BEING A CHURCH OF PEACE:
BEING A PEOPLE THAT CONFRONTS VIOLENCE

ANiSA /// ISSUE 3

IN THIS ISSUE ///

ANiSA
Anabaptist Network in South Africa

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WHAT IS ANiSA?

The Anabaptist Network in South Africa is a network of people, churches, and organizations that together explore and embrace a radical faith in Jesus Christ and lifestyle that is nourished by the example found within the Anabaptist movement. In wanting to be authentically rooted in Christ's peace and justice for all people we seek to walk with, support, and nurture communities of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

WHY THE E-ZINE?

The purpose of the ANiSA ezine is to agitate, provoke, challenge, and nurture people's thinking and imaginations as we explore and wrestle with what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the South African context.

DISCLAIMER

The ANiSA ezine seeks to provide a variety of opinions relating to faith, theology, politics, culture, peace and justice. Opinions expressed in this ezine do not necessarily represent the position of ANiSA.

LAYOUT, PHOTOGRAPHY & DESIGN /// Steven Schallert

A PRAYER OF LAMENT AND HEALING

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Almighty God,

We know that we should forgive those who have defied the way of love and justice,
but the pain and the anger seem too great to do so.

For now, we ask you to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves;
forgive those who have committed this crime and heal that which is flawed in them.

We also pray that you will help us forgive,
that we may be set free from bitterness and know your peace,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- AMEN -

A Prayer of Lament and Healing of a Violent Death,
Minister's Manual, p 201-202. ed. John Rempel, Herald Press, 1990.


SOUTH AFRICA

VIOLENCE

We are regularly bombarded with images of violence. We are constantly reminded of the ugly existence of violence in our world. Experiences of violence affect us in the most intimate of ways. It affects the way in which we see the world and those within it. It affects whether we are willing to trust others. It affects whether we are willing to be vulnerable. Worst of all, violence affects our imaginations – what we think is "realistic" and possible in this world.

As followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we have been given a most amazing example that challenges us to confront as well as how to confront violence and its grip in the world. And yet the church itself, the body of Christ, a body formed by those who believe in the Prince of Peace has regularly failed in challenging the violence that constrains humanity. Indeed the church has all too often and for many hundreds of years been willing to bless and justify the use of violence.

If we believe to be followers of Jesus, and if we believe to be the body of Christ, then we must also wrestle with what it means to be a body that is dedicated to and faithful to Jesus' demonstration of peace. Thus the focus of this latest ANiSA ezine issue. ***What does it mean to be a church, a body of Jesus followers, dedicated to peace?*** How does this church confront and oppose the violence that grips us? We hope that this issue may agitate our thinking, nurturing our commitment to peace while also challenging the ways in which we strive towards peace in peace . . .

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PEACE, VIOLENCE AND THE CHURCH: ARE WE PERPETUATING VIOLENCE OR BRINGING PEACE?

by. Cori Wielenga

"Why are churches, the presumed agents of peace, at best impotent in the face of their people's conflicts and at worst perpetrators of the most heinous crimes?", writes Miroslav Volf in an article about the role of the church in reconciliation. In South Arica, the church has had a mixed role to play in our historical crises, in some cases as perpetrator and others as liberator, but in most cases, has often been unconsciously complicit, if not in direct violence then in structural violence.

Johan Galtung, who is sometimes called the father of peace studies, differentiated between positive and negative peace. Negative peace describes the absence of war. Positive peace describes the presence of social justice, and the kind of environment most conducive to allowing individuals and communities to reach their full potential. This is much, much more than merely the absence of war. Galtung also differentiated between direct and structural violence, saying that direct violence describes the direct harm we do to one another (fighting, shooting etc) whereas structural violence describes the underlying systems and structures in place that prevent positive peace from becoming a reality. Structural violence would include things like structures that perpetuate inequality between men and women, rich and poor, the haves and have nots.

So although the church isn't normally involved in direct violence, we are often complicit in structural violence and become a hindrance to positive peace, which can perhaps also be described as the kind of peace Jesus spoke of. There are two ways the church is complicit in structural violence today that, I believe, contribute to the violence we're seeing in our country, particularly gender-based violence and violent crime.

We contribute to gender violence every time we perpetuate destructive gender stereotypes, gender roles or ways of treating men and women. We need to think very carefully about how we talk about women 'submitting' to men, for example, when this is interpreted by some men in our society as an excuse to beat their wives. And what is the impact of how we describe the role of women in the family in terms of allowing people to fulfill their full potential? Do we treat women in the church and in church leadership equally to men or do we repeat the same kind of violence towards women as we see outside of the church? Is the church standing up for the rights of women in the work environment where women continue to consistently earn less than men even when doing the same work?

And how does the church deal with economic inequality? Research has found that violent crime is the highest not in contexts where everyone is equally poor, but

in contexts where inequality between the rich and the poor is the greatest. But as Cobus van Wyngaard pointed out during one of our ANiSA dialogues, the church doesn't have a language to talk about inequality. We know how to talk about poverty and we have developed extensive programs to respond to poverty, but if the real issue is inequality, how are we addressing that? It's fairly easy, as a wealthy church, to give handouts to a more needy church. It is far harder to think of creative ways of addressing the underlying structures and systems that allow inequality to continue, especially considering that handouts from a wealthy to a poorer church may be further contributing to the inequality rather than addressing it.

These are some of the difficult things we find ourselves unintentionally complicit in. We often mean well but end up perpetuating the very systems and structures that lead to gender violence, violent crime and other forms of violence in our society. What is the solution?

A starting point may be to start talking about these things within our church and between churches. In most churches there are women who will be able to articulate quite well where they are being marginalized within the church and what needs to happen to address their concerns. Listen to them. And in terms of addressing economic inequality, instead of sending handouts to a church in need, organize a dialogue between churches in which members of both congregations are prepared to make themselves vulnerable and give of themselves and receive from the other.

There are no quick fixes when it comes to our complicity in violence and our hope of bringing peace. Awareness of our complicity is probably the first step. And from there, dialogue seems like a good second step. Out of honest and open dialogue, ideas and possibilities often begin to emerge that may surprise us in their creativity and are often uniquely responsive to our own particular c*ontext.*

Cori Wielenga is a research fellow in the Politics department at the University of Pretoria and is interested in the intersection of political narratives and personal stories.

SHALOM IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 2013

by. Craig Stewart

In Jeremiah 6 the prophet Jeremiah warns against prophets who say "peace, peace" when there is no peace. As you know peace, or Shalom, in the biblical sense is not simply an absence of conflict, but is deeper more resonant word incorporating wholeness in all our relationships - with God, our neighbors and the environment around us.

In the 1980s I lived in the peaceful suburb of Pinelands. During my last year or so of high school and my early university years I discovered the community of Langa, which is just across the railway line from Pinelands. It was here that I began discovering that many of the preachers and prophets I'd grown up with had not heeded Jeremiah's words, proclaiming a peace to me that did not actually exist. It was here that I discovered the whitewashing and wound dressing that much of the 'white' church was guilty of during apartheid. This discovery was very nearly the cause of me walking away from a faith in Christ, but God also brought me into contact with the Rev George Ngamlana who discipled me through that time, and for that I am very grateful.

In 1994 we breathed a sigh of relief at the legal end of Apartheid and we declared peace. But we've known in our hearts that this was not the whole story. During the course of last year we've seen our country's lack of peace emerge once again as actual violence. Perhaps again many of us in the church have been in the business of whitewashing walls and have not lived up to our calling. We've kept quiet, except when our own religious freedom was threatened or when addressing a few select pieces of morality, rather than prophetically living for something different.

