Swords into ploughshares

*a world without war*

Peace Sunday Packet 2014
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Theme: Swords into ploughshares—a world without war

Mennonite Central Committee encourages Anabaptist churches to observe Peace Sunday on November 9, just prior to Remembrance Day. Peace Sunday is an annual occasion to preach, teach and reflect upon the gospel of peace and to offer a nonviolent witness against war and violence. This year’s Peace Sunday Packet marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. We hope you will use this resource to help your congregation mark Peace Sunday.

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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@mennonitecc.ca.

More information
Webpage: mcccanada.ca/peace-sunday
Facebook page: Peace Sunday Canada 2014

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Cover art
Cover art work is from a stained glass window at Central Baptist Church, Wayne, PA. Used by permission of artist Lucinda Shaw and Central Baptist Church.
How to use this packet

• Skim the packet to get a sense of the content. Read through the introduction and Biblical interpretation to become familiar with the theme.

• Gather a team of people to help plan your Peace Sunday worship service, drawing from the materials in this packet. Check the Facebook page for additional resources.

• Make copies of the bulletin insert to include in your bulletin or to put in mailboxes.

• Share the Peace Sunday Packet with others in your congregation for use in adult or youth Sunday school, Bible study, or small group discussions.

• Inform the school teachers in your congregation or network about a brand new project—MCC’s Remembrance Day Peace Resource for Teachers (available in September 2014).

• Let us know about your Peace Sunday experience and whether or not you used any of our material:
  • send a message to peace@mennonitecc.ca
  • post something on our Facebook page

“War is what happens when language fails.”
– Margaret Atwood, Canadian author
Introduction to theme
Swords into ploughshares—a world without war

The year 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. For this year’s Peace Sunday Packet, we have chosen to reflect on this anniversary in light of the prophet Isaiah’s vision of God’s dream for a world where swords become ploughshares—a world without war.

Canada was drawn into the First World War in August 1914 as a colony of the British Empire. Over 600,000 Canadians served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Over 61,000—one in 10—were killed. Many thousands more were wounded physically and/or psychologically. The war remains the bloodiest war in which Canada has ever participated. Indeed, the “war to end all wars” introduced slaughter and carnage on a scale the world had never before witnessed.

According to many people, the war became a defining moment in Canadian history. The “success” of Canadian soldiers on the battlefield—at Vimy Ridge, Ypres, and Passchendaele—ignited a sense of national pride and honour. To this day, historians, politicians, and others insist that the First World War made Canada a nation.1

This was also the era when “nations became sacred and religions became nationalized.”2 Many Canadians regarded enlisting and fighting for their country as part of their Christian duty. Indeed, many Christian ministers urged their young men to sign up for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, believing fervently that theirs was a holy war of good against evil and God was on their side.

Canadian Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, as members of historic peace churches, saw things differently. They believed that, as followers of Jesus, they were called to love their enemies rather than kill them. Therefore they sought exemption from military service as conscientious objectors. As much as they loved Canada, their allegiance to Christ took priority over allegiance to country. Thankfully, Canada honoured their convictions (See Stories).

One hundred years later, our nation commemorates the First World War and the contribution of all those Canadians who fought and died. Mennonites and Brethren in Christ do well to remember and mourn this tragic loss of life. But they also do well to remember all those who died or had their lives devastated by war—allies and enemies alike.

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1 See, for example, Government of Canada Veterans Affairs, Valour Remembered: Canada and the First World War (Canada, 2000).

More importantly, on this anniversary, Mennonites and Brethren in Christ do well to remember who we are — members of peace churches, called to love our enemies, to refrain from war and violence, and to build peace. We are called to challenge the idea that war is inevitable or necessary. We are called to incarnate God’s dream — a world of swords turned to ploughshares, a world without war.

“As regards revenge, that is, to oppose an enemy with the sword, we believe and confess that the Lord Christ has forbidden and set aside to His disciples and followers all revenge and retaliation, and commanded them to render to no one evil for evil, or cursing for cursing, but to put the sword into the sheath, or, as the prophets have predicted, to beat the swords into ploughshares.”

– Dordrecht Confession, 1632
Biblical interpretation
God’s dream for the world:
commentary on Isaiah 2:2-5

One of the important ways the Bible functions in Christian faith is that it gives us an alternative script to live our lives by, an alternative script that challenges many of the scripts that our culture tempts us to follow. For example: Television advertisers feed us a script that suggests we humans are primarily consumers who find our deepest joy and fulfillment in life by purchasing the particular product being marketed to us. The Bible gives us an alternative script where we are first and foremost beloved children of God, who find our deepest joy and fulfillment by committing our lives to God and to God’s purposes for the world. How we actually live our lives depends very much on which script we decide to follow.

Many public commemorations of the hundred-year anniversary of the First World War remember the past in order to give us a script for how to live our lives going forward. Several features of this script are that war can bring out the best in a nation, as the First World War helped Canada grow up and come of age on the world stage. War breeds heroes and brings glory. War may be nasty but sometimes it is necessary as the only way to keep tyranny and evil in check. Nations like Canada must maintain a level of military preparedness in order to be able to promote democracy and justice and human rights in the world. Such is the script.

Isaiah 2:2–5 provides Christians with an alternative script to live by. The text begins with a Hebrew phrase meaning “in the days to come” or “in the last days.” The passage provides a sketch of what God’s good future for the world will look like. It portrays the universal peace and well-being towards which God will ultimately bend the stubborn forces of human history. Isaiah 2:2–5 is one of many texts in the prophetic books that describe God’s dream for the world. These passages can function somewhat like Martin Luther King Jr’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech of August 28, 1963. King projected a vision of America without racial prejudice and discrimination, a vision of what he wanted America to look like. He expressed the hope that his dream would become the script his audience followed.

Isaiah’s vision opens with a figurative description of how the hill that God’s temple sits on (Mount Zion) will become the highest of the mountains. The Jerusalem temple was the place where God’s presence touched down on earth in its most concentrated and powerful form. Therefore, God’s revelation and powers of blessing and salvation radiated outwards from the temple. Israelites made pilgrimages to the temple, especially for the major festivals, because at the temple they received assurance of God’s salvation. According to Isaiah, Mount Zion and all that it represents will be raised up and become visible to the nations. The temple will become like a giant

“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”
– Isaiah 2:4
magnet drawing all peoples to itself.

