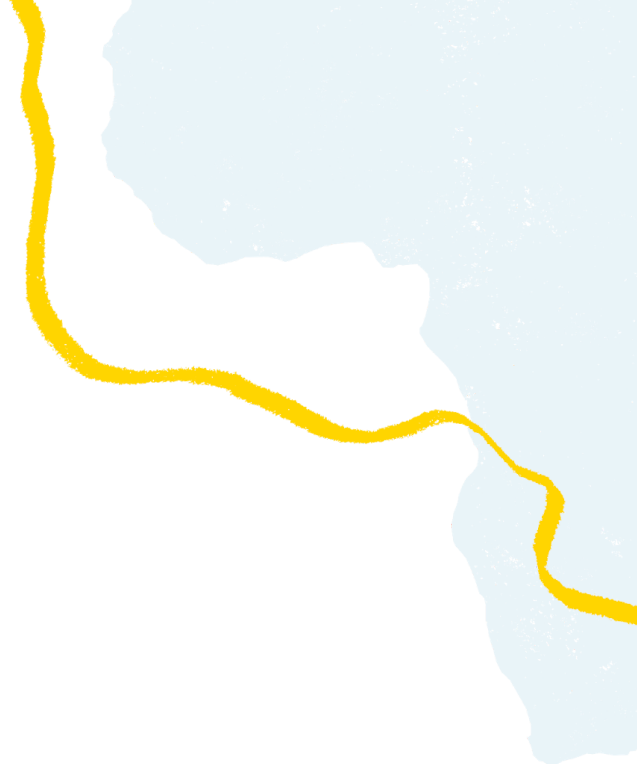


tearfund

Peacebuilding: A theological framework

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Introduction

A possible Tearfund approach to conflict and peacebuilding emerged as a priority area for exploration during the 2014 strategic review process. The peacebuilding team have sought to identify particular areas of peacebuilding work to which Tearfund can add value: where we, as an organisation, can best express and outwork the Christian call to peace and reconciliation; and where peacebuilding is a natural outworking of our own vision. As a part of this exploration it was essential that Tearfund reflect theologically on the topic of peacebuilding. We wanted to explore the work of peacebuilding as a part of the mission of God and to reflect on the way that it connects with Tearfund's own particular part of this mission (as presented in our 2016 *Theology of mission*).¹

This document lays out a theological framework for Tearfund's peacebuilding work. As such, it does not present a single theological position nor a one-size-fits-all approach to situations of oppression, violence, conflict and injustice. Rather it seeks to outline some of the key theological issues, positions and approaches that are important in the pursuit of peace, to which we can refer and seek to apply in our work. This discussion is rooted in our *Theology of mission*, our understanding of our call to participate in God's mission to redeem and restore his creation, and, in particular, to the goal of restoring relationships between people. Tearfund believes that the mission of God is essentially about bringing peace: between God and humans, humans and each other, and humans and the wider creation.

Peacebuilding is a Christ-centric activity that contributes to the well-being of the whole world and is not limited to the Christian community. It bears witness to our faith and to the nature of the kingdom of God, and is, to some extent, aspirational. This is because, while the death and resurrection of Christ have inaugurated the kingdom of God, the kingdom has not yet come in all its fullness, and will not do so until Christ's return brings into being the new creation. Many of the ideas and concepts discussed in this framework are assumed to most truly flourish within the context of restored relationships between humans, creation and God, which will not be seen in their fullness until the new Creation. However, it is the mission of the church to express the nature of the kingdom within the world and to invite others into it, including through the pursuit of peace.²

Of course, one does not have to be a Christian to be a peacebuilder. Many of the qualities of the peacebuilder and approaches to peacebuilding discussed in here will seem universal and universally applicable, reflecting what Reformed theology describes as the common grace of God available to all humankind. But, for the Christian, these qualities and ideas are rooted in our understanding of God's character and grace, our relationship with him and our growth as Christ's disciples through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Other religions and philosophies will often describe these qualities differently. As we develop our peacebuilding work, we will need to learn more about these ideas and reflect on how they connect to our own, in order to be able to talk about our own theology in ways that will build relationships across boundaries and differences.

¹ *Theology of mission* (2016)

² Wright (2012); Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and World Evangelical Fellowship (1982). This is discussed in more depth in Tearfund's *Theology of mission*.

This framework will focus on the Christian perspective. The aim is to help Tearfund to develop its work and position itself within peacebuilding dialogues as a relief and development organisation with a distinctive evangelical Christian identity. However, it is important to note that peacebuilding work takes place in contexts in which there are a plurality of beliefs (about religion and many other topics) and demands that people seek to build relationships across these divides. In addition, Tearfund's peacebuilding work will take place in many contexts where Christianity has historically been experienced in relation to Western imperialism and colonialism, and been promoted in ways that created divisions and damaged existing cultures. Given this history, we will need to be cautious of emphasising the importance of our beliefs in ways that may be perceived as privileging them and the cultural norms we may bring with them. This does not mean, of course, that we should not be able to describe ourselves as Christian or to seek to express this faith in our work. However, we will need to do so in ways that are sensitive to the local experience of Christianity, are understanding of language about the Christian faith (for example with reference to words such as 'evangelical'), and emphasise a respect for difference and desire for a peace that is inclusive. It will be essential that this framework is reflected on and its ideas used and communicated in the light of each different context in which we participate in peacebuilding.

Structure of the framework

This framework will begin by situating peacebuilding within the framework of the biblical narrative of creation, fall, and the mission of God to bring restoration and redemption through Israel, Christ, and the Church. It will discuss the importance of *story* to the formation of Christians and to the way we live and act in the world and draws out some important points for us to remember as we participate in God's story.

Chapter 2 will discuss what it means for Christians to seek peace and justice; ideas that we must understand biblically, as they will shape the work we do and the outcomes we seek. The chapter will also reflect on several other key factors and ideas that are important in peacebuilding, notably power, rights, diversity and community.

Chapters 3 and 4 return to the question of Christian formation for peacebuilding. Chapter 3 focuses on the way worship is a part of our transformation to become people who are more like Christ, people who seek peace. Chapter 4 looks more specifically at the qualities that mark a peacebuilder: humility, hospitality, courage and risk-taking, comfort with complexity, and imagination. These attitudes are characteristics in which all Christians should be looking to grow as they seek the kingdom, but they are also to be found in many other people,³ and should characterise those with whom Tearfund works in peacebuilding.

Chapter 5 looks at four approaches to peacebuilding that have been put forward by Christian thinkers. These are Henri Nouwen's move from *hostis* to *hospes*, John Paul Lederach's moral imagination, Miroslav Volf's embrace, and the ideas of just war and non-violence.⁴ These approaches provide models and ideas upon which Tearfund can draw as we develop our own peacebuilding work.

Chapter 6 will look at how Tearfund can begin to move from theology to praxis. As was mentioned briefly above, our biblically-shaped approach to peacebuilding will be developed and expressed in a number of contexts in which there are a plurality of religions and beliefs, and where Christianity is often a minority and

³ Wright (2010).

⁴ Nouwen (1998); Lederach (2010); Volf (2010).

sometimes mistrusted presence. It is important to think about how our theology plays out in our practice in these situations, and – in this framework – to reflect theologically about how Christians build peaceful relationships across religious difference, without conceding our belief in the truth of our faith.

Finally, this document will present some conclusions and suggestions for Tearfund's peacebuilding work. There are seven key points given, which should be borne in mind as projects, programmes and relationships are developed in the course of seeking peace.

Chapter 1: Where are we now and where are we going?

Key points

- The Bible tells us a story: that God made creation and it was good, but humanity was tempted and sinned in the fall, causing a break in the relationships between God, humanity and creation. It also tells us that God's mission is to redeem and restore these relationships and his creation. He does this by moving towards humanity and calling us to him: through the calling of Abraham; the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the establishment and commissioning of the church.
- This story gives Christians the hope of building a peaceful future in our world, calling and encouraging us to bear witness to the love of God and the nature of the coming kingdom by seeking restored relationships and peaceful communities.

'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31)⁵

One only has to turn on the news to realise that the world is divided, that injustice and oppression are common, and that creating and maintaining peace is hard work. This is not the way the world was meant to be. God created a good world in which people lived harmoniously in relationships with God, with each other and with the world around them. And yet, in Genesis 3, we are told the story of the fall, humanity's disobedience of God. We see its consequences: separation from God, conflict between humans, and difficulties in cultivating the earth on which humans depend.

"'You will not certainly die,'" the serpent said to the woman, "For God knows that when you eat from it our eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" (Genesis 3:4)

The Bible is clear that it is *sin* – in this case, disobedience born of a perception of God as an oppressor who withholds good things and not a loving, generous friend – that leads to conflict. Even before God pronounces the punishment for their disobedience, Adam has turned on Eve, blaming her for the eating of the fruit (Genesis 3:12). In the following chapter, we continue to see the growth of conflict between humans in the story of Cain and Abel. This is the Bible's first murder, an act of violence rooted in Cain's greed and his jealousy of his brother, who had a good relationship with God. In the New Testament, Jesus' understanding of sin is primarily a failure to live the life of discipleship described in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). This causes us to treat each other unjustly, putting ourselves and our own interests first, rather than seeking the common good of God's creation.

Division and conflict between people, and between people and God, is a recurring theme throughout the Bible and throughout human history. Individual disobedience and sin alone are not the problem. We may be broken people, but the world we live in is broken too. There are centuries of human sin, injustice and oppression contributing to broken relationships, oppressive power dynamics and intensely complicated conflicts. As Miroslav Volf points out, while we may prefer to see the world as divided into innocent and guilty, the closer we look at any given situation the more we see the 'intractable maze of small and large hatreds... each reinforcing the other'.⁶ That is, we are all stuck in histories from which we cannot extricate

⁵ All scripture quotations are taken from the NIV (UK) 2011.

⁶ Ibid. p 81.

ourselves. As long as we remain reluctant to look at these consciously and critically, we will not be truly able to overcome the injustices we perpetuate within them.

Gustavo Gutiérrez picks up on this in his work on liberation theology, emphasising the importance of becoming ‘ever more conscious of being an active subject of history [... and] ever more articulate in the face of social injustice and all repressive forces’.⁷ A Christian approach to peacebuilding needs to face the reality of human sin and our own complicity in the injustice and conflicts that we face in the world today. This is particularly true for white, western Christians, who are the heirs of Christendom, colonialism and imperialism, and who – however unintentionally – continue to benefit from this legacy, which needs to be acknowledged as they engage in peacebuilding activities with others who have suffered because of the same legacy. This is hard work. For many of us, the more we know about the complexity and interrelatedness of the problems we face, the less moral responsibility or ethical capability we feel to deal with them.⁸

Yet it is not all hopeless. The Bible tells us the story of God’s mission to restore the creation relationships that existed between God, humans and the world: a mission fulfilled in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, which will be fully revealed in the coming of the kingdom of God in the new creation. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer points out Jesus’ call to follow him offers us the chance to be obedient once again, identifying the Beatitudes as the promise Christ makes to those who are obedient to his call.⁹ Tearfund’s *Theology of mission* explains the way that discipleship shapes us for our participation in God’s mission: our relationship with Christ deepens through worship, prayer and reflection, and the Holy Spirit transforms us so that our relationship with the Triune God overflows through our lives into the world around us, bearing witness to the possibility and nature of a new future.¹⁰ The example of the first disciples and early church gives us a picture of Christian discipleship and life that stands in contrast to the realities of the world around it. The eschatological vision of a new creation and the second coming of Christ gives us an alternative vision of the future (and certain hope in its coming) which can sustain this kind of discipleship and the pursuit of peace in the face of the challenges and complexities of the world.¹¹

It is an accepted tenet of peacebuilding and reconciliation work that we need to engage with the psychological and spiritual effects of injustice and conflict, as well as their social and economic legacies, in order to help people to heal and develop new habits that can lead them away from conflicts in the future.¹² Conflict is something that absorbs the whole person, and so the whole person needs to experience the healing of the peacebuilding process in their whole life. The Bible gives us an account of humans as embodied beings bearing the image of God, possessed in some intricate way of mind, body and soul with an internal life that is tied to our external relationship with the world around us. The brokenness that entered with the fall affects all of these aspects of our person, but the restored relationship with God offered by Jesus encompasses all aspects as well:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30)

⁷ Gutiérrez (1973) pp 24–26.

⁸ Hauerwas (2011) p 123.

⁹ Bonhoeffer (2015) pp 15, 21, 60.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of this.

¹¹ Schlabach and Hughes, eds. (1997) p x; Jennings (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010).

¹² Lapsley (2012) p 136.