As evangelicals in particular, our understanding and theology of God's mission in South Africa hasn't been up to the task. We often display an outdated missionary mind-set of the word which falls short of what I believe is the fullness of God's mission. Rene Padilla of Argentina, who has been one of the elders of the Lausanne Movement since the very beginning, identifies a number of dichotomies caused by this mind-set that negatively affected how we have expressed our mission in the world and our nation.

- The difference between those Christian communities who are sent and those who receive creating a reality where mission is done by one group of people to another group of people.

- The geographic distinction between "home" and the "mission field" creating the sense that mission doesn't happen at home.

- The difference in status between missionaries who are called to "mission" and "normal" Christians who at best support those who do mission, but aren't directly involved in any way; the separation of the normal life of a church from mission.

This failed or incomplete understanding of mission we have embraced is one of the key factors contributing to the crisis of discipleship faced by the global church and highlighted in the Lausanne Cape Town commitment. I would argue that direct

consequence of this lack of discipleship has been the failure to incorporate striving for justice as part of the mission of the church. This failure is demonstrated tragically in the histories of South Africa and Rwanda - both of which were considered "Christian" nations and yet perpetuated two of the great evils of the last century, evils enacted by Christians.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Ever since the late 1960s and the first Lausanne gathering, theologians like Rene Padilla and others around the world have argued for a more integrated or holistic understanding of the gospel. This understanding of the gospel has become known as Integral Mission, which describes a proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. I appreciate the description of Integral Mission that the Micah Network has put together.

"Integral Mission isn't simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside of each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life, and our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word we have nothing to bring to the world."

Using the term Integral Mission isn't a parallel justice arm to the traditional evangelical mission of the church, it is a fundamental reworking of our understanding and practice of Gods mission and our role in South Africa. God does not pursue justice as an addendum to His mission on earth; justice is an aspect of His character and His throne is established on justice and righteousness, and so it should be with God's people. The Church in South Africa needs to sort out our theology as it relates to this mission. The division of a "social" gospel and an "evangelical" gospel was a heresy that we've allowed to muddy the waters of our mission for too long. **If our proclamation doesn't have social consequences and our social action doesn't have evangelistic consequences then we are watering it down.**

We also need to sort out our practice when it comes to engaging with poverty and justice issues. This work should not be a PR exercise to make people feel better about the church, nor should it be a fundraising exercise to raise funds for the church. And it cannot be work that is done paternalistically, creating dependency and perpetuating the power dynamics reflected in the broader society. There are many fantastic Christian development practitioners in this country who can help churches in building effective responses to poverty – let us learn and grow and change. Let's make 2013 a year that is marked by active engagement, servant leadership and an awakening to the significant role of integral mission of the Church in the next phase of our beautiful, rich, diverse nation's story.

This article was originally posted on the Warehouse website:

http://www.warehouse.org.za/index.php/site/article/shalom-in-south-africa-in-2013.

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CL 1268

WHERE WAS GOD?

by. Dorothy Hall

It was a Saturday afternoon. I had spent the morning proof-reading my grandson's thesis and needing a break from the computer I opened my front gate intending to walk just 500 yards up our quiet suburban road. I greeted a man who was walking in the opposite direction and set out at a brisk pace. A few minutes later there was a strong arm across my throat and I was being pushed down on to the sandy, bushy verge on the side of the road and a voice in my ear was telling me to take my pants off.

Instinctively I fought with every muscle in my body. I kicked. I twisted and pulled on ears and fingers as I could grab them, forcing him to release his grip on my throat, and all the time shouting out the names of the Lord. This was perhaps not the wisest thing to do because each shout brought a heavy fist down on my face or chest.

When I found myself face downwards in the dirt an inner prompting told me to just 'keep still'. With my legs tightly closed I presented to my assailant just a large, not very attractive buttocks and he made no further attempt to rape me. As I propped myself up on one arm he started to undo the watch on my left arm. This was a gift from a Swiss friend and precious to me. I told him firmly and brightly that he really didn't need my watch as it was 'just a cheap bit of rubbish' and, after apologizing for hurting me, he left me sitting on the side of the road.

Five minutes later a passer-by heard my cries for help and I was able to tell him where to find my neighbor. Within minutes neighbors had rallied round and the ambulance men were there to take me to the nearby hospital.

The next morning every person who came into the ward took one look at my battered face and body and asked, "What happened to you?". To some I described the fight and the younger nurses cheered when I told them I had landed an effective kick! Others heard the full story of how I had been spared a full frontal rape. I was consciously grateful, as I spoke, that I had sufficient life experience, at the age of 78, to be able to describe what had happened in a detached way.

I was amazed at the number of staff, from the matron to the cleaner, who assured me of their prayers. One nurse stood next to my bed and with downcast eyes said, 'I apologize for what my brother has done to you'.

It was the watch on my wrist that made me start to count my blessings. There were some very practical things to give thanks for: the man was not large, he was not armed, I was able to keep my wits about me, and a very practically minded person had walked down the road soon after the attack, someone whom I instinctively felt I could trust.

I believe that as time went on the prayers of my church community and family, plus the wise words of a Christian counsellor, helped me to understand my changed behavior patterns; loud noises made me jump, in crowded places I was always looking over my shoulder, the rustle of a curtain made me nervous. I was assured that this was quite normal as my mind was now 'constantly scanning'. I refused to let my mind linger on memories of the event and mentally castigated my assailant by calling him a 'silly, cheeky fool' …

I think in this way I came to see him, with his addiction and weakness, as the victim, not me.

There was one more victory to be claimed. The place where I was attacked was not very far from my front gate and I would have to ride past it on my journeys to and from the shops. In the week before Good Friday, as I passed it, in the safety of my car, I simply asked the Lord to make that patch of ground, in my mind, a place of victory. And He has, just as He did that stark hill in Jerusalem called 'The place of the Skull'.

Where was God when I was fighting for my life on the side of the road? I believe He was just where He was when the widow was following her dead son out of the village of Nain, on the side of the road taking part in a Life versus Death struggle.

EMBRACING VULNERABILITY

by. Gawie Snyman

Delmas, Mpumalanga is a rural farming and mining community. It has been my home for the past four years. It's where I minister and where I figure out what it means to serve Christ in a post-Christian world. On 23 May 2012, I received a devastating phone call: two of my congregants – five month-old baby Wian and his 67 year-old nanny Margaret – were missing. I rushed to Margaret's home to be met by even more terrible news: both Margaret and Wian had been murdered, strangled to death. Wian's body was found underneath a bed in one of the bedrooms; Margaret's in a back-yard storeroom.

As I heard this news and tried to come to terms with it, many thoughts rushed through my head. Nothing I knew from my seminary studies could have prepared me for a situation like this. I was overcome by a feeling of vulnerability that made me want to run away and hide. Through the grace of God I decided to *lean into* this vulnerability rather than shy away from it. I reckoned the family and my community needed me to be present, more than they needed me to be strong and in control. So with God's grace I remained on the scene, trying to comfort Wian's mom and dad and other people devastated by this senseless murder. Soon the media arrived. It so happened that they were referred to me, putting me in the somewhat uncomfortable position of being both the family's and the community's spokesperson.

It turned out that the main suspect in the murder was the garden worker, a black man named Themba. Like many rural communities, in Delmas reconciliation and trust between black and white isn't what it could be. A black-on-white murder, I realized, could kindle new tensions and resentments between black and white people even if the crime was not racially motivated. At first my fears seemed ill founded. On a Friday evening after the murder, the community organized a night vigil where Wian's parents were present and the community got the opportunity to offer their condolences. Some time after this event, however, an event of another kind was held with dangerous consequences.

A large group of about 100 right-wing representatives showed up in our town. I was vaguely aware of a planned protest action, but was so tied up with family counseling that I had hardly been able to respond. I should have. The march turned out to be anything but a peaceful march against crime. Instead, it was an opportunity to spread racist rhetoric openly on placards and shout obscene remarks to black community members. The march ended at the municipal offices where South Africa's flag, to so many a symbol of reconciliation and peace, was burned.

