



Just Peace  
Church Handbook



In 2015, the 30<sup>th</sup> General Synod held in Cleveland, OH marked the UCC's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Just Peace Church and called for a renewal of the UCC's Just Peace witness. This booklet is intended to accompany this resolution and be a resource for all levels and areas of the church for further work and witness, especially to local congregations declaring or recommitting themselves as "Just Peace Churches." This resource includes a summary of the historical and theological uniqueness of the Just Peace vision; the biblical and theological grounding for Just Peace values; and recommended steps for how to become a Just Peace Church. We pray this vision will inspire a whole new generation of peacemakers.

## Courage in the Struggle for Justice and Peace!

–The Just Peace Steering Committee

For more information on the UCC's Just Peace program visit [www.ucc.org/just\\_peace](http://www.ucc.org/just_peace) or email the Just Peace Steering Committee at [uccjustpeace@gmail.com](mailto:uccjustpeace@gmail.com) or UCC staff contact Rev. Michael Neuroth at (202) 543-1517 or [neurothm@ucc.org](mailto:neurothm@ucc.org)

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## Handbook Sections

- 3** Introduction
- 3** Prophetic Hope: Just Peace History
- 4** Expanding Peace: The Just Peace Movement
- 5** Biblical and Theological Grounding for Just Peace Ministry
- 7** Just Peace Congregations
- 10** Steps to Becoming a Just Peace Church
- 12** Living Fully into Being a Just Peace Church
- 15** Suggested Resources

## Introduction

The Just Peace Church vision is a hallmark of United Church of Christ's (UCC) theological identity. For over three decades, the **Just Peace Church pronouncement** has informed UCC witness across the life of the church and inspired a grassroots movement of UCC congregations committed to corporately naming and boldly proclaiming a public identity as justice-doing, peace-seeking church. The Just Peace pronouncement, which was affirmed in 1985 at the 15<sup>th</sup> General Synod in Ames, Iowa, articulated for the first time a UCC position on war and peace as distinct from other historic Christian approaches, namely the theories and practices of Crusade, Pacifism, and Just War.

Since 1985, the Just Peace paradigm has been further developed by scholarly research and the creation of ten corresponding "Just Peacemaking Practices." More recently, Just Peace has received increased attention and affirmation by the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical partners. While acknowledging the UCC's groundbreaking proclamation, these new ecumenical efforts are interpreting Just Peace in new contexts and considering its merits as an emerging consensus on how to faithfully address critical justice and peace concerns among various faith traditions.

WHAT IS JUST PEACE? ***Grounded in UCC polity and covenantal theology, the Just Peace Pronouncement and resulting church movement has at its core a call to alleviate systemic injustice of all kinds using non-violence, challenging us to explore the intersections between peace and justice, offering to the world the prophetic message, grounded in the hope of reconciliation in Jesus, that "Peace is possible!"***

### I. Prophetic Hope: Just Peace History

The history of the Just Peace movement within the United Church of Christ began in 1981 when at the 13<sup>th</sup> General Synod, a youth delegate brought a resolution to General Synod calling on the UCC to become a "peace church" (amended from the original wording which used 'pacifist' and changed two years later to 'peacemaking'). This resolution passed, but it became clear that further study was needed throughout the life of the church to define what a UCC approach to war and peace would be. Just War theory, Pacifism, and Crusade were the available models for consideration and yet at that moment none seemed to capture the UCC's unique theological history (which historically had leaned toward Just War) and its prophetic commitment to justice and peace. In 1983, a Peace Theology Development Team, was assembled by the then Office of Church in Society (now Justice and Witness Ministries) and was commissioned by the 14<sup>th</sup> General Synod to lead a process of discernment and bring a proposal of implementation to the following synod. This group met for two years studying the theological grounding and implications



Rev. Robert Moss, UCC President (1969-76) and early Just Peace advocate

of the UCC declaring itself a peacemaking church, seeking and incorporating broad feedback from many throughout the denomination. In Ames, Iowa at the 15<sup>th</sup> General Synod in 1985, a pronouncement “Affirming the United Church of Christ to be a Just Peace Church” was affirmed with broad support, designating the UCC as the first Christian Denomination to declare itself a ‘Just Peace Church’. The following year, members of the group contributed to the creation of a book, edited by Susan Thistlethwaite, titled *A Just Peace Church* which became a primary source of information and education on the topic. Just Peace was defined in the pronouncement as the “interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence” and was grounded – as we will explore in the next section – in the biblical concepts of *covenant* and *shalom*. Just Peace offered a holistic view of working at the intersection of peace and justice, acknowledging the connections between violence and systemic issues like environmental degradation, racism, economic disparity, homophobia, and the loss of civil and human rights. Speaking from the hope in the Gospel that God’s peace is a gift promised for all, the pronouncement offered with prophetic conviction the vision that “war can and must be eliminated” and the shared hope that “peace is possible.”

