Crossing to the other side:
Living as people of peace in a time of fear and terror
Peace Sunday Packet 2015

Peace Sunday is an annual occasion to preach, teach, reflect and act on the gospel of peace as revealed in Jesus Christ. Mennonite Central Committee encourages Anabaptist-Mennonite churches across Canada to observe Peace Sunday on November 8, 2015, just prior to Remembrance Day. We hope you will use this resource to help your congregation mark Peace Sunday.

The following team of MCC staff from across Canada helped to create the Peace Sunday Packet for 2015: Dana Hepting, Esther Epp-Tiessen, Jon Nofziger, Rachelle Klassen, Rebekah Sears, Steve Plenert, Tim Schmucker.

Thanks to Jennifer Wiebe, Dan Unrau, Donna Entz, Emily Loewen, Jason Boone, Ken Peters and Titus Peachey for their advice and counsel.

Send us feedback!
We would love to hear from you about how you used this resource and how we can make it better. Please send a message to peace@mcccanada.ca

More information is available!
Visit our Website for a video, more stories and background information, and additional ideas. Visit our Facebook page for regular updates, and to post your own suggestions. Contact us by Email at peace@mcccanada.ca if you have questions or concerns.

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How to use this packet

This packet is intended to help you and your congregation plan a Peace Sunday worship service, as well as related educational, advocacy and peace witness activities. MCC encourages use of these materials in connection with Remembrance Day, but you may use them at any other time of year.

Before Peace Sunday:
- Skim the packet to get a sense of the content. Read through the introduction and biblical interpretation to become familiar with the theme;
- Visit the website and Facebook page for a video, additional stories, more background information and other resources;
- Gather a team of people to help plan your Peace Sunday worship service, drawing from the materials in this packet;
- Use the worship resources to structure your worship service. Choose songs and hymns from your congregation's collection of resources;
- Use the biblical materials and stories to plan a sermon or meditation. We suggest focusing on one of the three suggested biblical passages;
- Share the action and advocacy suggestions with your education committee, missions committee or peace and justice group and encourage follow-up action;
- Share the Peace Sunday Packet with others in your congregation for use in adult or youth Sunday school, Bible study, or small group discussions.

After Peace Sunday:
- Let us know about your Peace Sunday experience, whether or not you used any of our material, and how we might improve Peace Sunday resources in the future:
  - Send an email message to peace@mcccanada.ca;
  - OR complete this short survey.

In a time of fear and terror, Christians are called to remember who they are: children of God, followers of Jesus, and people of peace. While many voices in society call us to be afraid, to project our fears onto Muslims, and to support military responses to extremist violence, our identity as Christians calls us to do otherwise. In a time of fear and terror, we are called to:

- Place our trust fully in the One who stills the storm;
- Lament the violence in our world and pray for all people caught in its web;
- Confess our own complicity in this violence and seek to live Jesus’ loving nonviolence;
- Support humanitarian assistance to those who suffer;
- Reach out in friendship to all people, but especially our Muslim neighbours;
- Call our government to non-military responses to violent extremism.
Introduction to theme

We live in a context of growing fear—fear about terrorism.

Terrorist acts are nothing new. People have used violent extremism for ideological or political gain for centuries. But since the attacks on the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001 (9/11) and the ensuing “War on Terror,” the specter of terrorism both at home and abroad has gained urgency in our homes, churches and communities.

During the past years, the headlines have brought news of terrorist attacks on an Indonesian resort, a Madrid train, a Chechen school, the London subway and a Mumbai hotel. Other desperate events include: Boko Haram’s kidnapping of hundreds of young girls in Nigeria, Al-Shabaab’s attack on shopping malls and universities in Kenya (specifically targeting Christians), and countless suicide bombings from Afghanistan to Tunisia.

In the summer of 2014, we learned about a violent extremist group taking over a swath of territory in Syria and western Iraq. This group—called Islamic State or ISIS or ISIL—was particularly brutal in attacking and killing Christians, Yezidis (another religious minority) and Shia Muslims. Canada quickly joined a U.S.-led military airstrike campaign against ISIS in Iraq, and then also in Syria. Our country is once again at war. (See page 22 for additional contextual analysis.)

All these developments have fostered a climate of fear in Canada. ISIS videos depicting brutal killings and beheadings (even if we haven’t watched them), stories of young Canadians being recruited by terrorist groups, and images of Parliament Hill under attack a year ago have shaken many of us deeply. At the same time, the increased media and political attention on terrorist attacks seems to exacerbate collective fear.

One of the unfortunate products of the climate of fear is the reflexive association of terrorism with Islam. In many ways, Muslims have become the feared “other.” Although many of the high-profile attacks in recent years have been committed by extremists purportedly acting in the name of Islam, many Muslims deplore this violence.

How do followers of Jesus live faithfully in this context? How do we address the climate of fear? How do we relate to those identified as “other”? How do we share the peace of Christ?

MCC humbly offers this packet as a tool for your congregation or group to engage in worship, reflection, and conversation about a hopeful peace church response in a time of fear and terror and what it might look like. Additionally, we offer suggestions for advocacy and action beyond Sunday morning.

The packet does not provide easy answers to the complex questions of our time. But it does invite all of us to live faithfully in a world permeated by the fear caused by extremist violence. It encourages us to face our fears, even while refusing to be consumed by them. It invites us to reach out in friendship and love to Muslim neighbours and newcomers and to resist stereotyping Muslims as terrorists. It calls us to renounce all violence and place our trust and hope more deeply—not in military might—but in the One who stills the storm and calls us to cross nonviolently to the other side.

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you . . ."
Isaiah 43:1-2
Biblical reflections

Use these biblical reflections to shape sermons or meditations or to inspire personal or group reflection and discussion.

- Mark 4:35–5:13: Jesus calms the storm and crosses to the other side
- Romans 12:9–21: Let love be genuine
- Psalm 46: God is our refuge

Mark 4:35–5:20: Jesus calms the storm while crossing to the other side, where he heals a man of unclean spirits.