During a Tearfund Theological Encounter in Nicaragua in 2016, Orlando Japás¹³ pointed out that in Luke's account of Jesus' miracles in chapters 8–9 of his gospel, we see Jesus bringing restoration and healing in all the different areas of life: in calming the storm, he transforms the disciples' relationship with the world around them from fear to security; he casts out demons, freeing a man's spirit; he heals a woman of a physical problem (bleeding) and raises a girl from death; and he feeds 5,000 hungry people. The Bible tells us that the mission of God, which the church is called to continue, is holistic: God offers life in all its fullness (John 10:1). Peacebuilding, which falls within that mission – restoring relationships between people in conflict – also needs to seek to offer life in all its fullness, to people on all sides.

The importance of story

As Christians, we regard the Bible as our *story*: it is the place to which we go to reflect upon who we are and what we are made for. We place ourselves in this story during worship. This embedding is vital to us, as it helps us to remain in Christ – by which we continue to be transformed, so that we do not conform to the pattern of the world (Romans 12:2) but bear witness to the transformation that God, in Christ, has made possible.

The power of stories to shape people's sense of themselves and their way of life is well-attested, and well-used, by brands and organisations. James Smith's refrain is the question 'what do you love?', as he points out that we pursue the things we love and shape our lives in ways that will help us to obtain them.¹⁴ He wants the church to understand this so that it takes the business of discipleship seriously, knowing that it encompasses the whole of our lives:

'Followers of Jesus are made, not born, formed by the Christian experiment, internalising the priorities, affections and dispositions of Jesus, and for this process we don't just need teachers to tell us God's story, we need creatives to show it, enabling us to imagine the world differently and hence perceive and act differently, as we learn the true story by heart in worship. The way to our imaginations is through story, image, symbol and song.'¹⁵

This is important for peacebuilding work as, in a world full of tension and conflict, we need to be able to imagine and tell the stories of a different future. The hope of a future of reconciliation and restoration is at the heart of the Christian story. In a world where many assume that conflict will be ongoing – that the best we can expect is a negotiation of the win-loss ratio between those in conflict with each other, careful management of tensions, and international policing to maintain public order – many theologians have suggested that it is the church that can provide an alternative vision. Duane Friesen describes this as a 'theological alternative to an ontology of violence', presenting the Christian narrative of mercy, reconciliation and hope, rooted in the Cross, as the alternative to the redemptive violence offered by peace and security machinery backed by the power provided by armies and armaments.¹⁶ To provide this narrative, he argues, we need a strong Christology: a rich picture of Christ's birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection, and of his prophetic engagement with the powers of sin, both temporal and spiritual.¹⁷

¹³ Japás is the National Executive Director of Scripture Union in Honduras.

¹⁴ Smith (2016); Smith (2009); Smith (2013).

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¹⁶ Friesen (2005) pp 47–48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p 40.

As we tell and live this story there are some important points for us to remember. Firstly, that we already know the ending of the story, which is described for us in Revelation and is promised to us and secured for us by Christ's death and resurrection. This gives us the hope to continue seeking peace, secure in the knowledge that it will eventually be revealed:

'I saw "a new heaven and a new earth", for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21:1–4)

Secondly, we aren't yet at the ending, and we do not know what the way to that end will look like. The fact that we know what the ending is does not mean that the path of human history towards it is a straight one, or that we are on an ever-upwards progression to the new creation.¹⁸ Jesus calls us to follow him towards the end, but he does not promise that the way will be clear or smooth.¹⁹ The Bible is full of stories of God calling people to follow him to a particular place or goal without knowing how they would get there. Indeed, Bonhoeffer quoted Luther on Abraham's response to God's call ('Thus Abraham went forth [...] not knowing whither he went'), arguing that to not know the way is 'true' knowledge.²⁰ The history of the early church and the fates of Jesus' disciples show us that, while we live in certain hope, we also live in uncertain times, making it ever more important that we live as disciples by our relationship with Christ and through the Holy Spirit, guiding us towards God.

Two points...

Before we move on, there are two further points that are worth bearing in mind.

Firstly, it is important to remember and make clear that, as Christians, we do not believe the establishment of the kingdom of God is in our power. This belongs to God and has been completed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the promise of its full revelation in which we hope, and it is our responsibility to bear witness to the character of this kingdom as we participate in God's mission.

Secondly, it is important to remember that the theological ideas and concepts discussed in the following chapters cannot be applied or expressed uniformly in every peacebuilding context in our plural world. Different ideas will need to play out differently in different contexts. For example, in Matthew 5:38–42, we are told that Jesus commands his followers: 'But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.' As we reflect on this teaching, it is important to think about the kind of relationships on which we are bringing it to bear. The way that we understand its application will depend upon the different relationships and different spheres of peacebuilding work in which it is being used (for example, in families, in churches and Christian communities, in multicultural and multi-faith communities, and at local, national and international level).

¹⁸ Holmes (2014).

¹⁹ Matthew 7:13–14; Luke 9:23.

²⁰ Bonhoeffer (2015) p 47.

One way of thinking about this is to refer to the Kuyperian idea of 'sphere sovereignty'. Kuyper developed the idea that there are different areas or 'spheres' of life or society, none of which is sovereign over any other. For him, this meant that a family, or a church, should not operate like a business, because they were different spheres of life with different roles in the world. It also meant that the church should not seek to control or regulate the state, and that the state should not be able to completely regulate the whole of human life, because it has its own limited sphere. In this way of thinking, Christians should not necessarily expect the biblical norms and principles for relationships or for the pursuit of justice that apply in the church to apply outside the church. For Tearfund, this means that we need to be aware that the way we talk about the ideas included in this framework and the way we use them in peacebuilding should vary, depending on the nature of the community and the context (for example, depending on whether we are in a Christian community or in an interfaith environment).

There is not space within this framework to think through all the possible applications of these ideas in the different spheres in which Tearfund may be engaged in peacebuilding work. However, as we develop our work, referring to the ideas in this framework, it will be important to examine the context and the community in which we are working, in order to reflect further upon the way that these ideas should be understood, communicated and applied within these projects and contexts.

Chapter 2: Key concepts

Key points

- Peace describes the way that all life (God, human, creation) should live and thrive in harmony with each other, as was intended in God's original creation. This peace will be restored in the new creation, and it is a defining characteristic of the kingdom of God.
- Justice incorporates rectifying justice, that puts a wrong to rights; and righteousness, that is a way of living justly. Justice is secured for us by Christ's life, death and resurrection, which puts our wrongs to rights, makes restored relationships possible and shows us how to live justly.
- Power dynamics are a factor in all relationships, and Tearfund, as a Western Christian organisation, is usually in the position of greater power in our relationships. Jesus shows us that power is a characteristic of God, which we possess as image bearers, but which we should be willing to use or lay aside to pursue justice and peace.
- Humans all possess the right to be treated with dignity as God's image bearers. These rights are to be understood in relation to our responsibilities towards each other and in the honouring of other peoples' rights within communities.
- While being equal bearers of God's image, human beings and communities are intrinsically different and diverse. This diversity must not be flattened out in pursuit of equality but incorporated and included within the unity and peace that we seek.
- Our model for this diversity in unity, and for community, is the Triune God. Within our communities and our common humanity, we have responsibilities towards each other and our wellbeing is essentially connected to each other's.

2.1 Peace

As Christians embark upon peacebuilding work, it is important that we think about what we believe peace looks like. As Miroslav Volf argues, we must start by considering what it means to be free of oppression and conflict, as becoming free from this state is an important first step on the road to reconciliation.

In English 'peace' is generally used to mean an absence of (or freedom from) conflict: it is the state that remains when external disturbances are removed from the equation. This is also true when we talk about the state of being 'at peace' with a situation. In this usage, there may be conflict or disturbances, but they do not affect a person, who is said to be 'at peace' with the situation despite them. Peace, in this conception, is about the person's relation to external stimuli and situations, in particular the removal of, or refusal to admit, negative external forces. However, in the Bible, peace appears to be enhanced by external stimuli and situations, specifically relationships – most particularly the relationship between human and God. There are two primary terms that are relevant, *shalom* in the Old Testament, and *eirene* in the New Testament.²¹

Shalom encompasses more attributes than peace does in English. It incorporates ideas of wholeness, completeness, balance, healing, well-being, tranquillity, prosperity, security and justice, and encompasses

²¹ *Eirene* is the Greek term most commonly used to translate *shalom* in the Septuagint, and the concepts are largely similar in the Bible. It seems likely that the concept of *shalom* will have influenced the New Testament development of *eirene* as a theological, Christian, idea, away from other Greek uses of *eirene* in relation to the Greek goddess of peace.

both a state of being and a way of living in a relationship with God. *Shalom* is broken because of the fall, but God the Father seeks to return it to creation. In Leviticus 26:3–9, *shalom* is the promised result of living according to the laws of Israel, a spiritual and material fruitfulness. In Isaiah, *shalom* is promised to Israel as the consequence of the sacrifice of the Messiah:

‘He was pierced for our transgressions... The punishment that brought us *shalom*²² was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.’ (Isaiah 53:5)

In John 14, Jesus tells his disciples that he has come to open the way to the Father and to bring them peace – *eirene* – the one being a consequence of the other. In Romans 5:1 and Ephesians 2:14–15, Paul describes the source of peace – *eirene* – as the restoration of our relationship with God through the sacrifice of and salvation offered by Christ at the cross.

This peace is secured in God’s righteousness and justice, as Isaiah describes:

‘The Lord’s justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence for ever.’ (Isaiah 32:16–17)

Paul, too, connects peace to righteousness and justice, using the term to describe Christ’s sacrifice which secured this peace. He also brings us back to the idea of *obedience*, claiming that just as it was Adam and Eve’s *disobedience* that broke humanity’s relationship with God, so it is Christ’s obedience to God that makes many righteous again (Romans 5:18–19).²³

At the same time, *shalom* and *eirene* are not just the result of God’s move towards humanity. They also require humanity to move towards God in order to become present in the world. Israel needed to enter the covenant with Yahweh, and follow the law that he gave them, in order to live rightly so that *shalom* could exist. Following the cross, true *eirene* requires human reconciliation with God. Through this reconciliation, we are sanctified and transformed by the Holy Spirit, and shaped for a life of peace. This peace may begin at an individual level, manifesting as a serenity that can withstand external disturbance or conflict, as someone finds his or her security in faith in God. However, it is a peace that should go beyond the individual, as a person’s peacefulness is reflected in the way that they live in relation to those around them, in seeking wholeness, healing, justice and prosperity throughout their communities. Receiving peace in Christ and being transformed by the Spirit enables the Christian to truly follow the command to love their neighbour as themselves, and begin to bring that peace into the world. It is also a peace that requires some personal sacrifice – just as Christ was sacrificed to restore peace between God and humans – as an individual seeks to offer it to others.

The ideas of *shalom* and *eirene* in the Bible gain their strength from God’s righteousness and can only reach their full potential through the restoration of God’s relationship with his creation, meaning that we will not see them in their utmost form until the return of Christ. However, the richness of these ideas – in particular, their focus on wholeness and flourishing in relationships and communities – can be explained and makes sense even without the existence of a restored relationship with God. They can be pursued by those who may not yet have that restored relationship, and by Christians in collaboration with such people. Volf argues

²² We have substituted the word *peace*, as it is rendered in the NIV, for *shalom*, in order to preserve the richer meaning of the original Hebrew in contrast to its English translation.

²³ *Eirene* in the New Testament stands in marked contrast to its contemporary understanding of peace expressed in the *Pax Romana*, in which peace was established and honoured by the subjugation of others to Rome.

that understanding freedom as *freedom to flourish* and to live with dignity (rather than *freedom from restraint*) has the potential to encourage people to take on the responsibility of securing that freedom for others, even past enemies, and thus to lead to and maintain reconciliation.²⁴ For Christians the pursuit of *shalom* and *eirene* for all, and with all who truly seek peace, bears witness to the Christian faith, transformation, and Christ-like willingness to love and reach out across boundaries.

2.2 Justice

As has been mentioned, both *shalom* and *eirene* are rooted in God's righteousness and justice, which suggests to the Christian that where peace is missing, so is justice. But what do we mean when we talk about justice?

The biblical account of justice is different to the essential idea of the Western tradition, *suum cuique* (to each their due), although there are connections between the two. In the *suum cuique* formulation, justice is the provision of a person's 'due' or 'rights', and a justice system is the system that secures and delivers those rights. The conversation then becomes about the question of what these rights are, and the best way of securing them for the majority.²⁵ In all of these understandings, doing and receiving justice requires a balance between individual rights and public order, and negotiating this involves systems and processes. In this negotiation, we see the tension between the individual's rights and the community's stability and security. There is also the question that arises with any system or process: who is able, or should be able, to access them and (in this case) the justice for which they are responsible? Contemporary Western society tends to think that justice and rights are secured by legislation upon its members – but what about those who aren't its members?²⁶

For the Christian, we are all members or potential members of God's society – the kingdom of heaven – and so justice should be available to everyone. But what is justice? Is it still *to each their due*? In Scripture, we find both the idea that justice is centred on being in a right relationship with the God who made us, and the restoration of that relationship after the fall (disobedience having led to self-interest and injustice to others). In Old Testament Israel, we see the ideas of *mishpat* and *tzedakah*, which lead society to *shalom*. *Mishpat* (seen, for example, in Micah 6:8) is a 'rectifying' justice, seeking to punish wrongdoing and give people their rights. It is a very active pursuit of justice, as Psalm 146 makes clear in talking about the way God executes justice for the oppressed. *Tzedakah*, on the other hand, refers to a life of righteousness and right relationships. In this formulation, the righteous are those who are right with God and are therefore committed to putting right all other relationships in life. It is inescapably social in its orientation to the world, as Job explains (29:12–17; 31:13–28). It is the primary justice that would, if universally expressed, render *mishpat* unnecessary. The laws of Israel required *mishpat*, but also encouraged the Israelites toward *tzedakah*, in the pursuit of a society characterised by *shalom*.

