Dear People of the Lakeshore and Beyond,

Merry Christmas! Or said another way, Joyeux Noel.

It’s already been a few weeks since we watched the movie by that title together. I’ve wanted to write about it ever since, but I’ve been most distracted. (You know I’m busy when I don’t even take time to blog.)

I believe most (all?) of us appreciated the beauty, humanity and spirituality of Joyeux Noel. We recognize the tragedy of the fallen brother and split families. We are frustrated by authorities who use religion in a nationalistic arm-twist to vindicate killing man, woman and child. We feel the hope of former enemies exchanging chocolate and [grape juice]. We see the absurdity of war when opposing soldiers can get along, but powerful leaders insist on sending their fine youth to destruction because of their own inability to play nice with their political neighbors.

And I think it’s compelling that we experience these reactions when pondering stories from our human history, not just made-up stories from a creative mind sitting at home in an arm chair. This was a beautiful story of the emotional capacity of the human soul.

As fine as the film was, our conversation after the film was somewhat frustrating for me. The original premise I reacted against was the notion that war is terrible but it has to be done. I wanted us to slow down and not jump so quickly to that conclusion. However, we jumped between so many countries, philosophies, types of response and topics that we couldn’t deal with any of them in a meaningful fashion. At one point we even completely lost track of the definitions of the words we were talking about. For example, both offering aid and cancelling aid can be considered part of the “third way” depending on how they are implemented since both are nonviolent (not fight) and both deal with the situation (not flight). Regardless of their efficacy or appropriateness in a given situation, which is really what we were debating regarding South Korea, they are still neither violent nor blind.

So I wanted to revisit these themes (peace, war, violence, nonviolence, shalom, pacifism, diplomacy, the third way, self defense, personal ethics, geo-political effectiveness, etc.) in a slower, more methodical manner, though I by no means here offer a complete review of these topics. Rather, I offer some of my thoughts, my questions, my path ahead. This is will long on generalities and issues and short on conclusions.

**Areas of Agreement**

*We agree that war is horrible.* There is little question about that. Whether it is shell shock, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)\(^1,2\), loss of limbs and senses, loss of family members (sons, fathers, mothers, daughters), loss of innocence, destruction of possessions and property, disruption of human services, “collateral damage” in the form of dead and maimed children, human rights abuses such as rape and torture, the finality of premature death, or increased rates of suicide\(^3\); we know war is horrible.
Along these lines, Dwight Eisenhower said, “I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.” And also, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.” (See more below in Quotes.)

Despite the deep knowledge that war is terrible, we are drawn to it like moths to bright blue zinging light. It defines us and them (good and bad). It brings solidarity to our group, gives us a common purpose and goal. For a moment the fight turns from each other and toward the other as we overlook our differences. Chris Hedges recognized this pull toward war when he wrote, “The communal march against an enemy generates a warm, unfamiliar bond with our neighbors, our community, our nation, wiping out unsettling undercurrents of alienation and dislocation.”

Over the holiday season we saw the end of *White Christmas*, and I was intrigued to hear the song about how much the men wanted back in the military (Hollywood’s rendition of this phenomenon). Another example is Bob Konrardy, a Vietnam veteran who experienced increased PTSD symptoms after touring Baghdad in support of the troops.

At the same time, I do want to highlight that many veterans move toward peace after their tours of duty. For example, see the Veterans for Peace website, *Long Shadows: Veterans' Paths to Peace* (Giffey, 2006) and *Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace* (Kingston, 2006). They do not all wish to return.

Moving on, I believe that we can also agree that peace is beautiful. And true peace, or shalom, is much more than the absence of war, violence or conflict. Grassi (2004) points out, “shalom has a broad range of meaning in the area of wholeness, well being, harmony, completion, and fulfillment. Proceeding from these roots are many branches of meaning such as reconciliation, forgiveness, avoidance of conflict, and healing.” Violent words and actions break peace, but so does the misuse of power, that is, injustice. In contrast, righteousness, or right living in relation to others, brings peace.

And I hope we agree that Jesus lived and taught the way of peace. He was hailed as the Prince of Peace and the giver of peace. He praised the peacemaker. As he looked on Jerusalem, he wept for the city because it had not learned the source of peace. The goal of his ministry was to bring us back to peace with God, each other, and arguably all creation, consequently, as his disciples, we have also been given the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus taught us to love our enemies, forgive, turn the other cheek (we’ll return to this last point soon), and treat others as we wish to be treated. Furthermore, Paul taught us to leave revenge to God and to overcome evil with good.
Questions and Issues

So with these general truths affirmed—war is ugly, peace is beautiful, Jesus taught peace—we, as Christians, turn to the questions that stare at us demanding consideration.

