

Looking Ahead to the 224th General Assembly

Baltimore, Maryland June 20-27, 2020

General Assembly is the place where the peace and justice witness of the church is defined and funded. Commissioners and Advisory Delegates from every presbytery will gather to make the decisions that will provide the resources and programming to equip faithful Presbyterians to respond to the challenges of war, injustice, and environmental destruction. You can be part of our General Assembly work by joining our team of GA volunteers in Baltimore this June or by working in your own congregation or presbytery to promote the overtures we are supporting:

Fossil Fuel Divestment: The urgency of the climate change crisis makes divestment from fossil fuels the most important item of business before this General Assembly. Fossil Free PCUSA says, "While fossil fuels have allowed us to create a better world for many, we now know its impact on creation and future generations is threatening the life we know and cherish." The Overture On Fossil Fuel Divestment from Monmouth Presbytery calls on the PC(USA), The Presbyterian Foundation, the Board of Pensions, and the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., to divest from the fossil fuel industry, using the Carbon Underground 200 and the S&P Global Industry Classification Standard's list of publicly traded companies engaged in coal, oil, and gas exploration, extraction, and production as the criteria to identify which companies are considered to be fossil fuel companies.

The GA will also have the option of taking a much weaker action of divestment from only three fossil fuel companies, a recommendation from Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI), the agency that does shareholder engagement on behalf of the church. PPF believes that this would be too little and too slow to be an effective response to the urgency of climate change. Now is the time for our church make a witness to others for immediate action. Now is the time to end our investment support of the fossil fuel industry.

Gun Violence Prevention: The Overture On Re-Affirming Our Commitment to Gun Violence Prevention asks the denomination to update the historic 2010 policy of the 219th General Assembly, *Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call* and to present this update for a vote at the 225th General Assembly in 2022. PPF's Gun Violence Prevention Working Group says, "Rooted in biblical values and reform theology, this historic and excellent ten year old document deserves to be updated and re-issued as a contemporary policy to help our congregations and our nation heal from the escalating epidemic and tragedy of gun violence."

Foreign and Military Policy: The Overture On Affirming the Effectiveness of Nonmilitary, Collaborative International Approaches to Resolving Conflict rejects the principles of exceptionalism and power through conquest that have led to overuse of military force and affirms the effectiveness of nonmilitary efforts such as diplomacy. It asks that insights from the ongoing discernment about the Doctrine of Discovery be used to examine current foreign policy as well as national history.

How you can help: Visit PPF's GA 2020 web page at presbypeacefellowship.org/ga-2020/. Download one or more of these overtures and ask your session to forward them to your presbytery. If you can, come to General Assembly to speak to a committee. Volunteer to be your presbytery's Overture Advocate for the overtures they pass. If you know them, talk to your presbytery's commissioners and youth advisory delegate and help them understand the overtures so that they can make informed decisions about them in Baltimore. Contact us with questions and let us know about the overtures your presbytery is supporting by sending an email to: ga@presbypeacefellowship.org



Susan Andrews, former moderator of the PC(USA), and José González-Colón, past moderator of the Synod of Borikén Puerto Rico, advocating for fossil fuel divestment at the 2018 GA.

A Peacemaker's Calendar

February 29 – Courageous Conversations workshop at Harlandale United Methodist Church, San Antonio TX, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Led by PPF Gun Violence Prevention Ministry Coordinator Deanna Hollas.

March 5 – Standing Our Holy Ground Webinar on “The Racial Divide in Gun Violence,” sponsored by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and PPF. 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. EST. Register at presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/standing-our-holy-ground/

March 8 – Adult Education class on gun violence prevention at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, Bryn Mawr PA. 11:15 a.m. Led by PPF Gun Violence Prevention Ministry Coordinator Deanna Hollas.

March 13-15 – A weekend of gun violence prevention presentations at Grace Presbyterian Church, Springfield VA. Led by PPF Gun Violence Prevention Ministry Coordinator Deanna Hollas and Activist Council member Jim Atwood. (Contact deanna@presbypeacefellowship.org for schedule.)

March 20 - 23 – Learn and Discern about nonviolent accompaniment in Colombia or Agua Prieta, Mexico. This three day training will be held in Los Angeles, CA. Contact PPF Accompaniment Coordinator Alison Wood (alison@presbypeacefellowship.org).