In 2:3 the focus shifts from what happens to the temple hill to how the nations will respond to it. The peoples of the world will encourage each other to make pilgrimages to the temple. They will recognize that God’s life-giving word and torah (guidelines, instructions, teaching, law) radiate forth from the temple, and they will be keen to learn the ways of God so that they might walk in them. This is an evangelistic vision. God’s dream is that all the peoples of the world will be drawn to worship him, recognize his sovereignty, learn his healing ways of peace and justice and walk in them.

In 2:4 the focus shifts again, this time to what God will do on behalf of the nations. Most English translations begin, “God will judge between the nations.” The Hebrew might better be rendered, “God will do justice among the nations.” The Hebrew verb shaphat, often translated “to judge,” has the root meaning “to make things right” or “to do justice.” The noun form of the verb is mishpat which means “justice.” Numerous texts speak of how God or a righteous king will “judge” the poor and oppressed (Psalm 10:18; Proverbs 29:14; Isaiah 11:4). Such passages mean that God or a king will liberate and do justice for those in need.

God promises to do justice and to set things right among the nations, which implies eliminating the causes of war — causes like aggression, oppression, greed, imperialism, the drive to dominate. As a result, nations will feel secure enough to turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. The iron used for weapons was a rare and expensive commodity. As a result of God’s justice, the nations will turn costly weapons designed to kill into agricultural implements that increase food production and enhance human well-being. God’s dream is to see the resources devoted to bombers, tanks, drones, aircraft carriers, and machine guns become life-enhancing farm implements, health-care facilities, schools, water treatment systems, conservation measures, trains and buses for public transit.

According to the end of 2:4, the nations will no longer even study the strategies of making war. There is an old saying, “If the only tool you have is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail.” When we set aside weapons and strategic planning for war, we are less likely to conceive of international conflicts as nails requiring the hammer of military intervention. Living by God’s dream for the world invites us to imagine alternative methods of dealing with both personal and international conflict.

The passage closes by inviting God’s people to begin living in light of the script provided by God’s dream for a peaceful and just world (2:5). (The paragraphing of the NIV, CEB, and other translations is preferable to the NRSV, which separates 2:5 from 2:2–4.)

“We... delighted in war, in the slaughter of one another, and in every other kind of iniquity; [but we] have in every part of the world converted our weapons of war into implements of peace — our swords into ploughshares, our spears into farmers’ tools — and we cultivate piety, justice, brotherly charity, faith and hope, which we derive from the Father through the crucified Saviour.”

— Justin Martyr, early church father
A fundamental Christian conviction is that God is at work through Jesus Christ to make real God’s dreams for the world, expressed in passages like Isaiah 2:2–5. Jesus takes on the temple’s role as being the “place” where God’s presence touches down here on earth in its most concentrated form. Jesus becomes the channel of God’s blessing and salvation to the nations. Jesus initiates the peaceful, world-wide kingdom or reign of God, renouncing the use of violence and military might because they are incompatible with God’s dream for the world. Through Jesus, God grants in part that peace promised in Isaiah 2, by proclaiming peace among the nations and breaking down the hostility and dividing walls between them (Ephesians 2:11–22).

If this is what God is at work to accomplish through Jesus Christ, then let us embrace God’s dream as the script for our lives. May God’s Holy Spirit empower us to, “walk in the light of the LORD” (2:5).

Dan Epp-Tiessen
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Information about the First World War
When and why did the First World War happen?
It began officially on July 28, 1914 and officially ended on November 11, 1918. It is generally believed that the cause of the war was a resurgence of imperial ambitions. The war was triggered in Sarajevo by the assassination on June 28 of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, by a Serbian nationalist.

Which countries were involved in the First World War?
The war involved two opposing alliances: the Allied Powers and the Central Powers. The major Allied Powers were the French Republic, the British Empire, and the Russian Empire. The Central Powers were composed of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. More than 100 countries participated in what was considered the first global war.

How many soldiers were involved?
In total, 65 million soldiers were mobilized in the First World War.

How many people were killed, injured, widowed or orphaned?
It has been estimated that there were around 37 million casualties during the First World War (16 million deaths, 21 million wounded). This number includes both military and civilian casualties. The war created approximately three million widows and six million orphans.

How many Canadian soldiers were involved?
During the First World War, some 620,000 Canadians enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), with 424,000 serving overseas. In total, over 61,000 of them – one in 10 – were killed.

What new weapons were used?
Many new and advanced weapons were developed as the First World War progressed. Older weapons such as hand grenades were reinvented to effectively wage trench warfare. Chemical warfare (tear gas, poison gases, mustard gas), machine guns, tanks, submarines, and airplanes were all introduced during the war through technological innovations. These new inventions contributed to the high number of casualties.

Was the First World War inevitable?
Many politicians, historians and analysts today claim the war was an inevitable outcome of the imperialist ambitions of the empires involved. But some people suggest it was not only a great and terrible tragedy, but also the greatest error of modern history.

“The First World War was... something worse than a tragedy, which is something we are taught by the theatre to regard as ultimately unavoidable. It was nothing less than the greatest error of modern history.”
– Niall Ferguson, British historian

“[I]f we want to point fingers from the twenty-first century we can accuse those who took Europe into war of two things. First, a failure of imagination in not seeing how destructive such a conflict could be and second, their lack of courage to stand up to those who said there was no choice left but to go to war. There are always choices.”
– Margaret MacMillan, Canadian historian
Worship materials
All worship materials, including the children’s story and drama, were prepared by Lois Siemens, pastor of Superb Mennonite Church, Kerrobert, Sask.

Contents of materials:
Visuals
Call to Worship — 2 options
Prayer of Confession — 3 options
Psalm of Lament
Responsive Reading
Litany — based on Psalm 31:15 & Isaiah 2:3
Pastoral Prayer
Prayer of Commitment
Benediction — 2 options
Children’s Story — War between the Sandpipers and the Whales
Drama — What’s a Ploughshare?

Visuals
The Isaiah text has many images in it that could be used as a visual focus for worship. Some of these ideas also lend themselves to a bulletin cover.

1. The text speaks about being taught and instructed in the ways of God. After this instruction, we will no longer be schooled in the ways of war. Set up a chalkboard and write parts of the Isaiah 2:2-5 passage on it. Or use the title of a course like: War 101 stroked out; Swords into Ploughshares 101.

2. The image of path could be depicted through photography.

3. Create a small mountain with rocks and set a few tea lights on or around it.

4. Set up shoes which represent different nations “walking” together.

Call to worship #1
Based on Isaiah 2:3-5
Can be a conversation between two people or with the congregation.

Leader: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.

Side 1: I have too much to do right here.