1. Are the moral teachings of Jesus listed above only meant for the individual person or can they be applied effectively at the community, national and international level?
2. To what extent can Christians use violence for self-defense? That is, how is a person to apply the teachings of the 2nd cheek, 2nd mile and 2nd garment?
3. To what extent can Christians use violence to defend others?
4. What are the definitions of force and violence, and what are the biblical teachings on each?
5. Can there be a “just war”?
   a. If yes, what are the conditions?
6. Can a Christian be a part of a secular military?
   a. If yes, then in what capacity—medic, chaplain, soldier, logistical support, other?
   b. If yes, can a Christian carry a weapon?
      i. If yes, can a Christian use a weapon to kill an enemy combatant?
         1. If yes, under what conditions—any, only self-defense, defense of the weak, in a “just war,” when commanded, other?
7. Is there such a thing as redemptive violence?19
8. What about Hitler (or other violent and tyrannical despots)?20
9. What about terrorists and others with an apparent lack of conscience or a philosophy/religion that endorses violence and/or chaos?21
10. What is the role and place of martyrdom in the Christian life?
11. Are there things worth dying for that should not be killed for?
12. What is the role of the Golden Rule in the war/violence/peace/nonviolence debate?
13. Is there a way to resolve the tension between the Master’s command to love the enemy and the State’s (Commander-in-Chief’s) command to kill he/she/it/them?
14. If one does accept Jesus’ teaching as a rule of life (e.g., turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, etc.), how are these principles to be applied in any given situation (e.g., Iranian terrorists in 1979, Saudi Arabian terrorists in 2001, Iraq in 2009, my job Monday morning, or with the rude driver in front of me)?
15. Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount were to the weak, occupied, poor and oppressed. How are Christians to follow these teachings when they are accepted members in a society that is a world superpower? How can these teachings be applied from a position of authority and superior power?
16. Why did Jesus say he brought a sword, not peace?22 Why did He tell His disciples to buy swords?23 Why did He use cords to drive out the animals and money changers from the temple?24 Why did He say harsh words against the religious leaders?25 Why did He teach the disciples to hate their family members?26
17. The early church rejected warfare (see quotes below). Does this represent a primitive and naïve Christianity out-of-sync with Jesus’ teachings or an authentic version of His intentions?27
18. How do NT teachings on war/violence/revenge/forgiveness/justice fit with OT teachings and practice? How are these reconciled (if they need to be), and how do they guide behavior today?

19. What is the nature of Jesus’ moral teachings? (Are they mandates? Are they practical? Are they descriptions of how ideal relationships will function in an ideal future?)

20. As a citizen of heaven, how do I view boundaries of us and them (nationalism, tribalism, etc.)?

21. On what do I and should I base my opinions about these issues? Four obvious possibilities: Emotions (fear, courage, hate, affection...); Logic (philosophy, utilitarianism, effectiveness, respect for government, containment, consistent ethic of life...); Experience (past abuse, past aggressive actions on others...); the Bible (OT/NT). Naturally, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

These are challenging questions that deserve (demand, beg?) rational thought and humble Bible study. I do not feel that a rapid-fire discussion such as we had after the film is the best way to come to reach well-founded conclusions.

And I propose, and here I make a broad generalization, that the average citizen is not well trained in these matters when the vast majority of our education (both secular and religious) has been spent studying empires, battles and political intrigue rather than in gaining an understanding of the principles and applications of nonviolence and peacemaking. How many books by Christian peace activists (Walter Wink, Thomas Merton, Ron Sider, Jim Wallis, John Howard Yoder, Shane Claiborne, Leo Tolstoy, Keith Akers, etc.) have we read compared to the numbers of stories of war we have consumed through history classes, the evening news, books, magazines, talk radio, TV programs and movies?

And how many books by Colman McCarthy, David Cortright, or Howard Zinn line our shelves? How many books have we even read about Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr.? And as Colman McCarthy asked us when visiting Andrews in 2003, how many shelves in the local bookstore are devoted to the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Vietnam, and Iraq as compared to books by the authors listed above? I would suggest that virtually everyone, myself included, is much more educated in the ways of war than in the ways of peace.

And I freely admit that my own journey in this path is still in its early stages, having only been reading about and pondering peacemaking and nonviolence for the past three or four years. In South Korea I taught one Bible class on peace—peace with God, peace within, peace with others, and world peace. For that class I primarily used the Bible, Jesus and Nonviolence (Wink, 2003), I’d Rather Teach Peace (McCarthy, 2009 is the newest edition), and The Peacemaker (Sande, 2004).

