

Living Well

Christian Practices for Everyday Life

12

Transforming the World



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Yearning



Each year, millions of Americans take to the streets in their community to volunteer on behalf of others. From soup kitchens and dental clinics to tutoring and construction, people use their free time, weekends, and vacations to make a difference in the world. And close to a half-million Americans go abroad annually to find ways to change the world. How are you transforming the world, both locally and globally? Don't feel you are powerless to change things. You can make a difference, as an individual and as a family!

Teach Your Children Well

The Thanksgiving turkeys simmered in the ovens as my 4-year-old and 2-year-old flitted between the kitchen and the dining room. My brother and his girlfriend helped set the tables, and my parents as always, put together a dazzling array of dishes and sweets. Others went back and forth bringing out hot dishes and calling for silverware or rolls as they headed out to the dining room.

It was a fabulous Thanksgiving, made even more special because three generations of my family served the meal to people we did not know. We, along with a score of other volunteers, served more than 500 people, and the highlight of my day was watching my daughter at the kids' table, nose to nose with a child who wanted a closer look at blue eyes, both of them laughing.

This was my children's first experience of service, although I am not sure it seemed any more unusual to them than a Thanksgiving with their aunts, uncles, and cousins. I doubt they'll even remember that first encounter of service. But it is now a part of who they are, the first chapter in a story I tell and will retell as their lives take shape, and their understanding of the world and their place in it grows.

As a young parent I sometimes find the task of raising children overwhelming. I'm not so consumed by the small tasks of diapers, tantrums, or even homework, but I am always wrestling in the back of my mind with how

to help them navigate this world and grow into conscientious and caring adults. How do I help them make sound decisions and healthy choices in their adolescence? How do I help them value their own life enough to treat themselves and those around them with respect and love?

As I struggle with this, I often come back to the need to heed our baptismal call to serve. We are called to serve God through serving others. In my own experience I've learned that we lose our self-centeredness by serving others and find in the end that our very self is valuable to God. My hope in introducing my children to service is to help them make service a way of life.

(Christina Zaker, HomeFaith.com)

Church on a Mission

Nearly 8000 miles separate Edina, Minn., and Rakai, southern Uganda. The two places couldn't be more different. Eight to 10 inches of snow blanket Edina four months a year, while nary a snowflake has ever fallen in Rakai, just south of the equator. The median age in suburban Edina is 44.5 years; in Rakai, considered the epicenter of East Africa's AIDS crisis, it's only 14.8.

One Edina church has figured out how to dramatically narrow the distance between the two communities. For more than 15 years, Christ Presbyterian Church has financially supported children and families in Rakai in personal ways—through friendship, prayer, and yearly visits that have fostered change on both

sides. Christ Presbyterian members sponsor 1,500 Rakai children through World Vision. More than 250 congregants have traveled to Africa, some several times. Even those who haven't gone feel close to their Ugandan "extended family."

"Our children have wept for kids in Africa who've had accidents or lost parents," says the Rev. John Crosby, Christ Presbyterian's senior pastor, whose own family sponsors six children there. "Recently there was a mass kidnapping of children in Gulu, an area in northern Uganda," he continues. "It happened over a weekend, and between the time I reached the church and entered the pulpit, five different people came up and asked me, 'Are those our kids? Are our kids OK?'" They all become our kids."

Personal interaction with sponsored children fueled the desire to do more. Christ Presbyterian built schools, health clinics, and water tanks in Rakai and started a housebuilding campaign for children orphaned by AIDS. The church engaged additional partners to meet the overwhelming needs the pandemic created—securing legal services from the International Justice Mission to protect the rights of widows and orphans, and working with a local ministry to help street children in Kampala, Uganda's capital.

"Christ Presbyterian has demonstrated the power that one [U.S.] church out of 340,000 can have in raising the bar on ministry with the poor," says World Vision President Rich Stearns. "They tackled the tragedy of AIDS orphans a decade before the rest of the faith community knew there was a problem."

Other voices attest to the church's impact. "We were living a very miserable life, staying without food sometimes. [We] had no good clothing, no bedding and other home requirements," says orphan Edward Kabogere Kayemba, from one of Rakai's 200 child-headed households. "But because of the support from Christ Presbyterian Church, all these problems are met, and this has extremely improved and changed our lives as a family."



