

# Creating a Caring Community

Second Edition



Empowering Youth and Adults  
in California for Peacemaking

A Project of The California Council of Churches  
and the American Jewish Congress

# **CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY**

*Empowering Youth and Adults in California for Peacemaking*

A Study Circle Designed For Use With  
Adults and Senior High School Youth, Grades 9 - 12

A Project of the California Council of Churches, the American Jewish Congress  
and its violence prevention arm, the Jack Berman Advocacy Center

**PROGRAM GUIDE**

*Creating A Caring Community:  
Empowering Youth and Adults in California  
for Peacemaking*

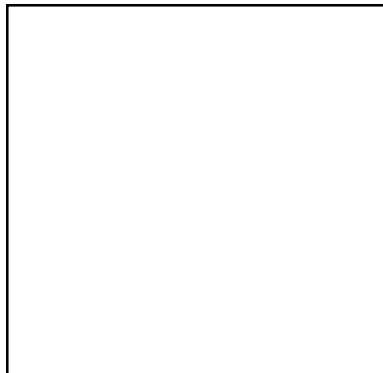
A Project of:

California Council of Churches  
2700 L Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816  
Phone (916) 442-5447 Fax (916) 442-3036  
E-Mail [cccinfo@calchurches.org](mailto:cccinfo@calchurches.org)

American Jewish Congress  
703 Market Street, Suite 258  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Phone (415) 974-1287 Fax (415) 974-1320  
E-Mail [sanfran@ajcongress.org](mailto:sanfran@ajcongress.org)

Funding for *Creating A Caring Community* provided by:

The California Wellness Foundation  
Presbyterian Peacemaking Program  
United Methodist Peace and Justice Program

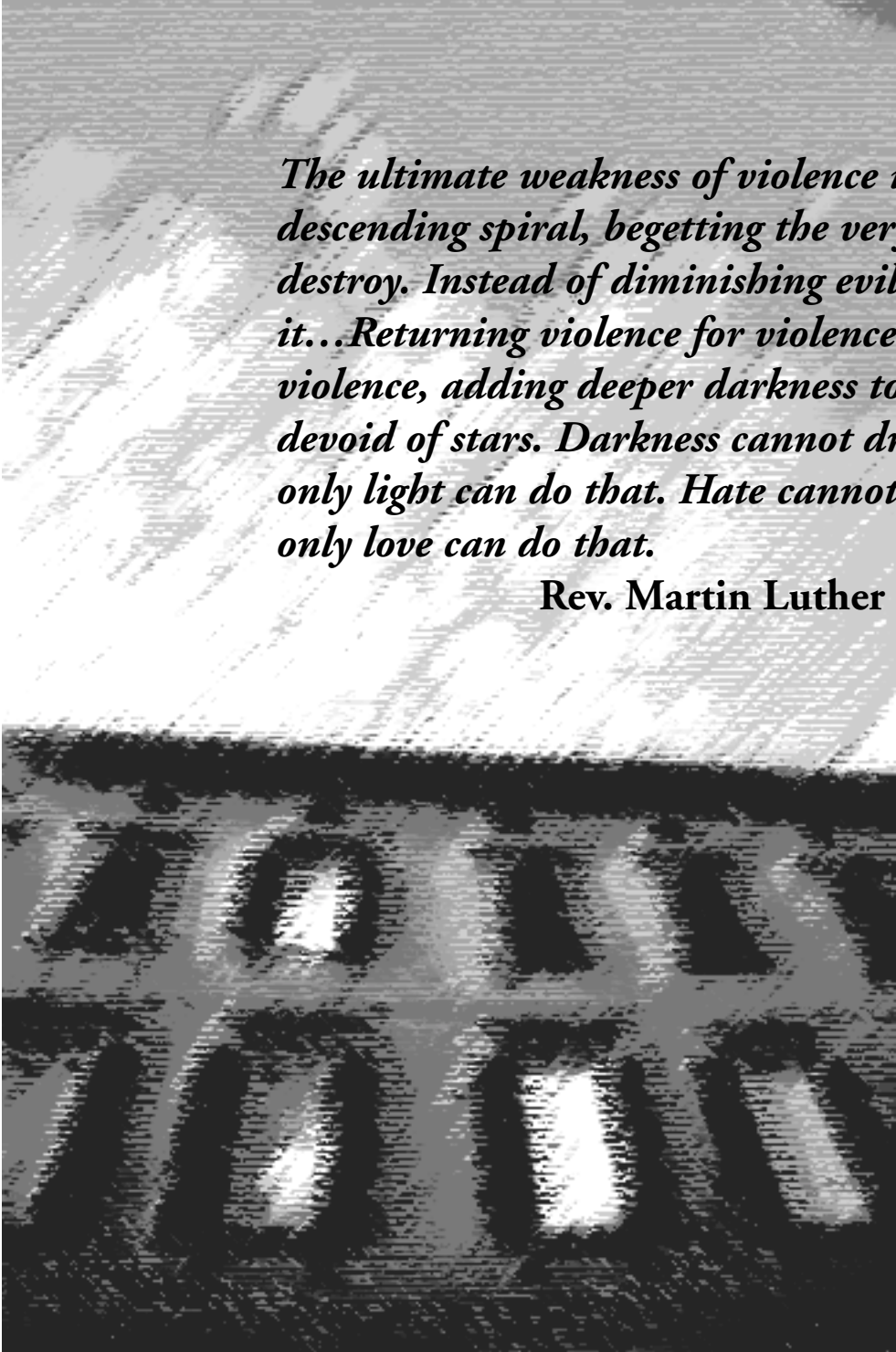


About the author:

Rev. Patrick E. Davis is a graduate of Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia and an ordained United Methodist Minister serving the Lynnewood United Methodist Church in Pleasanton, California. He is the Executive Director of Wesley Youth Homes, Inc., a 501C (3) non-profit agency dedicated to helping homeless teenage girls in California.

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*The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it...Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*

**Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

# Foreward

The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 reported 4,000 incidents of rape or other types of sexual battery in our nation's public schools; 11,000 incidents of physical attacks or fights, and 7,000 robberies in which weapons were used. About 190,000 fights or physical attacks not involving weapons also occurred at schools, along with 115,000 thefts and 98,000 incidents of vandalism (not involving weapons). According to the Adolescent and Young Adult Fact Book, published by the Children's Defense Fund, each day 135,000 American children carry guns to school. As a consequence, every day guns injure 30 students, three of whom die.

In Pearl, Mississippi, on October 1, 1997, Luke Woodham, 16, murdered his mother, his former girlfriend and another student. Michael Carneal, 14, opened fire on a student prayer meeting, killing three girls in West Paducah, Kentucky. Four months later, on March 24, 1998, Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden of Jonesboro, Arkansas, ambushed their middle school classmates, killing four students and a teacher. Then in May 1998, Kip Kinkel of Springfield, Oregon, murdered his parents and decided to shoot up his high school, killing two students. In the course of one year 15 people were murdered and 44 wounded by five young people, ages 11 to 16. This string of tragedies climaxed in the Spring of 1999, on the edge of a new millennium, when Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris killed 12 students, one teacher, themselves, and wounded 23 other students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. In light of these events, is there any more need for further statistical information to command our attention!?

In California violence has become the number one killer of youth. Our state now spends more to incarcerate a youth than it does to educate one—spending \$33,500 per youth per year to house a juvenile offender at the California Youth Authority and only \$5,000 per youth per year to educate in our public school system.

Janet Reno (U.S. Attorney General) has called on the religious community to combine their efforts along with federal, state, and local efforts to help solve youth violence which she says “is the greatest single crime problem in America today.”