March 18 – Webinar for PPFers planning to attend G.A. 8:00 p.m. EDT. (Contact timothywotring@gmail.com.)

March 22 – Adult Education class on gun violence prevention at University Presbyterian Church, Austin TX. 9:30 a.m. Led by PPF Gun Violence Prevention Ministry Coordinator Deanna Hollas.

April 15 – Standing Our Holy Ground Webinar on “A Conversation with the Sandy Hook Promise,” sponsored by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and PPF. 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. EDT. Register at presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/standing-our-holy-ground/

April 24 – Presbyterian Compassion, Peace & Justice Training Day at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington DC. Plenaries and workshops will explore climate change, ecological destruction and environmental racism. Register at presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/washington/advocacy-training-weekend/

April 24 - 27 – Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Join us in Washington D.C. for “Imagine! God’s Earth and People

Restored.” We will explore the intersection of climate change and economic injustice and empower our advocacy on behalf of policies and programs to chip away at the systems of oppression that keep people in poverty and push all life on earth to the brink of destruction. (advocacydays.org)

June 20 - 27 – 224th General Assembly of the PC(USA), Baltimore, MD. Join our planning team to help bring peacemaking, social justice, and climate change issues to the top of the GA agenda. Contact PPF GA chair Timothy Wotring (timothywotring@gmail.com).

June 20 – Progressive Presbyterians Issues Briefing at the 224th General Assembly, 8:00 a.m. PPF and partner organizations will review important overtures and reports to be considered at GA. Please RSVP at presbypeacefellowship.org/ga-2020/

June 24 – The Peace Breakfast at the 224th General Assembly, 6:45 a.m. Awarding of the 2019 and 2020 Peaceseecker Awards and celebration of the work of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. Purchase your ticket from GA ticket services or make an online reservation at presbypeacefellowship.org/ga-2020/

June 28 - 29 – Counter CUFI in Washington DC. Join Friends of Sabeel for a protest against Christian Zionism support for Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian People. (fosna.org)

...BRIEFLY is the newsletter of the

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

17 Crickettown Road Stony Point, NY 10980

presbypeacefellowship.org info@presbypeacefellowship.org

Aric Clark and Shannan Vance-Ocampo, Co-Moderators

Len Bjorkman, Moderator Emeritus

Rick Ufford-Chase, Secretary Whitney Palmer, 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

Katie Blanchard, Communication Manager katie@presbypeacefellowship.org

Deanna Hollas, Gun Violence Prevention Ministries Coordinator

deanna@presbypeacefellowship.org

Alison Wood, Accompaniment Coordinator alison@presbypeacefellowship.org

abby mohaupt, Fossil Free PCUSA Moderator awmohaupt@gmail.com

...BRIEFLY is funded entirely by gifts from our readers, members & friends. Send donations online or to our Stony Point office. Send address changes to christa@presbypeacefellowship.org or mail to the Stony Point office.

Contact the editors at:

Jan Orr-Harter JanOH4@aol.com & Marilyn White marwhite@igc.org

Be Part of PPF's General Assembly Witness

Join the GA Planning Team: Our team meets bi-weekly to plan for our GA activities: special events, outreach to commissioners, exhibit hall booth, overture testimony, and more. To participate, contact our GA coordinator, Timothy Wotring at timothywotring@gmail.com.

Visit our GA web page: Look for information about events, overtures, and volunteer opportunities. There is a link to a form for volunteers or email us at ga@presbypeacefellowship.org.

Support an overture: See page 1 for descriptions of PPF priority issues and overtures. We also encourage you to support these additional overtures:

Designating May 15 as the Palestinian Nakba Remembrance Day, which designates a day to remember the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland in 1947-48.

A Call for Ending the Siege of Gaza and Collective Punishment of Innocent Palestinian and Israeli Citizens, which calls for an end to military attacks.

Regarding a Korea Peace Treaty, which supports a Korean-led process leading to a peace treaty and nuclear disarmament.

Responding to the Human Needs of Those Affected by the Crisis in Syria, which calls for ending sanctions, self-determination, withdrawing foreign combatants, reconstruction, and protection of refugees and vulnerable groups.

Regarding Depleted Uranium in Iraq, which calls for removal of depleted uranium left behind from the use of armor penetrating weapons and mitigation of environmental and health effects.

