

## What is youth topics?

Topical issues to get young people thinking >>> fun – games, discussion starters, quizzes... >>> for people working with young people >>> sent to you twice a year >>> putting faith into action (youth topics is recommended to be used with young people aged 12-17 >>> feel free to adapt the content to suit the particular age and needs of your group.)

### How to use



- 1 Read it through once to get a feel for the programme.
- 2 Choose what is appropriate for your group.
- 3 Gather up what you will need.
- 4 Give yourself at least 30mins preparation time.
- 5 JUSTice – do it!

## Keep hope alive

Greed, racism, violence, discrimination and inequality can trigger a cycle of conflict.

If the conflict flares it can become a never-ending source of trouble as it is passed through the generations. Yet inside conflict zones there are often great stories of hope. In every place there are courageous, determined people working tirelessly to help those in need and resolve the differences at the heart of the conflict in their communities. This is grassroots at work and continues no matter what governments or rebels do. These people do make a difference and keep hope alive!

This issue of youth topics checks out what the peacemakers do at the grassroots level. It shares some of their methods and the need for hope when the odds are great. Both victims and victimisers need to learn to listen to one another, spend time in dialogue, work to understand and resolve differences, and advocate for a shared future where everyone has a place.



### Activity 1 WHAT'S THE DIAGNOSIS?

**Aim** To acknowledge the different types of conflict and identify the common elements of conflicts.

**Resources** Newspapers, magazines ...

**Action** Provide newspaper and magazine pictures or dramatic headlines about different types of conflict: eg between young people and their parents, bullying at school or work, violence against children or older people, arguments between friends, threatening behaviour, wars, groups fighting over resources such as land or oil, fighting between people of different gender or race. Break into small groups and brainstorm the discussion questions below.

1. What is the conflict in the picture?
2. Who is involved? Who is affected by it?
3. How does it affect the people involved in the short term? In the long term?

Return into the large group and discuss what causes conflict.

*Injustice can be taken away  
It doesn't have to be  
Always causing conflict  
For us all to see  
Our human limits still abound  
Unfair inequality  
We can endure, we can survive  
And try hard to break free  
Dream, dance, do what you can  
Challenge the limits creatively.*

### Activity 2 HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

**Aim** To practise listening well as a first step to resolving conflict.

**Resources** Chairs and volunteers.

**Action** In three groups brainstorm the skills for good listening ie giving the person your full attention, turn off your cell phone or music, repeating back what the person is saying in an affirming and interested way. After the brainstorm break into pairs. Set up the pairs so that they are facing each other ready to have a conversation. Person A is the story teller and Person B is the listener. Ask person A to tell person B about a fantastic movie they have just seen and encourage person B to role model good listening. Ask questions about how it felt to be listened to attentively and then what it was like being the listener.

### Activity 3 ENCOURAGING THE DIALOGUE

**Aim** To show how good communication can bring hope to a situation.

**Resources** An orange.

**Action** Choose two people to play person A and person B. Take the role players aside and explain that there will be three short role plays required of them. On the table there is an orange. In all role plays both people want the orange. Ask those watching to indicate with a thumbs up or a thumbs down signal if there is good dialogue.

**Role Play One:** A and B see the orange on the table. They go for it but A grabs it before B and heads off. B looks decidedly annoyed and grumpy.

**Role Play Two:** Both A and B again go for the orange. Again A gets it. This time B challenges and says, "Hey, I wanted the orange too!" A thinks of a quick solution and cuts the orange in half. Both go off still muttering and not that happy.

**Role Play Three:** Both parties go for the orange. A once again grabs the orange. However this time B says, "I want the orange". A acknowledges the request with good listening skills by stopping and looking at the person with their full attention, and then says, "Why?" After chatting, they discover their need for the orange is different and A only needs the outside to make icing and B needs the juice from the orange. The rest of the group should have responded with thumbs up for excellent listening and dialogue skills shown in the third role play.

