

PEACE –

what the churches in Sweden want

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Foreword

During the first decade of the new millennium, the United Nations (UN) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) each chose to particularly highlight peace and non-violence. The United Nations proclaimed the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, and the World Council of Churches proclaimed a Decade to Overcome Violence. The board of the Christian Council of Sweden decided in 2002 to establish a programme entitled A Culture of Peace, which aims to contribute to the two decades and to broaden and deepen the involvement of churches in building a culture of peace in accordance with these decades.

In Porto Alegre in 2006, the Assembly of the World Council of Churches decided to initiate a broad process to develop an ecumenical declaration on Just Peace that will be presented at the final conference of the Decade to Overcome Violence in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011.

Churches in Sweden, gathered in the Christian Council of Sweden, want to be a clear voice and actors for peace and justice. Inspired by the work of the World Council of Churches, the board of the Swedish Christian Council agreed to develop a Swedish paper on Just Peace. A working group, mandated by church leaders and including representatives from the Lutheran, Catholic, Free Church and Orthodox church families as well as experts from the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council, has during 2009 and 2010 worked to produce this booklet, entitled "PEACE – what the churches in Sweden want".

Peace is so much more than the absence of armed conflict. Peace needs to be realized in families, in neighborhoods, in cities, between groups and nations. These various kinds of peace are interconnected

and interdependent. This paper highlightens several aspects of peace in the chapters - “Peace in our daily lives”, “Peace with Creation”, “Peace and Justice” and “Building Peace”.

This publication is meant to be read and used by many. Congregations, associations, schools and all people of good will are invited to make their contribution to work for peace. The points listed under “Therefore, we call upon each other to...” are directed at these groups. Points listed under “Therefore we want” are also directed towards politicians and policymakers in our country, with concrete demands for steps towards Just Peace. Everyone cannot do everything, but each part can join together to complete the jigsaw puzzle. As churches, we are one big community in which we all are parts of one body.

Our ambition is that this booklet should be short and accessible. It should also be able to be the basis for many hours of more in-depth study. Last, the document is a simple study guide.

Christian Council of Sweden

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Background

Peace in the Bible

Political peace and inner peace are the same word in the Bible's basic texts, although in Swedish different words are used. The words of Jesus farewell address to his disciples have something crucial to say about the Bible's view of peace: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27).

Peace is God's gift to humanity. To live in peace is to take advantage of God's gift of a life in harmony with creation and our fellow human beings, a life of freedom and justice where all our human needs are met. The word shalom in the Old Testament is usually translated as peace, but its significance is broader: it includes aspects such as fullness and prosperity but also justice and righteousness. So peace in the Bible is about much more than the absence of armed conflict.

In the New Testament, the message of peace is an important part of Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God. The angelic song of Christmas night sets the tone: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests. (Luke 2:14).

The quote from John's Gospel above suggests a conflict between the peace that Jesus offers, and peace "as the world gives". The peace which the angels sang of above the shepherd's meadow in Bethlehem came at a time when Caesar Augustus was at the height of his power.

He had united the Roman Empire and installed “The Roman peace”, a peace based on oppression of other peoples. “The Roman peace” meant the absence of armed conflict, while peace in a biblical context is not just about the absence of war but also and perhaps above all about peace and justice.

The meeting between Jesus and Pilate (John 18:28 - 19:16) shows how these two perspectives clash. Here, two representatives of two different types of power meet, the power of oppression and the power of service. Two different visions of peace meet: the Roman peace and the peace that Jesus offers. In the meeting with Pilate, Jesus says: My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my followers would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place. Jesus does not deny that he has power, but suggests that his kingdom, and therefore his power are of a different kind, like the peace he offers.

The path of service leads to death on the cross, but it doesn't stop there: Jesus' resurrection shatters the boundaries of death and tells us that life, not death, is the last word. Through faith in the resurrection, the church finds inspiration for its striving for peace and justice.

War and Peace in the history of the Church

There are two approaches to violence and war running through the history of the Church: the pacifist approach and the doctrine of the just war. Basically, both perspectives distance themselves from war as an idea, but the latter identifies situations in which violence and war are the least evil alternative.

