



A ministry of reconciliation PRACTICING PEACE

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”

As 2 Cor 5:18 reminds us, we are called to live out our theology of peace by working for reconciliation and transformed relationships. As a ministry of historic peace churches, MCC supports international partners working to prevent conflict and teach peacebuilding skills. In the U.S., MCC engages in peace education and advocates for U.S. government policies that reduce militarism and increase support for peacebuilding and diplomacy.

As MCC’s new Peaceful Practices curriculum asserts: “It is common to see the words peace and justice together – and rightfully so. Following Jesus’ model, the work of peace and the work of justice are intertwined, and both are fundamental components of the upside-down kingdom of God.”

A lasting peace requires that systems and laws are transformed to ensure justice, meet basic needs and keep people safe. Working holistically to address conflict and injustice gives the best chance for achieving and sustaining peace.

Read more and find opportunities to engage at mcc.org/peacebuilding-education and washington.mcc.org. ✨

A view of the countryside outside Ocosingo, in the Mexican state of Chiapas, where MCC partners with Serapaz to support peace education and positive conflict transformation.



MCC Photo/William Kishivhe

Local advocacy training by MCC Nigeria in Plateau State.

Peace through reflective advocacy and mutual empowerment

by Charles Kwuelum

Transformative peacebuilding involves working at multiple levels, both addressing the root causes of conflict and violence, and meeting the needs of vulnerable populations. Work aimed at these different levels shares a view of conflict as a dynamic process and peacebuilding as a diverse set of interdependent elements and actions that contribute to the constructive transformation of the conflict.

The interactions between MCC advocacy staff in the United States and MCC staff in Nigeria have led to advocacy capacity trainings with local partners in Nigeria alongside the sharing of program insights from those partners with U.S. policymakers. Another example of this influence can be seen through MCC Nigeria's support of local partner Emergency Preparedness Response Teams (EPRT). EPRT teams work with student peace clubs in seventeen local government areas (counties) of Plateau State. The peace clubs aim to transform the mindsets of youth against all forms of bias and extremism and instead cultivate trust-building, positive attitudes and mutual relationships.

MCC's work influencing holistic, reflective change through humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding is shaped by a rich heritage

of Anabaptist values, including trust and human dignity. EPRT advocates to policymakers, traditional and religious leaders, and teachers in Plateau State to implement peace education in the state's school curriculum.

Parallel to this work with students, MCC staff in the U.S. advocate for a demilitarized response to violence and for increased poverty-focused development assistance.

Holistic change remains remote when government policies and other socio-political factors obstruct peacebuilding programming goals. A reflective advocacy that weaves together unique stakeholders, including religious actors, and facilitates an authentic space for shared power can influence peacebuilding policies and address the root causes of injustice. In the context of COVID-19, effective peacebuilding programming can prevent immediate outbreaks of violence, facilitate (re)building human relationships and heal traumatized and conflict-affected societies over the long term. A reflective advocacy enables peacebuilding to support public health and humanitarian responses by ensuring that they are conflict-sensitive and do no harm. ✨

Excerpted from an article in Intersections: MCC theory and practice quarterly, summer 2021, mcc.org/stories/intersections.



Peace to those who are near

by Jes Stoltzfus Buller

Pacebuilding is central to Mennonite Central Committee's work. MCC is known around the world as the organization that does "relief, development and peace, in the name of Christ." Our work over the past hundred years has created a reputation for working in partnership with local communities as an embodiment of Jesus' call in Matthew 5 to be peacemakers.

Being effective in helping others through conflict does not mean we are good at living peaceably with one another, however. Even within the Anabaptist community the skills involved in conflict transformation and restorative justice are often missing.

As the world (including the Anabaptist church) has become increasingly polarized, this lack of peacebuilding skills is even more evident. From presidential elections to membership guidelines to COVID-19 practices, conflict has frayed many communities who have not been able to address and transform difference in constructive ways. As John Paul



Peaceful Practices
A guide to healthy communication in conflict

Peaceful Practices, a new adult Sunday school curriculum from MCC, offers biblical reflection and practical ideas to hone skills for dialogue and transforming conflicts. Learn more and see when materials are available at mcc.org/peaceful-practices.



Buller, shown leading dialogue activities at a North Baltimore Mennonite Church retreat in 2018

Lederach says, “we simply have not developed an ethos of living healthily alongside embodied difference.”

