

MISSION
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Peace & Justice SUPPORT NETWORK

Mennonite peace witness



Peace with God, peace with neighbor, peace with the world. If we are pursuing peace in those areas, we are on the right track, because that is the track Jesus modeled for us.

The time spent in prayer and communion with God gave Jesus strength and wisdom to do his work in the world.

The time spent teaching, talking, listening to disciples, strangers, even enemies, filled his hours and show us that peacemaking is personal, intimate and relational.

The time spent confronting and challenging systems of sin and injustice show us that peace can't only be personal

and intimate, but also has to be discerning of the powers and principalities that operate in the world.

I'm glad the Peace and Justice Support Network is supporting, encouraging, and strengthening peacemaking in Mennonite Church USA in all three of these spheres. Read more in this issue of *DoveTales* about ways you and your church can get involved!

Peace.



Jason Boone
Minister of Peace and Justice



Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Participants of Mission Network's alumni and friends service-learning tour took part in a vigil in Douglas, Arizona, honoring those who have died in the desert. They carried crosses etched with the names of the deceased.

Peace with God

PJSN has always strived to ground active peacemaking in a deep spirituality and to support it with spiritual practices. We want to do even more to encourage the link between the two. In pursuit of that, I'm grateful to be able to introduce my

friend and colleague, Karla Minter, as a member of the Peace and Justice Support Network. Karla has experience, knowledge and passion about spiritual practices that will help us grow in our spiritual journeys to help sustain our peacemaking. —Jason Boone

A gradual relief from blindness

By Karla Minter



Can you see anything?

Jesus asks the blind man he has just touched, “Can you see anything?” (v. 23b) The man is blind. Others have brought the blind man to Jesus, begging him to touch him. The blind man replies, “I see people, but they look like trees walking.” (v. 24) With this appraisal, Jesus “laid his hands on his eyes again.” The blind man “looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.” (v. 25) The Harper Collins NRSV Study Bible describes this healing story as a “progressive relief from blindness ... symbolic of the disciple’s symbolic blindness and partial understanding.” For many White Christians, our current context of global pandemic, grief, loss, and increasing awareness of systemic racism is a call to move from blindness to sight. Am I completely blind? Can I see anything?

What do you see?

As I begin to see the deep pain and injustice around me, what do I truly see? Referring to the blind man’s progressive relief from blindness, where am I in the process of seeing clearly or seeing “people, but they look like trees walking?” In *White Awake*, Daniel Hill engages this movement from blindness to sight as the metaphor for the awakening journey of anti-racism work, described as a multifaceted cultural identity journey. In Brenda Salter McNeil’s for-

Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida

Mark 8:22-25

22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. **23** He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”

24 He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”

25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

ward for *White Awake*, she states, “As Christians, we must embark upon an awakening journey — a path that will lead us into direct confrontation with the narrative of racial difference. We must open our eyes to the uncomfortable racial hierarchy that has been the basis for the structure of our entire society. We must wake up to the ways that the narrative of racial difference played a major role in identity formation in the early days of our country, and to the ways it continues to play a dominant role in our sense of identity here and now.”

“One of the primary issues we must face, especially in this sociopolitical climate, is the need for White people to do the hard work of wrestling with what it really means to be White.”

**Peace & Justice
SUPPORT NETWORK**

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“This points to one of the core messages of *White Awake*: The poisonous impact of the narrative of racial difference does not land solely on people of color. The narrative of racial difference has also profoundly affected White people. But unlike people of color, most White people remain completely unaware of the ways this narrative has affected their sense of identity.” (p. 1)

As a White, middle-class woman in today’s sociopolitical climate, what do I see? As a follower of Jesus Christ, committed to the work of anti-racism, where am I in the process of moving from blindness to sight? Have I experienced Jesus’ healing touch in this journey?

How we see God ...

Acknowledging that *White Awake* is written “for those who are looking at racial justice through the lens of faith,” Hill emphasizes that “[t]here’s nothing that shapes our actions and behaviors more than how we see God.” Acknowledging Jesus as the full expression of the character of God, Hill states, “An awakening to justice, reconciliation, and cultural identity begins with seeing the full expression of Jesus with increasing clarity.” (p. 142)

This awakening will be a Spirit-led awakening. What spiritual practices will accompany us, will compel us, along the journey from blindness to seeing? Join us for the journey.



Photo by Andrew Boddien

Peace with neighbor

In 2016, PJSN operated the Election Day Communion campaign. Election Day Communion is a movement to encourage unity within churches in the midst of fractious political campaigns. It’s simple — Election Day Communion churches offer a communion service on the day or evening of the presidential election. It’s way to show that even though political differences may exist in our churches, our ultimate allegiance is to Jesus and that the unity found in his body can overcome even political division.

We planned on doing Election Day Communion again this November, but the tone, tenor and general intensity associated with the upcoming election gave us pause. Election Day Communion has always been given to being misinterpreted as saying that elections don’t matter — that laws, policies, and political actions aren’t important to followers of Jesus. These things are

important, because they affect people, for good and ill. Election Day Communion doesn’t deny the impact of elections; it celebrates the love and belonging God pours out to us through Jesus.

Yet with tensions so high in our nation, and the tendency toward misinterpretation that accompanies everything these days, it seemed like a wise course to not observe Election Day Communion this year.

But we heard from folks over the summer who said Election Day Communion was important to them and to their church communities. Folks who appreciated the chance to express a third way to approach the frenzy of election night.

So Election Day Communion is BACK. You can go to ElectionDayCommunion.com to learn more and sign up to be an EDC church on election day or night!



DoveTales

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Peace with the world

The Mennonites Against Militarism campaign will kick off in October! Mennonites Against Militarism is our chance to reignite our witness against the sins of militarism in its many forms. We'll be offering webinars, online learning communities, and much, much more over the next year.

The best way to stay in touch with Mennonites Against Militarism is to follow the PJSN Facebook page. We'll be making sure all the MAM news and opportunities are highlighted there. "Like" us today and make sure you don't miss a thing!

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