²⁴ Volf (2010) p 101.

²⁵ Critical voices in the evolution of the Western political concept of justice include Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, Mill, Kant, Niebuhr and Rawls. One of the important Christian voices in this discourse is Nicholas Wolterstorff, a philosopher writing from a Christian perspective (which differs from a theologian writing about justice). See Wolterstorff (1983); Wolterstorff (2010); Wolterstorff (2011).

²⁶ Wolterstorff (2010) p 31.

In the gospels and the New Testament, we see that Jesus' death and resurrection offer us salvation from sin and a restored relationship with God; that justice is found in the incarnation and the cross, which is the foundation for the newly established kingdom of heaven.

'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith.' (Romans 3:23–25)²⁷

There are a number of theological debates about what justification and atonement mean, and what happens, metaphysically and existentially, in Christ's death and resurrection. It is important that Tearfund is aware of these as we engage in peacebuilding work, because particular understandings of these ideas are sometimes boundary markers for certain traditions. Stephen Holmes' book *The Wondrous Cross* looks at a number of the accounts of the atonement, which describe it variously as being a moment of victory; the paying of a ransom for humanity; a revelation of God; a moment of redemption, in which freedom from slavery and oppression – both human and spiritual – is secured; a moment of sacrifice that purifies humanity; and a judgment of sin through which humanity is justified by Christ.²⁸ At the same time, despite these different understandings of the atonement Christians often end up in the same place: seeing justice as secured for humanity at the cross. This can enable us to work together to pursue justice, despite our differences of doctrine about the atonement.

Within Tearfund's own evangelical tradition, substitutionary atonement is the primary understanding of Christ's death and resurrection. Our *Statement of faith* describes it in the following terms:

'In [Christ's] death on the cross he took upon himself the sin of the world, bearing its full cost and penalty so that we are put right with God through his grace by faith in Christ alone. On the cross Jesus also entered into our suffering, defeated the powers of evil and accomplished the reconciliation of all creation. In his bodily resurrection he defeated death and became the forerunner of redeemed humanity.'²⁹

This describes the way that Christians see justice as incorporating both retribution and restoration. It is retributive because it knows and judges sin as something that creates division, and wrongdoing as something for which restitution ought to be made. It is also restorative, as the consequence of that judgement is the re-establishment of a relationship between the sinner and the sinned-against which completes both. The establishment of justice is seen in its ultimate form in the justification and restoration of humanity with God, through Christ's death and resurrection.

For Christians engaging in peacebuilding work, both retributive and restorative justice are important concepts. The pain of injustice must be acknowledged and recompense identified. However, if retribution is not or cannot be exacted, then the person sinned against or oppressed may choose to take the cost that comes with forgoing the necessary recompense, in order to move towards reconciliation and a restored relationship. This is what we see on the cross: as the sinner (humanity) cannot make restitution to the sinned against (God), God takes that cost upon himself in order to move forward into restoration and reconciliation with humanity.

²⁷ See also Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14–15; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 1:2.

²⁸ Holmes (2007) p 7.

²⁹ Tearfund, (2016).

As Christians, our experience of God's justice and saving grace becomes our example and our model for our own pursuit of justice. This begins with our incorporation into Christ as we accept the gift he offers, symbolised by baptism and in Communion, and continues as we live as part of the body of Christ.³⁰ Nearly always, there is a cost involved – God gave up his son; Christ gave up his life – and peacemakers and peacebuilders will have to give things away or give things up so that justice can be done and peace established.

‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.’ (Proverbs 31:8–9)

There is a rich vein of thought in the biblical writings that champions the rights of the poor and those who have experienced the greatest injustice as a result of sin. Miroslav Volf suggests that, by the Western understanding of justice as *suum cuique*, Yahweh of the Bible is profoundly unjust, given his partiality for the poor and oppressed. He argues that, unlike the Western tradition that puts the citizen (historically, male and property-owning) at the centre of the community, the Christian biblical tradition, especially as it has been recovered in liberation theology, gives ultimacy to the poor.³¹ This follows naturally from the recognition that life is our most basic right. The poor are all those whose life is vulnerable, threatened, and denied. And this ultimacy of the poor appears in God's declared partiality toward them.

Throughout the Bible, God's justice is defined in terms of his relationship with his people, and his righteousness, kindness, salvation, love and grace. In the story of the Prodigal Son, love, not impartiality, defines justice, and it is love that is the great commandment of the New Testament (Luke 15:11–32; Mark 12:30–31). Volf argues that the impartiality sought by the Western justice tradition is expedient for humanity, because it allows us to make up for our own limitations and corruptibility and to overlook the way that some continue to benefit from past injustices done to others. He argues that it is partiality which allows us to overcome past injustices and move towards reconciliation, because it says ‘you’ are more important than ‘me’ – but also notes that this partiality will have a cost for those who are prepared to pursue it in looking for true justice.

2.3 Power

In discussing justice, we talked about impartiality and partiality. Impartiality makes the claim that everyone matters as much as everyone else. Partiality, meanwhile, argues that while everyone may matter as much as everyone else, historically not everyone *has*. It is an approach to justice that seeks to engage with the complicated power relationships and dynamics of the world. And so, having looked at injustice as a root of conflict and justice as a necessity for peace, and having reflected upon God's partiality towards those who have experienced the greatest injustice, it is worth looking briefly at the role of power and its dynamics in injustice and conflict.

In contemporary critical and political thought, power is understood as a force that exists and moves in relationships. Michel Foucault described power as a fluid force that exists in the balance of relationships, something that is repressive but which also conditions people to accept certain norms about the world as

³⁰ Hauerwas (2011).

³¹ Gutiérrez (1977); Sobrino (2015) pp 31–32, 114–116, 121.

true. It directs who can say or do what, and when they can do it.³² Because it exists in relationships, power can also be claimed or reclaimed by those who have previously been excluded or regarded as powerless.³³

In conflict situations, power dynamics are always at play, as people use, claim or seek to claim power in relation to each other. Power may be sought and used for self-interested reasons, and it may be held on to by those who are already privileged to possess it in relation to others for the same reasons. In this way, the use of power creates injustices and conflicts. At the same time, power may also be claimed by the oppressed in order to level relations, or given away with the same goal in mind. Giving away power is still a use of power.

In the Bible, we see power as a characteristic of God from the very beginning. It is a power that is creative and discerning: in Genesis 3, the snake links God's ability to judge good from evil with his power. It is a power that is handed on to man: in Genesis 1:27–30, humanity is made in God's image and given power and authority to rule. But power can also be misused. We see this repeatedly after the fall – a moment in which humanity grasps for more power than God has given them (Genesis 3:5).

The improper exercise or pursuit of power is often seen in accounts of injustice and conflict in the Bible: in Cain's violent use of physical power over Abel; Rebecca and Jacob's desire for the power and authority that the oldest son inherits; Pharaoh's exercise of power over the Israelites. In the New Testament, we see Jesus criticising the Pharisees' love of their position of power (Luke 11:43) and dealing with James and John's request that they be allowed to sit at his right and left hand in glory. Their petition creates discord among the disciples, until Jesus tells them that 'Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant.' (Mark 10:35–45)

At the same time, despite the fall, power is not wholly negative. It still has positive potential. Andy Crouch explains how, although Jesus models servanthood for us – for example, in his washing of his disciples' feet (John 13:1–16) – he does not deny his power at the same time. He continues to describe himself as 'teacher and Lord' (John 13:13), and his willingness to serve is rooted in his identity as the son of God, who comes from God and is going to God (John 13:3). It is not that Jesus becomes powerless, but that he doesn't put stock in the privilege and status that humans often associate with power.³⁴

The kingdom of God is brought into being by a willingness to give up the trappings of power, and to exercise or lay aside power in order to secure justice and peace for others. Jesus refuses to use his power to escape the cross. Paul describes this in his letter to the Philippians:

'In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!' (Philippians 2:5–8)

Power is a capability to act or to effect change – in relation to other things and other people – and it belongs to us as people made in the image of God. As Christians, we receive the power of God that is the

³² Foucault (1977); Foucault (1980).

³³ Foucault (1981) p 71.

³⁴ Crouch (2013).

Holy Spirit. But power must be used in service of others and in pursuit of the kingdom. Jesus' willingness to wash his disciples' feet gives us an example of this. Leviticus 8 gives us another. In this moment, Moses washes Aaron and his sons before the community of Israel, to purify them before they are dressed in the robes that denote their role and power as priests of the Lord. Before they display their power, they have to display their humanity and weakness by standing naked to be washed by others before their community. The possession, expression and exercise of power is accountable to others and for others, to help open up relationships between humans and God.

As a Western-based organisation, Tearfund has power in its relationships with others. As a Christian organisation, we are called to use our power to serve others and to reveal the kingdom. Peacebuilding work will need to take into account the power relationships that exist within conflict situations and seek to rebalance power as a part of restoring relationships.

2.4 Rights

In discussing justice, we mentioned rights as something secured by justice. Rights are commonly understood as an important part of peacebuilding, as without acknowledging and respecting them, peace cannot be built or maintained. But what are they, and how does the Christian faith understand them? There are two kinds of right: legal rights, which are granted and upheld by a political community to a person; and natural human rights, which are believed to belong to all human beings. In western philosophical, political and legal thought, the idea of rights is largely understood in terms of the right and ability of an individual to be freed from all social restrictions that hinder them from being a fully self-determining agent – but what it is in a person that means they have this right is often debated. In many arguments, rights are connected to *capability* – that is, the capability of the person to be a fully self-determining person (or the potential capability of any person to be such) – with this distinguishing people from animals.

Vinoth Ramachandra has argued that it is the *imago dei* in humans (as described in Genesis 1) that provides the strongest foundation for human rights.³⁵ He follows Nicholas Wolterstorff in arguing that defence of the rights of those who are incapable of full autonomy and rational agency (for example, children, Alzheimer's patients, the mentally impaired) requires a robust notion of *bestowed worth*. In this concept, when we stand before another person, no matter their race, gender, status or capability, we stand before someone whose great worth has been *bestowed* on him or her by God.³⁶ The image of God in a person gives them a claim on others as to the way they are regarded. Ramachandra describes a right as a claim that somebody has to be treated in a certain way by others and not to be treated in certain other ways by others. However, he also insists that the existence of rights necessitates the existence of duties, as we have the responsibility to treat others in a way that responds positively to their rights.³⁷

Other theologians are slightly more suspicious of the language of rights, while not denying the truth of Wolterstorff's and Ramachandra's argument. Hauerwas notes that the way we in the West commonly use the term now 'underwrites an individualism that is possessive and agonistic', and reminds us to be wary of focusing on individual rights above the good of the community.³⁸ There is also often a sense that 'rights' – especially individual human rights – impose external (usually Western) values on communities. Finally,

³⁵ Ramachandra (2009).

³⁶ Wolterstorff (2010) p 360.

³⁷ Ramachandra (2009) pp 92–93.

³⁸ Hauerwas (2011) p 113.

Miroslav Volf, referencing Charles Taylor, also notes a need to be careful that the ‘basket of identical rights and immunities’, called on in the language of human rights and equality, does not lead us to flatten out the distinctive differences in our identities. We must have, he believes, the right to be different, and be allowed to be different with dignity.³⁹

Rights language is hard to avoid in both development and peacebuilding work, but it is not language that Christians should be scared of using. Indeed, it can often help us to communicate with non-Christians working in these areas.⁴⁰ However, we must remember that the rights, or qualities of life, that we want to see secured in justice and peace belong to people in their essential identity as God’s image bearers: a deeper justification than is common in the contemporary Western tradition. In this, it may be helpful to think of a person’s dignity as well as their rights – who they are as well as what they should have – as this will affect how we think of, and thus treat, each other.

This may also help us to balance the tensions that exist between the individual and the community in establishing rights, justice and peace. We can ask questions such as ‘if this person’s right to something is upheld, what other person’s human dignity may be endangered?’ As was mentioned above, it is difficult to balance individual liberties with communal order, but a community-focused perspective may make it easier for people to set aside their rights in pursuit of justice for others – and for people to be willing to lay aside their right to justice, and potentially forgive, in order to build peace.

