



# Seeking Peace

## **FACILITATOR GUIDE**

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### Facilitator Introduction

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## I. Introduction to WAND

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The *Faith Seeking Peace* curriculum is a project of the Women of Faith in Action (WFIA) program of the WAND Education Fund. The mission of the Women of Faith program is *to reorder national priorities away from militarism toward peace and real security. We do this by educating women of faith and engaging their voices and values in the political process.*

Women's Action for New Directions (WAND) was founded in the early 1980s by Dr. Helen Caldicott, a physician from Australia and expert on nuclear disarmament. Today, WAND has a major presence within the peace and security community on Capitol Hill, a national non-partisan network of women state legislators who influence federal budget priorities, and is firmly rooted in communities across the nation as a voice for women and peace. The issues closest to our hearts include nuclear disarmament, reordering federal spending priorities, and bringing women to the tables of power where important decisions are made about our nation's priorities and policies.

## II. About the Author

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Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss is the founder and Faith Communities Educator of WAND's Women of Faith in Action program. In her work with WAND, Amanda authored three editions of the *Faith Seeking Peace* curriculum and trains faith community leaders. She served on the Muslim-Christian Design Team which collaboratively authored the *Muslim-Christian Study and Action Guide to End the Nuclear Weapons Danger*. Amanda is a graduate of Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, where she earned a certificate in Black Church Studies. Her experience includes working as a minister of Christian education in a congregational setting and as a case manager for persons with HIV/AIDS. Amanda is ordained in the United Church of Christ, and lives in Asheville, NC with her husband, Seth, and son, Myles.

## III. Acknowledgements

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Support for this program has been provided by the Colombe Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Financial Services, the Stewart R. Mott Charitable Trust, and a circle of women donors in Atlanta, including Mary Laney Reilly, Ruth Schmidt, and Carol J. Tveit Clarke. The third edition of the *Faith Seeking Peace* curriculum was shaped with the help of a Review Committee that provided thoughtful input and invaluable insight. Review Committee members include: Mary Babic, Bobbie Wrenn Banks, Kathy Robinson, and Ruth Schmidt. Mary is credited with the fine graphic design and formatting that makes FSP aesthetically pleasing and user friendly. Bobbie Wrenn played an invaluable role in re-tooling this new edition through her expert analysis of WAND issues through a theological lens and experience as a field educator. Kathy Robinson offered particular insight into the study guide on nuclear weapons. Ruth Schmidt's tremendous editing skills contributed to making this edition an improved resource. A special thanks also goes to the inter-denominational group of women, led by Kit Frisinger, in Eugene, Oregon whose evaluations and input helped shape this new edition.

## IV. Introduction to *Faith Seeking Peace* Curriculum

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*Faith Seeking Peace* places Biblical texts in conversation with the critical issues of our day. The curriculum is organized into six one-hour sessions addressing the following issues from a faith and values perspective: federal budget priorities, the cost of war, nuclear weapons, the environmental impact of war, women’s experiences of war, and peace making. These sessions are designed to be used in conjunction with one another, yet each can also function as stand-alone sessions.

WAND hopes this project will invigorate religious communities with timely discussions on the implications of our faith in a new political climate. *Faith Seeking Peace* joins the growing movement throughout the nation that is bringing progressive voices of faith to the table in order to transform the crossroads of religion and politics in America.

## V. Facilitation

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Each session requires the guidance of a facilitator—someone who has become familiar with the materials, can spark conversation, and mediate dialogue on issues which may be divisive. The role of the facilitator is to *facilitate* discussion and exercises, rather than to promote a particular agenda or guide the discussion to a foregone conclusion. Thus a facilitator must also possess the capacity to reserve judgment and ensure that all voices are heard.

Because this curriculum attempts to faithfully guide participants in seeking peace, *the way in which sessions are conducted speaks as loudly as the content itself*. The process is as important as the purpose. Vigorous discussion on challenging issues can—and has—intimidated many well intentioned Christians, encouraging them to steer clear of conversation about difficult subjects like war and peace. The intent of this curriculum is to model the very strategies of collaborative conversation and theological articulation that reflect the values of justice, mercy, and peace.

Each session includes a study guide for use by participants as well as a guide for facilitators. These materials can also be found on the web at [www.faithwand.org](http://www.faithwand.org). Throughout the facilitator’s guide, one can find “facilitator tips” in bold, with bulleted points beneath. These tips generally comprise three labeled categories—tips on process, content, and communication. Tips on process are directional guides describing how an exercise should function. Tips on content provide the facilitator with possible responses to discussion questions, disclose why particular questions are being posed, and offer general insight into the curriculum. Tips on communication serve as reminders to create a safe space for all participants to voice a wide diversity of opinions.