Leader: We will be taught the ways of God.

Side 2: I don’t want to work that hard.

Leader: We will watch God judge between the nations

Side 1: I think I’d like to see that.

Leader: And settle disputes for many peoples.

Side 2: I have a few disputes that could use some settling.

Leader: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.

ALL: Yes, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths.
Call to worship #2
Merciful God of times past, present and yet to be:
We gather together in the Lord’s house
Uncertain of the future
And yet certain of your presence.

You summon us once again from our week
of work and worry, laundry and learning
to worship, pray and sing.
You call us together to teach us
how to transform weapons into instruments of life and peace.

God teaching us
Jesus walking with us
Spirit energizing us
Help us worship you with heart, hand and voice.
In the strong name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Prayer of confession #1
God of conversations,
We confess that we follow the life-destroying scripts of our world.
The script of consumerism—always looking for the next thing to promise happiness.
The script of exclusion—building walls to keep some in and others out.
And the script of militarism—believing that war strengthens us and makes us secure.

Forgive us!
Work with us to transform our scripts
From consumerism to security in being beloved children of God
From exclusion to generous hospitality that embraces all
From militarism to patient justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

And when we find ourselves at a loss to make the necessary changes,
Do not abandon us.
Remember and return us to the script of shalom,
We fervently pray, Amen.
Prayer of confession #2
*Can be prayed by one person or as a congregational reading.*

LEADER: Merciful God
who remembers us,
hear our confession.

SIDE 1: We have forgotten that
you created each of us: every culture, language and nation,
with delightful attention to detail.

ALL: May we remember that every person is beloved in your eyes.

SIDE 2: We have forgotten
our postures of humility
and leaned on our own understanding.

ALL: May we remember our child-like trust in a sovereign, active God.

SIDE 1: We have forgotten the road to true security
and abandoned those whose interests don’t line up with our own.

ALL: May we remember Jesus’ spirit of bold gentleness,
and dynamic trust rooted in the prayer,
“Your kingdom come, Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.”
Amen.

Prayer of confession #3

The Talmud encourages us: “Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.”

Long-suffering God,
for whom peace is a slow and consistent step-by-step journey.
We acknowledge our impatience with the steady work of building relationships,
our arrogance in deciding what others need,
our tendency to react.

Forgive us for distracting ourselves and running off the path
with worry and present need.
Pull away by fears of not being courageous enough,
smart enough,
prepared enough.
Forgive us our reluctance to move forward,
when we see the magnitude of the task ahead.

Remind us
We are not called to save the whole world
but to walk faithfully along God’s path.
We are not called to know all the answers
but be humbly open to instruction.
We are not left alone to climb an unknown way,
for Jesus walked the path before us,
and many have walked the path of reconciliation
and resisted evil with nonviolent acts.

Far-seeing God,
With our excuses blown away,
we trust in your unfailing love to forgive us,
and once again draw us into your daily practices of peace.
In this place, in these days, with these people,
In the name of Jesus the reconciler we pray,
Amen.

Psalm of lament
Rise up, O God,
O hope of the earth
Rise up and see
the illnesses that follow a conflict—
maimed bodies shattered by forgotten, active landmines,
a pockmarked earth, unproductive and weeping.

Rise up, O God, and hear
the grief of mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers,
the list of fears and threats we are unable to handle,
a passionate longing for justice.

Rise up, O God, and forgive
our silence,
our part in conflicts near and far,
our failure to love.

Rise up, O God, and act
with merciful presence,
loving power,
and honest justice.

Steadfast loving God
O hope of the earth
Rise up!

Rise up!
Responsive reading
Leader: This day,

Side 1: We walk the mountain path towards the house of the Lord with

ALL: these people—

Side 2: We open ourselves to instruction on right living for

ALL: these times—

Side 1: When too many ploughshares are beat into swords.

Leader: So that in

ALL: this house—

Side 2: We may wake up from our self-indulgent sleep.

ALL: For this world

Side 1: needs Jesus, the Prince of Peace in

ALL: these days.

Litany
Based on Psalm 31:15 & Isaiah 2:3
Leader—light print; congregation—bold print

In the beginning God gave orders to the morning
and showed the dawn its place (Job 38:12).
Humans were shaped from the dust of the earth and
all the days ordained were written in your book (Psalm 139:16).

Our times are in your hand (Psalm 31:15).
Teach us your ways (Isaiah 2:3).

Little by little, word by word,
conflicts emerged,
heaping dirt onto old wounds
and crowding the air with senseless noise.

Our times are in your hand.
Teach us your ways.

A great war drew everyone in.
Trenches shoulder-high carved the land.
Bombs and bullets fell from cloudless skies
as battle lines were drawn.

Our times are in your hand.
Teach us your ways.

Much later, flying over the wounded land,
a camera records the devastation.
Black and white images of wandering people.
Scattered stones, miles and miles and miles of trenches.
Our times are in your hand.
Teach us your ways.

Which times are in your hand, O God?
Ecclesiastes says there is a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Our times are in your hand.
Teach us your ways.

Forgive our audacity as we take it upon ourselves
to decide the times for killing and destroying
and the times for making peace.
We see in part and act as if we
know the whole.

Our times are in your hand.
Teach us your ways.

Repair
Heal
Deliver
Bring us to the time of peace!

OUR TIMES are in your hand
TEACH US your ways
Our times are in YOUR HAND
Teach us YOUR WAYS.

Pastoral prayer or prayers of the people

Hand gestures: open palms hands together; lift up towards heaven; separate hands to release prayers.
The instructions for the gesture are imbedded in the prayer.

Almighty God,
We open our hands and pour into them our prayers for ourselves and those we love.
We offer thanks for these people sitting behind, before and beside us (pause).
We pray for our families, our disagreements and conflicts.
    Teach us how to fight fairly.
We remember those whose frustration has turned to anger and bitterness.
    Give them release.
We pray for those who live bravely with woundedness in many forms.
    Heal them.

We open our hands and pour into them our prayers for this community.
We pray for those who seek peace from the war of addictions.
For those who tirelessly work for tolerance, inclusion and the re-naming of enemy to friend.
For those who seek to respond to violence with loving nonviolence.
For those who fearlessly offer help where it is needed.
We lift our prayers and release them into your love.