2.5 Diversity and inclusion

The idea of rights, as Volf points out, exists in a complicated relationship with diversity. We want and understand people to be equal – before God, made in his image – and yet as different. It is important that we consider this when thinking about peacebuilding, because peace needs to engage with differences between people, and the prejudices and conflict that have emerged between them because of these differences.

Miroslav Volf looks at diversity, difference, belonging and exclusion, pointing out that the Bible story shows us that humans have universal qualities (all made in the image of God) and individual qualities (as whole beings) that reflect the identity of God as three-and-one. The three members of the Trinity – Father, Son, Spirit – all have individual identities and roles, but they are defined by their relationships to the other members (John 13:1; 17:1) and their unity as God.⁴¹

In turn, humans are a part of local communities and invited to be a part of the community of the kingdom of God. Volf cites Abraham and Paul as examples of the way this works, with people retaining their individual identities and local ties while also standing out from them as part of God’s chosen people. We see Abraham leaving his country to follow God’s call, but taking his family with him and later choosing to bury Sarah in the land of his people (Genesis 12; 23). In the New Testament, we see Paul retaining his multi-cultural identity: speaking Greek to the Greeks, claiming Roman citizenship before the law of the empire, and debating the Mosaic law within the Jewish tradition, whilst also emphasising his adoption into the body of Christ.⁴² Both men belong to and are shaped by both their communities, but their primary

³⁹ Volf (2010) p 18.

⁴⁰ This is particularly true within Western communities.

⁴¹ Williams (2000) pp 281–282.

⁴² Volf (2010) p 59.

loyalty is to God and their membership of the community of his people. We are called out of our own cultures and into a new relationship, identity and community, belonging to God. We are intended to be diverse and yet united.

It is easy to read the story of Babel in Genesis 11 as one in which diversity is imposed upon humanity as a punishment for hubris and sin, with conflict arising from this diversity. However, the story also suggests that diversity reminds humans that, while they are made in the image of God, they are not God: diversity is something that prevents humanity from abusing its potential, by preventing us from removing God from the equation. It is something that humans must work to overcome but not to erase.

Volf questions the modern enlightenment story of process towards inclusion, arguing that we often sweep the things and people that do not fit this story beneath the carpet and ignore them. This kind of exclusion of people is often at the heart of sin and certainly at the heart of conflict.⁴³ However, the possibility of repenting and overcoming this kind of exclusionary response to difference and diversity can also be found in the Christian faith. In the Old Testament, we see the Israelites commanded to welcome the alien and stranger in the land (Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:17–19). In the New Testament, we see Jesus as a man who is definitely and identifiably Jewish, but with a mission of inclusion – both of those Jews who had been excluded under Jewish law, and of the Gentiles – into the kingdom of God.

At the same time, we still keep our earthly identities. It is noticeable that at Pentecost the outpouring of the Spirit enables those who receive the gospel to receive new life and be reunited with God, but in a way that retains their identity and diversity – for each hears in their own language.⁴⁴ As Christians we are called to be different from the world and to be united in Christ, but we are united *including* our differences, not despite them or without them.

‘So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ (Galatians 3:26–28)

Volf argues that as we enter the kingdom, each culture retains its own characteristics and specifics, but not its gods, which fall before the one true God. Our ‘departure’ from our own cultures towards the kingdom to live with one foot in each until the return of Christ should enable us to begin to name the evils of our own culture to which we were previously blind, and to seek reconciliation, repenting and forgiving as is required.⁴⁵

It is essential that, as peacebuilders, we acknowledge people’s differences and diversity as well as their equality, and do not assume that equality necessarily means that we must ‘treat everyone alike.’ This phrase assumes a basic shared humanity. But, as Rowan Williams argues, while we all share in the image of God, we also share in our involvement in time and history. This means that we must treat one another differently in acknowledgement of our different experiences within human history and allow previously disadvantaged

⁴³ Ibid. p 59. In reflecting on one aspect of this, Willie James Jennings (Jennings, 2010) describes the way that race was created as a concept during the early modern period of European exploration, and used to categorise and exclude. He emphasises the complicity of the church in this, with ‘whiteness’ being the quality distinguishing the colonists, and whiteness also meaning ‘Christian’ – leaving ‘non-whites’ as those who need to be saved in order to bring stability and order, as well as to save their souls.

⁴⁴ Ibid. pp 226–227.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p 59.

and oppressed others to claim their difference as equals.⁴⁶ Acknowledging and emphasising the equality of humans before God also means acknowledging that we have not always treated each other as equal before God. The peacebuilding process needs to account for this, and for people to make amends, in order for reconciliation and reunion to occur. It also needs to make sure that the ‘licensing’ of difference doesn’t excuse the dominant group or oppressor from changing.⁴⁷ Making space for others as different-and-equal within the kingdom demands some concession and change.

As a part of peacebuilding, it will be necessary for Christians and Westerners to acknowledge the parts of our own cultures in contributing to oppression and conflict over the years, to hear criticism and to critique ourselves, and repent where necessary. This is likely to be as important for Tearfund as a facilitator and a host of peacebuilding spaces in countries where we are ourselves being hosted, in order for us to play a legitimate part in peacebuilding dialogues.

2.6 Community and Trinity

In looking at justice, rights, diversity and inclusion, we need to look briefly at how we understand community, as all these qualities are only possible within a community. Christian theology understands that community is a fundamental essential of the world created by God, who is himself ‘living in community’ in his very essence, the Trinity.

We noted above that the Trinity is our model for understanding the possibility of having individual and universal identities, and diversity and inclusion in peaceful communities. It is also our model for community. Our understanding of God as three-in-one demands that we see community as essential to human life and flourishing. God’s creation is essentially relational, with God, humans and creation making up the community. It is not so much that we *need* relationships and community, but that we are *made* to be with one another.⁴⁸

The story of salvation, especially as it is seen in the incarnation and at Pentecost, is that the Triune God extends this community to humanity. As we enter this community, we abandon self-absorption to care for each other, in a relationship that acknowledges our differences and enables us to flourish, rather than erasing one another. For Paul, the church should show the diversity and unity of the body of Christ to the world. He argues that no one part of the body can be reduced to a function of another, and no part can subsist alone (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12). He also suggests that community is sustained by supporting and affirming others – that is, by love – so that the community remains united (1 Corinthians 10; Romans 14).

Within this community, we have responsibilities to each other. The story of Cain and Abel is an early example of this. In Genesis 4, it is clear that God expects Cain to be his brother’s keeper and Cain is punished for breaking that bond. However, at the same time, God makes sure that Cain has the right to community in his wandering, marking him so that others would know that they had to protect him. In describing *ubuntu* Desmond Tutu outlines the way that each person’s humanity is inextricably bound up with other people:

⁴⁶ Williams (2000) pp 281–282.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p 282.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p 281.

'I am human because I belong, I participate, I share. A person with ubuntu is open and available to others and affirming of them. The whole is diminished when other members are diminished, tortured or oppressed... Ubuntu means that in a real sense even the supporters of apartheid were victims of the vicious system which they implemented and which they supported so enthusiastically. Our humanity was intertwined.'⁴⁹

This kind of understanding of our relationships with others in our communities helps us to honour rights, dignity and diversity, without getting caught up in self-interest and individualism. It also helps us to seek justice and build peace together, by encouraging us to ask not just 'what can I change?' or 'what would I give up?' but 'how can I come to be trusted by other people so that we can both be changed?'⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Tutu (2000) p 35.

⁵⁰ Williams (2000) pp 285–86.

Chapter 3: Becoming peacebuilders: discipleship

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

If Christians are going to participate in peacebuilding, as Chapter 1 has suggested they should, what kind of people do we need to be? The next two chapters will look at what the Bible has to tell us about the development and characteristics of peacemakers (and peace breakers). Chapter 3 will look at the importance of Christian discipleship to the development of these characteristics, as we are transformed to become more like Christ. Chapter 4 will then look at particular characteristics and attributes which flourish as a consequence of discipleship. As noted in the introduction, the focus on discipleship and Christ-like qualities in peacebuilding does not mean that we believe non-Christians have nothing to offer to the peacebuilding process. Rather, this section presents why we think that Christians should be natural peacemakers, in order to place Tearfund’s activity within this frame.

Key points

- The Christian faith is not just a set of beliefs or ideas. It is a relationship with God that transforms us and shapes us, changing the way that we live in the world and making it possible for us, as disciples, to contribute to the transformation of the world around us.
- This transformation is rooted in our worship: in prayer, praise, reflection and study of scripture; and takes place within the community of the church.
- The celebration of Communion is at the centre of this worship, reminding us that Christ made peace for us with God and that we are called to invite others into this relationship and peace.
- As we grow as disciples we are transformed to become more like Christ, bearing his characteristics and being equipped to be peacebuilders.

3.1 Belief is a way of life

‘Christian theology is more than a set of doctrinal beliefs or systematic arguments. It is a way of seeing, of so dwelling in a particular language and doing new things with that language so that its revelatory and transformative power is manifest in the world.’⁵¹

Here, Ramachandra expresses the view that Christian theology – that is, the Christian’s knowledge of God – is not just an intellectual knowledge, an understanding of doctrine and the ability to state our beliefs about who God is and what he has done for us. Rather, it is a lived knowledge that shapes the way in which we see and act in the world, so that our lives are able to bear witness to the kingdom of God. It is restatement of the idea that Paul expresses in Romans 12:

‘Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your

⁵¹ Ramachandra (2009) p 13.

mind [...] Honour one another above yourselves [...] Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.' (Romans 12:1–2, 9–21)

Paul describes the process of growth as a disciple of Christ from worship to transformation, expressed in all the different gifts that God gives his people (Romans 12:3–8), but most particularly in 'sincere' love, whose qualities he describes through their active expression: devotion and honour of others, service, generosity, hospitality, and the pursuit of peace.

As is stated in Tearfund's *Theology of mission*, the most important step in discipleship – and the literal first step – is to respond to the call of Jesus to his disciples to 'come, follow me' (Mark 1:17). Bonhoeffer describes this as an act of obedience (rather than a confession of faith) that is made possible by the gift of grace, and as an act that costs us our lives of independence and self-rule.⁵² The reward, though, is the promise of the kingdom made in the Beatitudes, which is for those who gave up worldly wealth, power and security to obey his call and find their peace in him.⁵³ Once we take this step, we enter into a relationship with God as Jesus' disciples. In this new identity, we are shaped to be able to bear witness to the good news of the gospel, including the peace and harmony that is promised in the coming kingdom.

3.2 Starting in worship

In the growth of this relationship and our formation as disciples, worship – prayer, praise, study and reflection – is critical, because this is where we connect with God through the door opened by the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We see the importance of worship in the Bible, in the worship and hymns of Israel and the doxologies of the New Testament. In these, God's people verbalise and remind themselves of God's great goodness and love, identifying themselves as his people, shaped by him for his purposes.⁵⁴ It is a dynamic of receiving life from God that enables them to invite others into this fullness.⁵⁵ Paul describes this in Romans:

'Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.' (Romans 6:3–4)

As Jennings has pointed out, reminding ourselves of this is important, because it is this that frees us from the power and fear of death, in order to live lives that lead us and point towards God.⁵⁶ In the opening of the *Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, Stanley Hauerwas and Sam Wells argue that worship is critical for the development and inculcation of the Christian ethics that are a part of this life, while James K.A. Smith discusses the formative effects of daily worship as individuals and as the church on our minds and on our bodies – on our whole way of being in the world.⁵⁷ At the centre of this worship, and of critical

⁵² Bonhoeffer (2015) pp 15, 37–40.

⁵³ Ibid. pp 60–66.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Exodus 15:11; 1 Chronicles 29:10–13; Psalm 72:18–19; Romans 11:36; Hebrews 13:20–21.

⁵⁵ Harder (2005) pp 117–52.

⁵⁶ Jennings (2010) p 104.

⁵⁷ Hauerwas and Wells (2004) p 7; Smith (2009) pp 155–214.

importance in the work of peacebuilding and reconciliation, is the celebration of the Eucharist in Communion, for it is here that the many diverse members of the body of Christ become one body, in Christ.

