

The Mustard Seed



Planting the things that make for peace.

“I saw... that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love... flowed over the ocean of darkness.”

Journal of George Fox, early Quaker Leader, 1647

September 2014

Dear Great Plains Peace Advocates,

It is easy to get discouraged. War, occupation, genocide, disappearances, gun violence, murder, racism, hate seem to be all around us. Yet we are called by our God, a God of infinite love, a God who has not given up on us, a God who has plans for us and all human beings here at home and around the world for a future of hope and peace. What privilege to work under God’s guidance for this future.

Shalom – Salam – Paz – Peace,
Andrea

Prayer

Eternal God, out of whose absolute power and infinite intelligence the whole universe has come into being, we humbly confess that we have not loved you with our hearts, souls and minds, and we have not loved our neighbors as Christ loved us. We have all too often lived by our own selfish impulses rather than by the life of sacrificial love as revealed by Christ. We

often give in order to receive. We love our friends and hate our enemies... But you, O God, have mercy upon us. Forgive us for what we could have been but failed to be. Give us the intelligence to know your will. Give us the courage to do your will. Give us the devotion to love your will. In the name and spirit of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Shalom Sparks

(takes about 5 - 10 minutes to complete)

- Being part of God’s global family, add prayers for people suffering around the world to the list of prayer concerns in your church, e.g. the migrant children coming to our country fleeing violence, people being trafficked in our country and around the world, our leaders making decisions regarding how we take care of God’s creation, people suffering because of the racism in our country. Add prayers for God’s guidance on what God wants us to do to change the unjust structures that cause so much suffering.
- Remind your pastor/church council that churches in the Great Plains Conference are strongly encouraged to participate in the Global AIDS Fund by observing a Special Sunday offering on Sunday, December 7th. Make sure this Sunday is put on your church’s calendar. Resources are available at <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/globalaidsfund>



- Share about Peace with Justice Ministries with a friend or family member. Go to <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/peacewithjustice> for more information or contact me.

Peace Possibilities

(takes about 30 to 60 minutes to complete)

Taking care of God's creation



On September 21st, several United Methodists from the Great Plains Conference will join others in New York City marching for climate change action. What can we do?

*Keep all participants in your prayers that their voices may be heard

*Like the facebook page

United Methodists at the Peoples Climate March in NYC

*Read news articles about the march and share with others

*Decide on one action you can engage in to protect God's good earth, e.g. through "buy fresh – buy local"

"Precious in God's Sight: Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect Every Child"

Invite your church to observe the Children's Sabbath designated for Oct. 17-19 (it can also be celebrated at another time). To download bulletin inserts, prayers and litanies, go to <http://www.childrensdefense.org/programs-campaigns/faith-based-action/childrens-sabbaths/>

Fairness and Justice in the Workplace – Support the call for living wages

Scripture teaches that human beings, created in the image of God, have an innate dignity (Genesis 1:27). The United Methodist Church has long been involved in working for fair labor practices, against child labor and human trafficking. Watch this short video and share it with others.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWiJRXTr7kM&feature=youtu.be>

The basic principles are clear: all workers should be treated with respect and dignity, disparities of wealth and poverty should be avoided, workers should earn wages that sustain themselves and their families, and employers have a particular responsibility to treat workers fairly and empower them to organize to improve conditions.

Fairness and justice in the workplace. That's how it's always been. That's Church.

Learn more at www.ReThinkChurch.org

Vision Ventures

(takes a bit more energy and time!)

Injustice in Ferguson

Help our churches to not be silent in this situation of injustice. We need to name the reality that the majority of us reading this benefit from our racist society. Just in the last few weeks I experienced "white privilege" several times when I was not questioned, when I was trusted just because of the color of my skin. I knew that others would not have been treated like this.

The General Commission on Religion and Race is inviting United Methodists to engage one another in difficult and vital conversations right now.



"In the aftermath of the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown, there are no easy answers for the current crisis in Ferguson, Mo.; however, there are some things upon people who follow Christ can and must agree:

- This most recent high-profile case, the killing of an unarmed black man, allegedly by law-enforcement (or one acting in that role) is a signal that something is tragically amiss in our society.
- Confronting issues where racial injustice, poverty, fear, denial, violence and mutual mistrust is risky and scary for many of us, including people of faith.
- Neither silence nor violence will save the lives and souls of God's people; only courageous, Christ-like engagement can change things for the better."

<http://gcorr.org/resources/injustice-ferguson-resources-annual-conferences-clergy>

Additional Resources: You can find a Service on the Charter for Racial Justice at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/racial-justice Download the Manual on Racial Justice, the service is found on pages 44 – 45.

World Week for Peace in Israel Palestine

The theme of the week, to be observed during 21-27 September, is: "Let my people go!"



The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) of the World Council of Churches invites member churches, faith-based communities, and civil society organizations around the world to join together for a week of advocacy and action in support of an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel.

1. Praying with churches living under occupation, using a special prayer from Jerusalem and other worship resources prepared for the week.

2. Educating about actions that make for peace, and about facts on the ground that do not create peace, especially issues related to prisoners.

3. Advocating with political leaders using ecumenical policies that promote peace with justice.

*Encourage your church to participate in this event! www.worldweekforpeace.org

Preparing for elections

Elections are just a few weeks ahead of us. Attend a meeting with persons running for office and ask them what their plan is to end child poverty and to guarantee every child and pregnant woman has comprehensive health and mental health coverage and services. Read the Children's Defense Fund article about policy priorities. You can also write the candidates your questions and concerns. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/policy-priorities/>

Looking ahead –

*November 3 – 5th, Mark Braverman, Executive Director of KAIROS USA, will be speaking in Omaha, Lincoln, and Kearney on what is needed to bring peace to Israel and Palestine (details will be in GPconnect)

*Mini Mission U: November 7 – 8
Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas

*Feb. 8-9, 2015 LEAF (Legislative Event for Advocacy in Faith) at Topeka First UMC with the theme "Care for Creation"

*Feb. 14th Ecumenical Legislative Briefing Day at Christ UMC in Lincoln with a variety of workshops

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

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