

Je me souviens... I remember...

Peace Sunday Packet 2010



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**
Canada

Je me souviens... I remember...

On Remembrance Day our country invites us to reflect on the sacrifice of soldiers who have fought and died in the course of military service to Canada, and to honour those who are currently serving with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

Mennonite Central Committee encourages Canadian Anabaptist churches—as historic peace churches—to observe Peace Sunday just prior to Remembrance Day. Peace Sunday is an annual occasion to preach, teach and reflect upon the gospel of peace and to offer a witness against war and violence. It is a time to remind one another that our allegiance is to the God of peace and to Christ who is our peace.

This Peace Sunday Packet is a resource to assist your congregation in preparing for Peace Sunday.

This year's packet has been prepared by MCC staff in Québec: Jean-Calvin Kitata, peace and justice coordinator, and Claude and Muriel Queval, directors. Written with the Québec context in mind, it is offered to Anabaptist churches across the country in both French and English.

Additional resources available this year include:

- our popular “to remember is to work for peace” buttons
- a three-minute video on the theme “I remember”
- a compilation of suggestions for school teachers who wish to offer a peace perspective at Remembrance Day (available in October).

Visit our website for these additional resources, canada.mcc.org/peacesunday.

We welcome your questions, concerns and any feedback you have on these Peace Sunday materials. Please send your comments to peace@mennonitecc.ca.

For Christ's peace,

Esther Epp-Tiessen

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Blessed are the
peacemakers for they will
be called children of God.

– Matthew 5:8



Jean-Calvin Kitata



Claude and Muriel Queval

How to use this packet

- Skim or flip through the packet to get a general sense of the contents.
- Read through the Introduction (page 4) to become familiar with the theme.
- Decide who will be involved in planning the Peace Sunday worship service and who will lead it (as worship leader, speaker, storyteller, music leader, etc.)
- Work with the appropriate people to plan the worship service, drawing from the materials in the Resources for Worship (page 5) section. Pray that the Spirit will lead your planning.
- Incorporate aspects from the Learning Materials (page 11) into the sermon, storytelling, bulletin, etc.
- Share the packet with other people from your congregation who may wish to use the Learning Materials in adult or youth Sunday school classes, small group discussions, etc.
- After Peace Sunday, send a note to peace@mennonitecc.ca to let MCC know about your Peace Sunday worship service and whether or not you used any parts of the packet. Send us your suggestions for future packets.

The first step [of peacemaking] is to remember we are all God's children, all equal brothers and sisters, all sons and daughters of God. From this worldview and understanding, all our acts of peace and justice follow. This remembering is the daily act of recalling our basic identities and living out of them. It constantly returns to God, allows God to disarm our hearts and accepts the peace of heart that God offers.

As we accept God's disarming love every day, we become more and more who we already are — beloved sons and daughters of God. In this disarming practice of remembrance, we live our lives in the Spirit of God, growing more and more aware at each moment of God's active presence in us, in the human family, in the whole world.

Once we remember who we are, we realize we could never hurt — much less kill — another person. We could never wage war, sit idly by while millions starve to death, or share in the systemic violence that leads to poverty and the arms race. This constant remembrance of the unity of all life calls us to renounce violence, no matter how noble the cause.

— John Dear, [Disarming the Heart: Toward a Vow of Nonviolence](#), revised edition (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1993)

Introduction to theme:

Je me souviens... I remember...

“Je me souviens” (“I remember”) is a short but widely used phrase that has appeared on Province of Québec licence plates since 1978. These words have been the motto inscribed on the front of public monuments and buildings in La Belle Province for decades. Staff at MCC Québec were inspired to use “I remember” for this packet, for the simple reason that the phrase conveys openness; it cannot be associated with any particular remembrance and, more importantly, it carries no value judgments.

On Remembrance Day, our country asks us to remember those Canadians who have served—and continue to serve—militarily. It asks us to remember especially the sacrifice of those who have died through military service. Peace churches take a different view of Remembrance Day. We believe that Remembrance Day is a season for a wider kind of remembering. It is a season to remember that all people are children of God and to remember *all* those who suffer and die through war. It is a season to remember that Christ calls us to renounce violence and to commit ourselves to be peacemakers.

By celebrating Peace Sunday 2010, we as peace churches remember the victims of war and violence. We do this as a way of building peace. “I remember” thus conveys a message of solidarity with the men, women and children around the world who are victims of war’s savagery. This year, we will focus in particular on the groups most directly affected by arbitrary violence and who endure great suffering: refugees of war, children who are harmed by war, women and girls who are raped and sexually abused, populations that are emotionally traumatized, families that are separated, populations that suffer famine, as well as all those who have lost hope for a world of justice and peace.

Remembering is an act of honouring those who are suffering from war or carrying its scars; it is also a way of honouring those who resist militarism and aggression with loving nonviolence.