## II. Expanding Peace: The Just Peace Movement

In the years following adoption of the Just Peace Pronouncement, many UCC churches, conferences, seminaries, and other entities declared themselves “Just Peace” and incorporated the principles into various efforts and ministries. However, work and interest in Just Peace was not limited to the UCC. In subsequent years, a group of Christian and later interfaith scholars, including UCC theologian Susan Thistlethwaite, met for several years to further define and develop Just Peace theory and practice. The group over time agreed upon ten “Just Peacemaking Practices” which were actions or approaches that

had a proven track record for eliminating conflict and building peace. These practices were further developed in a series of books, three editions of which were edited by Glen Stassen, titled *Just Peacemaking*. The latest edition, edited by Susan Thistlethwaite, is titled *Interfaith Just Peacemaking: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on the New Paradigm of Peace and War*.

Although the UCC was the first denomination to claim to be a Just Peace church, several other denominations have over time issued similar statements pointing to the intersection of peace with justice. The Presbyterian

Church USA, United Methodist Church, and other ecumenical partners have all issued statements or are in the process of discerning official policy. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has over the past several years invited member denominations to consider Just Peace theory as a point of ecumenical consensus, issuing in 2011 an Ecumenical Call to Just Peace which was a primary text for consideration at the first International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011 and the 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly held in Busan, South Korea in 2013.



Rev. Yvonne Delk (UCC Office of Church and Society) at peace rally

At the WCC’s 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, a “Statement of the Way of Just Peace” was affirmed by member churches, calling on churches around the world to join a “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” which would seek justice and peace in every sphere of life including:

- + For Just Peace in the community – so that all may live free from fear
- + For Just Peace with the Earth – so that life is sustained
- + For Just Peace in the marketplace – so that all may live with dignity
- + For Just Peace among the nations – so that human lives are protected

At the 30<sup>th</sup> General Synod held in 2015, in Cleveland, OH, a Just Peace Steering Committee brought a resolution marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UCC declaring itself a Just Peace Church and calling for it to renew commitments to Just Peace. The resolution called on all settings of the church to renew existing covenants or become Just Peace Churches for the first time. It also updated aspects of the Just Peace vision to include important developments such as the scholarly work on the Ten Just Peace-making Practices and the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace and invitation to join the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace offered by the World Council of Churches.



Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary, World Council of Churches

“Peace is possible.” These three words resonate with such hope and conviction today, thirty years since they were passed by the UCC’s 15<sup>th</sup> General Synod in Ames, Iowa. It is an audacious, extravagant claim that, after over a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, may sound naïve to some. Yet, the Just Peace pronouncement was offered at a time when the Vietnam War was a recent memory, the Cold War was nearing its peak, and the nuclear arms race was recognized as an existential threat to all creation. Yet, in this context the UCC had the courage-the audacity-to articulate and affirm a new model for addressing issues of justice and peace in an authentic voice according to its own history and values. We are called to no less today, and invite individuals, churches, and all entities of the United Church of Christ to join a renewed pilgrimage of faith and action, seeking to live more fully into our witness as a Just Peace Church.

### **III. Biblical and Theological Grounding for Just Peace Ministry**

For local congregations, it can be difficult to embark upon Just Peace ministries without a spiritual grounding rooted in the Bible and theology in a manner that our members and friends can comprehend. The Biblical passages highlighted in the 1985 pronouncement help bring to light the importance of justice and peace as the elements that can offer hope for not only our congregants but also to our neighbors near and far. Deepening our understanding of the concepts of covenant, shalom, and hope are important points of reflection. Each of the biblical references and theological affirmations below, taken from the 1985 pronouncement, speak to the overarching call from Jesus to love God, ourselves and one another, just as God mercifully loves us and calls us to ministries of love and justice. As Just Peace churches, our congregations reflect God’s love and offer hope in a hurting world.



One step toward developing a spiritual grounding for Just Peace ministry is to engage the scriptures and affirmations below that offer hope for a Just Peace kingdom on earth. Additional articles and resources listed at the end of this handbook may also be useful in guiding your biblical and spiritual reflections.