While I have strong opinions and beliefs that to me answer some of the numerous questions listed above, some of them remain quite sticky. I have applied to the Peace Studies program at AMBS because I have on-going questions and because I do believe that peace is possible. I want to learn better how to achieve it—“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
Application of Principles

In order to properly apply the biblical principles to the questions posed above, we first need to correctly understand those teachings. Jesus and Nonviolence (Wink) is the shortest and most readable book I’ve found so far as an entry point to this topic. It could be read in a couple of hours, though it deserves more time for reflection. And its brevity leaves some points out of place, lacking description or context (along with a few typing errors). And just like any other book, I don’t personally agree with every statement or conclusion made. For a brief intro to the short book, you can read this essay by Wink—Christian Nonviolence. I strongly suggest it as it quickly sheds much light on the 2nd cheek, 2nd mile, 2nd article of clothing teachings of Jesus.

I also recommend “Chapter 14: The Ethics of War and Peacemaking” by Stassen in Toward an Evangelical Public Policy as a good overview of these issues. It helped bring together and systematize ideas I had been reading about.

As we gain a deeper understanding of Jesus’ “third way,” we can begin to look at ways to apply the principles in modern situations. I believe that other less controversial issues can act as models of how to apply ancient teachings and stories to the present. For instance, forgiveness is a universally accepted teaching of Jesus. We agree that it is biblical. We agree that forgiveness is important. We agree that it is hard.

So when someone wrongs me, and they ask for forgiveness, I need to forego my presumed right to revenge (or even before they ask). And now we have departed from unanimous agreement and waded into deeper, darker waters. If I forgive a felon, does that mean they shouldn’t go to jail or pay a fine? If I forgive a spouse for having an affair, does that preclude divorce as a response? That is, what consequences endure despite my decision to no longer wish them harm? There is much room for informed people to disagree.

We come to very different conclusions to these questions even though we each embrace forgiveness, and I think it normal that we find the same variety among Christians who embrace nonviolence. Some will still be medics or chaplains in the military. Some will say we should have nothing to do with the military whatsoever. Some will say force is acceptable to restrain evil, but that we should not kill in the process. Even when we embrace a principle, it can be implemented in a myriad of different ways. (Sabbath also comes to mind for Adventists; it’s the “right day” with a 10,000 different interpretations of how to “rest.”)

Moving the forgiveness example to the next level, we can ask, “Is forgiveness only applicable at the personal level or does it have a place at the national and international level?” Desmond Tutu certainly sees a role for forgiveness at the national level (No Future without Forgiveness, 2000).

I also believe forgiveness is important inter-nationally. For example, in Israel and Palestine, we see that revenge only perpetuates the cycle of violence. Forgiveness is desperately needed in the real world of geo-political power-play today. While I think we agree that it does have a
place at the international level, we’ll probably have very different views of what that means. Another example, if America never forgave Japan for attacking Pearl Harbor, Japan would still be our enemy and we would not buy their products. But we did, and we do.

What about international debt forgiveness? We will likely have very different views on debt relief even though we embrace forgiveness precisely because the working out of principles in real life isn’t clean and crisp and clear.

With the question What about Hitler?, I would suggest that forgiveness is an incredibly important theme. Although there is not unanimous agreement on this point, it has been argued that had the war reparations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles been forgiven, the conditions for Hitler’s rise to power would likely have not existed (or at least not to the degree necessary for his audacious claims). While this is debatable, it demonstrates that forgiveness may have a significant role to play in international affairs, though again there is room for debate about what that role is in any given situation. However, we don’t argue against the principle of forgiveness just because we disagree with how it may be implemented in a given situation.

This example of applying forgiveness to varying levels of application demonstrates my current thinking on nonviolence. As a follower of Jesus, I am called to live a nonviolent life. What that looks like, and how I apply those principles at the interpersonal, national and international level may be very different from how others live it out. But I hope we all embrace nonviolence at some fundamentally basic level.

I had planned on dealing with several of the questions raised above (especially #15), but this is already getting lengthy. Specific historical examples of nonviolent triumph and discussion of the biblical record will have to be another time. Following are peace resources and quotes collected for your perusal and pleasure.

May we each be peacemakers in our own corners of the world. May we each be channels of the Holy Spirit to bring shalom to someone today.

**Resources for Further Study**

Presently, the books and DVDs on my wish list far outnumber those on my completed list. I have read enough and seen enough to be inspired for peace- and justice-making, but I have much to learn. Following are resources that I either recommend or are on my “to digest” list. If you are interested in pursuing this topic further, I offer this as a starter kit on steroids (plus all of the links above and in the endnotes).

