

A white dove is shown from a high angle, holding a green olive branch with several leaves in its beak. The dove's feet are visible, gripping the branch. Below the dove, a portion of the Earth is visible, showing continents and oceans. The background is a gradient of blue and white.

# Peace Discernment Process Facilitator's Guide

## Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

This packet is intended to help you facilitate a discernment process in which participants will work through the material in “Encountering the Gospel of Peace Anew: An Invitation to Discernment and Witness,” the Peace Discernment Steering Team’s Interim Report to the 220th General Assembly (2012). There are three options to consider for the discernment process. *Each assumes that you and all of the participants have already read the Interim Report in its entirety.* It is available at [www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment/](http://www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment/).

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Let us pursue  
what  
makes for  
peace. Romans 14:19

***Thank you for being a part of our denomination’s  
peace discernment conversation.***

## Planning Your Peace Discernment Process

1. Begin your work as facilitator with prayer, asking God to guide you and the process so that it will be an open-hearted process of growth and discovery for everyone.
2. Assemble a group of preferably 8 to 10 people from your congregation. Confer with your pastor and/or key congregational leaders. It helps to invite personally those you wish to be involved.
3. Keep the following options in mind as you assemble your group:
  - a. Assemble a never-before-assembled group, striving for as much diversity in the group as possible (age, gender, race, sexual orientation, political persuasion, different levels of experience with peacemaking); or
  - b. In worshiping communities where there has been a strong history of peacemaking involvement in the congregation, it may be important to assemble a group of intentional, seasoned peacemakers, those with keen interest in helping shape and deepen this ministry in the denomination; or
  - c. Invite “special interest” groups with natural, cultivated affiliations—high school youth groups, women’s groups, men’s groups, established adult Sunday school groups, small support groups in the church—to participate; or
  - d. Consider involving the session or the board of deacons.
4. Select a schedule for your discernment process. Three options are provided. For whichever option you select, set the date(s) well in advance.
5. Secure commitments from participants. Follow up with a reminder to attend.
6. Distribute the PDST Interim Report, “Encountering the Gospel of Peace Anew: An Invitation to Discernment and Witness,” ahead of time; ask all participants to read it in its entirety **before** attending the discernment gathering.
7. Appoint a “scribe” who will record, without names, the essential content of what is shared in the communal discernment times. Keep in mind that in order to complete the task, the scribe, like the facilitator, will not be able to participate as directly in the discernment process.
8. The facilitator and scribe need to be available for an additional 30 to 45 minutes after the discernment to compile the response forms and prepare their report of the event, summarizing the views of participants. It is understood that the facilitator and scribe may need some time for the event to “settle” and additional time to write up the event. You are strongly encouraged to submit your final report within 24 to 48 hours, while it is still fresh. It is our hope that your experience of this discernment process is a meaningful one. Your reporting of it will be extremely valuable to the larger church’s discernment process. This last step is critically important and we urge you to give it care and thought. IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR REPORT ELECTRONICALLY AT [www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment](http://www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment) or email it to [Carl.Horton@pcusa.org](mailto:Carl.Horton@pcusa.org).

## Possible Schedules

### Option 1: 4-Hour Retreat

Gathering, Introductions, Guidelines, Opening Prayer (20 minutes)

Individual Discernment (30 minutes)

Break (5 minutes)

Communal Discernment (60 minutes)

Break (10 minutes)

Engaging the Document (40 minutes)

“The Current Position of the Church”

“Jesus, the Early Church, and Nonviolence: Recovering a Lost Legacy”

Break (5 minutes)

Engaging the Document (45 minutes)

“The Challenges of Violence, Terrorism, and War”

“Living in a Culture of Violence and Fear”

“New Directions for Peacemaking: Nonviolent Action, Conflict Transformation, and Reconciliation”

Break (5 minutes)

Wrapping Up, Response Forms, Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

### Option 2: 4-Week Sunday School Series

*Each session is 1 hour in length.*

**Week 1:** Introductions, Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Individual Discernment on Questions 1–4 (25 minutes)

Communal Discernment (25 minutes)

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

**Week 2:** Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Individual Discernment on Questions 5–8 (10 minutes)

Communal Discernment (15 minutes)