In the early centuries, when the Christian church was a vulnerable minority in the Roman Empire, the pacifist position dominated. When the church at the end of the 300's became the state religion perspectives changed and the doctrine of the just war began to develop. Church father Augustine and later Thomas Aquinas were important in this development. As the doctrine of the just war became the dominant position also in the churches of the reformation, the pacifist approach was preserved in some smaller denominations and movements. The doctrine of the just war was based in part on a number of

criteria, such as 1) the war must be for a just cause, 2) the use of force must be a last resort when other avenues have been tried and failed 3) the benefits to humanity must outweigh the evil that war entails.

History shows that the church has been involved in acts of violence and war that cannot be justified by the doctrine of the just war on many occasions, such as the medieval crusades or the bloody conquest of the Americas. Even in recent times church representatives have not always rejected the violence used by particular states and have sometimes even legitimized it. At the same time political leaders do not shy away from using Biblical arguments to defend the use of force. But there are also plenty of examples of how the church has been working for peace. It is important to continue and deepen our reflection on what a Christian approach to violence means. However, there is a risk of getting stuck in a polarized debate between pacifism and the doctrine of the just war. Instead, we can together focus on how we can best work to counter violence and promote peace.

Peace does not come by itself

Representatives from churches in the South often point to the link between peace and justice: without justice, no peace. At the Episcopal Conference of Medellin in Colombia in 1968, the Catholic bishops of Latin America discussed institutionalized (or structural) violence, in other words structural injustices. It was this rather than armed violence which they saw as the real threat to people, which must be addressed if peace is to be created. The bishops outlined their vision for peace against the background of spiraling violence that marked and continues to shape the reality that many people live in. Poverty is in itself a kind of violence; people are deprived of life opportunities. The ecumenical movement has also highlighted the link between peace and justice, such as at World Council of Churches Assembly in Vancouver in 1983: peace is “as the prophet Isaiah teaches us, a fruit of justice”.

Peace is not something that comes by itself, peace must be built and this peace-building is a challenge for the church. Peace is certainly a gift from God, but the way the church manages this gift reveals the extent to which we are faithful to the calling to be peace builders. The churches are called to speak and act against injustice and for peace, as a prophetic voice. By protesting against injustice, in solidarity with those who are oppressed, the churches become involved in God's mission in the world.

Peace in everyday life – to be an instrument of God’s peace

Peace in everyday life is peace with myself, my loved ones, colleagues at work, people in my neighborhood, the community I live in, the country I am a citizen of, as well as, peace between nations, peoples and interests. Every human being has a responsibility to contribute to a culture of peace, it is our mission, or as Jesus said: Do to others what you would have them do to you (Matt. 7:12).

Violence in everyday life has many faces: structural discrimination against vulnerable groups, racism, and the oppression of minorities, an unjust distribution of social resources, domestic violence, segregation, harassment and bullying in schools and workplaces, and more.

The objectification of the human body, in particular of women and children, contributes to devaluing human dignity, which in turn can lead to trafficking, prostitution, rape and other abuses. The violence around us must be defined and actively countered.

In Psalm 34 we learn not only to shun evil and strive for peace, but also to keep our tongue from evil and our lips from false words. Everyday peace begins in our hearts but also extends into the globalized world where our love of Jesus becomes visible in action. In the twelfth chapter of Romans Paul says that we serve God by being joyful in hope, patient in suffering and faithful in prayer. And all this proceeds from serving

each other, outdoing each other in showing mutual esteem, showing each other affection in brotherly and sisterly love and holding on to what is good.

The task of the congregation is to be a prophetic sign that peace and coexistence is possible.

That mission must be our constant endeavor. The starting point is Jesus and his meeting with a context that was subjected to an occupying power. In the Bible we see repeated examples of how people who come close to Jesus have their self-worth affirmed and are restored. Children, women and men who previously lived under the oppressive systems of society are enabled to pass on resurrection life, through their new identity in Christ.

