

WATCHING BRIEF 17-2: BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE

As Quakers, we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

If we are to offer alternatives to violent and militaristic approaches, we need to build a culture of peace. This report outlines some characteristics of such a culture, and identifies organisations and groups internationally and nationally that are working to create it.

Background

History is replete with examples of the use and abuse of power to oppress and eliminate others. At the same time there have always been groups that have lived peacefully. In fact, for most people, life's journey is undertaken on the basis of co-operation and negotiation rather than aggression and destruction. The American Quaker Elise Boulding wrote a book in 2000 called *Cultures of Peace* (Syracuse University Press) in which she identified many initiatives for peace around the world over the years. She singled out several relatively isolated societies where peaceableness has been a feature – the Inuit of the north, who base their lives on impulse control and concern for others; the Mbuti of the Congo, who have a peace based on a close relationship with the rainforest and interdependence; the Zuni of New Mexico, who emphasize harmony and sharing; and the Arapesh of New Guinea, who value nurture and shared leadership. In more modern settings, she identified the rural Northern Irish where equality across Catholic and Protestant groups had been a feature, and the Anabaptists of Europe (including the Brethren, Mennonites and Quakers) who adopted a pacifist approach and conscientious objection to military service.

Characteristics of a Culture of Peace

- A willingness to accept others regardless of difference.
- Structures that make communication and mutual learning possible.
- A recognition that humans are part of a deeper eco-system.
- Adoption of goals based on co-operation and mutual benefit.
- Developing the skills of negotiation and conflict resolution.
- Care for others, especially those who are vulnerable.
- Seeing the potential in new ideas, new experiences, new people.
- A system of justice that is based on principles of fairness and equity.

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- Working for peace at individual, social and international levels.
- Challenging the assumption that war is inevitable.

It is important to understand the nature of power structures – gender, class, race etc – if we are to build a culture of peace. A valuable example is found in the Women Peacemaker Program that works to empower women peace activists worldwide in nonviolent action, to promote women's role in peacebuilding, and to disseminate women's perspectives, experiences and solutions for peace. See www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org

International Initiatives

The United Nations offers some important avenues for building peace. A recently published research paper by the ANU academics Hilary Charlesworth and Jeremy Farrall highlighted the potential for strengthening the rule of law through the UN Security Council. The UN Charter gives the Council a wide range of powers to promote the peaceful settlement of international disputes (Chapter VI). The authors make the following points:

- The Council's effectiveness hinges on the capacity and willingness of UN member states to convert its decisions into action.
- Peace operations and peacekeepers are not always held to the best standards, and sanctions do not always provide appropriate protection.
- The Council needs a responsive approach that balances preventing the abuse of power with a pragmatic search for solutions that strengthen the rule of law.
- Transparency, consistency, accountability and engagement need to be the hallmarks of decision-making by the Council.
- New standards of behaviour will occur only when a wide range of actors see them as legitimate.
- The Council should make greater use of fact-finding missions, impact assessments, and consultation processes when determining the response to crisis situations.

The full report is available at <http://creativecommons.org.au/learn-more/licences/version3>

Mediation is an important part of the United Nations framework, and has been used over many years. There is a Mediation Support Unit in the Department of Political Affairs, and a Standby Team of 8 Senior Mediation Advisers. The Unit offers operational support to peace processes, and develops guidelines based on the lessons learned on the ground. There are close links between the Unit and individual nation states and regional organisations in enhancing the mediation capacity for conflict situations around the world. Further information is available at www.peacemakers.un.org/mediation-support

Isak Svensson, in a PRIO blog on 3 April 2017, has identified four ways in which mediators can become involved in an international conflict:

- They can be appointed by the United Nations or another international body.
- As a nation assumes the presidency of an international body, mediators from that country's region may be favoured.

