

stop making and using cluster-bombs (which spray devastating bomblets over large areas and can blow up later when people pick them up). Guess what? The United States, Russia, China, Israel, India, and Pakistan did not participate in shaping this ban and haven't agreed to it. I quote a paragraph in the report: "In Washington, a spokesman for the State Department, Tom Casey, said that such weapons are an important part of the American arsenal." I wonder what a spokesman for Jesus would say?

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Generally speaking, humankind has a tendency toward violence when things do not go the way that individuals, groups and nations desire. We most often consider violence only to have occurred when physical force and action is used against another, whether it be a person, a group, a nation, or some other earthly entity. However, violence is rightly defined as abusing and doing harm to someone through thoughts, looks, and words, as well as actions. Most of us do not stop to consider that any harmful way in which we interact with one another is a form of violence. For any interaction between two or more people, an unkind thought or word, gossip, a reacting frown, a threat, domination, aggressive behavior, or undue physical force are examples of violence that disturb what could and should be a peaceful and meaningful

relationship. In most situations, we do not have to look beyond ourselves for daily examples of this expanded view of violence.

In his relationship with the established religion of the day, Jesus expressed dissatisfaction with the current practices that existed in the Jewish faith; and he did this with words and actions that disturbed the leadership and status quo. Jesus' intent was to return the Jewish people toward acknowledging and worshipping God without the extreme legalism and pomp promoted and practiced by the existing leadership.

With words and actions that disturbed the leadership and status quo of his day, John Hus also expressed dissatisfaction with the current practices and excesses that existed in the Roman Catholic Church. His intent was to return the leadership within the church to a more simple style of living that modeled the life of the Apostles, centered on the law of Christ as found in the gospels, and emphasized helping people at all levels of society.

Both Jesus and John Hus worked for improvements by staying within the existing religious establishments using reasonably peaceful and meaningful approaches. Both were willing to come to the table and discuss their feelings and to reach agreements on changes that would result in more appropriate religious practices. I can think of no examples from their ministries in which they called for violent, physical action against another person or group or for the specific establishment of a new religion. It was the leadership of the Jewish faith and the Roman Catholic Church who

was unwilling to change and who wished to continue the status quo. It was only after their deaths by violent methods that new religious movements were begun by those following their teachings; and, over time, both the Christian faith and the Czech Reformation used physical violence to promote and sustain their beliefs and existence.

I hope we can learn from Jesus and John Hus and apply the lessons learned when our own Moravian congregations and provinces need to improve our faith and service so that we effectively focus on God and Christ, our ministries, our missions, and our love for one another. We have a rich heritage of faith, love and hope that has acted in peaceful ways and has promoted justice and service to all peoples.

I also hope we can learn from the six factors cited in *The Hinge's* lead article—factors that can potentially increase violent thoughts, words, looks and actions in our Moravian community. I think these factors point to six simple ways in which we can remove the potential for violence as we work together in our congregations and provinces:

We can reduce agitation within our community by acknowledging, listening and responding in creative ways to new thinking and action that may be needed to improve our relationships and practices.

We can eliminate irreparable damage to our community by not cleaving to an immovable position on any religious, cultural, social or organizational issue, although widely divergent opinions may exist.

We can overcome evil with good actions by demonstrating through our faith and our love toward others that we follow Christ and that peaceful existence and good order result through the ways in which we live and behave.

We can provide dignity and respect for all members of our community by not letting our personal biases make others feel that they are different and thus alienating and separating them from truly belonging.

We can dialogue over matters of faith and belief by recognizing that the truth claims of the Christian faith are essential to our existence but need to be interpreted and understood in ways that transcend unhealthy absolutes.

We can participate in leading and supporting our community so that all members are represented in deciding on directions and actions.

Applying these six simple and positive responses to situations in our community allow us to live by example in demonstrating our non-violent approaches to the Christian faith in our congregations and provinces. Applying these responses requires that we recognize the value and need for dialogue and understanding. Applying these responses requires that regardless of our thinking and opinions or our positions as leaders or members, we come to the discussion table and remain until there is agreement or consensus on how we will behave as a community of Christ.

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