

# THE METHODIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP



God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself ... and has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation.

*2 Cor. 5:19*

## **Crisis and Opportunity**

The twentieth century saw an unprecedented acceleration in the destructive capacity of weapons. The nature of warfare itself changed. It has become more and more impersonal with civilian populations increasingly subject to indiscriminate slaughter. The international arms trade disseminated weaponry and fed innumerable conflicts large and small. Millions died and many more were rendered homeless. This trend has continued in the new century with Iraq, Afghanistan and more recently the attacks on Gaza. The Amnesty International report details the arms trade involvement (see their website)

The tragedy is compounded by militarism contributing to the global problems of environmental pollution and poverty which threaten the future of the whole of humanity. Precious resources needed to combat this common enemy are squandered on wars between and within nations.

The paramount need is for conversion: a fundamental change of priorities, a massive re-direction of human and material resources from armaments to "building peace". For us, the change of priorities is rooted in the Gospel.

## **The Supremacy of Love**

Jesus taught unlimited love - not a sentimental emotion, but goodness in action, forgiving without limit, responding to evil with good and encompassing friend and foe alike. On the Cross, unarmed and vulnerable, he confronted evil by sacrificial love, not by the discipline, order and might of the Roman Empire.

Love means food for the hungry, justice for the poor, liberation for the oppressed. But it also means killing, maiming, burning and destroying - the typical actions of armed national defence or armed liberation struggles - must stop. To us it is inconceivable that the love taught by Jesus can be expressed in the killing of fellow human beings, no matter what the pretext may be.

We believe that violence breeds violence and usually destroys more than it defends. But our conviction is not based on such weighing up of consequences: it is a moral imperative and an affirmation of faith, a belief that in the real world of selfishness, conflict, aggression and oppression, the Christian response is the one taught and exemplified by Christ. The outstandingly radical element of the Gospel is his revelation that the Christian God is a non-violent God. All attempts to lay down conditions under which war-making might be considered "just" seem to us to miss the central truth that organised slaughter is simply not the way of Jesus. Even on its own terms the doctrine of the "Just War" cannot be made to endorse modern warfare as we have described it. More recently non-violence has been used effectively in some of the most violent situations. There are better ways of conflict resolution than war and its like.

## **The Fellowship of Reconciliation**

In July, 1914, on Cologne railway station, a German and an Englishman parted company with the words, "*We are one in Christ and can never be at war*". Inspired by that pledge, about 130 Christians of many denominations met in Cambridge during the last days of 1914 and founded a movement, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, committed to the personal renunciation of war and "*the enthronement of Love in personal, commercial and national life*." They recorded their general agreement in a statement which became, and still is, the Basis of the FoR. A few years later an international movement was established and FoR, England (FoRE) is now a national branch of the International FoR (IFoR).

## **The Methodist Peace Fellowship**

MPF is an association of Methodist pacifists linked with other denominational groups by the FoRE. It was founded in 1933 by Rev. Henry Carter, to inform and unite Methodists who covenanted together "*to renounce war and all its works and ways*." We in the MPF are committed to the way of love and rejection of violence, to reverence for life and respect for every human person as a child of God. We believe that the Church should be God's peace movement, and that we are called to accept, to live in, and to witness to, the Peace of Christ.

MPF is thoroughly ecumenical working closely with the FoR and accepting its Basis. Anyone joining MPF automatically becomes a member of the FoRE and subscriptions are paid to FoRE which largely provides the finance for the work of MPF.

The word "Fellowship" is important. Peacemaking can be a lonely and stressful commitment and the church family has not always been sympathetic to its pacifist sons and daughters. Through MPF we share our experience, our griefs, our insights, our hopes and our learning.

A public meeting and the AGM are held each year near the Methodist Conference venue, and in various ways MPF seeks to witness at national level through Methodist channels. At the local level members express their commitment through the FoRE or other local peace organisations. Depending on time, opportunity or enthusiasms, this includes meeting in study or discussion groups, supporting vigils or nonviolent demonstrations, letter writing, seeking to influence political leaders and powerful interests such as management and trade unions and, above all, prayer. We also manage the R. J. Barker Fund to assist young people wishing to engage in projects, conferences or training involving peace, reconciliation and conflict resolution etc.

Our primary role is to be the peace-leaven within the Methodist Church, calling all Methodists to a re-examination of the Peace of Christ, as an essential part of the Church's mission of reconciliation. Recently we submitted material to the Methodist/URC report "Peacemaking - A Christian Vocation" which was overwhelmingly approved by both churches in 2006. It is recommended for study. We are small in number and do not know all the answers, but it is our conviction that God has called us to this task. If you share this conviction, we invite you to join us. There is no fixed subscription, but members are invited to subscribe annually according to their means (details of Gift Aid overleaf). It is now possible for those who cannot accept the full pacifist position to enrol as "supporters". Members and Supporters receive FoR-E Peacelinks and MPF communications and may attend MPF Executives (without a vote) and the AGM

MPF also supports and participates in ecumenical and international initiatives for peace and reconciliation. We aim to galvanize concerns for peace among Methodists including those not able to accept the full pacifist position. "*Peace in the 21st Century*" is a thoughtful and provocative paper begun by Dr. Alan Litherland and published quarterly. It is sent by post or email on a cost basis (please donate if you can). Secretary, Rev. Maurice H. Wright, 3, Cornwall Drive, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury, SY3 0EP, [mhw@surf.free.co.uk](mailto:mhw@surf.free.co.uk) 01743 873633

## **FoRE Publications**

FoRE, 19, Paradise Street, Oxford OX1 1LD, 01865 250781, publishes bi-monthly e-mail newsletter etc, [www.for.org.uk](http://www.for.org.uk). Email [office@for.org.uk](mailto:office@for.org.uk). The IFOR website gives an international perspective - [www.ifor.org](http://www.ifor.org)

## The Basis of the Fellowship of Reconciliation

That Love as revealed and interpreted in the life and death of Jesus Christ, involves more than we have yet seen, that it is the only power by which evil can be overcome and the only sufficient basis of human society.

That, in order to establish a world order based on Love, it is incumbent on those who believe in this principle to accept it fully, both for themselves and in relation to others, and to take the risks involved in doing so in a world which does not yet accept it.

That therefore, as Christians, we are forbidden to wage war, and that our loyalty to our country, to humanity, to the Church Universal, and to Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, calls us instead to a life-service for the enthronement of Love in personal, commercial and national life.

That the Power, Wisdom and Love of God stretch far beyond the limits of our present experience, and that He is ever waiting to break forth into human life in new and larger ways.

That since God manifests Himself in the world through men and women, we offer ourselves to His redemptive purpose to be used by Him in whatever way He may reveal to us.

Please note that the Basis was an expression of general agreement and never intended as a fixed form of words



### Enrolment Form

Please indicate by ticking one or more of the boxes

I have read the Basis and wish to be enrolled as a

Member  Supporter  of the Methodist Peace Fellowship and FoRE  
and enclose £.. as a donation for the work of Fellowship\*

Please send me a Gift Aid form & details of Tax retrieval.

Please send me further information about FoRE and its programmes/resources.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Denomination: **Methodist** Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission for this information to be held on computer  
by FoRE

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Please make all cheques  
payable to:-  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
England.  
Registered charity No  
207822**

**Please complete this form  
and return it to :-  
Mrs. Diana Beaumont  
37, Common Road  
Wombourne  
Wolverhampton  
WV5 0HB UK**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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