As far as I know, only one member from our local community participated in this march but – not knowing that – black community members interpreted it as the general attitude of whites in Delmas. Some pastors with whom I have a relationship from our local township called me, asking if the protestors' sentiments and actions represented those of the Afrikaans-speaking churches. I assured them that they didn't, but felt that further action was needed. I wrote to the *Beeld*, the leading Afrikaans newspaper, stating in a letter that the actions of this group was insensitive and uncalled for in a community devastated by this senseless crime . . .

I was not prepared for what followed. I received various threats after the letter was published. A notorious right-wing leader, Piet Rudolph, threatened to disrupt our congregation's church service the following Sunday. He and about five of his followers followed through on this threat. As I was preaching on reconciliation from Acts 8:26-40, Rudolph and his followers came marching in and walked right to the front of the pulpit where I stood. I had no idea what they were up to. Our eyes met. I greeted Rudolph and requested them to take seat. I promised to speak to them after the service. To my surprised they complied. The media must have known about the planned attempt to disrupt the service because, after the service, journalists were present at the conversation between me, my church board and the right-wing group. One of this group made an absurd statement about God creating the moon and the stars for the purpose of being worshipped by 'lesser beings' like blacks. I firmly, yet politely disagreed and shared with them our understanding of the gospel as a call to reconciliation, peace and justice. Shortly afterwards they left in peace. Ironically, this was also the day where I became the first white pastor to preach at a local sister denomination in our nearby township.

The following week we met as black and white community pastors and decided that it was not enough to simply reject the message sent by the right wing groups from outside the community. We felt called to send a strong message of our commitment to peace and reconciliation. So we organized a march of peace to our town's main street where we made a statement about our commitment to reconciliation. With 300 community members present, the country's flag was raised. Afterwards, a spontaneous prayer-chain was formed. One pastor suggested that we stand *black-white* in this chain – and so it happened! The sight of black and white taking hands and praying for reconciliation is one I will never forget. Even our mayor attended the event.

For some time before this incident, I had become interested in Anabaptist theology. In its commitment to peace and reconciliation, I found a viable answer to the violence and crime so rampant in our communities. I'm not sure if I was true to the Anabaptist tradition in my handling of this incident in Delmas. Maybe it would have frowned upon the raising of the national flag and the involvement of the local mayor as deeds that intertwine church and state too closely. Given the context, we felt it was necessary.

Looking back, the most important thing the ordeal taught me about responding in a non-violent way to violence is its requirement of ***vulnerability***. If the outcome was in any way successful, this requirement stood out in most of the actions we undertook. We embraced the hurt and anger of the community by creating a safe space where people could share their vulnerability. *Embracing* it, I learned, is a form of courage rather than a sign of weakness. Embracing my own inadequacy made me acutely aware how dependent I am on Jesus. It enabled me to stay present during the crises, giving me enough credibility to inspire those I serve to follow my example. To those that opposed me, my vulnerability had a calming effect and brought down the levels of violence planned. Vulnerability can only be embraced by taking Jesus' word in the beatitudes of Matthew 5 to heart where He explains that we are broken yet accepted, blessed and therefore good enough to serve his Kingdom. Our vulnerability is something that we shy away from. Popular culture make us believe that vulnerability is a weakness that should be . . .

denied, masked or numbed. Only the unconditional love of Christ enables us to embrace the fact that we are imperfect, scared and lacking. When this happens our weakness becomes, in Christ, our strength. Never have I experienced this truth so acutely than during the events surrounding the murder. I hope this realization stays part of who I am for as long as I live.

Rita and Wiets, the parents of little Wian recently gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. Our community continues to step out on the path to healing and reconciliation. We do it in vulnerability. There is hope.

AMAHORO: CURATING THE META - CONVERSATION

by Roger Saner

"The problem with this world is this: some are eating from the top of the table, some are eating from underneath, and some are watching from afar."

It's Tuesday, 28 May 2013, and I'm in Entebbe. It's my second visit to Uganda – my first was in 2007 for the first *Amahoro* conference, although everyone prefers to call it a "gathering". A nearly full moon rises behind us over Lake Victoria, and we can hear the sound of small waves lapping the shore. Our theme this year is "Politics and the Kingdom of God." It's not a topic which can be lightly or shallowly approached, but many people during the week engage with difficult topics, like *the role of ethnicity in election violence in Kenya*, *gender-based violence*, *colonialism and Christianity*, *genocide*, *justice*, and other less charged but nonetheless important topics like *business and church leadership*. Our speaker this evening, Ugandan Bishop David Zac Nigiriye ("You can't say you're a Bishop in Kampala if you've never slept in a slum"), is an outspoken critic of the corruption he sees within the government of President Museveni and was arrested in February this year. It's with some discomfort I note a guard carrying an AK 47 patrolling our venue, but later someone tells me that this is a standard part of life after some *Al Qaeda* attacks a few years previously.

Bishop Zac - or 'Uncle Zac' - grew up very poor (he first encountered electricity at the age of 16). Although he had an interest in engineering, and studied a Masters in Physics, he ended up doing theology. He speaks from a postcolonial perspective, reflecting on Uganda's history and the conflict in the region, relating it to the role of Christianity in Uganda. When he started his Masters in Theology he got uncomfortable, because "you don't know God through abstraction." Then he started studying the history of mission in Uganda, to examine the way in which the church has become the church in a context of turbulence and conflict. "How has the church made sense of itself and its mission in this context of turbulence? How is the church contributing to conflict? How is it being shaped by it?" This is a theme at *Amahoro* - the ability for Christians to be engaged with the ugliest realities of human existence, and to relate their experiences to theology and recent history. It's a profoundly different way of being Christian to what I am used to, and I find it life-giving. To hear what I mean, download Uncle Zac's talk from the Amahoro website at -

www.amahoroafrica.org/blog

"I get angry when North Americans and Europeans treat Africans as if we're sub-standard, as if we don't know the truth."

There are around 120 people around me from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Australia, America, Canada and England. There are many deep relationships here, with friends traveling to each other's countries to spend time in their friend's homes and communities. Perhaps it's this strength of relationship which allows us to speak about such difficult topics, and to listen to each other. "Each of us comes from a very different theological background," said Paul Kiviri from Uganda as I sat next to him during a part of the South African presentation which examined reading Paul through a gendered lens (part of Rob Stegmann's PhD work). Discomfort? Yes, but more important than theological and doctrinal agreement is the value which *Amahoro* places on conversation.

There is plenty of space for this at the *Amahoro* gatherings, and many people find that the conversations they have with others are the most valuable part of the entire experience. So it's no surprise that over time we have learnt to focus not just on *what* we talk about, but *how* we talk and how we can have a higher quality discussion. It's very postmodern, I suppose, to define community by the commitment to stay in dialogue, but this is not a postmodern context. It's a *postcolonial* context, with postcolonial theology, and an African approach (if there is such a thing) to speaking with each other.