By receiving God's peace, for example in the Eucharist, we receive the source of reconciliation and forgiveness. Through the spiritual exercises (like Bible reading, prayer, retreat and pilgrimage), our insight into and experience of peace as a way of life is deepened along with our understanding of the task of passing this insight on, for example through training. Parents have a special responsibility to raise their children as peace builders, and need support in this work.

The congregation should be a protected zone for the vulnerable, a moral voice for the weak in society, not least children. Therefore, it is necessary for the church to take an active stand for peace and against violence in all its forms.

“To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”

Karl Barth

Therefore, we want:

- * Society's resources to be distributed more fairly, as an effective way to combat violence
- * Training in nonviolence and conflict management to be given at all levels in schools

- * Each workplace to actively work against harassment and bullying through training and skills development.

Therefore, we speak out against:

- * The inadequate counteraction of structural discrimination, the oppression of minorities, racism and segregation
- * The treatment of people's bodies as objects in advertising and other communication, on television and in other media
- * The glorification of violence, for example in computer games and films, as this makes efforts to create a culture of peace more difficult.

Therefore, we call upon each other to:

- * Seek a deeper spirituality, both individually and together in congregations, to strengthen and develop a culture of peace
- * Self-critically recognize our shortcomings as peace actors, but at the same time trust that we, as people created in God's image, have what it takes to be agents of peace
- * In our congregations, actively shape a culture of peace and create a protected environment for vulnerable people, especially children
- * In our congregations offer parenting courses in peace and conflict management, focusing on children and the family
- * As a congregation work to facilitate the integration of new Swedes in the community by offering fellowship, support and practical help, for example through SKRs Accompaniment Programme, which trains people to support new Swedes.

Peace with Creation

Our salvation cannot be separated from creation. While the rest of creation can survive without us humans, humans cannot survive on a ruined planet. Environmental pollution and a changing climate threaten our hopes for peace.

The earth is the Lords and everything in it (Psalm 24:1). We humans are God's image and we are entrusted with the care of the creation we are a part of. Environmental problems and climate change show that we have failed. Waste is dumped; forests are felled, natural resources are depleted and species face extinction. We are dependent upon each other and upon creation, but the policies that lead to climate change are an expression of a lack of accountability and failing humanity.

We must strive for a sustainable society where people are given equal opportunities. It is both about people here and now, the global community, and about future generations. This requires a sustainable approach to the management of environmental, economic and social issues. The climate issue is about justice and ethics. Western consumption patterns are unsustainable. We can to some extent influence developments through individual choices, for example as consumers, but we must also act socially and politically, as individual citizens and as a church in a global society. Only then can profound changes take place, for an environmentally and socially sustainable development.

Poor people in developing countries contribute least to global emissions, but are most vulnerable to the adverse effects. We

speak of "ecological footprints" that people leave on nature. Rich men's feet are the biggest, followed by rich women's and then poor men. The smallest impressions on nature are made by poor women. Women are generally, regardless of their living conditions, more environmentally friendly than men. Therefore it is essential that women take part in setting the agenda for the world's development - the fight against environmental destruction must be united with the struggle for gender equality.

Therefore, we want:

- * Sweden to dare to stand for an effective and just climate policy
- * The EU and other developed countries to heed climate research results and increase their commitments to reduce emissions
- * Rich countries to help finance the reduction of poor countries' emissions
- * The countries of the world to create legally binding agreements, and not only political agreements on the environment
- * Climate policy to be seen in relation to work for gender equality, in order to increase women's opportunities to be involved in setting the political agenda

Therefore, we speak out against:

- * Rich countries prioritizing their own welfare and economic development rather than drastically reducing their emissions for the benefit of poor countries in great need of development

- * Rich countries failing to take responsibility for the effects of climate change on poor countries, climate change that poor countries have contributed very little to
- * Rich countries moving their own environmental problems to poorer countries, for example through the dumping of waste from dirty industries

Therefore, we call upon each other to:

- * Strive for a cautious and sustainable lifestyle, where we are prepared, to the extent that we can, to forego some of our comfort for the sake of the environment
- * Learn how to make climate-smart choices
- * Review our traveling, eat seasonal produce and more vegetarian food, buy locally produced goods
- * Use our consumer power and demand climate certification on the goods we buy
- * Initiate a working group or similar group in the congregation, to produce a plan (for example, an environmental policy) for how we manage our activities to reduce our environmental impact

Peace and Justice

Increasing economic integration in the world has created greater prosperity but also led to deeper inequality. The gaps between rich and poor are increasing. In the globalized economy the free flow of goods, services and money between countries is increasing. Flows are driven partly by lots of little decisions that we as consumers make every day; decisions that can be more or less ethical, and help to reduce or increase inequities. The flows are controlled and regulated by institutions, agreements and policy decisions. These can be influenced.

