

**WHAT DO  
THE CHURCHES  
SAY ABOUT...**

**PEACEMAKING?**



National Council of  
**Churches in Australia**

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*Social justice confronts privilege;*

*Economic justice confronts wealth;*

*Ecological justice confronts consumption;*

*Political justice confronts power itself.*

The spirit, vocation and process of

**justice and peace** are transformed.

Statement on the Way of Just Peace WCC

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# What do the Australian Churches say about ... peacemaking?

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
(Matthew 5:9)*

For decades, churches in Australia have been speaking out against injustice, violence and oppression in our communities both at home and overseas. Australian churches, through their national assemblies, synods, dioceses and international affiliations have made many positional statements about 'peacemaking'.

Australian churches stand in unity in their approach to peacemaking through being living witnesses to the non-violent teachings of Jesus:

*The **Coptic Orthodox Church** encourages 'as followers of Christ .. we courageously choose hope, love and forgiveness when we encounter injustice as we know that God's love washes away our tears, heals our broken hearts and that light always conquers the darkness'.*

*Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne, 2016, Melbourne Bishop Condemns Church Bombing and Calls for Peace, Press Release.*

*The **Anglican Church in Australia** believes 'in a fellowship within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church in which each member diocese recognises loyalty to Christ and in particular, a common faith and order, a shared inheritance in worship, life and mission and a readiness to live in an interdependent life. The members of this Church are incorporated into the one body of Christ and are called by Christ to pursue all things that make for peace and unity'.*

*The Anglican Church in Australia, 2014, Encouraging Church Unity, Resolution, 52/14*

*The **Salvation Army** recognises 'the moral complexity inherent in issues of war and peace and the policing of civil order, and the difficult choices faced by governments and individuals. The Salvation Army itself is committed to peacemaking. It calls on everyone it can influence, especially Salvationists, to pray for peace, conscientiously pursue peace and equip themselves to become effective peacemakers. It recognises that even those who bear military or policing responsibilities can make peace and justice their goal'.*

*[The Salvation Army, 2016, Position Statement on: Peacemaking.](#)*

*The **Uniting Church in Australia** recognises 'that in order to achieve a 'just peace', there must be certain conditions in place. Peace demands a world where basic human rights are upheld, human needs are addressed and the causes of war are eliminated. We are called to break down destructive systems and structures, and begin again, with solid foundations of justice, peace and compassion'.*

*[Uniting Church in Australia, 2016, Three Building Blocks for Peace: International Day of Peace: 21 September 2016.](#)*

*Pope Francis, the leader of the **Catholic Church** affirms 'Peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church's continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms; she does so by her participation in the work of international institutions and through the competent contribution made by so many Christians to the drafting of legislation at all levels. Jesus himself offers a "manual" for this strategy of peacemaking in the Sermon on the Mount. The eight Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-10) provide a portrait of the person we could describe as blessed, good and authentic. Blessed are the meek, Jesus tells us, the merciful and the peacemakers, those who are pure in heart, and those who hunger and thirst for justice'.*

*[Catholic Church, 2017, Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace, 50th World Day of Peace message](#)*

*The **Religious Society of Friends** (Quakers) seek 'a world without war'. 'We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and take away the occasion of war'.*

*[Religious Society of Friends, 2017, Watching Brief 17-2: Building a Culture of Peace](#)*

# Being Peacemakers!

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)*

In Christ, the love of God for humanity and all of creation is shown to us and becomes real in our world. In his teachings and his ministry, Jesus shows us the way of peace. He calls us to be peacemakers in our families and communities, in our care of creation, in how we run our institutions and economies, and in how we contribute to world peace and act as good global citizens.

## **Peace in the Community**

Peace begins in our hearts, in our homes and in the way we relate to our neighbours. Our self-understanding determines our ways of relating to the wider world. As Christians we bear Christ to one another. If we believe this, and believe that peace begins at home, we will want to be instruments of peace in our communities. So we might ask ourselves, What positive steps do we take to build peace? How do we overcome experiences of aggression and exclusion – like racism and sexism – that violate the dignity of the person and the solidarity of communities?