If the Western conception of humanity is "I think therefore I am," perhaps an African experience can be phrased as "We are therefore I am." To this end, then, we had an orientation session which talked about how we can communicate better. In it, we unpacked "Ten words on communication," the title of a bookmark we were given by Steve Bonsey, an Episcopalian priest from Boston. They are -

1. THOU SHALT LISTEN ACTIVELY, ASK QUESTIONS, AND REFRAIN FROM GIVING ADVICE.

2. THOU SHALT ENGAGE BOTH THY HEART AND THY HEAD, EMOTION AND REASON.

3. THOU SHALT SEEK TO LIKE "THE OTHER."

4. THOU SHALT DANCE, NOT FIGHT.

5. THOU SHALT NOT BLAME, SHAME, OR DEMONIZE OTHERS, OR VICTIMIZE YOURSELF.

6. THOU SHALT PLAY FOR WIN-WIN, NOT WIN-LOSE OR LOSE-LOSE.

7. THOU SHALT RESPECTFULLY ESTABLISH AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT.

8. IF YOU HEAR AN IDEA THAT IS NEW OR STRANGE, TRY IT ON FOR SIZE.

9. IF YOU TEND TO BE QUIET, "STEP UP." IF YOU TEND TO DOMINATE, "STEP BACK."

10. SPEAK FROM YOUR HEART AND EXPERIENCE, AND KEEP IN CONFIDENCE WHAT OTHERS SHARE.

It's a transformative gift to be in a context where every conversation is meaningful and every interaction is valuable. It's a deeper way of being human and I wish all of life was like this.

Amahoro (which means "peace") was founded in 2007 by Claude and Kelley Nikondeha. Claude is from Burundi, and when he visits his Mother at her home, she greets him outside, hugging him and saying "*Amahoro!*" over and over until she can feel peace flowing between them. Only then does she invite him inside. This beautiful image is the hope of *Amahoro:* that peace and justice will be the everyday realities of life. It's the tension between this utopian ideal and people who are intimately familiar with the ugliness of poverty and injustice which produces such real and deep conversations at *Amahoro*.

My own contribution was running a smaller presentation on the role of critical race theory in post-colonialism. If N.T. Wright is correct in saying that most university-level students need a compulsory course on European history because most don't know if the Enlightenment came before the Renaissance, then just as vital is a simultaneous history of colonialism to explain the rise of Europe and the division of the world into white/non-white, person/sub-person. 100 years ago, Europe controlled around 85% of the globe and, to this day, countries like France, the Netherlands, Portugal, America (and others) hold colonies. This is a reflection of the worldwide exploitation of other countries by Europe, putting in place economic structures whose outcome it is to pump wealth from one side of the globe to the other, and will continue to work largely independently of the ill will/good will, racist/antiracist feelings of particular individuals. I looked at some specific historical events where Europeans claimed ownership over other parts of the world, and elected themselves as decision-makers on the humanity of humanoid-like races. All of this to eventually introduce the idea of "The Racial Contract" (from the 1999 book by Charles W. Mills of the same name), a global theoretical framework for situating conversations about race. So we did not shy away from difficult issues!

Characterized by a commitment to "integral mission" (integrating personal spirituality with social justice and compassion) based on a holistic understanding of Jesus' core message, other groups are having similar kinds of conversations to *Amahoro* around the world. In recent years, they have been connecting more and more, and the *Mesa Network* seeks to help their emerging ethos to deepen, spread, and move forward. The first Mesa gathering is in Thailand at the end of October this year - the website is -

www.mesa-friends.org

The next *Amahoro* gathering will be in Goma, DRC, from 2-6 June 2014. All of the talks from this year's gathering were recorded and will be made available at -

www.amahoroafrica.org

I'm amazed that a black Ugandan Bishop articulated my own understanding of my faith at this point in my journey better than I could. After Uncle Zac's talk to everyone, he held a smaller discussion which started off with a brilliant exposition of Micah 6:8. After an Amahoro-like time of conversation and listening, he closed by saying: "Thank you for letting me share my faith and my doubts."

The problem with this world is this: some are eating from the top of the table, some are eating from underneath, and some are watching from afar...


POLICE

FREEDOM IN PEACE, & PEACE IN FREEDOM

by Abby Cable

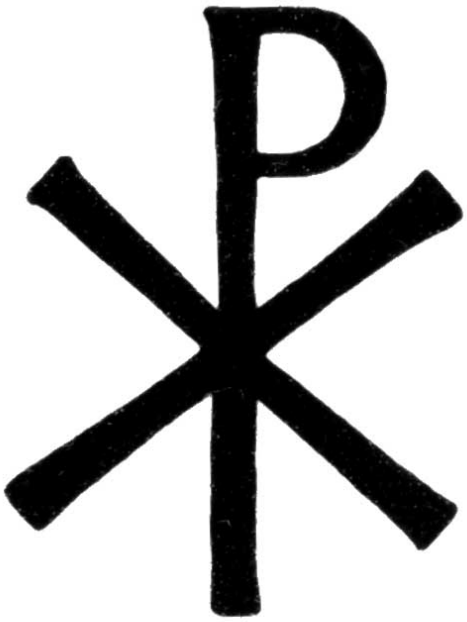
I was taught in school that the United States is the greatest country in the world due to the freedom that we have, and how we wouldn't have that freedom if men and women hadn't died fighting for it. I put my hand over my heart and pledged allegiance to the flag every morning. I was taught that war, though not considered a "nice" thing, was something that needed to happen so that our country would be safe. In the 2nd grade when I was 7 years old, I watched on TV two towers in New York get hit by airplanes, and another airplane crash in a field 45 minutes away from my home. At the age of 7, although I may not have fully understood, I heard with my own ears George W. Bush declare war. From then on, the media portrayed Muslims as terrorists, and I was taught that war was necessary. I believed all of this until the age of 18.

When Osama Bin Laden was captured and killed about a year ago, I watched on TV thousands of Americans cheering and rallying and celebrating his death. I went to school, hearing and seeing pupils and teachers joining in the celebration of his death. I knew as an American that I should be celebrating as well - this should be a joyous event for all of the United States, right? This is what needed to happen, right? We've been looking for this man for YEARS. But I found that I was really struggling in being happy over someone's death. My heart felt torn. As I watched thousands of Americans on TV rejoicing over the death of this man, I remember I started to cry. If this is what freedom meant: if it means hate and revenge are the only answer, if it means justice is death, then I want absolutely nothing to do with this freedom.

When Jesus was brought before the Romans, it was because he was upsetting the authorities. Jesus was claiming He was King. But there was already a king of a kingdom, and there was only one king. So when Jesus came in and said He was King of a different kind of kingdom, it made people mad. That's like someone coming in and saying, "No, Obama isn't the president. This dude is!" It would cause controversy; an outrageous uproar. And that's exactly what Jesus caused.

Jesus talked about living in solidarity with people; if you are above another person, you lower yourself to be on the same level as them. He talked about peace; always respond in love. He talked about revolutionary subordination. He talked about the kingdom being with the poor. He took down the flag and put up a cross. He talked about this type of freedom that cannot be obtained through war and militaristic fighting, but through loving those who we've been taught should be our enemies. He talked about this insane, upside down kingdom that is here and now, and how we are all invited to take part in it. This kingdom isn't like anything you've EVER heard of before. It's backwards, upside down, the poor are at the front, people are living in solidarity with others, the sword has been laid down, and freedom is no longer defined by your military. You always will be free in this kingdom because knowing what true freedom really is … is knowing peace.

During my time in Cape Town …



I had a chance to get to know my surf instructor, William, who soon became a close friend. One evening at the hostel we were staying at, William and I had a deep conversation about the United States and war. He said something I will never forget: "Abby, tell me this. For a country that claims it is so free, how can it be free when it's always at war? How can you be free if you do not know peace?"

FREEDOM IS PEACE
PEACE IS FREEDOM

My great grandfather served in the military, as well as my grandfather, my cousin, and a few of my very good friends. The people who are fighting or who have fought are doing what they feel or felt was best for our country, and I respect that. But as for me, I don't belong to this.

Maybe I'm unpatriotic, or maybe I am "un-American." But I've come to find that I belong to a greater kingdom; one that we've all been invited to participate in. I've come to find that the freedom this kingdom offers is greater than the type of freedom I've been taught in school.