Experts believe parenting issues are a significant component of juvenile delinquency. Schools, where problems with individual children first become apparent to others than family and friends, have no systematic, pro-active way of addressing troubled youth. Federal and state cutbacks in education and in after-school programs in the early 1980's left more young people with too much time on their hands, when their parents are at work.

In addition to the failure of the family structure and social institutions, experts tend to focus on three other major factors they believe drive crime and violence: the easy availability of guns, the strong link between alcohol abuse and violence, and the desensitizing influence of the glamorous portrayal of violence in the mass media. The mosaic of factors affecting at-risk youth is further complicated by race, gender, poverty, and unemployment.

Youth and adults know their communities and schools better than anyone else. This Program Guide, *Creating A Caring Community*, is intended to: 1) help religious communities counteract the stereotypes and misinformation that arise from the media's sensationalizing of violent behavior by beginning to address the cause of the growing violence among our youth; 2) identify some major factors affecting at-risk youth; and, 3) provide models of peacemaking that youth and adults in religious communities may use as a means of effectively addressing youth violence.

# Introduction

Session one deals with defining the causes and factors associated with youth violence. Session two will focus on conflict management. Session three provides a religious perspective on peacemaking. Session four enables young people and adults to talk honestly about youth violence and discover ways to respond as peacemakers. Finally, Session five seeks to help participants envision what the next steps can be toward implementing a violence prevention program in their community.

*Each session is designed for a minimum of one hour. However, if more time can be allotted, then that may be worked into each session. Therefore, any addition to the suggested session plans or modifications of the design is not only at the discretion of the leaders, but is solely the responsibility of the leaders.*

## HOW THE PROGRAM MAY BE USED

The program is designed to be offered in an intergenerational setting with youth ninth through twelfth grades and adults. It may be used in a variety of flexible and optional ways within a religious community.

The program may be offered in an ongoing format of five one-hour sessions as a short term class meeting Monday through Friday; or as an evening short term study circle meeting once a week for five weeks; or, as a five week senior high youth fellowship program meeting once a week with parents and other interested adults; or once a month over a five month period with senior high youth, parents, and other interested adults.

A second approach for offering the course is to present the course in five one hour evening sessions again meeting only once a week. If this approach is used it would be good to provide a snack supper or offer a meal as part of the total study experience.

A third approach is to offer the course in a retreat setting with senior high youth, parents and other interested adults. In this setting be sure to allow enough sessions during the time allowed for the retreat to cover five hours of material. For example, schedule five one hour sessions or two sessions of two and one-half hours each to cover all the material (be sure to include ten minute breaks). The course may also be offered as a one day seminar from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. and allowing one hour for lunch (allow for interval breaks).

## PREPARING TO LEAD A STUDY CIRCLE DISCUSSION

The study circle process is the method recommended for learning in this program. A study circle is made up of 5-20 people (12 is actually the best number to maintain) who agree to meet together in a democratic and collaborative way. The study circle builds on the experience and knowledge of the participants and expands horizons by ensuring that a variety of views may be heard.

*The study circle is a small-group democracy in action and as such demonstrates one model of peacemaking. It requires two co-leaders, one adult and one senior high youth, who can help give focus and at the same time encourage group ownership. The adult leader should have experience in teaching or leading groups.*

The study circle leaders do not “teach” in the sense of a schooling-instructional method. The leaders do not have to be experts in the subject of youth violence, but must have enough familiarity with it by a thorough reading of the *Program Guide* and be able to raise views that have not been considered by the participants. The leaders’ main task is to create an atmosphere of trust and dialogue for collaborative learning, one in which each participant feels at ease in expressing ideas and responding to those of others. The study circle is not to become a debate among participants.

## STUDY CIRCLE GROUND RULES

The leaders can establish the ground rules by identifying the expectations for the participants in the study circle (see suggested list for ground rules below). As leaders it is helpful to list these ground rules on newsprint before the first session of the study circle and go over the list with the participants in session one. Post the ground rules in an obvious place in the room throughout the duration of the study circle meetings (if that is possible). Working with a set of ground rules and expectations that everyone has ownership in is another model for peacemaking.

### Suggested ground rules for the study circle:

*Always share your concern and beliefs.  
Listen carefully to others.  
Be willing to examine your own beliefs in light of what others say.  
Speak your mind freely, but strive to maintain an open mind.  
Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.  
Cooperate with the leaders to keep the discussion on track.  
Don't monopolize the discussion.  
Address remarks to the group and not to an individual.  
Communicate your needs to the leaders  
(the leaders are responsible for guiding the discussion summarizing  
and soliciting clarification of unclear points).  
Value your own experience and opinions.  
Engage in friendly disagreement; avoid emotional argumentation, yelling, and personal put downs.  
Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your point.*

*Another way of modeling peacemaking is to use the above suggested ground rules as a way to expand session one by setting aside thirty minutes to discuss how each ground rule can apply to peacemaking in someone's personal life; and how they can be applied to our corporate life.*

### TIPS FOR LEADING AN INTERGENERATIONAL STUDY CIRCLE WITH YOUTH

- Avoid forcing a youth into the discussion. Allow youth more time to discuss at their own comfort and readiness level by allowing the discussion to develop. Learning to discuss and feel competent with adults requires some skill. Developing the discussion skill of an individual or the group takes time and patience. The leader simply can't rush the process. The leader can only facilitate it and nurture it.
- Remind the adults (in the presence of the youth) that they are learners and should work to actively listen to youth.
- Remind the youth to work at listening to what an adult is saying and to ask questions for clarification if you don't understand something.
- Always give clear instructions throughout the sessions and ask if there are any questions or if there is anything that is not clear that may need further clarification before beginning an activity.
- Show acceptance and tolerance of feelings and ideas. Youth often express their feelings, rather than an opinion based on fact. Avoid "telling" youth the correct information if you perceive an inaccuracy. Approach correcting misinformation by sharing accurate information from your experience. For example, you could say: "I had an experience that helped me see that issue in another way," and share the experience.
- Help adults to hear youth out and avoid interrupting youth as well as each other. If you observe an adult interrupting a youth go back as soon as possible in the discussion to the interrupted youth and say: "[Say the person's name], I felt that you may have been interrupted before you had a chance to finish what you were saying, please continue and help all of us understand that issue." If the youth declines to respond any further, say: "thank you for your patience and understanding." Help adults not to monopolize the discussion, by saying "let's hear

some ideas from our young people; what do you think about ...”. Try to pose questions for discussion as *open-ended* with no right or wrong answer.

An effective and fun technique to try early in the sessions is to use *popcorn discussions*. In a popcorn discussion, various members of the group, wherever they are sitting, stand-up (pop-up) one at a time to share in the discussion, then sit down. There is no pattern to this. It is like kernels of popcorn that randomly pop up, then go back down. The act of standing allows one person to be the focus of the discussion at that moment, and no one interrupts or “pops-up” again until the person standing is finished and sits down. It also gives the group a point to focus on, and helps the speaker be heard.

In a circle discussion, the group is seated in a circle, and each person around the circle, in turn, adds to the discussion with either a word, brief sentence, or a concern about what is being discussed. You may want to give individuals the option of passing and the discussion then skips to the next person. There is an advantage to requiring each person to share in the discussion, but the key is to strike a balance between prompting participation in a discussion (and thereby growing), and allowing permission to pass.

Again, it is important to strive to have an equal number of adult and youth participants as possible to avoid any inhibition to youth fully participating.

