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WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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Witness for Justice #494

September 20, 2010

The Peace that Transcends...

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Last week, many around the world let out a collective sigh of relief as it was announced that the planned “Burn a Koran” event set for 9/11 was cancelled. This event sparked outrage around the world and became the latest example of religious extremism, catching the media’s attention and our own grim fascination. Somehow the threat of such a heinous stunt grew into an international crisis that demanded the intervention of generals, heads of state, religious leaders, and even the Vatican.

In stark contrast, this week we will likely find much less public attention or media coverage. September 21st is the International Day of Peace and International Day of Prayer for Peace, held at the United Nations and in many houses of worship across the country. Likewise, the Millennium Summit, also happening this week at the UN in New York, will undoubtedly capture little coverage or public attention despite the fact that several heads of state will gather to discuss global poverty and the slipping targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the world’s largest anti-poverty campaign.

Where is the public interest in events like this? Where is the media coverage of such work of peace, justice, and kindness? Why won’t CNN cover the sermons of one of the thousands of pastors who this week will fervently preach tolerance and pray for peace? We all know the reasons. It is a function of TV ratings and the ongoing battle for the public square, the constant tug-of-war over our nation’s attention and consciousness-including our own. While we cannot control TV coverage, we can tune our own minds to focus on acts of peace happening in our communities.

Philippians 4:7, often cited in benedictions, reminds us that “...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and

your minds in Christ Jesus.” (NIV) The peace of God that transcends - I believe nothing could be more needed in our world today.

A peace that transcends violence
A peace that transcends fear
A peace that transcends racism
A peace that transcends ecological destruction
A peace that transcends poverty
A peace that transcends the logic of militarism
The peace that transcends all understanding...

In the United Church of Christ, our vision of a Just Peace seeks to transform and transcend the multiplicity and interconnected nature of injustices in our world. It is a glimmer of the peace of God that we are called to live into, the peace that transcends all understanding. This week, and particularly on 9/21, you are invited to pray and act for peace. This action contains within it more important and radical implications for our world than the burning of any book could. I look forward to watching coverage on CNN.

For more information:

1. <http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/2010/>
2. <http://www.ucc.org/news/burning-quran-is-anti-muslim.html>

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,300 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.