

## Honoring Peggy Howland and Other Wilderness People

By Janie Spahr, San Francisco CA

You're a pioneer clergy woman, a networker, a peace builder, a justice seeker, a joyous soprano, a believer, and a welcomer of strangers. You're a scuba diver, president of the scuba diver club. You're a world class underwater photographer and have won many awards doing that. You're a wildflower enthusiast. You're a member of the U.S. Power Squadron, in which you taught boat safety. You were secretary of New York City Religious Coalition on Reproductive Rights. You were moderator of Albany Presbytery, moderator of the Synod of the Northeast, chair of the Candidate's Committee of Albany presbytery, vice moderator of the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission, and a commissioner to the GA four times. You were president of and helped form the International Association of Women Ministers. You were sent to the global summit in Nairobi, Kenya in 2007 to work on women's leadership on HIV/AIDS and you came back to the church and taught us so much about that.

There are so many more things, but this is a story also of wilderness. It's a story of going through the wilderness so that we might do this kind of work that you have done. And you have known wilderness.

What are wilderness people? Wilderness people are people that are grounded in the earth, they need to put their feet on the ground. They know what loneliness entails. They understand what discernment means. They take time to learn context and oppressive structures that keep people wondering about their self esteem and self doubt. They live into a deeper way of knowing. They move beyond the "no" voices that are so loud sometimes, so loud. And they keep listening for the still, small voice that sometimes only comes as a whisper.

Wilderness people take time to be etched out. Who has etched you out? How did you learn? Was it the loss of someone you loved? Was it a loss of job? Was it something you learned from someone different from you, something that you had to go deep inside to know what it is? It's an etching out process. They call it "getting good character." But it's hard, it's hard work.

Wilderness people want to know the way of equality and fairness. They want to understand what justice means. Wilderness people hear and keep believing that something can change. They hear the voices. When we come out of the wilderness, we begin to hear who else isn't here. Who else isn't at the table.

*PPF Executive Director Emily Brewer and 223<sup>rd</sup> GA Co-Moderator Cindy Kohlmann present the 2018 Anne Barstow and Tom Driver Award for Excellence in Nonviolent Direct Action in Retirement to Peggy Howland on October 20 at Stony Point Center. The Rev. Dr. Janie Spahr was the featured speaker – hear her complete speech on the PPF Facebook page. (Photo by Samson Tso)*



Then we say, "Aha! Who else has been framed?" Or as Martin Luther King would say, "Who else has been framed and defamed and blamed?" Who else? And there's such a cacophony of voices of those marginalized and oppressed that we begin to hear their voices with us. And we begin to stand with people who have been long silenced.

What happens? We are in the wilderness. We become system changers, system breakers. And we understand the words now – the new words of interconnectivity and interdependence. We understand that everything is connected to everything else, that the earth is as important as the people we are with. We learn this when we're wilderness people. And that's what you are, for you have been etched out in such a deep way.

I said to Peggy, "What does it mean for you to earn this award? Because you know Anne and Tom very well." You said it was the Accompaniment Program, with Alice Winters' work in Colombia. That you came and you learned about what was going on there, and here. And you watched Tom and Anne do this accompaniment work in which they stood with, they were in the presence of. With that they saved many people's lives. This is what you said. You watched in 2003 when you went to Colombia. You watched their scholarship, their concern and their passion for a people who were teaching them how to stand with. And you put that into all your ministry. You said, "I want to be like Anne Barstow. She inspired me with her commitment to the necessity of church and society seeking alternatives to war." It wasn't enough to accompany, to stand with, but what are the alternatives? And how do I make system changes? How do I make alternatives to war?

