“Blessed are the Peacemakers”

Peacemaking and Reconciliation in The Salvation Army

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Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 2

1. The Issue ........................................................................................................................................... 3

2. Describe and Analyse ...................................................................................................................... 5

   2.1 The Secular Case for Peacemaking ............................................................................................ 5

   2.2 Christian Frameworks for Peace ............................................................................................... 7

   2.3 In the Literature ......................................................................................................................... 8

   2.4 A Salvation Army Case Study ................................................................................................... 9

3. Reflect and Evaluate ....................................................................................................................... 10

   3.1 The Bible and Faith Tradition .................................................................................................... 10

   3.2 The Salvation Army’s Approach ............................................................................................... 12

4. Decide and Plan – How then shall we live? .................................................................................. 15

   4.1 Faith Can Help Achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals ....................................... 15

   4.2 Personal/Individual .................................................................................................................... 16

   4.3 Corps ......................................................................................................................................... 16

   4.4 Centres ..................................................................................................................................... 17

   4.5 Community ............................................................................................................................... 17

5. Act – a Conclusion and a Challenge .............................................................................................. 20

References ............................................................................................................................................ 22
Abstract

The question this paper begins to answer is, ‘How can Christians take steps to make peace in their personal relationships and create peace in their local communities?’ Rather than present a catch-all solution, the document aims to stimulate reflection and discussion, and perhaps inspire new ideas for making peace in the community.

A renewed approach to peacemaking is needed to counteract prevailing trends in the world today. On a global scale, violence and conflict separate families, contribute to poverty and negatively influence cognitive, social and economic development. Even smaller-scale conflict takes a toll: you may clash with someone else in your congregation or have a longstanding feud with a former friend. These conflictual relationships come at a cost: collaboration decreases, community life suffers and the world looks a little bit less like Jesus. But a renewed approach to peacemaking is meant to restore relationships to a peaceful nature, which allow for human development and allow the Kingdom of God to flourish.

This document seeks to begin to answer the question by following The Salvation Army’s Faith-Based Facilitation (FBF) methodology. FBF is ‘a way of helping people think, talk, explore and respond to their issues in the light of faith … FBF is not a theory or a project – it is a way of working’. The FBF process consists of five steps in a cycle. Figure 1 outlines the process. Note that when reflecting and evaluating, it is necessary to draw upon the Bible and our faith tradition. The steps proceed to make the following case:

- Peacemaking is not the domain of some elite club, but rather something that every person can and should partake in. We are all peace practitioners.
- Peacemaking is worth examining because the world continues to fall away from the perfect harmony that God intended – much of the world is now characterised by conflict-driven poverty, persistent civil war and broken families and communities, among other things.
- Scholars and theologians have shown that religion can play an important role in making peace. Christian organisations and individuals occupy an important space in advocating for peace and reconciliation, by recognising the oneness of humanity in God’s image and also recognising the fallen nature of every human being – including the would-be peacemakers.

Figure 1: The Faith-Based Facilitation Cycle.
Source: Building Deeper Relationships.

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• The Bible offers guidance on both the why and how of peacemaking. The overarching narrative of Scripture – Creation, Fall and Redemption – situates the peacemaking story into a coherent framework:
  o Perfect peace existed at Creation;
  o The Fall brought conflict into the world;
  o Redemption is possible through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Humanity is now able to re-establish holy relationship with both God and each other. The mandate now is to go out and build God’s Kingdom on earth, as many have already done.
• This document presents examples for inspiration and reflection.
• Individuals may not be capable of bringing world peace, but they can contribute to a more peaceful world by making peace in their personal relationships and local communities. With a fuller understanding of the biblical theology of peace and of a way of life that lives it out, peacemaking becomes both more purpose-driven and easier. Any step toward local peacemaking should involve engaging with people or groups outside of your own ‘bubble’. It must also involve taking an active approach to disagreement and conflict rather than trying to bury them or neglect their existence. It must also involve a restoration of relationships, characterised by the reconciliation that Jesus made possible.
• Since this document aims to motivate rather than dictate, it mostly will refrain from Step Five, aside from some brief recommendations that will hopefully inspire many more actions. The ‘Act’ step is up to you, the peace practitioners of the world.

1. The Issue

When you think of peace, what do you think of? Do you think of your ideal holiday, stretched out on a quiet tropical beach without a care in the world? Do you think of a diverse group of children joining hands and singing about unity? Maybe you think of the end of a war. Maybe you think of something else. The point is, ‘peace’ brings up different images for different people.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines peace as ‘freedom from disturbance’. This broad definition generally captures the idea of peace, although as mentioned above, it can conjure up many different images. One of the most typical conceptions of peace is a simple political definition. In the political sense, peace typically means only the absence of active confrontation: The United States Institute of Peace, an independent arm of the United States government, defines its purpose as attaining ‘a world without violent conflict’. A number of concepts represent situations contrary to peace: conflict, violence, war, confrontation and others. If peace is not conflict, not violence, not war and not confrontation, then what is it?