We open our hands and pour into them our prayers for our world.
We pray that you would soften the hearts of those who easily resort to weapons and war.
That you would strengthen the fragile threads of peace into strong cords of justice.
That you would multiply the small seeds of righteousness sown and make them a
great harvest.
And we pray that would instruct us in the ways of peace.
Guide us in truth-telling, justice-seeking, and forgiving others as we have been
forgiven.
Open the eyes of our hearts, inspiring us to transform our swords into instruments
of peace.
We lift our prayers and release them into your hope.
We gather all our prayers, the spoken and the unspoken, and pray the prayer Jesus
taught us:
Our Father ...

Prayer of commitment
Peace-making God
Who desires us to stop learning war —
Teach us your ways,
As we commit to studying the path of reconciliation,
looking for common ground to meet our enemies,
and conquering our fear.

When all we can see is the mountain of violence —
Give us new eyes.
When the peace we practice offends —
When we feel the sting of persecution —
Give us courage and strength.
When fear overwhelms —
Remind us we do not walk alone.

In the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we pray, Amen.

Benediction
May God, the living God
Who brought all things into being,
Bless you with remembrance
That you are called a beloved child
That you are not alone
That peace is possible.
The one who walks behind us, beside and ahead of us,
walks with us now.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Charge
Beloved of God
You who are known and befriended by the living God
Go now to spread this love to those who cross your path
Go now to practice peace
Go now with a stronger faith, trusting in the power of love to transform lives.
And all the people said — Amen.
**Children’s story**

In addition to the adapted story below, consider using one of the following children’s books:

**The War between the Sandpipers and the Whales**

*A tale from the Marshall Islands*

Adapted by Lois Siemens from

*Instructions:* This story can be told by one person or by three people (a narrator, a sandpiper and a whale). If three people tell the story, the sandpiper and the whale should each wear a sign or a costume to distinguish them from each other. To make the story interactive, involve the children as additional sandpipers and whales, who help with “slurping” and “munching.”

**NARRATOR:** Every morning little Sandpiper went down to the beach for her breakfast. She would run into the water on her tall skinny legs and slurp….slurp… she would peck up a little minnow. Then she would run back up on the beach and wait. Into the water she would run again and slurp…slurp… gobble up another tidbit.

**Whale,** who lived in the deep bay, saw Sandpiper running in and out of the water. Whale stuck his huge head out of the water and called.

**WHALE:** “You! Little bird! Stay out of my water! The sea belongs to the **whales**!”

**NARRATOR:** Sandpiper remained silent a short while and then said,

**SANDPIPER:** “The sea belongs to the sandpipers too. And there are lots more sandpipers than there are whales. So leave me alone!”

**WHALE:** “More sandpipers? There are many more whales in the ocean than sandpipers on the land.”

**SANDPIPER:** “No way! There are more sandpipers!”

**NARRATOR:** Whale was furious. Whale came to the top of the water and spouted and then dove deep, deep into the bay. Whale turned to the east and west, north and south and called,

**WHALE:** “Whales, brother whales, come. Come to this island.”

**NARRATOR:** From the east and north, south and west the whale brothers heard and began to swim toward the island. And when they had all come, the bay was so crowded with whales you could walk across their backs.

**SANDPIPER:** *(scared)* “Wow! You **do** have a lot of brothers. But wait! I will call my sandpiper sisters.”

**NARRATOR:** Little Sandpiper flew up and down and called to the east and the south, the north and the west.

**SANDPIPER:** “Sandpipers, sandpipers, come quick! Come quick! Come to this island!”
NARRATOR: From the south and the north, the west and the east they came and when the birds had all landed they covered all the trees. Were there more whales or are there more sandpipers? It was impossible to tell.

But the whales were a little scared. Let’s call the cousins, they whispered. So they dove deep to the north and the west, the east and the south and they called all their cousins to come to the island.

WHALE: “Cousins! Come to the island: dolphins and porpoises, sharks, killer whales and blue whales. Come quick! Come to this island.”

NARRATOR: Now it was the Sandpipers who were scared. There were SO many whales! They decided to call their cousins too. They called to the south and the west, the east and the north.

SANDPIPER: “Cousins! Gulls and cormorants, herons and pelicans, come quick! Come to this island.”

NARRATOR: You couldn’t see the hills for all the birds. So… were there more birds or more sea creatures? It was impossible to tell. Then Whale had an idea.

WHALE: “If we eat up the land then there will be more whales than sandpipers.”

NARRATOR: So they began to munch on the land.

WHALE: … munch, scrunch, munch…

NARRATOR: And the beach started disappearing. Then Sandpiper had an idea.

SANDPIPER: “If we drink up all of the sea, the whales will die. Then there will be more sandpipers than whales.”

NARRATOR: So they flew down to the ocean and dipped their beaks in the water and began to drink and drink and drink.

SANDPIPER: … slurp, slurp, slurp…

NARRATOR: It was easier to drink and so the birds finished first. They flew around feeling pretty proud of themselves and then they looked down.

SANDPIPER: (smugly) “Look! The whales are dying, the fish are hardly breathing. The tiny starfish and minnows are gasping for breath.”

NARRATOR: Suddenly they thought of something.

SANDPIPER: “Wait a minute! The starfish and minnows are our food. That is what we eat… and if they die we’ll die too. This was a bad idea. Quick! Spit out the water back into the ocean.” Ptooie.. Ptooie.. Ptooie…

NARRATOR: So the birds all spat the water back into the ocean. The whales began to move and swim about, the crabs and minnows stretched their fins and began to live.

WHALE: “This was a bad idea. The ocean is where we live, the beach is part of our home, we are destroying our own home. Quick, spit back the land.” Glurk glurk.

NARRATOR: The whales spit back the land.

SANDPIPER: “This war was a bad idea, we almost destroyed our home.”

WHALE: “This war was a bad idea, there is plenty of ocean for all of us to share.”
NARRATOR: So the whale cousins and brothers swam away, and the sandpiper sisters and cousins flew away. But the question remains: Are there more whales or are there more sandpipers? In the end, it doesn’t really matter. It is such a little question to start such a big war.
Drama—what’s a ploughshare?

Needed:
- Two actors (Person A and Person B, each carrying a sword made of cardstock and the blade covered with tinfoil. The sword must be thin enough that the actor can rip the blade away from the handle.
- A person from the congregation who is church treasurer.
- A person who can hold up a drawing or sign of a ploughshare.

Note: Words in italics are stage directions

Scene:
A person bounds up to the stage with a sword made of cardboard and the blade covered with tinfoil.

Person A: Speaks to the congregation. What’s a ploughshare? We read in our scripture that swords will be turned into ploughshares. Thinks for a bit, turns the sword over in his/her hands. I got it! a plough share. I sell my sword and the money I get for it I turn into some kind of mutual fund.