Let us unite in worship, prayer and action for peace. Let us plead for world peace in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Let us participate in the coming of God’s peaceable reign. Happy Peace Sunday 2010!

Jean-Calvin KM Kitata
Coordinator of the Justice and Peace Program
MCC Québec

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Resources for Worship

This section includes suggestions for the various components for Peace Sunday worship. Feel free to adapt these materials, and to shape the worship service as appropriate for your congregation.

1. Call to worship

This is a suggested call to worship, based on 2 Corinthians 5:17-19.

One: So if anyone is in Christ

All: there is a new creation;

One: everything old has passed away;

All: see, everything has become new!

One: All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ,

All: and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;

One: that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them,

All: and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

One: Thanks be to God for the gift of peace he has granted us.

All: Thanks be to God for the ministry of peace to which he has called us.

2. Introduction to worship service

The worship leader may use words like these to introduce the worship service:

Today we are celebrating Peace Sunday. This is an occasion when we remind one another that our God is a God of peace, that Christ is our peace, and that, as people of God and followers of Jesus, we are called to forsake violence and to build peace.

The theme for this year's Peace Sunday is "I remember." On Remembrance Day, our country asks us to remember those Canadians who have served—and continue to serve—militarily. It asks us to remember especially the sacrifice of those who have died through military service. It is right to remember them. However, as a peace church (and part of Anabaptist family of peace churches) we take a different view of Remembrance Day. We believe that Remembrance Day is a season for a wider kind of remembering. It is a season to remember that all people are blessed children of God and to remember all those who suffer and die through war. Our theme this year invites us to remember all victims of war.

In planning this worship service, we have made use of the Peace Sunday Packet which is a peace resource produced each year by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). The Peace Sunday Packet is made available to over 700 churches across Canada and within the MCC constituency, and so today we worship in solidarity with many other Anabaptist churches across the country.

3. Songs and hymns

Anabaptist congregations across Canada use a variety of resources for singing in worship. They also use a variety of musical styles. Use the resources available to you for songs and hymns that will enhance the worship focus.

4. Video

MCC has produced a 3-minute video called "Je me souviens" or "I remember." It includes images and words that invite reflection and prayer for victims of war and violence everywhere. The video is posted and may be downloaded from canada.mcc.org/peacesunday.

You may choose to use this video as your Peace Sunday worship service begins, before a prayer for victims of war, or elsewhere.

5. Prayers

The following prayer was written by Muriel Queval of MCC Québec.

Lord, You remember
Lord, You the Creator of memory and history...
You remember a garden...
We, human beings, we remember this common place.
We had been placed there to live in complete peace... in total liberty.
We disregarded the only restriction that was placed upon us.
Since then, we wander aimlessly, we stay at the door, right against the door.
In the hope to see it open, never to close again.
Lord, we remember the consequences,
And the price You had to pay.
Far from abandoning us, You took your place in our tragedy
Lord, You the Lord and Saviour of the human race...
You remember... our condition... the wars and the fights... the injustice and the hatred...
Lord, You the commiserate God...
You remember the injured child who lost the ability to laugh and play,
You remember the young man forcibly enrolled in the armed forces,
You remember the humiliated young woman,
You remember these separated families, displaced, hungry, traumatized and searching for freedom...
Lord, You the God of redemption...
Give us the ability to learn from the past
That we might know how to build a better future.
Give us the ability to know how to eradicate violence
So that we, in a spirit of solidarity,
May recognize all as brothers and sisters equal in Your sight.
You, Lord God... You remember... how much You love us.
May we also know how to remember this.
Give us the desire to come back to You and to live in peace,
The peace that You have always wanted to give us so generously
Keep us from indifference or worse... from cruelty.
Make of us, Your redeemed people, makers of peace,
So that wherever in the world, we spread this Good News: Christ is risen from the dead, hope is given back to us
And so that in unity, all together, from the four corners of the world, following Jesus' example, Your well – beloved son,
we might say with one heart:
Our Father, Who art in heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the power, the kingdom and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.

The following prayers were written by Carol Penner, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ontario. They are used with permission from her blog of worship resources, leadinginworship.com

Remember (A litany for two voices or two groups)

Remember with clear eyes the horrific cost of war.
Remember with deep sorrow those who killed and were killed.
Remember with grief the blood-stained battlefields.
Remember with tears the rending of people from their homes.
Remember with compassion the bereaved and the wounded.
Remember with reverence those who risked their lives for peace.
Remember with tenderness the children's longing for freedom.
Remember with gratefulness all who forgave their enemies.
Remember with hope that the kingdom is planted with small seeds.
Remember with confidence that faith, hope and love abide.
All: Remember with joy that our Saviour is the Prince of Peace.

