

called to seek peace and pursue it





foreword



“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” Psalm 34:14

During the past two and a half years in Kosovo, I have seen first hand the carnage that resulted from ten years of oppression and open conflict. The violent struggle immediately following the NATO-led bombing campaign of 1999, claimed several thousand lives and culminated in the polarization of ethnic groups.

Since then, I have witnessed ethnic Serb extremists brutally attacking and killing innocent Albanians and watched the horrific scene as Albanian extremists retaliated. I was caught in the crossfire in the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica. Shot at, attacked and often chased out of neighbourhoods by extremists, I desperately tried to help. Should I, as a Christian working for a Christian humanitarian organization, have been satisfied with just rebuilding war-damaged houses and distributing clothing to this broken community?

As site manager for World Vision Kosovo’s emergency relief operation in Mitrovica, the turning point for me came one cold autumn day in 1999. I was asked to help negotiate the release of two bodies from the hospital in the predominantly Serbian North of the City and transport them across the Ibar River to the predominantly Albanian South side. The severely maimed and disfigured bodies of a murdered mother and her seven-year-old daughter, Edona, were eventually released. I was able to transport the bodies, with UN police and NATO military escort, across the bridge that separates the two communities in time for their family to provide them with the dignity of a proper Muslim burial.

That evening, after the funeral, I sat on the floor in my bedroom, in tears pleading to God to help me make sense of it all. Could and should World Vision help to stop this continuing cycle of ethnic violence and prevent such senseless murders?

The answer was clear: As a Christian organisation working in conflict zones around the world, we are called to be peacemakers. We are called to address the root causes of conflict in the communities in which we work, rather than only addressing the symptoms.

Today, by life, deed and word, our staff are preaching the Christian message of peace by rebuilding shattered relationships across ethnic lines. Through a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy integrated into our transformational development programmes, World Vision in Kosovo has succeeded where very few others have even dared to tread. From Mitrovica’s multi-ethnic Community Council for Peace and Tolerance that we helped set up and continue to facilitate to the community stabilization programmes and the multi-ethnic schools that we have helped to rebuild, World Vision has committed itself to doing the difficult yet necessary peace-making.

The report that follows is not only necessary but it is critical. It makes a clear and strong case for Christians to take an active role in peace building. As we walk through the darkest valleys we, “Ambassadors for Christ”, are called upon to shine the light of Christ, spread the message of reconciliation and tirelessly strive for peace.

Rudy Scholaert

World Vision Kosovo

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www.worldvision.org.uk/church

World Vision

599 Avebury Boulevard

Milton Keynes

MK9 3PG

Tel 01908 841000

www.worldvision.org.uk/church

Produced for World Vision by Derek Williams

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a world at war

Katia, aged 11, lives in a one-room wooden hut with cardboard-lined walls. She suffers from constant headaches and dizzy spells not only because of her poverty, but especially because of her heartache.

'Mama,' she says over and over again, 'why did everything change?'

'Everything' was her loving relationship with her father which was brought to a brutal end when masked paramilitaries ransacked her village in Colombia. Katia fled the sound of gunfire which claimed her father's life, but she still hears it in her head.

Somewhere in the world, fathers like hers, and even children like Katia, are being killed in violent conflicts every hour of the day. There has not been a single day since the end of World War II when peace has reigned across the earth. Perhaps there never has been in all history.

On 1 January 2001,

- there were 39 different conflicts being fought around the world, up from 30 a decade earlier.
- In addition, there were 23 'potential hot-spots' where conflict could start again or grow.
- And during 2000, the United Nations was involved in 14 separate peace-keeping operations.

The silence of the media

Most of these are major skirmishes, but only a few – usually those involving western troops or threatening western interests – make the headlines. The rest go unreported by the media, and therefore largely (but not entirely) unnoticed by the church in the West. Katia and her kin weep, but few

there are who hear, and still less who actively care.