Second person bounds up to the stage.
Person B: Mutual fund? I don’t think so. No, it’s not money. This can’t be about making money. There were no mutual funds in Isaiah’s time.

Person A: So what do you think a ploughshare is?

Person B: Well … puffing him/herself up… the Hebrew language is written backwards right? You read it from right to left instead of left to right so, really, the translation from the original Hebrew is probably… shareplough. Looks pleased with him/herself. It’s a call to share your plough. Your plough!

Person A: I don’t have a plough to share.

Person B: Of course not, but a farmer would. And in the days of Isaiah there must have been a lot of people with ploughs. Grins because he/she thinks she’s got the right answer.

Person A: So we share our ploughs. But if I have a plough and you have a plough, we wouldn’t need to share a plough. And how does the sword become a plough that we share?

Person B: Hey, I got an idea.

Person A: What?

Person B: Let’s Choogle it. (pronounced chew-gull)

Person A: Choogle. skeptically… OK, I’ll bite. How do you Choogle something?

Person B: It’s like Google... except your search engine is the church. Get it? Church (indicates the congregation with hand) plus Google equals Choogle. Look at all these people here, lets Choogle the church.

Person A: All right. Pretends he or she is typing. Anybody here know what a ploughshare is? Have the church treasurer prompted to raise their hand.

Person B: Notices the treasurer. Look, we got 495 responses in one second! Not bad.

Person A: Actually, I see one response.

Person B: No matter, look at this one—the treasurer. Points at the church treasurer. See, there is a connection between ploughshares and mutual funds. I knew it! Let’s click on that. What is a ploughshare?
Church treasurer: *stands up.* A piece of farm machinery... *pauses and remains standing.*

Person A: *Bumps B.* Hey, you were right.

Church treasurer: ... that you can sell and invest in for mutual funds.

Person B: Well, maybe not. Sounds like you were right, maybe it is sharing the plough.

Person A: I don’t know. Let’s check out another response.

_Have someone prompted who holds up a drawing or photograph of a ploughshare._

Person A: Let’s look at that one, it’s got pictures. *Gets the drawing and shows it to congregation.*

So that’s a ploughshare. Weird-looking!

Person B: What does it do?

Person A: _Turn over the drawing and read from the back starting off slowly and then reading fairly fast._

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/“In agriculture, a plowshare (or ploughshare)—did you know you could spell it p-l-o-w or p-l-o-u-g-h?—is a component of a plow (plough). It is the cutting or leading edge of a moldboard which closely follows the coulter (one or more ground-breaking spikes) when plowing. The plowshare itself is often a hardened blade dressed into an integral moldboard (by the blacksmith) so making a unified combination of plowshare and moldboard, the whole being responsible for entering the cleft in the earth (made by the coulter’s first cutting-through) and turning the earth over. In well-tilled terrain the plowshare may do duty without a preceding coulter. In modern plows both coulter and plowshare are detachable for easy replacement when worn or broken.”

So it is a blade that turns over the earth. The treasurer was right. It is a piece of farm machinery.

Person B: Well... question answered, I guess I can go sit down now. _Starts walking towards the pews._

Wait a minute. _Turns around and goes back._ What about turning the sword into a ploughshare? _Both examine their swords._

I don’t have to Choogle that one. My guess is that you take the metal from the sword and remake it into a ploughshare. *Takes his/her sword and tears off the blade and sets the handle down._

Person A: I get it! *Takes his/her sword and tears off the blade and sets the handle down._ Both smiling and excited. Now the big question is: what do we do with these? _Picks up the sword handles._ Tries different things: _holds one like a microphone, tries lifting weights, other ideas..._

Person B: I got it. *Holds the two of them as handles for a plough._ Now I can plough in style. *Both grin._

Then Person A _grabs the handle as if he/she just realized that the weapon is now useless._ He/she _swings it in the air like a sword._ Person B follows suit. They _try fencing but find it impossible without the blade._

Person A and B: _Speaking to each other._ **But the war!!!** _Turning to the congregation they say._

Now what are we going to fight with???

Both persons freeze. _They put the handles on the worship/communion table and leave stage._
Stories

This section is a compilation of stories of people resisting war, making peace in the midst of war, and practicing alternatives to war and violence. Some of them are about the First and Second World Wars, and others are more recent. Some of them are about Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, but many are not. Some stories are about Mennonite Central Committee partners building peace in different parts of the world.

You are encouraged to incorporate the stories into a sermon or children’s feature, discuss them in adult or youth Sunday school, or include them in a congregational newsletter.

1. The First World War and conscientious objection

When the war began in 1914, Anabaptist groups in Canada included Amish, Tunkers (later, Brethren in Christ), and Mennonites of both Swiss-South German and Dutch-North German (or Russian) descent. All of these groups held to historic peace church teachings of nonresistance and non-participation in war.

Prior to World War I, the policy of the Canadian government with respect to the religious convictions of these “nonresistant” or “pacifist” Christians had been quite generous. Up until Confederation in 1867, conscientious objectors (COs) were exempted from military service, though during certain periods they were required to pay a special tax in lieu of service. In 1868 the newly organized Dominion government provided for the exemption of COs, “upon such conditions and such regulations as the Governor or Council may from time to time prescribe.” In 1873 an Order-in-Council of the Dominion government, promised complete exemption from all military service to those Mennonites about to immigrate from Russia.

When conscription was introduced in 1917 there was some confusion in the application of the various laws and Orders-in-Council, resulting in prison sentences for a number of COs (see below). Eventually, however, a uniform policy determined that all religious COs would be granted indefinite “leaves of absence” from military service.

Near the end of the war Anabaptists in Ontario and western Canada gathered donations and sent them to the federal government for the relief of war victims. It was their way of expressing gratitude to the government for exemption from military service. In Ontario, this donation led to the founding of the Non-Resistant Relief Organization, a predecessor to MCC Ontario and MCC Canada.

During the Second World War, the federal government required all conscientious objectors to perform alternate service in lieu of military service.


2. Story of E.J. Swalm, a conscientious objector in the First World War

Ernest John Swalm (known as E.J.) was a young farmer from Collingwood, Ontario and a member of the Tunker (Brethren in Christ) church when he was drafted in June 1917. As a conscientious objector, he applied for an exemption. But because Tunkers had not been specifically named as a pacifist sect in the Military Service Act of 1917, Swalm's application was refused.