## HOW TO LEAD A STUDY CIRCLE DISCUSSION

*The following information on “How To Lead A Study Circle Discussion” is excerpted from the Study Circle Handbook, “A Manual for Study Circle Discussion Leaders, Organizers, and Participants,” a publication of the Study Circle Resource Center, sponsored by Topsfield Foundation, Inc., 1993 and is used by permission.*

Study circle discussion leaders need to be familiar with basic skills in discussion leadership. The following suggestions may summarize the most important points for effective study circle leadership. They provide the basis for the skills that you will need and develop every time you lead a discussion.

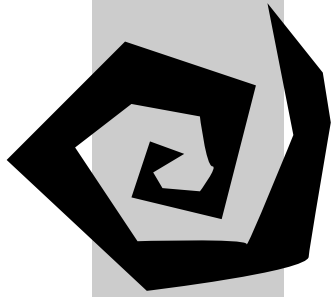
1. Be prepared by understanding the objectives for each session, familiarity with the subject, and thinking ahead of time about the directions in which the discussion might go. This kind of preparation will enable you to give your full attention to group dynamics and to what participants in the group are saying.
2. Set a relaxed and open tone by welcoming everyone. Use well-paced humor to help people focus differences on ideas rather than personalities.
3. Review ground rules (p. 7) at the beginning of the study circle and ask participants if they agree or want to add anything.
4. Stay aware of and assist the group dynamics by enabling the group to focus on the content of the discussion by monitoring how well the participants are communicating with each other—who has spoken, who hasn’t spoken, and whose points haven’t yet received a fair hearing. You always have the option to split the group into smaller groups to examine a variety of viewpoints to give people a chance to talk more easily with a fewer number of people. When wrestling with when to intervene in the discussion, err on the side of non-intervention.
5. Help the group grapple with the content by asking the group to think about the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of looking at an issue or solving a problem; ask what are the concerns or values that underlie their beliefs; caution the group not to focus on or be overly influenced by one particular personal experience or anecdote; summarizes the discussion

occasionally or encourages group members to do so; remain neutral about the content and avoid expressing your own values; and, enable participants to identify the “common ground” without forcing consensus.

6. Use questions to help make the discussion more productive (also refer to questions listed in session three):
  - What seems to be the key point here?
  - What is it that you disagree with?
  - Does anyone want to add to (or support, or challenge) that point?
  - Could you give an example or describe a personal experience to illustrate that point?
  - Could you help us understand the reasons behind your opinion?
  - What experiences or beliefs might lead decent and caring people to support that point of view?
  - What do you think people who hold that opinion care most deeply about?
  - What would be a strong case against what you just said?
  - What do you find most persuasive about that point of view?
  - What is it about that position that you just cannot live with?
  - Are there any points on which most of us would agree?
7. Reserve adequate time for closing the discussion by asking the group for last comments and thoughts about the subject. Ask participants to share any new ideas, insights, affirmations, or reaffirmations they’ve had as a result of the discussion. Thank everyone for their contributions.
8. Use flip charts - by writing down key points, participants will feel included and heard.

The goal of the study circle is to increase awareness and understanding of youth violence by focusing on the values that underlie opinions. Perhaps the most important question a study circle leader can ask is: “What experiences or beliefs might lead decent and caring people to support that point of view?” The group works through difficult issues and grapples with the choices that the religious community is facing. Study circles seek “common ground”—that is, areas of general agreement—but consensus or compromise is not necessary. One way to work at seeking some “common ground” is to ask participants to summarize the most important results of their discussion. Ask: “Did any common concerns emerge?” “In what ways do you see the issue differently as a result of considering others’ views?” Participants will likely have some common concerns and goals even though they have different ideas about how to address or achieve them. *Working through a process such as this is itself a model for peacemaking and participants will learn valuable life skills when dealing with difficult, controversial, and potentially conflictive issues.*

# Violence: What It Is and Why It Happens



## Session One

**Objective:** Identify what youth violence is, the causes, factors, and conditions associated with violence and why it happens.

**Preparation:** Read the *Introduction of the Program Guide* before leading Session One. Read Session One and become familiar with the session plan.

**Materials Needed:** Newsprint/markers, pencils, poster of study circle ground rules. Copies of Handout #1.

### 10 min. INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself, welcome everyone, and briefly share (in less than a minute) one reason why you are interested in, concerned about, and/or hope to learn by participating in a study circle related to violence prevention among California youth and the creation of a caring community through peacemaking.

Next, invite participants to introduce themselves and to briefly share one reason why they are interested in, concerned about, and/or hope to learn by participating in a study circle related to violence prevention. It will be important to tell the participants to be brief in their comments.

Explain what a study circle is and the ground rules to be used (refer to the material from the *Introduction to the Program Guide*, “Preparing To Lead A Study Circle Discussion”). Print a brief summary of what a study circle is and the ground rules on newsprint before beginning session one and post where it may be readily observed throughout the course of this study.

### 15 min. WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

Define the word VIOLENCE by asking for one or two participants to volunteer how they would define *violence* in their own words.

Next, read the definition of violence (see Handout #1) to the participants by Mark Rosenberg, M.D. M.P.P., Director, National Centers for Injury, Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

*Violence is the threatened or actual use of physical force or power against another person, against oneself, or against a group or community that either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death or deprivation.*

Explain that the definition used here is used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to define violence and it is the definition adopted and published by the Attorney General of California, Policy Council on Violence Prevention, *Final Report, Violence Prevention: A Vision of Hope*.

Ask: Does this definition of violence as a disease to be treated as a public health issue surprise you? Why or why not?

Using a marker, write the word **violence** in the center of a sheet of newsprint and draw a circle around the word and definition (be sure to leave adequate space on the newsprint to write other things on the newsprint).

Ask the participants to think about what the word **violence** brings to mind. Or ask, “What do you think of when you see the word **violence**?” If responses become particularly long and drawn-out ask the participant to summarize his/her response in a word or two (or suggest a summary yourself).

Write each participant’s response on the newsprint, drawing lines to connect them to the main concept. List each participant’s response without judging it and ask the participants not to judge or comment on any particular response at this time.

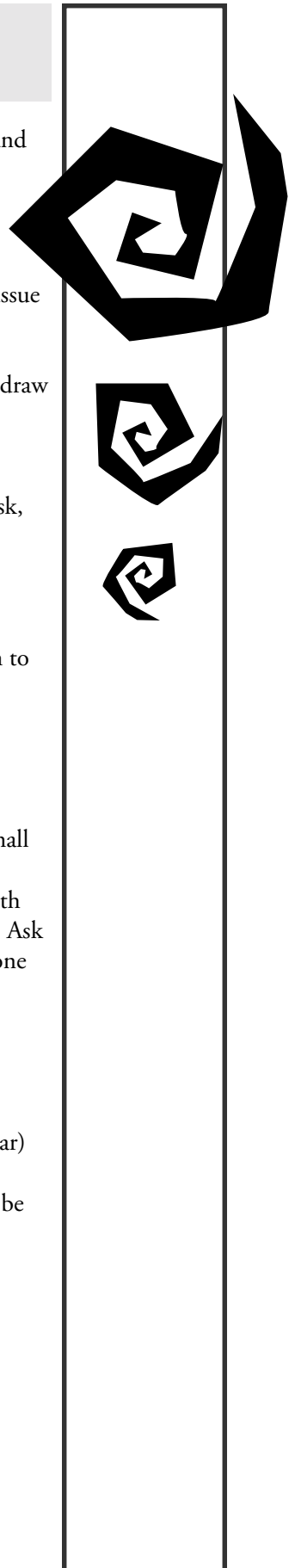
#### **20 min. DISCUSSION**

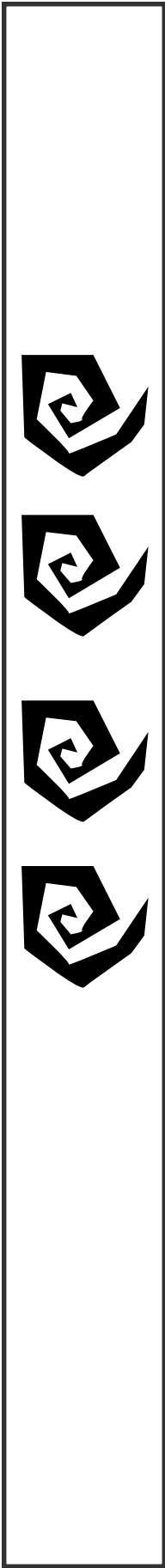
Divide the participants into small groups making sure to include youth in each small group (try not to have more than five and no less than two in each small group—do not put all youth in a small group and all adults in a small group—be sure youth and adults are well mixed). Assign the questions listed below to each small group. Ask the small groups to discuss the questions. Ask the small groups to appoint someone to summarize briefly one of the questions for the study circle.