Affirming the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris Agreement), which would join other faith groups in opposing the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

Declaring the Presbyterian Church (USA) to be a Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church, which supports discernment to become "Sanctuary and Accompaniment" mid-councils and congregations to serve as places of welcome, refuge, accompaniment and healing for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences.

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, which honors the history of the UN and supports its advocacy of international diplomacy and peacemaking.

The texts of overtures which have been passed by at least one presbytery may be found at pc-biz.org. Or contact marwhite@igc.org for a copy of any overture you would like to bring to your session or presbytery.

Attend the Peace Breakfast: Don't miss the PPF breakfast on Wednesday, June 24 at 6:45 a.m. The 2019 Peaceseecker Award will be presented to First United Church of Oak Park and the Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church, two Chicago congregations, for their outstanding ministries to prevent gun violence. The 2020 award will go to Puerto Rican climate justice activist Michelle Muñiz. There will also be a presentation on climate change and fossil fuel divestment, and an overview of PPF's work in the areas of Accompaniment and Peace Churches. Tickets are available online at presbypeacefellowship.org or from GA ticket service .

Attend the Progressive Presbyterians Issues Briefing: On Saturday, June 20 at 8:00 a.m., PPF and several other peace and justice organizations will present an overview of the GA business items that progressive presbyterians will be following during the week. Learn how to advocate for these overtures, reports, and resolutions as a commissioner or as an observer. No ticket required but please RSVP at presbypeacefellowship.org.

Visit the PPF booth in the exhibit hall: We'll have resources to take home to your congregation, briefing papers for every GA committee, friendly folks to talk with, and scheduled booth events on special topics. The exhibit hall will open on Friday, June 19 at 2:00 p.m. and close on Wednesday, June 24 at 7:30 p.m.

Meet our Interns: PPF has selected four talented workers to see that our GA events run smoothly, our committee testimony is organized, and that our volunteers and our commissioner friends are supported in every way:

Amanda Marbut is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer from San Antonio, TX, with a background in International Relations. She now lives in Tucson, AZ.

Laura Haney is from Virginia, but is currently living in Tucson, Arizona and serving as a Young Adult Volunteer. She is working with an organization that provides free home repairs for low income homeowners.

Jake Crowther is from Clemson, SC, and currently lives in Austin Texas. He works as an advocate for victims and survivors of domestic violence, as well as doing organizing work with the Austin Sanctuary Network, which offers radical hospitality and support to the immigrant community in Central Texas.

Julie Woodson is from Greenville, SC. She served with the Young Adult Volunteer program in Albuquerque, NM, where she worked at the Menaul School and the National Hispanic Cultural Center.

Accompaniment: Navigating the Dilemmas

By Alison Wood Tucson, AZ

There is only one migrant shelter in Agua Prieta, a town on the south side of the United States' border with Mexico. The Centro de Atención al Migrante "Exodus," or CAME, has offered hospitality to migrants for the past 19 years. With a shift in patterns of migration that led hundreds of asylum-seeking families to Agua Prieta in the first months of 2019, CAME has housed over 150 people at a time in a space built for 50 people — with a wait list of nearly 500 more. At the same time, intimidation from the organized crime group that controls the area escalated to the point of direct threats against CAME's coordinators.

In response to the escalating threat, the humanitarian aid community in Agua Prieta decided to request international accompaniment. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship was one of the groups (alongside Christian Peacemaker Teams) that was invited to accompany in Agua Prieta. In August, accompaniment partners met in Agua Prieta to evaluate the work in anticipation of continued accompaniment. Meeting together were five white U.S. citizens and three Mexican citizens; representing CAME, Frontera de Cristo, PPF and Christian Peacemaker Teams. After reviewing the highs and lows of the first three months of accompaniment, the shelter manager (whose name is being withheld for safety at his request) made an emphatic point: "You need to train your volunteers to say no." The shelter manager spoke about accompaniers and volunteers with other programs who did too much. These volunteers exhausted themselves by working too hard, set precedents for offering services that the rest of the team did not have the capacity to meet, or gave shelter guests the wrong impression of the role of accompaniers in Agua Prieta. The actions of accompaniers have implications far beyond their term of service. A "yes, we can take you to exchange money" to one traveler sets up the expectation for everyone that changing money is possible. What if the next volunteer has less energy or time?

