

SIMPLE AND QUIET SISTERS:

PEACE AND LOVE REQUIRE NO WEAPONS

Multi-faith perspectives on peace
from
St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church
Festival of Lights



Edited by John Bottomley

Foreword by Mark Zirnsac

May 2007

**SIMPLE AND QUIET SISTERS:
peace and love require no weapons**

A report of multi-faith perspectives on peace
from
St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church
Festival of Lights

Edited by John Bottomley

**With a Foreword by Dr Mark Zirnsak
Director, Justice and International Mission Unit
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
Uniting Church in Australia**

May 2007

Published by the
CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK
PO Box 362, St. Kilda, Australia 3182

Telephone (03) 9527 2283
(03) 9827 8322
www.cmn.unitingcare.org.au

SIMPLE AND QUIET SISTERS:
peace and love require no weapons

© St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church Council

Published 2007

ISBN 0 9752086 4 0

Design and layout by Margaret Neith

Printed and bound in Australia by Minuteman Press South Melbourne

So long as the text is not altered, whole or part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church Council and the Creative Ministries Network gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Justice and International Mission Unit of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

FOREWORD

Simple and Quiet Sisters

The Uniting Church in Australia from its foundations has understood the desire for peace with justice to be fundamental to the Gospels. In its 'Statement to the Nation' at the Inaugural Assembly in June 1977 the Uniting Church expressed its:

“concern for the welfare of the whole human race. We pledge ourselves to seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur. We will work for the eradication of poverty and racism within our society and beyond.”

Most recently, the 2003 National Assembly meeting of Uniting Church delegates affirmed that “God came in the crucified and risen Christ to make peace; and that God calls all Christians to be peacemakers, to save life, to heal and love their neighbours; and that the Church is committed to be a peacemaking body”. Specifically the Assembly committed itself to the principles of the World Council of Churches declaration of the *Decade to Overcome Violence* which included “to interact and collaborate with local communities, secular movements, and people of other living faiths towards cultivating a culture of peace.”

The efforts of St George's East St Kilda Uniting Church Festival of Lights, as documented in this report, capture the living out of the above commitments. Expressing commitments to God's just peace is much easier than seeking to live this out in our world. This report is an expression of giving life to the commitments the Uniting Church has made. It has brought together people of different faiths to express a common concern for the search for a just peace in Sri Lanka at a time when it has sunk back into a civil war which pits people against each other on primarily ethnic lines, but with a playing to religious divisions as well.

Dialogue across the ethnic and religious divisions in Sri Lanka is essential if a lasting and meaningful peace is to be achieved.

Civil war has re-emerged in Sri Lanka between the forces of the Government of Sri Lanka and the armed opposition group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). That civil war started in 1983 and claimed an estimated 65,000 lives. A ceasefire was

signed in 2002, but this has now broken down and the civil war is again in full swing, with an estimated 3,000 civilians killed by the start of 2007, half a million people forced to flee their homes and tens of thousands having fled to India.

In a wider context, the actions of the St George's congregation fit within actions being taken by the Uniting Church to give life to the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence. Uniting Church members are working for justice and peace in Indonesia (especially West Papua), the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, the Papua New Guinea highlands, Iraq, and Israel/Palestine.

The Justice and International Mission Unit of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has lobbied the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam to end the human rights abuses that both are responsible for. The Unit is also providing resources for Uniting Church members to write to the Government of Sri Lanka urging it to take steps to uphold basic human rights and negotiate a meaningful peace.

International efforts, such as those of the Uniting Church, other churches and other faith groups, will hopefully, in some small way, have impact over time in pressuring both sides in the conflict in Sri Lanka back to the negotiating table.

This report represents one of those small international steps.

Dr Mark Zirnsak

Director, Justice and International Mission Unit
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia

INTRODUCTION

Rev. John Bottomley

This book draws together three faith perspectives on peace. They were first presented to a Festival of Lights at St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church in December 2006. The Festival was sponsored by the St. George's Council as part of the congregation's commitment to the ministry of peace.

In particular, the Festival aimed to remember the war and violence in Sri Lanka and in the world, and to lift up human hearts in yearning for peace on earth and for love to be shared amongst all humankind.