We have been content to let our peace witness reflect perspectives on foreign policy without addressing the conflicts at home. Yet how we engage in conversation with one another regard-

ing things we disagree on is another important way to embody Jesus’ call to peacemaking. Ephesians 2:17 states that Christ came to proclaim peace to those who were far off and to those who were near.

Our mission of peacebuilding requires the integrity of practicing what we preach. We must use the skills and practices of conflict transformation in our own contexts. This means analyzing the peacebuilding principles, like those outlined on the insert, in relation to our own lives and local context.

These principles call us to listen to those we disagree with, opening our hearts and minds to difference. They ask us to acknowledge that nonviolence is more easily done from a position of privilege and to take our lead from those on the margins. They ask us to see and address the ways structures of violence inhabit all conflict, even at the interpersonal level.

As image-bearers of Christ, how we engage in conflict reflects a certain picture of Christ that either demonstrates the values of the kingdom, or does not. If we are to call ourselves peacemakers, let us model doing peace “in the name of Christ” authentically, here in our own communities and contexts, as well as in others. ✨

MCC photo/Brenda Burkholder



MCC photo/Colin Vandenberg

Peace through engagement

in North Korea

by Kate Parsons

Members of a delegation from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) at a research farm in Carman, in the Canadian province of Manitoba. The delegation’s visit in July 2018, accompanied by MCC staff in Canada, focused on agricultural areas of Manitoba and sharing sustainable farming practices.

MCC has provided humanitarian assistance to the people of North Korea for more than 25 years. But this work has always been within the broader context of MCC’s commitment to peace and a recognition that all people are created in God’s image and have dignity.

“We get almost daily messages in the West about why we shouldn’t like and shouldn’t trust the people of North Korea,” says Rick Cober Bauman, Executive Director of MCC Canada. “At MCC we’ve decided not to accept that single, simple narrative.”

The simple narrative can be difficult to challenge. A 2018 Gallup poll found that more than 50% of people in the U.S. considered North Korea to be the United States’ “greatest enemy.”

As tensions have escalated, so has the United States’ isolation of North Korea. The U.S. blocks all its citizens from traveling to North Korea with the exception of humanitarian workers and journalists. U.S. sanctions prohibit all trade and financial transactions with North Korea and require special exemptions for even the most basic humanitarian items.

Unfortunately, hostility between the U.S. and North Korea has translated into fear-based narratives that can dehumanize North Korean people.

MCC has long advocated for greater opportunities for engagement with people in North Korea, believing that peace comes not through isolation or aggression but through personal connections, dialogue and relationships that contribute to mutual understanding.

North Korea’s borders have been closed due to COVID-19 since January 2020. When borders open again, we call on the U.S. government to remove restrictions on travel, partnerships, and exchanges, allowing for the sort of connections that MCC has been cultivating for more than 25 years.

The path toward peace on the Korean Peninsula is complex, but it cannot be achieved without the Korean people. We encourage policies of diplomacy, dialogue and humanitarian assistance as we work toward lasting peace. ✨

Worship resources

Prayer of intercession

Lord, we thank you for those who work to dismantle structures used to exclude and oppress others. Together with our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, We continue to pray for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. May our churches and faith communities be known as messengers of peace and may our buildings be used as places of peace.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. With the church leaders of Colombia, we pray for governments, armed groups and the media to set aside attitudes of war and to enter into conversations and actions for peace, making substantial and fundamental concessions for the building of a new country, with full guarantees for human dignity with social and legal justice, including housing, employment, land, security, education, health and democratic freedom.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Prince of Peace, we pray for changed hearts that seek peace and work for justice for all South Sudanese. Alongside your followers in South Sudan, we give you thanks for those who are already working for peace in their communities. We pray for food, shelter, and medicine for those displaced and those fleeing conflict in their home communities.

We pray that those who go to bed hungry would be fed, and that those who are suffering would be comforted and made whole.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

—Adapted from *Sabeel Wave of Prayer; Statement of the Colombia Mennonite Church on the massacres; Bread and Peace Declaration; Prayer for peace in South Sudan*

A prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Scripture texts: Psalms 85:10, Matthew 5:9, 2 Cor 5:18, Ephesians 2:17

Songs

- STJ 56 Make me a channel of your peace
- VT 391 Ososo (Come Now, O Prince of Peace)
- VT 389 Together
- YouTube “38” (lamenting the division of North and South Korea) at youtube.com/watch?v=NN656XOdkyQ

Additional resources

Mennonite World Conference Peace Sunday: mwc-cmm.org/peace-commission/peace-sunday

IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3121
senate.gov

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 224-3121
house.gov

President Joseph Biden
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
(202) 456-1111
whitehouse.gov/contact

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Staff: Tammy Alexander (director and managing editor), Jes Stoltzfus Buller, Kirstin De Mello, Charles Kwuelum, Saulo Padilla, Katerina Parsons.