To get there, the next step in defining the issue is to distinguish between three closely related terms: peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

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• **Peacemaking.** The word is somewhat self-explanatory (making peace) but can take on different meanings depending on the context of its usage. Luc Reychler, a social scientist at the University of Leuven specifies peacemaking as the part of the peacebuilding process where conflict ends and an agreement is negotiated. In this case peacemaking would refer to the act of mediation, usually by a third party, to settle an active disagreement between two individuals or groups. Such making of peace tends to involve a process that seeks to uncover the source of the disagreement and resolve the dispute through an agreement or compromise, which both or all parties believe is to their own benefit. Note that this is not restrictive: any individual can be a peacemaker. This peacemaking process can occur personally (between two individuals or a small group) but can also cover a much larger group, such as two ethnic groups or two religious sects. Peacemaking in this sense can refer to the ending of active hostilities between warring tribes, factions or even nations, and by extension the preservation of such hostility-free conditions.

• **Peacekeeping.** A term popularised by the United Nations in its early days as an extension of the idea of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping focuses specifically on the preservation of hostility-free conditions. The UN forces are called Peacekeepers and are the soldiers and citizens tasked with helping violence-ridden countries ‘navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace’. Self-described as a global partnership, the peacekeeping forces are ‘a combined effort to maintain international peace and security’. The term peacekeeping is mainly reserved for United Nations peace operations.

• **Peacebuilding.** Reychler asserts that peacebuilding ‘tends to cover all activities undertaken before, during, or after a violent conflict to prevent, end, and/or transform violent conflicts and to create the necessary conditions for sustainable peace’. Put another way, peacebuilding is the umbrella term under which all actions for peace fall. Peacemaking and peacekeeping, he says, are ‘part of the peacebuilding process’. Similarly, the United Nations uses the term peacebuilding to refer broadly to all its work in conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

The macro-level peace work, peacebuilding, is necessary, but dauntingly complicated. The average individual has very little bearing on these matters. The United Nations, however, is not the only actor with a stake in community- or societal-level peace. Civil society groups, faith groups, government institutions and more, all participate in peacemaking. The issue, then, is locating where an individual can contribute to making a more peaceful world, and how they can do it, because the world is in dire need of individual peacemakers – conflict is everywhere.

The case for a renewed approach to peacemaking is based on the effects of the opposite of peace: conflict. Without peace, conflict reigns. There is bound to be conflict in all our lives, no matter what – you will come into disagreement with co-workers, family, other church members and other members of your community. Making peace with those people and moving past a conflict, however, is not as certain.

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5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

Peacemaking requires effort and engagement, and many people struggle to put in the work. With a better understanding of peacemaking and some inspiration on how to move forward, however, the way becomes a little bit clearer. So how can we go about making peace in our personal relationships and local communities?

2. Describe and Analyse

2.1 The Secular Case for Peacemaking

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) member states negotiated and agreed upon 17 goals for sustainable development and set a strict timeline to accomplish them at the global level by 2030. The result, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are ‘a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda’. The negative effects of violence and conflict, which illustrate the need for peacemakers around the world, counteract the aspirations of the SDGs: the lofty goals, covering nearly all aspects of development, from making clean water accessible to all to ensuring gender equality in schools, are predicated on the mere opportunity to pursue such ambitious reforms.

Within the SDGs, Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) is arguably the most critical objective, as the achievement of every other goal depends on Goal 16’s success. The first sub-target of Goal 16 aims to ‘significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere’ (see table).

Table 1: Targets and Indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>16.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere</td>
<td>Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, Goal 16 (available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16#targets.)

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Unfortunately, in the event of prolonged violence or armed conflict (in essence, the absence of peace), both economic and human development are compromised, proving an often insurmountable challenge to even begin to pursue the development espoused in the SDGs. Economists have carried out numerous studies to support this point. In the World Bank report *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, Paul Collier and his team wrote, ‘After a typical civil war of seven years duration, incomes would be around 15 percent lower than had the war not happened, implying an approximately 30 percent increase in the incidence of absolute poverty’. The individual case studies are captured in Figure 2, drawing upon research by Nicholas Sambanis.

![Figure 2: GDP per capita before and after civil war.](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/13938/567930PUB0brea10Box353739B01PUBLIC1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)


The findings apply not only to civil war, but to general unrest and violence as a whole. In the World Bank’s World Development Report of 2011, the team of researchers stated, ‘the disruptive effect of violence on development and the widening gap between countries affected by violence and those not affected are deeply troubling’. The team cites empirical research showing a widening poverty gap between violent and peaceful countries (Figure 3). A lack of peace prevents development and contributes to poverty.

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While these studies are on a macro level, violence and conflict at the macro level must also be occurring at the local level— if violence is slashing GDP, there are certainly individuals, families and communities in conflict. Individual livelihoods are disrupted by conflict. Conflict disrupts the routines of normal life, hurts productivity and prosperity and robs individuals of the opportunity to advance.

2.2 Christian Frameworks for Peace

We must distinguish the Christian understanding of peace, which can provide the framework for a peacemaking method that renews relationships and creates lasting peace, from the political peace described in Step One. Christians have a very specific understanding of peace, one that carries more responsibility than the simplistic political definition but that also provides the reason and motivation to seek lasting and sustainable peace in all relationships. Viewing peace in the simplistic light, where it is merely an absence of any number of negatives (i.e. violence, hostilities, war, conflict), fails to capture the full definition of peace as the Bible shows it to be. Harold H. Saunders, a former American Assistant Secretary of State, recognised this: ‘Peace is a spiritual and theological as well as juridical concept. Negotiated agreements do not make peace, people do’. For Christians, peace is constructive, not reductive. Christians pursue certain qualities of peace in earnest, both in themselves and in the community around them. It is in this way that we can make peace in both our personal relationships and our local communities.