Christ Presbyterian's outreach to Africa began in the 1980s, when a group of Edina pastors went to Ethiopia to respond to the famine. Afterward, their support widened to other East African countries, with yearly teams continuing to build relationships overseas and drum up funds at home. When John became pastor in 1990, Christ Presbyterian was enthusiastically mission-oriented but lacked focus. He helped direct energies to Uganda, specifically Rakai, through child sponsorship.

In 1999, Christ Presbyterian accepted World Vision's challenge to enter into a long-term partnership called the Rakai Orphans Support Project, allowing the church to improve the quality of life for the children in a more direct and holistic way. The project has energized the congregation. Frequent gatherings, video presentations, and Rakai-focused Sunday school curriculum give every member a personal connection to that far-off place of reddish soil and lush banana plants.

To John Crosby, this is something that not only any other church could do, but should do. "It's important that each congregation find their own place to embrace—their own soft spot in the heart that God can use to expand the kingdom of Heaven," he says. "The key, I think, is to personalize your experience, so that it's not just another check written by the rich for the poor."

(World Vision Magazine, Winter 2005)

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Health Care: A Family Affair

Since its founding in 1961, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Clinic, an agency of Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona in Tucson, has been providing care to the medically underserved or uninsured with the critical support of volunteer physicians, dentists, nurses, dental hygienists, and other healthcare professionals. Today, St. E's, as it is known in the community, boasts more than 150 volunteers who provide an estimated \$500,000 each year in discounted or free care.

For three dentists at St. E's, volunteering is a family affair. Dr. Sam Marascalco is one of the founders of St. E's dental clinic, which opened in 1963. He has been volunteering for more than 40 years, and now, at 87 years old, comes in once a week to do exams, cleanings, and denture fittings.

Dr. Phil Mooberry got involved when he married Dr. Sam's daughter. "My father-in-law has always been a great recruiter," said Dr. Phil. In addition to volunteering his skills, Dr. Phil now serves as the president of the advisory board for the dental program and also serves on the St. E's advisory board.

Dr. Nick Mooberry, Phil's son, who just graduated from dental school and joined his father's practice, started in August 2006.

"Nick knew he would be volunteering at St. E's," said Dr. Phil, with a laugh. "There just wasn't a question—it's a family duty and obligation."

Volunteering is how this family gives back to the community. "We can donate money to various charities, and that's important, but in this case, we have unique skills that charities cannot afford to pay people to provide," said Dr. Phil. "Besides, it's really great knowing that you are helping people who would otherwise not get dental care."

(Catholic Charities USA Magazine, 2006)





Olga's Legacy

Olga Murray was almost 60 and nearing retirement when she discovered a real need she could help solve. Until then, she had spent thirty years happily drafting opinions for justices of the California Supreme Court. But all that was about to end, and then what? She was full of energy, but how could she channel it?

She thought she would like to work with disadvantaged children, but the right program seemed elusive. Then, when she was hiking in Nepal and exploring the Himalayan mountains, she found the work she was born for.

Olga Murray discovered her own Everest—the plight of Nepalese children, living amid beauty and poverty in tiny villages, far from the capital city of Katmandu. The way to help them dawned on her when she visited an orphanage for boys in Katmandu. It was a hovel in a noisy slum on the bank of a filthy river, where all forty-five children slept in one room. The food was awful, latrines indescribable, and there was no hot water. Yet the boys were bright, eager, and grateful not to be on the streets.

But when the boys turned 16 and finished high school, she was told, the streets would be waiting for them. Family connections are essential to get jobs in Nepal; they had none. Their only hope was to go on to college—many were good college material—but that would cost \$300 a year, and they had no money.

Olga offered to provide scholarships for any of the boys who could pass the college entrance

exams. The first year, four boys passed—and thanks to the donors Olga has found to help the cause, every graduate since then who has qualified for college has been given a scholarship. By 2005, there were 160 students in college on Olga Murray's scholarships.

When she found herself supporting some twenty college scholarships and ever more children in boarding schools, she decided to launch her own foundation—the Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation (NYOF). NYOF supports her scholarships, boarding schools, two homes for street children, a program to keep rural girls from being sold as indentured servants, and a nutritional center that feeds malnourished kids back to health while showing their mothers how to feed them properly. NYOF also covers the school expenses of 335 village children whose families can't afford even \$50 a year for education. It pays special attention to 400 village girls, whose schooling is particularly neglected, and it helps train 100 teachers a year in rural districts. This year, thanks to Olga Murray's tireless work, more than 2000 young Nepalese will attend classes, ranging from preschool to postgraduate studies.