## A Peacemaker's Calendar

**November 11** – Armistice Day. Include prayers for peace in your Sunday worship service.

**November 15 - 18** – SOA Watch Border Encuentro, Nogales, Arizona/Mexico. Gather on the border to demand an end to US economic, military and political intervention in Latin America, and the closure of SOA/WHINSEC; an end to Plan Merida and the Alliance for Prosperity; demilitarization and divestment of borders; an end to the racist systems of oppression that criminalize and kill migrants, refugees and communities of color; and respect, dignity, justice and the right to self-determination of communities. See soaw.org for a complete schedule of events.

**November 15** – PPF Peace Church Working Group conference call, 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time (See p.6). Email Art Hunt (art@presbypeacefellowship.org) for instructions.

**November 19** – PPF Activist Council video conference meeting. Join us at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time to hear reports and updates from various working groups, plans for the coming year, and ways to participate in PPF activities. Email Emily Brewer (emily@presbypeacefellowship.org) for instructions.

**November 26** – PPF Gun Violence Prevention Working Group conference call, 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time. Join us to network with Presbyterians concerned about gun violence and plan programs and resources for congregations, clergy, and activists. Email Margery Rossi (margery0830@gmail.com) for instructions.

**Dec. 14, 2018** – 6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sandy Hook School Shooting. Include prayers or an Offering of Letters in your worship on Sun. Dec. 9 or 16 (See p. 7).

**January 19, 2019** – Women's March on Washington, DC and other cities around the globe (womensmarch.com).

**January 21, 2019** – Martin Luther King Day. The 223<sup>rd</sup> GA not only approved an overture to adopt King's "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," as a Contemporary Statement of Faith, but also voted to begin the process of considering this letter to be included in the Book of Confessions. Consider convening a group to study the letter and reflect on its message for our own time.

**January 21 - 31, 2019** – PPF delegation to Colombia, to provide accompaniment to our partners in the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia (Presbyterian Church of Colombia) who are taking great risks in their human rights work and their support of the communities of Colombians who have been displaced by the violence of the fifty-year war in their country. Learn about the realities of implementing the Peace Accords in Colombia. The delegation will visit three regions: La Costa (Barranquilla and

around), Uraba, and Bogota, providing the opportunity to meet with people who are helping to implement the Peace Accords, hear from people who have been displaced by the violence of the last five decades, and see several different parts of this beautiful country. The delegation will primarily be led by Sarah Henken, PCUSA mission co-worker in Colombia, along with leaders from the IPC. For information, contact Vimary Couvertier-Cruz (vima@presbypeacefellowship.org).

**Feb. 14, 2019** – 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Parkland, FL High School Shooting and the Universal Day of Prayer for Students. Save the date and watch for details (See p.7).

**March 11 - 23, 2019** – Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Travel Seminar to Rwanda. The focus will be "Reconciliation Work in Rwanda: Healing the Trauma of the Genocide." To apply, call 888-728-7228 x 5805.

**April 5 - 8, 2019** – Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Join us in Washington D.C. for "Troubling the Waters for the Healing of the World." The 2019 conference will draw on pioneers from the Civil Rights era as well as inspiration from young leaders to learn from the past, share best practices, and encourage one another for the work ahead. (advocacydays.org)

**April 22 - May 6, 2019** – Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Travel Seminar to Ukraine and Russia. The focus will be "Peacemaking on the Frontline." To apply, call 888-728-7228 x 5805.

**June 3 - 14, 2019** – A Postcolonial Survey of the Bible: Empire, Kinship, and the Way of Jesus will be offered as a two-part training at the Underground Seminary, Minneapolis, MN. For information, email laura@undergroundsem.org.

