

Reconciliation, Peace-making and Disarmament Position Paper

Peace Common Concern Network

Updated September 2025

The Iona Community



Peace
Position Paper



About this position paper

"We believe that the use, or threatened use, of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is theologically and morally indefensible and that opposition to their existence is an imperative of the Christian faith."

The Iona Community's commitment to peace goes back to the convictions of the Community's founder, George MacLeod. Today, it continues to be central to our Community commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, quoted in part above.

We are an international, ecumenical Christian community. We have Members and Associate Members in more than 25 nations across most continents. Collectively we long for and have an ongoing urgent concern for the peace of the world.

Our concern is grounded in the gospel imperative for peace. In this position paper we make clear our commitment to do all that we can to work, act and pray for it.

Our Community context

As a young man, George MacLeod fought in the trenches and received the Military Cross for bravery. He became a pacifist in the inter-war years, enduring bitter hostility for his views during World War II. In 1957, his Moderatorial Address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, delivered with the title 'Bombs and Bishops' was a plea for church unity and nuclear disarmament.

The Community's peace commitment was first formalised in 1966. This was the time of the Cold War and the build-up of nuclear weapons, but also an era of international transition and decolonisation. Recognition of the role played by economic injustice and racism in exacerbating and often causing conflict reflected the experience of members of the Community working in post-colonial African countries and confirmed the strong belief that any peace commitment also had to be rooted in a commitment to justice. In 1979, George MacLeod launched 'Mobilization for Survival', an initiative for unilateral nuclear disarmament. He continued to campaign for nuclear disarmament until his death at the age of 95. The Community's commitment to peace was also evidenced in the employment of a Justice and Peace Worker, Helen Steven, throughout the 1970s and 80s.

Opposition to weapons of mass destruction and to the arms trade has remained a part of the Community's action for justice and peace, individually and collectively ever since.

Our Christian conviction

At the heart of this enduring passion for peace has been the firm spiritual conviction that the way of Jesus Christ is one of non-violence. We are following one who was unequivocal in teaching that his followers should love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, bless those who curse them and pray for those who ill-treat them, and who died doing exactly that.

Peace is a central theme in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Appearing over 500 times in the Hebrew Bible, peace שלום (shalom) is not simply the cessation of hostilities or a personal state of inner calm. It is an active process making things whole and restoring what

is broken in the context of justice. It derives from the Hebrew root שָׁלַם (slm) meaning to be safe, sound, healthy, perfect, complete.

The Christian concept of peace, expressed in the Christian scriptures by the Greek word for peace - εἰρήνη (eirene) - focuses on reconciliation. True שָׁלוֹם (shalom) and εἰρήνη (eirene) are not achieved by “naive pacifism” but by a life based on love of God and neighbour, striving for justice, healing and reconciliation in harmony with all creation.

Our Current context

Now in the 2020s we see with growing concern a global situation with ongoing armed conflict, both between and within nations. The Geneva Academy for International Law currently monitors over 110 armed conflicts, estimated to be probably the most at any one time since World War II.

There is an increase in militarism, arms manufacture, military spending and readiness for war. There is a narrowing understanding of what constitutes security for individuals and nations, at a time when increasing inequality and climate change are the real threats.

Nuclear armed states risk failing to implement the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or to show any interest in the UN Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This treaty, which was negotiated with the participation of 135 nations, currently (July 2025) has 94 signatory states and has been ratified by 73 states parties.

Our Commitment

In our response to these historical, Christian and current contexts, the Peace CCN confirms the Iona Community's commitment to encouraging and stimulating thought and action for peace, reconciliation and disarmament, both within and beyond our Community.

As Members and Associate Members of the Iona Community, we commit to:

- **supporting the work of the UN** and other agencies in countering a concept of security based on militarism.
- **promoting the concept of human security** as the security of individuals and communities with a right to economic security and access to adequate health care and food associated with political security and care for the environment.
- **supporting the work of Campaign Against the Arms Trade** in opposing both specific and general arms deals, recognising the role of the international arms trade, both legal and illegal, in exacerbating conflict around the world and in diverting funding from other budgets.
- **opposing the production, possession or use of nuclear weapons** and support the work established by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- **an approach to peace-making** that recognises the role that conflict plays in exacerbating other challenges of the 21st century - local environmental degradation, climate change, refugee crises.

- **encouraging discussion and action** on these issues within the Community and with any other groups or individuals who have a genuine commitment to pursuing peaceful resolution of conflict, negotiation, reconciliation and alternative understandings of security to a military one.
- **continuing to work in partnership** with other organisations in the cause of making peace. We confirm our commitment to opposing the production, possession or use of nuclear weapons and support the work established by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Useful resources

The Iona Community is a member of the following wider alliances and groups:

- Network of Christian Peace Organisations
- Scottish Peace Network
- Church and Peace
- XR Peace
- Lakenheath Alliance for Peace
- Reconcilers Together
- Spirituality of Conflict
- Week of Prayer for World Peace

We continue to be inspired by Micah 4, 3b – 4:

‘They will beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid.’

‘Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me’ hymn by Jill Jackson-Miller and Sy Miller. [Available to read here.](#)

Contact us

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The Iona Community is an ecumenical Christian movement seeking new ways of living the gospel in today's world through working for peace and social justice rebuilding community and in the renewal of worship. Company No: SC096243 Charity No: SC003794