*Biblical Grounding with Small Group Reflections:*

**Ezekiel 37:26**

*“Just Peace is grounded in covenant relationship. God creates and calls us into covenant, God’s gift of friendship: ‘I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore’ (Ezekiel 37:26). When God’s abiding presence is embraced, human well-being results, or Shalom, which can be translated as Just Peace.”*

**REFLECTION QUESTION:**

As a new or renewing congregation seeking to gain a spiritual grounding for being Just Peace, how does God call the Body of Christ to serve in love as people of peace through our relationship with God, one another, and as a family of believers?

**John 10:10**

*“A Just Peace is grounded in the presence of the Holy Spirit. God sends the Holy Spirit to continue the struggle to overcome the powers ranged against human bonding. Thus, our hope for a Just Peace does not rest on human efforts alone, but on God’s promise that we will ‘have life and have it abundantly’ (John 10:10).”*

**REFLECTION QUESTION:**

Many of us are aware that the history of United Church of Christ speaks to our wider church being at the forefront of justice, but how might a new or renewing congregation embrace justice today? Are there others doing justice near or far who might also be grounded in the presence of the Holy Spirit?

**Ephesians 2:14**

*“A Just Peace is grounded in the community of reconciliation: the Just Peace Church. Jesus, who is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), performed signs of forgiveness and healing and made manifest that God’s reign is for those who are in need. The church is a continuation of that servant manifestation. As a Just Peace Church, we embody a Christ fully engaged in human events. The church is thus a real countervailing power to those forces that divide, that perpetuate human enmity and injustice, and that destroy.”*



Peace Village summer peace camp

**REFLECTION QUESTION:**

In what ways might forgiveness and mercy help effect justice and peace in the life of the church and in the greater hope of abundant living?

**1 Peter 3:15**

*As Christians, we offer conviction to the world that peace is possible. Being sustained for the inward journey of Just Peacemaking requires cultivating spiritual disciplines such as forgiveness and grounding ourselves in hope. As in 1 Peter 3:15 “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have”, we are called to be witnesses to the hope that we have found.*

## REFLECTION QUESTION:

Name congregational practices that may help sustain one's faith in a spiritual grounding of hope. How might these religious practices give witness to the possibility of peace?

*Theological Affirmations of Just Peace from the 1985 Pronouncement:*

*"A Just Peace is grounded in God's activity in creation. Creation shows the desire of God to sustain the world and not destroy. The creation anticipates what is to come: the history-long relationship between God and humanity and the coming vision of shalom."*

*"A Just Peace is grounded in the reconciling activity of Jesus Christ. Human sin is the rejection of the covenant of friendship with God and one another and the creation and perpetuation of structures of evil. Through God's own suffering love in the cross, the power of these structures has been broken and the possibility for relationship restored."*

*"A Just Peace is grounded in hope. Shalom is the vision that pulls all creation toward a time when weapons are swept off the earth and all creatures lie down together without fear; where all have their own fig tree and dwell secure from want. As Christians, we offer this conviction to the world: Peace is possible."*

## IV. Just Peace Congregations

### St. Peter and Trinity United Church of Christ

St. Peter and Trinity UCC congregations became deeply engaged in justice and peace advocacy as a part of the relationship between the Indiana Kentucky Conference and partner churches in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was at the time engulfed in a tenacious civil war, yet leaders from these churches because of the partnership were among the few outsiders able to travel into the conflict zone. The pastor, Rev. Chip Jahn, and other members were able to make these trips and then travel to Washington to share observations. In their analysis and work, they used the growing body of Just Peacemaking practices that were being compiled by Christian ethicists and theologians like Susan Thistlethwaite and Glen Stassen.

The churches began to look at other missions near and far that would benefit from applying the Just Peace practices. They used the principals on issues of domestic violence, developing a partnership between the domestic violence center and local churches called the "Sanctuary". The church developed a ministry of hospitality when a large group of Latin Americans moved into the area to work in a poultry factory.