**Adventist Resources**

1. The Peacemaking Remnant (book)
2. Seventh-day Adventists in Time of War (book)
3. I Pledge Allegiance (book)
4. Adventist Peace Fellowship (website)
5. Peace Messenger (blog)
6. Adventist Women for Peace (blog)
7. Jeff’s Peace and Justice Journal (my blog)
8. Adventist Church’s Noncombatant Position (article)
9. Clear Thinking about Military Service (article)
10. To Fight or Not to Fight (article*)
11. Adventist Action against Torture (article*)
12. Torture, Hitchens & Our Moral Witness (article)
13. Should I Fight? (conference + review* + published papers?)
14. For Conscience Sake (DVD, not yet released)
15. The Conscientious Objector (DVD)
16. Peace (SDA Statement)
17. A Seventh-day Adventist Call for Peace (SDA Statement)
18. Peace Message to All People of Good Will (SDA Statement)
19. Tolerance (SDA Statement)
20. War in Congo (SDA Statement)
21. War in Iraq (SDA Statement)

*See my comments posted on these online Spectrum articles.

Other Christian Resources
1. Centurion’s Purse (organization)
2. Peace Church (organization)
3. Christian Peacemaker Teams (organization)
4. Faith and Justice Churches (organization)
5. National Religious Campaign Against Torture (organization)
6. Christian Peace Witness for Iraq (organization)
7. Courageous Coward (article)
8. Jesus for President (book)
9. The Irresistible Revolution (book)
10. Jesus Wants to Save Christians (book)
11. Strength to Love (book)
12. The Politics of Jesus (book)
15. Passion for Peace (book)
17. Disruptive Religion (book)
18. The Ordinary Radicals (DVD)
19. Another World is Possible: War (DVD)
20. Nooma: You (DVD)
21. Mennonite (links)
General Resources

2. Nonviolence (book)
3. Peace (book)
5. Just Peacemaking (book)
7. The Essential Gandhi (book)
8. The Anatomy of Peace (book)
10. Approaches to Peace (book)
11. The Power of Nonviolence (book)
12. Peace Action (organization)
13. Peaceful Tomorrows (org/website)
14. Why We Fight (DVD)
15. War Made Easy (DVD)
16. The Fog of War (DVD)
17. A Force More Powerful (DVD)
18. The Peace! (DVD)
19. Gandhi (DVD)
20. Power and Terror (DVD)
21. I Know I’m Not Alone (DVD)\(^39\)

I also dream of the day when more Christians will seek news and analysis from Sojourners, Prism, Third Way and Geez, in addition to mainstream religious and secular sources.

Quotes – Dwight Eisenhower\(^40\)

“How far you can go without destroying from within what you are trying to defend from without?”

“I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it.”

“If men can develop weapons that are so terrifying as to make the thought of global war include almost a sentence for suicide, you would think that man's intelligence and his comprehension... would include also his ability to find a peaceful solution.”

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”
“Peace and justice are two sides of the same coin.”

“Though force can protect in emergency, only justice, fairness, consideration and cooperation can finally lead men to the dawn of eternal peace.”

“When people speak to you about a preventive war, you tell them to go and fight it. After my experience, I have come to hate war.”

“I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.”

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

**Quotes – Thomas Jefferson**\(^{41}\)

"I love peace, and am anxious that we should give the world still another useful lesson, by showing to them other modes of punishing injuries than by war, which is as much a punishment to the punisher as to the sufferer."

"Having seen the people of all other nations bowed down to the earth under the wars and prodigalities of their rulers, I have cherished their opposites, peace, economy, and riddance of public debt, believing that these were the high road to public as well as private prosperity and happiness."

"The evils which of necessity encompass the life of man are sufficiently numerous. Why should we add to them by voluntarily distressing and destroying one another? Peace, brothers, is better than war. In a long and bloody war, we lose many friends, and gain nothing. Let us then live in peace and friendship together, doing to each other all the good we can."

"I abhor war and view it as the greatest scourge of mankind."

"I have seen enough of one war never to wish to see another."

**Quotes – Gandhi**\(^{42}\)

“If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.”

“Whenever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him with love.”
“What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?”

“An eye for eye only ends up making the whole world blind.”

“Non-cooperation is an attempt to awaken the masses, to a sense of their dignity and power. This can only be done by enabling them to realize that they need not fear brute force, if they would but know the soul within.”

“I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.”

“Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.”