"I've had a good life, but these last years have been the best," she says. "I tell my friends to go out and do something for someone. That is what will make you feel good. The fact that you can't do everything doesn't mean you can't do anything."

(Bill Novelli, 50+: *Igniting a Revolution to Reinvent America*)

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Reflecting

In Jewish tradition, at the climax of the prayer service recited three times a day that recognizes the Oneness of God, the liturgy reads: “You are to repair the world for the sake of bringing God’s Reign on earth, so that all humankind will call Your Name...” This is the call to social justice. This is the recognition that God left work to be done to perfect the world, to repair its brokenness—*tikkun olam*—to strive for *shalom*, a Hebrew term normally translated as “peace,” but that comes from the root word for “wholeness.” You cannot be whole when the world is not whole. The spark of divinity in you is moved when encounter a human being, made in the image of God, in desperate need. This is not just about generosity of spirit; it is about the Spirit Within calling the heart to act.
(Ron Wolfson, *God’s To-Do List*)

When we look around the world today, we see the great need to “repair the world.” We see the need for *shalom*—for wholeness and well being for all God’s people. We know that things are in need of repair when

- nearly 1 out of every 2 people in the world (3 billion people!) live on less than \$2 a day and lack the basic necessities of life
- almost 1 out of 6 people in the world (1 billion people) are hungry
- hunger and poverty claim 25,000 lives every day around our world; the majority are children
- almost 1 out of 5 people in the world (1.4 billion people) lack access to clean water
- 100 million primary school-age children are too poor to go to school
- more than 30,000 children die each day from preventable diseases, and every 30 seconds a child in Africa dies of malaria.

(Dale Hanson Bourke, *The Skeptics Guide to Global Poverty*)

Things need repair in our community, our nation, and world. Take a few moments to consider how you are already transforming the world or how you would like to transform the world. Use the following questions to guide your reflection.

- How are you already engaged in transforming the world in your community, nation and world?
- How have you personally experienced the need for transforming the world through a direct encounter with injustice or the victims of injustice?
- What need or concern touches your heart most, and has the power to move you to compassion and action like the Good Samaritan, who stops to care for the wounds of a fellow human being in Jesus’ parable (see Luke 10:25–37)?
- How would you like to be engaged in transforming the world in your community, nation and world? Don’t be afraid to dream big!



Exploring

God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, and God is with us if we are with them.

(Bono, *On the Move*)

We Serve the Poor and Vulnerable

When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, and the people of all the nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. Then the King will say to the people on his right, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you received me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me." The righteous will then answer him, "When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When do we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important ones, you did it for me!"

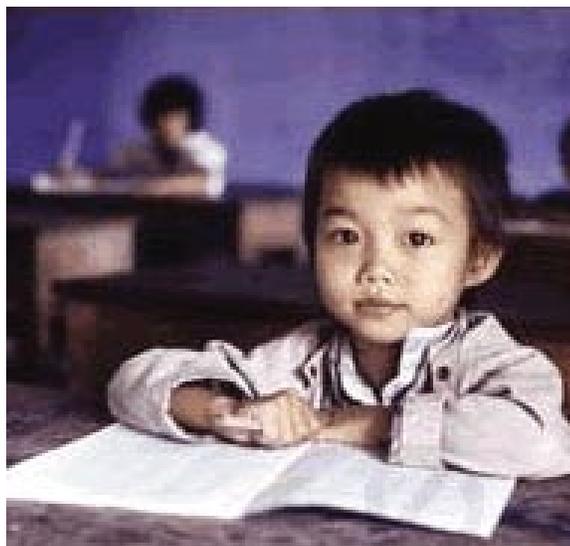
— Matthew 25:31–44

Concern for the poor echoes through the Scriptures—in the passion of the prophets, the words and witness of Jesus, and the example of the Christian community. The commitment to those who are in greatest need is rooted in the biblical vision of the sacredness of all human life. In the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis teaches us that every person is made in God's image and likeness and endowed with inalienable

dignity, regardless of who we are, where we are born, or what we accomplish. As believers, we are called to treat all people—especially those who are suffering—with respect, compassion, and justice.

