

Food for thought, questions for discussion, and activities to help individuals, classes, and small groups use Messenger as a focus for study and reflection.

July 2004

Food for Thought: An Overview of the Issue

“Children: Teachers of Peace” by sisters and Ph.D.s Karen Myers-Bowman and Judy Myers-Walls (pp. 8-11) gives findings of a research project that came out of the authors’ Brethren heritage, passion for peacemaking, and professional training in family studies and child development. With several colleagues they interviewed hundreds of children around the world, asking them to share their ideas about war and peace in words and pictures. One of the pictures appears on the cover of the magazine. Among those interviewed were Brethren and Mennonite children “who have been incredibly insightful and provide glimpses into the future of peacemaking in peace churches,” the authors write.

“Hot Enough for Ya?” by David Radcliff (pp. 16-17) asks if, “when it comes to global warming, most Americans are asleep at the wheel.” Radcliff, director of the New Community Project, a Brethren-related nonprofit organization, writes of global warming as not just an environmental issue, but also a faith issue and a moral issue.

“Taking Stock of Social Responsibility” by Karla Hignite and Will Thomas (pp.18-20), with a sidebar by Thomas on “Three Strategies for Socially Responsible Investing,” presents history and a basis for socially responsible investing in the Church of the Brethren, and the “maturing” of the socially responsible investing movement especially as it is carried out by Brethren Benefit Trust, the agency overseeing Brethren Pension Plan accounts and assets of denominational agencies and many congregations.

Activities: Connecting with the Content

Read Luke 19:41-42. The article on “Children: Teachers of Peace” includes drawings by children showing their ideas about what peace and war are like. **Draw** your own pictures of war and peace. **Look** at the children’s pictures of peace and **think** about what life would be like if the world resembled their pictures. **Look** at your picture of peace and **think** about what life would be like if the world resembled your picture. **Pray** for the people living in war zones around the world, and pray for peace.

Read Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:15. **Find and read** an article in a scientific journal about the effects of global warming, such as the *Nature* article David Radcliff refers to in his piece, “Hot Enough for Ya?” Today **do one of the things** that Radcliff suggests to “Beat the Heat” and help combat global warming.

Read Micah 6:6-8. If you participate in socially responsible investing with your personal investments, **research** what guidelines are used to invest your money; or if your congregation participates in socially responsible investing with its funds, **research** what guidelines are used to invest your church’s money. **Ask** your pastor, church board chair, or stewards or trustees chair for information on the church’s investments.

Questions for Discussion

1. The children quoted in the article, “Children: Teachers of Peace,” make many statements about war and peace such as “War is not what God wants,” by an eight-year-old boy. With which statements do you agree most? Why? Do you disagree with any of the children’s statements? Why?
2. In their analysis, the authors found that the children’s ideas about war and peace mirror central teachings of the Church of the Brethren. What are those teachings, as highlighted by the authors? Which of the children’s alternative strategies to war, and which of their ideas for being peacemakers, are practical and would work in the “real” world? How could you and your congregation put them into practice in your own lives and communities?
3. Children have a lot to teach about peace, the authors write. Read the three recommendations at the end of the article. What have you learned from children? How can you and your congregation help children find words for peacemaking? What can you and your congregation do to be models and partners with children in learning about peace?
4. In his article “Hot Enough for Ya?” David Radcliff outlines some of the warning signs and environmental destruction related to global warming. He suggests several angles from which people of faith may address the issue. How did you learn to respect creation? Where does that respect come, for you—religious or moral concerns, a need to defend life on this planet, a concern for justice for those on the margins of society, a concern for the wellbeing of your children and future generations? Why is global warming a faith issue?
5. Radcliff is concerned that most of us are “asleep at the wheel” when it comes to global warming. What characterizes such a lifestyle? What aspects of your life share these characteristics, and what do not? How do you express environmental concerns? How does your congregation act out God’s command to care for creation?
6. Review the history of socially responsible investing, or SRI, in the Church of the Brethren, in the article “Taking Stock of Social Responsibility.” How is SRI biblically based, as taken from Shantilal Bhagat’s work on the issue? What Bible verses support the concept of SRI?
7. The authors write of a potential conflict between a desire for purity in investments, and a desire—and for some organizations a responsibility—to get a good return from investments. What arguments can you make for seeking purity in investments? What are the arguments for getting good returns from investments? To whom are investors responsible?
8. The SRI movement has matured in recent years, according to the article. What are the signs of maturity in socially responsible investing? How does this maturity make SRI issues simpler, or more complicated? With maturity have come new coalitions of investors placing faith concerns side by side with secular concerns. How do you think the Church of the Brethren can, or should, make a witness for Christ with socially responsible investing?
9. If you, or your congregation, engage in socially responsible investing, why have you chosen to do so? If not, what would persuade you or your congregation to choose socially responsible investing?

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