



Mennonite World Conference Peace Council

MWC Peace Council Report to General Council August 17, 2003 Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

The Peace Council met August 12 and 13 at the MWC Assembly in Zimbabwe. Participants considered the summary of peacemaking stories that had been collected. The following summary includes additional points that arose from the discussion.

I. Continuum of Peacemaking Activities:

All Christians are called to be peacemakers but this can happen on a variety of levels. The discussion identified the following levels, with the understanding that this is not an exhaustive list:

- a. Peace with God: individual conversion creates a new person who can live at peace. This is the base for all the other levels of peacemaking.
- b. Peace within one's self: self-esteem and integrity are important components of peacemaking.
- c. Peace within the family: churches work with family life and relationships, and issues of domestic violence.
- d. Peacemaking within congregations and conferences: churches have dealt with internal conflicts.
- e. Peacemaking with neighbours and among neighbours: churches have worked at solving conflicts with other in their area and among groups in their communities.
- f. Peacemaking with other. Christians: conversation and witness reaches across historical divisions
- g. Peacemaking with members of other faiths: churches struggle with questions of how to relate with respect and witness with integrity.
- h. Peacemaking within nations and between nations: churches have worked for peace on national and international levels.
- i. Peacemaking with the environment: churches strive to live in ways that care for the earth.
- j. Peacemaking with enemies: at all levels of relationship, this is a spiritual challenge.

2. Biblical virtues that undergird Peacemaking:

The peacemaking activities of churches grow out of their reading of the Bible. A number of Biblical virtues serve as a basis for peacemaking:

- liberty
- Joy
- Self-esteem
- courage
- love
- humility
- corporateness
- repentance
- suffering (which includes patience, forbearance, and endurance)
- forgiveness
- reconciliation, which includes restoration
- justice and peace, held together
- witnessing
- confrontation of injustice



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3. Practices that form Christians as Peacemakers:

Peace Council participants noted practices that instill peacemaking as a habitual practice for Christians:

- a. Catechizing and discipling: Christians' identity as peacemakers is imparted in the way churches teach and receive new members.
- b. Worship: peacemaking identity and habits are instilled in the way congregations worship God.
- c. Prayer: peacemaking habits are engendered by prayer and the spiritual disciplines. Witness to the powers can also be considered as prayer.
- d. Christian education: this shapes peacemakers, and should include specific training for all ages, including church leadership, in peacemaking skills.
- e. Voluntary service: these activities can help young Christians learn peacemaking by doing it.
- f. Global awareness: this expands understanding of those beyond our boundaries, and should also include awareness of inter-ethnic and inter-faith differences.
- g. Non-violent action: advocacy to those in power and actions that confront injustice help Christians develop peacemaking skills

4. Recommendations to MWC:

The Peace Council participants encouraged MWC to continue making peace one of the center points of conversation between our member churches. They made several specific recommendations in this regard:

- a. MWC should encourage all member churches to find ways to cooperate with other Christian churches and groups in their contexts in peacemaking efforts, with special attention to activities of churches within the Decade to Overcome Violence.
- b. MWC should designate one Sunday each year as a global Peace Sunday, which member churches could observe with special worship services, similar to the World Fellowship Sunday. Suggested worship materials could be provided for this day.
- c. The next World Assembly should have one day or one worship service with a theme of peace. This could include sharing of stories from around the world of ways churches are working for peace.

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