



Peace Advocate News

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Matthew 5:9

Peace begins when you make your peace with Jesus, accept Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord.

Volume 11:3

Spring 2018

Glimmers of Hope **Out of the Ashes**

February saw yet another tragedy. Seventeen people died and fourteen more were injured in Portland, Florida when a young gunman invaded a high school and opened fire. It has become far too common in America. Since two gun wielding students killed 13 people in the Columbine high school shooting in 1999 150,000 students in 170 schools have experienced such a horrific event. Each time, there has been shock, outrage, and a national outcry for changes including in the relationship between Americans and guns only to see things go back to 'normal'. There are usually a few small steps proposed to bring change. A few steps have been taken, though some of these have been reversed or allowed to laps due to the strong gun lobby, once public attention is diverted to something else. For the most part, the government has not been willing to go against the lobbying and make the hard decisions that are needed to change the culture and prevent such tragedies from happening again. Public opinion has moved more and more toward change, but so far, public opinion has been ignored.

This time however, there is a glimmer of hope that has not been seen in the past. This time the students who survived the Florida shooting are themselves saying enough is enough! Only days after the tragedy and in the mist of the funerals for those who died, the students went to the state house in Tallahassee to demand changes in gun laws, including a ban on the automatic assault weapons that have become the guns of choice for many mass shooters. What is more, young people around the country are joining them in saying enough is enough! The initial response from Tallahassee was not encouraging. Florida legislators refused to act on any of the student's suggestions. Some leaders are instead clamoring to turn schools into armed camps with an armed security force or by calling on teachers to be armed.

The students are not calling for more guns in schools and most teachers agree with them and do not want to be armed themselves. They site statistics, verified by police, that even those trained in the use of fire arms miss their

aim most of the time, especially in the high-pressure chaos of an active shooter incident. They also point out the increased risk of student and staff deaths when there are more guns in the school – including the risk of being caught in cross fire, confusion over who the shooter is, and the risk of those guns getting into the wrong hands. . .

The young people have not been deterred or silenced by the resistance of political leaders. They remain quite eloquent as they share their views. One young man told the president, "We cannot protect our guns before we protect our children." Another student reminded legislators that the students will be voters soon and "if we cannot change your minds, we will change your seats." A young gun owner said he would gladly give up all his weapons if it would help stop the killing. In their determination there is hope. If they persist, maybe the students will keep the conversation going until there is an honest effort to address the issue of guns in America.

There are already some encouraging signs. A number of business leaders are moving to do some of the things the government has not been willing to do. Several key gun sellers are changing their policies. Dick's (and subsidiary Field & Stream), Walmart (the largest gum Seller in the U.S.), Kroger, and L.L. Bean will no longer sell guns to people under 18. Dick's will stop selling assault weapons at all (Walmart had already stopped selling them). Some will no longer sell toy lookalikes either. A number of other businesses have cut their ties to the NRA, in some cases, despite threats of retaliation. Following these moves, the White House, at least for the moment, has also expressed interest in some gun law changes over NRA objections.

Where these moves will lead remains to be seen. Some such actions have been taken before but have been rescinded once the memory of the precipitating event fades away. Only time will tell if lasting changes will result this time. However, the need to act is clear. Children should not have to fear for their safety as they go to school. Just as important, they should be learning that violence is not a good way to solve problems. For too many people, violence has become acceptable as entertainment; as a response to disagreement; as a supposedly quick fix to problems; as a way to live. For too many people, guns have become tied to their personal identity in ways that, for some, make possessing guns the thing that defines them.

All people are created by God and as such, are defined by much more than that. All people are of equal value to God and should be of equal value to each other. Perhaps the starting point for ending the violence is understanding this reality. To see the value God sees in us and in every other individual can eliminate the suspicions, fears and selfishness that seem to make some people willing to risk taking life to protect their own, and others willing to take life in response to their own anger or pain. No person can survive alone. Everyone is responsible for the wellbeing of everyone else as well as of themselves. Maybe this time the young will help us all realize that.

Did You Know?

John Donohue of the law school at Stanford University has released a study of the role of conceal carry guns in stopping/preventing violence. He found that the incidents of violence have gone up 13 to 15 percent in states that allow concealed carry. Also, the FBI has documented 13 years of mass shootings and found only one case in which someone with a conceal carry gun had a positive impact on the outcome.

Missing War News?

America is in the longest war in the country's history but recently little news about it is being made public by the Pentagon. The U.S. government says progress is being made, but they are not giving details and the White House is now saying American troops will be in Afghanistan indefinitely. While the Afghan government says it "controls most of the country", the BBC and other reports question such claims of progress and find instead that the U.S. backed Afghan government is losing ground. After 16 years the Taliban has an open and active presence in 70 percent of the country and ISIS controls more territory than ever. More than 31,000 civilians have been killed since American troops arrived in October 2001. 8,500 were injured or killed in 2017 alone. 2,400 American troops and hundreds of other foreign troops have also been killed since 2001. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction criticized the Pentagon for withholding information about the situation in Afghanistan. Trump had expressed interest in peace talks with the Taliban. He has now reversed that view. The only winners in this situation are the companies that are making money selling the weapons and supplies that make it possible to keep soldiers in the field indefinitely.

