

Peace & Reconciliation Network Hub:

An initiative of the Peace and Reconciliation Network & Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Centre

As conflicts increase processes of peace and reconciliation are crucial for creating a better future for people, the societies they create and inhabit, and the whole of creation. Faith communities, and particularly evangelical churches, have enormous potential as transformative agents for peace and reconciliation in a fragmented world.

We believe peace is God's will and the essence of God's Kingdom.

God created *Shalom* where wholeness and harmony between God and His creation, humanity with one another and oneself, and humanity with the created world was a purposed reality. Humanity was uniquely created in the divine image to steward God's *Shalom*. This *Shalom*, however, has been shrouded and broken by sin, which humanity chose. Now, through Jesus Christ, God has reconciled the world to Himself and is forming a reconciling community, the Church, who are redeemed, called and sent as a *Shalom*-shaped, Kingdom-oriented, peace-building force in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peace, therefore, does not imply the absence of conflicts. The peace of God is a dynamic, positive process that is directed towards reconciliation and embodies it as a witness to a world in conflict. Peacebuilding implies a union of gifts and peoples surrendered to Jesus Christ as Lord, and mutually submitted in a spirit of understanding and dialogue with God, ourselves and one another.

We are convinced that every person, regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, language and sex has the inherent right to life within God's *Shalom*. As part of God's ordained ordering of creation, ecclesiastical and social structures must take responsibility for promoting the concept of peace to and for all nations.

We believe reconciliation is central to God's mission in a world ruined by sin.

The ministry of reconciliation, as an integral part of the Gospel, God's mission and revealed within the Holy Scriptures, is aimed at justice. Reconciliation and the restoration of a just world for all requires God's people becoming active participants and agents in compassion, forgiveness, courage and patient endurance.

We are convinced the Church is the Body of Christ to represent God wherever a society suffers from conflicts, injustice, divisions, and brokenness.

Reconciliation cannot be reduced to only the individual or social dimension. It should never be an instrument, the strongest use to maintain the *status quo*. On the contrary, reconciliation is a journey towards the new creation shaped by a reconciled friendship with God and neighbor. Reconciliation is the actualizing of a holistic vision of life rooted in a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ, embodied in the Christ-centered community.

Social wholeness requires reconciliation. Where peace is merely the lack of hostility and violence there will always be divisive, cold conflicts that fracture society and the Church. Reconciliation, centered in Christ, leads to true peace, forming a culture shaped by the reign of God where people think and act in the spirit of God's love.

We are convinced the Church is called by God to be the agent of reconciliation in the world.

The Church carries and embodies the message of *Shalom*, restoration and renewal (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Christians work with God, commissioned as peacemakers and ambassadors of reconciliation.

Christian communities, temples of the Holy Spirit, engage this ministry of reconciliation and peace. In this ruined world, where hidden and visible conflict and injustice occurs, the church must realize her purpose and cannot remain indifferent. The Church must hear the world's pain and the voice of God to understand what is broken and participate in God's mission of reconciliation.

The Church, ultimately, is sent as Jesus was sent and is His ambassador of reconciliation. Jesus sets the methodology of mission and peacebuilding and is the measure of the Church's activity.

What, then, is Jesus' way of mission?

Jesus joined people. The Word became flesh (John 1:14). Incarnation initiates reconciliation.

Jesus earned trust. He cared for outcasts and the oppressed. Trust was built through service.

Jesus talked about life. His serving produced fellowship. Reconciliation presupposes relationship and conversation.

Jesus confronted sinful living. Jesus' life of truth revealed the brokenness in which people lived. Jesus' ministry of reconciliation revealed sin to bring freedom and peace.

Jesus made people whole. Jesus forgave, healed and freed from sin's bondage returning peace and *Shalom*.

Jesus called people to follow him. Jesus reconciled people with purpose. Reconciliation leads to mission.

Sent as Jesus was sent, the Church lives the ministry of reconciliation through:

- *Testimony.* The living of and witness to a culture of peace in their local context. The Church works at making justice a reality that is seen as believers love one another and even enemies.
- *Diaconia.* The works of charity, ministry to the needy, healing the sick and freeing the oppressed.
- *Koinonia.* Participating in fellowship, conversation, partnership and mutual support.
- *Evangelism.* Sharing the Good News of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension with all.
- *Prophecy.* Proclaiming the truths of God and His righteousness, being with and defending the oppressed and poor, exposing oppressors and what is unjust in cultures and systems, while partnering with public institutions.

The Church continues the ministry of reconciliation through:

- *Involvement.* Being with the world to love, know, and listen to the people we are among.
- *Context Analysis.* Learning culture, language and life to discover where there is brokenness and need.
- *Theological Reflection.* Applying biblical revelation and the history of the Church to what we discover.
- *Spirituality.* Prayerful intercession and listening to the Holy Spirit for how to respond in Jesus' way.
- *Planning for Action.* Acting in community as ministers of reconciliation with the people we are among. This action employs all the gifts of the Body of Christ and the various spheres of social life and influence that God has sovereignly placed His people in for His missional purposes.
- *Celebration.* Joyful and grateful expression of having participated in God's work of *Shalom*.

Biblical Foundations: Genesis 1:1-28; Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Psalm 24; Isaiah 1:10-20; Isaiah 2:1-5; Isaiah 58:6-12; Isaiah 61; Isaiah 65:17-25; Jonah 4:10-11; Micah 4:1-5; Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 5:1-20; Matthew 5:43-6:15; Matthew 11:25-30; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 2:8-14; Luke 4:16-21; Luke 19:1-10; John 1:1-18; John 4:1-38; John 13:1-35; John 15:18-16:15; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:24-47; Acts 10; Acts 17:22-31; Acts 26:1-23; Romans 5:1-11; Romans 12; 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:10; Galatians 3:23-29; Ephesians 3:7-10; Ephesians 4:4-16; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 1:15-29; Colossians 3:1-17; Hebrews 13:1-16; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 2:4-12; Revelation 7:9-12; Revelation 19:6-8; Revelation 21:1-8; Revelation 21:22-22:5

References:

- Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace, Approved by General Assembly resolution 39/11 of 12 November 1984
- Johannes Reimer, *Peace Building: The Mission of the Church*, Biblos Media, 2019.
- Declaration on the Right to Peace: resolution 71/189 adopted by the General Assembly.
- LOP 5: Reconciliation as the Mission of God, Lausanne Movement. <https://www.lausanne.org>
- Recovering Reconciliation as the Mission of God: Ten Theses <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/view.htm?id=526>