Often a "yes" comes from a place of guilt. All accompaniers with PPF are U.S. Christians; all of us have some oppressor-identities — even though some accompaniers have other identities as well or have done more work to understand oppression and dominance. We are all susceptible to some kind of guilt: white guilt, class guilt, documentation-status guilt. Standing at the wall between the United States and Mexico — with people sleeping on the ground waiting to get into this country that lets us waltz in and out at will — how could we possibly say no to any request? Guilt, especially white guilt, says: "I have all of these resources, why shouldn't I share them?"

I know this guilt all too well. I am a white, U.S. passport-holding, well-meaning, liberal Christian social worker. While in Agua Prieta

last November — shortly after members of the U.S. military were deployed to the border to put up razor wire on the northern side of the wall — I gave my coat to a woman sleeping next to the port of entry. She did not need, want or ask for a coat. I thrust it upon her to assuage my razor-sharp guilt at what my country was doing.

As accompaniment coordinator with PPF, I am responsible for supporting accompaniers in interrogating our first impulses. We work to understand what we have internalized that motivates us to act, and work to both feel our feelings and to de-center them in the pursuit of anti-racist partnership. We recognize that we have been socialized to believe that the Mexicans whom we accompany are less than we are. We acknowledge that we have been trained to believe that we are the smartest, the most correct and the best answer to any question. And we know that all of these things are lies.

A hard part of training accompaniers is helping them understand their location within a wider context: the chronology of ongoing border crises and the social geography of border communities committed long-term to humanitarian aid. The razor wire on the wall last November was new, but exclusion and control of movement at the border are decades old.

Our national commitment to forcibly halting migration at the border is a chronic illness. It's the kind of illness that calls for continuous management, not an acute emergency that will blow up once and be over. The severity will ebb and flow, but without a revolution in treatment, this condition will always be with us.

The current U.S. administration chooses to deliberately exacerbate the situation at the border and then to paint "flare-ups" as stand-alone emergencies rather than as part of a larger picture. We are driven from crisis to crisis with no contextual understanding. Accompaniers sometimes are driven to respond to crisis. But in building an accompaniment partnership, we don't want to just run to the fire. We have to understand that the circumstances we have been invited into have been under construction since long before we arrived and will continue without us after accompaniers leave.

Foundational to accompaniment work is our commitment to following the lead of local partners. As U.S. citizens we are addicted to taking control in international situations. The dynamics of power in this work are jagged and fragile. We deliberately use language meant to equalize, to point away from the inequalities. Here are some words we try to avoid: help, protect and secure. And these are words we move toward: walk alongside, serve, accompany and be with. The intention here is

part of an effort to acknowledge in our language that any power we bring into this situation is due to what we embody, not what we do.

We trust power dynamics we don't support in order to operate.

Accompaniers represent a source of power. When we send an 80-year-old white woman with a U.S. passport to walk alongside asylum seekers at the border wall, we are deliberately sending her as an emblem of U.S. imperialism, white supremacy and U.S. exceptionalism. At the same time that I encourage that woman in training to recognize and try to move away from the power of her whiteness, I am using her to say to organized crime, “the power of whiteness is paying attention to what you do here.” It is an impossible balance. We are putting her whiteness — as well as mine, and the power that it all represents — at the service of Mexicans from Guerrero, who U.S. whiteness is working hard to exclude. Accompaniers of color are perceived differently, but still represent the United States by virtue of the passports they hold.

Accompaniers show up as a synecdoche for the whole of the United States, in all of its messy, militaristic, imperialist, manipulative might. In Colombia, this is why the program works: A pair of young people with U.S. passports, spending a week in a small town in the Colombian state of Urabá, serves as an indication to armed actors (including the Colombian state) that the United States is paying attention to what happens there. In their individual bodies, part of a citizenry, accompaniers represent the whole.

In Agua Prieta, there is a different dynamic at play. We understand it like this: The organized crime (cartel) that controls the area of Agua Prieta is very good at what they do. And what they do is operate quietly enough to not be bothered by the U.S. border enforcement apparatus as the cartel moves drugs north across the border. Violence in Agua Prieta is constant and contained. The cartel has unquestionable control. Any challenge to that control is dealt with swiftly and fatally. Anything that would draw attention of U.S. authorities to the cartel's activities is not allowed — it is dealt with like any challenge.