St. George's is uniquely placed to undertake this ministry for peace in Sri Lanka. The congregation's commitment to peace began over 90 years ago, when St. George's minister Rev. Andrew Gillison was killed at Gallipoli in the courageous act of rescuing a wounded soldier. From 1916, St. George's Church has remembered with deep sorrow war's impact on Australian Defence Forces and our nation. The Rev. Angela Tampiyappa inherited this legacy when she became minister at St. George's, and this rich tradition soon spoke to her own sorrow from the impact of civil war in her homeland of Sri Lanka.

St. George's annual service of remembrance to 'heal the wounds of war' on the anniversary of Andrew Gillison's death called forth Angela's own need to pray for peace in Sri Lanka and around the world.

The multi-faith perspectives on peace presented in this book are due to the Church council hearing in Angela's sorrow and in her passion for peace Christ's call to St. George's to expand its ministry to comfort all victims of war, and to strive for peace in Sri Lanka and the world.

The Sri Lankan context is the other source of inspiration for this book. Sri Lanka is a country where Christians have learned to live more openly with other religious traditions, and where Eastern culture and tradition meets the West. The Festival of Lights reflected this Sri Lankan (and hopefully Christian) openness by inviting speakers from Buddhist and Hindu religious backgrounds to share their perspectives on peace with

a Christian speaker. Importantly, all of the speakers were of Asian birth, two from Sri Lanka and one from South Korea.

As you reflect on each contribution to this book, may the light of culture, tradition and religious faith speak to your hearts and minds, to comfort your sorrow, heal your pain, and renew your yearning for peace.

FOREBEARANCE AND SHARED HUMAN VALUES: a Buddhist perspective on peace

Dr. Ranjith Hettiarachi

Reverend Sirs,
Congregation of the Uniting Church,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Well-wishers of Sri Lanka.

I am most thankful to the members of the Uniting Church for inviting me to deliver this address on peace.

Serenity of the mind

The word 'peace', derived from old English PES and French PAIS, encompasses several meanings conceptually, some of which are more meaningful to this gathering than others. The most relevant of these is the aspect of peace described as a state of calm and serenity of the mind, though amongst humanity of all ages, other aspects of peace such as freedom from war and hostilities, quarrels and disagreement have taken the place of priority.

Where does one find peace, where does it reside? Peace, known to us as Inner Peace, essentially resides within. Much sought after External Peace, may it be in the street, in a city, in a country, cannot confer on us Inner Peace.

Inner peace generates tolerance and forbearance, which is one's inherent or acquired capacity to forebear the existence, identity and, the mental, verbal or physical expressions of other beings.

Obstructions to inner peace

Why is inner peace so elusive, so evasive and so difficult to sustain? Human minds occupied and afflicted with roots of evil such as desires, attachments and greed, or resentments, aversions and hatred, obstruct the nurturing of inner peace.

It has been so in most human history and so it is in contemporary times. One of the most compassionate and benevolent humans at peace was crucified by those with distorted minds, views and perceptions. His state of inner peace was such that he harboured unshaken forgiveness and

compassion for the perpetrators, even in his death. In more recent history, Mahatma Gandhi was shot down at his place of worship in Delhi. His last words were 'I bless you brother'. Two other most illustrious contemporary humans, His Holiness Dalai Lama, deprived of his own homeland for nearly 50 years, and Nelson Mandela imprisoned and tortured in jail for 25 years, portrayed the marvels of inner peace, and remain two of the most endeared humans on earth today. The Nobel Prize for Peace was hardly an adequate reward for their magnanimity and commitment to inner peace.

Compassion sustains inner peace

What is the experience of inner peace? We only need to reflect inwards for a few moments and experience the love, fondness, non-enmity, non-ill will and compassion we harbour towards our neighbour sitting next, in front, behind, all around within this church and outside in the streets around. See how thin and faint the boundaries are, if any exist. We see fellow beings with no demarcations of race, faith, culture or colour. We feel how love and fondness perfuse within, and pervade within and beyond the precincts of this church hall. See the joy and happiness, the calm and serenity within, illuminating our minds. This is the joy of inner peace, the calm and serenity of inner peace. When sustained, we thin out all thoughts of harm, ill will, conflict and violence. This undoubtedly is the unmistakable Pathway to Peace. Has it been realised in human history? The answer is a very emphatic "Yes".

One of the most revered men in the contemporary world, Nelson Mandela, almost single-handedly dismantled a viciously racist South-African regime, and defused a horrendous powder keg, bringing a lasting peace to South Africa. A supreme sense of compassion, forgiveness and peace that arose from a man tortured and incarcerated pervaded not only across South Africa, but also across every nook and corner of the World. Such is the power and might of inner peace!