- Civil society organisations may suggest suitable names for engagement.
- Experienced individuals can create openings for themselves or others to mediate.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 (Women, Peace and Security) led to greater awareness of the fact that peace is inextricably linked with gender equality and women's leadership. A 2015 report following a Global Study called for increased women's rights and explored the relation between violent conflict and women's rights.

Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom is working to build a network of female mediators who might be engaged in international work, as part of a move to strengthen women's role in peace and reconstruction processes. For more details see <https://blogs.prio.org/2017/04/peace-diplomacy-finding-entry-points-for-female-mediators/>

Australia and Peacemaking

Australia has been actively engaged in peace operations for over 70 years. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) website contains the following details:

- Military and police have been involved in over 50 UN and other multilateral operations since 1947, and are currently engaged in the Middle East, Cyprus, and South Sudan.
- Australia has assisted peace missions in Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Bougainville, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and the Sinai.
- Australia (11th largest contributor) has pledged more financial support for UN peacekeeping operations, and to build the capacity of UN troop contributing countries in our region.
- Australia gives support to the UN peacebuilding agencies and is the 8th largest donor to the UN Peacebuilding Fund that is used for conflict prevention in such areas as Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and the Solomon Islands.
- Australia is a leading advocate for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle which aims to protect populations from mass atrocities.

Full details of DFAT's program can be found at www.dfat.gov.au

In terms of foreign aid, the trend is downwards in relation to Budget allocations. In 2017-18 Australia's aid level will fall to its lowest point ever – 0.22% of Gross National Income. At the same time the UK is reaching the recommended UN level of 0.7%. Cuts in Australia's aid have been made mainly to Africa, the Middle East and Asia, while the Pacific retains its major funding position. A Lowy Institute poll in 2014 found that 75% of respondents wanted Australian aid to focus on reducing poverty, while 20% wanted it to promote Australian foreign policy. The budget reductions since 2013 have been larger than any other area of budget cuts, which suggests the Government is treating aid as expendable in the interests of reducing budget deficits.

NGO Peace Activities – A Sample

Ambassadors for Peace, launched in 2001 by the Universal Peace Federation, is a network of peace leaders drawn from many races, religions, nationalities and cultures. Their aim is to promote reconciliation, form a global network representing diversity, and promote cooperation beyond boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity and nationality. In different parts of the world, the ambassadors organize harmony and interfaith

gatherings, affirm human rights, and encourage adoption of a pledge of personal commitment to create “a culture of peace from the ground up and from the inside out”. See www.upf.org/ambassadors-for-peace

Pathways to Peace is an international peacebuilding, educational and consulting organisation dedicated to making peace a practical reality through local and global projects. It has a particular focus on making the International Day of Peace (21 September) an opportunity for inter-generational and inter-cultural participation. See <http://pathwaystopeace.org>

The Shift Network empowers a global movement of people who are creating an evolutionary shift of consciousness that in turn leads to a more enlightened society, one built on principles of peace, sustainability, health, and prosperity. It aims to share the wisdom of the planet’s brightest teachers, and connect individuals with a global community. See <http://m.theshiftnetwork.com>

The World Peace Library has over 375 audio recordings with inspirational stories, skills training and solutions offered by peacebuilders, social change leaders, scientists, Indigenous elders and spiritual mentors. It reflects the belief that a new narrative of peace is emerging around the world – rooted in ancient wisdom and accelerated by modern science. See <http://worldpeacelibrary.com>

The World Peace Prayer Society offers a variety of practices, ceremonies and initiatives to spread the message and prayer ‘may peace prevail on earth’ throughout the world. It emphasizes the power of thought, the power of words, and the power of linking people across cultures. Activities include the World Peace Prayer Flag Ceremony, the Peace Pole Project, Peace Pals Project and more. See <http://worldpeace.org>

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is the oldest international peace movement, established in 1915. It brings together women around the world who are united in working for peace by nonviolent means, and promoting political, economic and social justice for all. Its 2015 centenary conference called for a feminist foreign policy, and in 2017 it took a leading part in a Women’s March to Ban the Bomb, in New York. See <http://wilpf.org>

