

10 Steps to become a



*Becoming a Just Peace church is of spiritual value to a congregation's Christian practice. To make a covenant that will consider justice, peace and the sacredness of creation in all church's decisions and life is a big commitment that the Gospel calls us to. The World Council of Churches (WCC) through its "Ecumenical Call to Just Peace" has called on churches to work within four focus areas: the Environment, Economics, Global, and Local. Together with the global church, we are called to build: **Just Peace with the Earth, Just Peace in the Marketplace, Just Peace among the Nations, and Just Peace in the Community.** These justice concerns intersect with one another and with other issues of racial justice, LGBT justice, gender justice, disability justice, power and human and civil rights. The decision to become a Just Peace Church means you are ready to go deeper in the work you have done and may also be an invitation to focus on a new area. It is not just recognition of work that has been done but the beginning of something new.*

STEP 1 - CREATE SPACE FOR THE JUST PEACE PROCESS

Create space within your congregation's structure for a discernment process on becoming a Just Peace Church. The Pastor and designated ministry team should work together. Open communication is the first step in becoming a Just Peace Church.

STEP 2 - FORM A JUST PEACE TEAM TO STEER THE PROCESS

The Just Peace Team should include diverse members who can commit themselves to about six hours a month for 8 to 12 weeks. Using the many resources available on the UCC Just Peace website, the Team will educate themselves and then the congregation on what it means to be a Just Peace church.

STEP 3 - EXAMINE WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

First, determine the process you will follow and be in touch with the Just Peace Membership Committee (see below) which will be assign a point person to help answer questions and offer resources and support. Notify your Conference Minister that your church will be embarking on this journey so Conference Staff can offer support.

Define areas within your congregation where you already are at work for the sake of peace and justice. Using the WCC's four areas of focus, look at your church's mission statement and current activities to determine areas where your church can go deeper in its Just Peace ministry or begin something new. Consider systemic issues inherit in justice issues facing our world and society and the work that needs to be done to dismantle or reform the system in order to create a *just world for all*.

If your church has a long-range plan (and that's encouraged), revisit where work on behalf of Justice and Peace is envisioned.

STEP 4 - GROUND YOUR PROCESS IN BIBLICAL TEXT

We offer suggestions below for Biblical texts that might be helpful, but your congregation can choose a different text or can follow the model of Jesus' life without choosing a specific text.

- Jesus' statement of his mission to the world. (Luke 4:18-19)
- Mary's Song. The powerful are brought down and the hungry are filled. (Luke 1:46-55)
- God requires justice, kindness and humility. (Micah 6:8)
- God's covenant is for peace, justice and all creation in harmony. (Hosea 2:18)
- Faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-26)
- Establish Justice (Amos 5:6-15)
- Justice and peace shall embrace (Psalm 85:10)

STEP 5 - ORGANIZE AN ALL-CHURCH STUDY OR RETREAT

A multi-session all-church study or a retreat that can include as many congregants as possible is foundational for this process. You may choose to invite someone from the Just Peace Membership Committee or another Just Peace Church to address your congregation.

Components of this retreat may include topics such as: Definition of what it means to be a Just Peace Church; Review of Biblical texts on Justice and Peace; Conversation around areas where you already are at work for Peace and Justice; Visionary ideas of what your congregation could do on behalf of Peace and Justice; Begin to develop a Just Peace Covenant that will later be approved at a Congregational meeting.

STEP 6 - WRITE THE JUST PEACE COVENANT

The Just Peace Committee will write a Just Peace Covenant to be presented to the church governing board and congregation. This covenant may later be shared publicly in your community and put on your church website. The list of Just Peace churches and examples of Just Peace Covenants are posted on the Just Peace website here: https://www.ucc.org/just_peace_churches.

STEP 7 - AT A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING VOTE TO BECOME A JUST PEACE CHURCH

At the meeting, present your process, Just Peace Covenant and Revised Mission Statement (if necessary) to the congregation. A formal vote is required to declare your church a Just Peace Church.

STEP 8 - DETERMINE WHAT BODY WILL OVERSEE THE JUST PEACE WORK OF YOUR CHURCH

Determine whether your Just Peace Committee will continue Just Peace work in your congregation or if an ongoing task force needs to be established.

STEP 9 - PUBLICLY DECLARE YOUR CONGREGATION A JUST PEACE CHURCH

Publicly declare your congregation a Just Peace Church through signs, marketing (Facebook, web site, brochures, business cards, etc.), and write a press release for the local newspaper. A certificate will be sent to you by the Just Peace Membership Committee which you can display. Report your declaration to your Conference or Association and submit a copy of your Just Peace Covenant.

STEP 10 - GO FORTH AND ACT ON BEHALF OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

Go forth and act on behalf of justice and peace. Revisit your Just Peace Covenant regularly to stay focused and on track. The act of becoming a Just Peace Church should influence church decisions and commitment from here forward.

For more information and to download the full Just Peace Handbook, visit www.UCC.org/Just-Peace or email Rev. Michael Neuroth at neurothm@ucc.org .