



DoveTales

February 2017



Steps toward a more peaceful year

By Jason Boone

What are your hopes for peace in 2017? Are they for a specific issue, country, or group of people? Most of us have certain “hot buttons” that drive us to do more and work harder. I have ideas on what peace topics perhaps should take priority over others, and so do you.

But after a tumultuous 2016, I believe the most important word for peacemakers is from Luke, chapter 10: “Jesus told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

The need for reconciliation at home and abroad is

urgent and growing. Now more than ever, those of us who believe that following Jesus means working for peace and justice, must engage the world around us.

As our nation becomes more polarized, we must be the ones who build bridges of reconciliation.

We must walk boldly into the places of pain, suffering, poverty and violence with the words of peace on our lips and the tools of peace at the ready.

The challenges ahead require that peacemakers take initiative in doing the work of the kingdom. As our nation becomes more polarized, we must be the ones who build bridges of reconciliation. As the scourges of poverty, addiction, and homelessness manifest in our communities,

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both urban and rural, we must engage in sacrificial ways, entering into creative partnerships and bringing different ways of being into difficult circumstances. As our world becomes more violent, we must witness to an alternative kingdom.

Jesus is at the center of this great work, and the church continues as a unique, irreplaceable vehicle for it. I'm committed in 2017 to the Peace and Justice Support Network providing tools for encouraging every church in Mennonite Church USA to embrace its calling as an active, engaged peace church.

I need your help as supporters of the Peace and Justice Support Network to carry these tools into churches across Mennonite Church USA. We need more workers for the harvest. Our country and the world is yearning for churches who can proclaim and demonstrate the love of Jesus for all creation.

One new tool we are introducing this year is Peace Circles. Peace Circles are a way for churches to support and encourage active peacemaking. Centered on Scripture and supported by community, Peace Circles help us become involved in concrete ways in peacemaking. Read more about Peace Circles in this issue of *Dove Tales*, and consider taking our free online training to learn how to operate a Peace Circle at your church.

Continue to pray for the Peace and Justice Support Network, Mennonite Church USA, and everyone engaged in the great work of reconciliation so desperately needed today. Pray for more workers for a peaceful harvest.



Peace,

Jason Boone
Coordinating Minister
Peace and Justice Support Network



Peace Circles

PJSN is excited to partner with Jane Roeschly of Normal (Illinois) Mennonite Church to offer Peace Circles. Peace Circles are a six-week experience for groups of six to 10 designed to empower participants for acts of peacemaking in their hearts, homes, community, and the world, while being supported with prayer and spiritual community. This is a new way to help yourself and others get involved in active peacemaking!

Peace Circles are built around a three-step process:

- 1. Awareness**—Call to mind an image or feeling that makes you feel peaceful. Focus on what already feels peaceful to you. Going around the circle, share aloud, saying, "I feel peaceful when ..."
- 2. Vision**—This is about vision at any level – personal, community, global. Call to mind what you experience or know is NOT peaceful in you, in a setting in which you work or live, in your community, congregation, world. Consider what would make that situation more peaceful for yourself or others. Imagining the peaceful situation you would like to see come about, share around the circle by saying, "Peace for me would be ..." Or, "Peace for our neighbors would be ..."
- 3. Action**—Consider a very specific, single, realistic action you are willing to take (or behavior you are willing to change) this week to grow peace. This is commonly related to Step 2 (though not always). Complete this statement: "To grow peace, this week, I will ..."

You can find more information on what the weekly Peace Circle gatherings include and other supporting information at PSJN.org.

Peace Circles kickoff

To celebrate the kickoff of Peace Circles, we are offering a virtual Peace Circle! Led by Jane, this is an opportunity for you to experience the process and to prepare you to lead a Peace Circle in your church.

Dates: Tuesdays, 8-9 p.m. (Eastern), from Feb. 14-Mar. 21

Cost: FREE

Format: Online video conference

Space is limited. Visit www.PJSN.org to register.

The dividing wall of hostility

I have friends for whom the election of Donald Trump as president is a genuinely frightening event. They feel they will be targeted for harassment by the administration and its supporters on the basis of their skin color, gender, or citizenship status, among other things.

I have friends for whom the election of Donald Trump as president is a genuinely happy event. They believe a new administration will bring about an economic renaissance in our country, and will give voice to concerns about our culture that have been ignored.

It might be that such a contrast in visions has always been present in our nation. Yet somehow, we've worked together on pressing problems and maintained at least a grudging respect for opposing views. While extremist views existed, they were not recognized as being serious contributors to the collective community.

But it feels like on Nov. 8, 2016, we entered into new territory. The gap between supporters and detractors of the president-elect isn't bridged by anything. In fact, instead of bridges, dividing walls of hostility are being constructed every day.