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**Presbyterian Peace Fellowship** 17 Cricketown Road Stony Point, NY 10980  
presbypeacefellowship.org @presbypeace info@presbypeacefellowship.org  
Aric Clark and Shannan Vance-Ocampo, Co-Moderators  
Len Bjorkman, Moderator Emeritus  
Rick Ufford-Chase, Secretary Art Hunt, Treasurer  
Whitney Palmer, Assistant Treasurer  
Emily Brewer, Executive Director 929-251-3277  
emily@presbypeacefellowship.org  
Art Hunt, Deputy Director art@presbypeacefellowship.org  
Christa Galvin, Financial and Administrative Assistant  
christa@presbypeacefellowship.org  
Sarah Prager, Communication Manager sarah@presbypeacefellowship.org  
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Road, Stony Pt NY 10980 Contact the editors at: Jan Orr-Harter PO Box 930,  
Aledo, TX 76008 JanOH4@aol.com 817-291-3952 & Marilyn White 2705 Eden-  
wood Dr., Austin, TX 78745 marwhite@igc.org 512-450-2766

# Peacemaking at the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly

By Angela Williams, Austin TX

The General Assembly's vote to not divest from fossil fuels but to continue engaging with fossil fuel companies for another two years was profoundly disappointing. However, we also had many reasons to celebrate at this 223rd General Assembly in St. Louis:

**Social Justice Issues:** PPF celebrates the passage of the overture On Praying for a Movement of the Spirit to Engage Presbyterian Congregations in Nation-Wide Action to Prevent Gun Violence, as well as an overture endorsing a moratorium on the death penalty. We also celebrate the GA's overwhelming support for LGBTQIA persons.

**Peacemaking and Immigration Issues:** The GA passed a Commissioner's resolution condemning separation of families at the border. An overture affirming PC(USA) support for conscientious objectors and "peace churches" was approved, as was a strong statement supporting nuclear disarmament. A study was authorized to develop policy recommendations on Central America.

**Middle East Issues:** The Assembly approved a comprehensive statement on Syria, and several overtures supporting Palestinian rights. We welcome the GA's opposition to legislation in the US which seeks to impose civil and criminal penalties for nonviolent BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) resistance against human rights violations in Israel and Palestine. A report on the status of Jerusalem will be prepared for the next GA.

**Theological Issues:** The Letter from the Birmingham Jail became a candidate for inclusion in the Book of Confessions.

**Environmental Issues:** The GA decided not to divest from fossil fuels, but to continue engagement with those companies for at least two more years, despite a 35-20 vote for divestment in the committee, which heard powerful testimony from participants in the Walk for a Fossil Free World and advocates from 40 presbyteries. In the plenary, representatives from Mission Responsibility Through Investment and the Board of Pensions took advantage of unlimited podium access to convince commissioners to support a weaker minority report.

**Mission Coordination:** The GA urged all levels of the church to confess their complicity and repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, give voice to Native American theologies, and disrupt historic oppression and racism in Native American communities. The church will develop resources to help us understand how scripture and the confessions teach us to respect people and communities from different cultures and worldviews; how the PC(USA) strayed from those understandings and became complicit in a prevailing worldview of oppression and collusion through policies based on the Doctrine of Discovery; and how to co-operate in efforts that respect Native American peoples and their sovereignty.

**General Assembly Procedures:** The Office of the General Assembly was asked to recommend cost-reduction measures for future meetings, possibly including shorter or less frequent meetings, managing items of business such as overtures and reports, venue changes, and advisory delegate participation.

**Hands and Feet:** Apart from official business, 500 Presbyterians took to the streets without a march permit to deliver \$47,000 to a bail fund to release St. Louis residents from pre-trial incarceration and to demand an end to cash bail. The nonviolent direct action was led by local activists, mostly young women of color, and embodied the call of the 2016 General Assembly to become a "Matthew 25" church, engaging in social justice action at every GA.

*"Nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek."*

– Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail

# “Sleepwalking into a New Nuclear Arms Race”

## Trump Announces US will Abandon INF Treaty

By Jan Orr-Harter, Aledo TX

As we go to press, the Trump Administration has announced that the US will unilaterally withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), just six months after the US left the nuclear weapons treaty with Iran. The U.S. Constitution and Supreme Court have never addressed whether a president has authority to abandon a treaty that was ratified by the Senate. However, there was no effective objection when George W. Bush left the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 to develop new weapons.

