

# WAGING PEACE: 5 Approaches to Leading a Discussion



Music by Robert Kyr  
and lyrics from the Baton Rouge community  
(Commissioned by Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge in 2013)

## SUMMARY

*Waging Peace* is an original choral composition by respected American composer Dr. Robert Kyr. The lyrics are first-person accounts from individuals in Greater Baton Rouge submitted to the Interfaith Federation in the fall of 2012. The complete choral work with narration is 36 minutes in length and includes five movements: Listen, Understand, Forgive, Collaborate, and Proclaim.

The world premiere of *Waging Peace* music was featured at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Sounds of Community Concert held on Sunday, May 5, 2013 at Broadmoor Baptist Church. It was performed by an interfaith community choir, narrators, and instrumental ensemble representing over 20 congregations, totaling 100 performers.

## RESOURCES: CD from the Waging Peace Concert

The CD from the World Premiere of *Waging Peace* is available from the Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge. Included in the CD is the complete text of the lyrics and narration. This CD is a wonderful ongoing resource to encourage and motivate individuals to wage peace in their own lives and in the community.

## INTRODUCTION

Here are five frameworks to use as a guide when you make your plans to lead a discussion group on waging peace. As you make plans to lead a discussion, do not limit yourself to only one approach, but tailor-make a lesson plan for your specific audience and time frame. The CD of the concert is a helpful tool, but is not essential for a discussion.

## PRELIMINARY PLANS

- Clarify your objectives: What is the purpose of each session?
- Know your audience: Will you teach youth, adults, and/or families?
- Choose your time frame: Number of sessions? Time length per session?
- Consider inviting others to help facilitate the discussion: Someone who sang in the chorus or one who attended the concert? A survivor of violence?
- Remember to use “I” language and keep the discussion local.

### SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

CD of *Waging Peace*  
CD player  
Handout: Overview  
Handout: Lyrics  
Pencils/Pens

## FIVE APPROACHES

### 1) Listen to the voices of Baton Rouge

Pay attention to the lyrics, narration, and music as you listen to the *Waging Peace* recording. Keep in mind the lyrics and narration are from residents of Baton Rouge. Take time to read the words. Listen to their stories. Hear your neighbor’s pain as well as hope. Use a pen or pencil to circle key phrases. Pause for silent reflection.

- What do you hear? What is being said?
- How do our lives intersect with others as they share their stories?
- How might telling “our story” provide healing and hope?
- How are we changed as we listen to one another?

## 2) Understand the human condition

Listen to the lyrics and narration contributed by the Baton Rouge community and focus on themes of the human condition: violence, despair, fear, hope, prayer, meaning, gifts, forgiveness, and community. Also listen for the presence and response of the One to whom prayers are offered.

- Could these be “my” words?
- If not, why not?
- What common ground do you find with those who contributed the words used in the lyrics and narration?
- How do you (and I) engage in violence?
- What might change in our relationships if, and when, we seek common ground?

## 3) Pray that our hearts of stone might be transformed

Before listening to any music, become centered. Breathe. Let go of worries. Breathe deeply. Play a single movement three times, but each time ask one of the following questions:

Question for the first listening session:

What do you hear? (What speaks to you?)

Question for the second listening session:

Imagine the people who contributed the words.

What are their stories? What feelings or emotions surface?

Question for the third listening session:

What is the message for you?

What prayers does it evoke? How are you inspired to respond?

Variation: Rather than listening to the CD for one of the listening sessions, consider reading the narration and lyrics aloud as people listen. Provide time for sacred listening as persons in the group share their reflections while the group listens without comment or discussion. Allow enough time for prayers to be formed. Pray for one another.

## 4) Feel the Music

Focus on the musical arrangement. Reflect on the collaborative efforts of instrumentalists and singers (from approximately 20 congregations). Invite someone who sang in the community chorus or who attended the concert to describe what it was like to participate in the world premiere of Waging Peace.

- How does the composer use the music to support the lyrics?
- As you listen to each movement, what feelings, emotions, and thoughts are stirred?
- How does the composer resolve tension and discord in the music?
- How do the varied moods in each movement reflect and parallel your own journey with violence and peace?
- To which movement do you find yourself drawn and why?

## 5) Call for Action

Listen for the cries for justice found in each movement. Take time to ask the difficult questions. Why? Why am I not able to share love and kindness as I would like? Explore how each of us participates in acts of violence through outbursts of anger, impatience, and frustration. How do I live a life of integrity?

- Can there be peace without justice?
- Can there be justice without peace?
- But what is justice?
- Discover ways to collaborate with others to wage peace.