Throughout the Old Testament, God calls his people to care for those on the margins of society. The God of Israel is a God of justice who protects and defends the poor. The prophets clearly reminded the people of Israel that a test of their faithfulness was the way they treated their poor and vulnerable—the widows, the orphans, and the aliens.

In the New Testament, we learn how Jesus shared his love in a special way with those who were poor or vulnerable. In Jesus' description of the Last Judgment, the critical question is "What did you do for the least of these?" Jesus identified himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the imprisoned, and the strangers, insisting that when we serve them we serve him. We learn that when we ignore the poor, we ignore Christ himself.



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We Work for Justice to Ensure the Rights of all People

The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; if you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon. And I will always guide you and satisfy you with good things. I will keep you strong and well.
— Isaiah 58:6-7, 9-11

We are called to stand with all the poor in our world, especially the almost 2 billion people on our planet who live on \$2 a day or less. People have a fundamental right to life and to those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services and

employment. These fundamental rights are prerequisites for a dignified life. The Bible vigorously affirms the sacredness of every person as a creature formed in the image and likeness of God.

We work for a more just world so that the fundamental rights of every person are respected, especially those who are poor and oppressed. We work to shape a more caring community, a more just nation, and a more peaceful world. We join with others to demand respect for the dignity and rights of people; to shape public policies and priorities that show we care for and stand with the poor and vulnerable in our country and world.

Are we responsible for the fate of the world's poor? Do we have duties to suffering people in our community and in far-off places? Must we respond to the needs of suffering refugees in distant nations? Are we keepers of the creation for future generations? For the followers of Jesus, the answer is "yes." Indeed, we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. As members of God's one human family, we acknowledge our duties to people in far-off places. We accept God's charge to care for all human life and for all creation.

We Work for Peace

(The Lord) will settle disputes among the nations,
 among the great powers near and far.
 They will hammer their swords into plows
 and their spears into pruning knives.
 Nations will never again go to war,
 never prepare for battle again.
 Everyone will live in peace
 among their own vineyards and fig trees,
 and no one will make them afraid.
 The Lord almighty has promised this.
 —Micah 4:2–4

Happy are those who work for peace;
 God will call them his children!
 —Matthew 5:9

Peacemaking is first a matter of the heart. Change of mind and heart, of word and action, are essential to those who would work for peace. We need to nurture among ourselves faith and hope to strengthen our spirits

by placing our trust in God, rather than in ourselves; courage and compassion that move us to action for peace and justice; humility and kindness so that we can put the needs and interests of others ahead of our own; patience and perseverance to endure the hard work of peacemaking; and civility and charity so that we can treat others with respect and love.

We are called to be strong and active in our peacemaking, loving our enemies and doing good generously as God does, always ready to forgive and to renounce revenge. And we need to do this every day.

True peacemaking is also a matter of public policy and international relations. God created the human family as one and calls it to unity. We must work for peace among all peoples and nations. We do this by respecting the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice, by rejecting violence and war as solutions to problems or disagreements between people and nations, and by listening to understand other people and their points of view.



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We Care for Creation

God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased
—Genesis 1:31

The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord;
the earth and all who live on it are his. He built it on the deep waters beneath the earth
and laid its foundations in the ocean depths.
—Psalm 24:1–2

The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land, which nourishes us, are gifts of God that we are called to respect. The earth, the Bible reminds us, is a gift to all creatures, to “all living beings, all mortal creatures that are on earth”
—Genesis 9:16–17

Christian responsibility for the environment begins with appreciation of the goodness of all God’s creation. When we mistreat the natural world, we diminish our own dignity. We also put at risk the dignity of every person, especially the poor and powerless. The earth is ultimately a common heritage, the fruits of which are for the benefit of all.

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Dwelling in the presence of God, we begin to experience ourselves as part of creation, as stewards within it, not separate from it. As faithful stewards, fullness of life comes from living responsibly within God’s creation. We protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. We restore the land; provide clean, safe water to drink and unpolluted air to breathe; preserve endangered species and nature’s habitats; and wisely and responsibly use our natural resources.

At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done.

We will be judged by
“I was hungry and you gave me food to eat, I was naked and you clothed me, I was homeless and you took me in.”

Hungry not only for bread—but for love
Naked not only for clothing—but naked of human dignity and respect
Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks—but homeless because of rejection.

