

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

A guide for  
community  
organizers  
taking part in  
the Fellowship  
of Reconciliation  
project

THEY ARE  
OUR BROTHERS



Greetings—  
and the  
breaking  
of bread



The Reading

The ritual of music



Fellowship of Reconciliation  
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### WHAT CAN WE DO?

A guide to community organizers taking part  
in the Fellowship of Reconciliation project

#### "THEY ARE OUR BROTHERS..."

A National Campaign to Help Civilian  
Victims of the War in Vietnam

You will find the following suggestions self-explanatory. In essence, we are proposing that your local efforts in organizing community Committees of Conscience for the FOR's THEY ARE OUR BROTHERS program be launched around a meal of reconciliation -- a symbolic meal of rice and tea, of readings and prayer, and including an initial collection for the Vietnamese civilian victims of the war. In some instances, as local circumstances suggest, a vigil might follow the event. In the course of your continuing community efforts, you may wish to conduct other such meals -- points of rededication of concern, sharing of experience, re-evaluation and clarification.

The suggestions -- and related materials -- do not conclude, however, with the meals of reconciliation. Other ideas -- having a beg-in, a fast-for-peace or a vigil -- are included which could be used in addition.

### THE MEAL OF RECONCILIATION

FOR members and friends, in an initial experiment with a meal of reconciliation on October 4 in New York City, found the experience of participation in the event unforgettable.

A number of factors were later cited as contributing to the experience -- the variety of religious backgrounds represented, the form and content of the service, the symbolic nature of the "meal," and -- surprisingly important -- the setting. Perhaps most crucial of all, however, was the purpose; confrontation with a war which is killing and maiming more children than soldiers -- and yet a confrontation which does not end with protest but spills over to the works of mercy as well, in the form of a collection to aid the war's civilian victims.

#### Religious Backgrounds Represented

At the initial meal of reconciliation, participants represented all the major faiths and many walks of life, ranging from teaching nuns, lawyers, ministers and priests to union members, seminarians, housewives and civil rights workers. Those taking a verbal part in the meal were drawn from the major faiths. For many present, it was the first encounter with a real ecumenism. The continuing importance of such events possessing an interfaith character cannot be overemphasized.

#### The Form and Content of the Meal

In many respects, the meal followed quite traditional lines -- a period of readings interlaced with silent and spoken prayer, a collection and finally a symbolic meal of unity with each other and with the victims of the war.

The readings were drawn from a variety of sources,--scriptural (Old Testament and New) primarily, but some from more contemporary sources--the world press. Father Daniel Berrigan, for example, read an extract from Albert Camus' Resistance, Rebellion and Death, choosing the essay in which Camus asked of Christians that they speak out on matters affecting everyone in such a way "that not even a peasant could misunderstand the meaning of the words." A layman read the report from Le Monde (extracts of which can be found in THEY ARE OUR BROTHERS) of a priest's description of the utter destruction by air power of the villages he served. Silence for prayer followed each reading.

A brief litany, "Father, Forgive," was read. It appears in a box at the end of page 6.

Two folk-singers took an active role in the service, giving a certain musical urgency to what was occurring. A young man from the Catholic Worker movement began the meal with "Two hands alone can't tear the prison down, Ten hands alone can't tear the prison down--but if two and two and fifty make a million, we'll see that day come round, we'll see that day come round." If his arithmetic was lacking in precision, the message was not missed. Several similar songs and the Lord's Prayer were also sung.

The collection for war victims followed. Those who wished to be on the mailing list included their names and addresses with their contributions.

A prayer was said over the bread and wine.

(It has since been agreed that for such meals of reconciliation, particularly due to the focus on the Vietnamese war, rice and tea would be more effective than bread and wine.)

An Anglican bishop was present, a native of India who had been a friend of Gandhi's earlier in the century. He spoke of his friendship with Gandhi, the religious faith of the Indian leader, concluding with a statement of appreciation to those present for letting him take part in the most significant interfaith experience of his life.

The initial meal was ended with a two-mile walk to the United States Mission to the United Nations, where a one-hour vigil was conducted in complete silence for peace in Vietnam. Appropriate signs (NO MORE WAR--WAR NEVER AGAIN, AN END TO KILLING, IN THE NAME OF GOD--STOP IT, etc.) were held by a number of vigiliers; these had been prepared prior to the event.

#### The Symbolic Nature of the Meal

Advance publicity should make clear that a full meal does not occur at a meal of reconciliation--at least not what most Americans would consider adequate. In a sense such a meal, in its simplicity and poverty, is a meal with the Vietnamese themselves, all the more so if rice and tea are used, as they are the two principal staples of the Vietnamese diet. There is, of course, the practical value of such a meal for its planners; its basic simplicity does not interfere with the far more important concerns which have brought the participants together.

### The Setting

Needless to say, such meals can be conducted anywhere. The initial meal was conducted in the parish hall of St. Mark's in-the-Bouwerie, one of the oldest Episcopal churches in New York City. The church is now in the heart of a poverty section, with tenements on all sides of the church's ancient complex. Many felt that the poverty and simplicity of the setting was an important factor in forming the appropriate atmosphere for the meal.

Such a setting, in addition, made it easier for the poor to take part in the meal. The parish hall of St. Mark's is not one to humiliate or embarrass those who could wear only work clothes or an old, cotton-print dress.

### The Purpose

Yet what is most decisive, as always, is not so much the form and details of the meal as its purpose: to take upon ourselves the burden of war, in an effort to bring our present war to an end while at the same time coming to the aid of those innocent persons who have been its victims.

Though many of those taking part in the initial meal of reconciliation were themselves poor, nearly \$300 was collected in change and small bills from those present, thus forming the foundation for the fund which many Americans are now working to build to a far greater and more helpful size.

### BEG-INS

Father Daniel Berrigan has proposed beg-ins be carried out in conjunction with this effort. Participants might make sandwich-board signs to wear for such an effort. A proposed text for the signs is WE ARE BEGGING FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE WAR and in smaller letters, "The money you donate will help civilian victims of the war in Vietnam, North and South." Milk cartons, used with the attached sleeve, would be appropriate collection containers. Such an effort might end with a meal of reconciliation or brief service at an appropriate location. As a beg-in would likely be considered newsworthy in your community, the press should be notified beforehand.

### FASTS-FOR-PEACE

Persons might wish to fast from one or more meals per day, either on certain days each week or every day, placing the money which would have been spent for food in the BROTHERS collection container at home. Or the family might wish to fast together from one meal a week, adding the savings. Or perhaps dessert might be skipped at certain times. Not only might such efforts add gradually to your contribution for aid to the war victims--in a modest sense, it would be a joining of hands with those to whom hunger is neither temporary nor voluntary, who hunger not only for food but for the peace to tend their fields and families in peace without fear of lying dead or wounded at day's end.

One community in upstate New York raised \$1500 in a concentrated fast-for-peace effort. Making the results so impressive involved a considerable amount of work, needless to say, yet made continuing effort far easier.

### VIGILS

Public and private vigils, times of extended silence broken by periods of reading and/or verbal prayer, are among the more ancient methods of confronting

issues as well as achieving a sense of group unity and expansion.

A recent campaign of vigils launched by a group of Pennsylvania students focused around commuter trains in Philadelphia. A lengthy banner was held by them with the words, WE ARE THINKING ABOUT VIETNAM---COME AND THINK WITH US.

The vigil which followed the meal of reconciliation in New York consisted simply of an hour of silence between the United Nations and the U.S. Mission buildings.

Students in Pittsburgh fasted and prayed around the clock for two days and nights--they were in fact given the keys to the Cathedral during the hours when the Cathedral was locked. Their vigil and fast attracted nationwide news attention.

#### PUBLICITY

Particular priority should be given to publicity in your community. Far greater numbers are usually reached via newspapers, radio and television than by word of mouth, personal contact or participation in a meal of reconciliation.

The several channels of communication include posters, editorial news coverage and paid advertising.

A Poster which can be used to invite participation in a meal of reconciliation is enclosed. Space is provided for local details of date, time and place. These may be ordered in quantity from the Fellowship, using the coupon on the covering letter.

Press releases (supplemented by personal contact) should be sent to local newsmen -- in the religious and secular press, in television and radio. These releases should be sent out at each stage of your efforts. Press releases should be limited to facts and should not be confused with letters to the editor or other expressions of a more personal nature. It may be possible to take part in a radio or television round-table discussion of the campaign (or a listener participation program).

Direct contact with the community via leaflets, distribution of literature, the beg-ins or other means should also be seriously considered.

Letters to the editor on the effort (once the effort is underway) are still another means of communication and discussion involving the community.

As regards paid advertisements, there are two basic areas to be considered -- one involving meals of reconciliation, the other publicizing the overall "Brothers" project.

An ad inviting participation in a meal might use the same text as the already mentioned poster. Prints of the photo used on the poster (and elsewhere in the "Brothers" effort) are available for \$10 from the FOR. Though the ad would not require use of the photo, without doubt it would increase readership of an ad which might otherwise be small and unnoticeable. The \$10 fee includes royalty to United Press. (It is important to send the Fellowship two copies of your ad as it appears.)

A larger ad dealing with the larger project is available in two sizes from the Fellowship. A reproduction of the larger version is enclosed. A similar ad (with abbreviated text) is available from the Fellowship upon request. These are available in offset and not mat form.

#### REMITTING FUNDS

All checks representing funds realized by your efforts should be made payable to the Fellowship of Reconciliation and marked in the lower left hand corner of the check "Brothers Project."

Unless otherwise requested, only checks of \$50 or larger will be acknowledged with a receipt.

It might be a matter of convenience to send the contributions every two weeks or once a month, as income suggests.

Pledges received can be handled by the Fellowship; forward pledges with your checks.

#### ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

At the initial meal of reconciliation, no scriptural texts from Buddhist sources were read, a regrettable omission. Some of the teachings attributed to Buddha and several contemporary readings are attached for your possible use at meals of reconciliation in your area.

Also included are citations of Old and New Testament readings which might be appropriate for the meal.

The booklet, THEY ARE OUR BROTHERS, is another key source of material on the human dimensions of the war.

Still other sources:

Camus' essay on religious responsibility in the world can be found in the Modern Library edition of Resistance, Rebellion and Death. His essay on violence and the future, Neither Victims Nor Executioners, is available in a small paperback from FOR Publications at 25¢.

Two articles on the human dimensions of the war appear in the December issues of Ladies Home Journal and Ramparts.

Martha Gellhorn's reports, A New Kind of War, have been published by the Manchester Guardian in paperback form and are available from the FOR at 50¢

Thich Nhat Hanh's Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire--a Buddhist Proposal for Peace will be available from the FOR in January. Cloth \$3.50; paper \$1.25, \$1.00 each for 10 or more.

### IN SUMMARY

In summary we would suggest the following:

1. On as broad an interfaith basis as possible, gather three or five persons who would wish to work together in organizing and conducting a meal of reconciliation in your community--or who might wish to organize several in various nearby locations.
2. Locate a setting which would be dignified but simple, in a church or temple hall or some community center.
3. Choose a date which does not fall on a day which would make difficult the participation of any religious segment.
4. Publicize the meal in such a way as to reach as many economic and religious segments of the community as possible, thus making the meal more truly an event of reconciliation.
5. Seek out readings which would have meaning to all participants and which would increase both the understanding of the responsibility Vietnam poses and the understanding of the participants toward each other.
6. Try to make your meal (and other actions--beg-ins, fasts, vigils) not an end but a beginning of community involvement in the labor for peace and the work of mercy. Your efforts not only may mark the foundation of a more deeply rooted and more mature peace concern among your neighbors, but will help in pushing the work of reconciliation ahead in the nation and world community as well. The Chinese proverb often needs to be recalled: "Even a walk of one thousand miles must begin with a single step."

Prayer, on a board standing beside the altar in the ruins of the old  
Coventry cathedral: *FATHER FORGIVE*

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. St. Paul's letter to the Romans [3:23]

The *hatred* which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class, Father, forgive.

The *covetous* desires of men and nations to possess that which is not their own, Father, forgive.

The *greed* which exploits the labors of men and lays waste the earth,  
Father, forgive.

Our *envy* of the welfare and happiness of others,  
Father, forgive.

Our *indifference* to the plight of the homeless and the refugee,  
Father, forgive.

The *lust* which uses for ignoble ends the bodies of men and women,  
Father, forgive.

The *pride* which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,  
Father, forgive.

Copied courtesy  
of C. D. Preston  
Orlando, Fla.

THEY ARE OUR BROTHERS  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
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## BUDDHIST, JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS

### Buddhist Readings

Several Buddhist texts which might be used in conjunction with meals of reconciliation follow.

#### THE TWIN-VERSES

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me' -- in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.

'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me' -- in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease.

For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love -- this is an old rule.

The world does not know that we must all come to an end here; but those who know it, their quarrels cease at once.

#### PEACE AND WAR

A truth-finder, laying aside cudgel and sword,  
lives a life of innocence and mercy,  
full of kindness and compassion for everything that lives.

He heals divisions, and cements friendship;  
seeking peace, and pursuing it;  
for in peace is his delight, and his words  
are ever the words of a peacemaker.

The religious person is incapable of taking life wittingly.

That noble disciple, thus freed from covetousness,  
abides, suffusing the whole world  
with heart possessed of kindness--  
widespreading, grown great and boundless,  
free from enmity, and peaceful.

Happy is peace in the church.  
Happy is the devotion of those who are at peace.  
Live, delighting in and delighted by non-injury.

Rise! Sit up! Learn steadfastly for the sake of peace.

"As I am, so are these. As these are, so am I."  
Identifying himself with others,  
Let him not kill, nor cause any one to kill.

### LOVE

The whole length and breadth of the wide world  
is pervaded by the radiant thoughts of a mind  
all-embracing, vast and boundless,  
in which dwells no hate nor ill-will.

With radiant thoughts of love, of compassion,  
of sympathy and of poise  
his mind pervades each of the world's four quarters  
above, below, across, everywhere.

If villainous bandits were to carve you limb from limb,  
even then be it your task to preserve your hearts unmoved,  
never to allow an ill word to pass your lips,  
but always to abide in compassion and goodwill  
with no hate in your hearts,  
enfolding the bandit in radiant thoughts of love,  
and proceeding thence to enfold the whold world  
in your radiant thoughts of love,  
thoughts great, vast and beyond measure,  
in which no hatred is, or thought of harm.

Grow in loving-kindness; for, as you do so,  
malevolence will pass away.  
Grow in compassion; for, as you do so,  
vexation will pass away.  
Grow in gladness over other's welfare; for, as you do so,  
aversions will pass away.

We will develop liberation of the will through love.  
We will take our stand upon it

The three poems which follow are of contemporary Vietnamese Buddhist origin. The first author, Thich Nhat Hanh, is a monk, an FOR member, and is director of the South Vietnamese School of Youth for Social Service, one of the principal agencies to utilize medical relief donated via the FOR "Brothers" project.

#### CONDEMNATION

Listen to me, o brothers,  
Six Vietcong were here in my village yesterday  
My birthplace was bombarded and completely destroyed!  
Nobody survives  
Only foundations of houses are seen  
With the burned bamboo bushes  
And a destroyed pagoda without roof and altar  
I am back here today, contemplating cloud and river.

In the presence of tonight's stars,  
In the presence of all mankind on this earth,  
In the presence of you, o my fellow men,  
Let me raise my voice to condemn, this savage war of brothers.  
Let me ask: who has pushed us into this murderous quicksand?  
Be the witness tonight  
And listen to me  
I, do not accept this way  
I never have and I never will.  
I want to repeat this a thousand times before they kill me  
Listen to me as to a Do Quyen\*, dropping blood from its beak and crying out  
until death, for the sake of its mate,  
Turn your arms to fight hatred  
Our enemy is fanaticism, violence, it's cupidity, it's calumny,  
Our enemy is not man--even man bearing the label 'Vietcong'  
If we kill man, with whom shall we live?

Nhat Hanh

\* Name of a bird.

#### LIFE

Many an American said  
We have to kill for another year in order to have peace,  
In order to have peace, do you hear that, younger brother?  
One year, or two years, or ten years,  
I don't mind  
If this boy dies, we still have another  
Smaller boys will grow up, in time.  
More guns, more bullets, more boys,  
O people who never fear hunger and death  
Come, to be our advisers  
and to help us to kill us.

Thai Luau

## THE MOTHER'S LOVE

Pity to the old mother, symbol of the soul of the nation  
Her body is thin, similar to the form of our mother land  
In her two brown eyes, two pearls of tears  
The wrinkles on her forehead are like the ploughing lines of sufferings

Pity to the old mother whose heart is divided  
One part is for Hai, her first son  
One part is for Ba, her second son  
She does not know among them who is Communist  
She does not know among them who is anti-Communist

Her tears, shed by love have become a curtain  
preventing her to distinguish red and blue  
She only knows that her evenings are sad, very sad,  
And that the blood of her first son is as red as the blood of her  
second son.

Tru Vu

### Old Testament Readings

Genesis:1-11 (Cain and Abel narrative); Psalm 85 (Mercy and Truth have Met Together); Isaiah 24:1-28 (judgment narrative); Isaiah 61:1-3 (...the proclamation of liberty to captives); Ezekiel 34:25-30 (a prophecy of peace); Micah 6:1-8 (the Lord's accusation).

### New Testament Readings

Matthew 5:1-12 (the Beatitudes); Matthew 25: 31-46 (last judgment narrative-- "I was hungry..."); Romans 12:9-21 ("...if your enemy hungers..."); 1 Corinthians 13:1-23 (on love); James 2:12-17 (on faith and good deeds); 1 John 3:10-17 (on the law of love).