Simply ‘resolving’ a dispute or conflict does not always result in constructive peace, which is what we want to create. A resolution agreement often involves an unsatisfactory compromise and can leave dreaded ‘hidden hurts’ that can burst through the surface at any moment, having gone unaddressed. A resolution, essentially, is a negotiated agreement to end hostilities, but not to begin a wholesome relationship. On

11 In John Paul Lederach, The Journey Toward Reconciliation (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999), 12.
the contrary, God’s peace can be reached through the restorative renewal of relationships. There are multiple elements to this, namely reconciliation and forgiveness. It is critical to understand them well:

- **Reconciliation.** We often talk about reconciliation, but it is an admittedly complex term that is difficult to understand. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ‘to reconcile’ as ‘to restore to friendship or harmony’, but a term like reconciliation surely means much more. Reconciliation is the next step after establishing basic peace (in this sense, the end of active conflict). Reconciliation is critical to preventing a future outbreak of violence, hostilities or conflict, by bringing closure and resolving differences. Peacemaking is a complex process prone to failure in its own right; adding an expectation of reconciliation can make even the most ambitious peacemakers hesitate to engage in a situation of conflict.

- **Forgiveness.** We are all sinners, as people who have gone against what God intended for us. Thankfully, God forgives us of our sins. What does this have to do with peace? Think about it in this way: if you, a sinner, could be forgiven, why should you not be willing to forgive someone else? Each one of us does not deserve forgiveness, and yet God is still willing to give it out freely. In modelling our lives in pursuit of holiness, we forgive as God forgives. This concept is explained in greater detail in Step Three.

### 2.3 In the Literature

In the past, much of the scholarship on religion and conflict has focused on religion’s propensity to cause conflict, through its division along ethnic or ideological lines and the fundamentalist sects it has inspired. Recently, however, scholars have taken an interest in the value of religion in peacemaking efforts, and they have drawn several significant conclusions from their research and study.

First, broadly speaking, faith organisations play a major role in a community’s civil society and therefore in its movements toward peace. This is partly because religious leaders are among the most trusted, connected and culture-aware individuals a community has. R. Scott Appleby, an influential scholar of peacebuilding, makes this point repeatedly in his work. He has stated that the ‘social location’ and ‘cultural power’ of religious leaders put them in a unique spot to have a powerful influence on sustainable peacemaking: ‘Having earned a reputation for integrity and service … indigenous religious communities have few rivals for the trust of the people’. This makes religious leaders well poised to become influential mediators and peacemakers, from dealing with a dispute between individuals to negotiating the end to a tribal or ethnic conflict.

Douglas Johnston agrees, saying that religious leaders ‘are often better equipped to reach people at the level of the individual and subnational group … than are most political leaders that walk the halls of power’. Mohammed Abu-Nimer holds that even within religious organisations, the local leaders are the

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ones who can make all the difference, because they have a strong grasp of the multidimensional local culture, of which religion is only a (granted, significant) component.\textsuperscript{15}

The scholarship on peacemaking also encourages engagement, in a couple of ways. First, engagement in relationship is key to avoiding the dangers of separation, inferiority/superiority and dehumanisation. Going outside of your personal ‘bubble’ to make connections with others makes a huge difference. Especially in the age of social media (addressed more thoroughly below), finding ways to converse and fellowship with one another is crucial to seeing the image of God in others.

Second, one cannot shy away from conflict, but must approach it and address it. This can be on a local scale or, as Susan Thistlethwaite et al. (2008) have written, at the international level. Transnational cooperation and cooperative strategic alliances are ‘grounded in the Christian scriptural mandate to reach out to foreign nations’. When an international treaty or agreement lines up with Christian tenets, such as the dignity of all human beings, Christians ought to support and strengthen that treaty or agreement.\textsuperscript{16} The same logic translates to interpersonal agreements to end a conflict.

2.4 A Salvation Army Case Study

It may be helpful to look at a specific example of a Salvation Army peacemaking effort. This case, from Kenya, describes what peacemaking within a Salvation Army framework can look like. There were successes and failures, which inform future peacemaking work.

During the election period of 2007 and 2008, ethnic and tribal violence wracked Kenya. A contentious campaign and disputed result led to mass protests, which eventually evolved into widespread conflict and killing. The death toll was estimated at around 1,500, with total displacement nearing 500,000.\textsuperscript{17} Eventually, the major political parties reached an agreement to form a coalition government, marking the end of outright violence. Political and tribal tension remained, unresolved and simmering under the surface.

As the next election approached, set for 2013, The Salvation Army in Kenya prepared a game plan to help prevent a repeat of the previous election cycle. The Army organised peace marches, educated young people, distributed informative materials and identified and prepared regions that could be prone to violent activity. The election season passed relatively peacefully, The Salvation Army established itself as a valuable component of civil society and emergency disaster response, and it was credited with making a meaningful impact in reducing election violence. Since that time, the Army has continued to show a commitment to making peace in the country, showing compassion and reconciling battered communities and tribes.