“We must be the change we wish to see.”

**Quotes – Martin Luther King, Jr.**

“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom.”

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

“At the center of non-violence stands the principle of love.”

“Nonviolence is absolute commitment to the way of love. Love is not emotional bash; it is not empty sentimentalism. It is the active outpouring of one’s whole being into the being of another.”

“I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of nuclear annihilation... I believe that even amid today’s mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow... I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed.”

**Quotes – Early Christian Leaders**

“We who were filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, have each through the whole earth changed our warlike weapons—our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into implements of tillage—and we cultivate piety, righteousness, philanthropy, faith, and hope, which we have from the Father Himself through Him who was crucified.” - Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), *Dialogue with Trypho 110*
“We who formerly used to murder one another do not only now refrain from making war upon our enemies, but also, that we may not lie nor deceive our examiners, willingly die confessing Christ.” - Justin Martyr (100 - 165 AD), *Apology 1.39*

“The catechumen or faithful who wants to become a soldier is to be rejected, for he has despised God.” - Hippolytus (170-236 AD), *The Apostolic Tradition 16.11*.

“Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain, and the prison, and the torture, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?” - Tertullian (160-225 AD), *The Chaplet 11*.

“And as we by our prayers vanquish all demons who stir up war, and lead to the violation of oaths, and disturb the peace, we in this way are much more helpful to the kings than those who go into the field to fight for them... And none fight better for the king than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he require it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army - an army of piety - by offering our prayers to God.” - Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD), *Against Celsus 8.73*

“And to those who inquire of us whence we come, or who is our founder we reply that we are come, agreeably to the counsels of Jesus, to cut down our hostile and insolent wordy swords into ploughshares, and to convert into pruning-hooks the spears formerly employed in war. For we no longer take up sword against nation, nor do we learn war any more, having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader.” - Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD), *Against Celsus 5.33*

“Thus it will be neither lawful for a just man to engage in warfare, since his warfare is justice itself, nor to accuse any one of a capital charge, because it makes no difference whether you put a man to death by word, or rather by the sword, since it is the act of putting to death itself which is prohibited. Therefore, with regard to this precept of God, there ought to be no exception at all; but that it is always unlawful to put to death a man, whom God willed to be a sacred animal.” - Lactantius of Bithynia (aprox 240-317 AD), *Divine Institutes 6.20*

“The whole world is wet with mutual blood; and murder, which in the case of an individual is admitted to be a crime, is called a virtue when it is committed wholesale. Impunity is claimed for the wicked deeds, not on the plea that they are guiltless, but because the cruelty is perpetrated on a grand scale.” - Cyprian of Carthage (250 AD), *Epistle 1.6*

**Quotes – Seventh-day Adventists**

“The historic position of our church regarding service in the armed forces was clearly expressed some 150 years ago—very early on in our history, against the background of the American Civil
War. The consensus, expressed in articles and documents of the time, as well as an 1867 General Conference resolution, was unequivocal. “...[T]he bearing of arms, or engaging in war, is a direct violation of the teachings of our Savior and the spirit and letter of the law of God” (1867, Fifth Annual General Conference Session). This has, in broad terms, been our guiding principle: When you carry arms you imply that you are prepared to use them to take another’s life, and taking the life of one of God’s children, even that of our “enemy,” is inconsistent with what we hold to be sacred and right.” –Jan Paulsen

“Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God.” –Ellen White

“SDAs initially took a pacifist position rather than one of conscientious objection. This is particularly evident during the American Civil War.... [T]he third GC Session in 1865 stated that the SDA Church would ‘decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed’; the fifth GC Session in 1867 similarly stated that ‘the bearing of arms, or engaging in war is a direct violation of the teachings of our savior’; while in 1868 the church noted ‘that war was never justifiable except under the immediate direction of God’.” –Jeff Crocombe

"The denomination of Christians calling themselves Seventh-day Adventists, taking the Bible as their rule of faith and practice, are unanimous in their views that its teachings are contrary to the spirit and practice of war; hence, they have ever been conscientiously opposed to bearing arms. If there is any portion of the Bible which we, as a people, can point to more than any other as our creed, it is the law of the ten commandments, which we regard as the supreme law, and each precept of which we take in its most obvious and literal import. The fourth of these commandments requires cessation from labor on the seventh day of the week, the sixth prohibits the taking of life, neither of which, in our view, could be observed while doing military duty. Our practice has uniformly been consistent with these principles. Hence, our people have not felt free to enlist into the service. In none of our denominational publications have we advocated or encouraged the practice of bearing arms, and, when drafted, rather than violate our principles, we have been content to pay, and assist each other in paying, the $300 commutation money.” –F. M. Wilcox