Prayer of Confession

God of Wisdom,
As we remember the atomic blast, the gas chamber, the killing fields,
as we remember the war machine and the military establishment,
as we remember Hitler and Pol Pot, Jim Crow and the Indian Act,
call us to account for our own whispered innuendo,
our own snubs, our own finger pointing,
our own eyes averted from injustice, our own cutting words,
our own shove, our own furtive slap.
Do not allow the grandstand atrocities
to blind us to our own cruelties.
From the darkness of our bedrooms to skyscraper boardrooms,
from schools and churches to houses of parliament,
give us ears to hear your call to peace in our time,
peace with our own two hands.

The Foreseeable Future

A hymn of praise for fists uncurled!
Alleluias on our lips for ammunition abandoned!
Guns dropped, forgotten,
bombs defused, harmless!
Fervent thanks for tanks rusting,
for jet fighters permanently grounded!
This future, peace-bright,
hovers on the horizon of your kingdom.
It will dawn the day we remember
there are no soldiers—
 only your children, beloved and loving,
there are no borders—
 only one world, creative and creating,
there has been no collateral damage--
 only broken hearts, broken homes, broken dreams.
It will come the day we remember to pray,
“Your kingdom come, your will be done.”
The Spirit and the church say, “Come!”

6. Scripture readings

The suggested scripture texts for this year's Peace Sunday are:

- Zechariah 8:4-5, 12,16-17
- Micah 6:8
- Matthew 5:8-10

7. Sermon suggestions

The following was written by Claude Queval.

Just like us, Zechariah, Micah and Jesus lived in a violent and unjust world. Leaders' political decisions motivated by various factors economic, ideological or other have, throughout time, had devastating impacts on civilian populations and especially their most vulnerable members.

Zechariah and other prophets who followed him invite us to dream of a better world in which community members are able to enjoy "Shalom," which, in the understanding of the Jewish people of the Old Testament, is more than an absence of conflict. It is true peace in the city, where everyone can come and go freely without fear of suffering aggression or violence and where everyone is treated with respect, kindness and dignity. In short, it is a society in which everyone has access to the resources needed for survival (Zechariah 8:12) and a society whose oldest members as well as its youngest enjoy the calm and stability needed for laughter, play and celebration to emerge, which are all important elements of human balance. (Zechariah 8: 4-5).

However, there is nothing romantic or magical about this vision. Zechariah, like Micah and Jesus, invites people to action. "These are the things that ye shall do."

Matthew's beatitudes do not direct us to live in peace but to make peace. In this sense, "peacemakers" could be considered "pacifiers." However, pacifiers have a certain amount of power to impose peace on others. In Jesus' time, the Roman world lived in peace (dubbed pax romana, or Roman peace) because the Emperor Augustus had imposed it by force a few decades earlier.

Peacemakers or "peace workers" often have few tools at their disposal other than their commitment and their loving presence toward those who are suffering, the victims. These tools are what they use to "stand up for peace," which leads most naturally to the next beatitude, namely being "persecuted for justice."

Peacemakers who promote reconciliation model themselves on God who through Jesus achieves peace among people. This is an everyday and humble process (Micah 6: 8) conducted "in Christ's name."

Questions to accompany the message:

- Compile an inventory of the solutions, interventions and means proposed by society in general to achieve and maintain peace and to respond to victims' suffering. What do you think of these? How effective is each of these responses?
- Compile an inventory of ways that your congregation is involved in peacemaking in your community or around the world. What do you think of these? Is God calling your church to a deeper witness for peace?
- For your part, how do you help victims of conflict rebuild their capacity to hope, laugh and play?
- How does your lifestyle promote peace (based on the definition of "Shalom") in your immediate environment and in the world?
- How difficult have you found the role of peacemaker? How gratifying have you found the role of peacemaker?

8. Stories for children

The following stories were written by Muriel Queval.

Below are two stories that can be shared with children in your congregation. Option A is more appropriate for younger children, while Option B is more appropriate for older children.

Option A: Based on 2 Kings 5:2

Historical Background

When an enemy army invaded her country, a young girl was captured and deported. Taken away to a foreign land, she found herself in the service of a woman whose husband, Naaman, was very sick. Naaman was also the top general of the army that had taken this young girl away. He had leprosy, and there was no medicine to cure this illness. To avoid spreading his illness, Naaman had to keep away from others and live isolated and in seclusion.

The young slave girl remembered that in her native country, there was a man who could heal her master. She had a big heart, and with no consideration for all the misery imposed on her, she spoke to her mistress about this man. The general went to visit the prophet and came back cured.

The girl could have kept this information to herself and Naaman would never have been cured. However, she preferred to share it. She remembered the principle of blessing our enemies and doing good to those who persecute us.

First person fictionalized account

Although I'm very young, I'm always very busy. I have no chance to play or have fun like other kids my age. I have no choice but to work. I'm in the service of my mistress. If I don't do exactly as she says, I am in real trouble! I have to get up early to get fresh water, bring wood for the fire, prepare breakfast, take care of my mistress's clothing and jewellery, bring her creams, run her bath, and see that everything is ready. It is like this all day, and I fall into bed late at night quite exhausted. Then I get up the next day and do it all over again.