Based upon the goals of the project, then, the peace initiative was successful. The local people received the project well, mostly because they had experienced the consequences of conflict and disunity and preferred the alternative. Violence returned, however, in the election season of 2017/2018, showing that


\textsuperscript{17} \textit{The Salvation Army Peacebuilding Resource Pack} (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 2017), 9.
the efforts may have been more ‘conflict smothering’ than peacebuilding. The Army may have preached
and promoted political peace, but it may not have built peace as Christians understand it.

The secular case for peacemaking is strong, with the promise of economic development and a dramatic
increase in society’s overall wellbeing. The Christian framework adds strength to the argument, that a full
transformation of relationships into ones characterised by forgiveness, reconciliation and peace will
further the Kingdom of God. Religious groups occupy a critical space in the peacemaking world, with
unique opportunities to make progress. With full engagement, the peacemaking potential is there – as
evidenced by The Salvation Army’s work in Kenya.

The next step is to reflect on and evaluate what has been described. The following reflections will
hopefully shed light on what it means to be a peacemaker in both the personal life and the local
community.

3. Reflect and Evaluate

3.1 The Bible and Faith Tradition

First, it is necessary to bring in the Bible and faith tradition. The Bible should be a Christian’s primary
source for learning about what it means to be a person of peace.

Why should we be people of peace?

- Creation, before the Fall, was perfect peace. Often characterised by the Hebrew word ‘Shalom’,
  this peace was absolute harmony between God, Man and Creation. The ultimate goal of
  peacemakers should be to make the Earth as much like this model as possible.
- Man’s original sin, the Fall, separated mankind from fellowship with God. Because of the Fall,
  suffering and death – including conflict – entered the world, and humans became sinful and
  conflictual by nature. The world is fallen, and conflict is inevitable. We need peacemakers to
  counteract the forces of evil that constantly work against God’s creation as he intended it to be.
- Jesus gives a direct statement on peacemaking during the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:9
  says ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’. This idea is extremely
  important. It gives irrefutable evidence that peacemaking is desirable in God’s eyes. The value
  that Christians ought to assign to peacemaking is clear. The Zambian theologian Joe Kapolyo has
  written on this section of text, saying, ‘The peacemakers are rightly called sons of God because
  they demonstrate in reality not just their relationship with God but their participation in his most
  characteristic work. In so doing they establish realms where the Kingdom of Heaven is indeed
  effective’.18
- The broad scriptural theme of God’s justice not only consists of, but also leads directly to, peace:
  ‘The Lord’s justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of

2006), 1119.
that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever’ (Isaiah 32:16-17).

**How can we be people of peace?**

- The early Old Testament story of Jacob and Esau, found in Genesis 32 and 33, is an example of peacemaking behaviour. Jacob takes time to allow wounds to heal, then makes sure that every little action builds trust and does not breed animosity or anger. Esau accepts the peace offering and they are reconciled with each other. Many Christian peacemakers have used this story as a model of conflict resolution and reconciliation, especially in dealing with long-term conflict.
- Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:15-17 provide a basic structure for addressing localised conflict between two individuals. If we are to make peace in our communities and in our world, we must make peace in our closest relationships first.19
- In the New Testament, Ephesians 2:14 says ‘he [Jesus] himself is our peace’. Everything about Jesus is a perfect example of peacefulness: throughout his time on Earth, he remained ‘steadfast in his way of humility and active non-violence, even unto death’.20 The most accurate definition of peace is found not in a textbook, but through the life, actions and behaviour of Jesus Christ. All true peace stems from him: only with him in our hearts can we understand peace, only with him in our hearts can we make peace. As 1 John 2:6 says, ‘Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did’.
- There are other examples of conflict resolution and peacemaking scattered throughout the Bible. Kyung-Hee Sa, a Methodist leader and theologian, has analysed Acts 15 and 1 Corinthians 1 as informative examples of how to address conflict in the Church.21

There are plenty of other Biblical examples and teachings on peace. Peace is an overarching idea that comes across not only in individual verses, but also as a persistent theme throughout the Biblical narrative. It is also frequent subject matter in the Psalms. For further reading on Salvationists’ understanding of the Biblical foundations undergirding peace as a central tenet of Christianity, see the Sermon Outlines, Bible Studies and Relevant Bible Verses sections of The Salvation Army’s Peacebuilding Resource Pack, cited in the references of this document.

Christian scholars have focused on how a Christian worldview specifically guides peace processes and reconciliation. First, Christian organisations and individuals have a God-mandated vocation in peacemaking – grounded in the scriptures. Perhaps the most influential scholar in Christian peacebuilding is John Paul Lederach, an American Mennonite professor. Lederach has written a number of books and articles on peace and reconciliation, developing a strong argument on a Biblical imperative for peace processes based around reconciliation and changed relationships. For further reading on Christianity and peacemaking, Lederach is a good place to start.