Superficial peace

It might be opportune for us to take a brief glimpse of those places in the world where a superficial peace has been achieved, with no semblance of inner peace, leaving the populations in conflict, deeply embittered and grieved. Has Korea achieved peace after 50 years of separation, or has

Vietnam done so after 30 years? In the various other places of ongoing conflict with decades of intensely vicious racial enmity, hatred and violence, is lasting peace ever possible without the spontaneous arising of peace from within, in the parties in conflict? The most illustrative example that comes to one's mind is that of the Middle East. There is neither the slightest prospect of inner peace nor external peace, after 60 years of unrelenting conflict.

Prospects for peace in Sri Lanka

Having stated my views on 'lasting 'peace', let me very briefly state my thoughts on Sri Lanka, through sheer courtesy to my hosts, the Uniting Church. It was in the December of 1170, Thomas Beckett, the Archbishop of Canterbury, when faced with assassins at the Altar, at the behest of King Henry the 1st, stated that "one does not bring arms into the House of God". Invited to this place of Worship, to address a gathering on the verge of a festive period of spiritual peace, please permit me to take this meaningful utterance even further, and say "one does not bring armed conflict into the House of God". It is purely on this basis that I express my views today.

In spite of my deep-seated, passionate attachments and patriotic feelings for Sri Lanka, 40 years ago in 1966, my youthful visions made me feel that Sri Lanka as a nation had a bleak future in my lifetime. Today, the final phase of my life, in a far away land, I am inclined to ponder even worse. Why? A nation whose psyche and heart are embroiled and entrenched in racial, territorial and violent conflicts within and outside Sri Lanka cannot, and will not achieve peace in the foreseeable future. Territorial demands on the basis of race on the one hand and, defence of territory on the basis of race on the other hand, can never be appeased. Lasting Peace hence is a virtually non-existent reality for Sri Lanka. Beautiful Cyprus divided on a racial basis into racial territories, appears to be economically flourishing, enjoying superficial peace, but enmity and bitterness on the two sides is still thriving after 30 years. Whither its future?

In essence, conflicts based on race and territory and/or racism will never achieve a lasting peace.

Sri Lanka's peace must essentially take origin from within its people, its leaders and its parties in conflict. Peace for Sri

Lanka can never be enforced or imposed by any external powers, persons, emissaries or negotiators. Attempts by our esteemed neighbour India, our colonial master Britain, United States, Australia and, Norway in the recent times, have all miserably failed, and will continue to fail. So will violence of whatever magnitude. When the conflicting groups develop trust in each other, rid themselves of racially based demands and enmity, and last not least, cultivate fond relationships as one people, inner and external peace of a lasting nature is most likely to emerge.

Finally, “Sri Lanka that should have been an exquisite model for the whole of Asia, has seen, and will see its further demise, purely on account of its preoccupations with detrimental issues such as race.” These are the words of that great Asian visionary Lee Kuan Yew in 1984.

The path to lasting peace

Invited to speak as a Buddhist speaker, I have endeavoured to do so, without the mention of the words Buddha or Buddhist teachings, with the heart-felt hope that we will enrich ourselves with the shared human values that will have the capacity to instil and sustain inner peace and forbearance towards each other. If so, lasting peace is a possibility.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.

TOWARDS GLOBAL GOODNESS AND PEACE: A Hindu Perspective of Peace in the Sri Lankan context.

Mr. Kumaran Thangarajah

Dear Religious dignitaries, Fellow Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews and other faith and non-faith followers - let peace be with us all.

I consider it a great privilege to have been called upon by Rev Angela and colleagues to present some perspectives today. The issues raised are objective and coming from outside the square.

Introduction

Let me start by defining the main elements and putting them in perspective.

Let me clarify the word Hindu. The original term of this religion now known as Hinduism is 'Sanathana Dharma' which means Universal pathway. The name Hinduism was given by the British to refer to those who lived on the side of the river Indus. This is no longer valid since many other religions live in this region.

Second the term 'Peace' is so broad and context specific. However in the micro sense it refers to calmness, non-violence, passive, to refer to anything that is basically not violent.

The common explanation accepted by Hindus is that we as humans need to be at peace with ourselves first. This can be achieved easily through mental practices, lifestyle and contentment.