Church lay leaders, non-profit staff members, clergy, and theological students all may make ideal facilitators.

**A. Time—Length of Sessions:** While previous editions of the curriculum provided basic time frames for each exercise, experience has suggested that all groups use this resource differently. As a basic guideline, each session will probably require 90-120 minutes to

complete. The exception to this may be Study Guide II: The Cost of War, which may require a minimum of two hours to complete. Facilitators should explore the curriculum thoroughly, consider the group studying it, and then determine a basic time frame for each exercise. Because the issues discussed in this resource intersect so naturally with other important issues, facilitators should either prepare to draw conversation to a close in a timely way or build in extra time to address other issues that may arise. Many groups have used the *Faith Seeking Peace* curriculum as a twelve week Sunday school class, taking two weeks to examine each study guide. Others choose to cut out discussion questions or other portions of exercises so that the material fits into the time frame allotted.

## B. Safe Space

**1. Hearing Everyone:** Creating a safe space for all, in which collaborative dialogue can take place, is one of the goals of *Faith Seeking Peace*. This means that the facilitator will serve in more of a pastoral (rather than prophetic) role. A pastoral role seeks to ensure that participants feel heard and understood, to draw out those who are quiet, to respect those who choose not to share with the larger group, and to redirect conversation when participants go off on tangents or speak so much that others are not being heard. Above all, a pastoral role models respect for all participants, regardless of their theological perspective or political ideology.

Many exercises are designed specifically to engage participants with introverted personalities in small groups or partner discussions. Just as this curriculum provides practice in *speaking* theologically about critical issues, it also provides practice in *listening* to others.

**2. Conflict:** If *Faith Seeking Peace* is facilitated for a participant group that brings to the table diverse opinions regarding the intersection between faith and politics, vigorous—even conflictual—conversation may arise in the midst of discussion.

It is the facilitator's role to allow conversation to stretch participants—feeling anxious in the presence of such debate is to be expected. However, it is also the facilitator's role to step in if conversation becomes disrespectful. If participants are attacking one another in terms of faith, ideology, or integrity, the facilitator should step in to neutralize the situation, redirect conversation, or even offer a short break.

**3. Confidentiality:** In more insular groups, confidentiality, rather than conflict, may be a more critical issue in creating safe space. If this curriculum is being conducted within a congregation, for example, the facilitator can guide the group in creating a class covenant, which articulates expectations around confidentiality through a participatory process. Addressing confidentiality allows participants to truly be in touch with the inner, spiritual conflicts of the soul which arise when discussing difficult issues.

## C. Complex Issues

As stated above, the *Faith Seeking Peace* curriculum addresses the critical issues of our day, which are consistently debated in the media, amongst our elected officials, and at many dinner tables. Because this curriculum was written from a progressive perspective, it does not attempt to handle issues with a “black and white” approach. The purpose of the curriculum is to provide material which stimulates educated, faithful dialogue.

The facilitator should affirm that there are no responses which are wholly right or entirely wrong. All perspectives shared are open to a thoughtful critique which highlights both the assets and challenges of any given response.

#### **D. Diverse Exercises**

The six sessions of *Faith Seeking Peace* deliberately employ a variety of exercises, because participants learn in diverse ways. These exercises include discussion questions, responsive readings, film excerpts, writing, drawing, paired sharing, and more. The breadth of the issues being discussed requires a comprehensive and creative approach.

#### **E. Advance Preparation**

1. **Reading the curriculum:** Facilitators should familiarize themselves with the curriculum prior to facilitation by reading through both the participant and facilitator guides, paying special attention to “Advance Preparations,” and considering the ways in which they might respond to the material.
2. **Mini Sessions; Mutual Invitation; and Think/Pair/Share:**

Each session in the curriculum includes exercises designed to stimulate conversation amongst all personality types in a way that shares power mutually.

In a **mini-session**, the facilitator asks participants to pair up. Ideally, participants should pair with someone they do not know well. Once they have paired up and spread out around the room, the facilitator asks each pair to choose a Partner A and Partner B. Often the extroverted person in the group will choose to be Partner A, so it is sometimes a good practice to begin with Partner A *listening* and Partner B *speaking* (the opposite of what is usually expected). The facilitator then asks all Partner A’s to raise their hands, and tells them whether Partner A will speak or listen first. The facilitator should explain that each partner will have the opportunity to speak for 2 minutes straight (it should be timed by the facilitator), *uninterrupted*. This is an exercise of speaking and of listening, and so the listening partner must resist the urge to interrupt, ask questions, redirect conversation, etc. Mini session questions are always provided within participant study guides. The purpose of mini-sessions is to allow participants to voice reactions they may have to a particular topic. Some may need to get thoughts and feelings off their chests before they can participate in group discussion. Others may feel so intimidated by group

discussion that this is the only way in which they participate verbally in the session. Mini-sessions also enable participants to get to know one another on a more intimate level.

