

Dove Tales

On Preaching Peace and Justice

by Leo Hartshorn

“(Christ) came and proclaimed peace.”

Ephesians 2:17

Pace and justice are essential to the gospel of reconciliation. The good news of reconciliation with God and others necessitates making peace and doing justice. Preaching is a significant form of communicating the gospel of reconciliation within the life of the church. Within most Anabaptist-Mennonite churches the worship service is centered in the proclamation of the Word. Preachers often spend a significant amount of their time during the week in sermon preparation. So, it becomes imperative that pastors, and others with responsibility for proclaiming the Word, reflect on the nature of preaching peace and justice.

① Preaching peace and justice is more than preaching on peace and justice.

Preaching on peace for Peace Sunday or during a crisis of war is well and good, but preaching peace and justice calls for a consistent and comprehensive understanding and practice. Any preacher can tell you that preaching involves more than standing at the pulpit on a particular Sunday morning and talking for twenty minutes. It involves an ongoing practice of interpreting texts, structuring the sermon, considering the liturgical, congregational, and social contexts, using language creatively, and communicating with mind, passion, voice, and body. In the same way, preaching peace and justice is far more than occasionally addressing peace and justice as topics. It is an ongoing discipline integrated consistently into a perennial practice.

Preaching peace and justice is a comprehensive enterprise. It entails a wide range of skills and

disciplines, including biblical interpretation, use of language and illustrations, and addressing liturgical, ecclesial, social, and political contexts. How does a preacher interpret and proclaim problematic texts concerning slavery, women’s roles, or negative depictions of the Jewish people? Do the language, stories, and illustrations in the sermon reinforce gender, racial, or class stereotypes or present marginalized groups in a positive light? How do prayers, readings, offering, hymns, as well as sermon, proclaim peace and justice? How does the preacher speak to poverty, injustice, domestic violence, war, racism, and sexism in ways the congregation will listen? Developing skills and disciplines that address these and other questions form preaching into a practice that engenders peace and justice.

② If we understand peace and justice to be essential to the gospel, we will seek to ground peace and justice in scripture and Christian theology.

Many Christians do not see the connection between faith and politics nor peace and justice with the gospel. Any talk of peace and justice is initially heard as a form of partisan politics. Grounding peace and justice clearly in biblical texts and Christian theology through the continuing practices of teaching and preaching helps to create the awareness of peace and justice as integral to the Christian faith and message. A comprehensive study of those biblical texts that address peace and justice, and even problematic ones, within the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are important preparation for preaching on peace and justice. There may be some interpreters who might benefit

Mission Statement

The mission of Peace and Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA is to proclaim and promote God’s desire for justice (Micah 6:8), Christ’s call to peacemaking (Matthew 5:9), and the Spirit’s reconciling work (Ephesians 2:11-22).

from utilizing emancipatory methodologies of biblical interpretation, such as those found in feminist, African-American/womanist, Latino/mujerista, liberationist, political and postcolonial readings of the Bible alongside traditional male, Eurocentric interpretive approaches. Or interpreters might simply ask how a particular text and its interpretation can support gender, racial, class, and social equality.

An exploration of the implications of Christian theology for social issues might provide a rich supply of sermons on peace and justice. What does the Eucharist or Lord's Supper have to say to hunger in the world? Does the Christian practice of hospitality address our attitudes and practices towards immigrants and strangers? Can the catholicity or universality of the church speak to issues such as nationalism and war?

3 It is important to recognize that preaching itself is an act of nonviolent resistance.

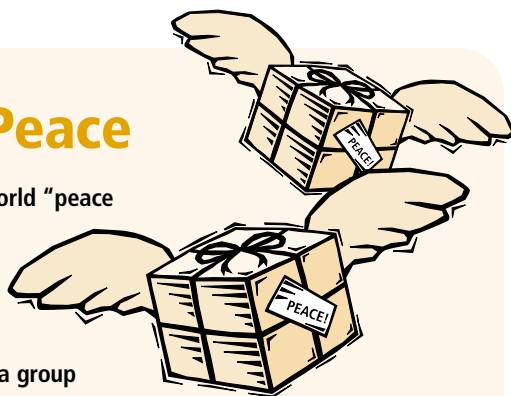
The apostle Paul went from voicing violent threats against followers of Jesus to proclaiming Christ's nonviolent cross as the way of salvation. He understood that the principalities and powers of this world are resisted by "proclaiming the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 2:17). Rather than confronting the powers with violent weapons of human warfare, Paul tells the church to take up the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17) Preaching is a rhetorical alternative to violent domination. It is a practice of nonviolence.

