

# Principles of Peace



These *Principles of Peace* articulate the shared witness and testimony of The Canadian Council of Churches. Peace is core to the mission and identity of all member churches and the heart of ecumenism.

## SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

The Creator is sovereign over all creation. At the heart of God's mission to creation is right relationship. Peace is a gift from God, who acts first in this mission-oriented way. Peace is at the heart of the inner life of the Holy Trinity. Peace exists where there are right relationships between God, humanity and all of creation.

## PEACE IS ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The plan of God as Creator is that all shall live in harmonious relationship with God. The possibility for this kind of peace is given through the reconciling work of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Peace and justice are at the heart of the Good News proclaimed by Jesus. God the Holy Spirit is in us as we journey towards becoming fully human, always becoming but not yet completed.

## INNER PEACE

Jesus said: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (John 14:27). Inner peace is a state of tranquility or mental quietude and concentration, nourished and deepened by prayer and the guarding of the heart. This inner tranquility is not simply silence, but an attitude of listening and openness towards God.

## PEACE IS THE MISSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Doing justice, loving one another as Christ loves us, and working for peace are central to the mission of God's people in the world: *What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8)

## PEACE AND THE CHURCH

The church proclaims the presence of God's Kingdom to the World. The church sacramentally restores humanity's relationship with God, with each other, and with creation. The healing, restoration and salvation of God's creation is the church's first priority and obligation. Peacebuilding and justice making are necessary and indivisible imperatives that guide the church's thinking and action.

## PEACE AS VOCATION AND TESTIMONY

Christ calls his followers to seek peace in the world. Peacemaking is the vocation of Christians: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God* (Matthew 5:9). It is a testimony of life, a witness to the world not only through what we say but how we act and how we live. It is a consistent body of words and actions. It is both a personal and corporate way of putting belief into action. Our contributions toward peace flow from faith in God's gift in response to God's call.

## PEACE AS ESTABLISHING JUSTICE

There can be no peace without justice. God's peace cannot be separated from God's righteousness, justice and steadfast love. Peacemaking and the establishment of conditions for just relationships are indispensable to our common faith. Working for peace is about establishing justice among persons and societies and in all areas of our public life. The path to peace is through service, the laying down of one's life for the other and by being witnesses to the Truth. Peace is nurtured and animated by charity and brought about by human freedom.

## PEACEMAKING AS POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Peace must be founded on truth and built on justice. Christians engage in political work as an expression of the hope that is in them, especially when fear and despair

threaten to paralyze the human community. Creating a Just Peace involves freeing human beings from fear and want, overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression. It requires establishing conditions for just relationships that respect the experience of the most vulnerable and value the integrity of creation. The dignity and freedom of the person is rooted in the reality of our divine origin. Because we are created in the Image of God, this essential human dignity forms the basis of human rights.

Principles of establishing justice include political responsibility for the common good; sharing fairly all created things; recognizing subsidiarity and differentiated responsibility<sup>1</sup>; participation in society; partnership and the preferential option for the poor; solidarity; social values inherent in the dignity of the human person; fostering mutual respect and understanding between peoples of all races, ethnic origins, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions and cultures; and embracing the way of love.

## PEACE, CONFLICT AND STATES

Peacemaking requires abolishing war and transforming conflict: *They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more* (Isaiah 2:4). Engaging in war constitutes a failure. The church must address the well-organized roots of violence and take up the responsibility to prevent conflicts and to protect people. Assessing the causes and conduct of war begins with reluctance toward entering into conflict and promoting a deep desire for resolution and lasting peace.

Courses of action include eliminating weapons of mass destruction; accommodating conscientious objectors; opposing the use of non-nuclear or conventional military

weapons against civilian populations; opposing spending enormous sums of money to produce ever more and newer types of weapons that threaten to destroy humanity; and providing humanitarian aid, without discrimination, based on the needs of all who suffer because of war, civil unrest, or other forms of violence. We seek to prevent war, build sustainable peace where violence has caused destruction, and reduce expenditures on weapons and direct those resources toward sustainable economic and social development.

## PEACEMAKING AS RESTORATIVE

Restoration of peace requires taking responsibility for injustices, repentance, asking forgiveness, and seeking reconciliation. The restoration of peace demands great love, mercy and forgiveness, a recognition and promotion of truth, human dignity, and human rights.

## HOLISTIC VISION OF PEACE: SHALOM

Peace is a dynamic state of well-being and harmony—right relationships among people and nature where there is no fear. Nothing and no one is excluded from God’s vision of peace; it includes all nations, cultures, and peoples, the whole inhabited Earth, indeed the whole cosmos. The quest for peace is at the heart of ecumenism and the shared path of reconciliation, of walking one another home.

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*(Adopted by consensus by the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches, May 23 2018.)*

<sup>1</sup>Subsidiarity and differentiated responsibility are hallmarks of a flourishing society where people, communities and organizations are free to fulfill their calling and their inner creativity to the fullest.



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