All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

Abbreviations STJ *Sing the Journey*
VT *Voices Together*

Facts about peacebuilding

More than **50%** of the **135 million people**

who are acutely food-insecure in the world live in countries where conflict is the leading driver of hunger

80 million
people around the world were forcibly displaced by conflict in 2020

33%
of U.S. foreign aid goes, not to humanitarian, development or local peacekeeping, but to military and security efforts



For the wellbeing and flourishing of people around the world, we want peace. But peacebuilding is more than just the prevention of violence.

Peacebuilding . . .

- Responds to the root causes and effects of conflict
- Addresses basic needs and rights equitably
- Builds right relationships through practices such as mediation, restorative justice, reconciliation and trauma healing
- Responds in situations where there are unjust relationships and structures
- Listens to the voices of the marginalized to advocate for just systems
- Respects and promotes diversity
- Restores the health of Creation and promotes sustainable living
- Enhances local knowledge and practices that support justice and peace

“Americans believe we’re more polarized than we really are—and that misperception can drive us even further apart.”

—From *America’s divided mind*,
beyondconflict.org

Sources: Facts: International Food Policy Research Institute, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Council on Foreign Relations, Institute for Economics and Peace, Beyond Conflict. Peacebuilding principles: MCC Bangladesh, Catholic Relief Services, The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding, A Mennonite peace? An analysis of Mennonite Central Committee’s work in East Africa by Emily Welty.

Every
\$1
invested in peace
saves the world
\$16
on the costs
of conflict



KEY PRINCIPLES FOR U.S. policies on peacebuilding



1 Peacebuilding is integral to relief and development

Economic insecurity, structural violence and conflict create barriers for relief and development. An entrepreneur in El Salvador or Honduras may not be able to expand her business because of violent extortion from gangs. A family in Iran or Syria may struggle to access health care because of sanctions and war. When sustainable development programs are intentionally woven with principles of peacebuilding, sustainable peace is an outcome. **U.S. foreign assistance should generously support peacebuilding projects that address violence and conflict at the root of hunger, displacement and public health crises.** This includes robust support for the Complex Crisis Fund (CCF) to prevent and respond to the early warning signs of violence and escalating conflicts.

2 Local peacebuilders are essential for lasting peace

True peace cannot be achieved through military force but can only be found by addressing the factors – including structural injustices—that lead to violence. Churches and local civil society organizations demonstrate effective, nonviolent, community-based responses to conflict. Such local, context-specific responses prevent violence while strengthening communities. Investing in peace education is essential. For example, Emergency Preparedness Response Teams (EPRT), an MCC partner in Nigeria, uses nonviolent peace education to build trust among Christian and Muslim communities and reduce the triggers of conflict and violence. **Funding for peacebuilding efforts should support local civil society organizations, not military forces. U.S. government policies should include strong calls for the protection of peace and human rights activists leading this work.**

3 Peace requires engagement with all stakeholders

Diplomacy and engagement are peaceful and effective alternatives to war. Understanding occurs when all parties listen to each other and see each other as human beings. **U.S. government policies should support avenues for constructive dialogue, such as people-to-people engagement, and lift broad-based sanctions and travel restrictions that isolate other countries.**

4 Peace means reducing gun violence

In the U.S., polling shows broad public support for expanding background checks as one tool for reducing gun violence in our communities. **Background checks should be required for all gun sales, including private, online and gun show sales. Sales of U.S. guns and other weapons are also fueling violence in other countries—more restrictions should be put on these sales.**

Learn more

Peaceful practices: A guide to healthy communication in conflict (coming soon) mcc.org/peaceful-practices

Mennonites against militarism
pjsn.org/mennonites-against-militarism

Pursuing peace: The essence of Mennonite Central Committee
mcccanada.org, commonword.ca, amazon.com

Voices from the global church
votervoice.net/MennoniteCC/BlogPosts/2006

A loaded conversation: An invitation to talk about guns
mcc.org/media/resources/8279