## **Peace with the Earth**

Peace on earth requires peace with the earth. Humans are called to take responsibility for all creation. Today's challenge in regard to ecology, climate change, and natural resources make it urgent to consider our views and actions. What are Christian ways to care for creation? What can people of faith do both individually and with others?

## **Peace in the Market Place**

Some see no way for the market to be peaceful, others see it as the way to peace and prosperity. The crises of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century compel us to take a critical look at the core assumptions about wealth and poverty, growth and sustainability, and how they are obstacles to justice and generate violence. What is the role of Christians in the world's market, both as participants and in our ministries of reconciliation?

## **Peace Among the Peoples**

As disciples of Christ, we work for peace. Our faith urges us to resolve conflicts between nations, races and religions. The gospel teaches us to promote peace and reconciliation. New situations call for us to respond as peacemakers in ever new ways. The way forward is not always clear. But we can ask ourselves, Do we live up to the call to love one another and to welcome the stranger? Are we being inclusive and inviting? What are we doing as individuals and as worshipping communities to build up our world's capacity to keep peace and break down national capacities to wage war?

On all these levels, we have an important role to play in ending violence, building inclusive and sustainable communities and bringing a new message of hope. It is Christ who calls his disciples to follow this way of peace.

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid ... Rise, let us be on our way. (John:14:27, 31)*

## Peace in the Community

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)*

Australian churches continue to be builders of a culture of peace as they engage with the world and cooperate with one another. Therefore, churches and other faith communities must challenge violence wherever they find it developing. We recognise, however, that peace is not simply the absence of conflict and violence but also the building up of our society in ways that foster social development, economic inclusion, ecological responsibility, cultural expression and spiritual fulfilment. If churches are to be peacemakers, Christians must strive to be peace-makers in all areas of life.

**Churches in Australia believe that in ‘peacemaking’ we participate in God’s mission of peace and reconciliation, confronting all manifestations of injustice and denouncing violence and unjust suffering.**

*The Salvation Army believes human life is created in the image of God and is a gift to be cherished, nurtured and redeemed. The sanctity of life means we treat all people with dignity. Dignity is neither conferred nor withheld by citizenship, human choice or plight; it is inherent in every person’.*

[The Salvation Army, 2016, Positional Statement on: Asylum Seekers and Refugees](#)

*The Religious Society of Friends believes ‘our common humanity transcends our differences. We aspire not to say or do anything or condone any statements, actions or situations which imply a lack of respect for the humanity and human rights of any person or people’.*

*Religious Society of Friends, 2008, Testimony Equality within Quakers*

*The Anglican Church in Australia recognises ‘the importance of freedom of religion and its manifestation in the related freedoms of speech, association and conscience for a healthy and mature society. Those freedoms are at risk of being undermined in Australian society due to a focus on other, sometimes competing rights’.*

*The Anglican Church in Australia, 2014, Human Rights, Resolution, 38/14.*

*The Catholic Church affirms ‘more than just the absence of violence, peace in its fullest sense, the peace of Christ himself, entails the true development of people. It means ensuring individuals have the right and means to participate fully in community life and to realise the spiritual, cultural, social and economic potential of their lives. To work for peace is to build a robust, participatory and mature society that is respectful of human rights and the development of people as God intended’.*

[Catholic Church in Australia, 2010, Violence in Australia: A message of Peace, Social Justice Sunday Statement.](#)

## How can we become more active in building ‘peace in the community’?

### Building relationships of Peace

We create peaceful communities by building relationships that affirm and respect the dignity of others. The differences between us may present questions and challenges. Rather than allowing differences to sow seeds of discrimination and mistrust, we should embrace the differences as a gift, as seeds of peace.

- Greeting – with a smile –one who appears to be different. A conversation may follow...
- Sit down beside someone that you don’t already know.
- We might engage a person in respectful conversation

## Peace with the Earth

*Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours: yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. (1 Chronicles 11)*

Human beings are to respect, protect and care for God's precious gift of creation. The reform of ecologically damaging lifestyles and the pursuit of ecological justice are key elements of just peace.