1. “Where do we see violence in life?” (At school, home, community, games and sporting events)
2. “What emotions are associated with violence?” (Anger, jealousy, fear)
3. “Do you think violence is learned; and if so, where do we learn to be violent?” (family, peers, television, movies, music)
4. “Why do you think there is so much violence in our society?”
5. “How has violence effected your life?”

#### **8 min. SUMMATION**

Ask someone from each of the small groups to briefly summarize one of the questions they discussed (do not allow a discussion of the small group summaries by the large group).





**2 min. INSIGHTS**

Ask participants to share any insights, new understandings, concerns the session raised for them or what was affirmed for them in the session that they think should be part of *Creating a Caring Community* through peacemaking.

**CLOSING**

Close with prayer.

**RESOURCES USED WITH PERMISSION IN THIS SESSION:**

Prothrow-Smith, Deborah, MD. *Violence Prevention Curriculum For Adolescents*, 1987, Teenage Health Teaching Models, Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, Massachusetts.

Daniel E. Lungren, Attorney General of California, Policy Council on Violence Prevention, *Final Report*, August 1995, *Violence Prevention: A Vision of Hope*. Sacramento, California.

# Violence: Confrontation & Conflict Management

**Objective:** To identify and practice peacemaking techniques as a skill for coping with confrontation and conflict.

To examine violence and its consequences, both positive and negative.

**Preparation:** Read session two and be familiar with the session plan.

**Materials**

**Needed:** Newsprint, markers, masking tape, pencils. Copies of the skit, anger style inventory, and styles of conflict to hand out to participants (Handouts #2, #3, #4a, #4b).



**5 min. INTRODUCTION**

In this session you will guide the participants in developing and using peacemaking techniques. In order to generate a prevention rationale it is important first of all to generate reasons for preventing violence. The emphasis begins not with morality or righteousness, but on health and common sense—weighing what a person would lose versus what he or she would gain from using violence.

Distribute “Your Anger Style Inventory” (Handout #4a) and ask participants to complete it.

Distribute and review Handout #4b. Explain to the participants that the scoring guide for “Your Anger Style Inventory” is not a scientific instrument and not based on hard-and-fast rules about how anger is or should be expressed, but rather it is to help us begin to think about anger and the ways anger is dealt with, especially if a style of anger leads to violence. After everyone has finished the inventory, ask:

Do you think the inventory gives an accurate assessment of general styles of dealing with anger?

Do you think anger styles are learned?

## Session Two

What does the inventory say about how anger is dealt with in general?

How do you see anger being handled with your friends, your family, and in the work place?

### **10 min. STYLES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Before reviewing the five styles of conflict (Handout #2) ask for volunteers (again you will need to mix youth and adults) to present a skit in the activity below. Distribute copies of the skit (Handout #3) to the volunteers and ask them to go into another room to rehearse the skit for approximately ten minutes.

Briefly review the five styles of conflict resolution from Handout #2 with those remaining in the room while other members are practicing the skit.

Ask:

“What style(s) do you most often use? What styles have you most often observed at work, at school, or at church? Are these styles of conflict learned? Who do we learn our styles of conflict resolution from (parents, peers, co-workers, culture, movies, television)?

### **25 min. FIGHT SCENE SKIT**

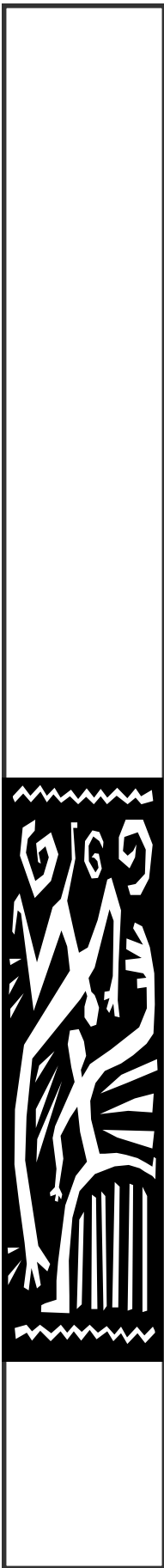
Explain that the skit will be presented twice.

Ask the volunteers to present the skit.

After the skit is finished ask:

- 1) “How did the fight develop” (begins with a conflict that escalates; friends and peers often play an important role in escalating [gets more intense] or deescalates conflict [becomes less intense]; what was the provocation or confrontation (an incident that sets off the fight; the first act of aggression— an attempt to harm someone).
- 2) “Describe the body language/nonverbal behavior you observed” (e.g. tension, short, sharp movements, aggressive stances, frowns, facial expressions, raised voices or shouting).
- 3) “What was the role of peers and observers?” (Try to break it up, get help, distract the fighters, encourage fighters, gather around to watch)

Present the skit again. This time ask the participants to focus on at what point(s) the fight could have been prevented or at what point(s) an intervention would have been effective.



**5 min. IDENTIFYING CONSEQUENCES**

Next, discuss the possible consequences—both negative and positive—of trying to prevent/intervene in the fight at a particular point. Explain to the participants that the term prevention means keeping the fight from occurring in the first place; intervention is trying to de-escalate it once it has begun, and usually involves a third party.

**5 min. REVIEW**

Review the styles of conflict resolution from Handout #2 and ask: What style(s) of conflict resolution could be effective in preventing the fight?

**5 min. CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LOCAL SCHOOLS**

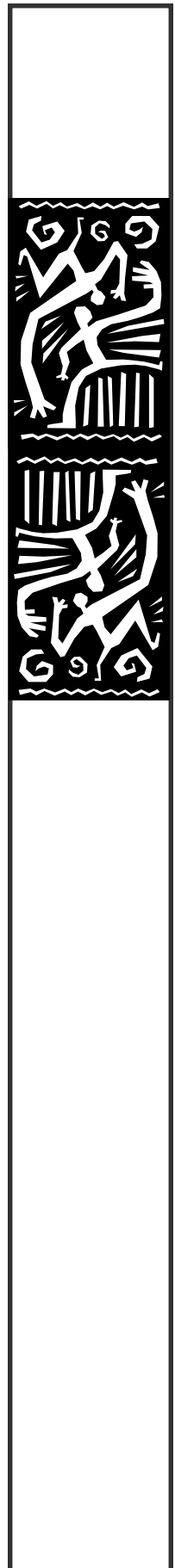
Ask youth participants what is going on in the local schools regarding any approach to conflict resolution. Is there a peer mediation program? How does it work?

**5 min. CLOSING**

Close with a prayer or word for the creation of a caring community through peacemaking.

