

St. Peter's United Church of Christ
358 College Avenue
Lancaster, PA 17603
Penn Central Conference
370 members - 54,725 in city

ST. PETER'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**A SHALOM CHURCH
A CHURCH WHICH WORKS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE**

St. Peter's United Church of Christ, a member of the Lancaster Association of the Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ and located at 358 College Avenue, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 17603, affirms its identity as a shalom community, a shalom church, a church which works for justice and peace.

We have read the words of Holy Scripture which make shalom the central spirit and purpose of the faithful community of God's people, including these:

"For Christ is our shalom, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." (Ephesians 2:14.)

"God has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; God has filled the hungry with good things, and has sent the rich empty away." (Luke 1:51-52.)

"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:24.)

"God has showed you, O people, what is good; and what does the Sovereign require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8.)

"And when he drew near and saw the city, (Jesus) wept over it, saying, 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for shalom!'" (Luke 19:41.)

"And (Jesus) stood up to read: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me who has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'" (Luke 4:16c, 18-19.)

"We believe that the Bible presents a vision of shalom. It is the story of God's people struggling for peace in many different situations and in many different ways. Shalom means peace in a much fuller sense than the English language conveys. Shalom means wholeness, healing, justice, righteousness, equality, unity, freedom, and community. Shalom is a vision of all people whole, well, and one, and of all nature whole, well, and one." "From the moment of God's creation in Genesis through the promise of the covenant to Abraham, to the unity that is given in Christ Jesus, God's will for creation and for all people is shalom.¹

In the Bible there is a story of a God who seeks shalom, and who stirs up the people, time and again, to create the conditions of shalom and to take fresh initiatives to bring unity, reconciliation, forgiveness, and justice.

We want to become a shalom church. As a congregation of the United Church of Christ, we recognize that God is calling us to be about the work of shalom, of bringing justice and making peace in the world, our community, and ourselves. Acknowledging that we have not always been faithful to this call and that this call challenges the ways we live our corporate and individual lives, we covenant among ourselves and with God, to seek the ways of shalom, to seek wholeness for all persons, to make a difference in our lives and the lives of all who experience injustice and violence in our homes, communities, nation, and world, and to reach out to those people and to understand the causes and problems which do not make for shalom.

Specifically, we affirm our identity as a shalom church, a gathering of persons working for justice and peace, whose members are willing to journey in the following and other ways which make for shalom:

¹Susan Thistlethwaite, *A JUST PEACE CHURCH*, United Church Press, 1986. Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Robert V. Moss, second president of the United Church of Christ, a member of St. Peter's Church while he and his family lived in Lancaster, the front piece of the book carries this quotation from Dr. Moss: "Although the doctrine of a just war is a venerable one in the church, it is becoming increasingly clear that the classical criteria which the theologians have used to classify wars as 'just' or 'unjust' will no longer serve. *In our kind of world, war has become dysfunctional.* 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." (United Church Herald supplement, 1971)

I. SPIRITUAL WITNESS, to do such things as

- to include regularly in our corporate worship intercessory prayer for the victims of injustice and violence and for shalom in our world and the creation of conditions of justice and peace;
- to focus regularly in worship services on shalom through the inclusion of scripture, prayers, litanies, sermons, special offerings, moments of mission concern, and resource persons and participating in and using the resources of ecumenical and interfaith shalom observations, such as Ten Days for Peace, Central America Week, etc.;
- to encourage our members to read and to study scripture concerning God's call to shalom and to pray daily for fulfillment of that call, including the KEY suggested daily readings and prayers and making available prayer calendars;
- to seek in our daily congregational life to act as a people centered in shalom, in justice and peace, as expressions of God's love;
- to encourage prayer groups to make shalom a central focus and to develop shalom prayer groups;
- to reaffirm this covenant in a worship service each year;

II. EDUCATION AND THEOLOGY, to do such things as

- to expand available educational and inspirational resources related to shalom;
- to continue the major emphasis on shalom, on issues of justice and peace, in the Bible study and adult forum and other groups of the congregation;
- to create and share shalom displays and exhibits;
- to provide opportunities for the study of such statements as the Call to Action of General Synod XV and the United Church of Christ study book, A JUST PEACE CHURCH, and the Economic and Theology study paper;
- to encourage each church school department to include shalom concerns in their sessions;
- to plan and offer training opportunities in parenting for peace and justice;
- to incorporate shalom themes into special seasons and activities of the church year;
- to invite and to learn from community resource persons who work at shalom;
- and others.

III. STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES, to do such things as

- to continue to promote and to support UCC offerings which fund shalom ministries, such as the Hunger Action Fund (20% retained by church for local hunger programs), Neighbors in Need and One Great Hour of Sharing, Just Peace Church offering (25% used for congregational shalom efforts);
- to encourage responsible use of personal and corporate investments to further shalom;
- to affirm the increase of the percentage of our church's total budget which is used for outreach to meet the needs of persons in our world;
- to promote and to celebrate personal lifestyles which further shalom;

- to support individual and group involvement in solving environmental concerns;
- to recruit members willing to develop time to participating in interdenominational and interfaith programs which address our concern for shalom in the world;
- to continue to utilize our facilities and resources to support community groups dedicated to bringing shalom, such as LINCARA, Codependents Anonymous, etc.;
- and others.

IV. **COMMUNITY WITNESS**, to do such things as

- to identify places and instances of injustice in our community and to help to develop programs which address their solution;
- to provide opportunities for our members to volunteer their time in programs of shalom in our community, where justice can be lived and peacemaking occur, such as food pantries and clothing banks, shelters for the homeless and/or abused, refugee sanctuary, etc.;
- to encourage members and or the congregation to communicate with local and other business and government leaders about unjust policies and practices and to affirm their efforts to create shalom;
- to affirm the participation of our members in community and ecumenical rallies and demonstrations which promote shalom;
- to continue to publicize our church works for shalom;
- to cooperate with others in seeking understanding of the interrelation of global and local issues of injustice;
- to support and celebrate the church's members who work in human and community service and those who witness to shalom in their work places;
- to participate in denominational and ecumenical legislative action networks;
- to train members to serve as delegation members who represent a Christian witness in meetings with representatives and other community leaders to discuss and to impact their positions on justice and peace and to write letters to the editor of newspapers expressing our commitment to and concern for shalom;
- and others.

In order to fulfill this covenant, we will ask each commission and committee of our congregation to participate in becoming a shalom community, and we will strengthen and empower our Shalom Task Force to encourage follow through and reaffirmation in our work for justice and peace.

This we covenant to do in our effort to be faithful to God's call in Jesus Christ to seek the ways of shalom as a congregation of the United Church of Christ.

By vote of the consistory of St. Peter's United Church of Christ and of the congregation, the governing body.

Date: January 21, 1990