This is Christ in distressing disguise.
(Mother Teresa, *Words To Love By...*)

Living

In his book, *Holy Discontents*, Bill Hybels recalls the experience of watching the TV cartoon character, Popeye the Sailor Man. When confronting problems, usually involving his special girl Olive Oyl, Popeye typically took it all in stride. He had a long fuse, and on most occasions was the epitome of calm, cool, and collected. But if it looked like something really terrible might happen, his pulse would race, his blood pressure would skyrocket, and his anger would begin to boil. Popeye would blurt out words that an entire generation had branded into their psyche: “That’s all I can stand, and I can’t stand no more!” This would be followed by eating a can of spinach that would give Popeye tremendous strength to be, in the words of Hybels, “an unstoppable force for good in the world.” Naturally, Popeye would crush the opposition and save the day.

Finding Your “Holy Discontent”

Have you come to a “That’s all I can stand, and I can’t stand no more!” moment in your life? Is there something so wrong in this world that you can’t stand it any longer?

It’s never too late to start igniting your “holy discontent.” Whether you’re at the stage of a spark or a four-alarm fire, discovering your holy discontent requires asking yourself some challenging questions.

- What needs exist?
- What is God stirring me to do?
- Where is my help most needed?

Take some time alone and then with your household to identify your “holy discontent” using the following questions, paying close attention to the thoughts and emotions elicited as you go.

1. When I consider the world around me, I can’t stand to see...
2. In my heart of hearts, I think it’s unacceptable when...
3. I don’t want to live in a world where...
4. I refuse to stand by and watch the unfolding of...
5. I don’t think God intends for certain things to be true, such as...

Think about what you (and your household) discovered through your reflection. What is God stirring you to do? What needs or issues or concerns truly move you to take action in transforming the world? Where is your help most needed? *Name two or three areas you (and your household) want to act on!*

Ways You Can Transform the World

There are so many ways to act on a particular need or issue. And there are so many people and organizations already engaged in transforming the world that will provide you a way to utilize your passion and gifts. You can address the need or issue at the level of your local community, the country, or the world. You can work on a need or issue alone, with your family or household, with your church community, and/or with groups and organizations.

In many ways it has never been easier to find a way to transform the world. There are organizations—local, national, and international—dedicated to transforming the world around almost every important need or issue. The internet provides everyone with access to ideas and organizations ready to engage you in transforming the world.

Serving the Poor and Vulnerable

I would say that the fight against poverty anywhere in the world is a moral duty of any of us as human beings. If we see someone, even a stranger, in the street who is hungry, who is shivering because of cold, I think we as human beings should help immediately. The fight against extreme poverty requires leadership at every level. You have to be compassionate.

(Jose Ramos-Horta, 1996 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, East Timor)

Service to the poor and vulnerable involves us in direct action to help people survive their present need or crisis, relieve their anxieties and remove their burdens, and lead them to the dignity of self-reliance. You can be involved in direct action alone or with your household or your church community.

Here are examples of direct action to serve the poor and vulnerable, both locally and globally:

- Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Donate goods such as food for the local food bank, clothing, school kits for children, “personal essentials” for those at a homeless shelter, a toy collection at Christmas, gift packages for prisoners.
- Care for the elderly by visiting them at a convalescent home or senior citizen facility or doing chores and shopping.
- Tutor children or become a Big Brother or Big Sister.
- Build or repair homes for the poor.
- Support efforts to provide vaccines and medical care to the world’s poor, such as provide mosquito nets for malaria prevention, immunizations against childhood disease, and HIV/AIDs treatment.
- Work with people who have disabling conditions.
- Give generously to those in need at home and abroad by making a financial donation to support the efforts of local and national groups who work directly with the poor.

- Adopt a community in another country by supporting them financially and learning about their culture and community life.
- Sponsor a child or family through a international sponsorship program such as World Vision.
- Support organizations that are building schools and libraries for children in the poorest countries of the world; provide books and/or our money to purchase books for children.

Action for Justice to Ensure the Rights of All People

We see eliminating poverty, ensuring that people are healthy, providing education and things of that kind to others as not being altruistic; it’s the best form of self-interest. It means that we’re safe. Actually, I say that we can be human only together. We can be prosperous only together. We can be free only together. We can be secure, ultimately, old together.