Meditation is one of the most effective and popular means of achieving Inner Peace. When we achieve inner peace, we are said to be in balance within ourselves and with the environment and universe.

Hence we would usually not condone any action that would harm, damage or hurt the environment. The environment includes human beings as well as animals, plants, the atmosphere, and planets. Therefore rational human beings are not expected to and would not support violence in any form or against any component of the environment.

However, the fundamental issue is that the individual human being needs to have achieved inner peace in order to be able to rationalize intelligently and enjoy life to its fullest.

Sri Lanka

Next, let us look at Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is a tiny island in the Indian Ocean whose National income or Gross Domestic Product is lower than the annual turnover of Telstra Corporation. This is just to give you an indication of its' financial relevance in the world.

It is worth recalling that at a time when the two communities were living harmoniously prior to independence, Lee Kuan Yew, the father of Singapore wished that Singapore should model its' growth along the lines of Sri Lanka.

The thrust of the major events that took place during the past twenty-five years involved the following:

- a) More than a million Tamils emigrated from the country through fear, repugnance and against discrimination.
- b) People from other nationalities emigrated for similar reasons along with those who left seeking economic advancement.
- c) More than 100,000 people were killed by guerillas, militants, terrorists, the military and government sponsored elements.

Mutual understanding: a Universal truth

What this has shown is that without peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding between the people, Sri Lanka or any other country cannot even dream of sustained socio-economic development. The past twenty-five years has provided clear evidence for it. The arms trade which may yield high margins is not a viable moral substitute due to the human misery that it causes. It has never resulted in prosperity to the country involved except to the supplying countries.

Hindus and Buddhists believe that Karma caused through human misery can last many generations . All others I suppose believe in Newton's Law of an equal and opposite reaction for all actions. Hence it is a Universal truth. Therefore should we not

try to implement peaceful strategies instead of threatening and killing each other? These are fundamental and simple questions. The only reason why conflicts prevail is due to greed. Mahatma Gandhi said, “the wealth in this world is easily sufficient to satisfy the needs of all beings. However, it cannot be sufficient to satisfy the greed of one man or woman”.

So what are we waiting for? Have we conquered ourselves? Have we really achieved peace within ourselves?

If not, what can we do to achieve this before we try to analyse what others can and should do? If every one of us present here today can achieve peace within ourselves, the Universal energy will have to take over and instill goodness and Peace globally. We need to have trust in the truth.

Swami Vivekananda said in Chicago at the first Parliament of Religions in 1896, “Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant fanaticism have possessed long this beautiful earth, drenched it often with human blood, destroyed civilizations and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for this horrible demon, human society will be far more advanced than it is now.”

Let the conch that was heard this morning be the death knell to all fanaticism with the sword and be the death knell to all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal that is freedom in all its forms.

‘Carpet bombing’: a heinous crime

In 1987 the Sri Lankan government started an “Annihilation of Tamils” campaign known as ‘carpet bombing’ from the northern tip similar to what the Nigerians did and virtually silenced and wiped out the minority group known as IBOs.

The Sri Lankan bomber planes progressed from the coastline for two days and gained about 20 kilometres when India initiated a diplomatic dialogue. When this was unheeded, India sent its helicopters with food parcels and within four hours the carpet bombing operation was stopped.

Such an allegedly heinous crime carried out by the State against a whole community should never have been contemplated since the effects could have been more disastrous. Alas, this situation is totally different to-day.

- a) Majority Sinhalese are Buddhists. Buddha was a Hindu prince. Hindus do not have a disliking towards Buddhists.
- b) The closest neighbouring group for Sri Lanka are the 60 million Tamils in India, most of whom are Hindus. There are more than 600 million Hindus spread around India.
- c) Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Catholics and Muslims have lived happily together for longer than the period they have been fighting.
- d) This process of relationships building can never be achieved through any form of violence, dominance or autocracy.

Children of God

Carefully prepare the 'level playing field' and peace will flourish. After all, human beings and for that matter all living forms are children of one God.

