



Peace is Possible

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Nearly 40 years ago, the United Church of Christ passed a pronouncement at our Fifteenth General Synod in 1985 declaring ourselves a “just peace church. Threaded through the pronouncement’s language were three bold words: “Peace is possible.”

That was a fairly audacious statement considering what was happening in 1985. Famine in Ethiopia had taken nearly a million lives. Cold War tensions were intense, and the Communist Bloc was still intact. The threat of nuclear war was depressingly real. A “just peace” seemed more a very distant dream than a live possibility.

There are days when peace feels pretty remote to me now, too. The news offers a constant barrage of the brutality of war and bitter conflicts across the globe. In places like Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and Haiti the scale of death, devastation, trauma, and civil unrest is gut-wrenching. The geo-politics and histories involved in each of those spaces are a complex web that feels impossible to sort out. It’s hard to imagine a pathway to peace, let alone declare with simple confidence that peace is in fact possible.

But then last week, I gathered with other church leaders from around the globe at a World Council of Churches (WCC) event outside Geneva, Switzerland. I listened as Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay, the General Secretary of WCC, shared that the WCC is increasingly being invited – in some cases even by governments – to sit at tables where peace is being brokered and to meet with heads of state to discuss the prospects for peace. In Columbia, in Palestine and Israel, in Russia and Ukraine, in Sudan and a variety of other places, peacebuilding has suddenly become a central task for the Council.

It was enough to make me think that perhaps peace really is possible. And it offered a powerful reminder of what I've always actually believed: the Church has a valuable and faithful role to play in peace-making. I now have the amazing privilege of seeing on a daily basis the ways we in the United Church of Christ are actively pursuing peace in this country and alongside partners across the world.

I marvel at the perseverance of so many of our Global Ministries partners in places where wars and conflicts rage and am inspired by their unwavering witness for a just peace despite so many obstacles and endless setbacks. I celebrate the willingness of United Church of Christ members to pray, advocate, protest, and write letters to Congress all for the cause of peace. I give thanks to our National Ministries staff who accompany distressed global partners with such dedication and compassion, and others who invite and equip our advocacy. I'm grateful for our ecumenical and interfaith partnerships that multiply our impact and amplify our voices. It's inspiring to see the Church at work in the world in all these ways, carrying a vision for the world where all have abundance, and none live in fear. Blessed are the peace-makers, indeed!

Some days it's still hard to proclaim with conviction that peace is possible. When the enormity of the world's troubles weighs heavily on my heart, and the inability of nations to forge a path to peace overwhelms me, I empathize with the Jesus who wept over Jerusalem. As he looked out over that city in the last days of his ministry, he said, "If you, even you, had only recognized the things that make for peace!" (Luke 19:42)

But then my faith enters in. And I remember that the work the Church is called to requires that we look beyond the heartaches of now and actively imagine the endless possibilities that God can wrestle from even the deepest sorrows and most tangled messes. The UCC's Just Peace pronouncement in 1985 said it exactly right:

Just Peace is grounded in hope. Shalom is the vision that pulls all creation toward a time when weapons are swept off the earth and all creatures lie down together without fear; where all have their own fig tree and dwell secure from want. As Christians, we offer this conviction to the world:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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([Pronouncement](#) on affirming the United Church Of Christ as a Just Peace Church, the Fifteenth General Synod, 1985)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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