## Christian World Service (CWS)

CWS works worldwide in 22 countries providing funds for local community projects to tackle poverty and build self-reliance. CWS responds quickly to humanitarian crises such as in the Congo by providing emergency supplies like food, shelter, medicines and clean water through the global network ACT International (Action by Churches Together). CWS also campaigns to tackle the root causes of global poverty and injustice, such as discrimination, unfair economic rules and the lack of resources.

### What we believe

CWS believes it is critical to listen carefully to its partners before undertaking any action or programme. CWS will keep helping until partners can become sustainable community organisations. The dialogue approach is key to good community development and conflict resolution.

Injustice is at the root of conflict but it can be overcome by dedicated action over time. Poverty is often a result of conflict; it can cause conflict and conflict increases poverty. Most of the victims in war are civilians, many of them women and children. They face a daily struggle to stay alive, protect their families and earn a living. By supporting CWS partners you enable people to work together for a better future and help keep hope alive.

### yt direct

If you wish to receive Youth Topics twice a year, tel 0800 74 73 72 (Youth Team) or email us at youth@cws.org.nz Just say what you want and give us your details.

## Activity 4 STEP UP TO THE LINE

**Aim** To create awareness of common life experiences.

**Resources** Prepared list of questions: eg who has a birthday in June? Who has a grandmother living overseas? Who has a pet that has died? Who struggles with maths? Who has one brother? Who is a middle child?

**Action** Create a thick line down the middle of the room. Divide the group evenly on either side of the line. Ask them to take five steps away from the line. If a person is able to answer yes to the question they are to take a step closer to the line. Once there they are to nod and acknowledge the others who are also on the line as someone that has something in common with them regardless of age, race, gender, or financial position.

**Discuss** Were there any surprises that came from the exercise? Did you learn something new about another person? Did you have things in common that you had not expected?

### LISTEN: RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

The South Pacific nation of Fiji has seen its share of political turmoil. Behind the turmoil in Fiji is the deep division between ethnic Fijians and Indo Fijians and differing political perspectives. George from the youth programme of the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA), a partner of Christian World Service, says "The past two coups in Fiji were about racism therefore ECEA's aim is to get indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians of our land to have discussions".

We know racism is destructive. It destroys communities and creates divisions in society. It is the opposite of the democratic principle that all people are equal and have the right to be treated fairly. To overcome this division created by the political situation the young people of the programme are initiating conversation on how to move forward together across the dividing lines. Earlier in 2008 young men and women from various ethnic groups and religions in Fiji met at a forum and have new hope for their communities. The young people are learning to be intercultural peace builders, ie learning the tools they need to build better understanding between ethnic groups in Fiji, to confront racism and to work for a society that negotiates its differences peacefully and creatively.

Vinaka who participates in the programme says, "What an experience! Youth from all over Fiji came together and shared opinions and experiences which stemmed from their own cultural backgrounds. Taboo topics were discussed as openly as possible. The concepts of RACISM and DISCRIMINATION were dug deep to figure out the root causes and what the way forward can be now...."



### YOUR TURN: READ OUT THE SCENARIO -

Next door to the school is a house with lovely land around it. It has just been gifted to the school under the condition that it is to be used for recreational activities for young people. Everyone is very excited about the new property and start to make plans around the use of the building. However a conflict arises when sub groups e.g. emo's, skaters, musicians begin to argue. Each group argues their case for using the building and why the other groups should not. Ask for one or two volunteers to argue for each sub group. Give them five minutes to prepare their case with a group of supporters. Invite those less interested in taking sides to form the third 'observer group'. Then give the representatives of the sub groups five minutes each to present their cases. Once the cases have been presented see if they can resolve their differences in five minutes of discussion. Finally invite the observer group to comment about how well each other group did at listening and respecting each other.