I will not participate in or support war or any act of militaristic violence. I will not own a gun for my own 'safety' or 'protection.' I will not pledge allegiance to a flag or a country. I will participate in the kingdom that is here and now. I will live in solidarity with the poor. I will love in all circumstances. And I will pledge allegiance to the cross, because I have found true and absolute freedom in knowing and living out the peace Jesus talks about.

Abby Cable is a Radical Journey volunteer, a program through Mennonite Mission Network, who has spent the last year living and working in South Africa

TWO UNSEEN CONTRIBUTORS

by John van Tonder

"Boy viciously attacked by Grade 1s." Newspaper headlines like these have become a familiar sight in the South African media. But why would a group of 7 year-old boys kick and punch their classmate with such brutality that he might never walk normally again?

South African crime is particularly violent, and although it is often described as "senseless", there might actually be some logic behind it. While violence is a complex problem, I would propose that we consider the following two key dynamics, as two lesser known contributors to the escalating violence in South Africa. Firstly, the family is in crisis, especially the African family where migrant labour caused a whole generation of fathers to spend most of their lives away from their families and their local communities. The second dynamic relates to the impact family life has on brain development, and the resulting violent behaviour it births.

The USA is also familiar with violence, especially when it comes to school shootings. While not the deadliest school shooting in US history, the Columbine High School massacre in 1999, where two high school students killed 12 fellow students and a teacher, led to a breakthrough in unravelling violent behavior. In studying the offenders, it was found that they all had one thing in common: the *prefrontal cortex* of their brains were 30-40% underdeveloped. The prefrontal cortex is where emotions such as empathy, sorrow, fear, etc. are processed, thereby making us "human" and sensitive to others. When a person's prefrontal cortex is underdeveloped, they don't feel hurt, and "*become emotionally insensitive and unresponsive to punishment. These antisocial aggressors feel no remorse for their violent and sometimes murderous acts*" (Josh McDowell, The Disconnected Generation, p 37 - 38).

While the writer is not proposing that all violent behavior is caused by an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex, it would be worth our while to bear in mind that:

1. "*Studies indicate that children who suffer repeated experiences of abuse, neglect, or terror tend toward impulsive aggression or antisocial personalities*" (Josh McDowell, p 37). This happens because the brain is basically in a fear-activated state, and a violent response is more easily triggered. These stress hormones also impact negatively on the normal development of the prefrontal cortex. The question we have to ask ourselves is: How many children in South Africa grow up in an environment where they have repeated experiences of abuse, neglect or terror? I think the answer is "far too many".

2. The saying: "Use it or lose it" is certainly true of the brain. During a child's teenage years, the brain will prune the synapses that are not being used. A child that grows up in a loving, secure environment with intimate, loving connections with adults, especially parents, will have many strong, well-developed synapses that deal with emotions and social behavior, which will remain intact during the pruning stage of the teenage years. Those who didn't have the loving relational connections, however, will not have the brain connections (synapses) either to help them relate well with others. In a real sense, they are missing the necessary . . .

"wiring" their brain needs to help them relate socially.

The good news is that a child's physical brain structure can change well into the teenage years. A child that didn't grow up in the necessary loving environment that facilitates normal brain development, can still experience significant changes in brain structures. There is therefore a definite message of hope when it comes to ministry to teenagers: *It is never too late!* When an abused or neglected child is brought into a relationally safe environment where secure and loving connections with adults take place, their prefrontal cortex will start growing again.

The other dynamic, referred to in the opening paragraph, is *the family itself* which is under tremendous strain. God ordained the family to be the safe environment in which children would find the necessary love and safety in which they could flourish and develop. Unfortunately, the family environment has become a scary and unsafe place for many children. Violence and neglect is not only experienced *by* them but modeled *to* them, and therefore shapes their understanding of marriage, love, relationships, parenting, etc.

While our lives and society are certainly shaped by what is happening to us, it is also shaped by what is not happening to us. Children are wounded and scarred by emotional and physical abuse and neglect, but I believe they are just as much scarred by what is not happening to them, and what is not being said to them. God as Father modeled to us the father's role to affirm identity, worth and purpose by saying in the hearing of His own Son: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased". This happened at two occasions; at Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3 and at His transfiguration in Matthew 17. I personally believe that God the Father spoke those words mostly for our sake, and not for the sake of Jesus, who was fully secure in His identity, worth and purpose.

Many families has not only become devoid of love and security, but of words of affirmation and love that shape who we are. In many cases fathers in particular have not only become absent or passive, but also quiet. The family has developed a vacuum at its deepest heart. It reminds me of the movie Gladiator where Communus stands before his father the king, longing for a word of affirmation, saying: "*… I looked for ways to please you … to make you proud … one kind word … one full hug … All I ever wanted was to live up to you.*" Moments later he embraces his father and suffocates him to death, while sobbing in anger and despair.

I have spent countless hours listening to men talk about their families and their fathers. Many of them grew up without a father in the house, and they have a deep-seated anger towards the father who "never showed up", but also toward life in general. Men are angry, mostly because nobody answered their deepest questions about worth, belonging, etc. As I listen to their stories, I realize they are primarily angry for the things their fathers didn't say to them: "I love you. I can see you did your best, and I'm proud of you. Nothing you do can make me love you less; I will always love you..."

Why do we see so much violence in society? I believe the root problem is that mankind is has lost the voice of our Loving Father. As we drift further from Him, it ultimately becomes a physiological problem where even brain structure and emotional development is stunted. Unless we hear His voice …

speak love, affirmation and purpose into our lives, we will never really be secure and whole. The result is that parents, and often fathers, do not feel they have anything to give their children. They feel that they lack the love, sense of identity, purpose, etc. that they are supposed to affirm in their children. Because of this, many fathers have become silent. They have also become angry and frustrated because they sense that they need to 'give something' - but they don't know what it is, or how to give it. They grew up without fathers bestowing identity, love and affirmation on them.

There is much hope, however, because God our Heavenly Father still speaks and loves! His desire is for us to hear His voice of love and affirmation, and to be healed and transformed by it. When that happens, He starts to speak those words of love and affirmation through us into our families and society. Gradually this gaping wound in the hearts of people becomes displaced by a genuine loving connection with Him and one another, creating safe families where kids can grow up and develop as whole, loving people.

Refugees and Xenophobia in South Africa

by Jimmy Juma

In June 2008, in South Africa – the homeland of Ubuntu – a deadly wave of violence swept through the country and shocked Africa and the world. While Alexander Township in Johannesburg became the epicenter, xenophobic attacks did not start there. Days before Alexander was on fire, attacks were reported in Pretoria and other parts of the country. Violence targeted and continues targeting immigrants of African origins living in South Africa, not sparing some South Africans. Many were killed, and others injured, by fellow South Africans. Some of the indicators used to identify foreigners: many Africans are darker in skin-colour than other Africans; others may not speak the local languages fluently. Additionally, there are unresolved intra-South African conflicts between locals and refugees. Hence, the church has a big role to play to end xenophobia and build peace.

Elements featured as immediate causes of xenophobic attacks include *unemployment* among South Africans, widespread *poverty* years after the end of apartheid rule, and poor *service delivery* by the government. To this list could also be added the *lack of information*, in particular regarding the role played by other African countries and the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) in the struggle for freedom for black South Africans. Little is known by South Africans at grassroots level, for example, about educational opportunities, asylum and other social support given to South African leaders in exile in Africa and the extent to which such support contributed to the demise of the apartheid regime. Little, too, is known about the number of South Africans working in other African countries and how resources from those countries contribute to the South African economy and wellbeing – let alone how much refugees contribute to the national economy through education, training and business.

Against this background, xenophobic attacks continue as a silent killer. A SABC documentary in April 2013 on this issue reported that each day there is an African immigrant killed in the country as a result of xenophobia. What is beginning to emerge is that victims are also becoming killers. The recent killings allegedly by a Somali immigrant in Diepsloot could well be a result of traumatic experience due to continued threats of xenophobic attacks, constant fear and the need for revenge.