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19 John Paul Lederach (*The Journey Toward Reconciliation*, 118-140) and Stanley Hauerwas (*Peacemaking: the Virtue of the Church*, 318-326) provide detailed analyses of Matthew 18 from the perspective of conflict resolution.
The foundations of Christianity go against the very nature of conflict: Conflict is based in a power struggle, with one party trying to establish dominance, or power, over the other. Lederach has identified three phenomena that together lead to the creation of enemies and, as a result, conflict. First, separation, where an individual begins only to see the differences in another person, rather than the similarities. Second, superiority. The individual sees himself as not only different from, but better than the other. On top of separation and superiority comes the third phenomenon, dehumanisation. When the other is separate and inferior, they become less than human, which ‘rob[s] them of being created in the image of God’. When the other no longer reflects the face of God in the eyes of the individual, it is easy to construct an enemy out of the other. However, Christians, with the help of the Holy Spirit, must learn to note primarily the sameness, not the difference, inherent in others.

How do you go about this? Theologian Stanley Hauerwas presents an alternative definition of peacemaking that draws heavily on the Christian tradition: for him, peacemaking is not an action but a way of being. He describes it as ‘life and practices engendered by a community that knows it lives as a forgiven people’. For Hauerwas, forgiveness is inseparable from, and a prerequisite of, peacemaking. Therefore, a conflict’s true resolution (i.e., transcending the tendency to see difference and inferiority in others) is only possible once the parties recognise that they are both fallen and in perpetual need of forgiveness, both from God and from others. They understand that they have sinned and fallen short, and that all others have too (see Romans 3:23-24). The ‘moral high ground’ of superiority falls through and forgiveness becomes the only way to work through differences.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, ‘Forgiveness is not just an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude’. Theology professor Thomas W. Porter goes even further: ‘Forgiveness breaks us out of the cycles of violence, revenge and retribution; Forgiveness is not reconciliation, but it is the only way to reconciliation’. Acknowledging the importance of both receiving and giving forgiveness requires a dramatic overhaul. We all sin frequently, and therefore the forgiveness never stops. It is critical to accept our fallen nature, and once we do, humility takes the place of pride and superiority. Hauerwas explains that without feeling the need to protect our pride, we can love rather than fear the other, paving the way for peace.

3.2 The Salvation Army’s Approach

Having reflected on the Bible and the tradition of the church, it is clear enough that Christians, and more specifically Salvationists, should be peaceful people. The Christian understanding of peace and peacemaking comes directly from the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, who provides a distinct, holistic

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23 Ibid, 49.
and constructive example of what it means to be a person of peace facing a conflict-ridden world. The Salvation Army believes strongly in the importance of engaging with the evils of society and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. By extension, this means preaching a gospel of peace, which Jesus describes and exemplifies. As a result, The Salvation Army has a biblical and doctrinal mandate to engage in peacemaking. In addition, The Salvation Army has a responsibility to pursue reconciliation and forgiveness following conflict resolution.

The Salvation Army uses the Bible as the foundation and source of its tenets and theology. Biblical understandings and Salvation Army experience combine to provide a theological understanding of peacemaking that is specific to the Army context:

The Salvation Army’s International Positional Statement on Peacemaking cites general biblical grounds for the Army’s given stance on peacemaking. Importantly, the statement notes the role of Jesus Christ in our understanding of peace: ‘Jesus, the Prince of Peace, says the peacemaker is blessed, and encourages his followers to turn the other cheek’.

The Sixth Doctrine of The Salvation Army says: ‘We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved’. Sin created a divide between Man and God, but Jesus’ sacrifice was the bridge to reconnect us. This is reconciliation. In its explication of Doctrine Six, The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine states, ‘Once and for all, Jesus’ death and resurrection opened the way for humanity to be reconciled to a loving God’. We have been reconciled to God through Christ, which offers us the opportunity of rebirth as people of love, peace and forgiveness (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Just as Jesus’ sacrifice reconciles us with God, it also brings us closer to each other. It allows us to pursue reconciliation with each other, because it has ‘destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility’, to quote Ephesians 2:14. Paul sums up the radical unity of Christ-driven and Christ-centred relationships in Galatians 3:28: ‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’. The ‘us and them’ complexes that are the frequent causes of conflict are wiped away. There is a common saying that often appears in both religious and political contexts (it has been used by people such as Pope John XXIII, John F. Kennedy and Mauricio Macri) that can apply here as well: “What unites us is much greater than what divides us”.

Christians, therefore, can unite around the fact that Jesus Christ has offered an eternal sacrifice for our sins and made possible a direct relationship between the perfect Father and a sinful people. Those who are ‘new creations’ can seek out opportunities for love, forgiveness, reconciliation and justice. Approaching conflict with humility, with the knowledge that one has sinned repeatedly but has nonetheless received undeserved forgiveness, makes peace attainable. Relationships can be reconciled: ‘All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation’ (2 Corinthians 5:18).

For the International Social Justice Commission (ISJC), an arm of The Salvation Army’s International Headquarters based in New York, reconciliation is an essential part of God’s justice. The ISJC often uses 28 For a list of The Salvation Army’s International Positional Statements, see https://www.salvationarmy.org/isjc/ips.
‘Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’, taken directly from Matthew 6:10, to explain what social justice means. That verse alone, from the Lord’s Prayer, should be enough to convince us to be reconcilers here on earth! Jesus gave it all to reunite people with God. Therefore, if we truly believe Matthew 6:10, we ought to be reconcilers on earth, bringing people together in holy relationships.

