



Announcing the New Peace Church Study Guide

From the PPF Peace Church Working Group

Responding to an overture from the Presbytery of San Jose, the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) voted to recognize and commend those churches who had declared themselves as "Peace Churches," to list such churches on the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program's website, and to encourage other churches to engage in discernment. The General Assembly also urged the Peacemaking Program to develop or identify resources and curriculum for congregations to assist young adults and older teens in discerning their positions on war and violence and conscientious objection. It was the hope of the General Assembly that more churches would engage in study and discernment about how to respond to the challenges of violence, militarism, and war and that some would embrace the principles of nonviolence and declare themselves to be Peace Churches.

The Peace Church Working Group of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and the Peacemaking Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have worked collaboratively since 2018 to develop a definition about what it means to be a Peace Church in the PCUSA (see page 8) and to design a curriculum for congregations. We invite you and interested congregations or study groups to download this new free resource at:

<https://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/peace-church/>

In the curriculum you will find a variety of resources to help you customize your study:

- The interactive Inventory of Conscience Survey (IOC), with questions for discussion.
- Three study sessions on the foundations of Christian nonviolence: Nonviolence in the Teachings of Jesus; Nonviolence in the Epistles; and Nonviolence in the Early Church.
- A guide for discussion about Can War Be Just?
- A list of videos and other resources for study on War, Nonviolent Resistance, and Conscientious Objection.

As you engage with these materials, we encourage you to consider the option of declaring your congregation a Peace Church by asking your session to adopt the Peace Church definition. Five churches have already made such a declaration, and are recognized as Peace Churches on the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program website.

A Peacemaker's Calendar

November 8 - Election Day. Vote, vote, vote!

November 13 – PPF Inventory of Conscience Workshop.

Learn to use a new interactive tool to see where you stand on the pacifist spectrum. 4:00 pm ET. Register at presbypeacefellowship.org/events/inventory-of-conscience-workshop/

November 15 – Do It All for the Glory of God: Eating for a Healthy Climate. Webinar Hosted by Presbyterians for Earth Care. This presentation will explain how food is contributing to the climate emergency, and offer science-based guidelines for making everyday dietary choices to reduce our climate “foodprint”. 7:00 pm Eastern. Register at presbyearthcare.org/eating-for-healthy-climate/

November 27 – First Sunday in Advent, with lectionary reading of Isaiah 2:1-5, “Swords into Plowshares.”

December 3-10 – Guns to Gardens Nationwide Safe Surrender Days. Find an event near you to dismantle unwanted guns and turn them into garden tools at www.gunstogardens.org or contact Rev. Deanna Hollas at Deanna@presbypeacefellowship.org

January 16, 2023 – Martin Luther King Day. “It is no longer a choice, my friends, between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence. And the alternative to disarmament, the alternative to a greater suspension of nuclear tests, the alternative to strengthening the United Nations and thereby disarming the whole world, may well be a civilization plunged into the abyss of annihilation, and our earthly habitat would be transformed into an inferno that even the mind of Dante could not imagine.” (3/31/1968)

February 3-17, 2023 – Presbyterian Peacemaking Program travel seminar to Philippines and Hong Kong, focusing on the root causes and current challenges of forced migration and labor trafficking. Info at presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/

March 13 - March 20, 2023 – Presbyterian Peacemaking Program travel seminar to Puerto Rico, exploring the aftermath of catastrophe – the political, social and racial dynamics revealed by multiple catastrophes and how the church is responding to them. Info at presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/

Between the Elect and the Elections

By David Ensign, PPF Interim Executive Director

PPF’s Activist Council autumn gathering this year falls (or fell, depending on when you read this) between All Saints Day and election day – the day of the elect and the day for the electing, as it were. I don’t pretend to understand the providence of God, but for a lifelong Presbyterian that order of things feels right. It also feels particularly urgent this fall to remember the saints of our movement on the eve of an election in which Christian nationalism is the unstated and unwelcome candidate on so many ballots.

The late Tom Driver has been a voice echoing from the great cloud of witnesses for me this fall. Tom’s attention to the power of ritual and the importance of artistic expression prompt me to wonder about the space we might continue to curate within PPF for creative expression that moves us and that comforts us when movement stills and movements falter.