3.3 Communion

As is described in Tearfund's *Theology of mission*, when we respond to the offer of salvation that Christ extends on the cross, we are born again and we join the body of Christ. This is symbolised in baptism, as we celebrate new birth, and in Communion, in which we partake of and participate in the body of Christ:⁵⁸

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.”
(John 6:56–57)

All Christians and denominations have an understanding that Communion is an important event. In taking a part of a meal shared by a group, it reminds the individual disciple that they are a part of a larger, diverse body, roots the identity of both individual and group in God, and celebrates the death and resurrection of Christ that made it possible for our relationship with God to be restored. Although each denomination talks about and celebrates Communion differently, and there are different theological and doctrinal understandings of how this happens psychologically, emotionally, philosophically and spiritually, Communion is common to us all.⁵⁹

This is important in peacebuilding, because it is the celebration of the restored relationship between God and humanity that makes peace possible between the rest of humanity. It is in Communion that we are both a local community, gathered together physically, and a global community, gathered together around the celebration of this ritual. In the liturgies of most denominations, Christians confess our sins, receive forgiveness, and share the peace with each other before we celebrate Communion, so that we are able to be a truly united, loving body, in Communion and in Christ. However, this does not mean that we should seek and maintain peace only within the church. We are also called to welcome other people into Communion, as we have been welcomed. This is why Miroslav Volf describes Communion as:

‘The ritual celebration of this “Divine making-space-for-us-and-inviting-us-in” [...] Inscribed on the very heart of God’s grace is the rule that we can be its recipients only if we do not resist being made into its agents.’⁶⁰

The sacrifice of Christ, and the celebration of that sacrifice, is for all.

⁵⁸ Cavanaugh (2008).

⁵⁹ For discussions of the Eucharist, see for example Zizioulas (2004); Cavanaugh (2008); Smith(2009).

⁶⁰ Volf (2010) p 129.

3.4 Becoming like Christ

In responding to Christ and following him, we make a choice to be obedient to him, the consequences of which are that we become the people who inherit the kingdom of God outlined by Christ in the Beatitudes.⁶¹ This is a transformation that happens through the grace of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit, and also through our own choice to receive those gifts and to continue in obedience. By these things, it is manifest in the world. As we mature as disciples we become more and more like Christ (Philippians 2:1–11) and can be ‘non-conformed’ to society (Romans 12:1–2) as we tune ourselves to the logic of Christ’s righteousness and *shalom*.⁶² It is in this developing relationship that we are purified and become holy – as the temple laws had previously done for the Jews – and it is this purification – of dying to sin and living to God in Christ (Romans 6:1–14) – and holiness that frees us to love. We can live towards God, and show the world what the justice that comes from his faithfulness to us looks like in the world, by obeying him in faith and hope.⁶³ It is also what allows us to display mercy and to forgive.

‘Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.’ (1 Peter 1:22–23)

Becoming more like Christ brings out certain characteristics or attitudes in us, shaping our character and our ways of being so that we engage with the world in Christ-like ways, rather than setting fixed rules. In Philippians 2:3–11, Paul notes that selflessness, servant-heartedness, humility and obedience to God are characteristics of Christ, and are for us to emulate. In the Sermon on the Mount, describing to whom the kingdom is promised, Jesus listed the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, those who seek righteousness and those who are persecuted because of it, and the peacemakers. Bonhoeffer argues that these characteristics belong to the blessed through their obedience to Christ. It is a willingness to follow that makes them poor; that makes them mourn for the fate of the world; that makes them seek and be persecuted for their desire to receive God’s righteousness through forgiveness of sin and renewal; that makes them stand with the marginalised and downtrodden in compassion and mercy; and that makes them renounce violence and seek peace, because they have found their peace in God.⁶⁴ These are the qualities of the person who is becoming more Christ-like.

⁶¹ Bonhoeffer (2015).

⁶² Harder (2005) p 120.

⁶³ Jennings (2013) p 182.

⁶⁴ Bonhoeffer (2015) pp 60–67.

Chapter 4: Characteristics of a peacebuilder

There are a number of characteristics of a peacebuilder that can be seen in both their attitudes and their skills. This chapter will look at the attitudes of a Christian peacebuilder, rather than their more technical skills like negotiation. In particular, we will look at humility, hospitality, courage, imagination and comfort with complexity. These are attitudes that many people possess, but they are also characteristics in which all Christians should be looking to grow as they seek the kingdom, and that should characterise Tearfund's approach to peacebuilding work.

Key points

- Humility acknowledges that 'I' am not more important than 'you' or than 'us'. It is a characteristic that enables us not to cling on to our own power and privilege, but to use them or lay them aside for the good of others, without diminishing our own value as people made in the image of God.
- Hospitality is an attitude towards others that welcomes, listens and responds. It is an attitude that God's people are commanded to have towards others, but it is important to remember that we must learn to be the guests of others as well as to be hosts – particularly in the locations where Tearfund will be participating in peacebuilding.
- Often, humility and hospitality involve the willingness to take a risk, in order to make a change to the status quo. This risk-taking is not foolhardiness or certainty of our own rightness, but courage in the face of uncertain situations, made possible by our trust in God.
- Peacebuilding takes place in complicated environments with no clear and simple solutions, in which all parties have some historical complicity or connection to the conflicts. Peacebuilders need to develop a comfort with complexity so that they can move forward in these situations, with love for others and the desire to restore relationships as the guiding principle.
- Imagination is an essential attribute of the peacebuilder, as this enables them to envision a different future and seek ways to bring it into reality. For the Christian, this imagination is grounded in our certain hope of the kingdom of God.

4.1 Humility

Throughout the Bible, we see humility and service of others as characteristics that express the love of God, and that maintain and build peaceful relationships with others. The clearest statement of this is in Paul's description of Christ's laying aside of his own power in order to humble himself and make peace between humanity and God possible (Philippians 2:5–8). For humans, humility is a refusal to exercise the power we have in relation to others, to make ourselves more at their expense.

We can see examples of humility in the stories of the Old Testament, in accounts of those whose behaviour made or maintained peace. In 1 Samuel 25:22–23, we see Abigail humble herself before David, apologising for her husband's dismissal of his request for hospitality and asking for his mercy. In the story of Esther, we see Mordecai using the practice of taking on sackcloth and ashes to humble himself, in order to try to prevent the violence that Haman sought to bring upon the Jews. We also see Esther being willing to humble herself before King Xerxes, to plead for the life of her people (Esther 4:1–3; 8:3). We can also see that it is

Cain's lack of humility before God that precipitates his violent actions (Genesis 4), and Joseph's lack of humility that angers his brothers at the beginning of their story (Genesis 37). It is his willingness to acknowledge that God has used Joseph's forced humbling in slavery and imprisonment to bring about good, and his readiness to lay aside the power and justification he has to exert vengeance upon his brother that allows reconciliation to take place in the family of Israel. In the New Testament letter to Philemon, we see Paul ask Philemon to set aside his power and justification to punish the runaway slave Onesimus and instead to welcome him as a brother in Christ, not a slave. He is asking Philemon to humble himself, out of a love of Christ.

It is important to remember, though, that humility and service are not about self-abasement or a lack of self-esteem. Christ knew who he was, even on the cross, but chose to lay aside the pride and power that he held in his identity as God. In describing hospitality, Nouwen emphasises the need for the host to retain their identity and presence and not to disappear in the presence of the stranger they have welcomed.⁶⁵ In this, it is a rebalancing of the power relationships between the two parties. It is also noticeable that very often the humility that contributes to peacebuilding is inextricably linked to Christ-like love, to hospitality and to courage. For example, in the story of Esther, her willingness to be humble is part of her willingness to risk her life for her people. In the story of Abigail, it is tied to her willingness to be hospitable to David and his men.

4.2 Hospitality

We mentioned the story of Abigail, in which her husband Nabal refuses to extend hospitality to David during the time in which he was in the wilderness hiding from Saul. David's anger at this refusal caused him to threaten Nabal, and it took Abigail's gift of hospitality, unbeknownst to her husband, to restore the peace (1 Samuel 25).

Henri Nouwen describes hospitality as an attitude more than an act: an approach to the world and to other people that welcomes, listens and responds. It is an attitude that acknowledges that those coming to us as strangers have left their own places and need space to find and be themselves again, sometimes making dramatically new lives. It is also an attitude that allows people to be quietly confident in their own identity, not needing to be liked but defined by their willingness to love and be loved.

Hospitality challenges our often innate hostilities, but Nouwen argues that we don't have to overcome these entirely before we start to be hospitable. We can fake it until we make it, permitting that recognition of our own weakness to keep us humble rather than letting it give us an excuse to close ourselves off.⁶⁶

'Hospitality is such an important attitude. We cannot change the world by a new plan, project, or idea. We cannot even change people by our convictions, stories, advice and proposals, but we can offer a space where people are encouraged to disarm themselves, to lay aside their occupations and preoccupations, and to listen with attention and care to the voices speaking in their own centre.'⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Nouwen (1998) p 74.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p 48

⁶⁷ Ibid. p 52.

Hospitality and welcome of the stranger was an ethic and a law of Israel, and they were called to remember this because of their own history: ‘Do not ill-treat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.’ (Exodus 22:21)⁶⁸ Images of feasting and banqueting are familiar in Scripture as locations of welcome, peace and flourishing, and as celebrations commemorating moments in Israel’s history, such as Passover.

‘You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.’ (Psalm 23:5)⁶⁹

Harder describes some of the images of banqueting tables, such as those in Proverbs 9:5–6 and Matthew 11:28–29, as inviting all to partake in the nourishment of wisdom and receive the promise of blessing and *shalom*, in a place where all are able to share and to be safe.⁷⁰ She also points out that God expects humans to make choices about whether to join his table. In the same way, if we are being hospitable we need to wait on people to choose to enter the space.

As well as developing the attitude of hospitality, it is important that the Christian develops a willingness to be hosted, to receive from others – even those who seem, in worldly terms, to have less than us – and to enter into a different power dynamic. This is an attitude that acknowledges that we are also recipients of God’s hospitality, that there are times and places where we need both to receive and to be welcomed as strangers, in order to find ourselves and work out how and where we fit in these places.

4.3 Courage and risk

Giving and receiving hospitality can be risky, especially in conflict situations. Abigail had no guarantee that David would welcome her when she went to him. Those who accept hospitality often have to rely on it for survival. Being courageous in the face of challenges and being willing to take risks are key attributes of the peacebuilder. These risks can come from facing uncertain situations, but also, at times, from being willing to stand with or speak out of a moral judgement on particular situations in pursuit of peace.

In Esther 4–8, we see Esther praying and fasting before taking her life in her hands to approach the king in his throne room, in order to save her people from violence. In Genesis 43–44, we see Judah being willing to risk his own life to protect Benjamin and to secure grain and food for his family, having promised his father that he will guarantee Benjamin’s safety. It is his willingness to do this that eventually moves Joseph to reveal himself and make peace with his brothers. And, in the gospel, we see Christ choosing to go to Jerusalem, knowing that it would end in his death, in order to make peace between God and humans.

‘There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.’ (1 John 4:18)

⁶⁸ See also Leviticus 19:34; Ramachandra (2009).

⁶⁹ See also Esther 5, in which Esther hosts a banquet as part of her plan to gain the king’s favour and assistance; Genesis 18:1–8, in which Abraham welcomes three strangers who bring with them the promise of Isaac’s birth; Deuteronomy 33:19; Song of Solomon 2:4; Isaiah 25:6; Matthew 22:1–14; Luke 5:29, 14:15–24.

⁷⁰ Harder (2005) pp 125, 147.

For the Christian, this ability to take risks and to be courageous in hope of peace is rooted in love and faith in God. Taking a risk in seeking peace is made easier by having confidence in God as our security.⁷¹ This does not mean being foolhardy or irresponsible, or over-certain of our own right-ness, but to trust that something will come from taking a step that we think is the right one to take, despite unknown consequences or possible behaviour.

For Christians seeking peace, some of this risk comes in acting in uncertainty as we live as disciples. This was situation normal, for the earliest Christians, who discovered that ‘adaptability, fluidity, formation, and reformation of being were [...] a requirement for survival.’⁷² Our growth and transformation to become more like Christ equips us to be and to act, but it does not give us an exact list of what we should do in any given situation. We live and act in the relationships we have as the people we have become, guided by the wisdom of God and the Holy Spirit, seeking to bear witness to the kingdom. Theodore Jennings describes this as imitation and improvisation:

‘Just as God acts [...] in ways that improvise in relation to what is happening in the world, so, too, must the lifestyle that testifies to or gives evidence of divine just also improvise. Improvisation is not random – but responsive and creative, and in that way both imitates God and gives dramatic evidence of the in-breaking of the messianic age.’⁷³

This is what it is to step out in faith – and to do it requires some hope and imagination, as well as courage.

4.4. Comfort with complexity

Chapter 1 started by noting that sin entered the world in the fall, and that division and conflict between human and God, and human and human, is a recurring theme in the Bible – and likewise in human history, as the repetition and consequences of sin and disobedience have shaped our world. It pointed out that Christians need to face this situation if there is to be peace.

It is therefore important that a peacebuilder is comfortable confronting complexity and ambiguity in conflict situations, and with recognising that no ‘next step’ in a peace process will resolve all of the problems at once. It is this characteristic that allows the peacebuilder to acknowledge the complicity of their own communities and themselves in the history of the conflicts that are being faced, without then withdrawing out of fear of making the situation worse.

In Romans 3:21, Paul writes that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Miroslav Volf points out two things: firstly, that this allows us to shed any delusions of our own perfectibility and ability to create perfection before the full revelation of the kingdom; and secondly, that this does not mean that all sins are

⁷¹ Schlabach and Friesen, eds. (2005) p 38.