As scripture and doctrine tell us, Christian peacemaking is much more than burying conflict under a thin layer of fleeting cooperation. It is an opportunity to resolve deep-rooted tensions and reorganise your society, your community, your congregation or your family under a radical framework of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The difficult but crucial step is to move from theory to practice. As many Salvationists can attest, peacemaking is not a common theme in the everyday life of Salvation Army ministry around the world. A frequent pitfall of churches that commit to peacemaking is a failure to move from the meeting room to the field. A church may commit to making peace, but it falls by the wayside with all the other priorities that come with pastoring a congregation. Thistlethwaite and Stassen conducted numerous peacemaking workshops for their research, and their workshop participants frequently expressed this exact frustration. Thistlethwaite and Stassen said of their participants, ‘Though their faith community promotes peace in theory, it is not always borne out with consistent action and practice’.30

There are examples of Christians moving from theory to practice, advancing peace in their congregations and communities. Hopefully, the examples allow readers to reflect on and evaluate the experiences and begin to formulate their own ideas, leading to a new impetus around Salvationist peacemaking that will encourage collaboration and connection. The Army’s involvement in the Kenyan elections, described in Step Two, led to some successes. In the period leading up to the 2013 election, the Army took on two aims: to do what it could to prevent another violent outbreak from occurring and to better prepare people to respond to and recover if such an outbreak did occur.

- To the first point, the Army formed cooperative relationships with other organisations such as the Red Cross to promote peace and nonviolence through radio, banners and other media. Marches in Nairobi encouraged unity and helped to divert attention from the election.
- To the second point, the Army was still ready to react should violence have broken out. Communication systems and monetary savings were at the ready, just in case. The Army prepared emergency shelters in identified risk areas. These actions contributed to a less violent election.

The peacemaking team also learned lessons in their transition from theory to practice, providing valuable experiential knowledge for future peacemaking efforts. For example, Lieutenant Richard Bradbury, The Salvation Army Kenya East’s Project Officer, conceded that the Project Office did not have any meaningful or intentional conversations about peace amongst themselves, nor what it meant to them or how they could live it in their daily lives. In this sense, peace promotion became a public service, rather than a way of life. For Jesus, peace was woven into the fabric of his being, inherent in his nature and never switched off. Perhaps, in future, The Salvation Army in Kenya could take time to reflect on how peacemaking could be woven into their ministry, rather than just how it could prevent overt conflict.

4. Decide and Plan – How then shall we live?

Step Four gets to the heart of the focus question: how can Christians take real steps toward making peace in their personal relationships and local communities? There are, in fact, precise and concrete steps that Salvationists can take immediately to begin to make an impact in their homes, churches and communities. First, peace is an essential part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and those goals offer numerous targets for peace and development. Then some suggestions for making peace are broken down into spheres: community, church, and personal relationships.

4.1 Faith Can Help Achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals
The secular reasons for peacemaking may differ from the ones that a Christian may put forward. Secular arguments for peace will most likely involve material wealth and prosperity, access to things such as education and healthcare, and basic freedoms such as of speech and religion. While the biblical reasons for peace focus instead on building God’s Kingdom, redeeming a fallen world and restoring creation, the secular arguments for peace are strong ones in and of themselves, and Christians can get behind them. They can be a starting point for collaboration between the religious and the non-religious, not only at the organisational level but at the personal level as well. Two people may not agree exactly on why peace is worth pursuing, but they can agree it is worth pursuing nonetheless.

The Salvation Army, engaged at the United Nations, is working towards incorporating the SDGs, an example of a plan based around secular reasons for peace, as a general framework for development work, all the while maintaining a Kingdom-oriented perspective. For The Salvation Army, the SDGs are an opportunity to do good on the Earth by building God’s Kingdom, with the support of the secular global governance system of the United Nations. The Salvation Army’s International Social Justice Commission is committed to working towards accomplishing the SDGs while simultaneously keeping Christ’s values central to its work (Figure 4). Pursuing the goals is justified by the developmental, educational and
environmental payoffs, but they take on much more importance considering the theological case for peacemaking.

How should one approach the SDGs with Christlike peace in mind? While the targets and sub-targets of the goals rightly put much of the onus on governments themselves, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as The Salvation Army can play an important role. Governments cannot legislate peaceful societies and strong institutions into existence; people and civil society must undergo a fundamental change in the nature of their relationships as well. Relationships within your corps, your local Salvation Army Centre, the wider local community and in your personal relationships (between peers, family members, etc.) are the place to start:

- They provide a platform for all people to be peace practitioners. You do not need 5+ years of experience and a master’s degree to resolve a longstanding conflict and make peace with someone at your corps.
- They are the necessary foundations for a wider, broader peace movement. Any national or widespread peacemaking effort will have to start in personal relationships.
- The biblical understanding of peace calls for relationships that are restored, people that have been reconciled, and groups that work together to glorify God and bring his Kingdom to earth.

4.2 Personal/Individual
In order to be a true peacemaker, personal relationships must be characterised by peace. An aspiring peacemaker must recognise that they are fallen and in constant need of forgiveness but reconciled to both God and humanity via the blood of Jesus Christ. Arriving at this self-understanding is necessary to becoming a holistic, engaged and humble peacemaker.