In the rare times I have a few minutes to rest (and I mean just a few minutes), I dream of my country. I remember my parents, my brothers, my sisters, my friends. Oh I miss them so much! How I would like to see them again and give them big hugs. Do they at least know I'm still alive? Just thinking about them brings tears to my eyes.

I remember the sweets that mama used to make for us in secret, and my brother's jokes; I remember us giggling around the table. I remember the evening stories that papa used to tell us. I remember family celebrations with my aunts, uncles and cousins and our trips to the temple every year as we sang together in praise of our God.

And then one day war came to our village. I don't like thinking about what happened, but it often comes back to me at night, appearing in my dreams, waking me up and leaving me shaking in fear. I remember being captured and hauled away. We had to march for days and days with almost nothing to eat or drink. And it was so hot.

My master, the husband of my mistress, was very sick. He was the top general of the army that had attacked my country. He had leprosy, an illness that could not be cured. And since he was contagious, he had to stay away from everyone. He had sores on his hands, feet and face that would not heal. Over time, this illness would kill him. Everyone here was very sad about this.

So I cranked up my courage, went to see my mistress, and said these words: "I remember that in my country, there is a man, Elisha, who is a prophet and a man of God, as we say. Only he can help cure our master Naaman." She listened to me. Her husband then travelled to my country (Oh, my country!) to see this man, and he came back cured. I remember that mama and papa taught me not to seek revenge but rather to bless my enemies and do them good.

Reflection

Remember that with God's help, we can do good those who harm us. With God's help, we can be peacemakers.

Option B: Based on 2 Samuel 4:4, 2 Samuel 9

Historical Background

Mephibosheth was only five when everything suddenly changed. In one fell swoop he lost his father, grandfather and two uncles to the war. A little later, a violent act related to this same event took the life of his last family member.

Upon learning this news, his nanny, thinking Mephibosheth's life in danger, picked him up in order to flee and take him to safety. However, she was rushing and dropped him, which injured both his legs and left him disabled.

Mephibosheth lived in hiding for many years, always fearing for his life and thinking he was no more valuable than a dead dog.

When David, the reigning king, had him brought to the royal court, Mephibosheth once again had every reason to fear for his life. However, David wanted to honour the promise he had made to Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father. So he took Jonathan's son under his protection, invited him to eat at his table, and returned to him all his father's possessions. Mephibosheth could finally live in peace.

David remembered that promises must be kept, and that a good king can use his power to do good, to free people, to return their belongings and to bring peace. (He had suffered so much from having to flee many times and remain in hiding.)

First-person fictionalized account

Sitting in the shade on a patio, with my crutches by my side, I watch some children playing, running, yelling and laughing. Their joyful play cruelly reminds me that I was never free to run around as I would have liked.

I remember it all happened when I was five. In one day, my father, grandfather and two uncles were killed at war, which meant I suddenly found myself an orphan. I also found myself disabled because when my nanny was fleeing with me in her arms to protect me, she accidentally dropped me, which damaged both my legs.

It should be said that in those days, when a king lost his throne, all his family members were often killed to be quite sure none would succeed him. This is why my uncle, who was not at war that day, was killed a short time later in his bed. So I am my family's only survivor. This is why I remained in hiding, living in constant fear of being discovered. One day the new king, David, learned I was alive, and he had me come to the royal palace. On the way there, I had so many questions and emotions running through my head. Even if I had never wanted to be involved in politics or to demand anything, even if I had no desire to plot in defence of my rights, I remained, despite my disability, a threat to the royalty. I feared, with reason, being the next victim.

When I was brought before the king, I bowed down to greet him. I was trembling with fear and almost overcome. People helped me up again. The king pronounced my name kindly and said I had no reason to fear for my safety. He was emotional as he said, "I remember my deep friendship with your father and my promise to him to take care of his family. I want to treat you kindly." He then invited me to eat with him. Since then, I have lived peacefully and freely under his protection. Finally, for the first time in my life, I am able to live free of fear.

Reflection

Remember that, even though people have harmed us, we can do good to others. We can free people, bless them, and to give back joy to people who have lost it. Remember that we can use our abilities to be peacemakers.

9. Benediction/sending prayer

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:16.

... even though people have harmed us, we can do good to others. We can free people, bless them, and to give back joy to people who have lost it. Remember that we can use our abilities to be peacemakers.

Learning Materials

The following was written by Jean-Calvin Kitata.

This section provides extensive information on victims of war, particularly: refugees, orphaned children, separated families, women and girls abused in war, people traumatized by war, and people made hungry by war. You are encouraged to incorporate some of this material into the sermon or into your church's education program.

