

## A Just Peace Church

The Just Peace Church vision is a hallmark of United Church of Christ theological identity.

For nearly two decades, the Just Peace Church program has been a grassroots movement of UCC congregations committed to corporately naming and boldly proclaiming a public identity as a justice-doing, peace-seeking church.

The movement traces its history to the 1985 General Synod, when a [Just Peace Pronouncement](#) called upon all settings of the UCC to be a Just Peace Church, underscoring the words of Dr. Robert V. Moss, the second president of the UCC, who wrote in 1971, "We now need to put as much effort into defining a just peace as we have done in the past in defining a just war."

The General Synod defined "just peace" as the interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence. The pronouncement called the church to a vision of shalom rooted in peace with justice and placed the UCC General Synod in opposition to the institution of war.

Over the years, the Just Peace Church identity has become an important symbol for many of our congregations, as both a means of shaping congregational identity and as a theological framework for doing justice-based theological reflection.

For many Just Peace congregations, this identity has helped to underscore their ministries of direct service, legislative advocacy, and courageous witness. The approach has differed from place to place: Some became immersed in anti-war and anti-militarism issues, while some focused their energies on U.S. policies affecting Central America. Others strengthened their multi-racial, multi-cultural witness. Some developed neighborhood ministries, while others translated their just-peace identity to be a fitting starting place for eventually becoming "Open and Affirming" or "Whole Earth" churches. Justice and Witness Ministries is committed to a revitalized Just Peace Church movement, wherein congregations will be empowered and resourced to create an even stronger justice and peace witness for decades to come.

In coming months, we hope you will be hearing more about the Just Peace movement in the UCC—as conversations expand and deepen in various settings around our church.

What does it mean to be a Just Peace Church in times like these? This is the question we have been asking ourselves and others. Your responses are most helpful in shaping the new directions of our collective movement.

Does your church consider itself to be a Just Peace congregation? Do you have thoughts to share about the direction of the Just Peace Church program? Contact the Rev. Loey Powell at 216-736-3715 or [powelll@ucc.org](mailto:powelll@ucc.org).