No matter who wins elections on Nov. 8, “elect from every nation” are always called to *imagine a world of peace in which all of God’s creation can thrive*. That may be both a working definition of the providence of God and the precise opposite of Christian nationalism for its oppressive power allows no space for imagination.

It’s also an invitation to wonder. What are the rituals and creative expressions that inspire us in the work of imagining a new world? Who are the saints whose lives witness to this work? This is not new ground for PPF. For example, over the summer, Presbyterians for Abolition – a PPF-adjacent project – sponsored an Evening of Art & Abolition. By the time you read this, another such evening may be on your calendar.

Speaking of calendars, soon you’ll be seeing a PPF Advent calendar on our social media platforms. While the calendar is specifically designed to invite financial support of PPF, it will also feature some creative expressions that, I hope, you will receive as gifts for the season.

Meanwhile, in this season – in this present moment – as we say **¡Presente!** to the roll call of the saints, may we remain present to the call to imagine a future otherwise.

A reflection:

Peace Means: COMING HOME

By Bill Laws, Sacramento CA

In 1970 two things happened to me: one good thing, one bad thing.

The good: I was accepted by my session at Folsom Presbyterian Church to study for the gospel ministry.

The bad: Because I had a low number in the national draft lottery, I received an induction letter.

Although I was contingently accepted by Union Theological Seminary to study for the ministry, I could not afford to attend the New York School. Then, my draft board told me that I didn't qualify as a conscientious objector.

In my service during the Vietnam Era I received a "service connected" disability. In fact, the Veterans Administration has had me tested for a mental health category: Shared Post Traumatic Stress. This is where my empathy for fellow combat troops created a period of very strong and sometimes difficult emotions.

Since then, two more things have happened: two very good things!

Good #1: The PC USA General Assembly has requested "attention be given to those leaving the military as conscientious objectors." This was good news. I have always considered myself a conscientious objector (C.O.) on the basis of mandatory service during a very unjust war.

Good #2: The church I was attending when drafted as an undergraduate college student, Davis Community Church, is exploring what it means to SEEK TO TEND TO THE WELLBEING OF THE PLACE AND PEOPLE AROUND US.

This September I was welcomed as a guest at my old church's Compassion, Peace and Justice coordinating team meeting. In many ways this team works to "bring community members home." They are considering partnerships with various agencies, for example, working to assist new immigrants adapt and transition to a "new" home. They are working to bring home community members "displaced" by the last two pandemic years to a "post quarantine" sense of home. Significantly, the Homelessness Working Group of the church continues to "advocate for the unhoused and marginalized in our community."

I am so thankful and appreciative for this sense of peace that rises from a sense of everyone needing to head homeward. I am myself in need of this sense of peacemaking.



Presbyterians For Abolition

By Liz Kearny, Longview WA

Presbyterians for Abolition is a group of people connected to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who are committed to the work of abolition of the prison industrial complex in the United States. Currently, we are working to complete our \$10k fundraising goal, which will be split 3 ways between PCUSA-related organizations working in solidarity with those who are incarcerated: Voices of Jubilee, The Solidarity Building Initiative of McCormick Theological Seminary, and Hagar's Community Church. We have raised just over \$8k so far - help us get to \$10k! Donate by going to <https://linktr.ee/presbyteriansforabolition> and clicking on "An Evening of Abolition - DONATE".

Interested in joining this group? Email Liz Kearny at liz@longviewpres.org to join the email list for future updates!

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Remembering Len Bjorkman

The Reverend Dr. Leonard Bjorkman, 91, died on September 27, 2022. An active member of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship for decades, Len served as Co-Moderator from 1998-2005, and as Moderator Emeritus from 2006 until his death. His peacemaking efforts often focused on the Middle East, inspired by his experiences in the 1950s as a mission coworker in Lebanon.

At the most recent General Assembly, Len worked with other members of the Iraq Partnership Network to advocate for an overture on depleted uranium, which passed unanimously. Following the G.A., he enthusiastically took up the task of involving as many groups as possible, including PPF, in joining the call for comprehensive cleanup and banning future military use of depleted uranium.

PPF extends its love to Len's partner in all of these things, Judy Bjorkman, and their family.