We face ecological challenges that have a huge social impact. The loss of biodiversity, our unsustainable consumption of resources, and climate change show us there is an urgent need for concerted for community action so that governments, businesses and consumers protect the environment for future generations.

**Churches in Australia and their members share a common understanding of our responsibility to God's creation. Therefore our churches have an important part to play.**

*The **Anglican Church in Australia** believes 'that human beings are not to exploit the creation without care for others, but to care for the creation, our world, as God cares for all. They express their strong support for the Principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development including ecologically sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity, the precautionary principle and intergenerational equity'.*

*The Anglican Church in Australia, 2014, Care for the Environment, Resolution, 62/14.*

*The **Catholic Church** believes' it is an urgent task for Christians today to be reconciled with all creation, and to undertake faithfully our responsibility of stewardship of God's gifts. To achieve such reconciliation, we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion or change of heart'.*

[A New Earth: The Environment challenge. Social Justice Statement, 2002, Catholic Church in Australia.](#)

*The **Salvation Army** believes 'that the biblical teaching requires us to be faithful stewards of the whole creation and to ensure a just sharing of resources. As part of the world community, we all have an obligation to protect and share the beauty and the benefits of the environment for all creation. The Salvation Army encourages acceptance of responsibility for the environment, according to the following principles:*

- 1. Concern and regard for all creation, not only human life;*
- 2. Striving for responsible lifestyles that promote environmental stewardship;*
- 3. Investing in regeneration with a long-term perspective rather than short-term expediency; and*
- 4. Caring for people and species whose sustainable living is threatened because of changes to their environment'.*

*The Salvation Army, 2013, Positional Statement on: The Environment.*

*The **Uniting Church in Australia** is 'concerned with the basic human rights of future generations and will urge the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment and the replenishment of the earth's resources for their use and enjoyment. In its first public statement in 1977, the UCA expressed what would be an abiding concern with the well-being of the planet for the rights of future generations. The natural environment is, however, not merely a resource for the benefit of human beings but has intrinsic value as part of God's good creation'.*

*The Uniting Church in Australia, 2006, Climate Change: For the Reconciliation of All Creation, p36 in [Common Belief: Australia's Faith Communities on Climate Change.](#)*

*The **Religious Society of Friends** believes 'we are called to consider the world as an enspirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes. They find delight in the grace of creation, and are humbled by the richness of its gifts. Our very existence depends upon sustaining our intimate relationships within nature. Yet much has been harmed or lost forever through our lack of reverence, our ignorance, denial, waste and ill-considered action. We have set ourselves against the Spirit. We have ignored our interconnectedness with all other living things, weakened our own well-being, and we have diminished the opportunity for fair livelihood'.*

*Religious Society of Friends, 2008, Quaker Earthcare Statement*

*Lutheran Church of Australia believes 'God calls baptised believers to be responsible stewards, using their dominion over creation no longer for selfish purposes but as the creator intended, to be God's vice-regents in the world and to advocate a sober and responsible use of the world's mineral, gas, and oil reserves, as well as its farming lands and forests, and to do all we can, collectively, to prevent an increase in global warming, as much as it lies in our environment. Christians can no longer be complicit or disinterested in the destruction of creation and the pollution of the environment'.*

[Lutheran Church of Australia, 2015. God's Creation: A sacred responsibility. Volume 3 H. Ethical and Social Issues.](#)

## How can Australian churches foster 'peace with the earth'?

### Develop an Ecologically Responsible Church Policy

How do you make decisions as a church? Are sustainability and the impacts of climate change considerations? Develop a green church policy that looks at areas such as catering, paper usage, waste, energy, transport, worship, mission, finances.

### Conduct an Energy Audit

Energy audits are the first step in being able to work out how to reduce your energy usage. They will tell you how much energy your church consumes and where and when it is being consumed so you can make decisions. A simple audit involves gathering together all your electricity, gas and water bills from the last twelve months and analysing your usage. Once you have the information you can change practices to ensure wise and careful use of energy.

