

ONE WORLD WEEK 2010 PIECE BY PIECE TOWARDS PEACE



Resources for personal reflection and corporate worship

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INTRODUCTION



We know that peace is more than the absence of war. Peace-building and peace-making are a journey as well as a destination. We are propelled by a *vision* of things and of relationships as we would like them to be and as we believe that God would like them to be.

But we know that often the route is tortuous, there are diversions: *encounters* which we had not planned and *experiences* which are powerful teachers.

To be effective peace-builders and peace-makers we are in need of conversion or *transformation*, a turning round of our lives, repentance, a change of heart, a new humility and a new resolve.

The irony is that to seek peace and to make it we must engage in struggle, non-violent *struggle* obviously, but struggle all the same to ensure that the last will be first; the struggle to know and to insist that life is sacred – both the life of humanity and of the natural world, that together they reflect the very being of God.

And these are truths which require more than the assent of our minds, the willingness of our hearts, they require us to experience them in the breadth of our lives.

That's why the sections that follow draw on *VISION, ENCOUNTER, EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION, STRUGGLE*. These truths can both capture us and set us free to be the peace-builders and peace-makers which God would have us be. They also provide building blocks for a One World Week corporate act of worship.

One World Week gives us a unique opportunity to view the world, our divided world, God's one world, from perspectives both of reality and of hope.

But if we're to live with authenticity, doing more than mouthing platitudes, dreaming dreams, we know that we must live the truth in our localities, neighbourhoods, communities, families, workplaces.

We must be in touch with, our lives must be shaped by those whom society too easily pushes to the edge: so-called scroungers, undesirables, asylum seekers, irritants, the socially unattractive.

Precisely because we are committed to peace we will be involved in vigorous debate and argument, whilst always accepting the human-ness, the right of our opponent to differ.

The authentic "one world-er" indeed reaches out globally, but is rooted in her/his local community and is shaped by the local and the global. S/he acts locally in order to live globally.

In the 1970s Julius Nyerere, the first president of newly independent Tanzania, described development as another name for peace. We are learning, all too slowly, that peace and justice and human development are indivisible. So is their context: the local and the global.

SETTING THE VISION



We won't get started on the journey of peace-building and peace-making unless we've got a vision in front of us, a vision guiding us, a vision compelling us.

Visions are neither abstract and dreamy, nor are they precise roadmaps. They arise out of the reality in which we find ourselves.

More than thirty years ago community leaders in Mindanao province in the Philippines sat down together and asked themselves whether the violence and under-development which they and their communities experienced on a daily basis were due, as often suggested, to differences of religious belief; basically that the main faiths of the province, Christianity and Islam, are simply incompatible. They had already learnt that for either Christian or Muslim to appeal to doctrinal orthodoxies didn't solve anything. Rather they made with their communities an analysis of their local situations and demonstrated that it wasn't religion that was dividing them, but that together they were the victims of economic and political exploitation.

The moment of change came when the leaders of the Muslim communities said it was their allegiance to the founding principles of their faith that drove them forwards: love of Allah and love of neighbour. This was echoed immediately by their Christian counter-parts. Breakthrough had been achieved. A community-based organisation, incorporating Christian and Muslim leaders, rose from the vision of shared starting and finishing points. This organisation continues to this day and has served the local population over the past thirty years, improving agriculture, improving health and education, empowering women and children and men. Recently areas previously insecure through the presence of the military and of counter-insurgents have been demilitarised on the insistence of the local communities. The energy (and money) that was going into war is being redirected into farming, healthcare, transport, literacy, political participation. Piece by piece towards peace indeed, inspired by a shared vision.

What is the vision that inspires and sustains us in our quest for peace and for human development? How is it expressed in our local community? Does it permeate the faith communities to which we belong? Does it extend beyond our faith community into wider community? How in our localities and in our increasingly inter-connected but not necessarily more equal world, does our vision equip us to work piece by piece for the world of peace and of plenty for which we long and for which we believe God pines?

For reflection:

"Society was divided into warring camps suspicious of one another. Where no contract or obligation was binding, nothing could heal the conflict, and since security was only to be found in the assumption that nothing was secure, everyone took steps to preserve himself and no one could afford to trust his neighbour."