"I have many fond memories of Len Bjorkman. I've known him since the '70's. But one thing that stands out more than everything else is, back in the '80's when all of us peace folk were concerned about wars in Central America (remember the sanctuary movement?), and the culture was still obsessed with communism rather than terrorism, Len faithfully raised the need to work for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. At EVERY gathering of PPF." – Bill Galvin

"When he arrived to Gaza, Palestine many years ago my husband's family hosted him during the intifada. We always kept in touch. During difficult times in Palestine he would always send his regards and asked if our family were safe. Just an amazing soul." – Najla Khass

"In 2002, as I was being released from 3 months of federal hospitality (a story in itself), Rev. Len Bjorkman drove 3 hours to greet me at the prison door. I have counted him a good friend for a quarter century, and cherish now a last long visit with him a few months ago." – Chuck Booker

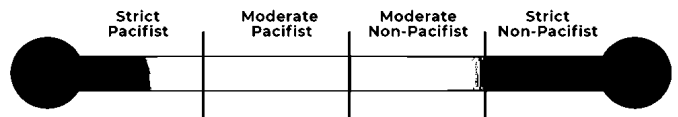
Inventory of Conscience Workshop

Sunday, November 13
1 pm PT/ 4pm ET

Do you consider yourself a pacifist or a non-pacifist? Or perhaps you are someplace on the spectrum between the two. Many of us may have just adopted the cultural norms on violence and war as our own without even realizing it.

This workshop will offer you an opportunity to take a closer look at what you believe and why. It will be based on the Inventory of Conscience Survey, which you will take ahead of time. And it will include journaling and small group discussions. Sharing will be voluntary and without judgment. Consider this to be an opportunity for discovery with an attitude of open-hearted inquiry for yourself and others. The workshop will be led by Geoff Browning, developer of the IOC Survey and a member of PPF's Peace Church Working Group.

Join us Sunday, November 13th starting at 1pm PT / 4pm ET
Register and take the inventory at
presbypeacefellowship.org/events/inventory-of-conscience-workshop/



Sample Questions: When you take the online Inventory of Conscience, you will be asked if you agree or disagree with a number of statements. Some of them are:

War is a necessary evil.

It is my responsibility as a citizen to tell our leaders when they are wrong in taking us to war.

The methods we use must be consistent with the goals we wish to achieve.

Violence is an inherent part of being human that we cannot change.

Gun Violence Prevention News



By Jan Orr-Harter, Aledo TX

The Guns to Gardens movement is growing! Americans are taking direct action to get unwanted guns out of homes and communities and turn them into garden tools. A recent event in Houston, sponsored by the Mayor's office, brought in over 1,200 firearms, many of them semi-automatic assault weapons.

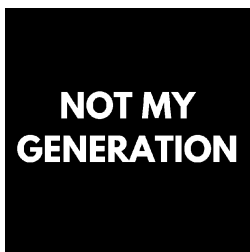
The next national day of events is Sat. Dec. 3, with churches holding events that day and throughout early Dec. in observance of the 10th memorial of the Sandy Hook school shooting. Others are planning events during Lent and on the next national day in June 2023. PPF's Gun Violence Prevention Ministry has trained over 120 folks from over 65 congregations in 24 states in how to hold a Safe Surrender event. The next training dates will be announced soon at www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence

Other projects of the PPF Gun Violence Prevention Working Group include: Creating an Emergency Gun Violence Response Kit and updating PPF's Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit, which has been downloaded by over 1700 individuals in all 50 states. We are looking for more folks to join PPF's Gun Violence Prevention Working Group! Can you help? We meet monthly by Zoom. Please contact Deanna Hollas at Deanna@presbypeacefellowship.org or Jan Orr-Harter at janoh4@aol.com

Encouraging numbers show that gun violence is slightly reducing over last year's record of almost 45,000 persons killed. Together, one gun at a time, one law at a time, one vote at a time, we are preventing gun violence. Thank you for your prayers, action and support. We share these opportunities that may be helpful to congregations:



The Soul Box Project – The Soulbox Project brings together small memorials to persons killed or injured by gunfire in the form of small paper boxes. The boxes are joined together for public displays, a type of “activism” to encourage change. So far over 200,000 Soul Boxes have been created. Congregations and local organizations can now borrow or adopt Soul Box displays for special events or permanent installations. See www.soulboxproject.org or contact Karla Niehus at exhibit@soulboxproject.org



For Teens and Young Adults: Activist Boot Camp sponsored by Not My Generation, the young adult group determined to not pass gun violence on to future generations. The virtual Boot Camp runs Nov. 2022 to May 2023 and offers youth a chance to learn how to advocate for preventing gun violence and systemic oppression. Act quickly! Learn more at www.notmygenerationgvp.org/abc-program

Briefly... News from PPF

PPF Supports Conscientious Objectors in Ukraine and Russia

At the request of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and international peace activists, we have signed on to an open letter:

Dear President Biden,

We the undersigned ask that you grant immediate asylum and assistance to Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian conscientious objectors and dissenters.