### Five Leaf Eco-Awards

The Five Leaf Eco-Awards are an Australian ecumenical environmental change program specifically designed for churches and religious organisations. Using a series of non-competitive awards, the program assists, inspires and rewards faith communities for taking environmental action and becoming more sustainable in response to God's call to care for creation.

### Write to your local Member of Parliament about Climate Change

As our elected representatives MPs and senators have a responsibility to act on behalf of the public. Politicians need to hear our opinions and concerns over climate change in order to act upon them. So we not only have the right to inform them of our views, but need to encourage them to support the issues that concern us.

If an MP receives enough correspondence on an issue from people in their electorate they are compelled to act in some way. Writing or visiting an MP lets them know you are concerned about an issue.

<https://salvosocialjustice.org/2016/05/24/how-to-contact-your-local-mp/>

### Be Peaceful Caretakers of our Planet Earth

Caring for our planet leads us to question our use and consumption of a range of resources. Recycling is not a solution in itself. Perhaps we can use less.

### Who is the NCCA EcoMission Network?

The EcoMission Network exists to assist the NCCA in its commitment to encourage and enable member churches, in the light of the gospel, to give a prophetic leadership to each other and to the community in caring for God's creation. The Network assists the member churches to uphold the dignity of all people and the flourishing of all creation.

## Peace in the Marketplace

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's good and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

Peace in the marketplace is nurtured by creating "economies of life." Their essential foundations are equitable socioeconomic relationships, respect for workers' rights, the just sharing and sustainable use of resources, healthy and affordable food for all, and broad participation in economic decision-making.

**As Christians and as Australian Churches, we have a special responsibility to model to the world a different way of living:**

*The **Uniting Church in Australia** believes 'in An Economy of Life: Reimagining human progress for a flourishing world. The point is not to find the solution (for there is no one), but to foster all the ways that every human enterprise, including theology, can help us imagine and live a different abundant life, one that will make the earth healthier and people happier. This is the great work of the twenty-first century. Never before have we had to think of everyone and everything all together'.*

[The Uniting Church in Australia, 2009, An Economy of Life: Re-Imagining Human Progress for a Flourishing World, Twelfth Assembly, Resolution 09.21](#)

*The **Salvation Army** in Australia asserts 'employees should give a fair day's work and in return employers should see that employees receive a fair day's pay. It is equally vital that society be structured so that there is a worthwhile role for each member. Although we as individuals are not defined by work roles, those roles are important to our self-esteem. We all need to feel that we are filling a worthwhile role in society. People without work often suffer a loss of confidence in themselves and their abilities'.*

*The Salvation Army, 2003, Positional Statement on: Work.*

*The **Catholic Church** contends 'that the consumer focus on winning the lowest price rarely extends beyond the point of sale to consider the needs of others. The market is interested in individuals as workers or consumers. Without regulation, it does not recognise the individual as a parent or member of a family who is called to provide love and care that is beyond price. The great irony of the consumer culture is that we can be duped into thinking that we freely consume when in fact it is we who are consumed'.*

*Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2012-2013, [The Gift of Family in Difficult Times: The Social and Economic Challenges Facing Families](#) Today, p.5*

*The **Religious Society of Friends** asks 'Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and in your dealings with individuals and organisations? Do you use money and information entrusted to you with discretion and responsibility?'*

*Religious Society of Friends, 2008, Integrity*

## How can Australian churches be actively engaged in 'peace in the marketplace'?

### Become a Fair Trade community

Becoming a Fair Trade Faith Group is a great way of acknowledging a commitment to Fair Trade. It also enables groups that are promoting Fair Trade to have their work recognised. Once receiving recognition, Fair Trade Communities also receive on-going support and updates from the Fair Trade Association.