Engaging the Document (25 minutes)

“Introduction,” “A Process of Discernment”

“The Current Position of the Church”

“Jesus, the Early Church, and Nonviolence: Recovering a Lost Legacy”

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

**Week 3:** Opening Prayer (5 minutes)  
Individual Discernment on Questions 9–16 (10 minutes)  
Communal Discernment (15 minutes)  
Engaging the Document (25 minutes)  
    “The Challenges of Violence, Terrorism, and War”  
    “Living in a Culture of Violence and Fear”  
Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

**Week 4:** Opening Prayer (5 minutes)  
Individual and Communal Discernment on Questions 17–20 (10 minutes)  
Engaging the Document (20 minutes)  
    “New Directions for Peacemaking: Nonviolent Action, Conflict Transformation, and Reconciliation”  
    “Discerning God’s Call to Presbyterian Peacemakers in the 21st Century”  
Wrapping Up, Response Forms (20 minutes)  
Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

### **Option 3: 5-Week Intensive Series**

*Each session is 2 hours in length.*

**Week 1:** Welcome and Orientation, Introductions, Guidelines, Opening Prayer (20 minutes)  
Individual Discernment on Questions 1–4 (40 minutes)  
Break (10 minutes)  
Communal Discernment (40 minutes)  
Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

**Week 2:** Welcome and Orientation, Opening Prayer (10 minutes)  
Individual Discernment on Questions 5–8 (10 minutes)  
Communal Discernment (10 minutes)  
Engaging the Document (35 minutes)  
    “Introduction,” “A Process of Discernment”  
    “The Current Position of the Church”  
Break (10 minutes)  
Engaging the Document (35 minutes)  
    “Jesus, the Early Church, and Nonviolence: Recovering a Lost Legacy”  
Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

**Week 3:** Welcome and Orientation, Opening Prayer (10 minutes)  
Individual Discernment on Questions 9–12 (15 minutes)  
Communal Discernment (15 minutes)  
Engaging the Document (60 minutes)  
    “The Challenges of Violence, Terrorism, and War”  
Break (10 minutes)  
Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

**Week 4:** Welcome and Orientation, Opening Prayer (10 minutes)  
Individual Discernment on Questions 13–16 (15 minutes)  
Communal Discernment (15 minutes)  
Engaging the Document (60 minutes)  
    “Living in a Culture of Violence and Fear”  
Break (10 minutes)  
Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

**Week 5:** Welcome and Orientation, Opening Prayer (10 minutes)  
Individual Discernment on Questions 17–20 (10 minutes)  
Communal Discernment (10 minutes)  
Engaging the Document (40 minutes)  
    “New Directions for Peacemaking:  
    Nonviolent Action, Conflict Transformation, and Reconciliation”  
    “Discerning God’s Call to Presbyterian Peacemakers in the 21st Century”  
Break (10 minutes)  
Wrapping Up, Response Forms (30 minutes)  
Closing Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

**Note:** The three options above focus on questions based in the resource material and group process. If time allows before or after any of these options, some participants may wish to visit a location with significance for reflection, such as a military base, a veterans’ hospital, a war cemetery, a military contractor factory, a peace organization, a monument, or a memorial.

## Companion Notes

### ***Gathering, Introductions, Guidelines, and Opening Prayer***

Welcome everyone. Introduce yourself and the peace discernment process. State the goal of the retreat: to participate in the denomination-wide peace discernment process, specifically to help the PC(USA) “seek clarity as to God’s call to the church to embrace nonviolence as its fundamental response to the challenges of violence, terror, and war; and identify, explore, and nurture new approaches to active peacemaking and nonviolence.”

Invite the participants to introduce themselves and state (in one sentence) their interest in being part of this peace discernment process.

Acknowledge at the outset that the issues discussed in the retreat are near and dear to our hearts. Questions about the necessity of war in a broken world, and Christians’ roles in those questions, have long been controversial in the church. For some of our church members, these are not abstract moral questions but ones that have been, and are being, lived by members of their families in active military service. Some of our church families may also have loved ones who have declared conscientious objection to war, or to the current wars. Hand out copies of “Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement” and highlight the main points. Ask for the group’s commitment to abide by these guidelines during your time together.