Swalm reported to the military officer but, even under threat, refused to perform any military duties. He was consequently seized, stripped, and forced to wear a military uniform. When he remained uncooperative, he was sentenced to two years of hard labour. While in custody, he received verbal and physical abuse from military officials. Several other Tunker men shared a similar experience. Mennonite bishop S.F. Coffman and Tunker leader D.W. Heise intervened on behalf of Swalm and the other COs and they were eventually released.
E.J. Swalm went on to become an outspoken advocate for nonresistance and non-participation in war. A charismatic speaker, he publicly shared his story often and published a book about it called *Nonresistance Under Test*, in 1938. During the Second World War, Swalm—by then, bishop of the Canadian Brethren in Christ churches—became head of the Conference of Historic Peace Churches (CHPC). The CHPC played a leading role in negotiating conscientious objector and alternative service provisions with the government. Throughout the war Swalm visited young COs in the alternative service camps, providing encouragement and pastoral support.


3. A Fellowship of Reconciliation

In August 1914, just after war had begun, two men stood on the platform of the train station at Cologne, Germany. One was Henry Hodgkin (an English Quaker) and the other was Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze (a German Lutheran). They had just attended a conference on Christian pacifism in Constance, southern German. And so as they stood on the platform—citizens of enemy nations—they pledged to each other that, “We are one in Christ and can never be at war.”

This simple but profound pledge, in the context of a rapidly escalating war, was the beginning of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), which was formed in December 1914 in England. Similar Fellowships formed in other countries in subsequent years, with an International FOR organized in 1919. For one hundred years, members of FOR have consistently witnessed against war, sustained by the belief that “love in action has the power to transform unjust political, social, and economic structures.”

One of FOR’s travelling “ambassadors of reconciliation” was Muriel Lester, a British Baptist and social worker, who later worked with Gandhi and others to advance the cause of nonviolence. When war began in 1914, Lester wrote about her community in Britain:

“We refused... to pronounce a moratorium on the Sermon on the Mount for the duration of the war. We could not conceive of God as a nationalist. We could not suddenly look upon our brother man as an enemy just because he chanced to have been born on the other side of a river or a strip of sea.”

See “International Fellowship of Reconciliation.”

4. The Christmas Truce

Sometimes moments of extraordinary beauty and humanity emerge in the midst of great violence and destruction. Such was the case on the western front of the First World War in December 1914.

For some months, Allied (British and French) and German forces had been locked in a stalemate of trench warfare. Often, their trenches were located only a few hundred meters from each other. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, soldiers from opposing armies began to exchange greetings and songs between their trenches. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day many of them ventured into “no man’s land” to put up simple Christmas trees, to exchange food, cigarettes and souvenirs, and to jointly bury their dead. Some groups sang Christmas carols together, while others played games of soccer.

According to an American historian Stanley Weintraub, it was almost always the Germans who initiated these Christmas truces which occurred at various points along the western front.

Military officers clearly were not pleased with this kind of “fraternization.” The following year at
Christmas, Allied commanders issued specific orders to soldiers not to participate in any further Christmas truces, though some smaller ones occurred. Later in the war, they ordered artillery bombardments on Christmas Eve to ensure there would be no friendliness across enemy lines. After all, the war had to go on!

According to Weintraub, the story of the Christmas truce reopened the human imagination to the “unsettling truth that at each end of the rifle, men were indeed the same.”


5. Nonresistant service as peacemaking

Edna Hunsperger of Preston, Ontario was a recently graduated nurse when Canada joined the Second World War in September 1939. Many of her nursing friends enlisted in the Armed Forces for nursing duty on the war front. As a Mennonite and nonresistant Christian, she did not feel she could join the “war machine,” but she wanted to do something to help heal the wounds of war.

In 1941, at the encouragement of her pastor, Edna signed up with Mennonite Central Committee for relief service in England. MCC had just initiated a program of providing food, clothing and nursing care for war victims. A year later, she and fellow nurse Elfrieda Klassen from Winnipeg, were in London—the first two Canadian women to serve MCC overseas.

During and after the war, service emerged as a very important way for nonresistant Christians to witness to their faith and their commitment to peace. The war had pushed them to demonstrate that if they were going to say “No” to military service, they had to say “Yes” to service of another kind. Alternative service, which was demanded by the state during the war, led to the emergence of voluntary service after the war. Women volunteered in disproportionate numbers. Almost twice as many Canadian women served with MCC between 1948 and 1970 as men.

For Edna Hunsperger and hundreds of others, MCC service proved a way to serve their country and humanity in a way that was consistent with their faith convictions. It was a way to demonstrate their commitment to save life rather than destroy it.

*See Esther Epp-Tiessen, Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2013).*

6. Le Chambon – A Refuge for Jews

Between 1940 and 1944, France was under German occupation, and a collaborationist government was in place. Under this regime, Nazi officials began to capture Jews throughout France and transport them to the death camps in Germany.

During this time, pacifists Andre and Magda Trocmé were pastoring a Protestant congregation in Le
Chambon-sur-Lignon, France. Together with several others, they encouraged the citizens of Le Chambon to hide Jews and protect them from certain death. The people of the small town hid the Jews in their homes, on farms and in public buildings.

When the Nazis were on patrol in Le Chambon, the Jews dispersed into the surrounding countryside until they could hear the villagers sing a particular song. The song was their signal that it was safe to return to town. The Trocmé and others also forged ration cards and identification documents so that their Jewish friends could escape to the safety of Switzerland which remained neutral during the war. It is estimated that the people of Le Chambon saved 3000 to 5000 Jews from the gas chambers.

The people of Le Chambon resisted the Nazis and their genocidal program at considerable risk to their lives. Some of them were arrested and even killed for their actions. One of those arrested and killed was Daniel Trocmé, a cousin of Andre. For the courage of its people, the entire town was named “Righteous among the nations” by the State of Israel in 1990. This is an honorary title given to non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jewish lives.


7. For love of enemy
In the 1980s a young man from the indigenous Guidai-Gosode people in Paraguay and Bolivia received a New Testament and read it. When he encountered the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, he was deeply moved by Jesus’ call to his followers to love their enemies. The man’s people had heard the gospel from Christian missionaries, but they had never heard about the call to love their enemies.

The young man shared his discovery with his relatives. A consensus emerged that the Guidai-Gosode should find their adversaries, the Totobie-Gosode, and seek to make peace with them. Over the years, members of the two groups had frequently killed one another.

A delegation of Guidai-Gosode set out to visit their enemies, making a long hike through dense bush. The group carried no weapons, for the leaders had said, “We have killed so many of them, and it might be that some of us will have to give our lives so they might understand that we come in peace and that Jesus has given us love for our enemies.”