I remember: The state of our collective memory

“No more war!” This evocative slogan, which emerged at the end of World War I, profoundly marked European populations. Between this marvellous intention and its implementation, however, a very different reality has taken place on our planet. History shows that, in so many ways, the generalized peace that people had yearned for through the expression “No more war!” has become a meaningless pious wish.

The year 2010 marks the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II and the extremely heavy toll it took, with extensive loss of human life and almost total economic devastation. This global military conflict involved approximately 50 countries. It is estimated that a total of 40 million civilians and 20 million soldiers were killed. For the first time in history, the atomic bomb was used.

The end of World War II kindled new hope that was expressed through the creation of the United Nations an organization founded on the commitment to protect future generations from the scourge of war and to guarantee peace and security in the world so that conflicts such as the first and second world wars would never reoccur.

But today war continues. Indeed, military expenditures worldwide have never been higher. Despite the financial crisis ravaging the planet in recent years, the new war on terror has meant that total military spending increased by four percent in a single year, reaching a record \$1.464 trillion in 2008 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). A massive flow of arms, which is still being fed by the extensive stockpiles built up during the Cold War, has served to support groups of all political persuasions.

The arms trade has undergone enormous expansion. The resources generated by arms trafficking are also regularly used to destabilize other regions. In many parts of the world, armed confrontations continue to inflict untold suffering on humanity. In short, advancements in armaments, techniques and strategies have naturally translated into a substantial increase in the number of civilian victims. In World War II, 50 percent of war's casualties were civilians; today that number is 90 percent.

Globally, the number of armed conflicts is decreasing, but the scourge of war continues to devastate millions of lives. Several theories and expressions have even been put forward to justify armed interventions. To justify recourse to force, military strategists have proposed various concepts and theories about war, including just war, preventive war, pre-emptive war, war of aggression, defensive war, clean war, surgical strikes, etc. Whatever the war and wherever it occurs, horror and desolation follow.

Despite the financial crisis ravaging the planet in recent years, the new war on terror has meant that total military spending increased by four percent in a single year, reaching a record \$1.464 trillion in 2008.

In our own case, Canada remains at war in Afghanistan. For nearly a decade, Canadian soldiers have participated in a NATO military mission to support particular political objectives in Afghanistan. The true nature and rationale for this mission remain controversial and confusing. Sadly, on July 20 of this year, the number of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan since the start of operations in 2002 reached a total of 151. (By the time you read this, that number will likely be higher.)

In addition, away from the highly publicized conflicts taking place in the glare of national or international media, most conflicts unfortunately drag on against a backdrop of indifference from the international community. Public opinion focuses for a short time on a small number of conflicts and ignores others, which means that, in many areas away from the international spotlight, the struggle by civilian populations to survive in the face of hate and intolerance is met with total indifference. Civil conflict in these countries of the South has grown in intensity.

Civil wars taking place in poorer countries go hand in hand with the most abject criminality. The number of their victims has increased considerably. Massacres of civilians, rape of women and girls, despair among refugees, political assassinations, torture and degrading treatment and arbitrary detention, often under the most extreme destitution, are the lot of countless victims in conflict zones.

It should also be mentioned that most of the civil wars that are ravaging vast regions are not being waged for ideological reasons but rather to control these countries' economic riches. God's blessing of countries with mineral resources can become a curse for innocent populations in some cases. Crimes against humanity are committed on an ongoing basis, and the people presumed responsible will probably never be brought to justice.

The causes and circumstances that trigger wars are certainly numerous, diverse and sometimes contradictory but the damage wrought does not stop when conflicts end. While material losses appear repairable, the human cost and the after-effects on survivors linger for several generations, well after the guns have fallen silent.

For all these reasons, this Peace Sunday Packet examines the impact of war, particularly as related to unarmed and defenceless civilian victims.

The human costs and after-effects of war linger for many generations, long after the guns have fallen silent.

1. I remember war refugees.

What is a refugee?

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is a “person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

How does one become a refugee?

Every year, millions of people are forced to leave their homes to avoid persecution, armed conflict or political violence and seek refuge elsewhere. Over the years, war-related events, ecological disasters, famines, totalitarian regimes, ideological intolerance, repression and persecution have forced people to flee in the name of life or liberty. Having been chased off their land and isolated from their loved ones, wandering refugees cling to hope and seek a haven where they can start over.

Refugees in the world

According to the annual Global Trends report by the United Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR), released on June 16, 2009, the number of people in the world forced to leave their homes and countries as a result of conflicts and persecution had reached 42 million by the end of 2008. This figure included 16 million refugees and asylum seekers and 26 million people internally displaced within their own countries. Some 80 percent of the world’s refugees are found in developing countries, along with the vast majority of internally displaced persons.

Refugees’ needs

Refugees need a haven of peace where they can recover from their traumas and regain hope in a better world. Welcoming them is not only an obvious moral duty but also an international obligation recognized by the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which was signed in Geneva on July 28, 1951 and ratified by almost all industrialized countries (including Canada). World Refugee Day is celebrated on June 20 every year.