Chapter 4 begins with Jesus in Galilee teaching “beside the sea.” At the end of the day (and the chapter), he and the disciples embark for “the other side.” A “great gale” arises, the disciples fear perishing, but Jesus calms the storm. They arrive at the other side where they are met by a man with “an unclean spirit” named “Legion,” who lives “among the tombs.” Jesus heals the demoniac, and the unclean spirits enter “a great herd of swine” who then rush down the steep hill into the sea and drown. This story of Jesus expelling the unclean spirit needs significant unpacking in order to understand its symbolic and political meanings.¹

1. The geography of the storm

The Sea of Galilee was on the eastern border of Galilee; crossing to the other side meant going to “the country of the Gerasenes,” the Decapolis. This meant going to enemy territory, into the heart of the Roman occupation.² This was where many thousands of Roman military veterans were stationed and settled.

Perhaps this is why the disciples were terrified in the boat; perhaps the storm was within them: their fear of where they were heading! Can we imagine the terror they must have felt? Can we imagine the terror we would feel, having taken the initiative to go and meet the enemy. In the disciples’ case, the enemy was their oppressor who had huge power over them.

Imagine also Jesus’ teachings that were no doubt reverberating in their ears: “Blessed are the peacemakers,” “Love your enemies,” and other calls to offer radical love.

The disciples were filled with fear, understandably so, in the midst of the storm and awoke Jesus in panic. “Do you not care if we perish?” they ask accusingly. Their trust in Jesus was being tested. When our trust is stretched to the limit, how do we respond? In times of great storms, Jesus asked the disciples and he asks us today, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

Jesus calms the storm, but insists that they—and now we—continue journeying to the other side. While Canada is not occupied by a foreign empire, our country is at war against extremist Islamists in the Middle East who have carried out violent attacks targeting civilians, religious minorities, and aid workers, and have encouraged acts of terrorism abroad, including Canada. Many voices have sounded the alarm of Islamic extremism here at home, suggesting we ought to be fearful, very fearful. Increasingly, Muslims are portrayed as “other” and as “enemy.” And yet Muslims of all stripes and colours are our neighbours—literally! —in our cities and towns. Have we taken the time to “cross to the other side” to get to know them? Again, Jesus asks us to trust him, to trust his Way.

¹ This interpretation is derived primarily, but not completely, from the work of John Dominic Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography (New York City: HarperCollins, 1995) and Ched Myers, Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).
² Myers, p. 191ff.
2. The symbolism of spirits and pigs

Our understanding of the enemy, and thus the disciples’ fear, is heightened by lots of symbolism in this healing.

Jesus and the disciples enter the Decapolis, an area of cities colonized with settlements of enemy oppressors—Roman veteran soldiers. They are greeted by a wild man with an unclean spirit, screaming “What have you to do with me? Do not torment me.” Perhaps this man is a symbol of the oppression of the Roman Empire, and of its militarism and war.

“And Legion is my name,” says the unclean spirit, a legion being a division of 2000 Roman soldiers. These legions were stationed in the Decapolis to control that part of the Roman Empire. And “a great herd of swine” is not a reference to a group of pigs, but rather a large group of military recruits. Pig was also the mascot of some Roman legions and also a derisive name for new recruits.

Jesus expels these demons. The unclean spirits—representing militarism, oppression and war—enter the pigs who then run into the sea and drown. Liberation! This was the yearning of the occupied and oppressed Jewish people; just as with the Exodus liberation from slavery in Egypt, their oppressors would drown in the sea. However….

3. The sending of the healed demoniac

The “swineherds” then go and tell what happened “in the city and in the country,” among the settlements and barracks of the Roman military. The people come running to see for themselves, find the demoniac in his right mind, and become afraid. So they beg Jesus to leave, to go back to Galilee, to leave the Roman military settlements. Jesus and the disciples comply. However, as they start to leave – “as he was getting into the boat” – the healed man asks to go with them, to join them. But Jesus says no, and sends him back to his community: “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.” And the man does exactly that.

Notice that the local Roman authorities didn't use their weapons to force Jesus to leave. Perhaps they realized that they were dealing with a power greater than military might: love and mercy, non-aggression and nonviolence.

Jesus gives the healed man a mission: stay among your people—including, the Roman military—and share the story of the fall of the power of violence and military might, and of the ascendancy of love and mercy through the person of God incarnate.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to encounter his presence among everyone we meet. In our current context and climate of fear, we are called to cross to “the other side,” to encounter our “enemies” or those labelled as “other,” and to offer love and friendship as Jesus would. If we today build relationships with our neighbours who are Muslims, including those who may have extremist tendencies, then perhaps a new understanding of at least some of the “Christian West” will start to permeate, both for them and the armed extremist groups.

At the same time, we also must engage those who sow fear among us in Canada, including our government, our media and those in our churches, who would have us see terrorists all around us. Refusing to succumb to the climate of fear will be essential if new understandings and relationships among us and others are to emerge.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."
John 14:27
Romans 12.9-21: Overcoming evil with good by offering hospitality to strangers, by blessing those who persecute us, and by feeding our enemies.

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good... extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them... Do not repay anyone evil for evil... live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves... No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

We could easily and quickly jump to applying these words (and those omitted by the ellipses) from Paul to our congregations and our lives. However, let’s take a minute to take a look at the letter’s context.

Paul’s letter to the Romans, although first in canonical order, is likely the last one Paul wrote. It is unique among all Paul’s letters to emerging congregations of first century Jesus-followers in that it is the only one written to a congregation that Paul himself did not establish; indeed, he had never visited it. Accordingly, Paul had no first-hand knowledge of the Roman congregation, and thus his teachings and exhortations are general in nature, rather than explicitly directed to specific situations. This is what we have in our chapter 12 passage—general teachings.

However, there is a gold nugget in this fact—namely, these non-specific teachings, many scholars think, contain an early version of some of Jesus’ teachings, perhaps the earliest written version in existence of some of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount/Plain” teachings. Note especially verses 14-15, 17, and 20-21, and compare Paul’s words there to Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 5.44 and Luke 6.27. Ponder the fact that Paul’s letter to the Romans was written around 25 years before the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. So we can reasonably imagine that Romans 12.9-21 contain nuggets of Jesus’ teachings, written by Paul in this letter around 24 years after Jesus’ death, taken either from a written compilation that no longer exists or from oral tradition.

How might these teachings from Jesus and the exhortations from Paul inform our response to the realities of terrorism, fear of the stranger and relating to the “other”? For us today, militant and extremist Islamists represent unbridled evil, a clear enemy. Many voices among us link their extremist Islamic teachings with the many fellow Canadians who are also Muslims.

