

Peacebuilding approaches

This is a summary of the main ideas which will guide the Peacebuilding Network's activities. John Paul Lederach's book *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*¹ is a key resource

Peace?

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." *Matthew 10:34*

"The gospel sends us the necessary conflict to grow us up" *Richard Rohr*

"If the Church is not a place both of conflict and of reconciliation it is not merely hindering its mission and evangelism, but it is a failing or failed church. It has ceased to be the miracle of diversity in unity, of the grace of God breaking down walls." *Justin Welby May 2013*

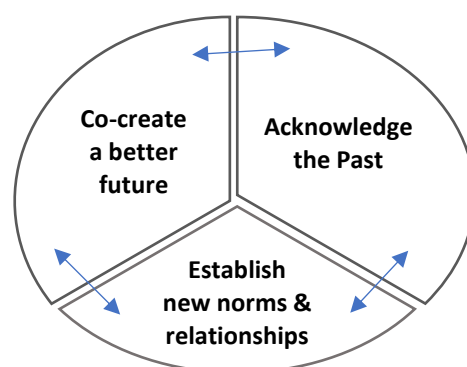
Conflict?

"The pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups or individuals... that involve human needs and can only be resolved by removing underlying causes". *Miall et al., 2004,*

- Conflict brings change and transforms perspectives, relationships, communications and structure of the group.
- People perceive conflict as a battle that they have to win, rather than a problem to be addressed responsibly.
- They start seeing the person as the problem rather than looking at the issues that lie beyond the person.
- Enemies are created... an enemy is rooted and constructed in our hearts and minds and takes on social significance as others share in the creation. *John Paul Lederach*

Christian responses to conflict

Peacebuilding requires attention to the past, the present and the future, but not necessarily in that order. Rather it involves moving through three interconnected fields of activity:



¹ Herald Press 2014

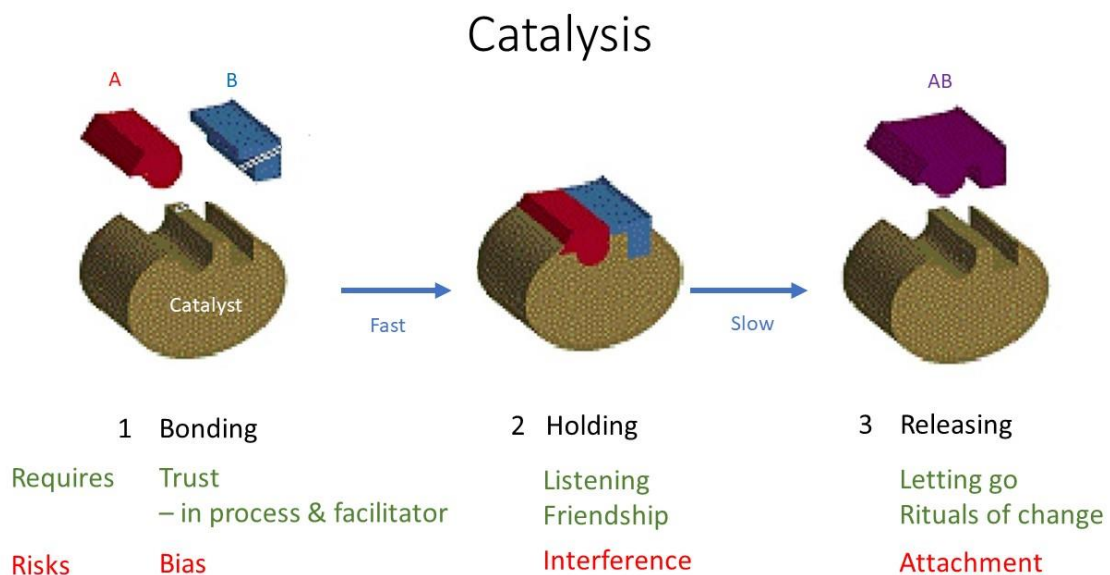
The nature of Christian peacebuilding

Conflict is an invitation to build peace. In churches, peacebuilding is the repair and renewal of Christian community and nurturing the growth of the Kingdom. Rather than treating conflict as a problem to be fixed, we seek to transform or transcend it with a gospel vision of love. It involves cultivating the seeds of a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) which is struggling to emerge through conflict. Draw on scripture, but never use it as a weapon.