The church’s response to refugees

Pope John-Paul II exhorted the church in these terms: “Wherever a man is suffering, there Christ suffers in his stead. Wherever a man is suffering, there the Church must be at his side. Man who is whole of body and soul is the main goal of the Pastoral care of the Church. When a stranger knocks at the door of our society, the Church is concerned. In the name of the Gospel of Christ, the Church cannot remain silent when the dignity of so many human beings is threatened by procedures and regulations that lose sight of what it means to be human. The Church must continue to make its voice heard in defending the human dignity of refugees wherever they are found. Christians must engage in the service of refugees and see them as brothers and sisters who are victims of inequality and injustice” (“Towards a Pastoral Care of Refugees,”1983).

MCC’s Refugee Assistance Program coordinates the sponsorship of refugees, public education on refugee issues, and advocacy on government policy towards refugees. To learn more or to get involved, contact your provincial MCC office or MCC Canada. (See addresses at the end of this packet or visit canada.mcc.org/refugee)

2. I remember children harmed by war.

Children of war

War is a daily reality for millions of children around the world. Thousands of civilians are killed or injured every day through armed conflict, and the majority of these innocent victims are children. Being vulnerable to the ravages of war and often separated from their families, children are orphaned or are handicapped for life. Many children remain traumatized by the brutal deaths and unspeakable violence they have witnessed and the terror and hardships they have endured. Many victims also die of hunger, malnutrition or lack of medical care.

In 2005 the UN reported that over the previous decade, two million children had been killed in situations of armed conflict, while six million had been permanently disabled or injured. Between 2003 and 2005 over 14 million were forcibly displaced within and outside their home countries. Between 8000 and 10,000 children are killed or disabled every year as a result of landmines. Over 250,000 continue to be exploited as child soldiers (“Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict,” September 2005).

Child soldiers

Some child soldiers choose to fight but most are recruited by force; through a lack of work or the loss of their family, they have no choice. According to a United Nations’ study by Graça Machel, “Their only remaining ‘choice’ is to fight as part of a unit, which provides clothing in the form of a uniform and food to eat. Once recruited, children become essential to the war. They quickly learn how to fight and kill. They are also raped and used as sexual slaves. Being less fully aware of their actions, they are more malleable and easier to shape. They can be made to do whatever is desired. They very quickly become the perfect instrument of war following instructions and not asking questions. To better control the local population, children are ordered to terrorize, torture or massacre their own families in the villages where they were raised. Then, these guilty children with blood on their hands are cursed by their parents and become pariahs excluded from their communities and condemned to remain with the political group they have joined. War orphans are always haunted by past violence (“Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” 1996).

Story of a war orphan

Theresa is a young woman full of spirit from Sierra Leone. She saw her parents for the last time when rebels attacked their city during Sierra Leone’s civil war (1991-2000). While fleeing to neighbouring Guinea, the family was separated. Theresa, who was never reunited with her parents, experienced war and its consequences in refugee camps where she begged and sold her body to soldiers and others for a little food or money. Today, peace has returned to Sierra Leone, and Theresa lives with her aunt in Koindu, a city in southeast Sierra Leone, a former rebel stronghold during the civil war. The girl is the mother of a two-year-old, whose father is unknown because she has had numerous sexual partners since returning home. She rarely felt her life was worth living. “I feel I’m good for nothing, that my life has no meaning,” she explained. “I have no idea who the child’s father is. I have to struggle just to find us clothing. I beg so we can eat.”

There are currently at least 250,000 children participating in hostilities as child soldiers in approximately 30 different conflicts around the world.

3. I remember the pain of women and girls who are raped and abused during war.

“Our bodies, their battlefield!”

One of the horrifying elements of conflicts is the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Women endure terrible situations. They suffer the physical and moral violence of rape, massacre, assassination, arbitrary arrest and illegal detention, assault and injuries, forced prostitution and sexual slavery. Thousands of women are abused, humiliated, attacked, raped, beaten, exploited and killed. They experience genital mutilation, infanticide, forced marriages, pimping, honour killings, femicide [murder of women], gang rape, systematic rape, sexual enslavement, pornography, organized pimp rings, slavery, and so on.

In many conflicts, girls are enslaved by soldiers who force them to become their “wives.” In addition to having to cook, clean, wash the clothes and transport ammunition, these girls are also the victims of sexual enslavement. Indeed, one of the disturbing elements of conflict is the use of sexual violence as a strategy of war by almost all parties. The rape of Congolese women and girls by soldiers during the war there is horrifying both in its scope and extraordinary brutality. Rapes often take place in public, and the women are generally beaten, whipped or otherwise physically abused by the rapists, before, during and after the conflict. In many cases, women are repeatedly gang raped.