Please make use of the “Reflections and Prayers” provided. Light a candle or ring a small bell or a “singing bowl” to mark the beginning of your time together. Select a reflection (ask the scribe to read it). Pray together using one of the suggested prayers or one of the facilitator’s choosing.

### ***Individual Discernment***

Go over with the group the “Thoughts on ‘Discernment’” and the steps outlined for individual discernment in the “How to Do Discernment” section. (You may want to have copies of these available to hand out to participants.) Invite the participants to be guided by this process, to open themselves to it, even if it seems new and different, to make the process their own, and not to be too rigidly bound to it. The questions are designed to guide and direct the discernment process but not to be too prescriptive.

### ***Communal Discernment***

After the break, invite people to gather in a circle for the communal discernment process. Go over the process of *communal* discernment with the group. This section of “How to Do Discernment” describes the method of *mutual invitation*. Again, invite participants in the group to open themselves to this method. It’s been used in many different settings and has proven to be a very effective way of getting a wide variety of perspectives out on the table and establishing an atmosphere of mutual respect and openness.

### ***Engaging the Document***

After the break, invite people back into the circle for a time of active engagement and wrestling with the content of the document. Review with participants the helpful information in “Seeking to Be Faithful: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement.” Allow a few minutes of individual discernment time and communal sharing, using the discernment questions listed for the specific part of the document you’re discussing. Then open the conversation about the document with open-ended questions such as “What stood out for you in this section?” or “What struck you as important or interesting in this section?” or “What statements in this section seem most important for helping the church find clarity about peace?”

Make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to speak and that no one dominates the discussion. Draw the quiet ones into the conversation by inviting them to offer their thoughts if they would be comfortable doing so.

### ***Wrapping Up, Response Forms, Closing Prayer***

Thank everyone for being present and sharing in this peace discernment process. Before the group disperses, pass out copies of the Participant Response Form and take the time to fill them out together. (If you are doing the Peace Discernment Process over 4 to 5 weeks, it may be helpful for participants to receive the Participant Response Form at the end of the first session, so that they can jot down notes at the end of each week’s session.) We hope the discernment process is personally meaningful for all the participants. As important as that is, equally or more important is filling out the response forms and sharing their discernment with the larger church. There may be some who would like to take the forms with them to complete and turn in later. *Please encourage them to fill out the response forms before leaving so that their responses can be included in your online report.* We don’t want to lose their valuable input. If they have more insights later—and we hope they will—we’re developing an online format for ongoing conversation about peace and nonviolence, and we will invite them to be part of the church’s ongoing discernment process. Collect all the response forms.

Close with a time of prayer. One possibility is to form a circle holding hands and invite all the participants to offer brief prayers such as “I thank you, God, for . . .” and “I ask you, God, for . . .” in an open season of prayer. Close the circle with your own prayer, or designate someone in the group to offer the final prayer in the circle.

## Thoughts on “Discernment”

Some of the participants in your group may not be familiar with discernment as a spiritual practice or may have questions about it. We may hear texts like 1 John 4:1, “test the spirits,” (or 1 Thessalonians 5:12ff) and wonder what they mean. Actually, anyone who has ever wrestled with an important personal commitment, such as making a profession of faith, choosing a life partner, deciding what to study in college, or trying to determine what God is calling you to do in a particular situation, has engaged in a process of discernment. Discernment can also be a group experience, as when a family, a session, or a congregation seeks God’s will in challenging circumstances.

Discernment is the act of discovering the truth from an array of options. A discerning mind distinguishes the true path from a range of possible courses of action. Discernment has the sense of cutting through to the heart of the matter. As the Interim Report puts it, *“discernment involves slowing down and listening together for God’s voice speaking in our midst. Through discernment, we seek wisdom, clarity, and insight as to what God is calling us to be and do, here and now. In discernment, we try to see the world through God’s eyes and align our words and actions with God’s will.”*

Some of the members of your group may ask, *“What’s the goal of this process, and where are we headed with all this?”* It’s a perfectly natural question. Discernment is something different than stating clear goals and objectives at the outset and then setting out to accomplish them. Instead, discernment invites you to set aside planning and goal-setting and enter into a process of prayerful searching and discovering. There is a fruitful paradox at the heart of discernment: on the one hand, if discernment is to be genuine, it cannot have predetermined outcomes; it must be truly open-ended. On the other hand, we never come to discernment with a blank slate but always bring with us our experiences, our history, our values. Authentic discernment, then, involves us bringing all of who we are into a fresh, potentially life-changing, encounter with the Spirit of the Living Christ, and where Christ leads us, none of us can say in advance.