Thucydides

*"Every gun that is made,
Every warship launched,
Every rocket fired signifies,
In the final sense,
A theft from those who hunger and are not fed,
Those who are cold and are not clothed."*

*The world in arms is not spending money alone.
It is spending the sweat of its labourers,
The genius of its scientists,
The hopes of its children."*

Dwight D. Eisenhower

"The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or the extension of justice?"

Martin Luther King, jnr



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ENCOUNTER



We hear so much about the violence which one human being does to another, one group to another, so often and so tragically along ethnic lines, that we frequently fail to hear or to glimpse the signs of hope. Nowhere is this more true than in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

For the past two decades Parents' Circle has been operating across the divide in Israel/Palestine enabling parents who have suffered the worst of all fates – the violent death of a child – to encounter one another from both sides of the conflict.

Through public meetings, talks in schools and through Hello Peace, a telephone network enabling bereaved and frightened people on both sides of the conflict to encounter one another by phone, understanding and trust are being built piece by piece.

A Parents' Circle member whose 14 year old daughter was killed in a suicide bombing in Jerusalem says "We, the members of Parents' Circle, have the most powerful power in our hands – the power of pain. You can use that power to create more pain or to create hope. By dialogue and reconciliation I, together with my Palestinian friends, will bang our heads against this wall until we put cracks in it. One day it will fall. Our blood is the same colour as that of Palestinians and our tears are just as bitter. If we who have paid the highest price possible (losing a child to violence) can still talk to one another, then anyone can.

What have we learnt? That the beginning of the end of conflicts take place when opponents finally encounter one another not with weapons but with words. Think Ireland, think South Africa, think Balkans. Include local perspectives.

For prayer and reflection:

Pray not for Arab or Jew
For Palestinian or Israeli
Pray rather for ourselves
That we might not divide
Them in our prayers but
Keep them both together
In our hearts.

*"In peace the sons bury their fathers
And in war the fathers bury their sons."*

Francis Bacon

*"It is true that the church seeks ideals of peace,
But it discerns different kinds of violence.
In my pastoral letter I recall
How on the mount of Tabor
Next to Christ transfigured
The five men who appear-
Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John –
Are men of violent character,
And they committed terrible violent acts.
Moses killed an Egyptian;
Elijah put to the sword
The prophets who did not adore the true God;
Peter drew his sword against Malchus
To defend Christ;
James and John begged Christ to rain fire
On a town that would not give him lodging.
But I say
Christians are peacemakers,
Not because they cannot fight,
But because they prefer the force of peace."*

Oscar Romero



EXPERIENCE



What's climate change got to do with peace and war?

A lot. Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, are being uprooted as a result of climate change; often they are being forced to find sanctuary in places where the local population is already living on the edge. Access to water and access to grazing lands are leading to conflict now, in northern Kenya for example.

In many marginal communities questions about climate change might be met by a blank stare, but the effects of climate change – increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, rising sea levels, longer dry seasons, more severe rains – are being widely experienced.

In central Tanzania in 2005 I stood beside a plot of withered maize, the staple crop of the area, in a village some 50 miles or so from the administrative capital Dodoma. Moleni, the farmer, also a mother of four and wife of the local pastor, stood talking with me. I could feel her pain at a failed crop and the insecurity that brings. As we talked Elea, her four year son (who looked only about two to me), clutched at her legs. Suddenly he was violently sick, the victim of the all too common malaria, but also the victim of poor nutrition and very low family income. Like any other loving mother, Moleni cuddled Elea, soothed his fever with cool water, strapped him to her back and set out in the burning midday heat to walk the ten miles or so to the nearest dispensary for drugs she could ill afford.

A remarkable occurrence? Commonplace, I guess. Today hard lives are being made harder by the effects of climate change. Some are being tipped over the edge.

Has this experience, this encounter changed me? I hope so. I need to be more responsible in my use of the resources entrusted to us all by God; I am called to be more generous in my response to the often unheard call of the poorest. I am called to make adjustments to the way I live and to go on badgering governments to put in place the big solutions required – and soon.