⁷² Jennings (2010) p 8.

⁷³ Jennings (2013) p 182. See also Vanhoozer (2005); Tom Wright (2013) p 93, who talk about participating in mission in the same terms.

equal. He argues that both Jesus and the prophets laid a particular burden on 'the mighty and the ruthless who oppress the weak and crush the needy'.⁷⁴

In complex situations, the Christian peacebuilder needs to be able to acknowledge that there are multiple claims and experiences – that all have sinned and all have suffered from the consequences of sin – and yet, to discern that there are moral judgements and just responses and decisions to be made in the pursuit of peace, erring towards a partiality for the oppressed. They also need to acknowledge that the offer of God's forgiveness is for all, and to seek ways of building peace that allow for both justice and forgiveness, including earthly justice and restitution alongside heavenly forgiveness.⁷⁵

Volf challenges the Christian to be willing to be complicated, not to oversimplify or systematise, and not to focus on an overall victory for justice (which we as humans cannot secure), but on small steps and agreements for overlapping territories and basic commitments. These are, perhaps, best secured by developing relationships in which we can navigate the complexities with others from all sides of a conflict.

As Volf points out in discussing the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:

'To make the rules stick, one must reduce moral ambiguity and the complexity of social agents and their interaction. Insistence on observance of the rules fosters polarities where none are to be found and heightens them where they do exist. As a result, one is either completely "in" (if no rule was broken) or completely "out" (if a rule has been broken).'⁷⁶

In a world without grace and salvation, rules are necessary to maintain order – but it is a world in which we will remain locked in cycles of enmity and division. In the story of the Prodigal Son, Volf sees an alternative path in the father's behaviour. He does not ignore what his younger son has done, or undo it (as Volf notes, the younger is not given a second share of inheritance), but he forgives it out of an indestructible love. This is in contrast to his elder son, who has remained in the family and is not willing to restore the relationship, prioritising the social rules instead. In this, he chooses to exclude himself from the family.⁷⁷

Mennonite theologian Shirley Showalter, reflecting on why some denominations have a stronger peacebuilding tradition than others, suggests that we should think about orthopraxy. She has argued that when a denomination has a focus on orthodoxy, something that she connects with an emphasis on systematic theology, then 'the church's energy goes towards sustaining right belief, which may not always make it into practice.'⁷⁸ She thinks that smaller, more communal and countercultural denominations (like the Mennonites, Brethren, Quakers and Amish) have tended to focus on orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy, rooting their shared practices in a community of like-minded people, whose shared values and approach to life is founded on moral obligation and commitment, rather than in the philosophy, nature and teleological ideas that underpin intellectual beliefs.

⁷⁴ Volf (2010) p 82.

⁷⁵ There is a danger, perhaps especially within the church, that the importance of God's forgiveness creates pressure on the oppressed to forgive their oppressor without the proper acknowledgement of injustice and the establishment of justice.

⁷⁶ Volf (2010) p 163

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp 157–165.

⁷⁸ Showalter (1997) p 6.

Orthopraxy is important, particularly in peacebuilding work, where it may hold together a diverse body of people who would disagree on the nuances of philosophies and doctrines. It may be that, as Volf argues, our basic commitments to the gospel and each other, and our willingness to make these bear on social realities with our contexts are more important – and more realistic – than building a coherent tradition or rigid rules, which cannot cope with complexity and instead tries to force an inadequate solution.

4.5. Imagination

‘There is within Christianity a breathtakingly powerful way to imagine and enact the social, to imagine and enact connection and belonging.’⁷⁹

Chapter 1 discussed the importance of the biblical narrative in giving the Christian peacebuilder an understanding of the future and the peace that we are seeking through our work, which enables us to imagine and tell stories of a different future. It makes sense, therefore, that imagination would be an important quality for a peacebuilder, and Chapter 5 will present one account of the way that imagination plays a part in the process of making peace.

John Paul Lederach describes imagination as having a quality of transcendence in its ability to break out of what seem to be predetermined structures, situations and dead ends. He sees Romans 8:22 as a metaphor for the birth pangs of something that is longed for and possible, but does not yet exist – a metaphor that may be used to describe the possibility for peace to be born out of conflict, given a vision and a catalyst,⁸⁰ as the death, resurrection and hope of Christ do for the new creation that the old has been awaiting.

We have also mentioned that our behaviour as peace builders is rooted in our discipleship: our imitation of Christ in the ways that we respond to the situations in which we find ourselves. This requires us to imagine ourselves as living within the kingdom and bringing that imagination into reality. For Christians, this imagination is not making up fantasies or fairy tales. It is an imagination driven by the hope, vision and promise of a different future, one that helps us to imagine reconciliation between diverse people who are loved by God. But as it is not yet fully revealed, we need to use the power of imagination to find ourselves living within it and witnessing to it. It is the imagination of Martin Luther King Jr’s ‘I have a dream’ speech, or the imagination of Moses, rooted in the vision given to him by God, to see Israel freed from slavery.⁸¹

The way that this imagination is expressed varies across people and cultures (for example, in arts, stories, conversations and vision statements). It describes a future without necessarily laying down the exact route to get there – but the hope of this different future can encourage people to choose different actions and ways of being in the present, in order to move towards it.

⁷⁹ Jennings (2010) p 4.

⁸⁰ Lederach (2010) p 29.

⁸¹ Brueggemann (2001) pp 3, 6, 14–17.

Chapter 5: The journey

Having explained that peacebuilding is a part of the mission of God, and explored the development and characteristics of the peacebuilder within the context of this mission, this chapter will look at some of the approaches that have been suggested to help humans move from brokenness and conflict to restoration and harmony. These accounts of peacebuilding seek to look at the whole process of transformation and ask how we might get to there from here, and are either explicitly theological or underpinned by Christian thought and ideas.

We will look at four accounts in particular:

- Henri Nouwen's account of hospitality in *Reaching Out*
- John Paul Lederach's discussion of imagination and creativity in peacebuilding in *The Moral Imagination*
- Miroslav Volf's presentation of the theology of embrace in *Exclusion and Embrace*
- the concepts of just war and non-violence as ways of engaging with and countering conflict

Key points

- Nouwen describes the importance and nature of a hospitable space, in which relationships can be developed and change can happen. Such spaces enable all participants to come as they are with their own experiences and voices, but also demand that all respect the identity, voices and experiences of others. This enables all to develop new ways of being together at peace without demanding that all become the same.
- Lederach describes the power of a moral imagination to see a different, peaceful future, and to start to bring this vision into reality by allowing it to reshape relationships and create new possibilities through them.
- Volf describes steps that we might take towards reconciliation through repentance and forgiveness, and the desire of each to make space for the other in our own lives and communities.
- The way that conflict is remembered is essential in maintaining peace in the future, so that the oppressed does not become the oppressor, and so that the oppressor does not 'reoffend.' Memory enables us to pursue justice and maintain peace, but we must remember in ways that do not create open wounds, and in the knowledge that salvation is offered to all.
- Just war and non-violence are both approaches to conflict that have a strong presence in Christian tradition. It is possible to question both approaches, but there are a number of questions that we can think through in situations where decisions about peace and war need to be made.

5.1 From *hostis* to *hospes* (Henri Nouwen)

'Our world is full of strangers, estranged from their past, culture, country, friends, neighbours, God, and themselves – searching for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found. Society is growing more fearful of the stranger and the harm they may

do. It is obligatory for Christians to offer an open and hospitable space where strangers cast off strangeness. We need to convert the *hostis* into a *hospes*.⁸²

In exploring what it means to live a life in the spirit of Jesus Christ, Nouwen describes three journeys that Christians take as they mature: from loneliness to solitude, from illusion to prayer, and from hostility to hospitality. It is this last that makes disciples peacemakers. We have already looked at hospitality as an attribute of a peacebuilder. This section will look at Nouwen's ideas about the nature and conditions of creating a hospitable space, which may contribute to the development of peace.

According to Nouwen, a hospitable space is one in which change can happen – where strangers can become friends, building relationships across differences. It is also a space where people are present, not absent. It is a space where the host allows the stranger to display and develop their own self-confidence, ideas and talents, and their own ability to love others rather than fearing them. In a hospitable space, people are received as they are, not offered love or welcome under conditions. At the same time, however, it must be a space where the stranger respects the identity, experiences and beliefs of the host. Nouwen grants the host the right to be 'at home in [one's] own house',⁸³ in order that they can welcome and ensure that the space is one where the people being hosted are free to be themselves and to build or rebuild their own ways of being, individually and together.

There are no barriers to entry to a hospitable space, but there may and should be boundaries upon life and participation in the space that has been created. Nouwen suggests that 'receptivity and confrontation are the two inseparable sides of Christian witness. They have to remain in careful balance'.⁸⁴ This involves sharing and listening, maintaining confidence in one's own identity, experiences and beliefs, but acknowledging those of others as equally important. As previously stated, this may challenge innate hostilities, but Nouwen argues that people don't have to overcome these entirely before we start engaging in hospitality. We can fake it until we make it, permitting that recognition of our own weakness to keep us humble rather than closed off.⁸⁵ He argues for the importance of poverty of mind, 'a growing willingness to accept the incomprehensibility of the mystery of life',⁸⁶ because this is what allows people to hear each other's experiences and build relationships. In this kind of space, difference between people is possible, and is not something to be feared. Change may happen to all participants but it, too, is not necessarily something to be feared.

It is in this kind of space that people will be able to share their experiences of conflict and oppression, and to hear and recognise the stories of others. It is in this kind of space that approaches and processes for peacebuilding, like those proposed by Lederach and Volf, may be able to take place, because it is a space in which the active nature of giving and receiving hospitality, in which all participants are aware that there are behavioural expectations and etiquette, can enable and safeguard communication and relationship-building. Of course, the more parties who enter this space, the more complicated the space becomes – and the more important it is that all those in the space respect the others' right to their own identity and listen to the accounts of experiences that others share.

Chapter 4 mentioned that the Christian peacebuilder needs to develop the attitude of receiving hospitality as well as offering it. As Tearfund engages in peacebuilding work, it is likely that we will often find ourselves

⁸² Nouwen (1998) p 43.

⁸³ Ibid. p 74.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p 72.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p 48.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p 75.

as the guest in a community, even if we are coming with resources. As we develop our work, we will need to remember both the attitude of hospitality and the importance of receiving hospitality. Nouwen permits the host to have the power to guard a hospitable space even though they must seek to avoid privileging their own voice, but as a guest in a space we must also cede this power to others.

5.2 Imagination, creativity and risk (John Paul Lederach)

In *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach discusses the idea that to make peace is to seek a constructive change in the world, and that it is a creative act.⁸⁷ He states that he believes the Christian faith has the potential to provide tools for peacemakers to participate in this act.

Lederach suggests four elements that generate, mobilise and build the moral imagination, making peacebuilding possible:⁸⁸

- the ability to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies
- the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity about the world that embraces complexity and does not rely on dualistic polarity
- the ability to believe in and pursue the creative act
- the willingness to accept the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the too-familiar landscape of violence, in order to see if transformation can happen

In Section 4.5 it was noted that the imagination has a quality of transcendence. Lederach describes the way that imagination enables people to see themselves in webs of relationship with other people, even their enemies – in a way that, to the Christian, is resonant with the understanding that we are commanded to love our neighbour, and that our neighbours include those we traditionally think of as our enemies (Luke 10:25–37). Once people can imagine themselves in these webs, they can imagine and see the potential that changes they make may have upon the web as a whole.

Secondly, Lederach talks about paradoxical curiosity as a mode of investigation for the peacebuilder: a willingness to approach and explore the realities of a conflict as infinitely complex and worthy of our curiosity, not our distillation into forced or dualistic categories.⁸⁹ Here, we come back to the idea that the peacebuilder is comfortable in complex situations and can handle ambiguity. The peacebuilder listens and accepts the experiences they hear about, refusing to judge without relinquishing the right to develop a perspective or opinion, and allowing the things they hear and learn to provoke imagination to help people move beyond conflict as a mode of social interaction.

Lederach moves his peacebuilder on from curiosity and learning, towards action. To make peace, something has to happen. Here, Lederach calls for the creative act in which ‘potentiality moves from the realm of possibility to the world of the tangible’,⁹⁰ and in which playfulness of mind brings into being things that have

⁸⁷ Lederach (2010) p ix. John Paul Lederach is Professor of International Peacebuilding at Notre Dame University in the USA. He is also a Mennonite Christian, who writes openly about the fact that his faith and theology have shaped his ideas about peacebuilding.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p 36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p 39.

not existed before. He cites the incarnation as the theological example of this, the moment when the potential for God to live among humans again and make peace with them became real.

