

First Congregational Church of Santa Barbara  
**STATEMENT FOR A JUST PEACE CHURCH**  
**A church that works for peace and justice throughout its sphere of influence**

*As a congregation and as individuals we affirm  
First Congregational Church of Santa Barbara, United Church of Christ,  
to be a Just Peace Church, defining Just Peace as  
the "interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence."\**

### **Our Confession**

We begin with a confession:

"We are part of the problem, no matter how hard we have tried to live faithfully all our lives as persons and as a church. We consume much more than our fair share of the earth's resources. We stand in the midst of many injustices and do too little. More is required of us." (Moderator Fred Fajen)

### **Our Beliefs**

As a church and as individuals we believe:

- 1)** that creating a just peace is central to our identity as Christians. In saying the prayer Jesus taught us, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," we acknowledge and bear witness to the truth that God has a divine purpose and will for creation.
- 2)** that a just peace is God's will for humankind. The definition of a just peace is based on the concept of peace expressed by the Hebrew word *shalom* as it is used biblically. Just peace seeks a communal well-being in which God's creation is justly and harmoniously ordered for the good of the whole.
- 3)** that "just peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of just social relations."\*
- 4)** that "courage in the struggle for justice and peace" is one of the powerful affirmations in the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ. To be part of this church and this denomination is to be part of the struggle for justice and peace.
- 5)** that justice is a fundamental source of real security and without it there can be no lasting peace. "We now need to put as much effort into defining a just peace as we have done in the past in defining a just war." (UCC President Robert V. Moss)

### **Our Understanding of a Just Peace**

As a Just Peace Church we visualize ourselves as a congregation whose members:

- 1)** bond together as friends of God to work for the creation of the things that make for peace and justice in the world.
- 2)** recognize the unity of the whole human community.
- 3)** reject labeling of others as enemies; recognize the diversity among peoples, knowing that non-violent conflict is essential to healthy relationships among people and nations and that there must be education, open dialog, and free exchange of ideas; and express honest differences, exploring and working through them in mutual understanding and growth.
- 4)** affirm justice as essential to a just peace. This includes the rights of every person to meet her/his basic human needs:
  - a) adequate food
  - b) decent housing
  - c) health care
  - d) employment
  - e) education
  - f) freedom of worship
  - g) protection of rights without regard to race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national or social origin
  - h) participation in decision making and the political process
  - i) freedom from physical violence, sexual abuse, and harassment
- 5)** oppose war, violence, and terrorism; reject the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. "We also reject unilateral full-scale disarmament as a currently acceptable path out of the present international dilemma. We affirm the mutual and verifiable freeze on testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons."\*
- 6)** support development of new policies for world security based on global economic justice.

## **Our Commitment to Action**

Because we are a church of hope, believing a just peace is possible, we commit ourselves to the following plan of action, seeking to make the tasks of peace-making, justice-doing, and earth-loving a central focus for our lives as individuals and as a congregation:

- 1)** to make praying for peace, justice, and the well-being of our earth a daily discipline and to listen to God's call to new life in ourselves and in the world. To keep always before us that this is a critical historical moment in which we live and in which we are called to express God's vision for the world.
- 2)** to expand and express our friendship with peoples all over the world, sharing our hope and our faith that we will live together in a world governed by God's just peace.
- 3)** to study issues and work through political avenues to help form public policy regarding basic human needs. To provide direct volunteer service where public policy is failing. To practice non-violent means of problem-solving in our relationships within our homes, our country, and our world.
- 4)** to seek and support plans for conversion of research and industry which now support war and defense to that of filling basic human needs. To make known our opposition to war and nuclear deterrence as national policy.
- 5)** to accept more responsibility for loving and caring for our planet and its living creatures through conservation, recycling, reducing use of hazardous materials, and supporting the clean-up of pollution.

*adopted by the congregation January 21, 1990*

\*from *A Just Peace Church* (1986), edited by Susan Thistlethwaite