As first century Jews, Jesus and Paul also faced a very clear enemy. The Roman Empire and its military power represented real terror in their lives and the lives of most Jews. In addition, the “Gentiles” were the obvious “stranger,” the clear “other” for them, and indeed for all first century followers of Jesus.

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3 Most scholars date Romans around 57 C.E. (give or take a year), while his first letter, 1 Thessalonians, was written about 51 C.E. Paul’s other letters fall in between these two. Paul died about 10 years after writing the letter to the Romans, so he quite possibly wrote other letters. These hypothetical letters, however, are not extant.

4 Matthew and Luke are dated 80-85 C.E.

5 Paul did appeal to the Roman emperor once and claim his Roman citizenship at times. However, these seem to be more for legal reasons rather than identity proclamations.

6 Ephesians 2.11ff: “For he [Christ] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups [Jews and Gentiles] into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.”
Listen to Paul's and Jesus' urgings:

- “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good.”
- “Extend hospitality to strangers.”
- “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”
- “Do not repay anyone evil for evil.”
- “Live peaceably with all.”
- “Never avenge yourselves.”
- “If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.”
- “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

What about the reference to heaping burning coals on your enemies' head by feeding them? Note the quotation marks in verse 20; we cannot know whether Paul is quoting Jesus. In any case, this phrase, and indeed all of verse 20, is from Proverbs 25.21f. Perhaps the burning coals originally meant intensified retribution. However, here in this context of Paul's and Jesus' teachings, it takes on a loftier meaning with a different intent: treat your enemies kindly (“do unto others…”), even treat them as friends, for then they may become ashamed of their hostility and repent. In short, the best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn her or him into a friend. And thus, as Paul concludes, evil is overcome with good.

Jesus and Paul, in both this passage from the letter to the Romans and in the scripture from Mark above, call us to examine how we treat our enemies, real or perceived. While we personally don't drop bombs on them, do we include them in our society? In our communities? Recent research has shown that the numerous Canadian teens and young adults who have been recruited by ISIS have been driven to violent extremism by their sense of deep alienation and isolation from “mainstream” society. [See section on Contextual Analysis.]

Their sense of not belonging, and of being rejected by Canadians, has played a significant role in their vulnerability to extremist recruitment. However, Jesus and Paul call us to befriend the enemy, to embrace the stranger, and in doing so we “overcome evil with good.”

Psalm 46: God is our refuge

The Psalms express the innermost feelings of the writers as they experience real life events. They are mostly hymns of praise, petition and lament—both individual and communal—and are intended for singing or chanting. From Bach to Godspell to U2, these Psalms have inspired musicians and artists.7 And Psalms are core to our worship; for example: “The LORD is my Shepherd,” “Have mercy on me O God,” “Bless the Lord, O my soul” [Psalms 23, 51, 103 respectively].

However, I will confess that I have trouble with many Psalms. I struggle with those that celebrate military victory over an enemy, and those that plead for the Lord to annihilate one's enemies. Those Psalms suggest the Lord is a tribal god who will not hesitate to save his people at the expense of others. I have great difficulty singing those songs of praise and petition.

With that caveat, let's look at Psalm 46. It was composed as a song of praise and thanksgiving after the Lord delivered Jerusalem from the hands of the Assyrians. It also inspired the famous hymn by Martin Luther in 1529, “A Mighty Fortress is our God.” The language, however, is universal rather than tribal, expressing confidence in the Lord during troubled times.

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People of faith are reminded that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” This is worth repeating: God is our refuge and strength. In the negative, that affirms that Christians don’t take refuge in our country’s military might, nor in the strength of our government’s bellicosity. At a time when nationalism and political bravado hope to win our hearts, we are reminded our security and strength lie with God.

Therefore—“We will not fear”—is more a commitment moving forward to the future than a simple statement of present fact. Fear is, of course, a normal human visceral reaction to danger and terrifying circumstances, and so obviously we’ll be afraid at times. However, the Psalmist declares that we will not permit fear to dominate us. Nor is “we will not fear” a hubristic shout, as in the clothing brand, “No Fear,” which features extreme sports along with contempt for social norms. Neither is “not fearing” only for when we’re in control or can shape what’s coming.

Rather, the commitment not to fear expresses deep confidence in our foundation and source of ultimate truth. No, we will not fear, come what may. Regardless of the extent of the earthquake in our lives (personal or national), the truth of the Psalm’s opening affirmation remains: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

Note also verse 9: “He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.” This great verse declares the end of war, although in its context it refers to the end of war against Israel, rather than all war forever and ever.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam . . .”

Psalm 46:103a

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These biblical reflections were written by Tim Schmucker, Toronto regional representative for MCC Ontario. Tim served the Mennonite church in Colombia. He holds an M.A. in Peace Studies from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (formerly Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary) in Elkhart, IN.
Welcome and invocation
Welcome to this service of worship, prayer and healing. All are welcome here.
Today is Peace Sunday. On this day we invite the Spirit to remind us, once again, that we are called to be people of peace, to follow Jesus’ way of peace. We are drawing on MCC’s Peace Sunday Packet for this service.
As followers of Christ in this community and this congregation we seek to be faithful to God in times of uncertainty, fear and threats of extremist violence. When we look around in fear and when we avidly seek enemies, we will assuredly find them.
But as people of faith we are not called to live in fear. Although there is undeniably great evil and unspeakable acts of violence and terror in our world, we are invited to seek peace and pursue it.
Seeking and pursuing peace—in the Spirit of Jesus—involves naming sin and our complicity in it, confession, facing conflict, welcoming strangers, befriending the “other” and bringing healing.
When we look around and see opportunities for healing and mutual transformation, then, perhaps, we are seeing with the eyes of the Lord. Look around and greet those near you with the words, “The Peace of Christ be with you.”

Call to worship
Come and worship the Lord. Come and kneel before the one who is present in storms of uncertainty. Lift up your fearful heart to the Lord who is our refuge and strength, present in times of terror and trouble. It is through God’s mysterious and wondrous love that ultimately the spears and bows of war will ultimately be shattered and that peace will reign. Commit your hearts to God in this hour and always so that you may walk the pathways of righteousness and hope. Come and discern the way of God so that you may not be overcome by terror and evil but that these shall be overcome by good.