Many things in the world are getting better all the time, but much work remains to be done. For example, 1.4 billion people (of about 6.7 billion) still live in extreme poverty. Those who belong to the world's wealthiest 20 percent use 80 percent of the Earth's resources.

We live in one world, a world rich in diversity but poor in justice.

In today's globalized economy, we are closer to each other than we think. The sheets that surround us when we sleep, the shirt or t-shirt that we wear on our skin is made of cotton which is often grown in India, Egypt or Peru. The coffee we drink to cope with getting up and going to work is grown and picked by farmers in Southeast Asia, Africa or Latin America. The metal in the mobile phones we use has often been mined in China, the Congo or Bolivia. Together Christians around the world pray for their daily bread. But when we ask for it, some know that they can safely buy a lot more bread than they

need while others pray without knowing whether they will be able to feed themselves today or tomorrow. Why do we accept that living conditions are so different?

The church is global and often has both a better understanding of global inequalities, and greater opportunities to work for a fairer distribution of resources than many other players. Swedish churches and denominations have plenty of opportunities to participate and influence development by encouraging and supporting their partners in the South. They in turn can support various interest groups, such as women, to effectively increase the local community's knowledge and ability to influence change.

International trade is necessary for most countries' development. For the poorest countries to benefit from the potential created by international trade, clearer and fairer trade rules are essential. Investments to strengthen national capacity in trade negotiations are also needed as are investments in infrastructure to enable farmers to reach international markets with their goods. Rich countries' subsidies to their own agricultural sector form major trade barriers for many poor countries.

The UN:s Millennium development Goals are eight measurable goals for reduced poverty, that should be achieved at the latest by 2015. For example, poverty and hunger should be halved and all children should be able to attend primary school. The rich countries have a particular responsibility for just trade relations, debt cancellation and increased development assistance, necessary preconditions for eliminating poverty and hunger.

In the New Testament, we meet Jesus as the bread of life and Jesus' very presence gives life. The Eucharist illustrates the Bible's view of the bread - bread that meets both physical and spiritual hunger. When we share communion bread, it is not only with God and with people in our local church but with all humanity.

When resources are shared there is enough for everyone.

There is enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed.

Gandhi

Therefore, we want:

- * Sweden to take its responsibility to contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals
- * Sweden to work for a just global regulatory framework for trade, to create good conditions for poor countries to develop
- * Swedish companies with operations abroad to ensure that their workers have decent wages and a decent working environment and have their human rights respected, including trade union rights
- * Sweden's development assistance to remain at least 1 percent of GNP (gross national product) and Sweden to put pressure on the large number of countries that do not meet the UN target of 0.7 percent in aid.

Therefore, we speak out against:

- * Development assistance that is not based on the recipient countries' own strategies to combat poverty, but controls in detail through requiring a certain type of economic reform
- * Development assistance funds being eroded through using them to finance debt relief, the receipt of refugees and foreign students
- * The development assistance budget being used to fund military operations and the adjustment to or combat of climate change

Therefore, we call upon each other to:

- * Protest against current trade rules that primarily benefit rich countries
- * Learn about human rights and contribute to defending them
- * Use our consumer power by buying fair trade
- * Work for our congregation to become Fair Trade Church

Building Peace

The leaders of the world's states are investing more and more money in weapons and military operations. Over the last decade, military spending has increased by 45 percent. In 2009, military spending amounted to 1531 billion U.S. dollars. In modern war, it is primarily civilians who are affected. Strong economic interests often exacerbate and prolong conflicts, in order, for example, to secure access to raw materials. The export of arms from Sweden has multiplied over the past decade, despite the fact that we have a law which states that arms export is generally prohibited, and that all sales are carried out as exceptions. According to the peace research institute, SIPRI, Sweden was the tenth largest weapons exporter in the world during the last ten years. Arms exports contribute to war and poverty and strengthen dictatorships.