In dealing with the issue, however, there is opportunity. The voice of the church and Christian organizations which was heard when xenophobic violence first erupted is still very much needed. At the time of eruption, among others: the Free Methodist church (which provided shelter to thousands of refugees and played a leading role), His People church (which advocated for refugees and provided shelter), the Mennonite Central Committee (which advocated for refugees through its Regional Peace Network and its partners), the Refugee Social Service in Durban (which provided social support), are some of the examples of interventions. Individual national and local church leaders, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Pastor Samson in Pietermaritzburg, also played critical roles at various levels to oppose the violence. Beside the church . . .

other leaders came to the party such as the mother of the nation, Winnie Mandela.

Although there was advocacy, the main response was disaster management which aimed to reduce the impact of violence on refugees. But when the wave of violence was officially declared over and the refugee displacement camps were forcibly closed down by government a few months later, the church paid less and less attention to the issue. Few of the actors who were once involved continue addressing the issue. What remains to be effectively addressed are the root causes of the problem and the transformation of relationships between South Africans and refugees. This is where the greater mission for the church lies.

Peaceful solutions (including conflict analysis, community dialogue forums and youth education, media adverts, trauma healing and support) and strengthening the few remaining actors (both individual and corporate) to address the root causes of xenophobia will go a long way to save refugee lives in South Africa, as well as promoting their well-being. This will also help prevent forms of revenge against South Africans, within and outside of the country. Constructive relationships among foreigners and nationals will restore the African value of *Ubuntu* lost to xenophobia and enhance right relationships, peace and the struggle against poverty in many communities, for example by affording South Africans an opportunity to learn business skills from refugees. Given the leading role of South Africa on the continent, such solutions will significantly contribute to African integration.

CHALLENGING OVERT VIOLENCE: EXPOSING COVERT VIOLENCE: UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL PEACE

by. Andrew Suderman

Violence continues to plague South Africa. Rape, forcible break-ins, car-jackings, and gang violence, as well as continued exploitation, oppression, and protests that are either violent or are quelled with violence are all realities that occur all too often. Fighting, killing, knives, guns, shootings, bombings, rape, and abuse are more than imaginary: they are part of South Africa's experience.

South Africa is often listed among the more violent countries in the world. Based on the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) study, South Africa is currently rated as the 15th country with the highest murder rate in the world.

Interestingly, although studies have demonstrated that violence in South Africa is decreasing (South Africa being previously rated as the second most violent country in the world), what we regularly hear in the news and elsewhere would make it seem that the opposite is true.

If we are interested in peace, and in following Jesus as our Prince of Peace, it would seem obvious to look for ways of impacting this reality. We want to calm tempers, encourage people to put their guns and other tools of death aside, speak out against such acts of violence, and work towards a society in which people can live in peace and harmony.

Sometimes, however, our best efforts in responding to expressions of *overt* violence allow for the conditions of *covert* violence to continue. By addressing only the overt expressions of violence, the covert roots of violence are often left unattended.

Yet, it is the covert systemic nature of violence – a form of violence that is embedded as part of our nature and identity – that generates the frustrations that lead to the overt manifestations of violence. We see this around the world: from South African townships and "shack settlements," to Egypt and Brazil, where people are coming together, fed-up with the embedded inequality and injustice that is assumed to be normal, and declaring "enough!" "Something *has to change*."

Slavoj Zizek helpfully identifies these two levels of violence:

"At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible 'subjective' violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the backgrounds which generate such outbursts. A step back enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance (Zizek, Violence: 1)."

We must wonder whether our struggle for peace also mirrors such two-tiered realities?

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AN UNATTAINABLE PEACE

While many speak about peace, not all definitions of peace are the same. Hardt and Negri, in their book *Empire*, note that while empires may be dedicated to peace, the practice of achieving this peace is continually bathed in blood. A place of peace sought through the pursuit of violent means is persistently elusive. It is beyond the grasp of good intentions. It is outside of what can be attained.

Yet, the quest for a calm, serene, even quiet space; a place that is peaceful and tranquil, is often the expressed goal identified by Presidents and other leaders in society (political and religious). Attaining this space, it is promised, will provide opportunities for lives to be lived protected from fear, conflict and violence. This form of peace pursues a place of peace where there is no conflict, no violence, is relaxed, serene, and undisturbed. This place is portrayed as a place of peace that would benefit everyone.

This place of peace is often inferred by placing the definite article "the" in front of "peace" – "the peace." Barrack Obama, for example, uses "the peace" repeatedly in his 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. This is akin to the Latin understanding of *pax*, especially in describing the *pax Romana.*

Hardt and Negri point out, however, that the achievement of such a place of peace, is continually bathed in blood. Although many, including Obama, admit that it is preferable to achieve "the peace" in peace, in our world of fear and conflict, force and violence are portrayed as justifiable means of bringing about this place of peace. In this way, Obama integrates the necessity of military power and the use of force as defining elements for a responsible way to pursue "the peace" – the place of peace. Obama states: "… all responsible nations must embrace the role that militaries with a clear mandate can play to keep the peace."

Indeed, the legendary *pax Romana* was able to maintain such a state of relative peace for the Roman Empire, through constant, violent suppression of those within the empire and those on its borders that jeopardized this time of relative tranquility. In South Africa, the apartheid government went to great lengths to suppress—violently—those who they perceived to be a threat to the peace they sought for their land.

Peace understood as a location that can be achieved via the continual use of violence and aggression, continues the cycle of violence. It may address the symptoms of overt violence by quelling such outbursts (although even this is questionable), but it does not address the roots of violence. By violently enforcing peace, such methods do not address the underlying issues – the covert violence – that exists, which creates and enforces inequality, oppression, and injustice.

The irony of pursuing "the peace" is that those who struggle against covert roots of violence, such as inequality, oppression, and injustice, are seen as "disturbers of the peace." The struggle against covert violence seems to be in contradiction to the struggle against overt violence. Yet, the struggle against overt violence, through violent means, exposes the ways in which we too are part of the embedded inequality and injustice that has taken root, and part of a systemic spirituality of justified violence that oppresses others.

PURSUING OVERT & COVERT PEACE

The biblical notion of peace, and Jesus' demonstration of it throughout his life, points to a vastly different understanding of peace. The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom* (*eirene* is the Greek). *Shalom* refers to a threefold notion of peace: 1) material and physical well-being; 2) the wellness of relationships; and 3) moral integrity (Yoder, *Shalom*:10-11).

Far from being an inactive, passive understanding of the avoidance of conflict and struggle, or a place of tranquility and serenity, *shalom* is the active pursuit of living in right relationship with oneself, others, and with creation. "Shalom defines how things should be" (Yoder, *Shalom*: 16). And only when right relationships are present can the place of peace be achieved.

We are tempted at times to think of peacemaking as maintaining the status quo without conflict. But… *peacemaking is whitewashing when we think we can have peace in spite of oppression, exploitation, and unjust laws*. To maintain a situation of oppression, material want, and deceit about the way things are is not to keep peace, but is to do the opposite! Shalom making means transforming these situations into ones of fairness, equality, and justice. *Shalom demands transformation not façade!* (Yoder, Shalom: 18).

Such an active understanding of peace challenges the injustice of the way things are and those who benefit from the injustice of the way things are. Pursuing peace, therefore, is sometimes perceived to be revolutionary. Seeking the peace (welfare) of the city inevitably and invariably challenges the status quo and the powers that stand in the way of equality, fairness, and justice. *Shalom*-making is revolutionary because it challenges injustice, oppression, greed, and conditions that cause suffering.