At the same time, the recent election brought to light serious problems that must be addressed. The never-ending wars we've been involved with since the turn of the century; economic systems that do not lead to just outcomes; systemic racism in our courts, prisons and communities; and a worldwide phenomenon of shrinking away from other cultures and countries to retreat into nationalist cocoons are just a few of the outstanding balances that will come due and demand payment.

These problems generate righteous anger, understandable fear, and palpable unease in our country. They can't be overcome by one side or the other. Trading off political victories, exchanging Republican presidents for Democrat presidents, and vice versa, may provide the thrill of victory for some, but will ultimately add to the wall of hostilities that divide us.

The challenges that lay ahead can only be addressed by united people. Unity doesn't mean political homogeneity, but it does mean the capacity to view our differences as minor compared to the opportunities that exist when we work together toward common goals that benefit many, not just few.

There will be ample opportunity and need for followers of Jesus to courageously stand for peace and justice in the months and years ahead. As followers of Jesus, we must stand with the poor, the weak, the marginalized. We must stand with those who work for peace and justice. These opportunities have been present previously, but they will no longer be ignored.

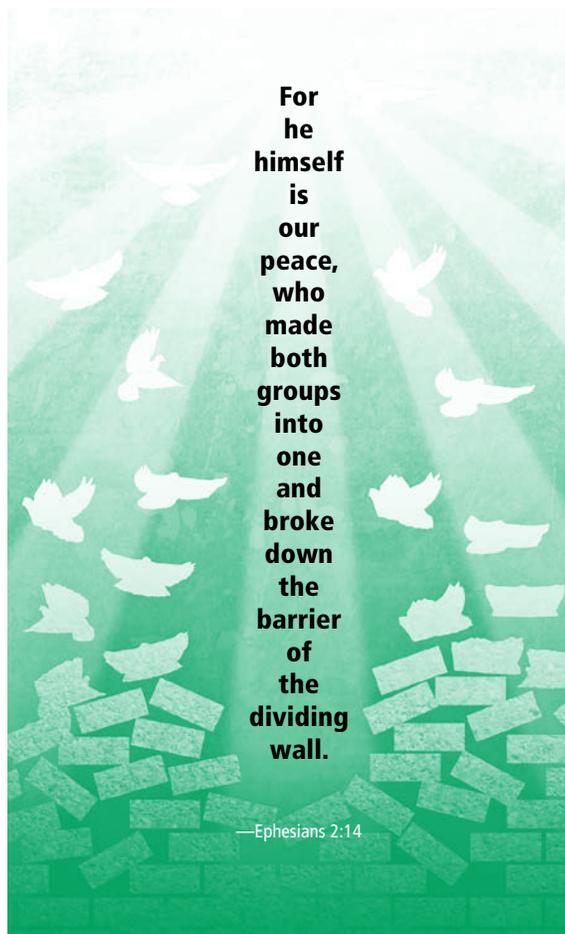
There is another call to be pursued, even as we make these valiant stands for justice. It's a call for each of us to work on dismantling the dividing wall of hostility that we all contribute to at different times. As agents of reconciliation, we can contribute toward the unity that is needed now more than ever.

This is difficult work, the work of active peacemaking. It's not enough to refrain from invective toward our political opponents. We must take steps forward to try and understand more fully what hopes and fears shape those with views we don't share.

We do this because we follow Jesus, who never turned away a chance to engage with those who opposed him. Let's be honest, our efforts won't result in an instant healing in our nation. But our faithfulness is seen by God. From the small moments of understanding, the precious minutes when defenses are lowered and connections can be made, when they are offered to God, as meager as a few fish and loaves of bread, abundance can flow.

New resources

We've developed a new page at PJSN.org with resources to help you and your church learn about breaking down these walls of hostility. Visit today!



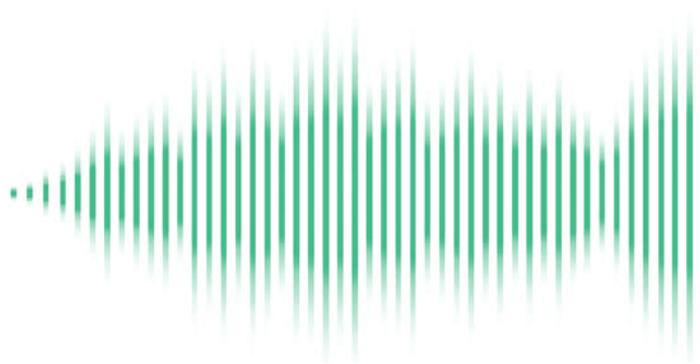


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Peace and Justice Support Network is a partnership with Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network.

Are you interested in:

- Becoming part of God's mission in your community?
- The Doctrine of Discovery?
- How Mennonites can connect with college students and millennials?
- The intersection of race and church?
- How trauma affects us and what it means for peacemaking?

Learn about these topics and much more with the **Peace Lab podcast!** These passionate conversations about peace happen in the Peace Lab. Listen to all the episodes at **[PJSN.org!](https://www.pjsn.org)**