



Who is my neighbour?

As we become aware of our own value as an individual, it is important that we treat others as we like to be treated. Almost all religions have a golden rule: do to others as you would have them do to you.

We live in communities. Throughout history there have always been hermits who live alone, but they are the exception. Most of us live, work and play with all sorts of different people and our feelings towards them can be very different.

Over the last century, despite emphasis on national identity and pride, we have become increasingly conscious that we live in a global community. In some senses, it is a very small world indeed. The news of something happening in one nation is publicised to every nation. Furthermore its consequences can deeply affect people everywhere. Our lives are inter-linked and our neighbour is our sister and brother on the other side of the world as well as the people who live next door.

No individual or nation can build a wall that will keep out thoughts and ideas. As humans we are interdependent, not only with each other but also with all of nature. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the earth we stand on are being damaged by our use and abuse of resources. How I live in one country affects how others live in another.

Suppose our neighbour is hurt. Is it our business? If the woman next door is violently assaulted, does it concern us? If war breaks out on the other side of the world, should we care? Who is responsible for bringing healing to a community 10 or 10,000 kilometres away that is devastated by fire, flood, earthquake or war?

Such questions have been asked for centuries. It is important to acknowledge that religion itself is sometimes a huge barrier to the development of a sense community. Religious wars and tensions are evident across the world. But of course this should not be the case. At its best, religion should speak of tolerance and acceptance both of our neighbour and of the stranger.

The Christian tradition records a story in the Bible commonly known as the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37). When Jesus was asked by a clever lawyer, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ he responded with a story about ordinary people caught in a universal experience:

‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

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Like all parables, the story is filled with unexpected depths of meaning. For Jesus it is clear that being a neighbour has nothing to do with geography or beliefs. We are all neighbours to each other.

According to the Qur'an and Sunnah, a Muslim has to discharge his moral responsibility not only to his parents, relatives and neighbours but to all men and women. The following Hadith (words) said by the Prophet Muhammad explains what a Muslim should do:

'He is not a believer who eats his fill when his neighbour beside him is hungry.'

The prophets in the Bible of the Jewish people make it very clear that belief in God is tied to treatment of neighbour:

'With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?... He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

(Micah 6:6a;8)

Hinduism and Buddhism promote care for all too.

Every religion has its own boundaries that define its identity. Some religions are more closed than others. But being a neighbour means that we are compassionate towards those who suffer and that we willingly help others wherever need exists. Such actions are a unifying force, binding us together in community. When we think chiefly of our own well-being and rarely give even a passing thought for the victims of oppression, injustice, violence and disease, we add to the alienation of one from another.

We need to find ways to bring us closer together in a new kind of human unity. Throughout the world, thousands and thousands of people, especially women and

children, are injured, raped, killed, left homeless and hungry every day. They are all our neighbours.

The world's religions all expect that faith will lead to a changed life in terms of human relationships. The person who tries to act continually with love and compassion enriches her own spiritual life. The giver gains as much as the recipient. Our own self-respect grows when we treat others, no matter who they are or what they have done, with respect. It is always possible to treat people fairly and justly without necessarily condoning or excusing their behaviour.

WAGGGS' Service Projects

Acts of service to others lie at the heart of what it is to be a Girl Guide/Girl Scout. Service projects enable members to show their responsibility for others within the community. Indeed Girl Guides/Girl Scouts are not only concerned for the future of their local community but for national and global communities too. Their activities make a difference to the lives of their neighbours throughout the world.

As part of their link with the Georgian Girl Scout Association, the Irish Girl Guides assisted with summer camps for refugee children from Georgia's war torn autonomous republic in the north-east. The Girl Guides of Canada – Guides du Canada, organised and ran a diversity camp for immigrant mothers and their children. Activities included music and crafts, co-operative games, sports and hiking. The Pakistan Girl Guides Association, through its Junior Guide Co. 'D' of Darkhana, carried out a health and sanitation project. The Junior Guides collected and sorted dry garbage and sold it at a better rate. The money raised from the sale paid for the following: vaccinations for hepatitis B for five children; the operation of a young boy suffering with a glandular malformation; medicine for a young

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man suffering with TB; a wheelchair and a stretcher for a hospital; fees for a midwife in training; assistance to a young widow.