This revolutionary form of peace becomes a visible manifestation of the good news that God intends for God's creation. It is good news, unless, of course, we are benefactors of injustice, oppression, inequality, hoarding, and greed. If we are benefactors, then life may become uncomfortable and we may seek ways of maintaining the status quo. If we are the benefactors, we may view those working for societal transformation as revolutionaries, rebels, and even as enemies! We may, as King Herod did, seek to kill all male babies under the age of 2 in order to maintain control, order, and social position!

This active understanding of peace responds to both overt and covert violence. *Shalom*-making is a response to the overt manifestations of violence in that it too is strategic, utilitarian, activism that seeks ways to respond to violence with nonviolent alternatives. And yet, *shalom*-making also responds to the embedded spirituality of justified violence, confronting systemic foundations of inequality and injustice by offering a new communal identity, one which demonstrates a new way to relate to one another.

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THE CHALLENGE FOR SHALOM - MAKERS

The ongoing challenge for those dedicated to *shalom*-making is to find ways of struggling against the embedded spirituality of violence with strategies that are already signs of the peace (*shalom* or right relationships) we desire. Challenging the ways of violence by using violence (besides being ironic) inevitably continues the ongoing cycle of violence, thus making true peace – true *shalom* – unattainable.

Shalom-makers are routinely confronted by two temptations: to respond to the powers of oppression, injustice, and violence with their own tools – those of violence and death; or, on the other hand, to become inactive because of fear of causing conflict. Both temptations maintain the status quo and are equally unhelpful.

The book of James reminds us that "the fruit of righteousness (justice) is sown in peace by those who make peace" (3:18). The fruit we pick depends on the way we sow! If we truly want peace with justice, we then must also sow peace in justice.

Our challenge as Christ's followers is to confront overt *and* covert forms of violence in new and creative ways that seek and demonstrate the true nature of peace. The pursuit of *pax* may respond to overt violence, but it fails to respond to the embedded spirituality of justified violence. *Shalom* provides us with both the strategic, utilitarian, activism that confronts overt violence, and it exposes covert violence by embedding a new communal, spiritual identity rooted in the pursuit of living in right relationships with one another, creation, and with God.

May God grant us the courage to live such revolutionary lives!


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UAW SAYS:
END SEGREGATED RULES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WE MARCH FOR
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THE HELL IT IS...

OR IS IT?

by Ian Farr

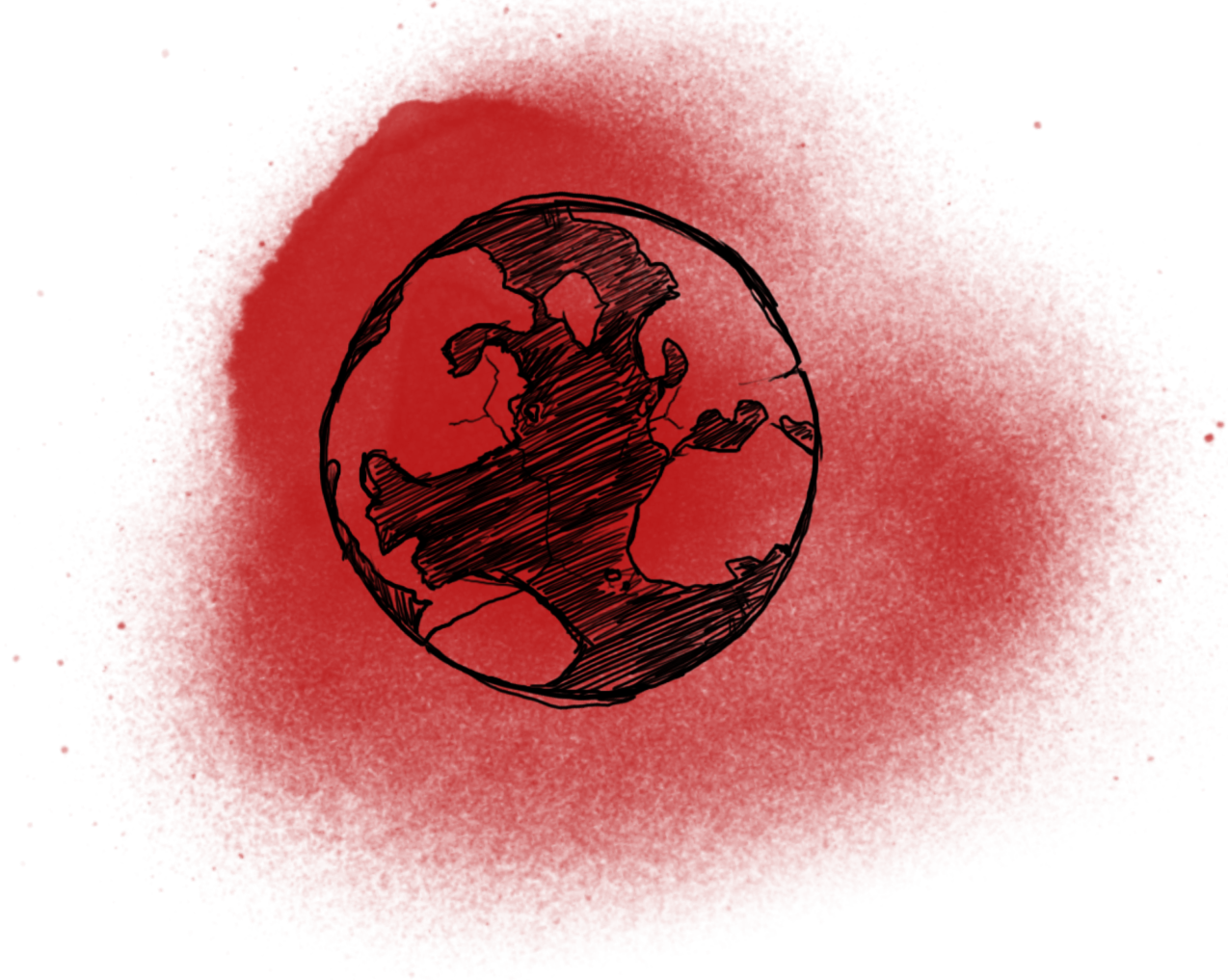
In the beautiful countryside of South West England is situated a small 'touch farm' and zoo which rejoices in the name of *Noah's Ark*. There, no doubt, the sincere owners hope families will go for a fun day out to enjoy the animals, learn more about the wonders of creation and perhaps one or two little bits of subtly introduced Bible knowledge.

The fact that the Noah story is far from being a suitable children's story about little cuddly animals (though it is so presented in many Sunday School classes) seems to be overlooked. It is actually about a seemingly vindictive and vicious God using horrendously efficient weapons of mass destruction to wipe out the vast majority of the human race. Genocide on a grand scale.

Ever since Rob Bell wrote his book *Love Wins*, internet forums and blogs have been full of verbally violent diatribes against the young man for having the audacity to suggest an end to the idea of a hell of Eternal Conscious Torment (ECT). Such a suggestion, it seems, would undermine the basis for much evangelism, the purpose of which is to stop sinners falling into the hands of an angry God. The tenacity of those holding to the doctrine of ECT while professing to follow the man from Galilee who urged that enemies be loved and opponents forgiven, seems to suggest either a schizophrenic God or a difference in view of the Father and the Son. Perhaps it is not surprising that the majority of these people understand the atonement as the Father inflicting hell on his Son in order that some of us can avoid experiencing it ourselves – an idea which author Steve Chalke once referred to as 'cosmic child abuse' (for which he also received a measure of violent verbal abuse).

Why is it that many Christians want to cling so strongly to images of God that are violent and retributive? Is it convenience? Are we not a people who, when we feel we have been wronged against, prefer *retributive* rather than *restitutional* justice to be meted out on the perpetrator? 'Just war,' capital punishment and incarceration can all be justified by a portrayal of God as angry, vengeful and swift to punish. But, many will ask, is not such a picture of God Biblical? The answer to that question is, of course, "yes" – verses can be found that present God in that way.