**Mutual Invitation** is a practice developed by Eric Law. It begins with the facilitator sharing first, then inviting a participant (by name) to share next. The participant has the choice to speak or to pass, then invites another participant to share. By ensuring that someone who passes still has the opportunity to invite the next person to speak, mutual invitation affirms and values all participants independently of verbal input. Mutual invitation may be used for an entire discussion or until each person has had the chance to speak once (then the discussion can continue with whoever has more to add).

**Think/Pair/Share** encourages the participation of introverts by first allowing time for all participants to think about their response to a particular question. Next, participants are invited to pair up with someone to discuss their responses. Finally, those who would like to share with the larger group are offered the opportunity to do so. This type of exercise works well with participants of various personality types and tends to ensure participation from all.

3. **Scribing:** The facilitator's primary task, as s/he leads the group through the exercises and mediates conversation, is to record responses in colorful marker on a large flip chart (which can rest on an easel). This is called "scribing," and it has two purposes.

First, it aides participants in listening and being heard, as responses are recorded on the flip chart. The facilitator may ask a participant to summarize their point, if it is unclear, so it can be recorded on the flip chart ("how should I record that up here?"). Secondly, it records the movement of the conversation throughout the session or series of sessions. Participants can look back at what was recorded earlier in order to build off of previous conversation. Participants are more informed when they can look up at the flip chart and see clear phrases which articulate elements of the discussion.

## VI. Taking Action

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Throughout Christian history, faithful saints have affirmed that faith without works is dead. This curriculum, because it seeks to combine the study of Biblical texts with some of the critical issues of our day, is designed to move Christians out of our comfort zones in considering the political and social implications of our faith. Ideally, participants will be moved toward action, and indeed each study guide offers "take action" opportunities. Below is a list of additional possibilities for groups who want to use this curriculum as a springboard for taking action.

## A. Dialogue

When participants begin to wonder, “*what next?*” as they work through this curriculum, it’s important to affirm that action is already taking place. The dialogue fostered by this curriculum *is* action. Explore with participants ways that they can forward this dialogue—how might we discuss these issues with those who agree with us and with those who disagree? Challenge participants to bring a Christian friend or family member to the next session who does not share the same outlook on the relationship between the U.S. and the world.

If certain participants stand out as possible facilitators, encourage them to facilitate the curriculum with a group that they organize in their congregation, among friends, or with an organization to which they belong.

## B. Action rooted in Christian Practices

Many Christian practices are rooted in the principles of justice, love, mercy, reconciliation, and peace. Simple ways to take action on issues discussed in this curriculum include:

- creating a Sabbath or Jubilee covenant group to create accountability around issues of rest and economic justice
- holding a candlelight vigil in a public space in your town to honor and mourn the lives lost in the Iraq War, those who have been wounded, and those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- designing an annual healing service around the anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima to collectively mourn the tragic loss of life
- collecting and sharing stories from the elders in one’s community of faith about their experiences and memories of war
- organizing children to create and send cards or artwork to countries widely perceived as our “enemies.”

Christians are called to eat together, pray together, mourn together, and laugh together across ideological and theological boundaries.

## C. Political Advocacy

Visit the National Priorities Project website at [www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org) and click on “trade-offs” to see how much your city and state spend on weapons and war, and how that money could translate into healthcare for children, affordable housing, or other priorities.

Some Christian groups may want to take action on particular issues related to public policy. There are many organizations that can assist groups in taking this step.

Visit the Friends Committee on National Legislation at [www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org) to connect historic Quaker testimonies on peace, equality, simplicity, and truth with peace and social justice issues the U.S. government should be addressing.

Sign onto email lists with Faithful Security at [www.fithfulsecurity.org](http://www.fithfulsecurity.org), the Muslim Christian Initiative (MCI) on the Nuclear Weapons Danger at [www.mci-nwd.org](http://www.mci-nwd.org), Sojourners at

[www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net), the American Friends Service Committee at [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org), Faith in the Public Life at [www.faithinpubliclife.org](http://www.faithinpubliclife.org), Bread for the World at [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org), or Church Women United at [www.churchwomen.org](http://www.churchwomen.org) for national action alerts and progressive Christian commentary on faith, politics, and culture.

Above all, please visit the WAND website at [www.wand.org](http://www.wand.org) and [www.faithwand.org](http://www.faithwand.org) to find up-to-date action guides on critical issues as well as action alerts. Track down groups in your area that work on justice and peace issues locally, regionally, and globally to find ways to become involved.