"Resolved that we recognize civil government as ordained of God, that order, justice, and quiet may be maintained in the land; and that the people of God may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. In accordance with this fact we acknowledge the justice of rendering tribute, custom, honor, and reverence to the civil power, as enjoined in the New Testament. While we thus cheerfully render to Caesar the things which the Scriptures show to be his, we are compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind." –SDA General Conference

“I hope my enemies will use nonviolent methods against me.” –Charissa Boyd
Quotes – Assorted Authors

“I despair to see so many radicals turn to violence as a proof of their militancy and commitment. It is heart-breaking to see all the old mistakes being made all over again. The usual pattern seems to be that people give nonviolence two weeks to solve their problem... and then decide it has ‘failed.’ Then they go on with violence for the next hundred years... and it seems never to ‘fail’ and be rejected.” –Ted Roszak

“If [Jesus’ life and ministry] was a rescue operation, it was one with a difference. It wasn’t a matter of the God of Israel simply fighting off the wicked pagans and vindicating his own people. It was more devastating. It was about God judging not only the pagans but also Israel; about God acting in a new way in which nothing could be taken for granted; about God fulfilling his promises, but doing so in a way that nobody had expected or anticipated. God was issuing a fresh challenge to Israel, echoing back to his promise to Abraham: Israel is indeed the light of the world, but its present policies have been putting that light under a bucket. It’s time for drastic action. Instead of the usual military revolt, it was time to show the pagans what the true God was really like, not by fighting and violence but by loving one’s enemies, turning the other cheek, going the second mile. That is the challenge which Jesus issued in a series of teachings that we call the ‘sermon on the mount’ (Matthew 5:1-7:29)” –N. T. Wright

“To say that we must kill our enemies and join the popular project to ‘rid the world of evil’ is to call Jesus unrealistic. And that is possibly desirable for many; surely his ideas do not resonate with any common wisdom. But can you call Jesus the Son of God and also say, ‘He just doesn’t understand the world today?’ How ironic is it to see a bumper sticker that says ‘Jesus is the answer’ next to a bumper sticker supporting the war in Iraq, as if to say ‘Jesus is the answer—but not in the real world.’ Remember, Jesus’ followers were burned alive, beheaded, or fed to lions. They knew evil and the ‘real world.’ They would meet it face to face.... Dallas Willard puts it well: ‘Jesus is Lord’ can mean little in practice for anyone who has to hesitate before saying, ‘Jesus is smart’ (The Divine Conspiracy, p. 95).” –Shane Claiborne

“Thus I helped make Mexico, and especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenue in. I helped in the raping of half-a-dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers and Co. in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras ‘right’ for American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.” –Smedly D. Butler (U. S. Marine Major General)

“When we say ‘War is over if you want it,’ we mean that if everyone demanded peace instead of another TV set, we’d have peace.” –John Lennon

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” –UNESCO Constitution
“He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” – Isaiah 2:4

“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” – Isaiah 9:7

[more peace quotes at Nuclear Age Peace Foundation]

Definitions – Wikipedia

I decided to add the following section (copied-and-pasted straight from the bastion of all true knowledge, Wikipedia) because I have realized that there is confusion about these related themes, because I have been confused about these related themes. For example, the nuances between pacifism (rejection of war and violence, narrowly defined), peacemaking (conflict resolution and relationship building, narrowly defined), and nonviolent social action (proactive working for change with nonviolent methods). Okay, the definitions:

“Nonviolence is a philosophy and strategy for social change that rejects the use of physical violence. As such, nonviolence is an alternative to passive acceptance of oppression and armed struggle against it. Practitioners of nonviolence may use diverse methods in their campaigns for social change, including critical forms of education and persuasion, civil disobedience and nonviolent direct action, and targeted communication via mass media.

“In modern times, nonviolence has been a powerful tool for social protest. Mahatma Gandhi led a decades-long nonviolent struggle against British rule in India, which eventually helped India win its independence in 1947. About 10 years later, Martin Luther King adopted Gandhi's nonviolent methods in his struggle to win civil rights for African Americans. Then in the 1960s César Chávez organized a campaign of nonviolence to protest the treatment of farms workers in California. These three leaders proved that people can bring about social change without using violence. As Chavez once explained, ‘Nonviolence is not inaction. It is not for the timid or the weak. It is hard work, it is the patience to win.’ Another recent nonviolent movement was the "Velvet Revolution"; a nonviolent revolution in Czechoslovakia that saw the overthrow of the Communist government in 1989. It is seen as one of the most important of the Revolutions of 1989.