The INF was signed in 1987 between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev with the primary goal – and result – of preventing a nuclear war starting in Europe. Ratified by over two thirds of the U.S. Senate in 1988, it was an historic treaty, a culmination of an international citizens’ movement to take substantive steps to prevent nuclear war and the result of bi-partisan action in the U.S. The treaty banned all land-based nuclear and conventional missiles with ranges of 310 to 3,420 miles. The ban resulted in the destruction of 2,692 missiles between the two countries and has kept Europe free of the US-Soviet/Russian nuclear standoff for three decades.



Gorbachev and Reagan signed the INF Treaty in 1987 (Wikipedia photo).

On-site verification lasted for ten years and in recent years both sides have accused the other side of cheating. For National Security Advisor John Bolton, long an opponent of any arms control, another reason for leaving the treaty is the growth of Chinese forces. Disagreeing, Jeffrey Lewis, Director of the East Asia

Nonproliferation Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying that “The China stuff is nonsense. The INF does not prohibit sea-and-air-based systems, nor does it prohibit [US Allies] South Korea and Japan from developing long-range missiles. If China were a real problem, the US and its allies could have acted long ago.”

Bolton also opposes extending the 2010 New START Agreement with Russia, which during the Obama era limited the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1500 on each side. The New START Agreement is due to expire in 2021.

In *Defense News*, former Undersecretary of Defense Jim Miller called for consequences for Russia not complying with the treaty, but warned of unregulated nuclear weapons. “The INF failure and the failure to get into discussions about extending New START is a sign of the U.S. sleepwalking into a new nuclear arms race. This is going to have consequences for the U.S. and our allies that we haven’t thought through.”

### **The Presbyterian Church has thought it through.**

For more than 70 years, the Presbyterian Church has asked itself, “What would Jesus do about nuclear weapons?” Since the first General Assembly following the Hiroshima bombing, our answer has always been that the Christ-like position is complete opposition to the development, use of, and threat to use nuclear weapons. This has been re-affirmed by General Assemblies in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and beyond, including the most recent GA. Our cousin, the Church of Scotland, speaks out against nuclear weapons at every meeting of its GA.

The trend away from nuclear treaties leaves the whole world vulnerable. What will be the response of Christians this time? You can call the White House at 202-456-1111.





*Participants in the PCUSA Walk for a Fossil Free World walked more than 200 miles from Louisville, KY to St. Louis, MO to advocate for fossil fuel divestment at the 223<sup>rd</sup> GA. (Photo by Debbie Gibson)*

## Fossil Free PCUSA: We Recommit to the Work

By abby mohaupt, El Granada CA and Colleen Earp, Richmond VA

Since General Assembly, we are resting, we are beginning to envision a way forward, and we are grateful. The earth is not our own; we are stewards for God's good creation and we are complicit in its destruction. It's time for us to confess and repent. We must be willing to name that our use of and profit from fossil fuels has disproportionately contributed to climate change. Then we must be willing to change our behavior and our investments to love God, love each other, and love creation with our whole selves.

As we recommit to working for a fossil free PCUSA, we're mindful of the global context of our work. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its fifth report on October 8. At its core, the report is a sobering call that we must keep global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, and that we must do all we can as quickly as we can. If we do not, we risk losing the possibility of a just and sustainable world for all.

The whole of creation is at stake.

We still believe in a fossil free PCUSA, a denomination that does not rely on the fossil fuel industry. In a political and social system that is racist, classist, homophobic, and violent, we must work for a world that is healthy and accessible to all.

To do this work, we are grateful for a little bit of Sabbath after General Assembly. After walking over 200 miles and then advocating and organizing for a week, our bodies and souls needed a rest. We needed to grieve that our beloved denomination chose to continue business as usual with the fossil fuel industry. We needed to grieve that we chose not to radically and faithfully be in solidarity with frontline communities to climate change. We needed Sabbath to be renewed.