For example, in Colombia war has been waged for 31 years in which:

- 40,000 have been killed in fighting over the past decade;
- A further 30,000 are murdered every year;
- Out of a population of 40 million, it has two million refugees ('Internally Displaced Persons' – IDPs) living in poverty as a result of fighting; about 65 per cent of them are children;
- One terrorist group alone has an annual income of \$600,000 million (from ransoms, extortion and drug trade 'taxes'), over 15,000 trained fighters, 30,000 automatic weapons and a small air force, and 'owns' 16,000 square miles of land that is a no-go area for government forces.

In Sierra Leone, a small country of only 4.5 million people

- Conflicts have flared regularly for a decade;
- Almost every town and village occupied by rebels has been badly damaged;
- In one town, Koidu, the entire population of 150,000 was displaced and impoverished
- When rebels invaded the capital in 1999, over 5,000 buildings and much of the infrastructure were destroyed, 3,000 children abducted to join the rebels, and several thousand adults killed.

Elsewhere, hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea broke out again in 1998, lasted for about 18 months

‘In Greek thought, “peace” is a relational word which speaks of a state of objective well-being, leading to harmonious relations between people and nations.’⁴

and resulted in 100,000 deaths. Fighting in the Maluccan Islands of Indonesia has claimed over 3,000 lives since 1999.

The list of recent or current conflicts continues: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Chechnya, Iran, India, Kosovo, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Peru, the Philippines, Uganda, to name but a few. They are in addition to the highly publicised conflicts in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

A sense of helplessness

For Christians it is tempting to retreat behind Jesus’ chilling prediction, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... All these are the beginning of birth pains,’ that is, of the end of the world as we know it (**Matthew 24:7-8**). We shrug our shoulders and assume that conflict is inevitable and we must let it take its course. Or we ‘explain’ it as God’s judgement on a world that ignores him and his law.

But by reacting passively, we miss important biblical concerns and human feelings:

- The victims crying out both for the compassionate help of ‘good Samaritans’ and for justice and peace to be restored;
- The instinctive desire of human nature at its best to address and if possible remedy the situation;
- The need and responsibility for people to work sacrificially as peace builders to prevent escalation of violence and to broker reconciliation (see **Matthew 5:9**).

The world at large and the Christian church have grown progressively better at ministering to the victims of conflict through direct international aid and especially through non-governmental agencies (NGOs).

World Vision is one such NGO. But as a matter of policy we focus on long-term community development and transformation and not merely on the provision of immediate aid in

crises. And it is increasingly clear that community development must also include active peace-making. Providing a village with clean water is no good if rival families or tribes will simply fight over it.

A massive task

Such peace building is not easy. When Croatian Christian Miroslav Volf argued that Christians should love their enemies in accordance with Jesus’ command (**Matthew 5:43-48**), he was asked by theologian Jurgen Moltmann if he could himself embrace a Serbian soldier. Volf’s response was, ‘No, I cannot – but as a follower of Christ I think I should be able to.’¹

The respected BBC reporter Fergal Keane, who grew up in Northern Ireland and who has covered several conflicts around the world, says he has ‘always needed to believe in the redeeming power of forgiveness, in the idea of an ultimate reconciliation between bitterly opposed traditions.’

But his experience in the killing fields of Rwanda made him doubt. ‘Are there peoples... who will never be able to reconcile?’ he wondered.

‘Perhaps it is time to concede that real healing in these divided societies may at least be a very distant prospect, at worst an illusion.... It is not that we cannot imagine very logical means to resolve the problems of these societies. It is just that the psychological and emotional framework needed to make them work does not exist.’²

A cause for hope

However, there have been a number of public attempts to begin to heal old rifts, if not to fully apologise for them. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission after the collapse of apartheid was a prime example. The Japanese have made conciliatory comments about the treatment of prisoners in the second world war. The Pope has apologised to the Jews and people abused by Catholic priests for the silence of the church while they suffered.

Such gestures suggest that the world is growing weary of conflict, but they do not change the deep-rooted problems. These seem intractable, yet Volf argues hopefully that reconciliation based on the Christian gospel is possible. He argues the gospel can supply the necessary psychological and emotional framework – and the spiritual dynamic.