In 1983 representatives from churches in sixty countries gathered in Uppsala for the Christian World Conference on Life and Peace. In the Conference final document, the participants were unanimous in declaring that warfare with nuclear weapons can never be justified. "We demand controlled and verifiable mutual disarmament agreements aimed at the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within five years." Nearly thirty years later, nuclear weapons still pose a danger to our planet. All efforts for nuclear disarmament should therefore be intensified.

Today there is considerable knowledge about methods of non-violence and how to prevent conflicts. By investing in

these techniques and using them at an early stage, many armed conflicts could be prevented. Within the non-violence tradition there is a valuable insight that the means and the ends need to be consistent with each other. By using 'means' characterized by respect for everyone's human dignity, transparency and participation, opportunities to find lasting solutions can begin to emerge. An example of a working method that needs to be spread is protective presence, in which people by their presence help to reduce the risk of violence. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel / Palestine and Fellowship of Reconciliation peace observers in Latin America are examples of such activities. Another important area is the work done to promote the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution aims to increase women's participation in efforts to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, as women are currently very under-represented in these contexts, despite being those most affected.

The church's mission is to be a tool for God's purposes in the world. With Jesus as a role model she is called to stand on the side of the poor and powerless, to bear witness to the truth - even when it involves risks - and to be a community that promotes healing and reconciliation. Through preaching the crucified and risen Jesus, the church points towards the path through suffering to a new transformed life. How congregations relate to violence is an important part of their testimony. Here the historic peace churches are forerunners - Mennonites, Quakers and Church of the Brethren (an Anabaptist movement in the United States). By refusing to accept violence and instead walking the path of non-violence like Jesus they show one way for Christians to live in a world plagued by violence in so many forms.

Peace is not something you wish for; it is something you make, something you do, something you are and something you give away.

Mother Teresa

Therefore, we want:

- * The development of a civilian capacity for the prevention of armed conflict and peace- building to be prioritized over resources for military intervention
- * The Swedish arms export law to be made more restrictive so that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and Sweden's Policy for Global Development (which says that all policies should seek ways to strengthen the Swedish contribution to equitable and sustainable global development) is prioritized over military and political interests in continued arms exports, and for arms exports to dictatorships to be made impossible
- * Sweden to take a more active role and work for ambitious goals in the ongoing UN process to develop a global treaty to regulate the arms trade (Arms Trade Treaty)
- * Sweden to take an active role in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325, both nationally and globally

Therefore, we speak out against:

- * Swedish arms exports being supported by public funds
Sweden investing more resources in military operations abroad than in civil ways to prevent and manage armed conflicts

Therefore, we call upon each other to:

- * Immerse ourselves in non-violence as a way of life by studying the gospel message of non-violence, such as the Sermon on the Mount

- * Learn in our congregations about methods for using non-violence to achieve social change, for example by supporting and participating in programs for protective presence and providing training in nonviolence and conflict management in conflict affected areas
- * Explore how we as churches in Sweden can work against arms exports, particularly those destined for countries in conflict and countries where serious violations of human rights occur or for countries where arms deals threaten to undermine poverty reduction
- * Working for a convention banning nuclear weapons, for example by urging our cities to join the international network of Mayors for Peace (Mayors for Peace, www.mayorsforpeace.org)
- * Not buying shares in mutual funds that trade with companies in the arms industry or with companies that violate human rights

The churches in Sweden, gathered in the Christian Council of Sweden, want to be a clear voice and agent in the work for peace and justice.

This document has been produced on the request of the board of the Christian Council. It discusses a variety of aspects of peace.

Peace must be realized in families, where people live, in cities, between groups and nations. All people of good will is encouraged to give their contribution to the work for peace.

The document is directed also to politicians and decision makers in our country with substantial demands on the way to a just peace.



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