Confession
Lord God. We confess that in our complex and violent world we are sorely tempted by our fears. We are like the disciples terrified by the stormy sea. We are tempted to rely on armies and weapons for our sense of security. We are tempted to paint those we do not know with a broad brush of suspicion. We confess that we hear the shrill voices of those stirring up fear more easily than the muffled voices of those who suffer.
We confess that it is easy to ignore and forget the victims of terror and violence. We block thoughts of the injured and dead because the images are too terrible. We confess that our own hurts and cares leave us unable or unwilling to care for others. Make us into people of deep and caring compassion.
We confess that we easily label others as terrorists and extremists without knowing their stories and histories. We confess that the acts of perpetrators of terror and violence often leave us feeling judgmental, vindictive and scared. We confess to easy hatred and desire easy vengeance. Grant us large enough hearts to care for those who commit twisted and violent acts and who have lost their own ability to care for those with whom they disagree.
Give us the wisdom to examine our privileges and to use them for justice. Grant us courage to reach beyond our fears and trust that our lives are in your care. Many times we benefit from systems that oppress others, often in ways we do not know. Show us, Lord, how to create economies and communities that heal violence and alienation.

We confess all of this to you, O Lord. We place ourselves in your hands and in your mercy.

**Words of assurance**
Receive these words of assurance: The Lord who was mocked, flogged and executed knows our fears and our worries. Take courage from his nonviolent resurrection. Allow the accepting love of God, rather than suspicion and fear, guide you. Take courage, find strength and work for peace!

**Children’s feature** (*This can be done as a reading or as a puppet play.*)

Derek: (in a morose voice) Hi Kelly.
Kelly: Oh hi Derek. You don't sound so good.
Derek: I'm not good.
Kelly: You're not?
Derek: Nope. And you shouldn't be either.
Kelly: I shouldn't?
Derek: Nope.
Kelly: But why?
Derek: I'm afraid! And you should be too!
Kelly: (looks around) Why? What's going on?
Derek: Because...they're out there!
Kelly: Who's out there?
Derek: The terrorists. They're all around us!
Kelly: I don't see anyone except you!
Derek: This isn't funny, Kelly. The danger is real!
Kelly: The danger of what?
Derek: The danger of attack!
Kelly: Yikes, that is scary!
Derek: And it can happen any place, anytime, anywhere.
Kelly: No wonder you're not okay.
Kelly: Where did you hear about all this? Who told you that the terrorists are out to get us?
Derek: I dunno. On TV, on the internet...somewhere. What does it matter if it's all true?
Kelly: But Derek.
Derek: What?
Kelly: It does matter who we listen to and what we hear.
Derek: You're right. Especially when there's danger!
Kelly: Well that's true. We have to be careful of dangers.
Derek: Like I said.
Kelly: But there are other voices out there too. With other messages.
Derek: Like what? Whose voices? What messages?
Kelly: The voice of Jesus! The message he gives us to love others: neighbours and enemies. Jesus teaches us to walk the way of peace!
Derek: Maybe they didn't have terrorists back in his days.
Kelly: They did! People were afraid then too. But Jesus told his friends to live in peace.
Derek: How did they do that?
Kelly: They healed sick people. They prayed and ate together. They accepted people who were different.
Derek: So were the people safe all the time then?
Kelly: No, bad things still happened to some of them.
Derek: But they loved others anyways?
Kelly: Yes they did.
Derek: Were they afraid?
Kelly: I'm sure they were.
Derek: But they did the right thing? They loved others in spite of their fears of terror?
Kelly: Yes they did. And so should we.

Prayer/Reading for the church in the state
Leader: We feel gratitude for the stability in our country.
People: We regularly trust government to provide services and to act on our behalf.
Leader: We entrust it to represent us internationally.
People: We invest government with tools to serve our needs: the rule of law, the courts, police and the power to protect.
Leader: As the church we have been given different tools—the tools of repentance, forgiveness and fellowship.
People: Sometimes these tools feel inadequate and we wish to align ourselves with the powers of the state.
Leader: We know that transformation seldom comes as a result of armed conflict and violence.
People: Therefore, we commit ourselves to the ways of Christ’s Kingdom even as we participate in the life of the state.

Reading of fear
This reading may be done by an individual, antiphonally or as a group. It has been prepared as a 3-person group reading/prayer.
Reader 1: What are we afraid of?
Reader 2: O God, you have given us powerful instincts for flight and fight.
Reader 3: We react quickly to the threats we perceive in the world around us.
Reader 1: When we see dreadful things that alarm and frighten us, we quickly put up our defenses.
Reader 2: We give you thanks for our instincts and we commit them to you and your service.
Reader 3: O God, you also invite us to walk other paths in the face of threat, to face the stormy sea and journey to the other side.
Reader 1: You invite us to do good to those who persecute us, to feed and give
drink to those who want to harm us.

ALL: You invite us to pray for them.

Reader 2: You even call us to love our enemies.

ALL: O God, this is hard for us to do.

Reader 3: Give us grace and mercy to overcome the terror and fear that dwells
within us.

Reader 1: Give us a Christ-like vision for peace.

Reader 2: Give us the courage that it takes to face our fears so that we might
see the possibilities between flight and fight.

Reading of courage
This reading may also be done in a variety of ways. It has been set up as a
leader/response reading.

Leader: The opposite of terrorism is not calm or even security.

People: No, the opposite of terrorism is courage.

Leader: Courage to move forward in spite of fear.

People: Courage to create relationships in spite of barriers.

Leader: Courage to stand up for what is good, right and beautiful even when
the clamour is to denounce, hate and tear down.

People: Jesus courageously met neighbours who others called unclean.

Leader: Jesus courageously healed those who were social rejects.

People: Jesus courageously taught things that were unpopular.

ALL: Help us to be courageous like Jesus.

Leader: Help us to trust that the Spirit of Jesus is with us,

People: Even though the mountains shake,

Leader: Even though the waters roar and foam,

People: Even though people wish to harm us.

ALL: Help us to cultivate courage in the name of Christ. Help us to be still and
know that you are God.

Benediction
As you go from here, acknowledge that there is uncertainty in the world. Venture
into our complicated world knowing that there is trouble and terror and that you
will hear voices calling for fear. Step into that world knowing that God cares
for you and all people. God seeks to bring us together in Christ. Go, love the
peoples of the world and experience God’s fullness! Amen.