“The term ‘nonviolence’ is often linked with or even used as a synonym for pacifism; however, the two concepts are fundamentally different. Pacifism denotes the rejection of the use of violence as a personal decision on moral or spiritual grounds, but does not inherently imply any inclination toward change on a sociopolitical level. Nonviolence on the other hand, presupposes the intent of (but does not limit it to) social or political change as a reason for the rejection of violence.”
“Pacifism is the opposition to war or violence as a means of settling disputes or gaining advantage. Pacifism covers a spectrum of views ranging from the belief that international disputes can and should be peacefully resolved; to calls for the abolition of the institutions of the military and war; to opposition to any organization of society through governmental force (anarchist or libertarian pacifism); to rejection of the use of physical violence to obtain political, economic or social goals; to the condemnation of force except in cases where it is absolutely necessary to advance the cause of peace; to opposition to violence under any circumstance, including defense of self and others.

“Pacifism may be based on moral principles (a deontological view) or pragmatism (a consequentialist view). Principled pacifism holds that at some point along the spectrum from war to interpersonal physical violence, such violence becomes morally wrong. Pragmatic pacifism holds that the costs of war and inter-personal violence are so substantial that better ways of resolving disputes must be found. Pacifists in general reject theories of Just War.

“Pacifists follow principles of nonviolence, believing that non-violent action is morally superior and/or pragmatically most effective. Some pacifists, however, support physical violence for emergency defense of self or others. Others support destruction of property in such emergencies or for conducting symbolic acts of resistance like pouring red paint to represent blood on the outside of military recruiting offices or entering air force bases and hammering on military aircraft. However, part of the pacifist belief system is taking responsibility for one's actions by submitting to arrest and using a trial to publicize opposition to war and other forms of violence.”

“Christian pacifism is the theological and ethical position that any form of violence is incompatible with the Christian faith. Christian pacifists state that Jesus himself was a pacifist who taught and practiced pacifism, and that his followers must do likewise.”

“Peace churches are Christian churches, groups or communities advocating Christian pacifism. The term historic peace churches refers specifically to three church groups: the Church of the Brethren, the Mennonites, and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

“Peacemaking is a form of conflict resolution which focuses on establishing equal power relationships that will be robust enough to forestall future conflict, and establishing some means of agreeing on ethical decisions within a community that has previously had conflict.

“The term peacemaking however is reserved for large, systemic, often factional conflicts in which no member of the community can avoid involvement, and in which no faction or segment can claim to be completely innocent of the problems. For instance, a post-genocide situation, or extreme oppression such as apartheid.

“The process of peacemaking is distinct from the rationale of pacifism or the use of non-violent protest or civil disobedience techniques, though they are often practiced by the same people.”
“A conscientious objector (CO) is an individual who, on religious, moral or ethical grounds, refuses to participate as a combatant in war or, in some cases, to take any role that would support a combatant organization armed forces. In the first case, conscientious objectors may be willing to accept non-combatant roles during conscription or military service. In the second case, the CO objects to any role within armed forces and results in complete rejection of conscription or military service and, in some countries, assignment to an alternative civilian service as a substitute for conscription or military service. Some conscientious objectors may consider themselves either pacifist, non-resistant, or antimilitarist.”

“Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is an international organization set up to support teams of peace workers in conflict areas around the world. These teams believe that they can lower the levels of violence through nonviolent direct action, human rights documentation, and nonviolence training. CPT sums their work up as ‘...committed to reducing violence by getting in the way’.”

“Muslim Peace Teams (MPT) are groups of citizens, especially in Iraq, who seek to demonstrate non-violence in practice by doing such things as physically interposing themselves between warring parties, but also by acting as intermediaries and negotiators.”

“The Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement is a Protestant Christian denomination, part of the Sabbatarian adventist movement, and the result of a split from the Seventh-day Adventist Church created by disagreement over proper Sabbath observance and military service during World War I.”

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1 “One in five service members, or at least 300,000, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression, according to a Rand Corporation study in 2008” (Alvarez & Eckholm, Purple Heart is Ruled Out for Traumatic Stress, New York Times, 7 Jan ‘09).

2 “In addition to the symptoms described above, we now know that there are clear biological changes that are associated with PTSD. PTSD is complicated by the fact that people with PTSD often may develop additional disorders such as depression, substance abuse, problems of memory and cognition, and other problems of physical and mental health. These problems may lead to impairment of the person’s ability to function in social or family life, including occupational instability, marital problems and family problems” (http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/handouts/handout_What%20is%20PTSD.pdf).