In Venezuela, the Ranger Guides of Los Proceres Group No. 2 from the Guyana Unit collected food donated by local shops. This food was distributed to a home for the elderly

International service projects include literacy schemes, visiting hospitals, planting trees to prevent soil erosion, conflict-resolution and peace education.

Realizing that children were leaving hospital without being vaccinated, a vaccination awareness programme was launched for children from 0 to 5 years old in Burkina Faso. Since 1981, patrols, rural Guides especially, have been organizing ongoing awareness campaigns in public places (outside churches, markets, etc.). Today, fewer women show reticence towards vaccination and do not respect the vaccination schedule of their children.

In order to make people more aware of the benefits of vitamin A, the Guides of Lebanon organized a sensitization campaign. Each company prepared biodegradable banners on which the benefits of vitamin A were written

and each Guide then stuck various items of food that contain vitamin A onto the banners. They then dressed up as the food items and distributed the banners across Lebanon. The Lebanese have therefore seen, in all the streets, a cabbage walking between two tomatoes, a courgette and a carrot.... The Guides explained to people the importance of vitamin A, which can prevent poor vision, cancer, infertility and mucus infections.

There are many more examples of these activities where Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting are making a difference in their communities.

Volunteering

Another way to contribute to the community is through volunteering. Millions of people throughout the world give their time, energy and skills as volunteers each week. Volunteers can do almost anything and anyone can volunteer irrespective of age and background. Volunteering is about helping others but it is as important to realise that volunteers benefit enormously too. Volunteering offers the potential for better employment prospects, the opportunity to learn new skills and to take on new challenges. Volunteering is enjoyable, satisfying and fun.



The power of the individual

It's easy to think 'I can't do anything; I'm just one person.' But when you stop to analyze it, such a statement simply flies in the face of history. Most advances in justice and peace have come about through the beliefs and actions of individuals.

The ripples of change that began with people such as Abraham and Sarah, Jesus, Mohammed, Siddhartha Gotama continue to be profound. Movements and organizations of all kinds – religious, political, humanitarian, educational, scientific, and cultural – almost all began with the vision and the energy of one person. Scouting and Guiding was born from the vision of one man – Lord Baden-Powell. Committees came later! It is amazing what one person can do.

Letters from tens of thousands of individual members of Amnesty International have persuaded governments to release political prisoners. Peaceful public protests by the apparently powerless have raised support in the world community and awakened the consciences of the powerful. Think for example of the mothers of the disappeared in Argentina.

When you believe that governments, corporations, organizations or individuals have made decisions or are acting in ways that are harmful to the community, make your opinion known to them. Your voice can be effective. In most democratic societies, politicians re-think policies when they hear from a large number of unhappy voters. Corporate managers listen to complaints because their sales depend on satisfied customers.

There are times when you may put your own safety, even life, in jeopardy by speaking out. Only you can weigh all the factors. Will those close to you be hurt, physically or in any other way, if you speak out? Will you lose your job? Do you have the spiritual and mental courage, as well as the physical stamina, to stand up against wrong?

The struggle by women to share fully in society so that they are treated equally with men in government, the workplace, recreation and the home was the biggest revolution of the 20th century. The equality of women benefits the whole community. Women had to speak out for themselves since there was no one else to do so. There were and are many courageous women.

The individual and WAGGGS

Are you concerned about justice, the environment, racism, violence or other problems affecting society? Do you have ideas for making life better? WAGGGS accepts that what you believe matters. How you act can make a difference not only in your own life, but also to the lives of others.

Working together with like-minded people who share concerns, strengthens the commitment and actions of all. Networking has become an increasingly effective method of spreading new ideas and extending the possibilities for successful action. What begins as a simple sharing of information ends with people working together towards a common goal.

The power of the individual

WAGGGS' Peace Initiative

The WAGGGS' Peace Initiative is a powerful example of individuals working together to benefit communities and nations. Working individually and as members of small groups, members of WAGGGS determine to make peace a reality in the community, nationally and in the wider world.

A commitment to peace is not just about signing declarations and high profile intervention work. It is more often about the day to day behaviours and interaction that individuals have with family, friends and colleagues and those with whom they do not immediately identify.