**RESOURCES USED WITH PERMISSION IN THIS SESSION**

Prothrow-Smith, Deborah, MD. *Violence Prevention Curriculum For Adolescents*.



# Violence: Religious Perspectives



## Session Three

**Objective:** To discuss the religious perspectives for creating a caring community in which youth and adults can work together as peacemakers.

**Preparation:** Read the religious perspectives on violence.

**Materials**

**Needed:** Newsprint, masking tape, markers, Bibles, and photocopies of the religious perspectives located in Handouts #5a, #5b, and #5c.

### 10 min. INTRODUCTION

Distribute the religious perspectives (Handouts #5a, #5b, #5c) for the participants to review.

Begin by briefly summarizing the religious perspectives with the participants.

### 20 min. DISCUSSION

Divide into three small groups (mixing youth and adults together) and ask the small groups to choose a reporter to report for the group later on in the session.

Assign each of the small groups one of the religious perspectives to discuss.

Ask the small groups to discuss the following questions (write the questions on newsprint and post for the small groups to refer to):

What does this religious perspective tell us about God?  
What does this religious perspective tell us about people?  
What does this religious perspective tell us about violence?

### 20 min. SUMMATION

After discussing in small groups, ask the reporters from each of the small groups to summarize their discussion of these questions.

**10 min. INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES**

Ask the participants to reflect on what the common vision and hope for a caring community is that is being described in the religious perspectives. Ask, “In what ways do these religious perspectives 1) point us toward a vision and hope for creating a caring community as a means of preventing violence, and 2) call our community to be peacemakers?”

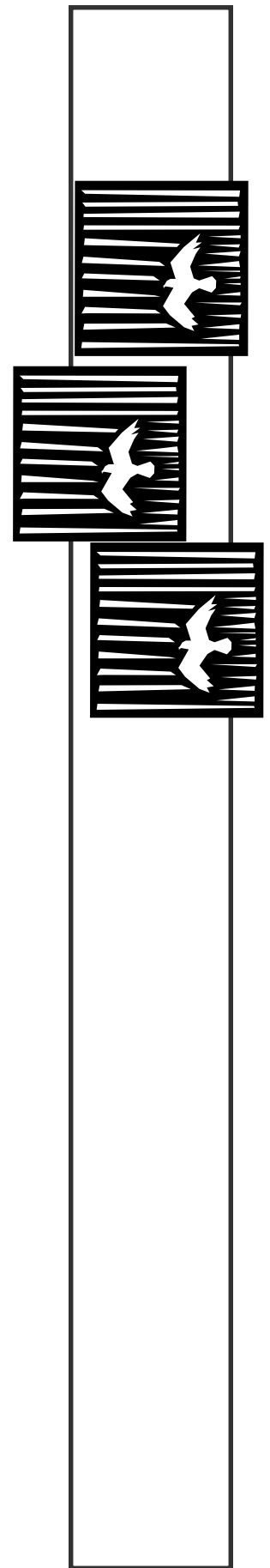
**CLOSING**

Close with a prayer.

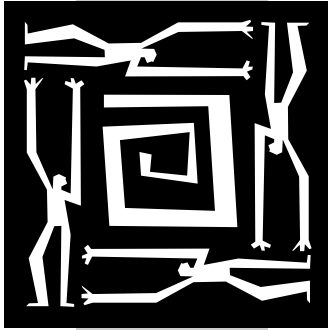
**RESOURCES USED WITH PERMISSION IN THIS SESSION:**

*Challenge: Christian Perspectives on Social Issues, Volume Three, Violence*, Cokesbury, The United Methodist Publishing House, 1993, p 10).

American Jewish Congress’ Violence Reduction Project, the Jack Berman Advocacy Center.



# Different Perspectives on How to Deal With Violence



**Objective:** To talk about violence and to find ways to work together to make the community a caring and safe place for all of us.

**Preparation:** Read and become familiar with the session plan. Photocopy enough copies of the Six Viewpoints (Handout #7).

**Materials**

**Needed:** Newsprint/markers, pencils

## 20 min. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

List the following five reasons for violence on newsprint.

**Reasons**

1. Violence happens because families are under stress and breaking down.
2. Violence is growing because our culture—movies, music, TV—glorifies it and shows it as a way to solve problems.
3. Violence is on the rise because we are too soft on troublemakers.
4. Violence grows in the poor parts of cities where crime and drugs are common.
5. Violence is getting worse because it's easier for kids to get guns.

Ask the participants: “Of the five reasons listed, is there one or more that you agree with? Why? Is anything left out?”

## 20 min. SIX VIEWPOINTS

Photocopy enough copies of the Six Viewpoints (Handout #7) located in the Program Guide for each of the participants.

Briefly summarize the six viewpoints with the participants.

*Ask: Of the six viewpoints, is there one, or a combination, that you agree with? Why? Is there a point of view left out?*

*How has your experience affected your feelings about this issue?*

*Why do you think violence happens in this community?*

*What could we do in our community to make it safer? Is anything already being done? What's working? Why or why not?*

*Is another community doing something that we might learn from?*

*How can young people take leadership around this issue?*

## **20 min. CLOSING**

In preparation for the session ask for a few volunteers from the group to contact the local schools and police departments in order to SURVEY THE COMMUNITY and report to the group what violence prevention programs are currently active in the community.

Ask for other volunteers to prepare a report on the connection between entertainment violence and real-life violence. Studies have shown that the average American child will see some 40,000 dramatized murders on TV and in the movies by the age of 18. Ask the volunteers to scan the prime time TV listings in the local newspapers and draw a pie chart showing the number of violent shows out of all shows. Also ask the volunteers to draw a bar graph to show the number of violent shows on each network or cable station; and to bring a brief summary of their findings to the next session (session five).

Ask for a third group of volunteers who would be willing to find a story about a conflict in the newspapers and to write three suggestions on how people could keep the conflict from becoming violent. If violence occurred, write three ways it could have been prevented.

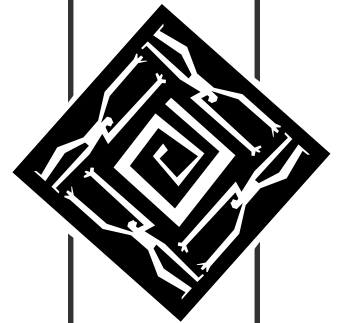
Give each group a few minutes to meet and make plans to report their findings at the next session.

Once you have assigned volunteers for these three tasks close this session with a time of silence and prayer.

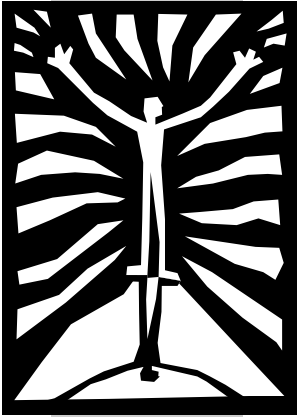
## **RESOURCE USED WITH PERMISSION IN THIS SESSION:**

*"Youth Issues, Youth Voices, A Guide for Engaging Youth and Adults in Public Dialogue and Problem- Solving."* 1996 Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

LINC, Youth Connecting Faith and Life, Youth Page, 1998, Cokesbury.



# Taking the Next Steps



## Session Five

**Objective:** To discuss and identify a violence prevention program that can work in the community.

**Preparation:** Photocopy enough copies for each participant of the “Program Idea Sheet” located in the Program Guide.

**Materials Needed:** Newsprint, magic makers, and copies of “Program Idea Sheet” (Handout #6).

### 10 min. COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH REPORT

In session four volunteers were asked to: 1) survey the community and report on what violence prevention programs currently exist in the community; 2) share a brief summary of the number of violent shows on each network; and 3) suggest ways that violence can be avoided.