'If there is will, courage and imagination the stark polarity [us and them] can

be overcome. Those caught in the vortex of mutual exclusion can resist its pull, rediscover their common belonging, even fall into each other's arms. People with conflicting interests, clashing perspectives, and differing cultures can avoid sliding into the cycle of escalating violence and instead maintain bonds, even make their life together flourish.'³

Sierra Leone: An case study of reconciliation

In Sierra Leone, the theory has been put into practice. In August 2000 the country's President attended the graduation of 280 young learning facilitators to assist in the rebuilding of the country. A further 80, who included former combatants in the Revolutionary United Front, were commissioned two months later.

Their task is to:

- take peace education into seven chiefdoms;
- provide non-formal education in reconciliation;
- and to teach skills development, remedial education and basic literacy and numeracy skills

One said, 'Through the training that World Vision has provided for us, I now realise that we should all join hands. I now see it as my responsibility to pass on to my colleagues what I have learned.'

A war-affected teenage mother added, 'The training has helped me to understand myself and the importance of spreading the message of reconciliation to others.'

A small start, perhaps, but it shows that something can be done – and peace and reconciliation initiatives are usually more effective when they begin from the bottom up, rather than being imposed from above. The Bible, we believe, gives a mandate for such work – despite the fact that it includes a catalogue of violence sometimes perpetrated in God's name.

‘blessed are the peacemakers’

A violent beginning

The Old Testament depicts human nature in the raw. Some of the psalms breathe bitter hatred and are soaked in the lust for revenge. No Christian concerned for peace can avoid facing them.

Take, for example, ‘May his days be few...may his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. May his children be wandering beggars; may they be driven from their ruined homes’ (Psalm 109:9-10). Or this: ‘Happy is he who repays what you have done to us – he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks’ (Psalm 137:8-9).

The history of God’s people from Abraham in about 2,000 BC to the return of Judah from exile in Babylon about 537 BC is full of violence and ethnic cleansing, some of it apparently sanctioned or even ordered by God himself (see Deuteronomy 20:16-18).

A detailed reconciliation of this injunction with the New Testament command to ‘love your enemies’ and ‘turn the other cheek’ (Matthew 5:44, 39) is beyond the scope of this paper. But five points should be noticed:

- 1. Such behaviour was ‘typical’.** Inter-tribal conflict was common in the ancient world. The Israelites were not the only tribes staking their claims and destroying settlements. Israel’s strategy was no worse than others’. And the

Psalms simply express natural human emotion. Being in the Bible does not make such action or emotion ‘right’ although it does suggest we can bring angry feelings to God; we must take in other teaching too.

- 2. God starts where his people are.** God does not expect people to attain his standards before they are acceptable or useful to him. Instead, he starts where they are and works through their limitations to achieve his greater purposes. The Old Testament story is a mega-example of this: God leads people forward from their imperfect beginnings and opens up new possibilities, just as individual Christians grow slowly and are not made perfect overnight.
- 3. People voluntarily limited their violence.** Human beings can act savagely, but they also have a survival instinct. In the ancient world battles and bloodshed were limited when ‘champions’ of each side were pitted against each other. The war decided by a set-piece contest. The dual of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) was one example; another (which ended in a draw and led to further battle) is in 2 Samuel 2:8-17. The stories of the Israelite kings include many treaties (not all of them wise) made to promote peaceful co-existence.
- 4. God points to a better way.** The Old Testament teaches that God wants his people to be different. Initially, this distinctiveness was expressed through religious customs and laws, but other differences are implied. Joshua is told that God is not on his side just because he is an Israelite (Joshua 5:13-15); the

“Punitive damage overlays the social round of error, explanation, apology and forgiveness with greed, a greed that obliterates them all. It must be wrong.”⁶ Simon Jenkins

LORD is not a tribal god of war. The miraculous conquest of Jericho (*Joshua 6*) and Gideon's startling 'victory' over the Midianites (*Judges 7*) suggest that faith can achieve more than force of arms. This leads to:

5. God placed limits on Israelite battle plans. The command to destroy all things was strictly limited to certain rival tribes; Israel was never intended to become an all-devouring superpower. The same passage in Deuteronomy 20 also:

- Gives compassionate leave to people with new houses, land or wives, and to the fainthearted;
- Insists on offering peace to a city before attacking it, and accepting surrender when offered;
- Bans the destruction of fruit trees during a siege in order to leave food for the future.

