

TEN

WORLD PEACE

Let There Be Peace on Earth. . .



We belong to each other.

—MOTHER TERESA

Astronauts have noticed that the Earth's national political boundaries are invisible from space. We all share the same home. What happens in Central Asia or Central America affects our lives in America. An ethnic clash far away may seem like a distant event, but it can create refugees who then destabilize the social environment of other countries; it can strengthen the hand of arms dealers and drug dealers who are searching for new markets; it can hurt the economy of a whole region, which has implications for our local economy.

A culture of peace involves us in curiosity about the state of peace everywhere. It engages us in action and commitment, to promote peace

for the whole family of life on Earth. In the global village of the twenty-first century, we cannot afford to live in isolation. The whole world is our back yard, and world peace is the dream we are creating together.

82 TAKE AN INTEREST IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Modern communication technology has brought the world into our living rooms. We can see what's happening on every continent. Some people turn off to this flow of information. It may seem like too much suffering, too complicated a picture of situations we don't understand in places that feel foreign to us.

We can turn away, or we can turn toward what's happening around the world. When we turn toward it, we discover that what may appear as an endless progression of war, famine, corruption, and political intrigue is actually an exciting story of humanity addressing its challenges as best it can. Each of us is an actor, director, script-writer, and audience for this rich and inspiring drama.

- Read about world affairs. Read local and national newspapers and news magazines. Subscribe to specialized information sources: journals, news services on the Web, international papers. Read about international political news, business news, even the weather!
- Learn about world affairs from television. Watch news shows, international broadcasts, and special reports on international issues.
- Follow one particular theme—famine, water, education of girls, overpopulation, ethnic warfare, elections in emerging nations, micro-credit programs, small arms sales. Become knowledgeable about the issue and how it is being addressed in various countries. What is successful? What is not?
- Learn about the foreign policy arm of your own government. Explore how the U.S. State Department operates; find out about the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Information Agency (USIA).

- Educate yourself about international bodies: The United Nations and its related agencies; regional organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS); intergovernmental institutions like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund; and international nongovernmental organizations such as CARE, Doctors Without Borders, or Save the Children.

83 ADOPT ONE PLACE IN THE WORLD AS YOUR SPECIAL CONCERN

Every place in the world is struggling with something. Find a situation where there is a meeting point between an issue you are interested in and a place that calls your attention.

Being attentive to one situation allows you to go deeply with your expertise, your commitment, and your caring for peace. It gives you a focus for understanding yourself as a citizen of the world and an agent of peace.

- Inform yourself. Find out all you can about your selected spot: keep up with the news; look at related Web sites; contact the country's embassy; read novels, poetry, travelogues, and political commentary about the place; learn about the culture.
- Get a pen pal. Correspond with someone who lives there, by mail or e-mail. Get their views on the situation. Let them explain to you the range of local perspectives, which may be different from yours as an outsider.
- Talk to people who have been there. Find people who went as tourists, as peace or development workers, or on business. Listen to their stories; use their experiences to round out your own understanding.
- Go there. Go visit your pen pal. Find an organization that welcomes volunteers. Sign on for a short-term consulting job with an international organization working there. Just get on a plane and arrive; be a tourist.
- Host people from that country in your home. Invite your pen pal. Host an exchange student, or someone traveling for business, fundraising, or medical treatment.

84 LET YOUR HEART BREAK WITH THE SUFFERING

Sometimes, we hold ourselves back from involvement in world affairs because of the intense suffering we see. How can we bear to deal with the reality of thousands of starving children? Raped women? Whole villages massacred?

Trying to hold the suffering away by staying away will not help. Only when you face squarely into the suffering and allow your heart to break with compassion can you truly stand in solidarity with the victims of violence. Only when your heart is open can you truly serve.

- Relax your defenses. When you focus on a situation in the world that is painful, notice the different ways you defend yourself against feeling that hurt. Now gently relax that protective stance. Let the pain in, a bit at a time. Breathe deeply.
- Weep for the suffering. When you open your heart and let in the suffering of the world, a natural response is to be sad. If tears come, let them come; don't try to stop them. If it feels like your heart is breaking, that is a good sign. It means you are making room for more caring.
- Feel compassion. Compassion is not pity or sympathy but a heartfelt desire that the suffering of others might be eased. Hold the victims of violence and disaster in a compassionate embrace in your heart; hold the perpetrators also, for they too are victims of violence.
- Feel loving kindness. Loving kindness is the heartfelt desire that others might live with peace, freedom, and joy. Hold the victims of violence and disaster in an embrace of loving kindness in your heart.
- Be present without having to fix it. Sometimes, when we see people hurting, we think we must make it all better. We cannot fix the pain of the world, but when we let ourselves be fully present to it we give the gift of witness.

85 SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS DOING INTERNATIONAL PEACE WORK

Many organizations exist specifically to work for peace in the world. Some are part of the UN system; some are connected to governments or universities or religious institutions; some are completely independent.

Each organization has its own unique mission. Some work at the highest political levels, seeking formal peace agreements. Others work behind the scenes, to foster dialogue and generate creative options for resolution. Still others work at the grassroots level, building bridges of understanding or working for change in the educational system or the media.