### Activity 5 WHAT CAN HELP!

**Aim** To explore areas of work where grassroots action happens and where the partners of CWS spend their energy.

**Resource** Word find and definitions can be downloaded from www.cws.org.nz - go to: resources/youth/youth topics 15.

**Action** Around the room place printed definitions of some of the words from the word find. Give each person a set of words (pre cut) from the word find and invite them to move around the room placing the word that fits the definition. Allow 10 minutes for this, then call freeze. Those who are standing beside a particular definition are asked to come up with a role play that uses this word to help in a conflict situation.

#### Definitions:

**Community Development** is about the involvement of a group of people in the issues that affect their lives. It is a process based on sharing power, skills, knowledge and experience.

**Advocacy** is speaking, writing or acting in support of something.

**Equality** is about all people being respected and given access to their cultural, political, social and economic rights.

**Legislation** is the process of making a law or the laws themselves.

**Dialogue** is a conversation between two or more people.

**Consultation** involves the consideration of other people's views on some matter, when making decisions.

**Partnership** is working together for an identified common goal or as a long term relationship.

**Action** is to do something to make change.

**Gift** is to give something as a present without expecting compensation.

**Ecumenical** is about the whole inhabited earth especially Christians and churches working together.

**Integrity** could be described as moral soundness or as consistency of thoughts, values and actions.

### The Federation For the Dalit Women's Empowerment of South India.

Caste discrimination in India is well entrenched, although now illegal, Dalits, formerly known as the untouchables, are the lowest, most marginalized group in the caste hierarchy. They are expected to do the most demanding and menial tasks, live in segregated areas, use separate water wells, drinking vessels and dishes, and suffer other daily humiliations. Each year there are at least 10,000 acts of violence against them. Every hour two Dalits are assaulted; every day three Dalit women are raped; every day two Dalits are murdered and two Dalit houses are burned down.<sup>1</sup> Dalits were considered ritually polluting; it was considered a sin for caste Hindus to look at Dalits. They were compelled to live outside the village, forbidden to wear gold, silver or jewels. Excluded from education they remain so far outside of mainstream communications that many do not even know that there is legislation outlawing untouchability.



CWS partners the Federation for Dalit Women Empowerment (FEDWE) use many of the skills identified in the word-find to improve the life of the Dalit community. Through their efforts women, children, and young people have more control over their lives and a more sustainable lifestyle. They can live with greater dignity, self respect and gender equity. FEDWE works hard in implementing The Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 passed by the Indian Government. They want this Act to help stop the suffering of an oppressed people although many deliberately ignore it or don't know it exists. FEDWE has many challenges to face and a lot of work to do. They have initiated dialogue with non Dalits to create an awareness of caste hierarchy and the social disparities prevailing around gender in their society. By listening they are helping the non Dalit community and dominant forces in the society begin to understand the story of the Dalit people.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Seabrook, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Class, Caste and Hierarchies*.

### Activity 6 KEEP HOPE ALIVE AND PERSEVERE

#### The story of the Widow and the Unjust Judge.

**Aim** To explore what the Bible says about our Keeping Hope Alive.

**Resources** Bible for each group.

**Action** Read in small groups the Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge. *Luke 18: 1-8*.

Read the parable to yourself once. Then in groups choose one member to read the parable aloud. Take a couple of minutes to think on the words. Ask someone again in the group to read the parable aloud. Take a couple of minutes to ponder again the parable and what it may be saying to you. Go around the group asking each member what really stood out for them from the parable. Once everyone has shared ask each group member to pray with the person next to them or ask a leader to end in prayer.

### What to do now

- 1 If you want to know more about CWS and their partners' grassroots work check out the website. www.cws.org.nz.
- 2 Organise a sponsored event with the money going to help CWS partners like ECREA and FEDWE with their grassroots community work or ring CWS (0800 747372) and become a regular financial contributor.
- 3 Think about these quotes and what they mean to you, "Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act" (Albert Einstein) 'Be the change you want to see in the world' (Mahatma Gandhi).
- 4 Don't give up knocking down the walls of injustice. Keep praying for a responsible and caring humanity.
- 5 Think about how you treat others in your class or school.