Hindu Gita's teachings are relevant and thus quoted as follows:

- a) WHATEVER HAS HAPPENED HAS OCCURRED WELL
- b) WHATEVER IS HAPPENING IS ALSO HAPPENING WELL
- c) WHATEVER IS GOING TO HAPPEN WILL ALSO BE WELL DONE
- d) WHAT HAVE YOU LOST THAT YOU HAVE CREATED?
- e) WHAT DID YOU BRING INTO THIS WORLD FOR YOU TO LOSE?
- f) WHAT HAVE YOU MATERIALISED FOR YOU TO WASTE?
- g) WHATEVER YOU HAVE ACQUIRED WAS TAKEN FROM THE EARTH
- h) WHATEVER YOU HAVE GIVEN WAS ALSO TAKEN FROM THE EARTH.
- i) WHATEVER IS YOURS TODAY BECOME SOMEONE ELSE'S TOMORROW
- j) AND IT BECOME SOMEONE ELSE'S ON ANOTHER DAY
- k) THESE CHANGES ARE THE NORMS OF THE UNIVERSE

Therefore the lesson is:

Be calm. Enjoy inner peace. Be at peace with all fellow human beings and the entire universe. Be contented with what we have

been given and be happy. Happiness will generate further happiness and therefore peace.

Life is too short. Meditate and be happy, and make others happy when you can.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

GLORY TO GOD AND ON EARTH PEACE: peace – A Christian perspective

Rev. Swee Ann Koh

First let me thank you for the privilege of sharing with you this morning.

I want to state very clearly from the outset that I am not speaking on behalf of all Christians or the Christian Church. That's impossible. I am also not speaking on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia to which I belong. What I am sharing with you this morning is clearly from my own perspectives and my interpretation of what I think is the 'Christian Perspective to Peace'.

Secondly, there is no one universal Christian perspective to peace that all Christians embrace. There is a great diversity of perspectives to peace in the Christian Church. So I am fully aware that there will be Christians here amongst us this morning that might not agree with my perspectives.

Thirdly, when we talk about Christian perspectives to peace we need to include in the conversation about Christian perspectives to war and violence. Christians have a history of non-violence and non-militarism, certainly for most of Christian history.

Early Christian views on peace and war

Through the first three centuries, Christians were expected to be pacifists. Christians have often been conflicted about war. During the first three hundred years of the church's life, Christians were at best marginalised and often persecuted. And participation in the military – or giving the oath – was one way they could have shown their allegiance to Rome.

But Christian theologians rejected it. Early Christianity eschewed military service, profit, competition, and power. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus each echoed Isaiah and called all Christians to pound swords into plowshares. Tatian, writing in about 160, explicitly refused military participation and compared it with a long list of evils. Instead, with Clement of Alexandria, he said the Christian's weapon was to be prayer.

He wrote, "For it is not in war, but in peace that we are trained. Peace and love, those simple and quiet sisters, require no arms."

Tertullian (155 A.D. – 240 A.D.) wrote that Jesus .. ."in disarming Peter, disarmed every soldier" (Mt. 26: 47-56; Mk. 14: 43-52; Lk. 22: 47-53; Jn. 18: 25-27). Tertullian is referring to the incident where Peter attempted to defend Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus halted him, forbidding him to take up the sword against those attackers. He tells Peter that he who lives by the sword will die by the sword. Tertullian and many Church fathers saw this as a model for all Christians — that none are given the right to pick up the sword.

In the *Canon of Discipline*, a third century document, it was said that Christian soldiers should not be taught to kill, and if they were, they must refuse to kill, even upon command by their officers. To do otherwise would bring Church discipline.

In an apostle order of Saint Hippolytus of Rome in A.D. 217 it is written:

"The subordinate soldier may not kill. If he is ordered to, he may not carry out the order; nor may he take the military oath. If he does not agree, reject him [from membership]."

This was the stance of all Christians beginning with Jesus and lasting at least 150 years. From approximately A. D. 150 until around A.D. 300 there were very few Christians in the military. Most refused military service. Some were executed for their stance, and they were considered martyrs for their faith. So with few exceptions, the Church of the first three centuries taught peace, even refusing the sacraments to those who participated in warfare.

There were several reasons for this stance besides the belief in non-violence. The Romans divinized the nation, and soldiers were expected to accept this, along with the worship of gods of war – including the eagle standard held by each legion in the name of the emperor, who was imperator (Commander-in-Chief) as well as head of the imperial cult that named him divine. The struggle with the essence of this cult of militarism has continued to be a matter for concern in all ages.