After 9/11, several churches in more urban settings opened dialogues with mosques, however St. Peter and Trinity UCC congregations were both in rural settings in Southern Indiana. The closest mosque was more than an hour away. Yet, when a speaker presented the congregations with stories of the plight of Muslim communities in rural Niger struggling to adjust to the desertification of their traditional pasture lands; one of the grade school kids asked what the church could do to help. They were told that many children in the



Rev. Chip Jahn,  
pastor, St. Peter and  
Trinity UCC

community of Bankilare couldn't attend school because they had to walk five miles to the nearest well to get water for their families. The youth from both churches decided to raise the money to dig a well. When the first well was dug the churches sent a young mother from the congregation to help dedicate it. That cemented a decade long relationship between these two rural Christian churches and a Muslim community in Niger, leading to the digging of three more wells and a food relief project after locusts destroyed the community's millet crop. In 2011, the pastor visited Bankilare and although the government required him to be escorted by military body guards, he was welcomed as a member of an extended family.

### Clackamas United Church of Christ

Rev. Denise Andersen came to Clackamas UCC from University Church in Chicago – a Just Peace congregation. In the Open and Affirming process, she encouraged Clackamas



Clackamas UCC,  
Milwaukie, OR

to also consider becoming a Just Peace church because of the church's historic activism for the sake of GLBT, gender, racial, economic and environmental justice. The underlying mission of the congregation had been peace with justice. The congregation went through the Just Peace process, and declared itself a Just Peace church.

Although the congregation had worked under this mode of faith practice since its founding in 1895, it had never articulated a position in such a covenantal

form. Developing its Just Peace Covenant and mission statement helped state clearly what the church's position was, grounding it as it moved forth as a Just Peace Church in subsequent years. How has becoming a Just Peace Church influenced the church's collective behavior? Being a declared Just Peace Church has influenced decisions and actions from the smallest level (no Styrofoam and only fair trade coffee/tea) to broader community and global engagement.

As a result of its history and covenanting as a Just Peace Church, Clackamas has directly supported local services for abused women and teen parents with children. It has supported Jobs with Justice as well as the local food bank. It has also been involved with the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice and the UCC's literacy program, Reading Changes Lives. On the global level, Clackamas supports Global Ministries' missionaries serving in Mozambique and two Congolese refugee families through Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR). It is a sponsor of 2020 Year Without War, and engages regularly in activism on Israel/Palestine and other peace initiatives.

Amidst its many efforts, what stands out is Clackamas' environmental justice work. The church had a 3 acre parcel of land it sold to the local parks district for 2/3rds its market value to develop a regional park for the community. The decision not to sell it to developers was based on Just Peace Church commitments to the environment. The church further developed a rain garden and 100 foot native hedgerow as a community training ground for environmental stewardship of the land and watershed. In 2014, Interfaith Power and Light recognized the congregation with a Sacred Grounds Steward honorable



mention award. Additionally, Water for Life has also been an important initiative within the congregation, through which the church has helped develop wells in Botswana and supplied fresh water to Haiti during the earthquake. Each year, the church also sponsors an endangered species and has raised over \$7,000 for animal sponsorship.

### Union Congregational UCC

Union Congregational United Church of Christ in West Palm Beach, Florida, is one of the newer Just Peace congregations in the United Church of Christ. Union's journey to becoming a Just Peace church began with a spiritual grounding in love, which is central to the church's vision statement of loving God and neighbor (Luke 10:27). In doing so, the congregation reached out to the Florida Conference Justice and Peace representative along with contacting the UCC national office in Washington, DC, to share our intentions of becoming a Just Peace church.

The wider United Church of Christ provided Union Congregational with the tools necessary to begin an ad hoc Justice and Peace Team that spent a year developing a Just Peace Covenantal Statement, offering just peace awareness moments during morning worship, and researching the Just Peace needs of the community. The year-long effort of the ad hoc Justice and Peace Team resulted in a unanimous congregational vote for Union to become a Just Peace Church, and the ad hoc team became the Justice and Peace Team, which was subsequently adopted into our church's bylaws.

As a new Just Peace Church, Union lives out its covenant of being Just Peace by hosting speakers during morning worship to bring awareness to justice issues such as the civil rights of same gender marriages and the relationship between crime, race and poverty. As a result, Union has joined with an ecumenical faith-based organization, P.E.A.C.E. (People Engaged in Active Community Efforts), a local affiliate with D.A.R.T. (Direct Action and Research Training Center). As a way for our members and friends to actually experience just peace concerns, the church also organized a daylong Just Peace trip to build awareness of the economic, environmental, and racial justice issues within our communities.

In the coming year, Union will take another just peace trip to address the environmental justice concerns of the Florida everglades. The church will also join other UCC congregations in letter-writing campaigns regarding public policy matters of just peace, and engage in the UCC's 'Reading Changes Lives' initiative which seeks to address the cradle to prison pipeline.