Violence against U.S. citizens in Agua Prieta would, without a doubt, draw the attention of U.S. border enforcement to the area — attention the cartel does not want. This, then, keeps U.S. citizens safer than local volunteers in humanitarian aid work supporting asylum seekers. At the same time, the brightly colored vests that accompaniers wear, and the sticker-covered car they drive, indicates that accompaniers belong to a church that is beyond the cartel's area of control.

We rely on the might of the U.S. border enforcement apparatus, and the certainty that violence toward accompaniers would draw the attention of the Border Patrol — which the cartel specifically



Former Colombia and Agua Prieta accompanier Ruth Noel leads a training session for PPF volunteers.

wants to avoid — to protect accompaniers from cartel violence and to extend that shadow of protection to our local partners. We trust power dynamics we don't support in order to operate. We use the power dynamics we are actively working to undo — the supremacy of whiteness, U.S. exceptionalism, the vision of the United States as moral authority and enforcer to the globe — in order to achieve our goal of nonviolence.

The shelter manager who is our primary partner feels safer with accompaniers present, saying, “they have been 100 percent helpful.” The labor of accompaniers, who have taken on some of the most visible volunteer tasks, means that the shelter manager can work from a secure location — materially increasing his security, as well as his sense of safety. Accompaniment is achieving its purpose in Agua Prieta.

Based on feedback from CAME staff and volunteers, and their continuing request for international presence, PPF has said “yes” again — committing to accompaniment in Agua Prieta into 2020. As we move forward we will continue to remind ourselves and the accompaniers we train that — while association with the empire we represent is bringing some small measure of increased safety to our partners in Agua Prieta — the very empire we rely on for personal security has an enormous role in the violence our neighbors are running from.

Alison Wood is the Accompaniment Coordinator for the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. This article is excerpted from a longer piece written for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, PPF's parent organization. Read the complete article at wagingnonviolence.org.

PPF's 75th Year Endowment Campaign – Nearly Done!

Goal: \$400,000 to Grow the Endowment from \$600,000 to \$1 Million

\$300,000 – Amount Given & Pledged so Far. **Thank you, all!**

\$25,000 – New Interest Income

\$75,000 Still Needed! We are nearly there!

In this Leap Year Month, let's LEAP to complete this campaign!

If you have not yet participated in the 75th Year Endowment Campaign, or if you can give more, please share as generously as you can in this peace legacy for the future.

To make a 3 year pledge or one-time gift, please see presbypeacefellowship.org/endow75

...from Bill Galvin, PPF Activist Council Member, Baltimore, MD

Why support PPF's endowment fund? I just look at my grandchildren --- that's why. I fear for the world that we are handing over to them. The world is on a precipice with climate change disasters already happening. It's more important than ever that we now commit our lives and everything we can give for peace.

The Presbyterian Church has done so many good things. But there has been a mindset that violence is OK if used to achieve a more just world. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship has stood firmly to embrace nonviolence and to call the church to take nonviolence seriously. Sometimes PPF has been the only part of the church doing this, even though nonviolence is the heart of the gospel.



I'm supporting the endowment because I want PPF to not just survive, but to THRIVE. I want PPF to grow and to call more and more people to take risks for peace. That's why!

...from Connie Bell, Member of St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, Wayzata, MN



Why am I supporting the PPF Endowment 75 Campaign? Because I believe it is urgent that we work continually against war. The future of our children and grandchildren and, indeed our world, is at stake. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship continually motivates me to do what I can for peace.

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is important, not only for its good works, but also as the primary vehicle for Presbyterians to work together for peace. I have been especially impressed by its accompaniment efforts in Colombia and its work on so many other issues.

For many years, I've marched for peace. Now, I support the PPF endowment fund to strengthen and encourage others. Will you join me?

presbypeacefellowship.org/endow75 **Thank You, All!**

Earth Day: April 22, 2020

Two resources to choose from!

God has entrusted all of creation to our care. Earth Day Sunday is a unique time to learn and pray about being responsible stewards of this sacred trust.

The 2020 Earth Day Sunday toolkit from Creation Justice Ministries will equip your faith community with preaching, teaching, prayer, and action materials. Learn more and download it at www.earthdaysunday.org.

The 2020 theme is "The Fierce Urgency of Now," a reference to a quote from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King in his final sermon at Riverside Church: "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there 'is' such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action."

The 2020 Faith Climate Action Week Kits equip you to engage your congregation in Sacred Activism during **Interfaith Power & Light's Faith Climate Action Week, April 17 – 26**.