4 Eisenhower quotes are copied from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/dwight_d_eisenhower.html.

5 War is a Force that Gives us Meaning (2003). I have not yet read this, but I appreciated talking with Charissa about it when she read it in S Korea.

6 vietnamin vet with PTSD goes to Iraq (Drash, CNN.com, 10 Dec ‘08). See also A Soldier’s Mind, Viet Nam Vet Seeks Closure To The Past… In Iraq.

7 Peace on Earth, p. 27.

8 Isaiah 32:17
“As evangelicals we understand that everything that was lost in the fall was restored and redeemed in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the basis of our entire theology and faith. It is important here that we not focus so singularly on the restoration of our relationship to God that we lose the radical nature of redemption in the other three levels of our created relationship. It is in the work of the incarnate Christ that we understand our transformed nature as we stand before God and our transformed responsibility as we stand by our neighbor, with ourselves, and in our created world” (quote take from the chapter “Central Themes for an Evangelical Framework” by R. Scott Rodin in Toward an Evangelical Public Policy, p. 275).

For an intro to this concept see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth_of_redemptive_violence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth_of_redemptive_violence) or see Claiborne’s The Irresistible Revolution.

This questions (What about Hitler?) has been addressed in at least three books that I’m aware of—What about Hitler? (Brimlow, 2006), Strength through Peace (McCarthy, 2002), and A Force More Powerful (Ackerman & DuVall, 2001).

This was tackled by Cortright in Gandhi and Beyond: Nonviolence for an Age of Terrorism (2006).

I recognize that some in the room that night have been contemplating these issues much longer than I, since the draft for Vietnam.

I also drew some from Faith and Violence by Merton and Blessed are the Peacemakers by Anderson and Mylander. I wondered why I had never heard this stuff preached in church, and then Rob Bell had the series, Calling All Peacemakers.

In addition to analyzing issues relating to war and nonviolence, there are classes on conflict resolution, economic justice, and development, among others.

Bonus Walter Wink article: Can Love Save the World (yes! magazine, Winter 2002).

Here is the intro paragraph to Stassen’s chapter: “Christian ethics has three approaches to violence, war, and peacemaking: just war theory, pacifism/nonviolence, and just peacemaking theory. Christian ethics, reflecting differences among theological traditions, is divided over which one (or which combination) best displays faithfulness to Jesus in a sinful world. I will begin by considering Jesus’ way of peacemaking and its link to Isaiah’s prophecies of the kingdom. Then I will present just war theory and pacifism in their best forms, as well as just peacemaking. I will not attempt to resolve the just war/pacifism debate, but will supplement them with their implicit commitment to just peacemaking. I urge that every church teach the three models so that Christians are not blown about by every shifting wind and accommodated to secular forces (Eph. 4:14ff.)” (p. 284).

Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa after Apartheid ended.

Here I focus on one issue, monetary debt forgiveness, but stories such as Corrie Ten Boom’s remind us of the personal role of forgiveness in this situation as well.
My actual wish list at Amazon.com includes hundreds of more books and DVDs on peace, nonviolence, social justice, theology and activism.

The only way I could keep these lists to 21 items was by omitting most sources referenced in other parts of the letter. For example the next list could not be complete without the books mentioned in reference #20 above.

I thought about including musicians like Jack Johnson, Michael Franti, Ben Harper and religious musicians like the Flobots, Justin McRoberts, The Cobalt Season and Derek Webb. But instead I listed a few of them here, as you now know.

Quotes are from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/dwight_d_eisenhower.html.

Quotes are from http://www.writespirit.net/authors/thomas_jefferson/quotes_war_jefferson.


Opposing viewpoints can be found here and here. In light of the quotes presented in the first three links, some of the points in the last two are shown spurious.


The Great Controversy, p. 589.

Reporting thoughts presented by Doug Morgan at the Should I Fight? Conference (http://www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2008/12/31/should_i_fight).

Seventh-day Adventists in Time of War, p. 58 (http://www.sdarm.org/origin.htm).

The Review and Herald, May 23, 1865 (http://www.sdarm.org/origin.htm).

Turning a line from The Great Debaters to fit the Golden Rule.

Strength through Peace, p. 1.


Jesus for President, p. 166.


http://www.dcn.davis.ca.us/vme/memorial/dvmquote.html

http://www.dcn.davis.ca.us/vme/memorial/dvmquote.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolence

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacifism

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_pacifism (See quotes from early Christian leaders here.)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_churches (See comments on Seventh-day Adventists.)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacemaking

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscientious_objector