As we have envisioned a way forward, we've added more and different people to our steering committee (you can meet everyone at <https://www.fossilfreepcusa.org/about-1/people/>). This winter, we will release a collection of resources of all the ways you, your congregation, and your presbytery can reduce your use of fossil fuels (look for that during Advent). This spring we will be preparing for a delegation to Puerto Rico to learn more about the current impact of climate change. And throughout we will continue to meet with Mission Responsibility Through Investment, calling on the committee to listen to frontline communities and to hold fossil fuel companies accountable.

In all our work, we are grateful for the continued partnership between Fossil Free PCUSA and PPF. Thanks be to God and to each of you for our shared work to build a just and sustainable world for all of creation.

## *Blessed are the peacemakers...*

News from members and friends of the PPF Activist Council

**Supporting Families and Preventing Child Abuse in Iowa:** Le Anne Clausen de Montes started the 'North Iowa Children's Discovery Center' this summer as a community-supported play center for young children, with programs for early childhood education, foster/adoptive training and support, and child abuse awareness and prevention. Resources for crisis support are available in the center, families can even bring a laptop and work on job applications while their kids play safely.

She helped start an Iowa Faith Leadership Network to encourage ecumenical and interfaith cooperation, collegiality, and continuing education and resource sharing, especially in small congregations and/or rural communities.

One of the projects of the IFLN is a Spiritual Needs Assessment for families of children who have a sensory, emotional, and/or behavioral disorder. Her thesis is that many families who have a child with these difficulties have stopped attending church. She is looking for respondents nationwide but especially from North Iowa and Iowa (see their Facebook page). Hopefully the information generated will help create more resources for clergy and faith educators and possibly at-home or online resources for families.

**Your PPF – Volunteer Opportunities:** Our justice work together takes place on the front lines of demonstrations, actions and protests or at General Assembly moving the Church we love closer to the ideal of Jesus' ministry. We are about organizing, advocating, marching, accompanying and witnessing. We are a persistent moral voice for justice, for compassion, for God's blessed hand in creation.

Not as visible are our administrative activities organizing ourselves and maintaining our policies and procedures. In this work, we also strive to be generous and just. Personnel, Endowment Fund, Nominating, Finance, Fundraising and Policy are performed by volunteer members of our standing and ad hoc committees. Members like you. If you are able to help keep your PPF organized, there is a place for you. For more information on the work of PPF committees or to volunteer, contact Art Hunt, Deputy Director, at [art@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:art@presbypeacefellowship.org).

**Lora Burge** has begun a new position as a chaplain at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Congratulations, Lora, and thank you for your work with PPF as the Colombia Accompaniment Program Coordinator. Thanks also go to outgoing treasurer **Dylan Rooke** and assistant treasurer **Ben Heimach-Snipes**.

**PPF Co-Moderator Arrested Protesting ICE:** Aric Clark was among 21 people arrested at the Sheridan, Oregon federal penitentiary on August 30 for protesting immigrant detentions. Aric said, "I thought of my time in Palestine with the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and how the walls, and prisons, and militarized

enforcement of racist and oppressive laws I saw there are mirrored here. I thought of the heroic protests of the village of Bil'in, and their garden of flowers planted in spent tear gas canisters manufactured in the United States. As the officers cuffed us with zip ties and urged us into a police van I knew I was exactly where I needed to be."

**PPF Elects Leadership Team:** The PPF Activist Council met in Minneapolis in September to plan for the next year and to elect executive committee members and officers. Bill Galvin, Jessica Light-Wells, Abby Mohaupt, and Elisabeth "Betsy" Simpson will serve as Members-At-Large. Elected as officers were Co-Moderators Aric Clark and Shannan Vance-Ocampo, Secretary Rick Ufford-Chase, Treasurer Art Hunt, and Assistant Treasurer Whitney Palmer.

**Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary student Angela Williams** served as the 2018 Seminary Intern with PPF and Fossil Free PCUSA, helping to organize the Walk for a Fossil Free World and the General Assembly witness for fossil fuel divestment. Reflecting on these experiences, Angela said, "One of the greatest takeaways I am bringing from this work is challenging the notions of business as usual. We live in a world broken by white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, capitalism, colonialism, and many other big, scary things. But it does not have to be like this. Being God's people in this world does not mean we need to be conflict avoidant, passive aggressive, or risk averse. We do not have to stay silent when people speak or act inappropriately for fear of being called indecent or out of order. We do not have to stay at the table when the table is on fire. We can choose to side with the oppressed of the world, using whatever privilege we carry to act in solidarity with those living in poverty. In fact, that is exactly what God calls us to do."

**Peace Churches:** First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, CA and Church of Reconciliation of Chapel Hill, NC have proclaimed themselves to be "Peace Churches." In November, Montclair Presbyterian Church in Oakland, CA will vote on its own proclamation. The 223<sup>rd</sup> GA approved an overture that encouraged the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program to recognize and commend those churches who have declared themselves Peace Churches and to encourage all churches interested in peace to continue their own discernment; to republish the materials developed in the six year "Peace Discernment" process completed in 2016; and to develop curriculum to help young adults discern their position on war and violence before registering with the Selective Service System. The PPF Peace Church Working Group, which includes representatives of these three Peace Churches and others who support congregational studies of nonviolence, meets by conference call to discuss how to encourage congregations to become Peace Churches and how to support the development of resources on nonviolence and conscientious objection. To join the working group, contact Art Hunt at [art@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:art@presbypeacefellowship.org).

# Hate Crimes & Gun Violence Prevention

By Jan Orr-Harter, Aledo TX

The massacre of 11 Jewish worshippers in Pittsburgh joins over 10,300 hate crimes each year that involve a firearm in America, over 28 each day. No federal law prohibits persons convicted of violent hate crimes from having guns; only a few states have taken such action. Hate crimes are rising and, according to the FBI, the majority of hate crimes are targeted against people of color, religious minorities and LGBTQ people. PPF grieves with our Jewish brothers and sisters. We do not have to live this way.

**Action:** You can always find any local action in your town by searching <https://act.everytown.org/event/moms-demand-action-event/>

**Dec. 14, 2018 – 6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sandy Hook School Shooting.** Include prayers or an Offering of Letters in your worship on Sun. Dec. 9 or 16. See resources in PPF's Gun Violence Prevention Toolkit  
[www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/resources](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/resources)

**Feb. 14, 2019 – 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Parkland, FL High School Shooting.** In addition to nationwide actions led by students, PPF asks every Presbyterian church to respond to the action of the 2018 GA by praying and acting to prevent gun violence on Sun. Feb. 17, the Universal Day of Prayer for Students. Save the dates and watch for details.

## Look and Listen: Colombia Accompanier Training

By AmyBeth Willis, Tucson AZ

I was one of 18 participants in the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship's Discernment and Training for the Colombia Accompaniment Program (CAP), held in Tucson in October. During an intense three days, we sought to learn the history of the nation of Colombia over the past 50 years, explore the origin of the CAP, and dig into the nitty-gritty of life as an accompanier with the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia (IPC). We gathered to discern whether God was calling us to a month of looking and listening in Colombia.

Contrary to stereotypical mission work, the work of an accompanier is a commitment to the ministry of presence. We were challenged to think about how we would feel spending a month with the sole purpose of holding presence with our Colombian hosts. As 18 white folks with U.S. passports, we were a group with immense privilege and power. We were challenged

to shift our understanding and commitment to develop a practice that would serve us not only as acompañantes but in our day-to-day life. How do we prioritize looking and listening over doing?

The IPC continues to request more accompaniers because our presence helps them to defend their rights. When the Colombian government sees that the Presbyterian Church there has United Statesian friends who visit, they are less likely to infringe on their rights. Even so, they are still much more at risk than we will ever be in their country.