This year's Faith Climate Action Week theme is, "Love Made Visible: Engaging in Sacred Activism" to protect the people we love and care about who are most impacted by climate change.

The kit includes a Sacred Activism guide on the importance of people of faith taking part in civic engagement, plus suggestions and tips for activism challenges including planning a prayer vigil, taking part in a rally or march, conducting a voter registration drive in conjunction with your local election officials, and more. Use the Sacred Activism Art Guide included in the kit to create eye-catching banners, placards, street paintings, and more with faith-based messaging.

In this election year Interfaith Power and Light PL invites you to collect pledges from your community members to vote with the climate in mind using the kit's Faith Climate Voter Pledge postcards and stickers for all who pledge. Add a film to your events to inspire your congregation to action. This year's film, *The Human Element* by James Balog of Chasing Ice fame, relays captivating stories of everyday Americans on the front lines of climate change; inspiring us to reevaluate our relationship with the natural world.

Together this Earth Day, we can joyfully do the sacred work of taking climate action. Visit faithclimateactionweek.org to order supplies.



No War on Iran

The Catalyst Project has created a study group curriculum to counter the disinformation campaign about Iran, educate people about the history and current situation in Iran, and inspire people to oppose US aggression against Iran. Each of the 4 sessions includes questions for discussion, and the format can be adjusted to fit different needs. You can find the curriculum here:

collectiveliberation.org/no-war-on-iran

We hope this curriculum will encourage people to both reflect and act to deter further US aggression in this critical time. Please share with people in your community, on your campuses, in your local networks, your union, faith communities, etc—let's build the broad and strong anti-war movement we so urgently need.

Immigration Study

PPF Activist Council member Elisabeth Simpson reports that a small group, part of the First Presbyterian Church Bethlehem, PA, but not endorsed by the church or session, has studied immigration issues and created four proposals related to:

- 1) the welfare of unaccompanied children and also those children in detention camps;
- 2) the annual refugee cap;
- 3) the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019;
- 4) the need to replace current immigration courts, which are under the control of DOJ, to Article I Courts, similar to the US Tax Court, the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the US Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

They now plan to meet with the staffs of Sen. Robert Casey and Sen. Patrick Toomey.



Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

17 Cricketown Road
Stony Point, NY 10980

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

www.presbypeacefellowship.org
@presbypeace

WINTER 2020

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 6
VALLEY STREAM NY 11580

Looking Ahead to General Assembly!

Michelle Muñiz Selected as 2020 Peaceseeker

By Emily Brewer, PPF Executive Director

PPF is honored to announce that our 2020 Peaceseeker is Michelle Muñiz Vega. This annual award calls attention to and celebrates Presbyterians making significant contributions to peace. As the Disaster Recovery Coordinator in the Presbytery of San Juan, Michelle leads delegations of Presbyterians who travel to Puerto Rico for recovery efforts and learning after Hurricane Maria. She serves as an integral part of a network of people and groups in Puerto Rico working to recover and rebuild in Puerto Rico in ways that are sustainable and just.

Michelle is from San Juan, but had been living in Miami, FL for several years prior to Hurricane Maria. As she was planning to move home, the hurricane devastated the small island in September 2017. When Michelle moved back to Puerto Rico two months later, she began working with the presbytery to organize support from the US and work with local communities in their recovery efforts. "Maria is a spotlight, but a lot was happening to and in Puerto Rico before Maria," says Michelle. "The delegations that come to do recovery work have an opportunity to learn about the

history and political dynamics here, but that's just the beginning. My hope is that people will go home and keep doing the work to learn about the history of Puerto Rico and how we can work together for a more just relationship between the US and Puerto Rico."

In July of 2019, Michelle led a delegation with Fossil Free PCUSA and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship to learn about efforts for climate justice in Puerto Rico and to hear about why the three presbyteries of Puerto Rico all supported the overture to divest from fossil fuels in 2018. "Climate Justice is ministry; it's peace work; it's not a committee or a sub-group, it is our work as the church," said Michelle as she reflected on the delegation and her work more broadly in Puerto Rico.



Michelle Muñiz Vega

Please join us to celebrate Michelle and the 2019 Peaceseekers – Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church and First United Church of Oak Park for their leading ministries to prevent gun violence – at the Peace Breakfast on June 24, 2020 in Baltimore, MD. (Order tickets at presbypeacefellowship.org/ga-2020/)