

The Mustard Seed



Planting the things that make for peace.

November 2015

Dear Great Plains Peace Advocates,

This issue of The Mustard Seed is long overdue. My plan was to get one published each quarter this year and I am disappointed I haven't been able to do this (the last issue is from July). Some of you are on facebook and will see a lot of posts about what is going on and where we can engage in peace and justice work. But I realize not everybody is using facebook.

Longing for peace in this troubled world, let us prepare for the celebration of the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace, who knows all about what it means to be a refugee. Let me share thoughts by Josie Gwin that spoke to me.

Peace – shalom – salam - paz, *Andrea*

Stop. Just STOP.

Closing our borders to refugees?! Are we seriously even having this discussion?! As Americans? As followers of Jesus!?! Simply because we are afraid?

Show me.

Show me in Scripture where the foundation for this kind of decision can be found. Because I can't find it.

What I can find? Hundreds of verses about caring for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the alien (refugee) among us.

Bible verses condemning those who walk in arrogance, laziness, and comfort while the poor and needy languish outside their gates. This was the very reason cited in Ezekiel 16:49-50 for the destruction of Sodom.

Fear- it's the root of all anger and hate. As a follower of Jesus, I do NOT walk in a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self discipline. 2 Tim 1:7

My God numbers my days, and until the day He calls me home, I am indestructible. And commanded to love my neighbor.

It's not a suggestion. Not a suggestion with exceptions like, I dont have to if I'm afraid, or if my neighbor is black, or a cop, or a Muslim, or a refugee, or a homeless person.

Its a command. Love.my.neighbor.

As a follower of Jesus, the world will know me by my love. Not by my security, or my comfort, or my fear, or my borders, or my refugee screening process.

But by my love. My God given, only possible by grace, love. For perfect love casts out fear...for whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18

Look at this child! Look at his eyes. Look at these families. Look at these broken people.

These are the eyes you are saying no to. That

you are saying not in my country, my state, my town, my house. Look at that child- fleeing for his life, cold, hungry, terrified and tell him no. Not here.

Let's make this a little more personal. Picture a family standing on your doorstep. Mom, dad, a couple of kids. Worn clothes, drawn and dirty and hungry faces, all their worldly belongings in their hands. Now picture closing the door in their face and telling them they cannot come in because your neighbor down the street was robbed. Picture them walking away, with. nowhere. else. to go.

I cannot do that with a clean conscience. I cannot picture that decision, line it up with Scripture, and have it come out to be the right one.

Is there a risk of terrorists coming into this country with refugees? Yes, probably. Is it higher than it was last week, last month, last year? I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not.

What I do know? I will not be the one standing by watching the person that needs help because they MIGHT be a terrorist.

Did you know the Apostle Paul was a terrorist? Author of 13 books of the New Testament, responsible for the spread of the early church through the Middle East, considered by many to be the greatest apostle. Zealously persecuted Christians before his life was transformed by meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus- yep, that would be in Syria.

Am I afraid of a terrorist coming in and harming or killing my family, my community, my nation?

To be absolutely honest, yes, I am. But for me, death is not the final answer. Death is not the end. For I know the God I serve, and the hope in eternity that I have.

And. I. will. not. walk. in. fear.

Used with permission from Josie Gwin (if you want to give feedback, she encourages you to do so: http://i.facebook.com/I/NAQG32AKKAQHNSX0QWub6Im0hMTmKZuEgvdML_tQu8VGfQ/Injosieskitchen.com)

Please read the statement by Bishop Jones and watch the press conference. He reminds us of Hebrews 13:2, "Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests without even knowing it." Keep looking for updates as more congregations will join those being open to welcoming Syrian refugees.



<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/at-least-35-congregations-umc-congregations-in-kansas-nebraska-ready-to-help-refugees-2922653>

Shalom Sparks

(takes about 5 - 15 minutes to complete)

- Share about the Micah Corps summer internship program with young adults in your church. This internship is for young people to grow in their spiritual walk

with God while linking their faith with social justice action. Applications for 2016 are available online at:

<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/internships>



- Participate in Giving Tuesday, December 1st. Look for projects that are involved in peace and justice work.



- Pray regularly for our delegates for General and Jurisdictional Conference as they prepare, learn, discern in regard to decisions that will be made next May. (Contact information in a separate document.)

Peace Possibilities

(takes about 30 to 60 minutes to complete)

❖ Beyond Bethlehem

This Christmas, Jesus followers across the country have an incredible opportunity to celebrate Jesus' birthday in a way that truly honors him as we focus together on the urgent, global refugee crisis. Ginghamburg UMC is partnering with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministry, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, United Methodist Communications and the

United Methodist Publishing House (Cokesbury) on the BEYOND BETHLEHEM initiative.



The intent is to remember that "Christmas is not our birthday" as we honor Christ on his.

The Action Step is to spend half as much on our own Christmas this year and give the rest as a sacrificial miracle offering to Advance #3022144 (Global Refugee/Migration - Projects).

To prepare go to <http://mikeslaughter.com/blog/beyond-bethlehem> where you will find brief videos and additional resources.

❖ Climate Talks in Paris

Participate through prayers in this important gathering Nov. 30 – Dec. 11.



The ECO Team of First United Methodist Church in Omaha developed a prayer guide. Go to <http://fumcomaha.org/>, scroll to the bottom and click on *Paris Climate Talks* to download the resource.

❖ Youth Activities on Social Justice Issues

Over the summer, the 2015 Micah Corps interns developed youth activities. Please invite the youth and youth leaders in your church to use them.



<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/micah-corps-interns-create-several-youth-activities-2899739>

Vision Ventures

(takes a bit more energy and time!)

- During this time of increased islamophobia, make plans to invite someone from the Islam faith to visit your Sunday school class, youth group or women's or men's group. Learn more about the faith of Islam and how important peace is in this religion. If you need help finding contacts, feel free to contact me.
- Consider participating in the Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington D.C. April 15-18, 2016: Lift Every Voice! – Racism, Class and Power. Peace with Justice Ministries is making scholarships available. For more information go to: <http://advocacydays.org/2016-lift-every-voice/>



- Get involved with the Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty or Nebraskans For Alternatives to the Death Penalty and help abolish the death penalty in both of our states. Watch for action alerts once the legislative sessions are starting up. <http://ksabolition.org/> or <http://nadp.net/>

LOOKING AHEAD:

- Feb. 13, 2016 – Ecumenical Legislative Day at Christ UMC in Lincoln, Nebraska.
- Feb. 21 - 22, 2016 – Legislative Event for Advocacy in Faith (LEAF) at First UMC in Topeka, Kansas.
- Dates not confirmed yet but possibly in Feb./March: Speaking tour of a Palestinian Christian and a Rabbi about the situation in the Holy Land (organized through the Great Plains Holy Land Task Force)

If you are on Facebook, please “like” the Peace with Justice – Great Plains Conference facebook page.



**More information can be found at: <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/peacewithjustice>

For questions contact Andrea Paret, Great Plains Peace with Justice Coordinator, at amparet08@yahoo.com

The Mustard Seed newsletter is an electronic publication of Peace with Justice Ministries, Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, contact Andrea Paret, amparet08@yahoo.com