So, all of us as individuals and as part of various communal groups know something about the **act** of discernment. One of our hopes in this process of discerning peace is that discernment will become a **habit** among us, that we will develop a disposition, a yearning for discernment and practice it regularly in all aspects of our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.



# How To Do Discernment

## *Steps for Individual Discernment, Communal Discernment, and Engaging the Document*

### **Individual Discernment: Using Lectio Divina**

- Step 1:** Look over the series of discernment questions quietly, meditatively, and alone.
- Step 2:** Identify one or two of the questions you feel drawn to, questions that speak to you or stand out in some way.
- Step 3:** Focus on the one or two questions, praying and meditating on them and journaling about them if you feel so inclined. What comes up for you in these questions? What images, experiences or concerns come to mind? Write down your answers. Do you sense any divine guidance?
- Step 4:** Ask yourself, “Are there any ‘nudges of the Spirit’ moving me in a particular direction, to do anything in particular? How is God’s peace calling me?” Name any new impetus to action or practical steps you feel drawn to try as a result of these questions.
- Step 5:** Go back to the list of discernment questions, and this time identify one or two questions that you resist or turn away from.
- Step 6:** Repeat steps 3 and 4 with these discernment questions.

### **Communal Discernment: Using Mutual Invitation**

**Step 1:** The group comes back together and gathers in a circle.

**Step 2:** The facilitator explains the method of **mutual invitation**.

Each person in the group will be invited to share the insights gleaned from their personal meditation on the discernment questions (4 to 5 minutes):

- What questions were you drawn to or felt resistance toward? Why?
- What images, stories, experiences, or concerns emerged in your discernment?
- How did the Spirit speak to you about any new direction or leading for your journey as a peacemaker?

Each person may pass if they wish, but it is hoped that everyone will wish to share. The facilitator begins, models the process, and keeps to the suggested time, then invites another member of the group to share, “I invite \_\_\_\_\_ to share.” This process is repeated until everyone has been invited to share. Each speaker is an honored discerner. In mutual invitation, the focus is on summoning every voice in the group and listening without discussion while each person speaks. Each participant speaks their truth while the rest of the group honors their contribution by listening respectfully, whether or not they agree.

**Step 3:** Using mutual invitation, each person in the group is invited to share insights from the individual discernment time (4 to 5 minutes). The scribe records content without using names.

### **Engaging the Document**

**Step 1:** Invite people back into the circle. Review the “Guidelines for Disagreement.”

**Step 2:** Engage the document section by section, allowing time for discussion and disagreement.

# Discernment Questions

*From the Peace Discernment Steering Team's Interim Report*

**The Peace Discernment Process into which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is now being invited is concerned principally with the following four questions:**

1. How can the PC(USA) hasten the day when war and violence are no longer considered acceptable or inevitable means for resolving conflicts? What are the best means for providing protection and security?
2. Should the PC(USA) continue to rely on the "just war" tradition as its basis for restraining war, or have the conditions of modern warfare and the politics and economics of war rendered our historic stance obsolete? Are there new emphases and different biblical alternatives to consider?
3. Is the PC(USA) now being called to become a "peace church," not simply opposing particular wars but affirming nonviolence as a basic orientation toward conflict in our daily lives, in our communities, and in our world? If so, what would the implications of such a stance be for those in the military, those in military industries, and for our witness in society?
4. How can Presbyterians help transform complicated structures of injustice and oppression and address the threat of environmental degradation?

### **Jesus, the Early Church, and Nonviolence: Recovering a Lost Legacy**

5. How do we respond to the example of Jesus and the nonviolent church of the first three centuries after seventeen centuries of trying to restrain violence through just war categories? Is there a third way between fight and flight?
  