For reflection:

"Think of what a world we could build if the power unleashed in war were applied to constructive tasks! One-tenth of the energy that the various belligerents spent in the war, a fraction of the money they exploded in hand grenades and poison gas, would suffice to raise the standard of living in every country and avert the economic catastrophe of worldwide unemployment. We must be prepared to make the same heroic sacrifices for the cause of war. There is no task that is more important or closer to my heart."

Albert Einstein

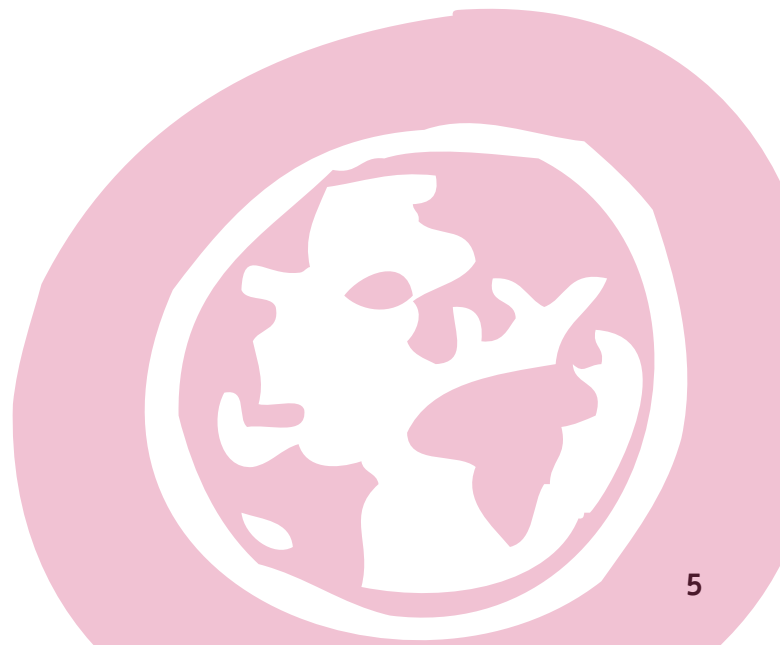
"You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children that we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves."

"This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected."

Chief Seattle

"Just as a mother would protect her only child, even at risk of her own life, even so let one cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings."

Shakyamuni Buddha



TRANSFORMATION



The thing that most of us know about Oscar Romero is the way he died: at the hands of hired gunmen as he celebrated mass in a community chapel for those living with cancer just over thirty years ago. We know little or nothing about his unremarkable childhood in a small and remote town in the eastern mountains of El Salvador; his enrolment at a theological college at the age of 13; his years in Rome training for the catholic priesthood; the exacting standards he set himself as a servant of God, bordering on the obsessive.

What we tend to know is how as Archbishop of San Salvador he stood up a variety of power structures – ecclesiastical, military, economic, political – until his life of integrity and devotion proved too much for those with vested interests and his life was summarily ended. What those hitmen, like so many others who abuse power, failed to recognise was that by his martyrdom Romero became far more influential than he had as a priest, church newspaper editor, theological college principal, assistant bishop and then archbishop.

No martyr courts death. Romero recognised in the last weeks of his life the transformation which he was undergoing in his relationship with God and as he witnessed and reflected on the situation of the poor all around him. He wrote this shortly before his death:

**I ask God to make his love, his justice, his truth shine through me more easily.
I am afraid of violence to myself.
I have been notified of serious threats to myself this very week.**

Romero's transformation, through God and through the poor, speak to us ultimately not of death but of peace and of the costliness of peace. May we find the grace and the strength to follow Romero (meaning pilgrim) on the journey of peace and be prepared for the smaller sacrifices required of us.

This prayer is attributed to Oscar Romero; although it may not have been written by him, it incorporates many of his hopes and passions:

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
It is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
Of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is way of saying
That the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No programme accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals or objectives includes everything.
It may be incomplete, but it is beginning, a step along the way,
An opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
Between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.
This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
Knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that provides far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation
In realizing that. This enables us to do something,
And to do it very well.

Amen



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STRUGGLE AND RESILIENT HOPE



Have you ever been to Kenya in reality or in your imagination?
A land of contrasts: the wide open spaces of the Rift Valley,
the crowded, stinking slum settlements dwarfing Nairobi – yet
pounding with vitality.