Ask the participants to share what they discovered from these assignments.

### 15 min. BRAINSTORMING

Distribute copies of Handout #6, “Program Idea Sheet.”

Ask the participants to identify the ideas listed that they think could work in their schools or community.

Ask which ideas would they be interested in doing to create a more caring community where they live? Encourage the participants to come up with ideas not necessarily listed on the handout (explain that the handout is provided to help get everyone thinking about what may be done in the community).

List the ideas on newsprint.

**30 min. TAKE THE NEXT STEP**

Prioritize one of the program ideas brain stormed that would work well in your community and begin developing a plan of action for implementing that program.

Develop a basic plan of action by answering the following questions:

Who will be involved?

What will be needed?

Where can the program be located (what location options exist for the program)?

When will the program be offered?

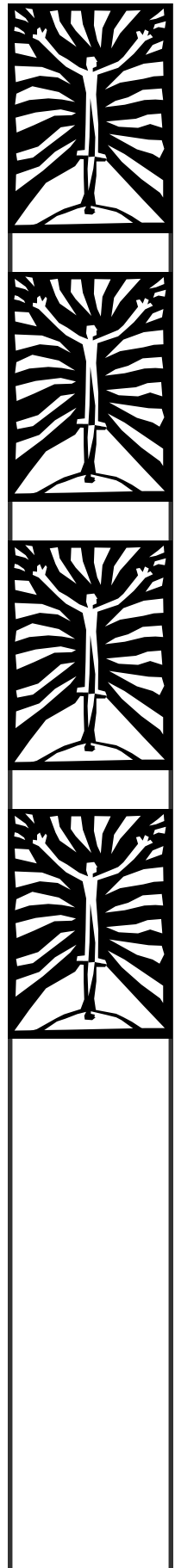
Develop a budget for the program. How much will the program cost to operate and what will the funding plan consist of (e.g. grants, personal and corporate donations, fund raisers)?

It is obvious that more meetings will be needed if the group is interested in taking this next step. If the group decides to continue to meet together it is advisable that the group seek sponsorship and support within their local religious community. Support from the local religious community's governing organization is essential as a necessary first step toward implementing a successful violence prevention program.

**5 min. CLOSING**

Ask the participants to share with each other what has been the most significant and important learning for them during their time together.

Close with a prayer.



## *Violence*

Violence is the threatened or actual use of physical force or power against another person, against oneself, or against a group or community that either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death or deprivation.

## Participant Handout #2

### *Styles of Conflict Resolution*

1. COMPETITIVE:

When one party struggles to achieve his/her goals regardless of impact on others. Handled by competition and dominance. Win or Lose. Use with people who take advantage of non-competitive behavior.

2. COLLABORATIVE:

When both parties work to satisfy each other's concerns. Mutually beneficial outcome is sought. Win - Win. Use when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised, to merge insights from two differing opinions.

3. AVOIDANCE:

The most frequent response to conflict! One or both parties withdraws or suppresses the conflict. Just let it go. Use when issue is trivial. Possible disruptions may outweigh the benefits.

4. ACCOMMODATION:

One party is prepared to appease the other, to give them what they want, with little regard for personal concern. Self sacrifice. Use when issue is more important to other than to you.

5. COMPROMISE:

Each party agrees to give something up in order to get something in return. Give and take style. Use when opponents are committed to mutually exclusive goals. Good for temporary settlements.

WHAT IS YOUR STYLE?

WHAT STYLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY? — TO EXPERIMENT WITH?

## Participant Handout #3

### *Fight Skit Script*

#### CHARACTERS

**Student 1:** Drove to school today and was supposed to give Student 2 a ride

**Student 2:** Was a little late getting up and missed the ride from Student 1

**Other Students:** Three or four extras

#### SCENE

The hallway outside the cafeteria at lunch time. There are several students standing around talking quietly to one another. Student 2 walks in and confronts Student 1.

**Student 2:** Hey, where were you this morning?

**Student 1:** Where was I? Where were you? I waited in front of your house and you never showed up!

**Student 2:** I was a little late, but you could have waited.

**Student 1:** What do you mean, “a little late”? I waited for at least ten minutes!

**Student 2:** That’s a lot of garbage! I wasn’t more than five minutes late. You could have pushed the buzzer or blown the horn.

**Student 1:** I did blow the horn, and I wasn’t going to leave the car double-parked to buzz you.

**Student 2:** Listen, you jerk. I had to walk to school, and I got to my first class half an hour late, and we were having a test. I didn’t finish, and the teacher won’t let me finish it later.

## Participant Handout #3

**Student 1:** Well, don't get mad at me. Get mad at her!

**Student 2:** If you had picked me up the way you said you would, I wouldn't have been late. (*Gives Student 1 a slight push*)

**Student 1:** (*Raises voice slightly*) Keep your hands off me! (*Gives a push back*) Don't blame me for your problems.

**Student 3:** Hey, a fight!

**Student 2:** (*Shouting*) My problems are your fault. (*Pushes again, harder*)

**Student 1:** (*Stumbles back*)

**Students 4 and 5:** (*Begin gathering around*) Who's fighting? Let's see!

**Student 3:** (*Shouting*) Come on, hit him!

**Student 1:** (*Shouting*) That's it! You asked for it! (*Lunges at Student 2*)

## Participant Handout #4a

### *Your Anger Style Inventory*

This quiz will help you determine your anger style, which means the way you usually deal with anger. Consider each statement below and mark the answer that *most closely* represents how you would probably react.

1. You have just found out that a friend of yours is stealing your girlfriend/boyfriend. You would probably:
  - a. beat the person up.
  - b. decide that the person isn't your friend anymore.
  - c. talk with both of them and find out what's going on.
2. You have a friend who has very strong opinions about lots of things. Some of his opinions make you mad. You would probably:
  - a. punch him the next time he starts stating his opinions.
  - b. ignore it—that's what friendship is about.
  - c. argue with him.
3. A guy you know slightly has very strong opinions about lots of things. Some of his opinions make you mad. You would probably:
  - a. hit him.
  - b. just try to stay away from the guy.
  - c. ask him why he feels the way he does.
4. When you are angry, which do you usually do?
  - a. think about throwing something or someone against the wall.
  - b. go for a walk or a run.
  - c. talk about how you feel with a friend who's not involved.
5. When you're angry, people who get in your way are likely to:
  - a. get pushed aside.
  - b. be invited to go with you to a movie or for a walk.
  - c. hear all about your problem.
6. It wasn't your fault that you were late getting to school. But because you were late, you missed a test and the teacher won't let you make it up. You would probably:
  - a. think about smashing the windshield of the teacher's car.
  - b. think, "Okay, so what if I get a failing grade?"
  - c. discuss it with the teacher later when you've calmed down.
7. When you're in a situation that makes you angry, you often think:
  - a. No one's going to push me around.
  - b. All I want to do is get out of here!
  - c. I want to clear this up.
8. Lately your boyfriend/girlfriend is nagging you all the time. It's getting on your nerves and making you angry. You would probably decide that:
  - a. you've had it—next time you'll hit him or her.
  - b. he or she isn't worth it—you'll break up.
  - c. this has got to stop—you'll call him or her and talk it out.
9. If you were angry with someone and started thinking of a way to get even with that person, you would probably:
  - a. pick the best idea and carry it out.
  - b. tell a friend your idea, have a good laugh, but leave it at that.
  - c. decide that it's time to let the person know how you feel.
10. You think your friend has let you down in a big way. Next time you see your friend, you would probably:
  - a. push him or her out of the way and keep walking.
  - b. pretend nothing has happened.
  - c. decide that it's time to let the person know how you feel.
11. You've heard that a girl you never liked much is going around school telling lies about you. You would probably:
  - a. slap her around until she learns some manners.
  - b. ignore it—who cares what she says?
  - c. tell her to knock it off or else.
12. When you're angry, you often feel like:
  - a. hitting someone or something.
  - b. taking a nap.
  - c. working on the problem so it's no longer a problem.