Elsewhere, Joshua was ordered to lame captured chariot horses (*Joshua 11:6-9*) not as an act of needless cruelty but to stop Israel using 'weapons of mass destruction' that were common to their enemies. (Solomon later ignored this.)

These are all small signs. But together they provide a foundation for the radical teaching of Jesus in New Testament times. He did not bring a new ethic; he drew out the implications of the old one.

A violent background for 'The Prince of peace'

Jesus did not utter his words 'Blessed are the peacemakers' from the steps of Paradise. Jesus was a Palestinian Jew living under an often brutal Roman occupation. War and violence were part of life.

- The emperor of Jesus' time, Tiberius, retired to the isle of Capri, leaving the empire in the hands of underlings, to be

'entertained' by juvenile sex and the torture of prisoners.

- Pontius Pilate, who sentenced Jesus to death, was a notorious hard Roman. He slaughtered Samaritan pilgrims at their shrine, and Jewish demonstrators in Jerusalem, probably in addition to the incident recorded in *Luke 13:1*.
- The Jewish king Herod the Great, who ordered the massacre of infants (*Matthew 2:16-18*), also murdered his wife, mother in law and three sons.
- Rebel groups such as the Zealots and lone assassins called Sicarii (so named from the curved daggers they carried) regularly harassed both Romans and Jewish 'collaborators'.
- Tax collectors who worked for the Romans were regarded by orthodox Jews as traitors and were effectively 'excommunicated' from Jewish religion and society.

To many, this was no time for a loyal Jew to say 'turn the other cheek'; 'make peace'; 'love your enemies.' Nor to include a Zealot and a tax collector among his closest aides. But Jesus did. And in so turning human values on their heads, he opened up vast new possibilities for human conduct and Christian ministry.

An all-round peace

All three synoptic gospels place two of Jesus' most remarkable miracles side by side, creating an unmistakable message.

- Jesus sleeps through a storm, then awakens and rebukes it. Mark's Gospel claims the water went 'completely [flat] calm' – unusual, as swell takes time to subside. It was this more than anything that caused great amazement. (*Matthew 8:18-27*; *Mark 4:35-41*; *Luke 8:22-25*.)
- Across the lake, Jesus then heals the wild man of Gerasa who no-one could restrain, casting out a

Coventry Cathedral's Litany of Reconciliation

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,
Father, forgive.

The covetous desires of men and nations to possess what is not their own,
Father forgive.

The greed which exploits the labours of men, and lays waste the earth,
Father, forgive.

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,
Father, forgive.

Our indifference to the plight of the homeless and the refugee,
Father, forgive.

The lust which uses for ignoble ends the bodies of men and women,
Father, forgive.

The pride which leads to trust in ourselves and not in God,
Father, forgive.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another,
As God in Christ forgave you.

legion of demons (**Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39**).

The message is that Jesus, the creator, is the Prince of peace (see **Isaiah 9:6**), as the Christmas angels proclaimed (**Luke 2:14**). But his peace is much more than the absence of conflict; it is another term for 'wholeness', which is reflected in the Hebrew word *shalom*. It is freedom from fear, peace in the environment, peace of mind and heart. It is at the centre of the Christian message.

Peace with God

There are many words used to describe the effects of Jesus' life, death and resurrection in the New Testament. All are important; each is like one facet of a diamond. But holding them together is the word reconciliation. Paul sums up his teaching in **Ephesians 2**:

- Without Christ, all people everywhere are spiritually 'dead', that is, cut off from the full range of God's life and trapped in prison of selfish, sensual desire (**vv. 1-3; cf. Romans 3:23; 6:23**). This makes them technically God's 'enemies' (**Colossians 1:21**) and is a fundamental cause of human conflict (**James 4:1-10**).
- The death and resurrection of Christ was God's chosen means to reconcile his enemies to himself. He made us alive (**vv. 5-7**) and brought us 'close' to himself (**v. 13**). Believers are reconciled to God (**2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:22**) and therefore have 'peace with God' (**Romans 5:1**).
- This reconciliation is more than personal. It has social (**vv. 15-16**), global, and cosmic implications (**Colossians 1:20**).

