

## Nine Modest Proposals for Mennonites on the road toward peace

*Let's stop talking about the "peace position." Peace is not a position. Peace is a way. Peace is a journey we are called to walk. And I'd rather be on a journey, inviting others to walk with me, than to be at one particular position, and having to defend it. Taking a journey is something you do on the move. Taking a position and defending it is something you do standing still. Give me the journey, any day.*

### Nine modest proposals for the journey . . .

- 1. Let's immerse ourselves in the whole story of scripture.** The Bible has no chapter and verse to tell us how to respond to international terrorism. But we will find reliable guidance as we become familiar with the God of the Bible. We Mennonites have our favorite peace texts we turn to. But our convictions on peace are based on the whole of scripture.
- 2. Let's cling to belief in a God whose heart is for all his children.** God loves people. You can't get more basic than that. God has a deep and abiding affection for all human beings, and wants all people to be reconciled—to himself and to each other. Every person on the face of this earth is God's creation. And God desires reconciliation with all of us.
- 3. Let's agree not to take God's job away from God.** God is the only Creator and Sustainer of life. God is the only righteous judge of good and evil. Yet we presume to be able to determine which human life is worth saving, and which is expendable. To "rid the world of evil" is God's agenda, not ours. "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).
- 4. Let's not waver from a commitment to make Jesus Lord of our lives, and follow his example in life.** "What would Jesus do?" is not a bad place to start. Simplistic? Maybe, and it doesn't answer every question. But can we picture Jesus and his disciples running a

bomb squadron to crush the evil systems they had to deal with? They did confront the powers, but with radically different methods. We have to take Jesus' life seriously, if we want to make him not only personal Savior, but Lord.

- 5. Let's agree to always walk toward, not away from, those with whom we disagree.** All of our opinions have points that can be challenged. We literally need each other in the church. We need diversity of perspectives to find the truth. Everyone suffers from a certain measure of naivete. If we just stick with those who see things our way, we will never discover our blind spots.
- 6. Let's always spend more time listening than formulating responses.** We have to be quiet long enough to hear what the Spirit is saying. If we are constantly driving our own stake in the ground, in order to defend our position, how will the Spirit nudge us a little farther along the road? How will the Spirit break through to give us new insight?
- 7. Let's commit ourselves to work for peace with justice.** The biblical picture is one of "justice and peace kissing each other" (Ps. 85:10). There is no peace without justice. Let's not short-circuit justice in the present crisis. It is right that those responsible for these massive acts of inhumanity are called to account. But there is more than one way for that to happen.
- 8. Let's always listen to the wisdom of the church.** There are good reasons why certain convictions have remained with us for many generations. We can disagree, but we must bend over backwards to listen. Some Mennonites can quote talk show hosts and radio preachers backwards and forwards, but have no idea what our Confession of Faith has to say. Mennonites don't get everything right. You might study our tradition thoroughly, and still find things to take issue with. But do listen to the wisdom of our community of faith.
- 9. Let's never stop proclaiming hope.** That's something important we have to offer the world in times like these. Our theology of resurrection is a theology of hope. God can bring life out of death. God can bring peace out of chaos. And God has the last word.