These worship resources were written by Steve Plenert, peace program
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Stories

Courageous nonviolence in the face of violence is to be celebrated, whether that violence is considered terrorism or not. This section is a compilation of stories of people confronting fear and resisting violence in nonviolent ways. Some stories are about Mennonite Central Committee partners building peace in different parts of the world. Some stories tell of Christians and Muslims extending friendship to one another. Use these stories as sermon illustrations, in your church newsletter, or for personal reflection and inspiration. Additional stories are available on the Peace Sunday Packet website.

1. Facing fear, Philippines

Bryan Paler was driving in heavy traffic in Manila, Philippines when he received a text message from an anonymous number. It read, “We’re coming to get you.” He knew this was likely not an empty threat. Bryan had been an activist in the Communist Party of the Philippines, an armed underground political party that, through guerilla warfare, has been working to overthrow the government since 1968. After years of involvement with the party, Bryan felt that seeking justice through the use of violence would only beget more violence. He chose to leave the movement and help his fellow Filipinos build peace nonviolently by working as a grassroots community organizer.

But leaving an underground armed group is dangerous business. While he didn't know exactly where this threat was coming from, Bryan knew that the one sending it wanted to induce fear and stop him from being an outspoken proponent for building peace through nonviolent action in the Philippines. Only a few weeks earlier, a friend of Bryan’s had received a similar threat and had been in hiding because of it.

But Bryan chose not to act in fear. Instead, he informed the one threatening him that he'd like to know when he would be coming, so Bryan could have coffee ready and they could talk. He also told him, “You can do what you want to me, but just know that my entire church community will continue to work wholeheartedly for peace, even if you kill me.” The anonymous texts threatening his life stopped. Bryan continues to build peace in the Philippines through creative, nonviolent ways.


2. Facing fear, Colombia

A decade ago, growers of coca (the plant used to produce cocaine) were pushed out of southern Colombia by aerial spraying and military operations. Some then moved to the Pacific coast jungle province of Chocó, attracted by its remoteness. At that point, Chocanos had few or no viable alternatives to cover basic family needs, so coca-growing seemed attractive. Unfortunately, the coca economy has now inflated all prices in the region, making it all the more difficult for families to avoid the illicit economy.

The Mennonite Brethren (MB) pastors in the area began preaching from the pulpit against involvement with coca-growing, but knew they needed to offer more than just words. MCC then partnered with the MB Regional Church Council to help families recuperate their traditional food crops, particularly their primary staple—rice.

Around 150 families in 17 river communities received rice seed and training to strengthen food production in the region once again. The MB churches worked through many obstacles to open a community rice processing plant that allows families to process their harvest and obtain a high quality final product, not only for their own consumption, but also for sale.
Unfortunately, once the rice processing plant was up and running, a paramilitary commander demanded a meeting with the church leaders. The regional church president, José Rutilio Rivas, and two other pastors went to the appointed location with fear but also with profound clarity. With weapons in hand, the paramilitary commander insisted that the church-supported rice processing plant pay a “vaccine” to the illegal armed group. This “vaccine” could enhance safety.

Rutilio responded resolutely, “The Mennonite church has been committed to non-violence and peace-building for centuries. We will not support any of the armed groups, not even the state armed groups. If you force us, we will close down the project, though it is of service to the community. But we will not support you, even if it costs us our lives.”

Surprised by such boldness, the commander promised respect for their position of non-collaboration.

Story supplied by Bonnie Klassen, MCC Area Director for Latin America & the Caribbean.

3. Building Friendship, Indonesia

In 2006, an earthquake greatly damaged parts of Indonesia. The earthquake's epicentre was a village where Mennonites lived as a minority amongst Muslims.

There had been a history of social and political tensions in the community prior to the quake. The church had wanted to renovate and expand but was not allowed to do so. Indonesian law requires groups wishing to build new houses of worship (church, mosque, and temple) to obtain approving signatures from all residences and business within 500 meters of the proposed building. Muslim groups, being in the majority, had little difficulty getting permission to build a new mosque, but it was a different story for Christian churches, including the Mennonite church. The neighbours had refused to provide the required signatures.

The earthquake had a devastating effect on the community, collapsing nearly every home and causing much death and injury. Amazingly, although damaged, the Mennonite church stood. The congregation nevertheless erected a tent as a temporary place of worship and community kitchen and gave the sanctuary over to be used for the community disaster response. The local church soon found itself working with Indonesian Mennonite Diakonia Service (IMDS) coordinating the local relief response and becoming a material resource warehouse for the whole community.

The congregation worked deliberately to build relationships across faiths. When concerns about people stealing the resources arose, the leader of IMDS, a Mennonite pastor, called a community meeting and insisted that the food was for everyone; if goods were stolen, everyone would go hungry. Both the Christians and Muslims provided security. The sanctuary was also used as a dorm for volunteers from other Mennonite congregations and from a militant Muslim group coming to assist in the clean-up and rebuilding. Mennonites and Muslims ate, slept and worked together and had long talks into the evening.

One of the Muslim neighbors later reported that the Mennonites “made peace by coming to help us. They are people just as we are people. We are no longer afraid. We now know that Christians are not as we thought before.”

Three years following this relief effort, the Mennonite church not only received permission for renovations of its building, but the Muslim neighbors in the village helped build a new building on the same property. As part of the new building, they erected an open pavilion for community gatherings where both Christians and Muslims can meet outside a place of worship.

Based on story provided by Jeanne and Dan Jantzi, former MCC workers in Indonesia.
4. From revenge to reconciliation, Nigeria

In September 2001, just a few days after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the U.S., major violence broke out in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria and 900 people were killed. The conflict was primarily over land and it pitted indigenous people and settlers against one another. Because the settlers were almost entirely Muslim and the indigenous people predominantly Christian, the struggle over land ownership and access to its resources was sometimes framed as a religious conflict. The situation is much the same today.

During the riots of 2001, a young Muslim woman named Amina lost her brother, and her family lost much of its property to Christian attackers. Amina was convinced that Christians were planning the destruction of Muslims throughout Nigeria. She was bent on seeking revenge and joined an armed group that carried out attacks on Christians.

Amina’s father, however, encouraged her to attend a workshop on conflict transformation being offered by MCC. Although educated in Arabic and the Qur’an he wanted his children to learn from western ideas and education. He thought his daughter should learn about “the other side.”