As humans made in the image of God, we inherit our creativity from our creator, who made the world. We all have creative potential – and in Lederach’s picture of peacebuilding, we all have the potential to be peacemakers. However, we need to remember that creativity is not magic. Nothing that is created comes into being without effort or work being done to create the thing that has been imagined in time and space. Creating peace, too, takes time and effort, as people and groups break down old patterns of relationship and develop new ones. We also need to remember that the creative act requires the use of power, and so in peacebuilding work, it is important to be aware of the power dynamics in a situation, in order to make sure that the process of imagining and creating belongs to the people and communities involved, while not reinforcing damaging power imbalances.

Finally, Lederach reminds us that the creative act, through which the moral imagination is able to come into being, always involves a risk – a step into the unknown without a guarantee of success.⁹¹ In the context of conflict and peacebuilding, conflict is the known and peace the unknown. It involves a risk to try to build a new, peaceful, way of life and relationship, and to hope in its success.

‘Peace asks you to share memory. It asks you to share space, territory, specific concrete places. It asks you to share a future. And all this you are asked to do with and in the presence of your enemy.’⁹²

⁹²

The risk is, perhaps, all the greater because, Lederach argues, true reconciliation is not to ‘forgive and forget’, but to ‘remember and change’.⁹³ Remembering well, without reopening tensions (as we will explore in more detail with Miroslav Volf) is much harder work than the oblivion of forgetfulness, but remembering what one has gained and what might be lost, and identifying oneself as a person who is reconciled, is a powerful element in maintaining a peaceful future.

5.3 The embrace (Miroslav Volf)

Miroslav Volf’s book *Exclusion and Embrace* is the starting place of his ongoing theological journey exploring the issues of exclusion and reconciliation within and between communities. This section looks particularly at his use of the metaphor of the embrace as a process for reconciliation and peacebuilding. This is a metaphor born out of the belief that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of love, and that therefore liberation and reconciliation must occur in a place of love.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ibid. p 39.

⁹² Cejka and Bamat (2003) p 265.

⁹³ Lederach (2010) p 152.

⁹⁴ The metaphor of embrace, which requires touch, is not a metaphor which will work perfectly in all cultures, conflict and peacebuilding situations, where touch may be constrained or be emotionally difficult for those involved in the process.

‘When the Trinity turns toward the world, the Son and the spirit become the two arms of God by which humanity was made and taken into God’s embrace.’⁹⁵

Volf’s theology of embrace has four key elements:

- repentance
- forgiveness
- making space in oneself for others
- healing of memory

The willingness to embrace is both a moment of union or reunion, and an attitude or orientation towards other people that can be developed. It also has four stages or moments:

- opening the arms to the other person
- waiting for the other person to respond to the offer of embrace
- closing the arms, with each party holding, and being held – the embrace must be gentle so that both sides remain identifiably themselves
- opening the arms again – each must let go of the other so that they can remain themselves and yet be enriched by the traces of another after an embrace

The movement towards the embrace is a journey that both sides of a conflict need to take. They can journey on their own, as part of their own healing process, moving towards repentance or forgiveness as is relevant. But ideally, they will undertake these journeys in sight of the other, coming to hear what the other has experienced and understand their perspective on a situation.

Repentance⁹⁶

Repentance demands that people acknowledge that they have sinned and to take responsibility for it – even though we are all a part of systems that produce injustice and induce us to sin, often almost unconsciously and uncritically. For Volf, sin lies in disobedience of God. This disobedience is something that is clearly seen in those who persecute others, and in who benefit from injustice without challenging it. However, Volf argues that it is also important that the oppressed repent of their desire for vengeance upon their enemies, whom they are still called to love. Repentance lays the ground for a different, more peaceful way of life in future.

Forgiveness⁹⁷

The establishment of a just response, for example by a legal process, provides a framework for repentance and restitution without encouraging vengeance. However, an unjust deed cannot be undone and the original offence will always remain. Often, restitution cannot be made, even if determining appropriate restitution is possible. Forgiveness can help to overcome the lack of satisfaction that can be found in strict retributive justice.

⁹⁵ Volf (2010) p 128; referencing Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* 5.6.1 which describes the Son and Spirit as the ‘hands’ of the Father.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* pp 115–119.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* pp 120–126.

Forgiveness allows for healing, especially if the anger and pain of the oppressed are laid before God, as the Psalmist shows us, for it is before him that the seeds of forgiveness are able to sprout. At the same time, forgiveness affirms the importance of justice: the cry to ‘forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors’ (Matthew 6:12) cites a debt that can only be established by the judgment of justice or laid aside by an act of forgiveness. Forgiveness is hard: it is, after all, encapsulated on the cross. We suffer if we pass on the rightful claim of restitutive justice in order to forgive our enemy.

Forgiveness does not need to follow repentance, chronologically, in that someone might choose to forgive without the other party having repented, as a part of their own journey – but without it, the true *shalom* that Christian peacebuilding seeks, in which all parties can flourish together, will not come to full fruition.

Making space for the other⁹⁸

Forgiveness marks a moment where hostility breaks down, but it does not necessarily lead to restored relationships. Volf points out that after forgiveness, people may go their separate ways rather than continuing to do life together.

Volf’s model for this step is the embrace he sees offered in the open arms of Christ on the cross. These open arms reveal a self-giving love and the willingness of God to make space in himself to lovingly receive the humanity that had been estranged from him.⁹⁹ To explain how this works, Volf looks at the nature of the Trinity, with its three distinct persons who are ‘in’ each other in perfect communion. On the cross, this Trinity opens up and invites humanity in – something we celebrate and respond to in the ritual of the Eucharist.

Volf is clear that we need to remember that this invitation is not just something that is for ‘me’ and ‘mine’. It is offered to all, and if ‘I’ am going to join the body, I must be ready to be a part of the body with everyone else, even those who have injured me. Stepping into the embrace that Christ offers us demands that we, in turn, be willing to offer this embrace to others: ‘Inscribed on the very heart of God’s grace is the rule that we can be its recipients only if we do not resist being made into its agents.’¹⁰⁰

Healing of memory¹⁰¹

‘See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.’ (Isaiah 65:17)

The final stage of making peace, for Volf, is a ‘certain kind of forgetting’ in which people remember their histories without holding grudges. Volf understands that memory always does something to us – and to the people we are remembering¹⁰² – and argues that while the memory of evil can be a shield against the same evil occurring again, it also acts as a barrier between self and other, a continual sore in the relationship, and often a motivating force in future conflict. This leads him to argue that our histories must be redeemed, so that we can forgive and embrace without complete oblivion in this world, by ‘narrating the history of the offender’s sin in the context of grace’. He argues that we must remember sin, in order that repentance,

⁹⁸ Ibid. pp 126–130.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p 127.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p 129.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pp 131–139.

¹⁰² Volf (2014).

justice and transformation can occur, but we must remember it in the knowledge that God forgets a sin repented of and forgiven, knowing that the salvation of the cross is offered to the perpetrators of injustice just as it is to the victims, and that in the new creation, the former sins will be washed away.¹⁰³

To do this, Volf argues that we must remember truthfully, hopefully, responsibly and in reconciling ways in order to do justice. This involves:

- telling the truth about the past, and recognising that our perspective is our own and is limited
- placing our memories in the context of a hopeful vision of the future and in the knowledge that we are loved by God
- recognising that we have a responsibility not to repeat what was done to others, as the Israelites were commanded to treat strangers well because they were once strangers in Egypt (Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:34)
- acknowledging that salvation and reconciliation is offered to our enemies as well as to us¹⁰⁴

It is this that enables us to create peaceful, loving communities with those who have wronged us.

Volf acknowledges that to offer the embrace – in repentance or in forgiveness – is to take a risk. There is always the possibility that an attempt to build peace on one side will be rejected by the other, just as Christ is often rejected by humanity. Because of this, societies and communities do need to create social regulations and laws that will move towards justice and order – though true peace will only come when they are transformed, by grace, from a social contract into covenant relationships of loving commitment and responsibility.¹⁰⁵ He illustrates this transformation by referring to God's refusal to give up his contract with humanity – 'How can I hand you over, O Israel?' (Hosea 11:8) – and Jesus' presentation of this refusal in the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. Reiterating from before, in a world without grace and salvation the rules are necessary to maintain order – but it is a world in which we will remain locked in cycles of enmity and division. The alternative path is found in the father's behaviour. He does not ignore what the younger son has done or undo it (as Volf notes, the younger is not given a second share of inheritance), but he forgives it out of an indestructible love.¹⁰⁶

It is this understanding of a bigger picture of reconciliation that really enables humans to reconcile with each other. If we have experienced love and forgiveness, it is easier to offer it – and it is an offer that is demanded of those who have accepted reconciliation with God.

5.4 Just war or non-violence?

One question that may come up for Christians engaging with conflict situations and peacebuilding work is whether violence can ever be justified.

We have mentioned the story of Esther in looking at the character of a peacebuilder, but (of course) the restoration and reconciliation that was created between the Babylonians and the Jews involved Mordecai

¹⁰³ Volf (2010) pp 136–139. See also Volf (2006).

¹⁰⁴ Volf (2014).

¹⁰⁵ Volf (2010) pp 147–156.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pp 157–165.

overruling Haman's earlier law for the destruction of the Jews, by crafting a law of his own that gave the Jews the right to assemble, destroy and plunder anyone who attacked them – that is, they were allowed to fight in self-defence.¹⁰⁷

Yet, in the gospels, we see Jesus – moving on from the Beatitudes to talk about the fulfilment of the law and the importance of righteousness – tell his audience: 'Do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.' (Matthew 5:39) When he himself is under threat, he forbids Peter to use his sword (John 18:10–11).

The question is, perhaps, less about whether individual Christians should meet conflict with a willingness to engage in conflict, but whether we should intervene to defend the vulnerable, and whether communities should be able to use violence seek to defend themselves and their most vulnerable members.

Marty has outlined three historic Christian perspectives on war and peace – pacifism and non-violence, just war and crusade – noting that for many theorists and theologians, just war was a strategy of responsible love and service.¹⁰⁸ However, he notes that in the modern era, the methods of contemporary war mean that the just war theory, in particular its emphasis on protecting the wellbeing of non-combatants, does not function in relation to reality. In the same period, he argues, pacifism has moved beyond withdrawal from society and its conflicts into a search for effective peacebuilding.¹⁰⁹ Marty himself argues that the desire to love and defend the vulnerable cannot be effective in a fallen world without the possibility of a final recourse to violence or war.¹¹⁰ Therefore, there needs to be something between pacifism and just war.

The Roman Catholic Church, the traditional home of just war theory, has moved away from this approach in recent years. Recent Catholic theology has been concerned with the way that the theory focuses on war, rather than peace, suggesting that if peace is defined positively (as in Section 2.1 above) rather than as the absence of war, Christian theology can develop a more expansive vision for peace and peacebuilding as part of our discipleship, largely rooted in the Sermon on the Mount.

Allen has argued that Christian discipleship is rooted in the eschatological claim that Jesus' death and resurrection has defeated the powers of sin. He claims, therefore, that the believer should follow Jesus Christ in all things, however apparently unworldly.¹¹¹ Friesen concurs, arguing that 'the wisdom of the cross affirms that safety and security are ultimately grounded not in violence but in peace-making practices that build on trust and interdependence to secure a more just social order'.¹¹² Pacifism, in this view, is the only option for the disciple, who, seeing the world from the cross, embraces an ethic of risk grounded in eschatological hope, revealing the truly radical nature of the kingdom.

The differences between pacifism, just war and political realism have been described as 'the hard moral choices'.¹¹³ Friesen calls this decision making process 'working through the relationship between faithfulness and effectiveness',¹¹⁴ arguing that following Christ faithfully and pursuing peace effectively

¹⁰⁷ Esther 8-9

¹⁰⁸ Marty (1997) pp 185–188.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp 188–189.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p 197.

¹¹¹ Allen (1997) p133.

¹¹² Friesen (2005) p 48.

¹¹³ Koontz (1997) p 223.

¹¹⁴ Friesen (2005) p 49.

demands a love of neighbour that includes work for just systems that protect them from harm. Non-violence, he argues, cannot be a cover for withdrawal – as the cross shows.

Miroslav Volf argues that our commitment to the gospel and to each other, and to making this have an impact within our social reality, is of primary importance, and that it makes building a coherent philosophical tradition that will ensure we always make the right choice in this kind of situation unrealistic.¹¹⁵ He makes the following suggestions, arguing that while non-violence should always be the aim, it may be impossible in practice while seeking to relieve the oppression of others.

- Maintain a suspicion against the perspective of the powerful – because they have the ability to impose their perspective, not because their perspective is more likely to be wrong.
- Remember God’s partiality for people living in poverty and experiencing injustice.
- Keep on wanting to embrace and make space for the other – because there is no other place in which we will be able to agree on justice, or where we can develop willingness to sacrifice ourselves for each other.¹¹⁶
- Remember that God has promised a final judgment and divine vengeance, as depicted in Revelation.
- If there is an occasion where we choose to intervene in a situation in a way that is likely to lead to violence and conflict, do not seek to legitimise it through religious arguments or certainties, but acknowledge instead that this is the unpleasant consequence of living in a fallen world.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Volf (2010) p 216.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p 218.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. pp 299–306.