It is essential, therefore, if we are to be a people of peace (and the peace-making people we long to be) that we get our theology right, first of all. We must recognize that whatever picture of God we see in the Old Testament is inadequate and incomplete. That picture is a developing one; it is only in Jesus that we see the full and complete revelation of God. Then we will live as followers of Jesus and as children of that good God of forgiveness and acceptance, whose essence is love. If we fail to do this, we will continue to be part of the problem of making this world a hell of a mess - rather than being the solution (or part of it) that God has called us to be.



As for ourselves,

yes, we must be meek, bear

injustice, malice, rash judgment.

We must turn the other cheek, give

up our cloak, go a second mile...

– Dorothy Day

PUSH IT FURTHER ///

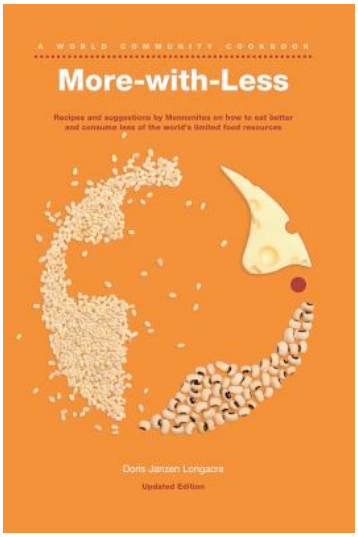
AVAILABLE TITLES FROM THE ANiSA BOOK SHOP

POST-CHRISTENDOM: CHURCH AND MISSION IN A STRANGE NEW WORLD

by: Stuart Murray

The end of Christendom, where the Christian story was known and the church was central, invites Christians in western culture to embrace marginality and discover fresh ways of being church and engaging in mission. Whilst the transition from modernity to postmodernity has received a huge amount of attention, the shift from Christendom to post-Christendom has not yet been fully explored. This book is an introduction, a journey into the past, an interpretation of the present and an invitation to ask what following Jesus might mean in the strange new world of post-Christendom.

COST: R140

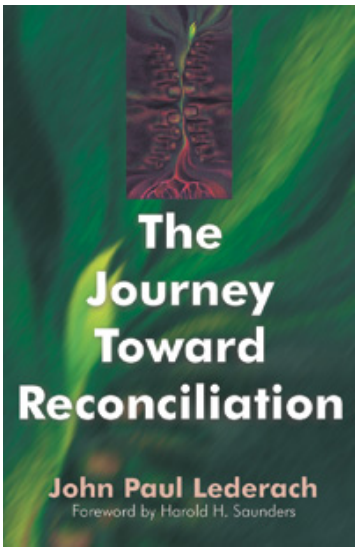


MORE-WITH-LESS (UPDATED EDITION)

by: Doris Janzen Longacre

For more than 35 years, *More-with-Less Cookbook* has helped thousands of families establish a climate of joy and concern for others at mealtime, while improving nutrition and saving money. This cookbook contains recipes and suggestions by Mennonites on how to eat better and consume less of the world's limited food resources.

COST: R120



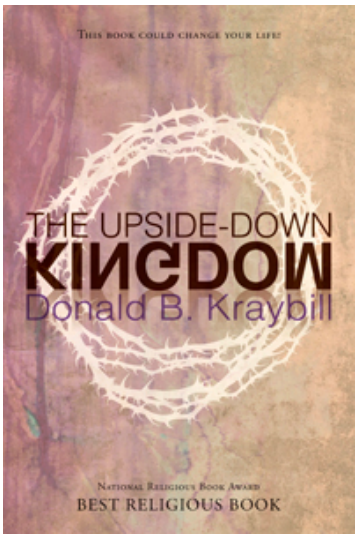
THE JOURNEY TOWARD RECONCILIATION

by: John Paul Lederach

We live in a diverse, but interdependent world. Even with modern technology, communications, and travel, we still need to build relationships leading to reconciliation.

John Paul Lederach shares insights gained from years of work in international mediation and deep spiritual reflection on the task of reconciliation. From personal experiences and the Bible story, he finds God seeking reconciliation throughout history. Here is help for conflicted families, communities, and nations.

COST: R90



THE UPSIDE - DOWN KINGDOM

by: Donald B. Kraybill

Translated into six languages, and with over 100,000 copies sold, The Upside-Down Kingdom continues to change people's lives. Donald B. Kraybill shows how the kingdom of God announced by Jesus appeared upside-down in first-century Palestine. Jesus wins by serving and triumphs by losing. Today, God's way still looks upside-down as it breaks into diverse cultures around the world.

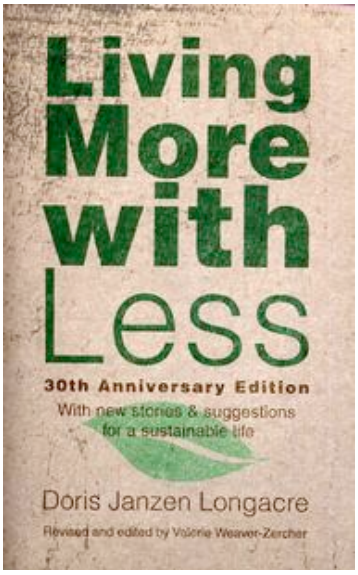
COST: R110

DISCIPLESHIP AS POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

by: John Howard Yoder

In this work Yoder succeeds in reopening the theological debate on Christians and political responsibility with the larger church to which persecution had put an end 400 years earlier. Biblical scholar Timothy J. Geddert translated two of these lectures, originally given in Germany, as a resource to understand Yoder's invitation to begin an exploratory journey that leads to Jesus Christ's peace church.

COST: R50



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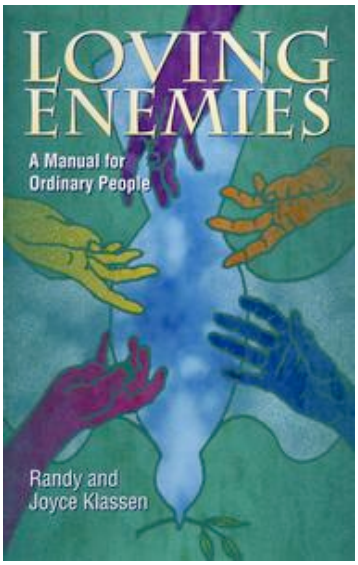

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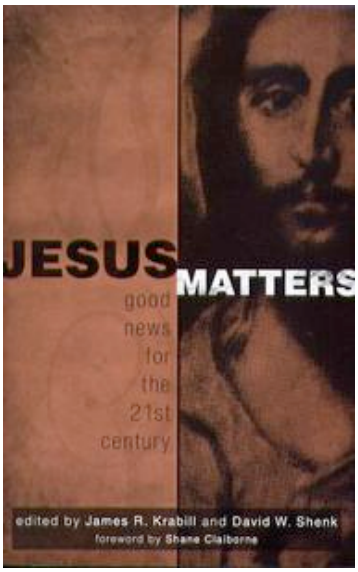

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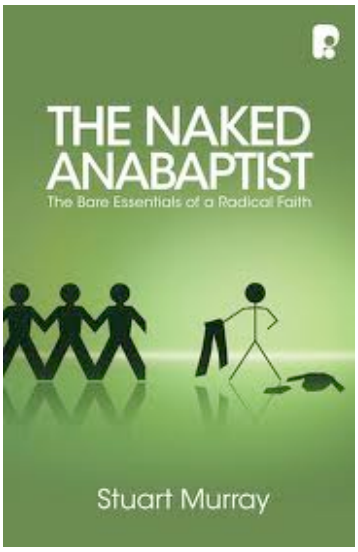

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