Source: Julia Conley. "Damning New Study Helps Explain Why Pentagon Will No Longer Release Afghan War Updates." **Common Dreams**. 1-31-17.

People In Limbo Update

In the last issue of this newsletter, there was an article, "Thousands Are Now In Limbo" which talked about the plight of the thousands of people from Caribbean and central American countries who have been told that, after

living in the U.S. under Temporary Protected Status (TPS) protection, most of them for years, the current U.S. government is rescinding their TPS protection. Reference was made to Ilexene Alphonse, interim pastor of Eglise des Freres Haitiens in Miami, Fla and his report on the people affected in his congregation. The March 2018 issue of *Messenger* has an article (pages 18-20) includes his report. It also gives more information on TPS and the people from other countries that are affected. When the *Messenger* article was published, those losing TPS status included 60,000 from Haiti, 260,000 from El Salvador fleeing earthquakes, 86,000 from Honduras fleeing Hurricane Mitch, 15,000 fleeing an earthquake in Nepal, 5,300 people from Nicaragua also fleeing Hurricane Mitch, some 500 from Somalia fleeing war, 1,050 from Sudan and 100 from South Sudan also fleeing war, 7,000 from Syria fleeing war, and 1,100 fleeing war in Yemen are affected. For many of these people the situation they fled has not improved substantially. Their plight has become a 'political football' in U.S. politics. The fact that they are people – men, women, and children made in the image of God and with the same rights and needs as any other people often gets lost in the shuffle to make political points or economic statements, often at their expense. Read the *Messenger* article for more on the human side of the story.



Remember Nigeria!

Update

It has been reported that on February 20 Boko Haram attacked the Government Girls Science and Technical School, in Dapchi, less than 50 miles south of the Niger border in Nigeria's Yobe state. The Church of the Brethren Newline reports: "Witnesses told US media that the Boko Haram convoy consisted of nine vehicles, including two with machine guns on the roof. The uniformed Boko Haram fighters opened fire as they entered the village and proceeded directly to the school. There are contradictory reports about the number of girls they kidnapped and how many were subsequently rescued by the Nigerian army. Witnesses credibly say that more than 90 were kidnapped, more than 70 were rescued, and that 2 girls were killed." This school is about 170 miles north-west of Chibok where school girls, including many from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), were kidnapped in 2014.

There is no word yet about the identity of these girls except that they are high school age. Keep them and their families in your prayers as you continue to remember the 106 Chibok girls and some 2,000 other women and children still missing in Nigeria.

Newsline also reports that several EYN pastors had traveled through the Chibok area just hours before a Boko Haram attack happened there. The report says the pastors were lucky to have traveled safely. Pray for all Nigerians who live with the fear of this kind of violence every day.

Source: Newsline 2-23-2018.

Coming at District Conference 2018

The 30th Annual Silent Auction for the Peace Endowment Fund.

We Need You to bring handmade items and goodies (handcrafted items, artist's work, homemade food) for the auction and/or come prepared to bid on the donated items in the auction! See the District Website nohcob.org for more information.

Worship Resources

Make Praying for Peace Part of Your Worship
Remember in prayer:

1. **Victims of gun violence** – especially children. Since Columbine in 1999 150,000 students in 170 schools have experienced a school shooting. Parkland, FL was the latest.
2. **World leaders willing to risk the use of nuclear weapons** to save face, project personal power, advance their self-interest, to show off, just because they can. . .
3. **People recovering from natural disasters** – hurricanes, earth quakes, fires, extreme cold . . . especially those not getting the basic help they need including Porto Rico
4. **Yemen, Niger, & elsewhere;** where the U.S. is involved in often forgotten wars. Civilians are victims every day.
5. **All people in this world who live with war.**
6. **People facing torture.**
7. People trying to put their lives & their countries back together after living through **genocide or 'ethnic cleansing'** events. Myanmar, & Rwanda are only two of many such places.
8. **People affected by gun violence.**
9. **South Sudan:** The country with the world's worst human rights record. Large numbers of people continue to flee to Uganda to escape violence there. They also face famine.
10. **Nigeria:** The girls kidnapped from a government school in Dapchi February 20. The 106 Chibok girls & more than 2,000 other women & children still missing, EYN, all those affected by the continuing violence & famine.
11. **Democratic Republic of Congo** where violence continues.
12. **Bangladesh** – brutal attacks by Islamist militants on minority groups including non-Muslims and intellectuals are rising.
13. **Those in prison** because of their beliefs.
14. All those whose lives are dominated by **fear.**
15. **Child Soldiers**
16. Those who **don't know God's peace** & have lost hope & joy.