6. In what ways does the church today practice (or fail to practice) Jesus' message of nonviolence?
  
7. How do you understand the current just war tradition of the church? Do you agree with an expectation, or even acceptance, of some amount of war? Why or why not?
  
8. How do you feel about military force being used to keep peace and maintain security? What are the limits to military action and how can they be applied?

### **The Challenges of Violence, Terrorism, and War**

9. Have the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan changed the way you think about war? If so, how? What lessons have you learned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?
  
10. Do you, in your own life, see signs of a "military-industrial-congressional" complex supporting our tendency to use force or threat of force?

11. What effects do you see in the shift from the citizen-soldier model to the volunteer or professional soldier model with contractor support?

12. As Christians should we expect or encourage our political leaders to show mercy to our nation's enemies?

### **Living in a Culture of Violence and Fear**

13. How have your experiences with violence and/or war affected you, your faith, and/or your views about peacemaking?

14. How is discrimination against particular populations within our society (sexism, racism, classism, ethnic or religious prejudice, etc.) a form of violence? How would you define "structural violence"?

15. How do cultural practices such as violence in entertainment media impact us? Do you think they lead to greater violence or to more passivity? Why? Are we in some sense bullied and disempowered by the world of fantasy?

16. Are economic practices of unemployment, poverty-level wages, and work without health or retirement benefits forms of structural violence?

**New Directions for Peacemaking:**

**Nonviolent Action, Conflict Transformation, and Reconciliation**

17. Have you ever been offered an opportunity to take a bold stand for peace? If so, how did you respond? If not, do you wish you could have such an opportunity?

18. New forms of just peacemaking and nonviolence include accompaniment (where persons from outside a situation protect persons and communities under threat), truth and reconciliation commissions (an alternative to taking revenge), public expressions of confession and repentance by leaders, citizen diplomacy, shared reconstruction projects, as well as demonstrations and forms of large-scale noncooperation with undemocratic regimes. How effective can such measures be, and how essential is it for the church to encourage them?

19. Peace efforts based in international law usually involve the United Nations to develop and implement diplomatic consensus, although NATO and other regional bodies are sometimes also involved. How important are efforts at international policing or humanitarian intervention, and how different are these from wars initiated by individual nations?

20. How could the PC(USA) do a more effective job of teaching nonviolence to its members? What other characteristics would mark a "peace church" stance in today's world?

# Seeking to Be Faithful Together

## *Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement*

In a spirit of trust and love, we promise we will . . .

### Give them a hearing . . . listen before we answer

John 7:51 and  
Proverbs 18:13

- 1 Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ;**
  - we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange,
  - we will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others.
- 2 Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.**
- 3 State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.**

### Speak the truth in love

Ephesians 4:15

- 4 Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teachings.**
- 5 Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity;**
  - we will not engage in name-calling or labelling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.
- 6 Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.**

### Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace

Ephesians 4:3

- 7 Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.**
- 8 Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension;**
  - we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
- 9 Follow these additional guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:**
  - urge persons of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;
  - seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;
  - be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
  - abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways which are consistent with these Guidelines.
- 10 Include our disagreement in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.**

Adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for use by sessions and congregations

# Participant Response Form

Please respond to all the questions, using the space provided.

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Church/Institution/Group \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which discernment questions did you choose to reflect on in the individual discernment time?
2. What came out of that individual discernment time for you?
3. What did you take away from the communal discernment time when you listened to others in your group?
4. What general impressions do you have of the Interim Report?
5. What did you find challenging in the Interim Report?





# Facilitator/Scribe Report Form

This form may also be filled out online at [www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment](http://www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment)

Name of Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Discernment Process \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Best contact for facilitator(s) Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule (select one)  4-hour retreat  4-week series  5-week intensive

Role (select one)  Facilitator  Scribe

Number of participants in discernment process \_\_\_\_\_

How many participants in your discernment group were:

Male  Female

Under age 40  Age 40 or older

White  Racial/Ethnic

Active or retired military  Never served in the military

Were there any particularly poignant stories that came out of the peace discernment process that could be shared with or without attribution with the Peace Discernment Steering Team? (Attach a separate sheet or include these stories in your summary of responses)