During the first moments of the encounter, the Totobie-Gosode killed five of the visitors and badly injured four others. But when they saw that their visitors were completely nonviolent, the Totobie-Gosode stopped the killing. They returned to the village of the Guidai-Gosode “to live and learn with their former enemies.” They had made peace.

See Alfred Neufeld, What We Believe Together: Exploring the “Shared Convictions” of Anabaptist-Related Churches (Good Books, 2007), pp. 96-97.

8. Disarming hands, hearts and minds
In the mid-1990s a long civil war finally ended in the African country of Mozambique. One of the people who helped negotiate a peace agreement was Anglican archbishop Dinis Sengulane. After the war’s end, he travelled the country, asking people what might jeopardize this agreement in the feature. One woman told him bluntly, “Guns.” After years of war, the country was awash in guns. According to the woman, it would be only too easy for people to use them again.

After thinking and praying, the archbishop suggested a disarmament project that would help prevent a resurgence of violence. At his encouragement, the Christian Council of Mozambique developed a program called Transforming Arms into Ploughshares (TAE in Portuguese). Under this program, people could turn in their weapons in exchange for agricultural implements, sewing machines or other tools that
could improve their lives. The weapons, in turn, would be dismantled and made into productive objects or pieces of art.

Since its inception in 1995, the project has collected over 800,000 pieces of war equipment, with the Russian-made AK-47 being the most common. Many of these weapons have been transformed into crosses and are worn by clergy around the world. Others have been fashioned into chairs, tables, and works of art. Two of the most famous pieces of art—Tree of Life and Throne of Weapons—are on display at the British Museum.

More recently, TAE has carried out trainings in peace education and conflict transformation, supported by Mennonite Central Committee, as a part of a new Water for Weapons project which provides a clean water source to communities that turn over their weapons. In a still fragile post-conflict situation, TAE works at disarming people’s hands, hearts and minds.

See “The bishop who smashed guns at the altar” The Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

9. Remembering as a way to build peace
The Vraca fortress on the outskirts of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina is crumbling, marked with graffiti and overtaken by weeds and litter. The building dates back to 1898 but was the site of executions and battles that claimed thousands of lives during the Second World War and the siege of Sarajevo in the 1990s.

Tamara Šmidling of the Peace Academy Foundation (PAF) says, “World War II was a war between people of different ethnic backgrounds. We should have listened to the lessons of that time. Many people believe the conflicts in the 1990s were vengeance for that war.”

With funding from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), PAF is implementing “The Culture of Remembering.” The goal is to achieve a lasting peace not by denying or ignoring history—but by acknowledging and talking about it.

Šmidling says while most people in Bosnia and Herzegovina live peacefully alongside their neighbours, many still identify strongly with one of three groups—Bošniak, Serb or Croat. She says each group has its own horrific memories of past atrocities. And each group tends to remember its own victims, but not the victims of the other groups.

The Culture of Remembering project shifts the focus to talking about what people have in common. Memorialization, or remembering, is about telling the story to demonstrate that everyone suffered, that everyone has victims.

Initially, the project will bring together people from three communities for educational workshops on how memories influence people’s view of the world and how sharing those stories can contribute to unity and peace. Eventually the goal is to research and publicize memorial sites to encourage open public discussion about the past.

The site of the Vraca fortress is one of those places of remembering—remembering to build peace.

See “Remembering past conflict as a path to peace,” Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

10. Instead of violence
On May 20, 2014 a massive bomb killed 122 people in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, not far from the office of Mennonite Central Committee. It is believed the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram was responsible for the attack.

Images of the marketplace bombing were shown around the world as evidence of Muslim-Christian
violence in Nigeria. What the world did not see was Muslims and Christians, working shoulder to shoulder, to care for the wounded, and rescue people from the debris. Several years ago, attacks like this one resulted in reprisal attacks and widespread violence. This time, no further violence erupted.

According to MCC workers, the dramatic shift resulted from the patient, persistent peacebuilding work of MCC partners like the Emergency Preparedness Response Teams (EPRT). Birthed in 2005, EPRT is an inter-faith, grassroots network engaged in emergency response and peacebuilding across the state. Guided by advisory and management committees, its work is carried out by 15-member volunteer teams—comprised of some 270 trained peacebuilders, Muslims and Christians, women and men.

The volunteers are trained in emergency response, conflict prevention, mediation, and civic education. Dressed in blue shirts and red hats, they proactively detect and diffuse early warning signs of tension, violence, or natural disaster. Their work requires not only technical training, but personal wisdom, solid judgment, and the ability to build relationships of trust in environments where trust is fragile at best.

Over the years, EPRT members have become vital actors for preventing crises and contributing to a culture of peace. Matthew Tangbuin, MCC program advisor and business manager, said of the May 20 bombings, “If not for the peace work that has been taking place... over the last number of years, this kind of incident could easily have erupted into religious violence.”

See “In bombing, MCC Nigeria sees signs of peace,” Mennonite Central Committee Canada: See also “Putting the spotlight on peace,” Ottawa Office Notebook, 28 May 2014.

11. South Korean conscientious objector: Lee Sang Min

In South Korea, military service is mandatory for all young men. There are no legal provisions for conscientious objection. According to the United Nations, of the 723 COs imprisoned worldwide, 669 (92.5 percent), are incarcerated in South Korea. Most of the Korean COs are members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Lee Sang Min, a member of Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Seoul, is the first South Korean Mennonite to refuse military service because of his commitment to Christ. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison on 30 April 2014. He will have a criminal record upon his release.

Being a Christian pacifist in Korea is a very difficult thing. Opposing military service in South Korea is seen as a betrayal of one’s country and as sympathy with North Korea. Conscientious objectors and their families experience ostracism and isolation.

Yet Sang Min has made this choice because he believes Christ calls him to take a stand against war. He says, “I want the next generation to live in a better place which respects individual choice and beliefs. I believe this is part of the Kingdom of God.”

See “Taking stand against war,” Canadian Mennonite, 29 January 2014. See also video interview.
12. Turning swords into ploughshares for nearly 40 years

In 1976 two Canadians had a vision for a Canadian initiative that would help to turn swords into ploughshares. One of them was Ernie Regehr, a Mennonite, and the other was Murray Thomson, a Quaker.

