

# **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 14:1

Winter 2021

## **In the Face of Unexpected Violence**

For people who have always tried to work for peace, what we saw on January 6<sup>th</sup> in Washington and in numerous state capitals around the country, was appalling and shameful. Part of being human is that we do not all agree on everything. However, using force and violence to get your way is never acceptable. For one who believes that life is a gift from God and that there is value in every human being, it was painful to watch a group of people become a mob, cause serious injury; threaten and take life; and cause such wanton destruction. Some in the mob clearly let recent inflammatory political rhetoric carry them away while others used the situation as an excuse to unleash long harbored plans for more selfish and sinister schemes to gain control and power for their own purposes by any means.

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, we saw the power of hate expressed in ways many of us never expected to see. We must all examine our role in this tragedy and ask for forgiveness where we enabled it by turning a blind eye or keeping silent when we should have spoken up for the value and rights of all people, for peaceful behavior, and for nonviolent solutions to disagreements. Lord help us examine our motives where we have allowed our frustrations to turn to anger and make amends if we let that anger be used to cause or encourage harm and destruction. Because we are human with wills of our own, we will disagree at times, but God calls us to remember that even when we disagree, we are all God's children and should treat each other as such. Pray for the wisdom to understand this, and the humility to acknowledge that we are not always right and are not the center of the universe. Lord, remind us that it is God's will we must seek not our own. Pray for the wisdom to know the difference.

Particularly in the days and weeks ahead, pray for our leaders that they will seek not confrontation or to ferment more discord and violence, but reason, dialog, and constructive efforts to work together to deal with the issues that face all of us. Also pray for those who would seek further violent upheaval. Change their hearts and make us instruments of your peace to and for them.

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## **What It Really Meant**

Many people, especially Americans, have forgotten it, but, at the time, World War I was thought to be the war to end all war. It was horrendous, and despicably fought in ways that had never been done before, including the use of poison gas. It demonstrated the devaluing of human life on an enormous scale, in part because it marked a transition between older methods of war based more on one-on-one combat and so called 'modern methods' using weapons of mass destruction more impersonally delivered. It was so horrific, because, while the weapons had changed, the tactics had not. For example, thousands of men were sent charging against enemy lines with no hope of achieving anything and little hope of survival simply because charging forward and repelling counter charges was the way wars had always been fought. The fact that the soldiers now faced machinegun fire, shelling, planes delivering bombs from the sky, tanks, and other weapons (including U-boats at sea) which largely doomed traditional tactics from the start, notwithstanding. It was also the last war fought in which the majority of the people killed were soldiers not civilians. It did not end with a 'victory', but with an armistice followed later by a treaty. An armistice is a truce, or ceasefire reached by making an agreement between the parties involved. In this case, they literally set the day and time (11 o'clock on the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918) at which fighting was to stop and, even with the agreement in hand, actually kept fighting until the last minute. In reality, reports say both sides continued shelling each other until nightfall, hours after the armistice was to go into effect. Both sides knew the end time and that further fighting would achieve only more dead. Even so, they kept fighting and 11,000 people died after the armistice agreement was reached.

The soul sickness, despair and devastation people were feeling by the end of the hostilities was overwhelming in the countries effected by the war. Originally, here and elsewhere, November 11 became a day for expressing gratitude for peace. It was a day to remember the dead, and, just as important, it was a day to work for an end to all war so there would be no more war dead ever again.

In the U.S., "A Congressional Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 U.S. Code, Sec. 87a) approved [on] May 13, 1938, made November 11 in each year a legal holiday: a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as 'Armistice Day'" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans_Day)). Also known as Remembrance Day, it was marked by a time of silence and a somber mood of mourning and reflection. It was also a day of renewing a commitment to preventing war in the future. In 1954, after the Second World War and the Korean war, President Eisenhower changed the U.S. name of the day to Veterans Day and, called on the country to remember all veterans from all wars. There was also a big shift in focus. The day was turned into a pro-military celebration day on which to glorify war and warriors. In some quarters, people are actually encouraged to support involvement in future war as a way to honor past war dead. . . Such a notion would have been repugnant to those who started the commemoration of Armistice Day.

From 1971 through 1978 the date of U.S. 'Veterans Day' was changed to the fourth Monday in October, by the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. Even with the return to the November 11<sup>th</sup> date after 1971, the origin of the day and its original focus have largely been forgotten. Some cities have gone so far as to ban participation in the day's commemorations by groups like Veterans For Peace because such groups honor veterans and past war dead but do not glorify war or encourage future war. Veterans For Peace have taken the lead in calling for a return to the original intention of Armistice Day, November 11<sup>th</sup> – as a day for peace. They say: "As veterans we know that a day that celebrates peace, not war, is the best way to honor the sacrifices of veterans. We want generations after us to never know the destruction war has wrought on people and the earth."