Throughout the weekend, we were given opportunities to practice looking and listening.

The more power you hold in the world, the less you've been told to be quiet and listen. As a white woman with a U.S. passport, I have been socialized to take up space. Usually, I'm listened to. As I leave this weekend committed to one day becoming a Colombia accompanier, I feel empowered to continuing to develop these skills of observation and listening. It's one way I can use my power for good.

## Cheese or Weapons?

By Tom Williams, Whitefish Bay WI

NPR recently did a story on the great cheese give away of the 80s in which the government bought excess cheese and gave it away. At some point, Uncle Sam was spending something like \$2 Billion per year on cheese and this caused many to rail against such an excessively expensive program. Now I don't know what that would mean in 2018 dollars though my "guestimate" is about \$10 billion if we figure expenses double every ten years! But even if it were – let's say – \$25 Billion, has anyone thought of the fact that this equals less than 1/20th of the Pentagon's budget? Trump just signed a \$717 Billion fiscal 2019 military funding bill! Now that's a lot of cheese!!

Medicare for all plans have been introduced and challenged because of their cost. Some estimate that such plans would cost \$5 Trillion over a decade. HMM! That's about \$500 Billion per year! So, let's think about this for just a minute. The Pentagon will spend more than \$6 Trillion in the next decade to assure us we can kill people/dominate people/maintain our hegemony and how many question/challenge/dispute that "need"? BUT the thought of feeding people or providing medical care for folks is challenged every day by politicians and others who claim it is too expensive, we can't afford it! Hmmm, makes one wonder about priorities!



# Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

17 Cricketown Road  
Stony Point, NY 10980

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*PPF stands with Tree of  
Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.  
Lord, help us prevent gun  
violence and heal our  
nation...*

## **FALL 2018**

New nuclear threat – p.4

## **Community, Commitment, and Creativity**

By Emily Brewer, New York NY

Creativity, Community, Commitment. These were some of the themes that emerged during the two and a half days that the Activist Council gathered in Minneapolis at the Church of All Nations September 20-22. Our time began with a panel led by staff and members of the Church of All Nations and the Underground Seminary. Pastor Jim Bear Jacobs, Hikari Nakane, Pastor Jin Kim, and Laura Newby spoke of community requiring a commitment to dismantling the evils of white supremacy and colonialism in our society and also within ourselves. They also spoke of the need to re-think our relationship to money and transactionalism. Building and sustaining this kind of community takes commitment and creativity, which we explored together through the rest of our time together in worship, working groups, antiracism self-evaluations, mealtimes, and more. The feel was one of collaboration as we discerned together how PPF is being called to act and how we are being called to be in the next year.

The Creation Justice working group committed to supporting and encouraging local congregations and presbyteries to invest in solar and wind energies as part of becoming carbon neutral congregations. They also committed to collaborate more with ecumenical and interfaith partners as we continue to engage

in the fossil free movement. This group also began to look forward to the 224th General Assembly in 2020 to come up with creative ways to witness there to the urgency of climate change and the moral imperative to protect the planet and bring justice to those most affected by climate change—the poor and people of color.

The Gun Violence Prevention working group committed to creating a church response to gun violence and shootings. They also began to look forward to the 2020 General Assembly which will be held in Baltimore and began brainstorming ways to deepen our commitment to ending gun violence, connect with denominational and local groups, and build upon the overture that was passed by this year's GA, which included a prayer for congregations to use.

There were also conversations about how we can deepen our work around gender-based violence, support the campaign to make congregations HP-Free, supporting and nurturing Peace Churches in the PCUSA, being in solidarity with the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia as well as partners in Central America, and more.

If you would like to join in this work, you are most welcome. PPF's work is driven by the passion, energy, and commitment of those who speak up and show up, so we hope that you will lend your creativity and commitment to this community. Be in touch with us and we'll help you get connected.

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