WAGGGS involvement with refugees

In 1993–1997 WAGGGS joined forces with the UNHCR, the organization responsible for protecting and assisting refugees around the

world. Over 8.5 million girls and young women worked together to improve the lives of refugees worldwide. The Tanzania Girl Guides Association worked with Somali refugees, implementing health sensitisation programmes, income-generating activities, education in marketing and management and an environmental conservation programme. In Zambia, the focus has been on skills training and income-generating for refugee Angolan girls. The Zimbabwe Girl Guides Association work with internally displaced people providing skills training for a poultry raising project.

WAGGGS involvement with refugees is another example of individuals coming together to improve the world through local action and education.



Being part of a family

The family is the first unit of society into which a child is born and from which a child will learn. Many children begin to learn spiritual values from their family, even if the family does not have a faith commitment.

There are many varieties of family patterns and in many parts of the world, the traditional family unit is being redefined. The large extended family has always been the norm in some societies: parents, grandparents, children, aunts, uncles, cousins. Kinship bonds might include several hundred relationships. Besides providing mutual care, they help to guard against the intermarriage of people who are too closely related.

Other families are small: one child and one parent. There are many reasons for this. Some people chose to bring up a child alone. Others are single parents due to the fact that their partner is employed away from home, through divorce, death or desertion.

Couples, married in law or not, may be a family unit. Children may live with blood relatives other than their parents, or with adults not related to them. Nuns or monks, living in religious communities, regard their community as their family. This is also true for those who live in other communal arrangements, secular or sacred.

It is obvious that a lot more than blood relationships make a family. Indeed, sometimes a family related by blood has no close ties and no real claim to being a family. Yet the bonds that unite individuals in true

families are strong. First of all, an uncritical, forgiving love. Shared memories, both joyous and painful. Family traditions. Many meals eaten together. Fun and recreation. Learning. Conversation. Laughter. Tears. Places. Smells. Hugs. Music and singing. Stories. Dancing. Seeing new places. Shared friends of several generations. At its best, a family is where you are always welcome because you know beyond all doubt that you belong.

The awareness of being part of a family is a profoundly spiritual feeling. Imagine what the world would be like if we cared for each other as parents care for their children, and if we could trust each other as children do. The mutual giving and receiving that takes place in families, small and large, is not about things. It's about trust, openness, listening, appreciation, acceptance and help. A living, vibrant family is not a closed unit. It opens its doors in hospitality, and welcomes others in need of family love.

Sadly, there are birth families that are not trustworthy, supportive, or caring. Some parents are unable to love their children as they did not receive love themselves. Countless children experience criticism, rejection, abuse, neglect, hatred and desertion by their natural parents. They have to look elsewhere for the emotional and even physical support a family is expected to give. They may find this with other adults including the parents of close friends, teachers, youth leaders, or their peers. Street children often gather and live in groups, creating a unit that has many of the characteristics of a family.



The power of the group

Purpose

For the participants to experience the enjoyment and collective power of working together to solve a problem as a group.

Materials needed

Paper, pens, local newspaper

What to do

Around the world brave women speak out against injustice. They take up a public position. They speak in organizations to which they belong, initiate action groups or even whole new movements. They speak from the heart, out of deep conviction that their words can carry to high places and help to bring about change.

When people act together on an issue, they can have a stronger voice for change.

As a group think about local problems that are in the news and choose one that is of particular concern to you all. Brainstorm ways in which you could take action to deal with the problem using the following guidelines.

What is the **PROBLEM**?

What are the **ISSUES** around the problem?

What are the **SUB-ISSUES**?

What are the **ACTIONS** that can be taken?

When you have **SUCCESS** you must **CELEBRATE!**



Discussion about family

Purpose

To explore attitudes towards and experiences of family.

Materials needed

Props (as required)

What to do

Divide participants into groups of four. Invite them to choose one of the questions below for discussion and then to make up a play using information from the discussion. The play will be performed to the rest of the wider group.

Describe the family to which you belong.

Do you think of yourself as belonging to more than one family?

What do you think about separation and divorce? Is it too easy? What effect does separation and divorce have on children?

