



PEACE IS DOING, NOT WAITING

Wednesday, September 30

Peace in the World

Let Peace and Justice Begin with Us

Rev. Michael Neuroth

Psalm 85:10

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. (NRSV)

Reflection: One of my most cherished memories from my childhood is standing at the piano, singing with my grandmother. Usually my uncle would be at the piano while my “Nanni” would pick the songs and dance around the room, prodding each of us to sing along. She loved show tunes, but her favorite song was “Let There Be Peace on Earth” written by Jill Jackson-Miller and Sy Miller in 1955. It is a powerful song with a beautiful crescendo of commitment to “take each moment, and live each moment, in peace eternally.” It still gives me goosebumps when I remember belting out that refrain as a young boy.

While I still appreciate the song for its beauty and its inspiration to seek peace, the line “let peace begin with me” now rings somewhat hollow for me. Although peace includes transforming our own minds and hearts, too often the work for peace ends there. It isn’t enough for us to think about peace or sing about peace. As we see in Psalm 85:10, building a “Just Peace” involves relationship and connection. We are called to engage the other and unite peace with justice (“righteousness” and “justice” both come from the Greek word *δικαιοσύνη*) not at arm’s length, but closely. Building peace is not a solo act. It begins in relationship, and it cannot be sought independently from the struggle for justice in community. Peace must be active, applied, engaged — we must *wage* peace. Peace begins with *us*, and it begins through justice.

Through the years, I have interacted with some incredible people and organizations working to build peace. I have met with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Hebron, Justapaz staff in Colombia, and Nonviolent Peaceforce Unarmed Protectors in Iraq. What inspires me most about their work is their engagement — the relationships they have cultivated, in communities and with people experiencing conflict, as they step into the fray. These peace *builders* risk



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experiencing violence by drawing close in order to expose the injustice, address trauma and seek reconciliation through the vision of Just Peace.

Although not all of us are called to work in these settings, I do believe that we all must be willing to more closely connect our hope for peace to deeper engagement with one another and our communities.

Practice for Peacemakers: Take time today to learn more about the many organizations working to build peace in conflict areas around the world. Look for their stories of engagement and accompaniment. See how you can get involved directly and support their work financially. Further, see how you can build peace in your own relationships and community through deeper connections.

Prayer: God, help us live into our vow to be peacemakers. Let us be drawn toward one another and be willing to risk for peace. Let your Just Peace reign on Earth. Let it begin now. Let it start here. Let it begin with *us*. Amen.



Rev. Michael Neuroth serves as the United Church of Christ's policy advocate for international issues in the Washington, D.C. office. An ordained minister, Michael advocates on a wide range of international peace, human rights and economic justice issues reflected in UCC policy. Michael holds master's degrees in divinity, theology and social work from Princeton Seminary and Rutgers University. He lives on Capitol Hill with his wife, Amber, and their two boys.