Amina reluctantly attended the 3-day workshop in 2003. By the third day she had experienced a transformation. The workshop demonstrated to her the power of nonviolence and conflict transformation. It also taught her that most Christians are not intent on harming Muslims. Today she is one of the strongest peace advocates the city of Jos has ever seen.


5. Love is stronger than hate, Ontario

Leon Kehl of Floradale Mennonite church in Floradale, Ontario remembers 9/11, the day Muslim extremists flew airplanes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, killing thousands. He attended a prayer vigil that evening and was overwhelmed with a sense of sorrow, not only for those who died that day, but also for those “who were going to die because of that day.” In his struggle to know how to respond, he felt drawn to build relationships with local Muslims. It is work he has felt called to do.

With the help of MCC Ontario, Kehl and others organized a friendship group of Muslims and Mennonites. They meet together once a month, often at each other’s places of worship. They have also planned small forums with speakers and discussions on topics related to faith and life. Sometimes they gather to tie knots on comforters.

In 2010 the friendship group worked together to sponsor refugees who had fled from Iraq and were in a refugee camp on the Syrian border. Because of the friendships that had been established, two Mennonite churches and two mosques pooled their finances and worked together to sponsor three families. Since then, Kehl has spearheaded another refugee sponsorship partnership involving Christians and Muslims in Waterloo region. And in 2014 he and a Muslim colleague led a Mennonite tour group to Turkey to live with and learn from Muslim families.
“We need to understand each other and get to know each other,” says Kehl about his friendship with Muslims. “We have been asked [by government and society] to respond to the ‘other’ with violence and that’s not in keeping with being Mennonite or what Jesus teaches.” He passionately believes that, “love is stronger than hate—it just takes longer.”

Based on information supplied by Leon Kehl, as well as Barb Draper, “Mennonites develops friendships with Muslims to build grassroots peace,” Canadian Mennonite, 1 February 2012.

6. “You will have to kill us first,” Syria

The Qalamoun region straddles the highway from Damascus to Homs in central Syria. Long known for their hospitality, the people of Qalamoun responded with open arms when families displaced by violence elsewhere came seeking refuge. In addition to welcoming the displaced families into their shops, homes and schools, they immediately began organizing efforts to provide food and hygiene items to their new guests. As more and more IDPs arrived, and the need for humanitarian support quickly became evident, they formed a local interfaith network of distributors and coordinators to respond to the crisis.

The purposeful inclusion of both Christian and Muslim partners in this effort facilitated not only a successful relief distribution, but also helped to establish trust and cooperation between different faith groups. This trust became very important when Islamist militants appeared on the scene.

Qalamoun's location has made it an attractive target for both the government and opposition forces. When Islamist militants arrived in 2013, Christians were in grave danger. Qalamoun's Muslims responded by helping to evacuate members of the Christian community to other villages for safety. Similarly, they defied the militants to attack them when the militants entered a Syrian Orthodox church. As the armed personnel approached, the Muslim residents of the community were resolute: “If you wish to defile this church and harm these people,” they stated, “you will have to kill us first.”

A historically diverse host community in Qalamoun continues to provide an example of how Muslims and Christians can not only live together, but thrive together. As many communities in Syria fall prey to the vicious cycles of hate, Qalamoun serves as a beacon of hope.

Adapted from Riad Jarjour and Andrew Long-Higgins;“Humanitarian assistance and social cohesion in Syria,” Intersections, Fall 2014, 6-7.

7. In the wake of terrorist attacks, Kenya

Eastleigh is a business hub and undoubtedly the most religiously diverse community within Nairobi City, Kenya. This area is home to refugees mostly from Somalia and a few from Ethiopia. Most of the inhabitants are Muslims looking for opportunities in the city, away from the refugee camps. And whenever there is an attack related to terrorism or some intelligence report on the same, the area becomes a quick target both by the host community and the law enforcers. At times the neighbourhood is quite tumultuous.

The Eastleigh Fellowship Center (EFC), founded by Mennonite missionaries in 1978, has worked for almost thirty years to encourage peaceful relations between the Muslim and Christian communities of Eastleigh. EFC now hosts a Centre for Peace and Nationhood (CPN) that seeks to create a safe space where young Christians and Muslims can come together to dialogue about the issues affecting their communities.
CPN brings both Christian and Muslim youth together so they can interact and form healthy relationships. During every sporting activity, we stop playing and talk about peace and faith. We do not speak from only a Christian perspective; we invite Muslim scholars and clerics to come and engage in the conversations. Overall, we encourage the youth to talk about what faith means to them in the hope that they can share their differences and celebrate the similarities.

Building healthy relationships and friendships, across religious divides, through sports and other joint activities has been CPN’s approach in response to terrorism in Kenya. It is our prayer that these simple interventions will build lasting bridges between Christians and Muslims and will go a long way to cushion some of the current perturbing trends in our society.

By Fred Bobo, program officer for the Centre for Peace and Nationhood of the Kenya Mennonite Church.

"Perfect love casts out fear."
1 John 4:18

8. In the wake of a school shooting, Alberta

School shootings are not common in Canada, yet they do occur. On April 28, 1999 a 14-year-old student walked into his high school in Taber, Alberta with a sawed-off rifle and began shooting. He killed one student and wounded another. The shooting occurred only eight days after a massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in which two senior students killed 13 people. It was generally believed Taber was a “copycat” crime.

The young shooter, Todd Cameron Smith, had recently dropped out of school. He had been severely bullied since very young and had a difficult home life. He struggled with depression and had become reclusive and fearful.

The young person who died was 17-year-old Jason Lang. Jason Lang’s father, Reverend Dale Lang, an Anglican minister, publicly forgave Smith for his son’s death. He and his wife Dianne reached out to Smith’s mother and tried to support her.

Lang also became an outspoken anti-bullying activist. Over the next years he criss-crossed the country, speaking to hundreds of groups about the need to prevent bullying and to extend friendship to isolated and marginalized youth. His main message to school students was, “You are a significant person. Your life is not a mistake, you count and you make a difference in the world.”


9. Racial violence as terrorism, South Carolina

On June 17, 2015, a 21-year-old white man attended a weekly Bible study meeting being held at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The congregation is one of the oldest black churches in the United States and has long been an important place in the struggle for civil rights for black people.