The question for Christians and for some conscientious objectors too, is that of allegiance. In the Gospel, a group of community leaders attempt to entrap Jesus, ostensibly on the question of taxation. Jesus' response is to ask them for a sample of the coin required for the Roman 'poll tax', a silver denarii of Tiberius Caesar (A.D. 14-37), which portrayed his likeness along with a statement naming him divine. Religious Jews were not even to carry such coins. Its presence in the purse of one religious leader was telling. Jesus' response is both humorous and ironic . ."give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22: 15-22; Mk. 12: 13-17; Lk. 20: 20-26). Thus he neatly addresses the issue of obedience and allegiance to God first of all, while deftly sidestepping the trap set for him. The obligation of taxes may be to Caesar, but the obligation to God encompasses all things. One cannot serve two masters.

So for the first three centuries the Church embraced pacifism.

Everything changed in the 4th century with the conversion of Emperor Constantine. In the 4th century Christians for the first time had to make some accommodation to the state because it now might stand not as the church's opponent, but as its protector and aid. It was a watershed that had a decisive influence on human history for the coming fifteen hundred years.

The early witnesses, martyrs, bishops, priests, teachers, and laypeople - all agents of transformation through their transformed lives, - had achieved a revolution of peace and nonviolence in hearts and minds. There followed a revolution in the other direction. The new revolution brought the followers of Jesus to an acceptance of violence and warfare and gave rise to the Just War theory.

Just War theory

The principles of the just war position that have been formulated by the Christian church have their root in the teaching of Ambrose, Augustine, and Aquinas. These men sought to address the issue of war from a Christian perspective. In seeking the answer to the question of when

a war can be considered just, they employed the Bible and classical ideals of just war that had been developed by Greek and Roman thinkers.

The Old Testament revelation concerning warfare was central to their thinking, as was the general biblical revelation of the standards of God's moral law, but they also found significant insight into the nature of just war from men like Cicero. However, St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354 – 430 A.D.), is largely responsible for the movement towards "acceptable" degrees of warfare. His was a response, or reaction, to a pagan invasion of Roman Africa and fears that Christianity would be extinguished if conquered. The fear proved groundless.

Not only was Christianity not curtailed – but many invaders became Christian. So, the compromise towards "just war", as it was named, has remained an issue, and a problem, for Christians and those who question the ethics and efficacy of war.

By the time we come to the Middle Ages, the two dominate views within the Christian community were pacifism and the just war theory. But something happened at that point that made pacifism passé.

The Crusades started.

The Europeans attempted to take back the Middle East from the pagans. That aroused a strong military fervor that showed up in Christian theology. It was during that time that the just war theory of Augustine was put in legal form in the 12th century and Thomas Aquinas - another church theologian - put some more theological 'meat' to the theory. He laid down three criteria for a war to be just.

First, it must be declared by a legitimate authority and not some individual.

Second, those attacked must be attacked for some just reason.

Third, those who attack must do so with the right intention, the attainment of some good, and the avoidance or elimination of some evil.

After you move out of the Middle Ages and go into the Renaissance and Reformation periods, certain factors made the relationship between Christianity and war an important topic. With the development of gunpowder and the cannon, the conduct of war changed. No longer were civilians safe behind walls of the castles, no longer were knights protected by armor.

Moreover, Europe was in the process of being divided into dynastic monarchies from which the present nation states would emerge. Rivalries arose between these kings, and wars followed. Whereas previous conflicts had pitted heathens against Christians, these wars were fought among Christians.

Pacifism's rebirth

During this time, the just war theory continued to dominate but some strong voices arose that taught pacifism and it had a rebirth of popularity. This period of the 1600's saw the birth of a number of pacifist groups.

The Swiss Brethren and Mennonites developed and they practiced pacifism. The Quakers were formed by George Fox in 1668 and brought to Pennsylvania by William Penn in 1682. And they were strong pacifists.

Luther and Calvin

Defenders of the just war theory can be found as well. Martin Luther taught that without arms, peace could not be kept. He thought that sometimes wars had to be waged to repel injustice and establish a firm peace. Wars were necessary in some cases to preserve the life and health of a people in the same way that a doctor sometimes finds it necessary to amputate a leg or arm to preserve the entire body.

John Calvin in his 'Institutes of the Christian Religion' also defended the idea of a just war. He said that leaders, by the nature of their office have the right to be armed both to restrain the misdeeds of private individuals by judicial punishment and to defend by war the realms entrusted to their safekeeping.