## **VII. Interplay between Faith, Feminism, and Experiences of Violence**

As WAND staff brought news of *Faith Seeking Peace* to chapters in the field, something interesting occurred. Within the span of one week, four women openly and honestly spoke to WAND staff about their painful experiences of abuse and violence within their faith communities, often at the hand of religious leaders. For some, this curriculum opened up old wounds. For others, *Faith Seeking Peace* seemed to offer an opportunity to reengage a religious tradition left behind years ago. For most, WAND’s faith project carried the hope for further healing.

Because WAND’s *Faith Seeking Peace* curriculum does not specifically focus on issues of domestic violence or sexual abuse, some facilitators are surprised that participation in the curriculum can re-open old wounds of those who have experienced such violence within their homes or communities of faith. And yet, our faith communities often function as family. Faith involves emotional and spiritual intimacy, and any time such intimacy exists, the possibility of violation becomes real. Religious leaders often carry a great deal of authority within faith communities, and we know—given clergy abuse scandals—that such authority can be greatly abused and misused.

When engaging the complex issues raised by *Faith Seeking Peace*, a participant’s personal experiences with violence may rise to the surface. Participants may feel that the safe space provided by a group making the link between feminism and faith is a good setting to give voice to their experiences and heal from old wounds. If this should happen in the midst of a session, it may be time to break up into a mini session to allow all participants some time to process what they are thinking and feeling in response to what they have heard. A short break following the mini session may also be appropriate to provide an opportunity for the facilitator to check in with the participant who shared a personal experience of abuse.

Upon reconvening the session, it may be helpful to briefly articulate the following:

- acknowledge what has just happened, that participants may have a variety of feelings about it ranging from pain and sympathy to “let’s move on...”
- The fact that this issue has arisen demonstrates that this is a safe space. While the purpose of the session is not to focus on experiences and issues of domestic violence or sexual abuse, these are issues that are intricately related to the violence of war. Maintaining safe

space throughout the rest of the session/curriculum requires confidentiality around what participants have shared.

- Those who have experienced clergy abuse, violence, or the misuse of power are not alone. These types of abuse have happened frequently and continue to happen.
- Abuse and violence are not the fault of the victim/survivor. Our task as Christians is to figure out how we can live out the call to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God in the midst of a violent world.

After sharing the above, move back into the curriculum. Remind participants that they may get up to use the bathroom or take a break whenever they need to do so. Check in with the participant again after the session has ended. It's important to know that facilitators, even if they are ordained ministers, are often not trained and licensed therapists. As a facilitator, do not attempt to provide therapy for the participant. Instead, consider exploring the option of the participant seeking therapy with a trained therapist if they are not already doing so.

## VIII. Evaluations

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**Included below is a general participant evaluation which may be used for any and all sessions.** Evaluations may require an additional 10 minutes. It is best, if possible, to have participants complete an evaluation directly after the session and submit it to the facilitator immediately.

Facilitators should utilize evaluations, but also should fax them to WAND at 404-524-7593. **Facilitator evaluations can also be found below.** These should be completed by all facilitators and also faxed to WAND. Evaluations help us to remain accountable for the materials we are producing and aid us in improving this project. We would also love to hear from facilitators by phone at 404-524-5999 or by email at [ahvoss@wand.org](mailto:ahvoss@wand.org).

## Faith Seeking Peace: Participant Evaluation

Please list your name and denomination. What inspired you to attend this class?

How do you understand the purpose of the *Faith Seeking Peace* curriculum?

What did you like most and least about this resource?

On a scale of one to ten (one being the worst and ten being the best), how would you rate *Faith Seeking Peace* in terms of content? In terms of process?

General comments:

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Please fax or mail evaluations to WAND at (404) 524-7593 or 250 Georgia Ave. SE  
Ste. 202, Atlanta, GA 30312, attn: Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss

## Faith Seeking Peace: Facilitator Evaluation

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Please list your name, organizational affiliation, denomination, and tell us about your work. How did you hear about *Faith Seeking Peace*?

What is your understanding of WAND, as an organization, and how did the association between the curriculum and the organization serve as an aid or a hindrance with your participant group?

How do you understand the purpose of the curriculum on the whole and how well were the objectives for each session satisfied? How did you like the order of the sessions?

How were you able to create safe space for participants? Was this a challenging task? Did conflict arise within the group?

How did participants respond to both the *process* and the *content* of the curriculum? As a facilitator, comment on the process and content from your perspective.

Which exercise *and* session did you like the most? Which exercise *and* session did you like the least? Why?

General Comments:

On a scale of one to ten (one being the worst and ten being the best), how would you rate this curriculum in terms of content?

In terms of process?

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Please fax or mail evaluations to WAND at (404) 524-7593 or 250 Georgia Ave. SE  
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