Have you smelt Kenya, the open sewers of Kibera, or those roses
flown to your local florist's shop?
Have you tasted ugali, sitting on the ground in a Kenyan village
or the Kenyan tea in your cuppa at home or the perfectly shaped
green bean or mangetout pea on your plate?
Have the generous, gracious people of Kenya touched your life?

In autumn 2009 young Christian Aid volunteers visited
programmes and partners supported by Christian Aid in central
Kenya. They met Margaret who described her life like this:

"I began to get sick. I had fever every month. I had to go to
hospital and was bed-ridden. The doctor asked "what will you do if
you're positive?"

At home there are many problems. No one helps me with money to
go to hospital. The shop money has all been used for sickness. My
family doesn't like me. No one cares about me. My husband won't
sleep in the same room as me. But I have now learnt to make rope
to sell and get money for hospital from the group. With the help
of BIDII (a community based organisation supported by Christian
Aid) I now have hope for the future..."

And another volunteer offers this meditation:

Deep breath

In the world of
Texts, tweets, status updates
Bluetooth, wi-fi
Clubcard points, re-using bags
Dressing up, downing shots
Small/medium/large popcorn, salted or sweet

Passing the time, not having time
High petrol prices, low employment
Overdrafts, overwork
Sales, cash, card, doubt
Reading, watching, wanting, dreaming
Losing the will
Finding the one
Passion, pleasure, pain, uncertainty

It's hard to remember that
Water is sparse
Security a luxury
People are not surviving, let alone living
And we have too much of everything
While they share anything

Take a deep breath
And remember we all breathe
We all hope
We all love
And they are always there
And always here in our hearts

Remind us, challenge us and
Shape us into the compassionate, considerate, selfless
Example Jesus embodied.

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A SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

The themes covered in these materials – *Vision, Encounter, Experience, Transformation, Struggle* – are supported by stories and reflections from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Central America and Africa again respectively. They provide building blocks which should work well in corporate worship. The stories/background which illustrate each theme can be used as they stand or, the cases of Mucaard (Asia), Parents Circle (Middle East), Oscar Romero (Central America) can be supplanted by further internet research.

Alternatively/additionally worship leaders are encouraged to choose similar/complementary material which will resonate with local congregations and is based on local experience.

In corporate worship it is best to avoid overloading participants with words. It makes sense to base worship around four components:

1. Our shared *Vision*, which will almost certainly include words from Christian scripture such as Isaiah 65: 15-25 and Revelation 21: 1-5a.
2. Our response to/experience of the *Vision* in the light of our own *Encounters* and *Experiences*. This section could include further passages from the Bible, such as Jeremiah 6: 9-15 and Matthew 10: 26-39, each exploring the costliness of true peace.

The section could also include a sermon or address, but it might include perspectives offered by local worshippers.

It might include too a time for members of the worshipping group to *encounter* one another and to share their stories, *experience*, perspectives on peacebuilding and peacemaking.

3. The *Transformation* we undergo through our encounter with God and with one another. This section can include confession, intercessory prayer, silence. Some of the prayers and reflections in the preceding material may commend themselves for congregational use.
4. Our commitment to be involved in the continuing *struggle* to build a world of peace and justice, sustained by the example of others and our hope in the God of all.

This section should include an appropriate act/prayer of commitment and blessing/strengthening for the task.

For reference:

To supplement the section on **VISION** (Asia) consult www.mucaard-uk.org
on **ENCOUNTER** (Middle East) consult www.theparentscircle.com
on **TRANSFORMATION** (Central America) enter **Oscar Romero** on your search engine.

Christian Aid stories and reflections are used with the permission of the authors.

Hymns

A list of hymns suitable for this year's theme

He's got the whole world in His Hands
Bind us together
Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Let there be love shared among us
Brother, sister let me serve you
Cry freedom
Kum ba yah
Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord
For the healing of the nations
God whose almighty Word
When I needed a neighbour were you there
Make me a channel of your peace

Credits

Our thanks to Robert Pearce of Christian Aid for producing this Worship Anthology and to Revd Steve Hall, vicar in the Southampton Parish team and Monsignor Vincent Harvey of St Edmunds, Southampton for their suggested hymns.