17. **Those facing execution** – & those willing to execute because they put revenge above redemption & forgiveness
18. **People affected by gun negligence** – especially 525 child shooters in 2016. Many of these shooters are toddlers. . .
19. **People Displaced** because of war or political unrest including the people of **Somalia, Syria, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo, countries in the Middle East, and South America**
20. People **working for peace** locally and in the world.
21. **Veterans'** living with their part in war. 18 U.S. Iraq/Afghanistan veterans commit suicide every day. (US Veterans Affairs statistics)
22. **Girls & Women** facing abuse and violence every day
23. **Women** who face sexual abuse in the workplace.
24. **People facing Deportation** –women, children, & men are frequently pulled from their homes & work places, with little or no due process. Some children come home from school to find parents gone without warning. . .
25. **800,000 children, now young people,** who fall under the provisions of the Dream Act – the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program which is to be cut
26. **Those now waging war by remote control** – they push buttons from far away that hurt or kill men, women, children

Shalom My Friend

Do you remember the song?

Shalom, my friends,
Shalom, my friends,
Shalom, shalom.
Till we meet again,
Till we meet again,
Shalom, shalom.



It is based on a Hebrew folk song Shalom Chaverim. Often sung as a round, it is a blessing and a fair well or sending song, and it is a call for peace.

Shalom is a Hebrew word that is hard to translate into English. The English word used is usually peace. American English speakers have trouble understanding that this seemingly simple translation is not so simple at all. Unlike people in much of the world, most Americans speak only one language. As a result, they do not appreciate that translation is often not a one word to one word process. Some languages have different words for each of the separate nuances English tries to cover with one word. For example, in the Inuit language there are 50 separate words for the different kinds of frozen precipitation – all of which English simply labels snow. The reverse is also true. English speakers struggle to understand when one word in another language, shalom for example, requires whole

sentences to translate into English. These struggles brought on by language reflect and contribute to the struggles people have when trying to understand one another. In his Brethren Church Peace email on February 19, Phill Lersch's points out that "the American Heritage College Dictionary, Third Edition, defines SHALOM as meaning 'a traditional Jewish greeting or farewell,' from the Hebrew word meaning 'peace.'" He then reminds us that Walter Brueggeman and Willard M. Swartley have clarified that Shalom means much more:

- SHALOM: Peace with God, peace with the world, peace with oneself, peace among Jesus' followers, peace with one's enemies, peace with creation.
- SHALOM: Personal wholeness and societal harmony.
- SHALOM: Seeking the well-being and personal fulfillment of everyone.
- SHALOM: Peace with oneself, with others and with God.
- SHALOM is a word of hope, describing the coming or emerging Peace of God.
- SHALOM has to do with living God's way with others, with society and with the created order.
- SHALOM is a holistic idea of external peace in the world and internal peace within.
- SHALOM is the way God wants us to live together.
- SHALOM is God's Loving Intentionality.
- SHALOM is the way God created the world to be.
- SHALOM embraces political, public, interpersonal and personal peace.
- SHALOM, a single word, expresses the crux of Jesus' teachings.

Lord God, help us to remember that a great many of our problems are based on our own limited understanding. The limits of our understanding can be based on many things – prejudice, bias, fear, selfishness, intent, ignorance, misunderstanding. . . and all too often, our choice of words. Remind us to acknowledge that words are not always as precise as we think. This is especially true when more than one language and the cultures that surround them is involved. Listening is twice as important as speaking and making sure we understand what we hear is more important yet.

The word 'Shalom' means far more than one English word can express. The fact of the matter is, so does the English word 'Peace!' Lord make us instruments of your peace with all its meaning and possibilities!

Are We Moving Forward Or Falling Back?

This nation and the world are of two minds on this question. What is progress for some is falling back or back-sliding for others. Part of the problem is that people with both views cannot imagine how anyone could possibly

think differently than they do and be a 'good' person. For the most part, people with these differing views cannot even agree on the questions to ask, on what direction to go, on how to define what the goal is, and therefore, how to know if the goal has been reached. Part of our very human problem is that this situation does not seem to change.

Lord, open our minds to the possibility that we do not always have it right. Make listening a priority over speaking our mind. Make concern for all people more important than 'me', or ideology or being right. Make "I am sorry" and "I love you" our 'first responders' when there is conflict, followed closely by "I forgive you" and "let's talk".

The shortest distance between two people is a smile.
Victor Borge

Peacemaking Remembrance Dates!



April 22. Earth Day.

April 28. In 1977 mothers in Argentina held their first rally for 'the disappeared' in Buenos Aires. Thousands who opposed Argentina's government were abducted and never heard from again. The rally drew attention to their plight and called for accountability

Mother's Day. the second Sunday in May. Read the Mother's Day Proclamation and rediscover that Mother's Day was started as a call for peace. Need a copy? Contact the District Peace Advocate, see below.

May 15. International Conscientious Objectors' Day. On this day in 1994, a stone commemorating conscientious objectors worldwide was unveiled in Tavistock Square, London.

May 24. This is International Women's Day for Disarmament.

June 19. This is "Juneteenth", marking the day in 1865 when previously enslaved people in Texas learned that they were free.

June 20. This is World Refugee Day.

June 23. This is United Nations Public Service Day.

June 26. This is United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.



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