Prayerfully, Union's spiritual grounding towards becoming a Just Peace church offers yet another tool of reflection on how other congregations might ignite a new or renewing covenantal relationship of being Centers of Just Peace alongside all of God's people in our world today.



Union Congregational UCC, West Palm Beach, FL



## V. Steps to Becoming a Just Peace Church

Becoming a Just Peace church is of spiritual value to a congregation's Christian practice. Christians live by faith, God's promises and living out their covenants. To make a covenant that will consider justice, peace and the sacredness of creation in all your church's decisions and life is a big commitment, but it is what the Gospel calls us to do. This was clear in Biblical times and other periods of Christian history, but now in our society of radical individualism and polarization, this call to stand for justice and peace for all needs to be intentionally stressed. When we go about our faith practice with the deep belief that this societal engagement within culture does make a difference in God's world, we become aware of God at work in the societal/political setting and in the entire natural world. We open ourselves to truly hearing God's call to join in God's full mission not only to individuals but also to the social/political structures of a world that God loves. (John 3:16).

***Here are suggested steps for declaring your congregation a Just Peace Church.***

### STEP 1 – CREATE A SPACE FOR THE JUST PEACE PROCESS

Create a Space within your congregation's structure to propose a discernment process on becoming a Just Peace Church. If you are not the pastor of the congregation, work in relationship with the pastor, justice and witness or social outreach committee, and governing board of your congregation. Open communication is the first tactic in addressing becoming a Just Peace Church.

### STEP 2 – FORM A JUST PEACE COMMITTEE TO STEER THE JUST PEACE PROCESS

Form a Just Peace Committee/Core Team of church members interested in being the steering team for the Just Peace process. Build this team from a wide variety of congregants who can commit themselves to about six hours of teamwork a month. The entire process can take 8 to 12 weeks to complete. This team needs to educate itself on what it means to be a Just Peace congregation. Reading "A Just Peace Church" and "Just Peacemaking – 10 Practices for Abolishing War" is strongly suggested. You will find information on these books and others in the resource section of this document.

Define areas within your congregation where you already are at work for the sake of peace and justice. List these areas. Through analysis of your church's mission statement and current activities, determine areas where your church can grow its Just Peace ministry. If your church has a long-range plan (and that's encouraged), revisit where work on behalf of Justice and Peace is envisioned. List these visions.

Invite a pastor or active member from a local Just Peace Church to come and address your core team. This will be beneficial for fielding questions and helping the team to understand how the process worked in other congregations.

Determine your process from this point on. Example:



**Rev. Marilyn Pagan-Banks, Economic Justice Rally in Chicago, IL**

- 1) Sponsor an all-church study group or retreat on the topic of Just Peace.
- 2) Develop a covenant to be presented to the governing body of your church for endorsement.
- 3) Present this Just Peace Covenant to the congregation for a vote to become a Just Peace Church

### STEP 3 – GROUND YOUR PROCESS IN BIBLICAL TEXT

#### Biblical Texts the Just Peace Committee and Congregation Might Address:

Jesus' statement of his mission to the world. (Luke 4:18-19)

Mary's Song. The powerful are brought down and the hungry are filled. (Luke 1:46-55)

God requires justice, kindness and humility. (Micah 6:8)

God's covenant is for peace, justice and all creation in harmony. (Hosea 2:18)

Faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-26)

Establish Justice. (Amos 5:6-15)

Other texts: Ezek: 37:36, Matthew 23:23, Romans 12:18, Peter 3:15, John 10:10

### STEP 4 – ORGANIZE AN ALL-CHURCH STUDY OR RETREAT

Establish an on-going study of about six sessions or an all-church retreat to address the Just Peace Committee's work on the process of becoming a Just Peace Church. Engage as many congregants as possible when you get to this point. The more people know, the more they will be compelled to vote for your congregation becoming a Just Peace Church. The curriculum for these sessions/retreat can include:

- 1) Definition of what it means to be a Just Peace Church
- 2) Review of Biblical texts on Justice and Peace
- 3) Share the areas determined where you already are at work for Peace and Justice.
- 4) Share visionary ideas of what your congregation could do on behalf of Peace and Justice.
- 5) Consider having someone from a Just Peace Church come and address your study/retreat.
- 6) Explain what will happen next. (Writing the Just Peace Covenant and voting on this in a Congregational meeting.)