The young man, Dylann Roof, sat quietly for a portion of the Bible study and then stood up, pulled out a pistol, and opened fire on the black people present. He shot nine persons, three men and six women, ranging in age from 28 to 87. One of the victims was a senator and the church’s pastor and many of the others were community leaders. Eight of the victims died immediately, the ninth one later on.

The shooting was clearly motivated by racial hatred and an ideology of white supremacism. Some people called it an act of terrorism.

Amazingly, the congregation responded to Roof with grace and forgiveness. At a court appearance only days after he was apprehended, relatives of the
murdered individuals spoke to him via video link. One of them said, “I forgive you, my family forgives you. We would like you to take this opportunity to repent… Do that and you’ll be better off than you are right now.”


10. The Messiah I have not known

David Shenk is a Mennonite elder who has spent his life relating to Muslim people all around the world. He tells this story:

“On one occasion after I described the astonishing reconciliation offered in the cross, a Muslim academic and theologian turned to me and said, ‘I have never experienced the church as a peacemaking community. This is the first time I have ever known that Jesus rejected the way of violence against his enemies. As for the church, we Muslims perceive of the church as a community committed to violence when things do not go your way.’ I responded, ‘May God forgive the church for portraying a violent Messiah who is a distorted masquerade of the Messiah of the Gospel. I hope by God’s grace you also can forgive us. Your comments are a call to Christians to repent of the distortions of the Gospel that we so often embrace.’ The Muslim scholar thanked me and with deep emotion said, ‘This is the first time in my life that I have heard a Christian ask forgiveness from Muslims for the sins of the church. In your confession, I have seen an image of the Messiah I have not known.’”


"Every Christian needs a Muslim friend, and every Muslim needs a Christian friend."

David Shenk, Eastern Mennonite Missions
A time of fear and terror: A brief contextual analysis

This brief essay provides some context for understanding the theme of this packet. Additional information is available on the website of the Peace Sunday Packet.

Terrorism and fear

The term “terrorism” has been used for centuries, from the French Revolution8 to anti-colonial movements of the 1950s and 60s, to the Al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001 (9/11). However, despite decades of formal attempts through the United Nations and other bodies, the international community has failed to come to a consensus on a universal definition for the word “terrorism.”

Despite this lack of consensus, virtually all experts point to two identifying components: the targeting of civilians and the cultivation of fear. One basic definition suggests that terrorism is violence motivated by political, social or religious ideology and used to invoke fear and bring about change. The Canadian Criminal Code identifies terrorism as an act committed for a political, religious or ideological purpose with the intention of intimidating the public.9

Fear is a normal human reaction to the possibility of a terrifying attack. But fear can consume people, distort their perceptions and understandings, and prevent them from living healthy lives. In a climate of fear, people may be easily manipulated to target and isolate certain groups who seem responsible for their fear.10

Fear, Muslims and the “other”

Throughout Canadian history, during times of war and crisis, successive governments have fostered attitudes of fear or suspicion of the “other,” leading to the criminalization of certain ethnic or political groups. During the First World War, for example, over 8000 Canadians of German and Austro-Hungarian descent were interned under suspicion of enemy activity, and during the Second World War some 35,000 citizens of Japanese, German and Italian descent were interned.10

Although this same level of arrest and internment has in no way repeated itself, we are nevertheless witnessing similar attitudes of fear or suspicion aimed at Muslims. Today in Canada, statements by politicians, the media and society as a whole often portray Muslims as the feared “other,” responsible for terrorism worldwide, as well as the terrorist threat at home.11

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9 Government of Canada, Department of Defence, “Definitions of Terrorism and the Canadian Context.”
11 John Siebert, “Civil society can play a key role in preventing and dealing with domestic radicalization,” The Ploughshares Monitor, Spring 2015.
Consider, for example, how the term “terrorism” is used: the 2015 attack on the Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris by Muslims was deemed terrorism, but the 2011 massacre of 77 Norwegians by a rightwing extremist who wanted to eliminate Islam was not. Similarly, the assault on Parliament Hill in October 2014 by a “lone wolf” Muslim was identified as a terrorist attack, but the killing of three Moncton RCMP officers by an ideologically motivated and Catholic-raised young man was not.

Currently in Canada and around the world, acts of mass violence committed by groups other than Muslims are often not labeled as terrorist, despite the striking resemblance. As Ottawa professors Mahmoud Eid and Karim H. Karim indicate, “The association of Islam with terrorism has come to be accepted as part of the discourse on security and terrorism, so much so that the terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘terrorist’ have become almost synonymous.”

Clearly all extremist violence is wrong, but the term terrorism should be used consistently.

**Impacts on Muslims**

Not surprisingly, since 9/11, Muslim Canadians report experiencing a significant increase in incidents of vandalism against their mosques and community centres, as well as restrictions on, and politicization of, specific cultural and religious practices. In 2013, while other religious groups reported a decline in hate crimes, Canadian Muslims reported a 44 percent increase.

Young Muslims are particularly vulnerable to being treated as the “other.” Feeling unwelcome, isolated and misunderstood may in fact contribute to their joining “radical” or extremist groups.

Much more research is needed to identify the factors that cause young people to make such unfortunate choices. But people who work with “radicalized” youth indicate that a significant number are readily recruited by extremist groups because they are frustrated by society around them. Many of these young people are new immigrants who experience difficulty adapting to their new home, finding employment, and relating to those around them. They often focus on the injustice in the world and see violence as a response to that injustice. These young people need to feel a sense of belonging and need help channeling their anger in positive directions.

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14 “Let’s call all terrorists ‘terrorists.’”


A military response?
Since September 2001, Canada has contributed directly to the so-called "War on Terror" led by the United States. This includes military interventions in Afghanistan (2001-2014), Libya (2011) and the current mission against ISIS (2014-present). Canada initially joined the U.S.-led campaign against ISIS for a six-month period, beginning in October 2014. In April of 2015, Canada's participation was extended for another year and the mission expanded to include airstrikes in Syria.