- Look again at SDG Target 16.1 (Table 1). While the aim is broad, achieving this objective would stem partly from the noticeable presence of forgiving, peaceful people, ones who discourage conflict. Salvationists around the world can present an example of a peaceful alternative to the selfishness, pride and greed that lead people to resort to violence. The specific numeric targets relate to hard data that may be best left to government measurement. Again, however, The Salvation Army can contribute indirectly to a less violent and more peaceful society through a transformation of our relationships.
- Matthew 18 is one of the most frequently cited Scripture passages that deals with conflict and peacemaking. Reflect on the difficult but necessary steps that Jesus lays out, and apply them to your own personal relationships that are in conflict. When you make peace in your personal relationships, you avoid hypocrisy when preaching peace in your corps or community.

4.3 Corps
- Refer back to the biblical examples of how to be people of peace (Step 3). Many of these passages relate to making peace within your worshipping body. Acts 15 and 1 Corinthians 1 impart wisdom on being local peacemakers in the corps.
- Consider how social cohesion and inclusiveness can grow in the corps setting:
  - A more representative body of both decision-makers and worshippers will make sure no one is left behind, and discontentment does not grow into conflict. If, however, conflict

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31 You can find all the SDG targets and sub-targets at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs.
does arise, empowerment of marginalised groups such as women and youth will help begin to break down barriers between people. It will also encourage relationship building, which decreases the likelihood of future conflict.

- Do not let other priorities push the need for peacemaking down the so-called to-do list.
  - In a Salvation Army corps setting, this is understandably difficult: in times where conflict is not present, peacemaking may seem unnecessary or at least as not a major priority, slipping down the to-do list of overburdened officers and corps members. In times where conflict rears its head, taking the long view may fall prey to damage control measures, in seeking a quick fix that follows the disaster response structure.
  - Still, for corps officers and other local leaders, keeping an eye out for potential sources of conflict and continually pushing peacemaking as a Kingdom-building lifestyle will pay dividends.

In some ways, the demands of being a person or corps of peace clash with the tendencies and traditions of The Salvation Army, as noted by Lieutenant Richard Bradbury. The Army’s natural reflex is to provide emergency response during a crisis. Bradbury noted that during the Kenyan election campaign, the go-to question was ‘How do we deal with this disaster?’ rather than ‘How can we build peace?’ The emergency-disaster response framework may be more appealing from a results- or efficiency-based perspective, but the first question can lead to damage control and quick fixes. The second question requires a long-term commitment to developing personal relationships, transforming interactions between groups and forgiving and reconciling with each other.

4.4 Centres
Centres, such as Salvation Army hospitals, schools, and Kroc Community Centers, are a unique intersection of the internal Salvation Army and the wider community. They offer opportunities for peacemaking – their very existence promotes peace. Many people in rough communities see centres as safe havens for work, play and services. The Kroc Community Centre in Camden, New Jersey in the United States is an example of this. Camden is a city struggling with poverty and violence, but the large and inviting Kroc Centre is a place of refuge and a place of peace. It has become a source of hope and pride for the community.

Affordability of services fosters social cohesion. Centres are not profit-driven, making their access costs less of an obstacle. People of different classes and income brackets come together with little restriction, breaking down social silos and encouraging interaction. Supporting these centres is essential for their continued operation.

4.5 Community
- Catherine Germond, Program Manager at the Cordoba Foundation of Geneva, makes the case for increasing social cohesion. Social cohesion seeks to bring together distinct groups into one community. It helps to generate fewer misunderstandings, and it increases as forums of public discourse become more representative of the population. She stresses that it should include women’s empowerment. Advocating for women and working with them to establish a presence in the community’s decision-making circles could be a good place for Salvationists to start making

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inroads into making peace in their communities, which then can lead to greater peacemaking gains – Oscar Nduwarugira says that ‘social cohesion must first be established in communities in order for efforts at higher levels of reconciliation, such as a national truth and reconciliation commission, to be effective’.  

- Similarly, especially in communities dealing with long-term or generational conflict, reaching the youth and getting them more involved in the community is very important. The younger generation will be searching for both an identity and a sense of belonging, says Peter Prove of the World Council of Churches. Building relationships with young people and establishing a constructive support system of both peers and mentors can be hugely influential in creating the necessary infrastructure for a peaceful society (or church; reaching out to the youth of your corps is a peacemaking move in your corps as well).

Notice how both ideas above, weaving more women and more young people into the fabric of the community, require engagement. To build relationships with young people, advocate for women’s empowerment or take on any other peacemaking project, it is necessary to emerge from the ‘just-like-me’ bubble and get involved in the diverse community.

- The World Council of Churches’ 2013 document ‘Statement on the Way of Just Peace’ encourages coordination between national/global church leadership and local communities: Local communities need the support of the international church for guidance, and the international church needs the support of local communities for legitimacy. The document also encourages interfaith cooperation, mainly by establishing relationships with people of other faiths (yet another example of the worth of breaking out of your homogeneous bubble). This is especially valuable in communities where society is divided along religious lines, showing that religion does not have to be an impenetrable wall.

One way to start making inroads into building social cohesion is through social media – which qualify as ‘communities’ that we actively participate in. Pew Research Center, a respected polling organisation, which has tracked social media usage since 2005, found that usage in the United States has risen from 5% to 69% in just 13 years (Figure 5). The usage statistics in the rest of the West are similar, and the figures for the Global South are quickly catching up.