'The humble, private notion of apology and restitution and a fresh start needs encouraging in the private domain, not least because in the public domain it is virtually extinct.'⁷ Libby Purves

Peace with each other

So while this basic gospel message is rightly celebrated by individuals who embrace it, the New Testament calls on Christians to apply the message of reconciliation in three ways:

1. To be reconciled themselves to those who they naturally dispute with. The chief conflict in the early church was both racial and cultural. Jewish Christians could not understand how non-Jews could believe in the Messiah without also undergoing Jewish rites. It led to bitter disputes which were resolved:

- By Peter's vision and the Gentile 'Pentecost' (**Acts 10**), showing that God did not regard such differences as people did;
- By Paul's ministry to Gentile districts and the establishment of thriving churches, again showing that God does not discriminate on the basis of race;
- Through the church leaders meeting at the council of Jerusalem to discuss the matter and to come to a common mind, issuing a resolution as a result (**Acts 15**).

So in **Ephesians 2:11-21** Paul describes the re-union of these disparate groups into 'the body of Christ'. All are sinners, all are saved by Christ, therefore all are one in Christ (**Galatians 3:28**). This requires a major shift in thinking which should result in a shift in behaviour.

2. To practice unity within the church. If all humans are made in God's image (**Genesis 1:26**) and (potentially or actually) one in Christ, reconciled to him and each other, then it follows that we should treat each person, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or class, equally. It is easier said than done. Apartheid in South Africa was built on supposedly biblical foundations. Several Bible passages address this practical issue:

- Social and financial distinctions are to be avoided in the church (**James 2:1-13**);

- Christians are to love one another as Christ loved them (that is, sacrificially), which is central to their witness in the world (**John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10**);
 - That love is to be expressed by service and compassion to all regardless of human distinctions (**John 13:14-17; Colossians 3:12-14**);
 - Disputes between Christians are to be resolved quickly, as often as necessary, and where possible privately, by total forgiveness (**Matthew 18:15-20; Philippians 4:2**).
- Sort problems between Christians out in the church and do not go to law against each other (**1 Corinthians 6:1-8**);
 - Forgive others because God has already forgiven you; bitterness towards others makes us unable to receive God's grace (**Matthew 18:21-35**);
 - Leave revenge to God because he is completely fair (**Romans 12:17-21**);
 - Discover and demonstrate the power of love over evil by doing good even to your enemies (**Matthew 5:38-48**).

3. To take the message of reconciliation into the world.

Paul's teaching that the apostles (and by implication, all believers) were 'ambassadors for Christ' with a message of reconciliation (**2 Corinthians 5:18-20**) is often thought of merely as a mandate for evangelism. But if our witness is by deed as well as word, and if we are the body of Christ in the world, then we cannot separate the call to be reconciled to God from the related call to be reconciled to our neighbour.⁵ Jesus implied that peace-making was part of discipleship (**Matthew 5:9**), and Paul called on his friend to be a peacemaker between Euodia and Syntyche (**Philippians 4:3**).

Some practical steps

The apostles were well aware of human weakness, and the practical peace-making instructions of the New Testament are surprisingly detailed. They form a foundation for everyday Christian living:

- Think of others better than yourself (**Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3**);
- Look to the practical interests of others (**Philippians 2:4**);
- Recognise you are imperfect and sinful before you criticise others, and recognise that all humans are imperfect and prone to mistakes which should draw understanding rather than litigation (**Matthew 7:1-5**);

'We cannot be peace builders at the national level if we are not practising peace building at the personal level.'

We cannot be peace builders at the community or national level if we are not practising peace building on the personal level. But experience suggests that while faith in Christ is the only sure way to reach the full shalom that Jesus released to those who trust him, some degree of reconciliation is still possible between people who do not share that faith. And Christians are well placed to broker it.

The Churches' Millennium Resolution

Let there be:

Respect for the earth
 Peace for its people
 Love in our lives
 Delight in the good
 Forgiveness for past wrongs
 And from now on a new start.

reconciliation in action

Conflict creates havoc in the lives of ordinary people. It also undermines the development of communities and nations. For a Christian agency like World Vision, preventing conflict and healing the wounds caused by conflict are therefore increasing and pressing concerns.