The Government of Canada has justified its latest military interventions as safeguarding Canadians from terrorism, as well as protecting civilians and minorities in both Iraq and Syria. However, numerous authorities argue that military intervention, especially by a Western coalition in the Middle East, is the wrong response to violent extremism. Such a response fails to address the root causes of such violence (sectarian divisions, political exclusion, and economic collapse), does not advance prospects for long-term peace, and may actually contribute to the rise of further violent extremism. 19

Moreover, for many people on the receiving end, the “War on Terror” has been experienced as a kind of terrorism of its own. Airstrikes, drone attacks, civilian deaths in the hundreds of thousands, and the resulting trauma, turmoil and displacement have been devastating. In many ways, the “War on Terror” has contributed to the kind of rage that fuels extremist groups.20

Peacebuilding experts have advanced numerous suggestions for non-military responses to terrorism: end the flow of weapons and money to all involved parties; invest in social and economic development in areas where extremist groups are active; support civil society groups working for nonviolent change; and encourage regional diplomacy that includes all parties, even the extremist groups themselves.21

In the past year, MCC has called on the Government of Canada to withdraw from its military campaign against ISIS and to do the following: increase humanitarian assistance for millions of displaced and vulnerable peoples in Iraq, Syria and neighbouring countries; encourage grassroots peacebuilding initiatives to lessen inter-religious conflict and counter extremist ideology at its roots; and support a diplomatic solution to existing conflicts. You are encouraged to send a similar message. (See sample letter at the back of this packet.)

This analysis is written by Rebekah Sears, Policy Analyst for MCC Canada’s Ottawa Office and Esther Epp-Tiessen, Public Engagement Coordinator for the Ottawa Office. Rebekah has served with MCC in Colombia and has an M.A. in Conflict Resolution and Analysis from Carleton University, Ottawa. Esther has served with MCC in the Philippines and has an M.A. in Canadian History from the University of Manitoba and an M.A. in Theology from the University of Winnipeg.


Action and advocacy suggestions

These suggestions are ways that your congregation, individuals, families and groups can take action in response to Peace Sunday worship.

1. **Learn more.** Spend time reading the stories and the contextual analysis provided in this packet. Watch the videos listed on the next page. Discuss them in a group or Sunday school class. Pray for wisdom and courage to be ambassadors of peace and understanding in your community.

2. **Make a donation to MCC’s peacebuilding work.** Through a variety of projects and programs around the world, MCC assists communities touched by violence and trauma to heal, to reach out to their enemies, and to resolve conflicts peaceably. Learn more here.

3. **Sponsor a refugee family.** Many refugees and internally displaced persons hope to return to their homes eventually, but some desperately need to be resettled in a third country. MCC is ready to help facilitate the sponsorship of refugees. Learn more here.

4. **Reach out in friendship to Muslims in your community.** See the Stories section for examples. Many mosques are eager to welcome Christian visitors and to share about the practice of their faith. Be prepared to share about your Christian faith. Offering friendship and engaging in dialogue does not mean that you are “watering down” your faith.

5. **Read a book about Islam by a Muslim author,** such as Tariq Ramadan’s *In the Footsteps of the Prophet* (Oxford University Press, 2009). Or form a multi-faith group and discuss Karen Armstrong’s book *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* (Anchor, 2011).

6. **Speak out against racial profiling** and against speech that equates certain groups of people with terrorists. Send a letter to the editor of your local paper when you see or hear this kind of racism.

7. **Support the Good Soil campaign** of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Some violent extremism is rooted in economic and social deprivation and exclusion. The Good Soil campaign is helping to address wide disparities in wealth by urging the Canadian government to provide increased and sustained support to smallholder farmers around the world, many of whom live with ongoing hunger and insecurity. Learn more here.

8. **Send a letter to the prime minister of Canada,** encouraging him to pursue non-military means of building peace in the Middle East. See the sample letter on the next page.
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to express my concern over Canada’s participation in the military mission in Iraq and Syria against the group known as Islamic State (ISIS). My views arise from my identity as a follower of Jesus and my deep conviction that military might cannot bring peace to this part of the world.

I deplore the brutal, deliberate, and systemic violence perpetrated by ISIS and other militant groups against religious minorities, other Muslims, and western hostages. These kinds of atrocities must be condemned.

I believe strongly, however, that a military campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria is the wrong response to this complex problem. Not only will airstrikes inevitably harm civilians, but they will do little to address the deep-rooted ethnic, religious, and economic divisions fueling the present violence. As lessons from past interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya should caution, military responses by western forces—while providing some relief in the short-term—often exacerbate political grievances, fuel extremist activity, and contribute to further violence and instability in the long-term.

I urge the Government of Canada to invest in non-military means of addressing insecurity in the Middle East: namely, to increase humanitarian assistance for the millions of displaced and vulnerable peoples in Syria, Iraq, and neighbouring countries; to encourage grassroots peacebuilding initiatives that aim to lessen inter-religious conflict and counter extremist ideology at its roots; and to support a regional diplomatic solution to existing conflicts.

Finally, while it is critical to address extremist violence both at home and abroad, I am concerned about the growing fear of Muslims in Canada. I urge you to invest in domestic policies that create a welcoming environment for all Canadian citizens, as well as for and newcomers of diverse backgrounds and religious faiths.

I assure you of my prayers as you lead our country.

Sincerely,

Name
Full address

CC: Member of Parliament

Letters sent by Canada Post to the above address require no postage. You may also send your letter by email to pm@pm.gc.ca. Find your MP's email address here. Please inform MCC Canada's Ottawa Office of your letter by sending a message to ottawa@mccccanada.ca.
Additional resources

Videos:


Print and on-line resources:


Hedges, Chris. “The terror we give is the terror we get.” Truthdig, 8 February 2015.


Theologisches Seminar Bienenberg, Switzerland.

Books:


MCC Alberta
#210, 2946-32nd Street NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7
(403) 275-6935

MCC British Columbia
31414 Marshall Road, Box 2038, Abbotsford, BC V2T 3T8
(604) 850-6639

MCC Canada
134 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9
(204) 261-6381

MCC Manitoba
134 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9
(204) 261-6381

MCC Maritimes
27 John Street, Moncton, NB E1C 2G7
(506) 383-9339

MCC Newfoundland and Labrador
Box 850, Station B, Happy Valley, NL A0P 1E0
(709) 896-3213

MCC Ontario
203-50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1
(519) 745-8458

MCC Québec
200–4824 Chemin de la Côte-des-Neiges, Montreal QC H3V 1G4
(514) 278-3008

MCC Saskatchewan
600-45th Street West, Saskatoon, SK S7L 5W9
(306) 665-2555

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mcccanada.ca