The development of Just War theory

And then we move into the modern period and there have been defenders of both pacifist and just war theories. The Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, who was a believer, and the Indian reformer Gandhi, advocated pacifism. Those who wrote on the just war side essentially refined the classical arguments for that position.

The seven criteria for Just War are:

1) **Competent authority:** A war must be declared by politically responsible authorities and not by private individuals.

(2) **Probability of success:** A war should not be undertaken if there is no obvious hope for success.

(3) **Last Resort:** A war must be a last resort after sincere efforts have been made to resolve the controversy peacefully.

(4) **Just Intent:** The object of a war must be peace and reconciliation and not the unlimited destruction of the enemy state.

(5) **Just Cause:** The war must be an act of defense in response to armed aggression. ***Jus in bello* (Justice in war):**

(6) **Proportionality:** The good brought about by a war should outweigh its evils in cost and destruction to both sides and the means used should be proportional to the harm caused.

(7) **Discriminate means:** Military actions should not be waged that directly intend to take the lives of noncombatants (i.e., civilians or innocents).

Renouncing nuclear war

Modern day application of the 'Just War' doctrine has led to many problems with the advent of nuclear weapons. In 1983 the Catholic Bishop in the United States issued a paper that renounced nuclear war, but allowed for the interim

acceptability of nuclear deterrence in the pursuit of a better means of preserving the peace.

In 1986, the Methodist Bishops in United States went further and not only renounced nuclear weapons as well as nuclear deterrence, but also renounced defenses against nuclear weapons, specifically the US Strategic Defense Initiative.

Nonviolent resistance

There is another perspective on war and peace that is held by some Christians: Nonviolent resistance. Nonviolent resistance differs from pacifism in that it allows non-cooperation and resistance to authority (although many who call themselves pacifists do not recognize this distinction). This is the school of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Most members of traditional peace churches – Quakers, Brethren, and Mennonites, also follow it.

As a practical matter, the practice of nonviolent resistance has had considerable success in the last century. Several countries have adopted a form of it called "Civilian Based Defense" (CBD) as an official part of their national security strategy. This school can also make a strong claim to having Jesus of Nazareth as one of its adherents. His lack of resistance from the time of his arrest to his crucifixion makes him appear to be a Pacifist. Yet it was not so much the civil authorities, but his Father's plan that he was cooperating with. His open confrontation of religious authority throughout his ministry tends to place him in the nonviolent resistance school.

Adherents of nonviolent resistance are a minority, to be sure, but influential nonetheless. Their position cannot be ignored.

I am a recent convert to this Christian perspective. "I don't see myself as a pacifist. I see myself rather as a violent person trying to become nonviolent following Jesus, 'the Prince of Peace'. Martin Luther King Jr. seemed to understand what was at stake as well as anyone, as this quote makes clear:

Through violence you may murder a murderer, but you can't murder murder.

Through violence you may murder a liar, but you can't establish truth.

Through violence you may murder a hater, but you can't murder hate.

Darkness cannot put out darkness. Only light can do that.

And in giving you this quick overview of Christian history and various perspectives on Peace and War what I wanted you to see is that from the experience of the Christian church there has been a diversity of opinion regarding the subject of peace and war.

Peace: the Biblical witness

Let me conclude by giving you a quick summary of the understanding of peace from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the New Testament.

First let me say that Christians see peace as a gift from God and also a quality that we need to pursue and work on.

In modern society, "peace" usually means a time without war or an inner sense of calm. In the Bible, peace means more than that. The Hebrew word for peace, 'shalom', certainly includes the absence of warfare, but it also involves much more than that. The basic meaning of the Hebrew term shalom is completeness wholeness, or well-being in an all-inclusive sense. In peace, the necessities of life - food, shelter, health, safety - are secure for all. The prophet Micah's vision of peace foresees a time when everyone is provided for and all are free from even the threat of harm: "They shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken." (Micah 4.4) Peace, righteousness, and justice come together in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Isaiah 32.16-18). In the beautiful vision of the Psalmist, "righteousness and peace will kiss," - they are intimately related (Ps 85.10). The Psalmist also urges, "do good; seek peace, and pursue it" (Ps 34.14).

Peace then is not simply still and quiet; it involves deep commitment to working for justice. If any members of a community are harmed, the shalom of the whole is broken: there is no peace. God's shalom extends beyond human

society, restoring the entire world to the original harmony and wholeness that God intended for it as part of a good creation (Genesis 1). Isaiah, for example, envisions the world as a peaceable kingdom where even the violence among animals ends. Predator and prey will live together peaceably, the wolf will lie down with the lamb, and no one will hurt or destroy in God's entire realm (Isaiah 11.6-9).