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Current situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Although exact numbers are difficult to obtain, non-governmental organizations and United Nations’ organizations on the ground in eastern DRC have estimated at 14,000 the number of rapes in 2005 and 13,000 in 2006. Recently, in 2007, the UN coordinator of emergency aid, John Holmes, described the situation of rape victims hospitalized in the province of South Kivu. He affirmed having seen proof and having heard stories of victims describing “sexual violence so brutal it staggers the imagination.” He stated that over 32,000 cases of rape and sexual violence had been reported for the province of South Kivu alone since 2005—and that this represented only a fraction of the total number of women suffering such extreme violence. (Los Angeles Times, 11 October 2007).

Frontline testimonial

Justine Masika Bihamba of *Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles dans la région du Nord-Kivu* describes the situation [TRANSLATION]: “Women still carry bloody scars from the war in the Congolese jungle. Those not raped endure separation from their husbands, who have fled or joined armed groups. They also endure separation from their sons, who are kidnapped by armed groups and risk never returning home. Their daughters are obliged to agree to early marriages, since, for the mothers, this is preferable to having men simply take their daughters’ virginity and remove them to distant jungles. In addition to all this, the girls serve as cheap labour, performing vile and demeaning work. They are kidnapped to sift minerals for illegal miners, to transport ammunition, to cook for their captors (who end up abusing them), to serve as spies, etc. Being unprepared for the role of head of household, abandoned women lose patience and remarry to ensure their physical safety. Others sell themselves to achieve more economic security, feed their children, or meet a myriad of family needs. Many abandoned women end up developing psychosomatic illnesses (intestinal or cardiac) due to the persistent stress caused by war. Rape is practised systematically, village by village. Women dare not file complaints for fear of reprisals. War has led to a generalized moral decline across society. Rapists have become so numerous that the traditional sanction imposed by the village elder is no longer feasible. Men rape because they can do so with total impunity. Justice

is corrupt, and women do not complain out of fear of retribution. I know one 18-year-old girl whose lips were cut off because she recounted her attack to a police officer.”

Legal protection for women and girls in war zones

Rape is a horrible practice that inflicts suffering on many women and girls in zones of conflict. In its resolution unanimously adopted on June 19, 2008, the United Nations’ Security Council finally recognized rape as a weapon of war because, in addition to leaving women traumatized, it places them at greater risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. This resolution excluded crimes of sexual violence from amnesty agreements reached during peace negotiations and emphasized the importance of ending impunity for crimes of sexual violence. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) indicated that during the first quarter of 2010, 1,244 women had reported to the UN having been raped in the DRC, or nearly 14 rapes a day on average, which is approximately the same number as during the same period in 2009.

In her declaration of April 27, 2010 before the 15 members of the Security Council following her visit to the DRC, Margot Wallström, UN special representative on sexual violence in combat, stated, “If women continue to suffer sexual violence, it is not because the law is inadequate to protect them, but because it is inadequately enforced. Women have no rights, if those who violate their rights go unpunished” (UN News Centre, 27 April 2010).

Prayer for women and girls

This prayer is taken from the statement by the Ecumenical Council of Churches on sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, September 2, 2009:

God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of life in all its fullness, We bring before you women and girls who are denied the joy and abundance of life because of the violence perpetrated against them. Violence against women and girls is a sin, depriving them of justice and human love. Yet in the midst of such pain and degradation, we believe that you hold each abused girl and woman in the cradle of your hand, calling her name, enfolding her with compassion, sharing with her the same protecting love your blessed mother shared with you in your humanity.

Forgive us for remaining silent in the face of such suffering. Forgive us for the times we have failed to name violence as a sin and an offence against you. Forgive us when we perpetuate cultural, social and church practices which put the lives of women and girls at risk. And in granting us your forgiveness, empower us to act in solidarity with women and girls entrapped in violence and suffering. Make us advocates of transformative justice seeking truth and reconciliation for individuals and communities. Create within us a desire to work for the inclusive community of women and men, made in your image and partners in your mission. Amen!

“If women continue to suffer sexual violence, it is not because the law is inadequate to protect them, but because it is inadequately enforced. Women have no rights, if those who violate their rights go unpunished.”

- Margot Wallström, UN special representative on sexual violence in combat

4. I remember people emotionally traumatized by war.

What is a trauma?

Trauma is “the full range of disorders caused by a wound, an injury.” It may also signify a shock leading to disturbance of a person’s psychic wellbeing, hence psychic trauma. According to The Dictionary of Psychology, psychic trauma is “an experience that inflicts damage to the personality, often of a lasting nature.”

No one can ignore that civilian populations are the main victims in armed conflicts. Women and children suffer the most when schools are closed, infirmaries destroyed, fields mined and markets emptied. Indeed, the associated traumatic events are unexpected, uncontrollable and pose a serious threat to individuals and their loved ones. Children are killed or mutilated while others are orphaned or separated from their families. Boys are forced to bear arms in some countries and commit acts of violence. Those who survive combat may be traumatized for extended periods by the mutilations, fires and pillaging they have witnessed or by their extended separation from their families. Millions of people have been direct or indirect witnesses of atrocities such as the massacre of their families often under violent conditions so dehumanizing as to be unimaginable.