Throughout history, too many leaders, from chiefs to kings, to presidents, and even religious leaders, have used various means to convince their people to support war. They have tried to hide the messy,

destructive, corrupt, immoral, and sinful reality of war, while using everything from forced conscription to creating a belief in a villainous enemy, to glorifying the warrior and war itself to gain support for actions that all too frequently leave people on all sides worse off than when the war started.

Sources: Veterans for Peace at: <https://www.veteransforpeace.org/>  
Jay Wittmeyer. "Remembering Remembrance Day". Reflections in the Messenger. Nov. 10, 2018



## Did You Know?

It is hard to help children get an unbiased view of the world. Marie Benner-Rhoades (Youth & Young Adult Peace Formation Director for OEP) reports "children as young as six months already make judgments based on race." We must be very intentional about it if we want to raise children not to be racist in their attitudes and thinking. One example of the need for careful choices is evident in the options for reading materials for children. Even when you are careful about what they read, "according to 2019 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), 11.9% of children's books feature First Peoples [Native or Indigenous Peoples], 5.3% Latinx, 8.7% Asians/Asian Americans, 11.9% Black/African, 41.8% white, and 29.2% animals/trucks, etc." "Taken together, books about white children, talking bears, trucks, monsters, potatoes, etc. represent nearly three quarters (71%) of children's and young adult books published in 2019." (The CCBC added a category to track books by and about Arab/Arab Americans in 2020.) To find books about children and cultures that are not white, especially books that are also written by the people themselves, takes some work, but it is worth it! Children need to hear stories and learn about all kinds of people in order to understand and appreciate the diversity of the world they live in. Making sure they have access to such books is one way we can help raise children who are the caring, loving, empathetic, and unbiased people God calls them to be. The CCBC publishes lists of books they recommend by category at: <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/booklists/>.

The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) is a unique examination, study and research library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The CCBC is also funded by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction through the Division for Libraries and Technology. For more about them see: <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/about/>. (See also the Peace resources list on page 4)





# Remember Nigeria!

The situation in Nigeria continues to be untenable, and is now made worse by COVID-19. Boko Haram attacks continue as do some tribal conflicts, all with accompanying killing, abductions, burning, and looting. Some church building and villages have been burned, rebuilt, and burned again – repeatedly. Thousands are displaced, thousands more cannot safely sleep in their own homes for fear of night attacks. Many try to plant their crops and tend them only to have the harvest stolen or burned just when it is ready. Death and destruction are still part of daily life and have been for more than a dozen years now.

As devastating as this is, its effect on the children has another, in some ways more far-reaching, facet. So many children have lost the ability to get an education, that it will have an enormous impact on Nigeria’s future. This is one of the primary goals of Boko Haram whose very name means western education is evil. Some families are doing their best to educate their children. In Nigeria, there are school fees to be paid, and fees to take the exams required to move to the next grade. Children may have to walk for miles to get to a school since their local schools have been destroyed. This journey is often not safe. Many go to boarding school which is also not safe because these are targeted by Boko Haram. In some of the displaced person camps, teachers who are themselves displaced, hold free classes under the trees, even with virtually no supplies, for the children and for adults who cannot read. Some children are waiting for a time when it will be ‘safe’ again to go to school, but meanwhile, time is passing. . .



Women & Children at Gurku camp

The things the people of Nigeria have faced and lived through are gut-wrenching and unimaginable to those of us who have not lived in a war zone. However, their stories of pain and suffering are not the whole story. Their faith, strength, resilience, willingness to forgive, and work together to rebuild together, offer hope for the future. One example is the Gurku Interfaith Camp of Internally Displaced People on the northern edge of Abuja (the nation’s capital) which the Nigerian Brethren, American Brethren, Mission 21 Swiss and Germans, and an interfaith NGO support. There they are striving to build a new

community for those who have lost their homes, villages, and churches (the church is the community of people not just the building!). The camp is self-sufficient in that



A three-room house being built at Gurku camp.

they use solar power to pump water and provide electricity along with biogas for cooking. They offer help with trauma healing and support for faith practices. Muslims and Christians live side-by-side in the camp. (Boko Haram also threatens & attacks Muslims who do not agree with them). People are given paid work using their skills. Farmers grow food, teachers teach children and adult literacy, people from the building trades construct houses and other needed structures, business people help with trade for necessary goods, seamstresses make clothes, and people barter with each other for necessary goods and services – cooking oil for haircuts, solar phone charging for clothes, etc. The church is strong and vibrant in the camp. Preachers and other church leaders provide pastoral care, and there are at least five choirs (an important part of church life in Nigeria!). With so many tribes and languages (over 500 languages are spoken in Nigeria!) represented in the camp, special care is taken to include everyone by teaching each other the music, dances, etc. of the different tribes so that all can participate in worship and community life together. The Nigerian Brethren continue to work for peace and do not take part in the violence. The new book from Brethren Press: *We Bear It in Tears: Stories From Nigeria* gives us a glimpse into what our Nigerian sisters and brothers face, and shares their witness to the world (see Peace Resources page 4).

## Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons

On July 7 2017 the United Nations signed the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons or TPNW). It was to go into effect as soon as 50 nations ratified it. The 50<sup>th</sup> ratification was received on October 24, 2020 which means the treaty ‘enters into force’ 90 days later on January 22, 2021. The TPNW is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal being their total elimination. The treaty includes a comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear weapon activities. Countries that sign the treaty agree not to develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or encourage such activities by others. For nuclear armed states joining the treaty, it provides for a time-bound framework for negotiations leading to the



verified and irreversible elimination of its nuclear weapons program. At present, the nations that develop and have nuclear weapons have not signed the treaty so such weapons will not disappear as of the end of January. However, this is a start. Even in the countries that have not yet signed it, many people support the treaty. As this support grows, the day may come when the world does not have to live under the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Sources:

Church of the Brethren *Newsline* 10-30-2020.

Michelle Fujii. *What Does the Nuclear Weapons Ban Mean for the U.S.?* Friends Committee on National Legislation. <https://www.fcni.org/updates/what-does-the-nuclear-weapons-ban-mean-for-the-u-s-3060>.

*Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*. Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty\\_on\\_the\\_Prohibition\\_of\\_Nuclear\\_Weapons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_on_the_Prohibition_of_Nuclear_Weapons). For a list of the countries that have ratified the treaty.

## Worship Resources

### People

We are different?  
 Are we one?  
 Aren't we people everyone?  
 Seeking each a little space.  
 A place to live and be ourselves,  
     to work and worship,  
     learn and grow;  
     and marvel in the world we know?  
 Wouldn't it be such a shame,  
     if all of us were quite the same?  
 How we worship,  
     how we look,  
     where we live,  
     the way we cook.  
 What's our color?  
 What's our race?  
 Do they make us out of place?  
 Or do they make us each unique;  
     with something special,  
     something great,  
     to share with other people who  
     have their own something special too?  
 And doesn't sharing who we are  
     make each of us more special still;  
     instead of pulling us apart,  
     it adds more color to the art  
     that we call living here on earth  
     where being different,  
     and yet one,  
     is in the miracle of birth!

LLF 2-2-96

## Make Praying for Peace Part of Your Worship

Remember in prayer:

1. **Those facing the coronavirus** – That is, all of us. The U.S. continues to have the largest number of cases in the world, but other countries also continue to suffer with the virus. Support those who are sick and those caring for them; scientists working on treatments and those trying to get vaccines out to people; leaders responsible for public policy during this pandemic. Help

all of us do our part to work together for the good of everyone in this time of pandemic.

2. **Those living with racism**
3. **Those consumed by hate** & willing to use violence to get their way
4. **The victims of gun violence & for those willing to commit such senseless acts.**
5. **All people in this world who continue to live with war.**
6. **Girls & Women** facing abuse & violence every day



## Peace Resources

See specific articles for related resource information.

### *We Bear It in Tears: Stories from Nigeria.*

Interviews by Carol Mason. Photos by Donna Parcell. Brethren Press. 2020 ISBN 978-0-87178-291-5

*"The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, EYN) has suffered untold violence from the terrorist attacks of Boko Haram. Thousands have been abducted or killed, including the girls abducted from the Chibok school in 2014, and countless others have been displaced."* "This book gives voice to women, men and children who have suffered from this crisis. By hearing their stories, we share their burden of tears. By seeing their faces, we witness an enduring faith and a commitment to nonviolence. These stories call us to pray and work for a sustainable peace in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Nigeria."

### Children's Books That Teach Peace and The Enrichment of Diversity

See the lists available from the Cooperative Children's Book Center at: <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/booklists/>

Brethren Press also offers children's books that are good choices at: <https://www.brethrenpress.com/SearchResults.asp?Cat=27>

The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center at Bluffton University would also be a good resource. Learn more at: <https://www.bluffton.edu/about/lionlamb/index.aspx>

### Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders

*"Seeking to proclaim Christ's good news – the gospel of peace and justice – and to be active in the sacred ministry of reconciliation wherever and whenever we can."* Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (LMPC)



Online registration is now open for LMPC's **Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders**. This training will help you be prepared when there is a conflict in your church. It is a 5-day training session. The session will be held in March, May, June, August, October, and November this year by zoom unless conditions with COVID change. LMPC offers other training as well. For more information, contact them at: 630-627-0507, or send an email to [Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org](mailto:Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org). For further information we also invite you to check our website at <https://lmpeace-center.org/>. Several in the Northern Ohio District have taken LMPC training. Contact the District Office for their recommendations. Phone: 419-281-3058. District Executive Minister, Kris Hawk e-mail: [krishawk@nohcob.org](mailto:krishawk@nohcob.org)

Look for Peace & Reconciliation Resources on the Northern Ohio District Website.

For access go to: [www.nohcob.org](http://www.nohcob.org)



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