These organizations need help. Many of them depend on money from individuals like yourself to keep going. Others require a broad base of support through caring, engaged members.

- Find out who's doing what. Ask around your network of friends and colleagues to learn about specific organizations, or check the Resource Guide provided at the end of the chapter.
- Become a member. Find an organization that speaks to you, and join up. Pay dues. Read their newsletters and other materials. Tell your friends about them.
- Become a volunteer. Some organizations are set up to use volunteers in their offices or in the field where their programs are. Seek out the best fit for your skills and interests with what's needed.
- Be a cheerleader. Find organizations you like, and actively cheer them on. Write encouraging notes, congratulate them on a job well done, offer to put them in touch with resources that you think might be useful to them.
- Contribute money. These organizations all need money; rarely do they have enough to meet the incredible need. Even a small check can be a great gift. Or, save your petty cash or spare change over several months and send a bigger check. Better yet, pick one or more organizations and make it the primary recipient of your charitable giving.

86 SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL AID AGENCIES

Relief and humanitarian organizations are a little bit different from peacemaking groups. These agencies are concerned with the basics of human life: food, shelter, water, education, and health. They are on the scene when disaster hits, saving lives.

Increasingly, these organizations are staying long after the flood or earthquake or civil war, supporting the long-term development needs of the people so that they can sustain themselves over time. More and more, this is overlapping with peace work. The two depend on each other. Peace cannot prevail when people are hungry; people cannot grow a strong economy when there is war.

- Educate yourself. Learn what agencies exist, what they are doing, what the needs are, what the obstacles are, and what the success stories are.
- Pick one or two agencies whose work particularly touches your heart. Support them financially, and in any other way you can.
- Sponsor a child, or a child's education, somewhere in the world.
- Respond to emergency appeals when a natural disaster strikes. Stay involved after the peak of the emergency passes.
- Offer your services in an emergency if you have a specialized skill.
- Give blood. Give clothes. Give food. Give time.
- Send prayers. Send love. Send money.

87 GET INVOLVED AT YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

Your place of worship is a good place to get involved in programs that take the international perspective. Most faith traditions put a high value on issues of peace and development. It is good to work with others who share your values.

Another advantage to working from your place of worship is that it helps build community. Through your own local congregation, and also through the larger network of your parent body, you are able to be part of a much larger mission.

- Find out if your church, synagogue, temple, mosque, or other place of worship has any programs for international work. They may participate in aid and relief, education, social and economic development, social justice, or peacebuilding projects.
- Go to the meetings of these projects. Find out what's happening. Sense where you are drawn.
- Support the initiative(s) you are drawn to with your time, your skills, and your money.
- If the program you want doesn't exist, start it. Ask your clergy person for help. Talk to other members of your faith community to find like-minded people.
- Travel with a group from your place of worship on a trip they are taking. Work to help organize the travel arrangements. Host someone coming from out of town who is involved with this project.
- Organize study groups, film showings, book readings, lectures, and other events to educate your team and your wider community on the issues you are concerned with.
- Give a guest sermon or speak at some special event about your international activities.

88 TRAVEL ON A PEACE MISSION

Many organizations take teams of peacebuilders to troubled places where an international presence can be especially helpful. Where people are oppressed and vulnerable, international witnesses from other countries can serve as a ray of hope, provide doorways for dialogue, or be a deterrent to further violence.

These peace missions are usually volunteer in nature. They may provide observers to important functions, like election monitoring. They may gather information, such as data on human rights abuses. They may provide a safe presence for refugees trying to return to their homes. Or they may do important work in the community—physical labor or community organizing.

- Find the peace mission that best fits your interests. Check it out thoroughly. Talk to people who have participated. Where

does their money come from? Make sure there is an experienced team leader.

- Know what is expected of you. How long will you stay? How much will it cost you, and what does that cover? What will happen if you get sick? Will you be alone or with a team? What dangers might you face?
- Get the training you need. Good intentions are not enough. You need to know exactly what your job entails—and what it doesn't. You need to be sure you have the right skills to accomplish your task, so that you will not inadvertently cause harm to the people you are trying to help.
- Request orientation assistance. What should you study before you go? How much of the language should you know? What should you be especially alert to?
- Request debriefing assistance. What will happen when you get back? Will you be asked to speak publicly or to write about your experience? Will there be someone to help you make sense of your experience and integrate it?

89 BECOME INVOLVED WITH REFUGEES IN YOUR TOWN

These days, you don't have to go far away to work for planetary peace; sometimes the world comes to you. Many of today's conflicts have created masses of refugees, people fleeing the dangers of their own countries, seeking safety elsewhere.

Refugees from war-torn societies are present throughout the United States. They may arrive with little or no knowledge of English, and with varying degrees of comfort with the life and culture of America. They may have suffered grave trauma, or milder economic and social displacement.

- Discover who are the main refugee groups in your community. Find out about their circumstances. How many are there; why did they leave their homes; how long have they been here; how have they adjusted?