Four approaches to Christian peacebuilding

1. Catalysis: What does it mean to be a transformative presence?

A catalyst bonds with, and holds together, different elements so that they can transform themselves into a new state.



Lederach: The Reconciliation Arts, as embodied by Jesus

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| a) Notice mutual humanity | – | “Can I help?” |
| b) Nurture self-reflection | – | Walking, asking questions |
| c) Accompanying | – | Alongsidedness, friendship |

Being a transformative presence is about engaging in positive relationships, not a technical process. Expect uncertainty and be prepared to wander, wonder and wait.

Slow down – don't try to fix things.

2. Dialogue – what is the conversation which needs to take place?

Perhaps this conflict arises from our having different needs and experiences. Can we learn about what underlies this conflict by exploring each others' perspectives through dialogue?

Good dialogue is an act of thinking together, rather than a decision-making or negotiating process. It benefits from:

- Many voices, stories,
- Honest sharing of hopes and fears
- Inquiry into assumptions, stereotypes, (mis)perceptions etc
- Looking for connections between ideas and people
- Seeking deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of the conflict

Lederach: Matthew 18 gives direct practical teaching

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| a) | Go directly | Conversation and prayerful engagement |
| b) | Take along 1 or 2 witnesses | Presence & accountability |
| c) | Tell it to the Church | Wider responsible discernment |
| d) | Relate as with tax collector | Jesus ate with them (<i>Matt. 9:10</i>) |

Move toward conflict

3. Invitational: Where is God in this situation?

The invitational approach challenges everyone involved in a conflict to reflect on how God might be speaking to them in this situation. It can take different forms according to different theological understandings of how God speaks to us.



Lederach on Listening

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| a) | Spiritual discipline: Technique (e.g. active listening) gives information; deeper level when I interact with you as a person about whom I care. |
| b) | Listening is like prayer: attentive awareness of the presence of God and discipline based on relationships and love. |
| c) | Listening is seeking God: There is God in every human; Listening creates an opportunity for us both to get in touch with what God is saying. |

4. Appreciative: expanding the positive core

The appreciative approach is constructivist, in which people collaborate in creating new patterns of thought and action, based on their past experience of positive action (*positive core*). It is rooted in Appreciative Inquiry (<https://baynvc.org/basics-of-nonviolent-communication/>)

- Expanding the positive core (*discovery*): What's our experience of good things happening here?
What enabled this to happen?
How can we recreate these conditions?
- Envisioning a different future (*dream*): What would I like our situation to look like in the
(distant) future?
Share and integrate different visions
Backcasting to connect with the present moment

Insights from Non-Violent Communication

- A Feelings are generated by our own frustrated needs, rather than caused by external factors or other people
- B Anger arises from the way we think about situations, specifically from moralistic (right/wrong) or critical (i.e. blame apportioning) thoughts or preconceptions or assumptions about how things "ought" to be.
- C It is common to mistake an event (trigger) which stimulates anger as the cause (the meaning we put on the event)

Lederach's Declarations on Church Conflict (p151)

1. Conflict is part of the church	Jesus assumes there will be time of disagreement and conflict.
2. Move toward conflict	Church is place of reconciliation. Conflict is necessary and important learning.
3. Move toward each other	Skilled confrontation and spiritual discipline for engagement with God and others
4. Church is forum for handling conflict	interaction expression of differences and integration of conflict into healthy life
5. Goal is healing of relationships	Restoration and healing of personal and social fabrics
6. God is Present	When we come together to seek healing, restoration and reconciliation