A few observed symptoms

The symptoms often involve continuing and invasive memories of the traumatic event in question. According to a report by Florence da Silva, these memories trigger distress accompanied by the following: images, thoughts or perceptions; repetitive dreams of the event triggering distress (frightening dreams in children); sudden impressions or actions as if the traumatic event were about to reoccur (illusions, hallucinations); and intense psychic distress during exposure to external or internal cues evoking or resembling an aspect of the traumatic event.

Da Silva also reports that the following are manifestations of psychological trauma among Rwandan children after the 1994 genocide (“Traumatisme de l’enfant de la guerre,” 1996).

- disrupted sleep patterns, including nightmares, terrors, hallucinations
- eating disorders
- gastrointestinal disorders, including those of psychosomatic origin
- emotional changes and disorders: sadness, indifference, dependence, aggressiveness, worry, intense fear, lack of concentration, closing down of communication
- behavioural difficulties, including stealing, fighting, alcoholism, prostitution, suicide.

Those who survive combat may be traumatized for extended periods by the violence they have witnessed or by their extended separation from their families.

MCC supports programs for trauma healing in places such as: Uganda, Rwanda/Burundi, Sudan, Colombia, India, Gaza, and Southeast Europe.

5. I remember families separated by war.

Multiple causes of family separation

In addition to loss of human life, war triggers massive displacement of populations and disrupts the existing demographic structures of some regions. The civilian population finds itself increasingly at the very heart of attacks and under a hail of fire. Civilians have often become priority military objectives, on the same footing as combatants. Acts of war are directed against civilians, either directly or as reprisals. The population is forced to take refuge in makeshift shelters. Attackers essentially strive to create a climate of panic, to spread terror and to use famine as a decisive weapon. For their part, defenders shut the population in or prevent them from fleeing (while that remains possible) so they can serve as human shields.

A humanitarian response

A central search agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) exists to provide various missing persons search services around the world, thereby allowing detainees or civilians affected by conflicts, catastrophes or other situations such as mass migrations to re-establish contact with their family members. The information provided by the ICRC on their Restoring Family Links program website states that:

“Re-establishing family links means carrying out, in those situations, a range of activities that aim to prevent separation and disappearance, restore and maintain contact between family members, and clarify the fate of persons reported missing. It involves collecting information about persons who are missing, persons who have died, and vulnerable persons such as children separated from their families and persons deprived of their freedom. This also involves tracing persons unaccounted for, organizing the exchange of family news and the transmission of documents when normal means of communication have broken down, organizing family reunifications and repatriations, and issuing travel documents and attestations. These activities are carried out by the worldwide Family Links Network constituted by the ICRC and the tracing services of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

“Respect for family unity goes hand in hand with respect for human dignity. Every year, the ICRC and the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies help hundreds of thousands of people (displaced persons, refugees, detainees and missing persons) to restore family links and to clarify the fate of missing relatives” (Family Links Program, ICRC).

6. I remember people who are hungry because of war.

Current situation

All wars cause food shortages and hunger, in addition to destroying hope for a better world. Despite the existence of specific requirements under international humanitarian law designed to protect all non-combatants and especially civilian populations from the effects of hostilities and their consequences, famine too often results from armed conflicts, either deliberately caused by the belligerents, in violation of their obligations, or indirectly caused as a result of the destruction wrought by war.

The factors causing hunger

The causes of famine in times of war include the following: displacement of populations, whether forced or triggered by the approach of fighting; restrictions placed on production activities through internment, travel restrictions or the indiscriminate use of mines that prevent farmers from working the land; destruction of irrigation infrastructure and harvests; breakdown of lines of communication; pillaging and destruction of reserves; and barriers to emergency aid operations intended to counter the effects of food shortages. In addition, farmers are sometimes prevented from working their land, crops are devastated by fighting or by armies on the move, irrigation infrastructure is damaged, transportation and distribution systems are paralyzed, populations are uprooted, and reserves are pillaged or destroyed. It should also be mentioned that belligerents rarely authorize free passage of aid shipments to civilian populations, even allied ones, when they lack goods essential to their survival.

International legal provisions

With respect to international armed conflicts, international humanitarian law states that the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited. Further, it says, "It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove, or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies, and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other reason" (Geneva Conventions, Protocol I).

All wars cause food shortages and hunger, in addition to destroying hope for a better world.

MCC relieves hunger in war-affected communities in eastern Congo, Colombia, Sudan and Afghanistan. MCC helps to fund school feeding programs, agricultural recovery programs, and loan funds that improve livelihoods.



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