As a nonviolent practice preaching should avoid the rhetorical violence of a moralism that castigates. Pointing the finger and accusing the congregation for breaking God's commandments or for

The Gift of Peace

Wish you could give the world "peace on earth" for Christmas this year? Many of us send Christmas cards saying "peace on earth" and pray for it daily.

Consider giving a donation to a group working for peace and justice in the name of great Aunt Sally this year—maybe she has enough bottles of perfume to last a while; or give a peace poster to your nephew Josh to balance the mailings he is receiving daily from military enlistment services. Many of us have more than our share of the world's goods. Let's think how to spread Christ's peace and justice this holiday season.



being racist, sexist, and warmongers will probably not, in the words of Andrew Carnegie, "win friends and influence people." Moralizing places all the power of change within the realm of human effort. It is command without empowerment. Do this and don't do that. Being prophetic does not necessarily mean replacing God's power and grace with human works. The preacher can proclaim a gospel of power and grace, while at the same time calling the church to a vision and practice of peace and justice. Preachers of peace and justice can proclaim the God who has the power not only to transform individuals, but also institutions and social systems. Prophetic preaching can be hopeful. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which grew out of his African-American preaching tradition, addressed racism in America with a hopeful and inspiring vision.

4 Preaching peace and justice calls for awareness of our social context.

Preaching must always be contextual. In order to connect the good news with

peace and justice the preacher should be to some extent informed about what is going on locally, nationally, and globally in peace and justice. The context will form the particular shape of the sermon. What does the gospel of peace have to say to a congregation living during a war? What shape will a sermon on justice take in a highly segregated suburban community? How will the awareness of the increasing gap between the rich and the poor in the U.S. impact a sermon on the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus? Context will shape the sermon, stories, illustrations, and ethical implications.

Preaching peace and justice is more than preaching *on* peace and justice. It is a comprehensive, nonviolent practice of resistance and ecclesial formation that connects our faith to a world in need of spiritual transformation. Christ came preaching peace. The preacher can do no less.

An annotated bibliography of books on preaching peace and justice can be found on the PJSN web site: www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace.



Peace and Justice
Support Network

Dove Tales is a biannual newsletter created by Peace and Justice Support Network to inspire creative thinking and action in our collective peace and justice work. Ideas, articles, and reports can be sent to the editor: **PJSN Reference Committee:** Leo Hartshorn, Susan Mark Landis, Valerie Weidman, Dick Davis, Malinda Berry, Titus Peachey, Mark Frey, Yvonne Diaz Keeler, Andy Peifer Nissley, and Jorge Vielman. **Editor:** Leo Hartshorn, minister of peace and justice, Mennonite Mission Network, 202 South Ann Street, Lancaster, Pa .17602, 717-399-8353, LeoH@MennoniteMission.net. **Designer:** Cynthia Friesen Coyle, volunteer, Americus, Ga. **Web site:** www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace. **Opinions expressed in Dove Tales are those of the author and do not reflect official positions of Mennonite Church USA or the Peace and Justice Support Network.**

Start a Peace and Justice Small Group!

Do you want to gather people together who are interested in peace and justice? Try starting a peace and justice small group. Here are some ideas for getting started.

- ✦ Spend time with God discerning if you are ready to begin a small group, and whether your congregation is the place to seek others to join you.
- ✦ Invite members of your congregation interested in peace and justice to your home to discuss the possibility of forming a small group. Put an announcement in the church bulletin.
- ✦ At the first home meeting have everyone share their interest in peace and justice.
- ✦ Discuss a time and place to begin a regular meeting. Home meetings provide for a relaxed atmosphere. Meeting places can be rotated.
- ✦ Consider sharing leadership. This allows each person the opportunity to contribute their gifts.