[http://www.fta.org.au/uploads/1/9/7/4/19743811/fair\\_trade\\_assoc\\_communities\\_faith\\_groups\\_\(1\).pdf](http://www.fta.org.au/uploads/1/9/7/4/19743811/fair_trade_assoc_communities_faith_groups_(1).pdf)

### Become aware of your rights and responsibilities in the work place.

In Australia, most people are entitled to 10 minimum employment entitlements under the National Employment Standards (NES). These must be provided to all employees. The national minimum wage and the NES make up the minimum entitlements for employees in Australia.

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)*

## Peace among the Peoples

People are more able to live at peace when they are able to live with dignity. Even if people are not feeling good about themselves, when they are shown respect, they may be more able to have a sense of their own worth. Homeless, indigenous people, refugees and asylum seekers, ethnic and religious minorities deserve to be recognized as people with God given dignity..

Inequalities and experience of indignity require healing. At one level action is required by governments. So Churches must call on governments to act in such situation. At another level, actions of individuals or groups (congregations and churches) can make a huge difference by their compassionate response to need.

*The **Catholic Church** recognizes that ‘Australia has assumed some important responsibilities. As a nation elected onto the United Nations Security Council, we have a direct hand dealing with global security challenges and humanitarian crises. The Catholic Bishops of Australia call ‘on our government to exercise these responsibilities not merely in our country’s narrow interests, but in the spirit of the common good of all humanity. Australia cannot claim these roles in world leadership if it has not shown that we are willing to act in the interests of the poorest and most marginalised within our shores, in our region and worldwide’.*

Catholic Church in Australia, 2013-14, [Lazarus at Our Gate: A Critical Moment in the Fight Against World Poverty, Social Justice Statement](#)

*The **Uniting Church in Australia** believes ‘that every person is precious and entitled to live with dignity because they are God’s children, and that each person’s life and rights need to be protected or the human community (and its reflection of God) and all people are diminished. They believe that Christians are called to love their neighbour as they love themselves and to extend that love even to enemies. It is the love of God in Christ Jesus which motivates us to live out this calling by working for peace with justice in our church, our communities and the world. The recognition of human rights is an affirmation of the dignity of all people and essential for achieving peace with justice’.*

Uniting Church in Australia, 2006, [Dignity in Humanity: Recognising Christ in Every Person.](#)

*The **Religious Society of Friends** suggests ‘that you need to bring into God’s light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society’s conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear’.*

Religious Society of Friends, 2008, *Quakers Peace Making, From Advices and Queries, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Australia*

*The **Lutheran Church in Australia** believe ‘Christians should become informed about situations, in their own country and in other countries, where people’s human rights are being threatened or human rights abuses are taking place. Christians should develop an attitude of concern about these situations and compassion toward the victims. They should be active in increasing community awareness of the need to safeguard human dignity’.*

[Lutheran Church in Australia, 2001, Human Rights, Volume 2 H. Ethical and Social Issues](#)

## How can Australian churches be actively involved with ‘peace among the people’?

- **Be informed**
- **Write to newspapers or other media**
- **Start a social justice group at your church**

### **What is the Social Justice Network?**

The Social Justice Network gives expression to the NCCA’s commitment to “encourage and enable the member churches, in the light of the gospel, to give prophetic leadership to each other and to the community” by speaking out against injustice, violence and oppression; and working to uphold the dignity of all people and the flourishing of all creation.

The Social Justice Network is a forum for NCCA member churches to: Communicate about issues of justice, peace and creation; reflect theologically on the implications of the gospel for social justice in Australia; facilitate co-operation between the churches on matters of justice, peace and the integrity of creation; and advise and support the NCCA on actions which might appropriately be taken by the Council and/or by a group of the member churches.

### **What is the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)?**

The NCCA is made up of 19 Christian Churches, gathered from across this wide brown land, who have embarked on a pilgrimage together. We bring a widely varied history of place, experience, and theology, but we share a common faith and confession in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. We also share a common future as we are convinced that the future of Christians in Australia lies together

The statements are gathered from across the diverse confessions and traditions of the NCCA member churches. Not all churches are represented.

### **What is the ‘Lund’ Principle?**

The Lund Principle is an important principle in ecumenical relations between Christian churches. Should not the churches act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?