Chapter 6: From theology to praxis

As Tearfund develops peacebuilding work, the ideas discussed above will need to be taken out of the theoretical space, in which we can talk about an ideal, biblical approach to peacebuilding and its ultimate destination, and into the practical realities in which we work.

As mentioned in the introduction, peacebuilding work takes place in contexts where there are a plurality of religions and beliefs, and where Christianity is often a minority and sometimes mistrusted presence. In order to use our theology well, therefore, it is important that we also reflect theologically how Christians build peaceful relationships across religious difference, without conceding our belief in the truth of our faith.

Key points

- Tearfund's theological beliefs and approaches are laid out in the following documents: *Statement of faith*, *Theology of mission*, *Theory of poverty*, *Policy and theological approach on sharing our faith*, *Theological approach on impartiality*.
- Tearfund is confident in its beliefs and identity as a Christian organisation. In this confidence, we choose and are able to articulate and express our beliefs in our work in ways that are humble, respect the freedom and beliefs of others, and do not seek to privilege our views and experiences above those of others, especially in places where we are visitors and are hosted by others.
- Christianity has always existed in a world of multiple religious choices. As Tearfund develops its peacebuilding work, we will need to learn more about other faiths and other experiences of Christianity, so that we can build positive relationships with others in ways that foster unity, and peace that allows for difference and diversity.
- There is valuable common ground with those who have other beliefs, most notably the shared view that faith is important and shapes people's ways of life, and a shared belief that the wellbeing of others is important and to be pursued as part of a virtuous life. In peacebuilding work, the shared desire to find peace across existing divisions and boundaries provides a shared goal for working together.

6.1 Tearfund's position

Tearfund's fundamental theological beliefs are laid out in our *Statement of faith*. Our understanding of mission and our participation in it is laid out in our *Theology of mission*, and our understanding of poverty and our work to alleviate it in our *Theory of poverty*. These documents present the key markers and ideas that define Tearfund's identity as an evangelical Christian organisation, and help staff, partners and allies to be aware of where we stand, the beliefs we hold dear, and of the goals of our work. These, in conjunction with a clear understanding of the aims of our peacebuilding work and how it connects to our organisational vision, will help us to determine the shape of this work and who to ally and partner with in doing it.

Tearfund is a Christian humanitarian organisation whose work is born out of our Christian values and our belief that alleviating poverty, oppression and suffering in all its forms is an integral part of the mission of

God in which the church is called to participate. In our experience, actions motivated by such faith are not generally problematic to those who have other faiths, as faith-based activity is respected and there is a common understanding that faith shapes action and life. Problems emerge when there is suspicion that those actions seek to require or manipulate others to accept that faith, or to privilege our Christian faith above the faiths of others living and working in the same context.

As our policy and approach on sharing our faith makes clear, Tearfund is confident in our own faith and in our belief that our work reveals the love of God for his creation, facilitating the flourishing that is the mark of the kingdom of God. We believe that everyone has the right to freedom of religion, thought and conscience, and that the use of any manipulation, falsehood, pressure or coercion in sharing our faith is inconsistent with the command to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matthew 22:39), and with the example of Christ and the will of God to allow humans to choose to accept him as Lord. This means that the ways in which we share our faith must be guided by the contexts in which we are working and the work that is being undertaken. It will be important that those with whom we work are aware of and willing to respect our Christian identity and Statement of Faith, but equally important that we respond in similar fashion.

Peacebuilding work takes place in very specific contexts, in which we will be building relationships with and between different denominations and faiths, with multiple lines of division. We will also be working in many contexts where Christianity has historically been experienced in relation to Western imperialism and colonialism, spreading in ways that created divisions and damaged existing cultures. We need to remember this history as we present ourselves and articulate our beliefs. In particular, we need to be aware of where our own beliefs have been embedded in cultural norms and practices that have not always revealed the love of God to others. This does not mean, of course, that we should not be able to describe ourselves as Christian or to seek to express this faith in our work. However, we will need to do so in ways that are sensitive to the local experience of Christianity, understanding of language about the Christian faith (for example, with reference to words such as ‘evangelical’), and emphasise a respect for difference and desire for a peace that is inclusive, rather than falling into exclusion and disrespect for difference.

As such, we will need to recognise that much of our own thought and practice has been shaped by our own culture and context, and learn to lay aside the instinctive desire to privilege our own cultural ways as the right way, recognising that God and the gospel are experienced, interpreted and expressed differently in different times, places, and languages. If we are seeking peace between denominations, we will need to encourage all parties to reflect on this too. We will need to learn more of the historical relationships between different denominations and different faiths in the places where we are working, so that we can find ways to seek unity while respecting individuals’ understandings of the ways and traditions in which they have developed their own faiths.

6.2 Building relationships

In his book *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, Olson also argues for an *irenica* approach to theological difference within the global church (*irenica* meaning ‘of a peaceable spirit’):

‘An irenic approach to expounding Christian beliefs is one that attempts always to understand opposing viewpoints before disagreeing, and when it is necessary to disagree does so respectfully and in love. An irenic approach to doctrine seeks common ground and values unity within diversity

and diversity within unity. An irenic approach does not imply relativism or disregard for truth, but it does seek to live by the motto “in essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity.”¹¹⁸

As Tearfund approaches peacebuilding work, it will be helpful to bear in mind Olson’s advice as we navigate our differences. It may also be applied to interfaith work, where our essential unity with those of other faiths should be a genuine commitment to working for peace.

As McGrath points out, Christianity has always existed in a world with multiple religious options, emerging in an ancient Mediterranean context in which Judaism, Hellenic and Roman religions predominated. Christians have always had to engage with the ways in which social, political and other cultural practices are tied up with other religions as they developed ways of life and witness.¹¹⁹ Being a Christian, living and working in ways that express and bear witness to our faith in dialogue and relationship with those of other faiths is a fairly normal state of life that Western Christians have been largely sheltered from for most of the last 1600 years, and while it may pose new challenges, we should not fear it.

As was mentioned at the start of this framework, peacebuilding at its best is an activity that is essential to the Christian faith and that contributes to the wellbeing of the whole world. It is an activity, as we have mentioned, in which non-Christians often operate, participating in movements for peace within God’s common grace. While there are differences between Tearfund and other denominations and faiths, we do not think that they preclude us from working with other denominations and faiths, and we are comfortable doing so to achieve our aims where we share the same goals.¹²⁰

Looking for common ground

It is worth touching briefly on the idea of ‘principled pluralism’ that is a part of contemporary Calvinist theology. This idea accepts the existence of the modern pluralistic nation-state and globalised work and reflects on how Christian ethics operate within this space.¹²¹ It argues that while the Christian community must discuss, internally, how the Christian faith applies on its own terms (as we have sought to do with peacebuilding in this framework), it must also develop ways in which this understanding can be communicated to a diverse culture. It is called principled pluralism because it seeks to find biblical principles that apply without preference for one faith (or professed lack of faith) over another in a diverse society. It is a principle that allows diverse traditions to self-define and disagree, but also to find common cause in pursuit of the common good. John Inazu describes the importance of confident pluralism to maintaining peaceful relationships in the presence of difference and disagreement:

[It] takes both confidence and pluralism seriously. Confidence without pluralism misses the reality of politics. It suppresses difference, sometimes violently. Pluralism without confidence misses the reality of people. It ignores or trivialises stark differences for the sake of feigned agreement and false unity. Confident pluralism allows genuine difference to coexist without suppressing or

¹¹⁸ Olson (2016) p 24.

¹¹⁹ McGrath (1994) p 446.

¹²⁰ In Tearfund’s language and practices there is currently a distinction to be made between working with others in alliances, and working through others: for example, in our partnership and grant-making relationships.

¹²¹ Many thinkers in this tradition would argue that the pluralistic modern nation is something that has evolved as part of God’s providence and plan, but it is not necessary to accept that the nation-state is an unmitigated good to accept the value of principled pluralism as an idea.

minimising our firmly held convictions. We can embrace pluralism precisely because we are confident in our own beliefs, and in the groups and institutions that sustain them.¹²²

The majority of the world's religions share two things in common: a concern for the well-being of others (sometimes described as the 'Golden Rule'); and an understanding of what it means to live a good life, or as a good person, that acknowledges the fact that practices and ways of life are not incidental extras to faith and belief. All of the faiths with which Tearfund comes into frequent contact have concepts of duties, or of good or right ways of living, that cover all areas of life, not just the spiritual. This shared view – despite the differences in beliefs and practices – has the potential to provide a common entry point into a conversation about possible peaceful futures that understand the important role that faith has in culture and society, both within the history of the conflict in question and in the peaceful future that is hoped for. That said, followers of each faith – and of no faith – have different understandings of what it means to live well and to flourish that will need to be acknowledged and discussed as part of peacebuilding processes, as Tearfund hopes to serve individuals and communities in developing ways of living together in which they can thrive.

¹²² Inazu (2016) p 5.

Conclusions

(1) It is fundamental that we understand what we, as Christians, mean when we say we are seeking peace and justice. This helps us to understand the distinctive role of the church in peacebuilding, and – set alongside Tearfund’s own mission and vision – helps us to see what can be distinctive about Tearfund’s response to conflict. Chapters 1 and 2 discussed the distinctive story and understandings of peace and justice that the Christian faith can bring to peacebuilding work in the world today, and provided a Christian understanding of some of the key concepts that feature in contemporary peacebuilding work.

(2) Peacebuilding is a long-term process, pointing out that, for Christians, we will not see the full restoration of *shalom* until Christ returns. However, it also makes clear the possibility of moving forwards towards peace in the present through processes that take steps to pursue justice, enable forgiveness, and see restored relationships grow. It will be important that our peacebuilding work, in programmes and projects, keeps its view on both the short- and long-term goal, understanding that small, identifiable steps can provide solid foundations for the longer-term development of peace.

(3) One of the most important factors in a peacebuilding process is the establishment of a safe relational space where people can come together, be themselves, tell their stories and grow together. This is the kind of space in which Tearfund can support the development of principled or confident pluralism and restored relationships, and seek reconciliation. This framework notes the essential importance of the restoration of relationships within the mission of God and to the development of peace. Chapter 5 focuses on some specific approaches that can help Tearfund develop this kind of space and that can be deployed within it, while Chapters 3 and 4 can help to identify the kinds of people with whom we should be seeking to develop relationships in pursuit of peace.

(4) Building peace is not about creating ‘winners’ or ‘losers’, but about coming together across boundaries and divisions to think and dream about what it means to be free of oppression and conflict, to flourish together and to acknowledge that there will be some sacrifice involved on each side in order to build this future. This framework has discussed the way that, in truly peaceful environments and communities, each person values the wellbeing of others as much as they do their own. It has also identified the fact that making peace in a broken world requires a cost on the part of the peacebuilder, who may have to sacrifice the payment of a debt that is justly owed or their own privileged position in order to create a more equitable relationship between people who can then build a peaceful future together.

(5) Those best able to build these relationships may often be found on the fringes of communities and groups who are a part of conflict situations – those who are within those groups and can speak to them, but who are able to see situations differently and to speak into them. John Paul Lederach makes this explicit in *The Moral Imagination*.¹²³ Throughout this framework, we have cited the examples of biblical outsiders: women like Abigail and Esther; Jesus himself. It is often easier – and often a matter of necessity – for those who are not in positions of power or privilege within systems, cultures and communities to see the need and opportunities for change, and to develop characteristics like humility and risk-taking in the course of living near the margins.

¹²³ Lederach (2010).

(6) Our own discipleship is an essential part of the peacebuilding process, as we learn to live in the world in ways that reveal the kingdom of God. This makes spiritual formation of staff and (Christian) partners and allies an important part of Tearfund's peacebuilding process. Chapter 3 focused on this, describing the importance of worship – understood in the broadest terms of prayer, praise, reflection and study – to Christian transformation, enabling us, as disciples, to follow in Christ's footsteps in seeking peace in the world. It also emphasised the centrality of Communion to our worship, reminding us of our own forgiven-ness and peace with God, and of the need to seek peace with others in turn.

(7) Finally, our participation in peacebuilding will contribute to the formation and development of Tearfund. It is particularly likely that it will challenge the way we articulate and understand the outworking of our theology and our mission in our practice. This is because the new relationships we build, and the contexts in which we spend time, teach us more about being both confident and humble in our expression of our beliefs in relation to our work. If we are not aware of this possibility, it will happen without us knowing it, which poses a greater risk for Tearfund's distinctive identity and reputation. However, the things we learn and the way we develop as a result of this work also has the potential to improve our work in general as we develop our ability to build relationships and communicate across divisions. It also may also help us to speak into the challenges facing aid and development work in conflict areas, particularly the religious challenges, and to advocate for faith-based development and Christian organisations' participation in this space.

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