- ✦ Set an agenda for the first regular meeting. Make sure to have both an inward and an outward journey, prayer and action. Suggestions: a) A time of sharing and prayer- pray for each other, the church, current world situations; b) A time of study and discussion- assign readings from a book and discuss together; c) A time of planning and action- present a common project to work on together, such as letter writing, planning a public action.
- ✦ The group can discuss the possibility of a group covenant that would include a shared commitment to regular attendance, prayer, study, and involvement in action.
- ✦ Connect the work of the small group with that of the area conference peace committee and Mennonite Church USA's Peace and Justice Support Network:
www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace.

Resources:

Daniel L. Buttry, *Peace Ministry: A Handbook for Local Congregations* (Judson, 1995)

Dennis A. Jacobsen, *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing* (Fortress, 2001).

Ken Sehested, *How to Start a Peacemaker Group in Your Local Church* (Baptist Peacemaker Fellowship of North America).

Glen Stassen, *Journey into Peacemaking* (Brotherhood Commission, SBC, 1983).

Richard K. Taylor, *Peace and Justice Ministry: A Practical Guide* (Brown-Roa, 1994)

An Offering of Prayers

Mennonite peace workers rely on their relationship with God, their commitment to Christ's call to peace and justice and their dependence on the Spirit to guide them. These folks yearn for your prayers—both your time holding them to God in prayer and your written notes letting them know you are praying for them.

Consider inviting a local group of believers to spend time in prayer for peace workers, and then write the workers and let them know about your prayers. Perhaps this is a one-time event; perhaps it becomes part of your local life together. Maybe you'll form a continuing relationship with someone taking a risk for peace that affects how you read the news and live.

Here are websites of Mennonite-related groups to help you find names, current events for prayer, staff names and addresses to send written prayers:

- ✦ Center on Conscience and War (formerly NISBCO)
<http://www.nisbco.org/>
- ✦ Christian Peacemaker Teams <http://www.cpt.org/>
- ✦ Every Church a Peace Church <http://www.ecapc.org/>

- ✦ Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries
<http://www.mcc.org/us/index.html>
- ✦ Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office
<http://www.mcc.org/us/washington/index.html>
- ✦ National Campaign for Peace Tax Fund <http://www.peacetax-fund.org/>

You'll find additional organizations on our links page:

- ✦ <http://peace.mennolink.org/links.html>

Mennonite Church USA peace staff also appreciate your prayers:

- ✦ <http://peace.mennolink.org/staff.html>

We believe in prayer. We believe your prayers make a difference. Please share your time with peace workers.



Spread the Peace Grants

Pace and Justice Support Network seeks to encourage congregations and conferences within Mennonite Church USA to “spread the peace.” Your generous support of PJSN in 2003 has provided us with funds for offering small grants to start local peace and justice projects. One time grants of \$500.00 and \$1000.00 are given:

- ✦ to Mennonite groups (congregations or conferences, rather than individuals) for projects based in the United States;
- ✦ for sharing, witnessing, reaching out for peace and justice;
- ✦ to recipients who raise local matching funds from individual donors both within and outside the congregation to demonstrate local ownership and commitment.

The 2004 recipients of the Spread the Peace Grants were designated at a meeting of the Peace and Justice Support Network Reference Committee on September 9-11 in Philadelphia, PA. The 2004 recipients were:

- 1 North Baltimore Mennonite Church**, Baltimore, Maryland, received \$500 for their Refugee Assistance Program, which provides emergency housing for refugees at the Reservoir Hill House of Peace;
- 2 Madison Mennonite Church**, Madison, Wisconsin, received \$1000 for helping to fund an illustrator for the new book, “Praying With Our Feet,” a children’s peace book with song;
- 3 Shalom Mennonite Church**, Indianapolis, Indiana, received \$500.00 for strengthening peace witness to the larger community through an annual peace festival and lecture;
- 4 Community Mennonite Church**, Harrisonburg, Virginia, received \$500 to train community and church volunteers to establish a phone support line for persons within and outside the church who are faced with decisions about military service, conscientious objection and national obligation;

- 5 Pacific Northwest Mennonite Church Peace and Justice Committee** received \$1000 to create a portable “Peace Pavilion” display that will be made available to congregations and committees for events like MCC relief sales, Ten Thousand Village bazaars, state and county fairs, and special peace and justice events. A total of 8 applications were received. We had \$3500 available for distribution.