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, South Africa)

Working for justice involves speaking up for people whose rights are being denied or oppressed and trying to reform structures that cause or perpetuate their oppression. Our efforts to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, welcome the stranger, and serve the poor and vulnerable are accompanied by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering and injustice. We are called to help change the systems and structures that make it impossible for people to catch up or get ahead.

Here are examples of action for justice to ensure the rights of all people:

- Be an advocate for just policies and priorities that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God’s creation, and build peace; become familiar with pending legislation or proposals that affect people’s basic needs; write advocacy letters or e-mails.
- Work with groups to change legislation or budget priorities that ensure the human rights of people.

- Work with organizations that are changing the structures that promote injustice.
- Support organizations working for justice locally, nationally, and internationally by promoting the purpose and activities of organizations, providing financial support, and volunteering time to work with the organization.
- Develop a program or campaign to educate people in your church or community about a particular justice issue.
- Loan money, through organizations involved in microlending, to an individual entrepreneur in the developing world so they can start a business and help to alleviate poverty in their community.
- Use your purchasing power to buy fair trade products, such as coffee, chocolate, and crafts that benefit local producers in the developing world. Look for the Fair Trade label.
- Work with organizations that seek to build bridges of understanding among people who have been hostile toward each other.
- Being an advocate for government policies that promote peace and diplomacy; engage in letter/e-mail writing around peace issues.
- Commit to living the Pledge of Nonviolence, developed by the Institute for Peace and Justice, as an individual and as a family or household.

Work for Peace

I think if we can begin to teach nonviolence in our homes (where we solve our problems through loving one another), if we teach it in our schools, if we teach it in our communities, and if everybody did that around the world, we could very quickly shift from a violence, militaristic, unjust, cruel world to a loving, forgiving, caring world.

(Mairead Corrigan Maguire, 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Northern Ireland)

Making peace must start within ourselves, in our family, and in our relationships with people and the world. We commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people. The Institute for Peace and Justice developed a “Pledge for Nonviolence:”

- Work to end the violence of human trafficking of children by working with organizations that seek to shut down trafficking rings and providing support for the victims.
- Address violence in the media by not purchasing and/or abstaining or limiting exposure to violent TV shows, movies, video games, and toys.

Pledge of Nonviolence

Making peace must start within ourselves and in our family/household. Each of us must commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people.

- Respect self and others: To respect myself, to affirm others and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behavior.
- Communicate better: To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.
- Listen carefully: To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others’ feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.
- Forgive: To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another, to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.
- Respect nature: To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.
- Play creatively: To select entertainment and toys that support our values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny or acceptable.
- Be courageous: To challenge violence in all its forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

(Institute for Peace and Justice, www.ipj-ppj.org)

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Caring for Creation

We, the human species, are confronting a planetary emergency, a threat to the survival of our civilization that is gathering ominous and destructive potential even as we gather here. But there is hopeful news as well: we have the ability to solve this crisis and avoid the worst—though not all—of its consequences, if we act boldly, decisively and quickly.

(Al Gore, 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, United States)

There are simple actions each of us can take to have a measurable, positive impact on the environment—and it shows us this impact right away. Everyone knows ordinary people can make personal changes to help the environment. When these basic actions are taken together by thousands of us, it has a significant impact on our environment. These actions are not the complete answer to all of our environmental problems. We will be able to hand a healthy planet over to future generations only if government, businesses and institutions also each do their part. These basic actions are an important part of the solution. It offers a way for each of us to personally engage and affect change in the world around us. It offers a way for us to be environmental role models in our families and our communities. And, through concrete example, it challenges business leaders and elected officials to make the right decisions as well.

- Take basic, doable actions, personally and with your household, to reduce your “environmental footprint” and save our habitat (water, trees) and prevent the emission of climate-warming carbon dioxide:
 1. Skip a car trip each week. Drive less: walk, bike, carpool, and/or use mass transit.
 2. Replace one beef meal each week. Eat lower on the food chain—going meatless for just one meal a week can make a difference. Eat eco-friendly seafood.
 3. Declare your independence from junk mail by canceling unwanted or duplicate catalogs and mailings.
 4. Replace all the standard light bulbs in your house (and business) with energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs).
 5. Move the thermostat 3°F: down three degrees in the winter and up three degrees in the summer.
 6. Eliminate lawn and garden pesticides and look for environmentally-friendly alternatives.
 7. Install an efficient showerhead and low flow faucet aerators.
- Adopt a piece of the planet through the Nature Conservatory’s “Adopt an Acre” and “Rescue the Reef” programs, and the Rainforest Alliance’s “Adopt-a-Rainforest” program.
- Protect endangered species and their habitats through the World Wildlife Fund’s variety of projects.
- Care for the environment by planting trees in your community or organizing a clean-up the community day.
- Recycle all your paper, glass, aluminum, and plastic, as well electronics.
- Be an advocate for government policies and programs that support the environment and encourage alternative energy