### *Your Anger Style Inventory Scoring Guide*

Go through the quiz and count the number of “a” answers, “b” answers, and “c” answers you had. Whichever type of answer you circled most often indicates how you usually deal with anger. A description of your anger style is given below. While you may have one dominant anger style, you probably use all three at one time or another. No one way of dealing with anger is always right or always wrong, unless it gets you into trouble. The best way to deal with anger depends on the situation.

#### **VIOLENT ANGER EXPRESSER** (mostly “a” answers)

Anger makes you feel violent, either toward people or toward things. Almost everyone feels violent sometimes, but acting violently doesn’t solve problems or make bad situations better—and it can easily get you into trouble. Thinking but not acting on violent thoughts probably won’t get you into trouble, but it can make you pretty uncomfortable. Consider using your anger in more constructive ways.

#### **ANGER CONTROLLER** (mostly “b” answers)

You don’t try to express your anger—you either ignore it or don’t let it bother you. This can be positive in situations that are too minor or too dangerous to do anything about. It can also be positive if you channel the anger into constructive activities, such as exercising. But it can be negative if you do self-destructive things to escape your feelings (such as drinking alcohol or using drugs) or if you don’t succeed in ignoring your anger and just carry it around inside you. Before you act, examine the costs and benefits of controlling your anger.

#### **VERBAL ANGER EXPRESSER** (mostly “c” answers)

You usually express your anger verbally, either to the person with whom you’re angry or to whatever person or thing gets in your way. This can be positive if it is done effectively—it can solve problems or make a bad situation better, which is using anger constructively. Sometimes it helps to get the feelings of anger off your chest. But expressing anger verbally can be negative if it makes a bad situation even worse and leads to more anger or to a fight. Before you express your anger verbally, think about whether this is the time and place to do it.

## Participant Handout #5a

### **CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEMAKING**

*Challenge: Christian Perspective on Social Issues, Volume Three, Violence, Cokesbury, The United Methodist Publishing House, 1993, pp.16-17.*

The Christian perspective on peacemaking draws heavily from Hebrew Scriptures describing — Shalom — a term used to describe a community when it is in harmony with God. Jesus taught God’s concern for the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed (Luke 4:18).

For Christians, Shalom is a condition of equality, peace, and justice. Shalom allows people the opportunity to devote their energy and their resources to their jobs, to enjoy the fruits of their labors, and to participate in the life on earth that God calls “very good.”

Jesus explained his attitude toward violence by saying “The law says, ‘Do not kill.’ I say, Do not be angry, either. The law says, ‘An eye for an eye.’ I say, Do not exact any revenge. Be totally forgiving! And pray, ‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors (paraphrased from Matthew 5:21- 22,38-39, 44 and 6:12).

Jesus taught love as the proper way in treating each other: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength; and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-31, and Luke 10:27).

The apostle Paul built on Jesus’ teaching when he said “never avenge yourself, but leave it to God.” In this way, Christians can overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14-21). Both Jesus and Paul seem to imply that violence is overcome by a life regulated by a “higher standard”—the love principle.

## Participant Handout #5b

### JEWISH PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEMAKING

*An introduction by Rabbi Alan Berg, Peninsula Temple Beth El in San Mateo, California. Rabbi Berg serves on the Board of the American Jewish Congress. This material was developed for this Program Guide by the American Jewish Congress' violence reduction project, the Jack Berman Advocacy Center.*

The Jewish faith understands that violence leads to such great human suffering, that ultimately violence destabilizes society. We find this sad truth first presented in the story of Noah and the Flood:

“The end of all flesh has come before me, for the world is filled with violence....” (Genesis 6:13).

The question before Jews at this point in history is how the lessons of our tradition and our own history can be applied to diminish the brutalities that, in so many forms, brings unconscionable suffering.

Our understanding of life comes from measuring the dignity of every human being against Leviticus 19: “You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy. In Judaism God is the source of our ethics. When we speak of God as One, we see a human face, every human face, in that Oneness. Jews see God when we look into each other’s eyes. The Hebrew phrase for this is ‘betzelem Elohim’—in the image of God.

Violence has many vessels. It can come directly from bullets, knives and fists. But it can also come from the harms that society can do to communities. It can also come from things we do to ourselves, physically and emotionally. Jewish values have shaped our response to all of these levels and forms of violence. With regard to the category of ‘bullets, knives and fists’ the Jewish community provides leadership for diminishing the use of firearms in America, building coalitions with corporations to create gun turn-in and exchange programs. We seek to have a Jewish voice in the state legislature on violence related issues.

The Talmud teaches us that, in every other law of the Torah, if a man is commanded, ‘transgress and suffer not death, he may transgress and not suffer death, excepting idolatry, incest, and shedding blood....’ (Sanhedrin 74a).

## Participant Handout #5b

The nature of community has so much to do with violent acts. One of the primary signs that community ties are weak is the prevalence of violence upon the innocent, the infirm and the weak. We see this in the many episodes of child abuse and murder throughout the world today. We also see a symptom in the growth of the prison industry in America. Throughout its centuries, from Torah to the prophets to the Talmud to the modern Responsa writings, Judaism has placed the need for a just society as 'frontlets between your eyes.'

The tradition pleads for those who are alone, unprotected and suffering, it cries out for fairness, "You shall appoint magistrates and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice."

The Jewish passion for justice requires us to struggle for a better society. We place a priority on the safeguards for human liberty in the Bill of Rights and we seek to provide leadership in the struggle to maintain a strong wall of separation between church and state.

The Jewish community seeks partnerships to fight hate crimes and we support the vision of Isaiah, "...all who are thirsty, Come for water, Even if you have no money, come for food and eat" (Isaiah 55:1).

There are many reasons that we do acts of violence against ourselves. Emotional illness, a harsh family environment, even the basic frustrations and disappointments of modern living can lead us to harm ourselves.

Throughout the centuries, Judaism has tried to provide support for people who are ill, suffering, in need of a hand, with a strong, charitable social service network. These efforts continue in local communities throughout America. Our Synagogues and social service organizations are supported through the hands and hearts of volunteers who repair lives and build a society built on the principal implied in one word: Shalom.

Ending all of these dreadful forms of violence is a primary goal of Judaism and the Jewish people. We join our hands and hearts with all people of all faith traditions to do mitzvot, good deeds, and to bring God's presence more fully into the world.

## Participant Handout #5c

### MUSLIM PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEMAKING

*Iftekar A. Hai, Director of Interfaith Relations, United Muslims of America*

The message of the Quran outlines our responsibilities to each other as members of the families, communities and the human race. Youth violence and respect for life is deeply rooted in the initial upbringing of our children. Children are compared by Islamic scholars to a clean sheet of paper when they are born. They are innocent and pure. Children develop moral values, basic beliefs at early stages of their life from their parents. Therefore parents bear the responsibilities of character building which is associated with youth violence and respect for life. They can sow seeds of hatred and violence as well as sow seeds of peace, respect and harmony. The Quran outlines in the following verses of wisdom that relates to youth violence respect for life and responsibilities.

