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THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION (ISSN 0021-8480) is published bimonthly, October through May, plus a single summer issue for June, July, August, and September by the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. TELEPHONE (301) 680-5075; FAX (301) 622-9627; E-mail: rumbleb@gc.adventist.org. Subscription price, U.S. \$18.25. Add \$1.00 for postage outside the U.S. Single copy, U.S. \$3.75. Periodical postage paid at Silver Spring, Maryland, and additional mailing office. Please send all changes of address to P.O. Box 5, Keene, TX 76059, including both old and new address. Address all editorial and advertising correspondence to the Editor. Copyright 2008 General Conference of SDA, POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION, P.O. Box 5, Keene, TX 76059.

Why Teach About Peace?

In an increasingly contentious world where conflicts affect not only professional military personnel, but also civilians—including men, women, and children—it is important for Adventist educators to consider whether we are teaching our students how to address the issues that contribute to conflict and peacemaking at all levels of human existence.



What is peace? Is it solely the absence of conflict or violence? Is it the same as passivity or inaction? Jesus bid farewell to His disciples with a message of peace: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you” (John 14:27, NIV).

What did He mean by this? As we examine the context of the Gospels, we see that Jesus understood peace to mean active and courageous obedience to the principles of His kingdom as elaborated in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). It is not surprising that Ellen White dedicated an entire book to that Sermon, since it was to serve as the basis for Adventism’s positions on issues of social justice and war.

This issue of the JOURNAL on peace and peacemaking is a plea for Adventist educators to remember the centrality of peace in Adventist belief and practice, and the importance of intentionally teaching these principles in order to help our students apply them, not only in their professions and their personal relationships, but also in how they practice their religion.

Are our students learning how to get past an offense without cutting off communication or harboring resentments? Are they seeing the connection between ethical behavior and their religious beliefs? Are they learning that God is just as dishonored by their bullying the weak as by doing drugs? Are they learning to value mercy, compassion, and meekness instead of greed and pride, which lead to injustice and the abuse of power? I believe that the Christian classroom is where peacemaking and peacekeeping concepts must be taught, regardless of whether children are exposed to the concepts at home or in the church.

In this issue, Ginger Hanks Harwood and George Knight show why we need to include peace studies in the Adventist curriculum by giving us a review of attitudes toward peace and war in the early Adventist Church, and a call to rediscover noncombatancy as a fundamental Adventist belief.

Ron and Karen Flowers introduce a segment on how to incorporate the topic of peace and the peacemaking strategies into the Adventist classroom. Tiffany Hunter shares her experience using the principles of conflict resolution in her 1st-grade classroom; and my article shows how forgiveness can be taught in a university setting. Kendra Haloviak offers insights into the Book of Revelation from a peacemaking perspective. Christiane Schubert’s review of the work of the Restorative Justice Movement links peace and justice in a way that resonates with New Testament teachings about peace.

A further connection between peace and social justice is made in Joy Butler’s gripping report on her work of rescuing young girls from sex slavery in Thailand. Linking the classroom to real-life social justice work is a powerful educational tool in peacemaking. Darold Bigger’s moving account of his journey back to peace through forgiveness after the murder of his daughter offers the classroom teacher some guidance in addressing the needs of children and youth who have suffered loss through some form of injustice.

The final segment includes useful resources for the teacher and a link to a report by Douglas Morgan on the specific resources available through his organization, Adventist Peace Fellowship.

It is the authors’ hope that these articles and resources will stimulate a serious conversation about the centrality of peace in our religious faith and how we can more effectively pass on to the next generation these concepts and convictions.—Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson.

The Coordinator for this special issue on Peacemaking, Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson, Ph.D., is Professor of Spanish Language and Literature and chairs the Department of World Languages at La Sierra University in Riverside, California. An author, speaker/presenter, professor, and administrator, she has presented her seminar on peace through forgiveness in the U.S. and abroad. Dr. Morales-Gudmundsson is also cofounder of Adventist Women for Peace. Her latest book is I Forgive You, But . . . (Pacific Press, 2007). The editorial staff express their heartfelt appreciation for her enthusiasm, dedication, and attention to detail throughout the planning and preparation of the issue.