

## Overcoming Religious/Cultural Violence Study Reflection Materials



### *Some general questions*

What struck you positively in this story?

What did you find challenging, or difficult?

What can we learn from this story to apply to our own situation and journey towards peace?

### *Some further questions arising from the stories in the Religious-Cultural circle of peacemaking*

What experiences have we had of cross-cultural dialogue?

What has helped us to grow in understanding?

What has hindered?

How can we make better contact with some of our 'other' neighbours?

Where can get together for a yarn?

What common witness can we make with people of other faith and/or culture in our own schools and communities?

What symbols of Reconciliation are there in our local communities?

What opportunities are there for coming together further?

What do we know about Harmony Day?

What activities might we plan for next year? Whom would we seek to involve?

### *Some further thoughts for reflection and discussion*

*'One belief more than any other has been responsible for the slaughter of individuals on the altars of high ideals. It is the belief that those who do not share my truth do not share my humanity.'* (Isaiah Berlin)

*'It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business.'* (Mahatma Gandhi)

#### *The Need for a Global Ethic*

1. *No world survival without a world ethic*

2. *No world peace without religious peace*

3. *No religious peace without religious dialogue*

(Prof.Hans Kung)

## SEEDS OF PEACE

### ***Key contributors to religion as a force for violence***

- \* exclusive visions of God
- \* exclusive understandings of truth and salvation
- \* exclusive identities
- \* selective interpretation of sacred texts
- \* unwillingness of religions to be critical of themselves
- \* failure to enter significant dialogue and social action together

### ***Five ways religions may relate to one another*** (from Avery Dulles (first 4) and Joseph Hough)

1. *Coercion* - most popular!
2. *Convergence* - religions seen as essentially the same: ignoring questions of revelation & salvation?
3. *Pluralism* - each religion a blessing, reflecting certain aspects of the divine: works best for relativists?
4. *Toleration* - popular contemporary (esp. secular) practical Western position: avoiding engagement?
5. *Inclusivity* - if God is free and sovereign, can s/he bring transforming liberation through others?

### ***Some key features of positive Inter-Faith relationships***

#### ***Four Principles of Dialogue*** (from the former British Council of Churches):

Dialogue begins when people meet each other  
Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust  
Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community  
Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness

*'What makes dialogue between us possible is our common humanity, created in the image of God. We all experience the joys and sorrows of human life, we are citizens of one country, we face the same problems, we all live in God's presence.'* (BCC Relations with Peoples of Other Faiths)

*(true Dialogue is) speech from certainty to certainty...from one open-hearted person to another open-hearted person. Only then will common life appear, not of an identical content of faith which is alleged to be found in all religions, but that of the situation, of anguish and expectation.* (Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*)

*Only in the cave of the heart can true dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism take place: contact at any other level can never be more than superficial and fleeting. Too often in the past Christians have given the impression that we are not even aware of the existence of this space within the secret places of the heart where resides the Supreme Bliss: and too often, perhaps the impression was true. Now, however, the time has come for Christians and Hindus to recognise in each other the gift of the Spirit, and for that both must go silently down to the depths of their own being, to the place where the Glory dwelleth'.* (Sister Sara Grant, translator of the Benedictine monk Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda))