

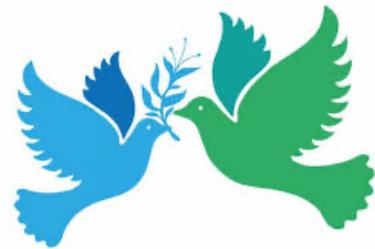
ELCG – Summer Devotional Series “Voices of Faith”

Week of 1 August 2021 (#1)

by Laurel Borisenko

Theme: peacebuilding as ‘moral imagination’

I would like to share with you the writings of one of my heroes: John Paul Lederach. Lederach is not a theologian, he is an American peace practitioner and academic, a devout Christian, and thankfully a prolific writer. There is not one book Lederach has written that is not poignant, thoughtful, practical, and moving into poetic description. He described how creative expression (moral imagination) is central to reconciliation. In his experience as a peacebuilder, overcoming violence requires imagination, which translates into creative acts. People who can harness their imagination in situations of violence have a capacity to find creative ways to move beyond violent responses (2005, p 29). On the other side, he describes violence as ‘...the behavior of someone incapable of imagining other solutions to the problem at hand.’ (Lederach, 2009)



In my experience, healing through creative expression is all about storytelling. We may express our story in dance or painting or singing or drumming—in whatever way speaks to the core of our being as image-bearers of the Creator God. I love the eloquent way he articulates profound ideas so simply:

“We live by the stories we tell about each other. Once guns are chosen as the way to tell our stories, the modality by which we communicate, it becomes hard to find our way back to words.” (Lederach, 2011, p. 15).

In my work with refugees, and my research with survivors of violence, I have seen these ideas become a reality. We all have a story to tell (expressed maybe in dance or painting or singing) and we all need to be heard. This is how we break out of a cycle of violence and enter into a cycle of healing—following the example of the Prince of Peace, who calls peacemakers ‘blessed’.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

Question for Reflection:

What stories do I need to share or to hear that would increase the peace and healing in my circle of influence?

Lederach, John Paul. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2005.

———2011. *The Poetic Unfolding of the Human Spirit*. Kalamazoo, USA: Fetzer Institute.

———2011. *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*, Herald Press, USA.

Lederach, Paul and Jill Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out: Journeys Through the Soundscape of Healing and Reconciliation*: New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.