Applying for a Peace Grant

To apply for 2005 Spread the Peace Grants consideration should be given to the vision of the project, peace and justice issues the project addresses, and assets your congregation/conference brings to the project. Decisions about recipients and disbursements will be made at the Fall of 2005. Please contact us for an application form:

Valerie Weidman, administrative assistant
Peace and Justice Support Network
543 Garden Hill Lane
Lancaster, PA 17603
717-397-3855

Mugging Someone for Peace

The following is the script of a peace mug presentation at Central District Conference at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio on June 25, 2004:

The Peace and Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA has encouraged Conference Peace Committees to affirm someone who has been involved over a lifetime in Peace and Justice, by awarding a “Peace Mug” that they had commissioned potter Dick Lehman to create. We as a Peace, Service, and Justice Committee asked for nominations, because we know that there are many persons in our conference who are so committed. We chose Leroy Kennel of Christ Community Church of Schaumburg, Illinois, to be the recipient this year. Leroy has a very lengthy and impressive resume of Peace & Justice work, starting in his college days continuing through his lifetime. He has worked with youth, and adults in church, community, national, and international situations and organizations, including being a candidate for U.S. House of Representatives on a peace platform. Leroy, our Peace, S, & J. committee would like to affirm you as one of Christ’s Peacemakers, by presenting this Peace Mug to you, which is a gift from the P&JSN of Mennonite Church USA. May God Bless you as you continue the Jesus’ way of Peacemaking.

Peace and Justice groups are encouraged to recognize local peace and justice leaders by presenting them with a Peace Mug. For more information on PJSN Peace Mugs, go to: www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace or contact Valerie Weidman, PJSN administrative assistant.



Hilary Bertsche, Chair of Peace, Service, and Justice Committee of Central District Conference (left), presenting the peace mug to Leroy Kennel (right).



Tell the world Jesus called us to **LOVE** enemies!



New PJSN resources help spread Christ's views on enemies, as found in both the Sermon on the Mount and his life. Wearing these buttons and t-shirts will take courage; if you give them as gifts, be sure to bless the recipients and bathe them in your prayers. Consider calling your youth group together for a meeting about living as peacemakers and then giving each person a button or t-shirt during a time of dedication to Christ and the pursuit of peace and justice. These new resources (as well as the many resources we continue to have available on our web site) make great Christmas gifts and stocking stuffers.

Buttons

Buttons are in two colors on white background. "Enemies" is red and black; the others are green and black. "Enemies" and "peace/justice" are 2" circles; "Choose Peace" is 2.75" x 1.75" rectangle and "Ask me" (spread the word about PJSN at your meetings and events!) is a 3" circle.

Buttons **\$2.00 + S&H**

T-Shirt

Our new t-shirt features PeaceSigns and is long-sleeved on blue shaded crystal. Front: PeaceSigns logo. Back, a "sign of peace" reading "Love your enemies. No exceptions."

Adult S - 3XL **\$19.00 + S&H**

Order buttons and t-shirt through:

Mennonite Media
 1251 Virginia Avenue
 Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2497
 E-mail: LoisH@MennoMedia.org
 Telephone: 1-800-999-3534
 FAX: 540-434-5556 (Attention LoisH.)

PJSN Fundraising note:

Thanks to those of you who sent donations for our fall fund drive! Because you donated, PJSN will be able to give Spread the Peace grants, produce worship resources on timely themes, answer questions about the (unlikely) draft, help Sunday school classes find resources, add pages to our constantly accessed web site and give grants to the financial support of Leo Hartshorn, Susan Mark Landis and their office staff.

When the fall letters went out, we yet needed to raise \$71,000 this year—some through your donations, some through contributions from your congregation, some through sale of resources. Fall is the time of year most of you give—so we hope to hear from each of you so we receive all of the \$5,000 Mennonite Mutual Aid 3/1 matching grant—for each \$3 you send, they give us \$1.

(Just a note—our most sincere apologies if you incorrectly received a letter implying you hadn't yet given this year. Just let us know.) PJSN is delighted to receive a donation to honor someone—we'll mention it in our next print publication. For information to encourage your congregation to support PJSN financially, see our website.

Thanks for your continued support

Remember, PJSN is self-supporting. Many volunteers give valuable time and skills, but we truly need your financial contributions—gifts that confirm that well-supported Mennonite peace and justice work matters to you, that our PJSN budget of over \$100,000 is possible. Please put us on your regular donation list!

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