

# Voices to the Capitol



## Meditation

May 2014

*Love and faithfulness will meet; justice and peace will embrace. Psalm 85:10*

*Through the heartfelt mercies of our God, God's Sunrise will break in upon us, shining on those in the darkness, those sitting in the shadow of death, then showing us the way, one foot at a time, down the path of peace. Luke 1:78+79*

God, what do you want me to do to be a peace-maker?

**As people of hope**, we are consoled by the promise that “justice and peace shall embrace” (Psalm 85:10), and are reminded that justice requires peace-making and that peace requires justice-making. We confront and imagine how to transform the violence in our world, and together seek a vision of **peace in the community, peace among the peoples, peace in the marketplace, and peace with the earth.** (Ecumenical Advocacy Days)

### Prayer

God of love and peace –

We pray for social justice,  
for the alleviation of the crippling poverty  
that condemns millions of people around the world  
to lives of misery - hungry, sick, and utterly without hope.

We pray for the children who are starving,  
who are condemned to homelessness, slave labor, and prostitution,  
and especially for those forced to fight, to kill and torture  
even members of their own family.

We pray for the victims of violence and war,  
for those wounded in body and for those wounded in mind.

We pray for the multitudes of refugees, forced from their homes to alien places  
through war or through the utter destruction of their environment.

We pray for those inflicting violence on others.

We pray for courage to see where others suffer.

We pray for courage to take action, to be peace-makers and not just peace-lovers.

We pray for these things with humility;

We pray because of our trust in God.

We pray, above all, for peace throughout the world.

(Parts of this prayer are by Jane Goodall)

At the 2014 Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice in Washington D.C. in March (EAD), we discovered - through prayer, worship, speakers, and advocacy training - a faith-based vision for national policies that “guide our feet into the path of peace” (Luke 1:79), which culminated in a Congressional Lobby Day on Capitol Hill. Please join over 800 peace advocates from around the nation and the world in the actions below.

**Advocating for and promoting policies that make for a more peaceful world, including efforts to end gun violence and promote poverty reduction.**

**Our Nation can and must do more to nurture a culture of peace. We call for policies that:**

- 1. *Reduce acquisition and use of guns for purposes that cause harm; and***
- 2. *Rebalance funding priorities away from out-sized military spending to focus more resources on preventing violence and enhancing human security.***

We do not advocate that all guns be banned. Rather, we support legislation that will make it harder for people with hostile intentions to buy guns and easier for the community stakeholders to adequately prevent them from doing harm.

Pentagon and war spending currently account for 57% of the federal discretionary budget. This means that every other priority included in the discretionary part of the budget must vie for tiny pieces of the remaining 43%. Research has indicated that investing in conflict prevention is 60 times more cost effective than intervening after violence has begun. We can, if we so choose, invest in a different way of relating and interacting with our brothers and sisters here and around the world by promoting policies that reduce violence, including right sizing military spending and focusing on efforts to end poverty and other causes of violence.

To read the complete statement of what we advocate for, go to:

**<http://advocacydays.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/EAD-2014-ASK.pdf>**

Note: Ecumenical Advocacy Days are endorsed by United Methodist Women and by the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society.

***Our children are particularly at risk.*** School shootings are horrific. Yet, they are endangered in other ways:

- **Over 30% of homes with children have a gun in them, many of which are not secured.**
- **Over 1,000 American kids under age 18 died from gunshot wounds in 2010 (CDC), and over 7,000 were hospitalized from firearms injuries. On average, a child or teen is shot every hour (Yale School of Medicine)**
- **85% of children accidentally shot were shot by another child (C. Barber, Harvard School of Public Health)**

**<sup>1</sup>The U.S. Pentagon budget is so large it dwarfs the military budgets of the next 29 biggest spenders in the world.** With only 5% of the world's population, the United States accounts for 45% (almost half) of the world's military expenditures. This is far out of balance by any measure.

**<sup>v</sup>Conflict prevention is funded at abysmally low levels.** The Complex Crisis Fund would be funded at only \$30 million (that's an "m", not a "b") under the FY15 request. The FY 2014 funding level for Conflict and Stabilization Operations was \$42 million (again, these numbers are in millions). These funds together receive approximately the equivalent of *the cost overrun alone for one F-35 airplane.*

# Legislative Action

➤ **Contact your senators and representatives by letter, e-mail or phone urging them to support sensible gun laws and to rebalance funding priorities in our federal budget.**

➤ **Email your Representative now to reduce Pentagon spending.**

Every year Congress has two chances to reduce Pentagon waste through the appropriations and authorization bills. Next week the House will vote on its version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

As it stands, the bill would authorize \$521.3 billion plus approximately \$80 billion for the Afghanistan War and other unrelated Pentagon expenditures that are funded in a separate Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account. Next week, your Representative may offer or support amendments that will cut wasteful Pentagon pork.

There will only be a short time next week when we will know exactly what amendments the Republican leadership will allow to be voted on **so please write your Representative today.**

For more information go to Peace Action (<http://www.peace-action.org/>) or to Nebraskans For Peace ([http://nebraskansforpeace.org/reduce\\_pentagon\\_spending](http://nebraskansforpeace.org/reduce_pentagon_spending))



The picture shows the young girl who folded all the peace cranes that decorated the stage at the 2014 Ecumenical Advocacy Days.

## Additional Actions

1. Read the resolution "**Christians Respond to Gun Violence**" being brought to the Great Plains Annual Conference June 11- 14<sup>th</sup> by members of the Great Plains Mercy and Justice Team as well as laity and clergy from across the Conference.  
[http://www.greatplainsumc.org/files/annual\\_conference/2014annualconferencesection2workbook.pdf](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/files/annual_conference/2014annualconferencesection2workbook.pdf) page 58-60  
Engage with others in conversation about this resolution including your pastor and lay delegate to Annual Conference. Pray for all attending Annual Conference who will be voting on this resolution.
2. If you are traveling to Washington D.C. this summer, make sure you include a visit to your senators/representatives. They need to hear your voice.

**Voices to the Capitol** is a resource with an alternating primary focus on peace/non-violence in one issue and on hunger/food justice in the next. It includes an invitation to use the gift of our voices to speak out on these issues by contacting our representatives and senators in Washington.

**Voices to the Capitol** is an electronic newsletter published by Peace with Justice Ministries, Great Plains Conference of The United Methodist Church.

To subscribe/ unsubscribe, contact Andrea Paret, Great Plains Conference Peace with Justice Coordinator, at [amparet08@yahoo.com](mailto:amparet08@yahoo.com).

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**To look up addresses of stateside offices, go to:**  
<http://www.contactingthecongress.org/>