What other kinds of families do you know e.g. one-parent families? What is your attitude towards other models of family?

What is the attitude towards homosexuality within your community? What do you think about children being brought up within a homosexual relationship?

How has your experience of family affected your own spiritual development? Give specific examples.



How well equipped are you to help?

Purpose

To look at what skills and attitudes people may need to develop in order to offer a better quality of service to others.

Materials needed

Table below

What to do

Two factors are involved in service to others: skills and attitude.

Skills

Before you can help someone in need, you have to be able to analyse what is wrong and have the practical skills and knowledge to provide assistance.

Invite participants to measure their own skills and knowledge by completing this chart. Adjust it for use appropriate to the group that you are working with.

After people have filled in the form, encourage them to choose one skill that they want to improve. How can they do this? Their action plan must be SMART:

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-oriented



How well equipped are you to help?

	Have no skill	Have some skills	Am skilled
Basic First Aid procedures			
Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation			
Artificial Respiration			
Family meal preparation			
Catering for large numbers			
Identification of edible wild foods			
Listening to other people			
Looking after a baby			
Looking after a small child			
Looking after elderly person			
Assisting a wheelchair user			
Knowledge of sign language for the hearing impaired			
Able to communicate in a language other than mother tongue			
Repairing a bicycle			
Do minor boat repairs			
Repair and maintain variety of mechanical or electrical objects			
Know how to use basic tools (hammer, saw)			
Do minor car repairs			
Putting up a tent			
Find way by sun and stars			
Make a temporary shelter			
How to stay safe in severe storms			
Reading a map			
Writing letters			
Making telephone calls			
Calling a meeting			

Service to others

Attitudes

An attitude may be defined as a learned tendency to think, feel and act in a particular way towards a given object or class of objects. An object may be a person, a group, an institution, or something abstract like education or religion.

Attitudes are extremely important because all the skills in the world are useless if people

are not willing to understand and accept another perspective. It is hard to measure attitude.

Brainstorm attitudes – both positive and negative – that people have e.g. patience, tolerance, generosity, kindness, prejudice, hatred, anger.....

Why do people have these attitudes? How might they change?



A dilemma: who would you help?

Purpose

To enable participants to make decisions about ethical dilemmas

Materials needed

The story printed below.

What to do

Invite participants to discuss the following predicament in groups of seven. Each person in the group acts the part of one of the characters in order to make their own case.

There are no right or wrong answers. It is interesting to see how others react to an apparently insoluble problem. Do some people change their viewpoint after hearing what others think?

NB. It is important to debrief after this exercise.

Story:

A group of strangers goes by chartered boat to a remote, uninhabited island. While they are exploring the island a terrible storm arises, and the boat is smashed against the rocks and destroyed, with their personal items and the week's supply of food. Two days later, they manage to hail a passing 10 m sailing vessel with a man, wife and four-year-old child aboard. The man tells them they are about three days from the nearest landfall and that they have room for two people. If you had to make the decision, which two would you choose to go?

Ari, a 50-year-old man who has mild angina problems, is a world-famous magazine science photographer, has a worried new wife on the mainland, and is noted for his explosive temper.

Cara, a beautiful 23-year-old has just told everyone she is two months pregnant, is a microbiologist working on her doctoral thesis and anxious to look for supporting evidence on the island.

Lee is a 30-year-old environmentalist who is sure the waters around the island hold the secret to a sudden decrease in an already rare fish species. He is moody and unsociable.

At 60, Francesca is the oldest in the group and has had several careers: medical doctor, anthropologist and is currently writing a book about oceanic islands. She is not the motherly type, but once operated a vegetarian cafe. She is troubled by arthritis in her knees.

Georgi 35, a botanist with a keen interest in the medicinal value of plants, is looking for a species of lily, which he is convinced holds the cure for some kinds of cancer. He is a constant worrier, especially over small matters, and was immediately smitten by Cara.

Bubbi, 40, the rich and adventurous woman who made the venture financially possible is exceptionally well organised but so bossy that everyone dislikes her intensely. She is a skilled deep-sea angler, very fit, used to everyone doing her bidding.

Kirstin, 40, is the owner-skipper of the charter boat and is anxious for her passengers to complete their voyage safely.