To Learn More About Issues and Action Ideas

Service, Justice, and Advocacy

- Bread for the World: www.bread.org (advocacy)
 - Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org (multiple services)
 - Children's Defense Fund: www.childrensdefense.org (advocacy)
 - Church World Service: churchworldservice.org (multiple services)
 - Compassion International: www.compassion.com (multiple services)
 - Global Exchange: www.globalexchange.org (fair trade)
 - Habitat for Humanity: www.habitat.org (homes)
 - Heifer Project: www.heifer.org (multiple services)
 - First Books: www.firstbook.org (books)
 - Kiva: www.kiva.org (microlending)
 - NETWORK: www.networklobby.org (advocacy)
 - ONE Campaign: www.one.org (advocacy)
 - PeaceJam: www.peacejam.org (advocacy)
 - Room to Read: www.roomtoread.org (schools and libraries)
 - SERRV: www.serrv.org (fair trade products)
 - Sojourners: www.sojo.net (advocacy)
 - Ten Thousand Villages: www.tenthousandvillages.org (fair trade products)
 - World Vision: worldvision.org (multiple services)
- (For additional organizations go to the ONE campaign: www.one.org/partners.)

Peace

- Institute for Peace and Justice: www.ipj-ppj.org
- Pax Christi, USA: www.paxchristiusa.org
- Not For Sale: www.notforsalecampaign.org

Care for Creation

- We Can Solve It: www.wecansolveit.org
- The Center for a New American Dream: www.newdream.org
- American Forestry Association: www.americanforests.org
- National Arbor Day Foundation: www.arborday.org
- The Nature Conservancy: www.nature.org
- Rainforest Alliance: www.rainforest-alliance.org
- World Wildlife Fund: www.worldwildlife.org



Develop an Action Plan

Now its time to act. Confirm your commitment to transforming the world through a plan of action—as an individual and/or as a family or household. Be sure to consider the following questions as you formulate your plan:

- ✓ What is the need or issue you are going to act on?
- ✓ How have you studied the need or issue?
- ✓ What type of action or project are you going to be involved in? Will it be a local project or a national or international project?
- ✓ Will you do it alone, with your family or household, with friends, or with your church community?
- ✓ How will you implement your action or project? What steps will you take? What resources will you need? How much time will be involved?

Pray for the courage, patience, and compassion to transform the world through your actions.

Resources for Living the Christian Practice of Transforming the World

Go to our project web site
www.lifelongfaith.com
 for exciting ideas, practical resources,
 and recommended books and web
 sites to help you live the Christian
 practice of transforming the world.

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Praying

Lord Jesus,
Open my eyes that they may see the
needs of the poor;
move my hands that they may feed
the hungry;
touch my heart that it may bring
warmth to the despairing;
teach me the generosity that
welcomes strangers;
let me share my possessions to clothe
the naked;
give me the care that strengthens the
sick;
make me share in the quest to set the
prisoner free.
In serving the needs of the poor may
we grow closer to you.
Amen.



O God, all holy one,
you are our Mother and our Father,
and we are your children.
Open our eyes and our hearts
so that we may be able to discern
your work in the universe.
And be able to see your features
in every one of your children.
May we learn that there are many paths
but all lead to you.
Help us to know that you have created us
for family, for togetherness,
for peace, for gentleness,
for compassion, for caring, for sharing.

May we know that you want us
to care for one another
as those who know
that they are sisters and brothers,
members of the same family,
your family,
the human family.

Help us to beat our swords into plowshares
and spears into pruning hooks,
so that we may be able to live
in peace and harmony
wiping away the tears
from the eyes of those
who are less fortunate than ourselves.
And may we know war no more
as we strive to be
what you want us to be:
your children.
Amen.

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu)