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In my work with young adults I often ask them to in some form or another in getting to know one another to making "I am" posters. On these posters I ask them to write statements about themselves;" I am" and then fill in the blank. Today I want to start by giving you a few "I am" statements about me.

I am a child of God. A pacifist. An Anabaptist Mennonite Baptist. A child of my tradition, a survivor of violence, a follower of Christ. A young adult working with youth and young adults. An American who grew up 'aussie' and a person who is still learning. I was born into class, education, nationality, language and a skin colour that gave me great privilege. And I believe that to those who much was given, much will be asked.

First my tradition. I was raised as an Anabaptist in the Mennonite tradition. During the reformation the Anabaptists thought that the reformers did not go far enough. They believed that they should be able to interpret the biblical texts for themselves without a priest telling them what the bible said. They did this in communities reading the bible together. They believed in believers' baptism and an adult making this commitment to faith; and a clear separation of church and state. They also believed that they could not take up the sword and fight because it contradicted the call of Christ. Because of this and these beliefs they were largely martyred, but the tradition did live on. They continued to be committed to peace and non-violence as well as community discernment and simple living.

My Family. I am the child of parents who read the gospels and felt that God was calling them towards a peaceful way of life and faith. Both of my grandfathers fought in WW2 and many of my cousins are still serving or have served in the American armed forces. So being a people of peace had to be a conscious choice.

This means that I grew up knowing that I needed to live out my non-violent views and also be able to articulate what I believed and why. I have wrestled long and hard with the idea of military involvement because some of my cousins have killed people in their time in the services, so I can't just demonize soldiers because they are part of my family. I can not set myself up and over and against them, against the other; I have to learn to know them and their motivations. But I find what the military does and teaches, destructive, de-humanizing and counter to my faith.

I realize that I have these views because my parents and my tradition are people of peace. My personal narrative has been flooded with stories of peace but I would rather tell these stories than add to the voices of the world that say that the biggest guns, the most violence and the cleverest cunning wins. My faith. I am a child of God and a follower of Jesus Christ. My commitment to peace is deeply grounded in my faith and my relationship with God through Jesus. Jesus is my lens for how I read the bible and look at life and faith. When Jesus said "love your enemies", I think he probably meant don't kill them. I see every person as a child of God and wonder how dare we kill a child of God? As the people of God, I believe that we are not only not called to go to war but to be active peace makers. When I look at the New Testament and the life of Jesus, I see a Jesus who was not violent. Yes, Jesus got angry but he did not re-pay in like kind. When violence was done to him, he did not respond in violence; even to the point of death. He stopped violence by absorbing it and lived out an alternative to retaliation. I follow a Jesus that had power in weakness, who stood up to the politics and the religious powers of his day and he spoke truth. A Jesus who ston..., who dodged stoning a woman by drawing on ground. A Jesus who valued the least of these but who was bold and compassionate at the same time. A Jesus who said things like "Bless it are the peacemakers, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you".

I believe that as Christians, we are called to be in the world but not of it. We are actively living out something that is counter cultural. Jesus does not make this life sound easy, in fact he invites each one of us to pick up our cross and to follow him. I believe the people of God are not defined by borders or nationalistic boundaries. We are the people of God, bound in Christ's body through faith. I believe we are called to value difference and to see the other as a brother and a sister in Christ.

My Pacifism. So, I'm a pacifist or I try to hold to the ideas and actions of a pacifist life. I know that I am compliant in and to violence but I am not willing to let others to be violent for me. I don't think it is okay for me to say that I am not violent and then call the police or the military to do violence in my name. I must actively work for peace, me being a pacifist does not mean that I am passive. I can't sit by but neither can I make the war makers into my enemy. They are people too and are children of God. Beloved to our creator, just as I am.

A majority of people would say that they are for peace but our budgets for war making say something different. Imagine training for peace with the commitment and money that we train for war. Which leads me to my work, I am a young adult who works with youth and young adults and as you see on your tables; there are yellow brochures like this that tells you some about what I do. Um, part of my job is working with a community called 'Irene's Place', Irene taken from the Greek word 'irene' meaning peace and trying to create a place for peace in Canberra and in Australia. Part of what we are trying to do at 'Irene's Place' is to intentionally train for peace, to say; what would it look like for young adults to take a year and come and live in intentional community and learn about peace that is not only just between me and God but me and

other people and me and all of creation. What does it mean to train and to live into that kind of peace, so I live there in that house with those young women and we work together at understanding what this might mean?

I also work with youth and with children and some of my work is struggling with these 'what if' statements. What if we train our children to approach the other with curiosity and openness instead of suspicion and fear? What if we work toward co-operation and the good of all instead of ma... bowing to the myth of redeemed violence and encouraging children to play out war, putting guns in their hands at younger and younger ages and telling them that it is fun and a game to point a gun at someone and to pull the trigger?

We need to measure our success with the good of all in mind and not just try to promote the individual to the detriment of community. My faith and my relationship with God in the example of Jesus with the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit lead me toward peace. It is a complicated, active involved peace. It is a peace that means more than the absence of war but that is grounded in God's great shalom and fullness. My faith is more than a relationship between me and God, it is also between me and other people and me and all of creation. My wholeness and shalom in God is tied to their wholeness. I am a pacifist but I also confess that I am human and flawed and in desperate need of God's grace and mercy. No where in my faith do I see a call to violence let alone war. What I do see is a strong call to the opposite, to be a people of peace, actively following the prince of peace. Thank you very much for giving me this chance to speak to you tonight.