Both men had personally witnessed the devastation of war and militarism—Thomson as an air force pilot in the Second World War, and Regehr as an MCC worker in southern Africa. They were deeply committed to peace. They believed that one way to build a peaceful and secure world was through disarmament, diplomacy and development—not military might.

Inspired by the vision of the prophet Isaiah, Project Ploughshares began operating under the Canadian Council of Churches in 1977 from an office at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario. For nearly 40 years, it has helped to advance global peace by: advancing the concept of human—rather than national—security, pressing for nuclear disarmament, monitoring armed conflicts around the world, resisting Canada’s participation in war, and advancing policies that limit the resort to armed force.

Over the past 15 years, Project Ploughshares has been instrumental in the development and promotion of an international Arms Trade Treaty which would regulate the transfer of weapons around the globe. According to key staff person Ken Epps, the approval of the treaty at the United Nations in 2013 marked “a milestone victory” and an “instrument of hope for the millions of people and thousands of communities across the world suffering from or threatened by armed violence.”

The vision of Isaiah continues to inspire the work of Project Ploughshares.

(See Call for Action section to take action to urge Canada to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.)

Call for action—urge Canada to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

At least 500,000 people are killed and millions of others displaced each year as a result of armed conflict and violence. A major factor in all this death and displacement is the unregulated and irresponsible trade and transfer of arms and ammunition. Indeed, more regulations govern the sale of bananas than the transfer of weapons!

In 2013 the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to adopt an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which will, for the first time in history, set global rules for the international transfer of conventional weapons—everything from machine guns to fighter jets and war ships. According to the UN:

“The treaty will foster peace and security by thwarting uncontrolled destabilizing arms flows to conflict regions. It will prevent human rights abusers and violators of the laws of war from being supplied with arms. And it will help keep warlords, pirates, and gangs from acquiring these deadly tools.”

A large majority of states have signed the treaty and already dozens have ratified it by passing legislation in their own countries. The ATT will come into force 90 days after it has been ratified by 50 states, likely in early 2015.

Thus far, the Government of Canada has refused to sign the Arms Trade Treaty. By not signing, Canada has separated itself from its closest allies (including the U.S.) and from its role as a leader in global peace and disarmament.

Please urge the Government of Canada to demonstrate a commitment to international peace and security by signing and ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty.

Please consider sending the sample letter to Prime Minister Harper. Adapt it as you see fit.

• Mail it—no postage required—to The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister Canada, House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada, K1A 0A6. Send a copy of the letter to Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs, House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada, K1A 0A6.

• If you prefer to use email, send your message to the Prime Minister to pm@parl.gc.ca. Send a copy to your Member of Parliament (find his or her email at http://parl.gc.ca ). Make sure to include your mailing address on the email.

• Send a message to peace@mennonitecc.ca to let staff at MCC Canada know of your actions.

For more information on the International Arms Trade Treaty, visit http://ploughshares.ca/programs/conventional-weapons/arms-trade-treaty/

“For any war, anytime, anywhere….ends with mutual defeat.”

– Fadi Abi Allam, founder of Permanent Peace Movement, Lebanon
Dear Prime Minister Harper,

I am writing today to urge the government to sign the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) at the United Nations without delay and begin treaty ratification in Canada as soon as possible.

By signing the ATT, Canada would join the large majority of UN member states that have already signed the treaty to create a safer world for the thousands of civilians living under the threat of violence. The ATT provides Canada with an unprecedented opportunity to reinforce the international architecture of conflict prevention, and indeed to bring peace and stability to the many communities now suffering from the effects of armed violence. For many countries the ATT will raise conventional weapons import and export standards, and it will have no appreciable impact on legal gun-owners in Canada.

In April 2013, Canada was one of 155 UN member states that voted in favour of the ATT’s adoption. Since then all of Canada’s traditional security partners, including all other NATO members, have signed the treaty, and several have passed the necessary domestic legislation for ratification.

I urge you to listen to the millions of people who live in daily fear of armed violence and to the thousands of Canadians who for over 10 years have worked on this issue, asking Canada to implement an international treaty that would better regulate the irresponsible arms trade.

The devastating humanitarian consequences of current conflicts around the world underline just how urgently regulation of the arms trade is needed. The ATT will not resolve current crises, but it will surely contribute to preventing similar crises in the future.

Today, my message could not be stronger or clearer: Canada must sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty without hesitation.

Sincerely,
More suggestions and resources

Imagine a world without war

• In advance of Peace Sunday, invite artists of all ages in your community to create art work that imagines a world without war. Display the art on Peace Sunday.

• Alternately, provide art materials during your Peace Sunday worship service. Invite anyone who wishes, to create art during the worship service. Invite the artists to share their creations at the conclusion of the worship service.

• Another possibility is to invite a group of people to find photos and images of swords or guns being transformed into life-giving objects. Display these.

Hold a peace prayer meeting

• Gather a small group of people for an evening or early morning time of prayer for peace. Provide a focal point, with a candle, a cross or other symbols to draw people into reflective space. Read Isaiah 2:2-5 or other scripture passages. Invite spoken and silent prayers for peace in places nearby and faraway.

Host a letter-writing lunch

• Plan a simple potluck meal to follow your Peace Sunday worship service (or at another time). Provide information about the Arms Trade Treaty (see Call for Action section), as well as paper and envelopes. Invite those present to write a letter to the Prime Minister Harper, urging Canada to sign onto this important convention.

Discuss these videos

• “The Christmas Truce.” A movie version of the Christmas celebration along the western front of WWI in 1914. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p05E_o haQGk

• “The last 100 years of nonviolence.” A brief overview of how nonviolent actions have changed the course of history over the past century. Produced by MCC Ontario 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGFDhGpk634

• “Love your enemies: a grandfather’s legacy of peace.” A brief story about German Mennonite army captain Siegfried Bartel and his journey to pacifism. Produced for Peace Sunday Packet 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MtSrXTbUFU&list=TLrzNtC8wGvirVgG3TuyK0RYcRtxni7BcR

Plan a public peace witness

• Contact peace@mennonitecc.ca and ask for information on a public peace vigil or prayer walk.

• Gather at your community’s war memorial to pray for an end to war.

“War is not inherent in human beings. We learn war and we learn peace. The culture of peace is something which is learned, just as violence is learned and war culture is learned. So we are engaged in an enormous learning process for the whole planet.”

– Elise Boulding, U.S. peace scholar
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(403) 275-6935

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31414 Marshall Road, Box 2038, Abbotsford, BC V2T 3T8
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MCC Newfoundland and Labrador
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MCC Québec
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MCC Saskatchewan
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