Earlier, we recounted the story of a World Vision reconciliation project in Sierra Leone. It was not an isolated example of the kind of ministry which we see as an integral part to helping poor communities to develop.

Another is the 'Pokotusa' project on the Kenya-Uganda border. In this remote part of Africa, centuries of inter-tribal conflict and cattle raiding has become more and more dangerous in recent years as automatic guns have replaced spears as the weapon of choice. Insecurity has held back the development of the region. As part of an integrated development programme, World Vision has started a peace process which includes

- Human rights awareness education
- Training of reconciliation trainers
- Poverty alleviation
- Close co-operation with government and other NGOs
- Deliberate involvement of women in local organising committees
- Training of church leaders to facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation seminars

It is aimed to assist some 200,000 people directly, and it is estimated that a further four million will be affected indirectly.

The project has made major strides in mitigating cattle raids and defusing

tensions. For the first nine months since the peace accord, no major raid has been carried out and cattle raiding activities have been reduced to mere cattle thefts, which are being handled by communities identifying and returning stolen livestock to the owners.

"The most exciting thing is that people are now appreciating one another. Criminals are being named, thus avoiding wholesale condemnation of a whole community as was the case in the past," says Daniel Kiptugen, World Vision's manager for the region.

The effectiveness of the Pokotusa structures is its biggest strength. These allow the communities to handle issues using traditionally accepted justice systems like fines, bull slaughtering in peace meetings and negotiations. So effective are they that the government of Kenya is now using the framework to handle problems associated with cattle rustling and is commending the model to other communities.

Children lead the way

In Colombia, the 350 children of the 'Children Peace Builders' movement have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times. Several World Vision sponsored children are leading the movement. They help each other deal with the effects of displacement and poverty, and are making their voices heard in the country. Few people can fail to heed the cries of children.

Serbs and Albanians play the game

It was only a football match, but it was a turning point. After ten years of hostility and broken relationships,

'It is a vital strategy to reach church leaders quickly. If you influence church leaders you are going to influence many more people through them.'

(Antoine Rutayisire, team leader of African Enterprise in Rwanda who has been active in restraining his fellow Hutus from turning on Tutsi neighbours. World Vision supports his work.)

the youth of Bellobrat, an Albanian village, played football against Bosnian Serb youngsters from a neighbouring village. It was organised by World Vision as one of eight similar projects in the war-torn area. When a young Serb was asked the result, he replied, 'It was peace that won today.'

Angolan churches ask forgiveness

In a World Vision organised prayer initiative, Christians from Angola's main ethnic groups came together to pray and to ask forgiveness from each other for their part in the nation's civil war. It was a first step towards bringing necessary reconciliation between ethnic groups in the country.

World Vision's three-year community-based human rights and peace education programme in Angola plans to train 13,000 people in human rights, peace and reconciliation work, to become enablers in their own local communities. An inter-church peace committee is inter-acting with civil groups for a common cause. World Vision has been in Angola for over 10 years, and has begun to win the confidence of local leaders and communities.

Artful method to bring reconciliation

A four day convention in Rwanda led to 120 young people committing themselves to leadership roles in bringing healing and reconciliation to their fractured country through the arts. With songs, dramas, dances and poems they are spreading their message to audiences hungry for change, including prisons which house 120,000 people awaiting trial for genocide crimes. One audience member said, 'If we had been told about this all along, unity and reconciliation would have been realised a long time ago. It gives me hope for the future of my country.'

Inter-faith dialogue unites cultures

A three day workshop sponsored by World Vision in Chad brought together 50 church leaders, imams and village chiefs (who are mainly animist). Initial tensions between the participants eased once they had been together for 24 hours.

Psycho-social support for traumatised children

World Vision Uganda has trained over 630 community care-givers (many of whom are displaced persons) to co-ordinate psycho-social aid for children formerly abducted into rebel armies and now reunited with their families and communities. Some of the children have been given tools in order to help them begin working life. Over 5,500 formerly abducted children have passed through World Vision's rehabilitation centre in Gulu in northern Uganda.

