholiceducation.org

Shirley Murray wrote "Hymn for Anzac Day" which includes the verse "Honour the brave whose conscience was their call, answered no bugle, went against the wall, suffered in prisons of contempt and shame, branded as cowards, in our country's name." *Hope is Our Song, New Hymns and Songs from Aotearoa New Zealand, New Zealand Hymn Book Trust, 2009.*

Discuss:

"To stop the unjust aggressor is licit." *Pope Francis, Sept 8th, 2014.*

How can each one of us relearn ways to do this without resorting to violence?

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth.

Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate...

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot overcome darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Martin Luther King

Useful Links

Pax Christi: www.paxchristi.org.au

World Peace: www.worldpeace.org

Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies:
<http://sydney.edu.au>

Parliament of World Religions:
www.parliamentofreligions.org

World Council of Churches:
www.oikoumene.org