- Explore existing programs. Find out what services are already provided and by whom, and what is still needed.
- Take the time to build trust. Remember, you are a stranger to them, just as they may seem "foreign" to you. They may be culturally sensitive to receiving help, or may have experiences that make it hard for them to trust outsiders. Go slowly. Have patience.
- Attend events. Gradually get to know the people by participating in their activities. Go to meetings to discuss refugee-related issues; attend a cultural celebration that is open to the public; be an observer during some event where services are delivered by a church group or city department.
- Help a refugee family get settled, learn how to move around town (shop, use unfamiliar appliances, enroll children in school), find the social services they need.
- Get involved in dialogue. Many refugee communities bring with them the same hostilities that caused the problems back home. Help build bridges between the factions. Start by working with existing organizations who do this. Eventually become a facilitator yourself.

90 PRACTICE CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

These days, informal, citizen-to-citizen diplomacy is an important part of any peace process. Remember that the formal, official peace process managed by the UN or some other official body will only deal with legal and political matters. It will not reach the people, to affect what is in their hearts and minds. This can only be done on a person-to-person basis.

Likewise, building strong relationships with outside groups can provide trust, hope, and a sense of support to people who may be struggling. Knowing that someone else cares and that resources are available can be the fuel that keeps people going through the hard times.

- Read "Guidelines to Newcomers to Track Two Diplomacy" (see the Resource Guide). This article will help you know what to

expect and how to act so that you can do the most good and the least harm.

- Join or start a sister cities program. This is where your town joins with a city of approximately the same size somewhere in the world where you want to build links. Participate in administering the program and in any trips or exchanges that occur.
- Be or host an exchange student. Personal relationships developed while staying in someone's home can last for years and can be doorways to a whole network of caring relationships and associations.
- Join an existing citizen-diplomacy project. This may be in any area: business, education, religion, media, arts, or sports. In these projects, you have the opportunity to make an offering of your special skills, to follow your interests, or just to build bridges of friendship and mutual understanding.



REVIEW

Practice the Four Principles of Peace on Earth

COMMUNITY

Let the world into your life; decide to personally be part of the solution to world problems.

COOPERATION

Work with others to provide support and solidarity for those who are hurt by war and other disasters.

NONVIOLENCE

Respect the dignity of those who are vulnerable; prepare yourself so that your actions will do no harm.

WITNESS

Open your heart to the suffering of the world, and pour love into the wounds.



DO SOMETHING!

Within the global community, we have access to information about wars far away. Often we are touched by the suffering of war victims, but few of us are prepared to do anything concrete about it. In this story, an American child started a process for her community to make a difference.

Ishmet B. was three days old when he was driven from his burning home in Kosovo. His terrified father, his exhausted mother, and his traumatized brother, Adem, welcomed him into a chaotic world. He spent his first three months in a tiny tent in a Macedonian refugee camp, listening to his crying brother and sensing the shock and pain of his parents. His family had lost their home, their business, and possibly their family. His only uncle was in a Serbian prison.

Around the time that Ishmet was born, Mari, a twelve-year-old girl from the beautiful village of Danville (population 2,000) in Vermont, asked her parents to "Do something!" when she saw a picture of refugees on the cover of *Newsweek*. Three months later, Mari's and Ishmet's families were living together, and many in the Danville community were surrounding the B.'s with a blanket of love and practical support. An ecumenical group, prompted by Mari and others, had arranged to "Do something!"

Today, Ishmet's family is living in a nice apartment near Danville. The fear has disappeared from his parents' faces. His brother is a happy, confident little boy. The B.'s still have worries, and they struggle to make ends meet with jobs that pay too little. They miss their families and their home, but they have each other, and they have friends like Mari. For now, they have enough.



RESOURCE GUIDE

Check within your local community for sister city or citizen exchange programs, world affairs events, and refugee resettlement projects. Here are some suggestions:

PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN INTERCULTURAL STUDENT EXCHANGE

Dedicated to fostering increased international understanding through worldwide intercultural learning and living experiences. AISE gives high school students from 27 countries the opportunity to live in the United States as members of the local community; offers reciprocal programs for American students.

LAJOLLA, CA; PHONE: 858-459-9761 OR 1-800-SIBLING; FAX: 858-459-5301;

E-MAIL: aise.usa@worldnet.att.net; WEB SITE: www.aise.com

CARE

One of the world's largest private international relief and development organizations. CARE reaches out to people whose lives are devastated by humanitarian emergencies or who are struggling each day in poor communities to survive and improve their lives.

ATLANTA, GA; PHONE: 404-681-2552;

E-MAIL: info@care.org; WEB SITE: www.care.org

INSTITUTE FOR MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY

Promotes a transformative, systems approach to peace in places of deep-rooted conflict around the world. IMTD helps people from all sectors of society find ways to step forward as responsible peace-builders in their communities.

WASHINGTON, DC; PHONE: 202-466-4605; FAX: 202-466-4607;

E-MAIL: imtd@imtd.org; WEB SITE: www.imtd.org

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL

A grassroots organization that explores and implements nonviolent approaches to peacekeeping and defending human rights. When