Since President Vladimir V. Putin announced a new troop call-up on September 21, 2022, eligible Russian men have been fleeing the country in droves to escape the draft. However, neither the U.S. nor Europe have changed the policies that make it difficult for Russians to enter. There are an estimated 100,000 Russian military draftees and deserters refusing the war of aggression. An estimated 22,000 Belarusian military draftees have left their country because they don't want to participate in the war in Ukraine.

Ukraine suspended the right to conscientious objection and closed the border for men between 18 and 60. Over 100,000 men have evaded war involvement in Ukraine and fled abroad. Everyone who has refused service risks persecution – up to ten years for Russian draft dodgers – because of their stand against the war. These brave men are our hope for peace and they need protection.

Instead of continuing to provide weapons – at least \$20 billion in military assistance to Ukraine as of September 8, 2022 – that prolong and escalate this war that could easily result in nuclear catastrophe, we call on you to support and grant asylum to Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian conscientious objectors and deserters.

Are You Listening?

A Matter of Faith is a podcast collaboration between the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and Unbound, the Interactive Journal on Christian Justice. In each episode, hosts Simon Doong and Lee Catoe give thoughtful responses to questions submitted by listeners on issues of faith, social justice and church life. The podcast also highlights relevant policies, resources and guests from around the PC(USA). Recent topics have included Gun Violence, Roe V. Wade, Reparations, Israel-Palestine, Gender Based Violence, and many more. Catch the podcast each week and subscribe on your podcast platform of choice or listen at amatteroffaith.buzzsprout.com.

A Woman of Faith

Congratulations to PPF Co-Moderatorabby mohaupt for being chosen to receive a Women of Faith Award. This year the theme is "Women Leading Movements for Positive Change." Recipients are selected by the PCUSA office of Racial Equity and Women's Intercultural Ministries along with Presbyterian Women. Among abby's many achievements listed in the award announcement were providing leadership to FossilFree PCUSA, organizing the 2018 walk from Louisville to the St. Louis General Assembly, and attending to the voices of those communities whose lives are most impacted by climate change and the abuses of fossil fuels and the fossil fuel industry.

PPF signs on to Amicus Brief to support the Apache Stronghold

This October we signed on as a "friend of the court" alongside dozens of congregations and organizations to support the Apache Stronghold as they continue to seek to protect their sacred lands at Oak Flat from copper mining. You can learn more at apache-stronghold.com

Preach for Peace: A Challenge

This year we are reaching out to preachers in our network (ordained and not) who will pledge to preach nonviolence. We want to connect with more congregations in our commitment to nonviolence and anti-racism and we want to raise some money while we do it!

That's where you come in. Will you commit to preaching peace at least one time before the end of 2022 in a congregation on behalf of PPF and donate your honorarium to the organization?

We can support matching you with a church or you can set up a preaching gig on your own. Once you take the pledge we'll share a toolkit with you that will offer support to preach nonviolence and anti-racism and will also have some liturgy and resources for you to utilize as you plan worship.

You may also know of a congregation that would be interested in connecting with PPF to bring a Preach for Peace speaker. Be sure to check in with them first, and we'll do our best to match them with a guest preacher.

To participate, contact Interim Executive Director David Ensign at David@presbypeace.org.

PPF Activist Council adopts a new vision statement

One of the major commitments the Activist Council has made this year has been to adopt a new vision statement to support us in moving together as a national organization across many communities and dedicated to many issues, and to speak directly to the time in history we are navigating collectively. Our Advent campaign will highlight this new vision statement so be sure to tune in and learn more!

Our Vision

Relying on God's grace, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship imagines a world of peace where all God's creation can thrive.