On respect for parents: The focus is on God, our Creator and Sustainer. The Quran states, "God has decreed that you worship none, but one God alone. Be kind to your parents. When they attain old age never say to them any word of contempt, nor repel them. Refer to them with honor and kindness. Treat them with humility and respect, and pray: "My Lord! Bestow on them your mercy because they loved and cherished me in my childhood days." 17:23

On respect for life: "Be good to your parents. Do not indulge in shameful deeds, (sexual fantasies, lewd and improper acts, etc.) openly or secretly. Do not take life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law (follow the due process). 6:151

On factors that lead to violence: "Oh you who believe (refers to anyone who believes in God, they may be Jewish, Christians, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindus, Native American, etc.) Intoxicants (mind altering drugs, alcohol, etc.) and gambling (lottery, betting, etc.) are abomination. Avoid them so that you may prosper. Intoxicants and gambling hinder you from remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not then abstain?" 5:93/94

To summarize, Muslims strive to build a society based on solid foundations, where the divine in all the religions is respected and a common prayer dedicated to the Creator of all humanity is evoked. The wisdom and spirituality in all the traditions is laid bare for our younger generation to learn from. Public television, entertainment industry, business, etc. should be included in building a society that will pride in respect for life, respect for parents and respect for solving the problems in a peaceful and non-violent ways. Virtues of forgiveness must be extolled. This is the legacy that Islam wishes to pass on to the younger as well as coming generations, if this nation of the people, by the people and for the people is to survive in the coming millennium.

## Participant Handout #6

# *Program Idea sheet*

### **AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS/SAFE HAVENS**

From 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and during the summer, when kids are at the highest risk of violence, schools can serve as homework centers, offer enrichment courses and tutoring, provide mentoring programs, house recreational programs and help young people prepare for college. Structured and supervised activities for youth, including a range of academic enrichment and recreational activities, help create a safe haven from violence, gangs, and drugs.

### **MENTORING**

The presence of a responsible and caring role model in the life of a young person offers a powerful solution to the problems that youth face today. Many studies have concluded that the best youth programs are distinguished by their ability to provide the youth with an adult who takes a personal interest in a young person and increases their perspective, confidence and sense of self-worth. An adult mentor can be both a teacher and a friend to a young person, modeling how to settle their differences peacefully and how to create peace by refusing to accept violence as the norm. Katherine Keough, an authority on school violence says "If students see adults accepting violence as a good solution to a problem, then they will emulate that violence." She believes that adults can set the example by saying no to television programs, music, and movies that glorify violence.

### **PEER MEDIATION**

Students trained in special mediation skills such as problem solving, active listening, communicating and identifying points of agreement help other students examine their disagreements and develop mutual solutions. Young people involved in this type of program benefit from the opportunity to contribute to positive solutions in their school environment while learning skills to resolve conflict in their own lives.

### **STUDENT PLEDGE DAY**

Sponsor and organize a Student Pledge Day at your school involving the cooperation of a community interfaith association, ministerial association, parent/teacher association, the local government and police department where young people can sign a pledge to never bring a gun, knife, or any other type of weapon to school; never use a weapon to settle a dispute; and to use their influence with friends to keep them from using weapons to settle disputes.

## Participant Handout #7

### *The Six Viewpoints*

#### *Different Perspectives On How To Deal With Violence*

(Courtesy of The Study Circles Resource Center, Pomfret, CT)

**Viewpoint #1 — We Need To Punish Troublemakers.**

We need to get tougher on the small number of young people who are committing most of the violent acts in our community. Kids who don't straighten out should be locked up. We also need better protection against violence. There must be more security in schools, and harsher punishments for those who break the rules. We need more police in high crime areas. We need laws allowing police to stop and frisk young people who look suspicious.

**Viewpoint #2 — We Should Make It Harder To Get Guns.**

Young people are no different today than they were 20 or 40 years ago. Teenagers have always hung out in groups, and gangs have been around for a long time. What's different is that instead of using fists and knives, kids now can get access to handguns and even automatic weapons. We need to pass and enforce strict gun control laws, and we should educate everyone about the dangers of guns.

**Viewpoint #3 — We Need To Deal With Drugs and Alcohol.**

Many violent crimes are committed by people who are drunk or on drugs. We need to prevent substance abuse, enforce bans on the sale of alcohol to minors, and provide more "chem-free" activities for youth. Also, we need to crack down on the people who deal drugs, since the drug trade is usually tied to violence and crime.

**Viewpoint #4 — We Need To Learn How To Resolve Problems Peacefully.**

Violence is everywhere, so it can seem natural to use violence in a conflict unless we learn how to stop problems before they become fights. Kids and adults must have the chance to learn communication skills, conflict resolution techniques, and peer mediation. We need violence prevention education in all our schools and communities.

**Viewpoint #5 — We Need To Protect Ourselves.**

Things are out of control, especially in many large cities, and kids can't always count on adults for protection. Every young person should take self-defense programs such as martial arts. Young people should carry a pocket-size alarm, or a defensive "pepper" spray.

**Viewpoint #6 — We Need To Deal With Poverty.**

All the things that happen more frequently in high poverty areas—family disruption, high drug and alcohol use, overburdened schools, joblessness—make these areas a "powder keg" for violence. We need to do more than rescue individual children who live in these areas; we have to change their environments.

## Resources

*Christian Perspective on Social Issues, Volume Three: Violence.*

Cokesbury  
(800) 672-1789

*Church and Society*, "Violence: Roots, Realities, Redemption,"  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), January/February 1995

*Discussion-Starting Skits for Teenagers, Facing Violence.*

R. William Pike  
(408) 286-8505

*Families Creating a Circle of Peace: A Guide For Living the Family Pledge of Nonviolence.*

Parenting for Peace and Justice Network  
4144 Lindell Blvd, #408  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
(314) 533-4445

*Making The Peace: A 15-Session Violence Prevention Curriculum For Young People*

Paul Kivel & Allan Creighton with the Oakland Men's Project  
P.O. Box 2914  
Alameda, CA 94501-0914  
(800) 266-5592

*Peace, Christian Living in a Violent World.*

Mary I. Farr, Intersections, Small Group Series  
Augsburg Fortress  
P. O. Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440-8807

*Resources for Youth: California's Violence Prevention.*

Public Education Campaign  
454 Las Galinas Avenue, Suite 178  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
(415) 331-5991

*To The Point: Confronting Youth Issues-Violence.*

Abingdon Press,  
201 Eighth Avenue, South  
Nashville, TN 37202

*Violence: A Christian Response.*

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Christian Life Commission  
(800) 352-8741 or (214) 828-5190

*Youth Issues, Youth Voices: A Guide for Engaging Youth and Adults in Public Dialogue and Problem Solving.*

Study Circles Resource Center  
P.O. Box 203  
Pomfret, CT 06258  
(860) 928-2616

# *Evaluation Form*

*Creating a Caring Community*

Name of Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Adult Facilitator's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Adult Facilitator's Address \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Facilitator's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Facilitator's Address \_\_\_\_\_

Age of Youth Facilitator \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like about this course?

What could be improved?

How did you structure the course? Five weekly sessions? Three two-hour sessions? One five-hour retreat?  
Other?

Please mail this form, along with the Creating A Caring Community mailing list sign up sheet (page 36), to:

Violence Prevention Project  
California Council of Churches  
2700 L Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816

*Creating a Caring Community:*  
Violence Prevention Project  
of the California Council of Churches and  
the American Jewish Congress

*Sign up for Creating a Caring Community:*

Sign up here to receive the quarterly newsletter, *Creating a Caring Community*, which describes violence prevention work around California within the religious community.

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

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