The largest social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp, have grown so quickly that they have come to dominate our society, and yet their effects are not well understood. Governments, think tanks and judicial bodies struggle to stay up-to-date with the latest technologies. Unfortunately, those

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who seek to destroy peace have learned to take advantage of the connectivity that social media can offer. Many extremists and hate groups have mastered using messaging apps and secretive internet message boards to share information, combine forces and recruit new members. During a UN meeting on social media, youth and religion in February 2018, Messenger Tomasz Grysa of the Holy See Mission acknowledged that the most regrettable aspect of social media is that it can divide, mock and train for evil, as it already has. 37

So how do we start to turn the tables? We must acknowledge the shortcomings and dangers of social media. First, they have altered the way many people conduct dialogue. The main form of dialogue has become ‘a comment, not a conversation’. Social media do not encourage engagement: it is very easy to read a post, form a quick opinion, and drop a comment without reading or considering any other viewpoints. This can lead to insulation, where a commenter has no reason to engage with ideas outside of their own personal ‘bubble’. By not considering other perspectives or experiences, a user becomes vulnerable: first, to ‘fake news’, if it fits into their limited perspective or bubble. Second, to entrench divisive or dangerous beliefs based on positive feedback from like-minded individuals, screening out all others. During conversation, these vulnerabilities are decreased; in a dialogue of comments, they are a much larger threat. Once again, consider that engagement is vital to peacemaking.

Second, conversation through text on a screen is prone to misunderstanding. Without tone and body language, a reader must assume many things in conversation, and if the wrong assumption is made, distress or disagreement can stem from nothing. When our primary means of communication is through written text on a page, some of the most essential components of effective communicating are lost.

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Third, as alluded to above, it is easy to spread disinformation very quickly: the interconnectedness of such global networks makes it possible that determined fraudsters can share ‘fake news’ with speed and, often, impunity. Encoded servers and anonymised systems let people post without fear of discovery or punishment. The ‘bubbles’ of the first shortcoming feed directly into this: once an influencer penetrates a certain circle, that individual or group can play on existing beliefs and spread fantastical or dangerous misinformation.

Not one of these phenomena is new, and yet social media have allowed each of them to make new and profound impacts on the structure and functioning of society. Despite these dangers of social media, however, not everything is negative: the networks have the capability to encourage a new age in peacemaking and reconciliation. They provide a new platform to connect, unite and reconcile. The optimistic conclusion of Messenger Grysa’s address to the UN was that social media’s position of power could be influential in uniting people and enabling connections that were never before possible. The Salvation Army can utilise social networks to spread messages of peace, encourage healthy dialogue practices and promote reconciliatory attitudes. In order to continue encouraging healthy dialogue and promoting peace, The Salvation Army and Salvationists alike must establish a strong online presence and advocate for peace and reconciliation in the digital world as much as in the physical world. If the Army is truly committed to be an army of peacemakers, it may have to start online.

5. Act – a Conclusion and a Challenge

How can Christians take steps to make peace in their personal relationships and local communities?

The framework around Salvationist peacemaking is built on the overarching biblical narrative of Creation, Fall and Redemption. The inspired scriptures of both the Old and New Testament provide the manual for how to live as a peaceful people. As part of God’s mission to redeem the world, Christians ought to pursue a complete, holistic renewal of relationships – also known as restoration. At the point of Creation, before the Fall, God and Man had a perfect relationship that was untouched by brokenness or violence. While sin makes this perfection unattainable, Christians have a Biblical mandate to bring God’s Kingdom on Earth. Christians hope to ‘restore’ the perfect relationships that God originally intended, without pride, without jealousy and without anger. Restoration wipes away the underlying tensions and takes away the chances of regressing back into conflict. Armed with this understanding of the world, and other valuable tools such as reconciliation, forgiveness and engagement, impactful peacemaking becomes much more accessible to Christians. The purpose behind peacemaking is clearer, providing Christians with a real, tangible reason to pursue peace on earth. With such clear goals in mind, the process becomes much easier.

The relentless news stories of violence and suffering remind us of the importance of peacemaking every single day. The world needs peace – primarily because it is part of God’s plan for the redemption of the world, but also because it allows for material prosperity and freedom from the devastating consequences

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38 ‘Dimensions of Dialogue’, International Social Justice Commission,
of conflict. Since the world needs peace, the world needs peacemakers – not only peace and conflict experts, but peace practitioners of all walks of life. All people can and should be peacemakers.

All peacemakers face different obstacles to peace. The suggestions of step four may help you in your efforts to make peace, but not all of them will apply. Chances are, you will have to be a little bit inventive. With the right foundations to pursue peace as God truly intends it to be, inventiveness is welcome and necessary.

Even if peacemaking fails to make it onto institutional agendas, it must be ingrained into the hearts and minds of people. Christian peacemaking, after all, is not just something a group of trained people practice, but a way of life that every individual is capable of. Remember, Christians are to be people of peace, they are to resolve conflict gracefully, they are to seek to reconcile people both to God and to each other, and they are to do it all with the goal of building God’s Kingdom on Earth. The exact steps to make that happen in an increasingly complex world are less clear. Let us seek God’s guidance as we navigate the treacherous terrain of the modern world. Hopefully this document allows you to reflect upon ideas on peacemaking and use them to create even better responses to the conflicts and disagreements you encounter. Now go out and make it happen!
References