IN ADDITION TO THIS FORM, PLEASE SEND OR UPLOAD A SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES AND NOTES FROM THE CONVERSATION. YOU ARE ALSO ENCOURAGED TO SEND PARTICIPANT RESPONSE FORMS OR SCAN AND UPLOAD THEM TO US AT [www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment](http://www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment)

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202

# Peace Reflections and Prayers

## I. Reflections

1. Oscar Romero wrote, "It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts: it is beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is the Lord's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. No sermon says all that should be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfections. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. That is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted knowing they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that affects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very, very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the Master Builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future that is not our own."
2. Jack Bernard, a co-founder of the Church of the Sojourners in San Francisco, wrote, "The key element in beginning to learn to embody the love of God is not heroic faith and determination. It has to do with whether or not we can take hold of the love of God as a power that includes us within it. The difference is between seeing life from the inside of God versus seeing it from within my own sensibilities and capacities. From inside the love of God, suffering becomes not only bearable, but a privilege of participating with Christ in his love for the world. This cannot be rationally explained or justified, but it is the fruit of a life trustingly lived in and for God who is all love."
3. Nonviolence is not just for an elite few, it is for everyone. It is a way of life based on respect for each human person and for the environment. It is also a means of bringing about social and political change and resisting evil without entering into evil. It is a whole new way of thinking.
4. People try nonviolence for a week, and when it doesn't "work" they go back to violence, which hasn't worked for centuries.
5. King did not begin the Montgomery bus boycott with a personal commitment to nonviolence. This commitment came later as he shifted the primary focus of his thinking from justice to love. Before his shift to the primacy of love and following the bombing of his house (30 January 1956), King had armed guards around his house and even applied for a permit to carry a gun in his car. But when he made the shift to love, nonviolence became more than just a practical way for an oppressed people to achieve justice; it also became a way of life, a total commitment.
6. Human evolution has provided the species with two deeply instinctual responses to violence: flight or fight. Jesus offers a third way: nonviolent direct action.

7. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding.
8. Though the Reformed tradition has justified the resort to violence in response to particular forms of oppression, its emphasis on the reconciling vision of love presumes that the choice of nonviolence is more appropriate.
9. War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.
10. Every gun that is made, every warship launched,  
every rocket fired signifies,  
in the final sense,  
a theft from those who hunger and are not fed,  
those who are cold and are not clothed.

This world in arms is not spending money alone.  
It is spending the sweat of its laborers,  
the genius of its scientists,  
the hopes of its children.

11. Think of what a world we could build if the power unleashed in war were applied to constructive tasks! One-tenth of the energy that the various belligerents spent in the war, a fraction of the money they exploded in hand grenades and poison gas, would suffice to raise the standard of living in every country and avert the economic catastrophe of worldwide unemployment. We must be prepared to make the same heroic sacrifices for the cause of war. There is no task that is more important or closer to my heart.
12. We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap  
warranting endless competition among us  
but as a deliberate act of God  
to make us a community of brothers and sisters  
jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer  
to the varied problems of life.
13. Time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of stagnation.
14. Let us recognize that as with individuals, so with social structures: they can be outwardly orderly yet inwardly violent. And if violence means violating human integrity, then without hesitation we must call violent any social structure that condemns human beings to hopelessness and helplessness, to less than human existence. Further, it is clear that people concerned with non-violence must show not only compassion for the victims of violence but also a determination to change the structures of society that make them objects of compassion.

15. My experience has been that the poor know violence more intimately than most people because it has been a part of their lives, whether the violence of the gun or the violence of want and need. I don't subscribe to the belief that non-violence is cowardice. When people are involved in something constructive, trying to bring about change, they tend to be less violent than those who are not engaged in rebuilding or in anything creative. Non-violence forces one to be creative; it forces any leader to go to the people and get them involved so that they can come forth with new ideas. I think that once people understand the strength of non-violence—the force it generates, the love it creates, the response that it brings from the total community—they will not be willing to abandon it easily.
16. Peace means imagining a way to work out differences through dialogue and negotiation. It means valuing other children as much as our own, citing casualties in one figure without distinguishing between nationalities. Peace is envisioning a solution to the unsolvable. It means thinking the unthinkable, that we might just call a halt, yesterday to war.