Rwandan woman forgives murderer

Deborah, a Hutu, saw the Tutsi soldiers coming back. They had already taken and shot one of her sons. The leading soldier took her into another room, alone. She expected to die herself. Her heart was pumping hard.

In the months since her son's death, Deborah, a Christian, had felt God speaking to her about forgiveness. She had also seen a man shot in cold blood for confessing to a murder.

The soldier spoke. He said his name was Charles. 'I am the one who killed your son,' he said.

Deborah continues, 'I began to feel great joy. I hugged Charles. I felt very emotional and we both shed tears as we held one another. He knew I wasn't going to hand him over. A great burden had been lifted from both of us.'

postscript: the human rainbow

A young child with a set of watercolours tends to reduce both the sheet of paper and the water pot to a muddy brown. Many pigments combine into the colour of soil.

In God's created world, this is not so. The colours of the rainbow, when mixed, create pure white light – for white light becomes a rainbow only when refracted through a lens. (Television works by combining the primary colours of red, green and blue light to create white and all the other colours.)

In the Bible, God is often 'painted' as pure white light (see **1 Timothy 6:16**; **Revelation 1:16**). And so is his kingdom; the saints in heaven are clothed in white robes (**Revelation 7:9**), a symbol of perfection that reflects the pure light of God shining in their hearts.

That does not mean that God is 'colourless'. Nor that in God's kingdom, differences between people and cultures are erased. Just the reverse. They are combined into something greater, purer, than they were apart. They are the colours of the rainbow joined together to form pure white.

The Christian work of reconciliation is not a form of cloning, of erasing distinctions. It respects culture and all other human 'colours'. Rather, it seeks to bring them together into a more complete whole, which will finally be completed when God creates 'a new heavens and a new earth' (**Revelation 21:1-5**).

It is a work we invite you to join us in, personally, locally and globally.

End Notes

¹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, Abingdon Press 1996, p.9.

² Fergal Keane, 'No forgetting, no forgiving', *Time*, 14 April 1997, p.43.

³ Miroslav Volf, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

⁴ S.E. Porter, 'Peace and reconciliation', *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, IVP 1993

⁵ The relationship between evangelism, social activity and compassion ministry is dealt with in Orange Paper 2, *Seeing the world through God's eyes*.

⁶ Simon Jenkins, 'These damages must be wrong', *The Times*, 14 December 1996.

⁷ Libby Purves, 'Go on, say you're sorry', *The Times*, 9 November 1999.



World Vision: frequently asked questions

Who are we?

We are an international, inter-denominational Christian humanitarian aid and development agency over 50 years old. We are one of the 'big six' agencies, with national World Vision offices in 90 countries. Most World Vision projects are long term Area Development Programmes.

Who we work with?

We are a Christian agency, but work with people from all races and faith communities and with governments and other non-governmental agencies (NGOs). World Vision staff are drawn from a wide range of Christian traditions. We take opportunities to brief leaders at high government levels on development needs and Christian perspectives. We try not to duplicate what others are doing. Whenever possible, we work in partnership with local churches, under local leadership.

Where we get our money?

Donations are given from individuals in many countries, both church members and members of the general public. We also receive grant funding from governments, companies and trusts for specific projects. We use child sponsorship as a major source of fund-raising.

'Conflict creates havoc in the lives of ordinary people. It also undermines the development of communities and nations. Preventing conflict and healing the wounds caused by conflict are therefore increasing and pressing concerns.'



Orange Papers are produced by the Church Action Team of World Vision UK to inform and promote debate about current issues faced by Christians concerned about justice and poverty. World Vision welcomes comment about the content of Orange Papers.

Orange Papers

- 1. A fire we must fight** – a Christian response to the world's HIV/AIDS crisis
- 2. Seeing the world through God's eyes** – why helping poor communities transform is a Christian priority
- 3. Called to seek peace and pursue it** – why peace initiatives are an important part of Christian development ministry

Please contact the Church Action Team at the address below.

Cover photo: An Albanian child holds shells fired into his house during the conflict in Kosovo. The boy's name, Liridon, means 'lover of peace'.

World Vision

599 Avebury Boulevard
Milton Keynes
MK9 3PG

tel: 01908 841000

www.worldvision.org.uk/church

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