



# Taking Action as a Group

## Who can be involved?

Everyone! All ages and in many different ways. Overcoming violence is something we can all help with. The Decade to Overcome Violence is an opportunity for people to work together in their churches and their community to make a difference. You *can* make a difference.

'Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.' -- *Margaret Mead*.

## Questions to think about when planning

What you decide to do will be determined by your own community, and the issues that are relevant there. Before deciding on how you will participate, consider these questions which were prepared by the World Council of Churches -

- What are the various forms of violence you encounter in your country, community, homes, workplaces, schools, etc.?
- Who / what are the perpetrators?
- How do you plan to overcome these forms of violence?
- What are your hesitations and obstacles?
- What are your faith resources?
- Who are your partners?
- What are your priorities?
- Who are your allies and how do you plan to work with them?
- How do you want to relate with those struggling for justice and liberation?
- What kind of peace do you wish?
- How will you bring your concerns into your prayer and worship?

The marvellous vision of the peaceable Kingdom, in which all violence has been overcome and all men, women and children live in loving unity with nature, calls for its realisation in our day-to-day lives. Instead of being an escapist dream, it challenges us to anticipate what it promises. Every time we forgive our neighbour, every time we make a child smile, every time we show compassion to a suffering person, every time we arrange a bouquet of flowers, offer care to tame or wild animals, prevent pollution, create beauty in our homes and gardens, and work for peace and justice among peoples and nations we are making the vision come true.

Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*

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## What kind of Action?

Being involved in the Decade to Overcome Violence is important. But try to be realistic, as well as imaginative, about what your group can achieve or become involved in. Action to develop your plan can be -

- ▮ signing a petition
- ▮ becoming aware as a group of different forms of violence
- ▮ considering the gospel implications for ways of peace
- ▮ becoming involved in a local action group
- ▮ supporting a project that helps people in areas of conflict overseas

## 100 Ways You Can Stop Violence

The South Australian Council of Churches have published a leaflet: *100 Ways You Can Help Stop Violence*, with ideas including:

- ▮ learning to control our anger and to avoid violent situations
- ▮ sharing toys
- ▮ promoting reuse and recycling of materials
- ▮ creating a community art project eg. a Peace Mural or Garden
- ▮ supporting community activities for young and vulnerable people
- ▮ organising a seminar about indigenous issues
- ▮ writing to the local paper about concerns which affect others
- ▮ organising a vigil at a site of violence
- ▮ speaking out against intolerance and bigotry where it occurs
- ▮ supporting refugee rights and resettlement in our communities

- how many ideas can *you* come up with?

...let others know about them and pass them on!

Jubilee Australia, Drop The Debt, is part of a global campaign to reduce the heavy burden of debt upon the poorest countries on earth. Visit the website, [www.jubilee2000.org.au](http://www.jubilee2000.org.au), or write to the office at the National Council of Churches in Sydney, [jubilee@ncca.org.au](mailto:jubilee@ncca.org.au), to see how you can become involved.

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# Taking Action as a Group

## Connect with God in the community

God is continually present in all of creation and human experience. For it is the divine presence which alerts us to the possibility of connection between us and God, and between us and creation.

Beginning with this faith that God exists and is at work in the world, we can look for connections that can be made in the community so that God's presence can be acknowledged and worked with. This foundational belief means that we recognise that we are part of the larger local community where our church is situated.

So many amazing opportunities are possible when we see God's presence within the whole of creation. We realise:

-  There is nothing outside of God's presence.
-  We can become involved in groups/projects that already exist.
-  We can connect with other churches and work ecumenically.
-  Projects that we envision and enact can be of benefit to the whole community when we work collaboratively.
-  We can be a part of the mission of the church in our local community.

Being involved in your local community is a witness to the presence of God in the world and in creation. It is also a real example of people who are willing to be involved in work that can make a difference - for justice, compassion and healing in your community.

The World Council of Churches, at the beginning of the Decade to Overcome Violence, agreed to work together, beyond the walls of the church, to overcome violence and build peace. Churches around the world, working in their communities, are consequently involved in -

-  Conflict resolution
-  Theological reflection
-  Campaigns and Education
-  Prayer and worship
-  Community initiatives
-  Interfaith dialogue

*How will you/your group/your church be involved?*

Think creatively - you never know where the connections will lead you!

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# Taking Action as a Group

## What can we do *with others*?

You or the group you're involved in may have some great ideas for projects/work to do with the Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence. These may include some of the ideas above, or:

-  Awareness raising study groups/forums
-  Study groups looking at the nature of peace and violence in the world and the Gospel connections with the issues.
-  Working with the local shelter and others for victims of domestic violence.
-  Collaborating on resources for children in the local schools.
-  Tree planting or improving the natural environment

Just remember, once you have identified possible areas you could be involved in, check what's *already* happening in your community. Important places/groups to connect with would be -

-  Other churches (and/or faith groups) in your community.
-  The local community centre.
-  The local council.
-  The local schools.

Work may already be being done in areas you've identified. If so, decide -

-  Will we talk to these groups and see if there's a gap needing to be filled?
-  Can we help out in any way in the work already being done?
-  Will we identify other completely different areas not already being covered in already established groups/programs?
-  How will we relate them to our faith and prayer?



When making connections within the community, and when you become involved in a process of collaboration with other groups, remember:

- Reach out to people of all faiths and cultures, regardless of church and community boundaries: listen, and be aware of their gifts and insights.
- Identify a project/area of need that is transformative.
- Be realistic about what your group or you as an individual have to offer.
- Recognise the importance of the whole community, and the groups that already exist within the community - respecting and valuing its diversity.
- Be realistic about what can be achieved.
- The process, developing networks, is just as important as offering service

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