Throughout the prophets' writings we see a call to live in a peaceable kingdom, one known for justice and mercy. This is God's intent for nations, an intention God again demonstrated with the coming of Jesus.

There are no verses about war in the New Testament, except in the Book of Revelations, which deals with God's war, not humans. War as such is not a theme in the New Testament. It is mentioned (Lk 11:21-22; 14:31-32; 22:35; Mt 12:25; 22:1ff; etc.), or hinted at (e.g. the destruction of Jerusalem as God's judgement (Lk 19:43-44; 21:6; 13:34-35), but never systematically discussed for its own sake.

War is simply presupposed as one of the evils characterizing the present age (Mt 24:6, Mk 13:7. Rev 9:16ff.). Its presence is a result of the fallen nature of humankind (Jas 4:1-3).

I believe that the Old Testament has a very ambiguous attitude towards war. The New Testament message, on the other hand, is quite unambiguous: it is clearly *against* war as a means to achieve God's justice, emphasising the importance of *acceptance* of suffering, not *inflicting* it, as Jesus showed by his own example.

The Gospels depict Jesus as a Messiah who fulfils his calling through suffering and not by conquering the enemies of God and his people. Right at the start of his ministry, Jesus resolutely resists the temptation to establish his rule through any form of worldly power (Mt 4, Lk 4). He rejects violence as a means to enforce the will of God (Lk 9:51-56) and he never uses force against people in order to push through his program of renewal in Israel. He refuses to be made a king by the crowds (Jn 6:15). He does not allow his identity as Messiah to be made known until he has made sure, by his death on the cross, that no misunderstanding could arise as to the true meaning of this title.

The teaching of Jesus includes the same emphases: His followers must be servants and not lord it over others (Mk 10:42-45; Jn 13). They must be willing to suffer at the hands of worldly authorities (Mk 13:9-13; Jn 15:18-16:4). They are blessed when they are persecuted, they must be peacemakers, turn the other cheek, love their enemies (Sermon on the Mount).

By the way he dies, Jesus confirms the integrity of his life and teaching: He does not resist arrest, and rebukes his disciples for taking up arms in his defence. He does not defend himself or call down God's angels to help him (Mt 26:53). He prays for the soldiers driving the nails into his body (Lk 23:34).

The New Testament diverges from the Old Testament in not glorifying war, but exalting peace (Rom 12:18ff.; 1 Tim 2:2; 1 Pet 2:20ff.):

- “Glory to God and on earth *peace*...” (Lk 2:14).
- “For he is our *peace*...” (Eph 2:14).
- “As shoes for your feet, put on the readiness to proclaim the Gospel of *peace*” (Eph 6:15).
- “It is to *peace* that God has called you” (1 Cor 7:15).
- “God is a God not of disorder but of *peace*” (1 Cor 14:33).

Peace in the New Testament does not refer to “inner tranquility” or “an untroubled state of mind”, but functions rather as a concept in opposition to war, with emphasis on the harmony of interpersonal relations (cf. Rom 5:1).

The gospel of peace: a test for Christian credibility

Some Christians believe this is not a realistic option in the kind of world we live in today. I believe the question is not whether the New Testament vision of peace and reconciliation instead of violence and force is a realistic option. The question is whether we can preach the Gospel of peace with any credibility as long as we ourselves accept the horrors of war and violence as a necessary and unavoidable evil.

Barth's succinct comments are a salutary reminder of how much is actually at stake in this matter:

“How can the Church be, for all its weakness, a small yet significant force for peace when it is obviously no longer horrified by war but willing and able to integrate it quite smoothly into its own Christian system? The primary and supreme task of Christian ethics in this matter is surely to recover and manifest a distinctive horror of war and aloofness from it.”

Shalom.

Peace be with you.

St. George's congregation is committed to peace, justice and reconciliation. On the fourth Sunday of each month, the worship service has a distinctive emphasis on St. George's Mission for Peace, with invited speakers and other special features.

Time of Sunday services: 10:00am

St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church
4 Chapel Street
St. Kilda, 3183

Minister: Revd. Angela Tampiyappa phone 9731 0604

Office: 9527 2283

www.eaststkilda.unitingchurch.org.au