The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) is a non-partisan federation of national medical groups in 64 countries, representing tens of thousands of doctors, medical students, nurses, other health workers, and concerned citizens, who share a common goal of creating a more peaceful and secure world freed from the threat of nuclear annihilation. See <http://ippnw.org>

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a union of government and civil society organisations. It has become the world’s largest and most diverse environmental network, with 1300 member organisations and 16,000 experts who advise on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. See www.iucn.org

Faith Groups

- Interfaith Encounter Association, Israel – promotes peace through interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural study.
- Orthodox Peace Fellowship – a group of Orthodox Christians applying the Gospel principles to situations of division and conflict
- Ahmadiyya Muslim Community – seeking to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values through education and interfaith dialogue.
- Buddhist Peace Fellowship – emphasising compassionate action, speaking, learning and doing.
- Religions for Peace – representing the world’s great religions dedicated to peace, ending poverty and protecting the earth.
- Pax Christi International – Catholic peace movement working on human rights, human security, disarmament and a just world order.

For a full list, see www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/religious-interfaith-organisations-peace_n_1902435

Quaker International Organisations and Ventures

The Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF) “envisions a global future in which humanity is in right relationship with the commonwealth of life”. Its principal emphases are – inclusion, social and economic justice, ecological wellbeing, and participatory research and discernment. Areas of concern are policies that strengthen Earth’s capacity to support life; bringing governance of the common good into the use of technology; reducing structural violence, reversing segregation; and moving from aggressive individualism to practices of cooperation, wealth sharing, and the common good. See www.quakerinstitute.org

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) represents the Quaker movement at the United Nations. With two offices (New York and Geneva), QUNO staff work with people in the UN, multilateral organisations, government delegations, and non-governmental organisations, to achieve changes in international standards and practice. Quakers are known for speaking out against injustice and war - issues that are incompatible with the vision of a world in which peace and justice prevail. The work is rooted in the Quaker testimonies of peace, truth, justice, equality, and simplicity. Peace is more than the absence of war and violence, and requires looking for what seeds of war there may be in all our social, political, and economic relationships. See www.quno.org

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has a worldwide scope for its activities in support of peace and justice. Based in Philadelphia USA, AFSC describes itself as “a Quaker organization devoted to service, development, and peace programs throughout the world. Our work is based on the belief in the worth of every person, and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice”. AFSC partners with individuals and communities around the world who are courageously pursuing justice and peace, often under the most difficult circumstances. Together, these efforts demonstrate the power of nonviolence to overcome injustice, violence, discrimination, and exploitation. In the past year, AFSC has run programs in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and throughout USA. See www.afsc.org

Quaker Peace and Social Witness is a British-based agency which has international programs in Palestine/Israel (accompaniment of vulnerable communities, East Africa (supporting peace activists to use nonviolence for change), and conciliation work in South Asia. See www.quaker.org.uk

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) works around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. Specific initiatives include the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) that works on grassroots peace activities in Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda); the Asia West Pacific Initiative (FPT-AWP) that seeks to offer opportunities for service in that region; and the Peacebuilding in Latin America (PLA) that promotes peace and healing in Central and South America where the legacy of civil war, poverty and injustice continues to harm people's lives. See www.friendspeacetams.org

Alternatives to Violence Project International (AVP) is a training program enabling participants to deal with potentially violent situations in new and creative ways. Interactive exercises, discussions, games, and role plays help examine how people respond to injustice and prejudice, and how to approach such challenges nonviolently. It relies on three principles – expect the best, think before reacting, and ask for a nonviolent path. It has branches in many countries, including Australia. See <http://avp.international>

Australian Peace Organisations

The Living Peace Museum has an excellent directory of these organisations, by categories including peace and social justice, environment, faith, research, media, multicultural, and political. See www.livingpeacemuseum.org.au

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