In local and global communities, we will use every nonviolent means to disrupt and transform the culture of domination that normalizes racism, ecocide, militarization, and war. We build peace through the abolition of structural violence and by living into alternatives to violence with creativity, intelligence, imagination, and love.

After General Assembly: Next Steps

Though “a world of peace” feels all too distant, PPF has done and will continue to do the creative work of building that world in many and various ways. On September 13, David Ensign hosted an online conversation with Jan Orr-Harter, Dexter Kearny, Geoff Browning, and Ashley Diaz-Mejias speaking about ways that decisions made over the summer by General Assembly connect with PPF’s work of gun violence prevention, responding to climate change, expanding the conversation about developing peace churches, and engaging the work of abolition. The video is available on the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship’s Facebook page. It includes numerous invitations to specific ways to engage the work right now.

Fossil Free Update

As has been the case after each General Assembly since we began organizing about a decade ago, the Fossil Free team spent some time resting before considering next steps. Over the past few months, it has become clear that a longer Sabbath is needed as several working group leaders tend to their current family, educational, and vocational developments. We are grateful to Abby Mohaupt and Liv Thomas for their co-moderation over the past several years, and celebrate the good work they are doing elsewhere in their lives right now.

In the coming weeks, the Fossil Free tab on the PPF website will be updating with FFPCUSA’s resources for how and why we divest as individuals, congregations, and presbyteries, as well as toolkits for teaching and supporting this work. The Fossil Free PCUSA social media presence will be placed on pause after we share the new website. Dexter Kearny and Colleen Earp are currently acting as co-coordinators of an effort to rest and renew in our work of making peace for and with creation through fossil fuel divestment and other action and learning. They will respond to requests for support and resources as they are able, and anticipate reconvening the working group late winter or early spring. Contact info@presbypeacefellowship.org or visit presbypeacefellowship.org/fossil-free/ for information.



Calling All Activists - Join the Activist Council!

The Activist Council gathers virtually and in person to encourage one another in the work of nonviolence in our local churches and communities and to set the direction of PPF’s work. We don’t act alone. We help one another.

We have grown in our ability to be in community through virtual technology. Activist Council members live all over the United States. We are all ages, with many backgrounds and areas of interest and expertise. You are needed to help us move toward a world of nonviolence.

The **ABCs** of the Activist Council are: **A**ffirm the nonviolence of Jesus, **B**e active in PPF, **C**ontribute each year as generously as you are able. We welcome you!

More info at presbypeacefellowship.org/activistcouncil

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Fall 2022

What is a Presbyterian Peace Church?

A "Peace Church" in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a faith community that shares with its Presbyterian siblings a deep passion for peace and has adopted the PC(USA)'s "Commitment to Peacemaking."

A Presbyterian Peace Church takes the further step of aligning itself – within the Reformed tradition – with the historic "Peace Church" positions on violence, war, and the place of the military. A Peace Church recognizes that war and militarism are inconsistent with the Gospel of Christ and Jesus' example of nonviolence, and it confesses that the Christian Church has historically been complicit in the world's violence. A Peace Church challenges the adequacy of "Just War" or "Justifiable War" theory and theology, and understands that injustice, poverty and oppression are foundations of violence and war. Accordingly, a Presbyterian Peace Church commits itself, after the manner of Jesus and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to:

Work diligently to dismantle and disavow structures and systems of violence
Oppose militarism, the global expansion of the U.S. military and the war economy

Disavow war, weaponry, and violence in all circumstances as a means to resolve conflict
Promote the use of nonviolent means of conflict resolution including mediation, reconciliation, and peaceful resistance
Stand against propaganda and actions that promote ill-will between nations or peoples and lead to war
Foster respect and dialogue to strengthen communities, build resilience, and resolve conflicts
Care for the marginalized and oppressed through ministries of justice and reconciliation so as to prevent the escalation of conflict into violence and war
Affirm conscientious objection in all its forms as a proper faithful expression of nonparticipation in warfare,
Equip people as they discern their Christian response to war
Accompany and be in solidarity with those who have declared themselves to be Conscientious Objectors, and
Act in additional ways, guided by the Holy Spirit, that are consistent with being a Presbyterian Peace Church in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**This definition was agreed upon for shared use by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Peacemaking Program and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.*

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