## II. Prayers

17. Leader: Remember, O Lord, the peoples of the world divided into many nations and tongues. Deliver us from every evil that gets in the way of your saving purpose; and fulfill the promise of peace on earth among people with whom you are pleased; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**People: Amen.**

Leader: From the curse of war and human sin that causes war;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From pride that turns its back on you, and from unbelief that will not call you Lord;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From national vanity that poses as patriotism; from arrogant boasting and blind self-worship that admit no guilt;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From the self-righteousness that will not compromise, and from selfishness that gains by the oppression of others;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From the lust for money or power that arouses the urge to kill;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From trusting in the weapons of war, and mistrusting the councils of peace;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From hearing, believing, and speaking lies about other nations;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From groundless suspicions and fears that stand in the way of reconciliation;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

Leader: From words and deeds that encourage discord, prejudice, and hatred; from everything that prevents the human family from fulfilling your promise of peace;

**People: O Lord, deliver us.**

18. Spirit of truth and judgment, who alone can cast out the powers that grip our world at the point of crisis, give us your discernment, that we may accurately name what is evil, and know the way that leads to peace, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

19. Our heart is comforted  
in its awareness of You  
Soul within our soul  
Life within all life.  
Our heart is comfort  
in remembering You  
Giver of this day  
Gift of every moment.  
May we be bearers of comfort,  
May we be strong in our soul  
to cry at the wrongs of nations  
to weep with the bleeding earth  
to mourn with those who mourn this night  
in the loss of life and ends  
in the loss of dreams and hope.  
May we be strong in our soul this night.

20. Prayer of Blessing

May the deep blessings of earth be with us.  
May the fathomless soundings of seas surge in our soul.  
May boundless stretches of the universe echo in our depths  
to open us to wonder  
to strengthen us for love  
to humble us with gratitude  
that we may find ourselves in one another  
that we may lose ourselves in gladness  
that we give ourselves to peace.

21. Prayer of Awareness

It is because we long for peace  
that we pray.  
It is because we hope for wholeness  
that we hunger.  
It is because we need forgiveness  
that we seek new beginnings.  
So we come  
entering the depths of our soul  
to plead for peace  
to summon wholeness  
to beg forgiveness of ourselves and one another  
and thus of You  
Soul within our soul  
Light within our longings.  
Be still and aware.

22. Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is sadness, joy; where there is darkness, light.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; not so much to be understood, as to understand; not so much to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

23. A Woman's Prayer for Peace

When I think of peace, I think of a world where human beings are no longer brutalized on account of such accidents of birth as sex, race, religion, or nationality. For me, peace is a way of structuring human relations where daily acts of kindness and caring are tangibly rewarded. It is a way of thinking, feeling, and acting where our essential interconnection with one another is truly honored.

I pray for a world where we live in partnership rather than domination; where "man's conquest of nature" is recognized as suicidal and sacrilegious; where power is no longer equated with the blade, but with the holy chalice: the ancient symbol of the power to give, nurture, enhance life. And I not only pray, but actively work, for the day when it will be so.

24. Loving God, we long for a world at peace, a world free from violence and war, a world free from hunger and poverty, a world free from injustice and oppression. In Jesus Christ, you show us a force more powerful than evil, sin, and death. You show us the power of love and truth to bring about personal transformation and social change. Help us to embrace Jesus' way of nonviolence. Stir us from our comfort and complacency. Inspire us with prophetic vision. Instill in us a passion for the possible. Give us courage to speak truth to power. Help us heal the wounds of our broken world.

**Please see the PC(USA)'s Book of Common Worship: There are 16 relevant prayers on pages 795 797, 799, 816 819.**

25. Gracious and Loving God, You have called us together to do the work of Your church. Be present with us during this meeting, guide us that we may make decisions that will reflect Your loving presence in this world. Create within us open minds and hearts, that we will not fear conflict or run from it, but embrace it, knowing that it is an opportunity for growing in faith and a fuller understanding of Your will for us. Help us to listen to each other, share our thoughts in loving, honest ways and do all we can to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

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Guide our feet  
into the way of  
peace.

—Luke 1:79



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