Environmental justice rally, Washington, DC

### STEP 5 – WRITE THE JUST PEACE COVENANT

The Just Peace Committee will write a Just Peace Covenant to be presented to the church governing board and the congregation. Examples of Just Peace covenants are available on the website at [www.ucc.org/just\\_peace](http://www.ucc.org/just_peace). Also – address your current mission statement and long range plan to see if these need editing in any manner to reflect your church's decision to become a Just Peace Church.

**Present this covenant to the governing board of your congregation for their endorsement.**

## **STEP 6 – CALL A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TO VOTE TO BECOME A JUST PEACE CHURCH**

At the meeting, present your process, Just Peace Covenant and Revised Mission Statement (if necessary) to the congregation. Move to accept the Just Peace Covenant and Revised Mission Statement (if necessary). A formal vote is required to declare your church a Just Peace Church.

## **STEP 7 – DETERMINE WHAT BODY WILL OVERSEE THE JUST PEACE WORK OF YOUR CHURCH**

Determine whether your Just Peace Committee will continue the furtherance of Just Peace work in your congregation or if an ongoing task force needs to be established.

## **STEP 8 – PUBLICLY DECLARE YOUR CONGREGATION A JUST PEACE CHURCH**

Publicly declare your congregation a just peace church through signs, marketing (Facebook, web site, brochures, business cards, etc.), and write a press release for the local newspaper. Report your declaration to your Conference or Association and submit a copy of your Just Peace Covenant to the Just Peace Steering Committee at [uccjustpeace@gmail.com](mailto:uccjustpeace@gmail.com)

## **STEP 9 – GO FORTH AND ACT ON BEHALF OF JUSTICE AND PEACE**

Go forth and act on behalf of Justice and Peace. Revisit your Just Peace Covenant regularly to stay focused and on track. The act of becoming a Just Peace Church should influence every church decision and commitment from here forward.

## **VI. Living Fully into Being a Just Peace Church**

### **Congratulations on becoming a Just Peace Congregation!**

Your congregation has been on a journey of discernment. You have engaged with our faith, the Holy Spirit, and with the community both within and outside your walls, and you have learned about Just Peace. You have covenanted with God and with each other to be a congregation working for Just Peace. You have given thought to what this will mean for the life of the congregation going forward and are now ready to live out that faith commitment to being a congregation seeking Just Peace. The hope is that this the covenant will become part of the ongoing life of the church.

Making the commitment to be a Just Peace Church means the congregation's witness and work in the world will be different going forward. To ensure that, here are some steps you can take.

Implementing the Covenant:

- + **Add** the designation "Just Peace Church" to signage, church letterhead, the Sunday bulletin, and other places both as a witness to the world and to remind the congregation of the commitment it has made.
- + **Create** a Just Peace Committee/Core Team. This could be a totally new body within the church or it could be an existing body (such as a social justice committee) that takes on this new ministry.
  - ▶ The committee's first task would be to carefully read the covenant in order to clearly understand the congregation's intentions for the covenant going forward.

- ▶ The group can construct a one- to two-year plan of implementation that includes a range of activities focused on Just Peace such as worship and prayer, study, and activities – both advocacy and “on-the-ground” engagement – in the local community, the nation, or world.
- ▶ The draft implementation plan could be shared for review and comments with the governing body and others within the church, then distributed to the congregation.
- + **Seek out** resources and organizations that can support and facilitate your Just Peace ministries. See the resource section at the end of this handbook.
- + **Engage** in the work of creating a Just Peace. There are many ways to engage in ministries of Just Peace. You may already have ideas for what your congregation will do as a Just Peace Church. Be led by God and by the interests and gifts of the congregation to determine the work you are called to do. The following are some suggestions for you to consider:
  - ▶ Educate your congregation around an issue
  - ▶ Offer community forums
  - ▶ Show up and stand in solidarity
  - ▶ Join or start a local justice coalition. Write letters to legislators or editors, advocating for local/state/national Just Peace policies
  - ▶ Survey your congregations to determine where their passions lie and create responses rooted in those passions
  - ▶ Lift up Just Peace concerns every week during worship
  - ▶ Preach regularly on Just Peace issues
  - ▶ Include a Just Peace column in your newsletter
  - ▶ Post activities on Facebook or other social media sites
- + **Sustain** yourself amidst struggle. At some point, the members of the committee or task force assigned to lead the work may hit an emotional and spiritual wall, either individually or as a group. The issues will seem too big. It will seem like conversations need to be repeated over and over. Work may come to a standstill or the group may meet resistance in the church or elsewhere. Group members may feel anxious or maybe even embarrassed about what seems like a lack of progress. They may feel angry, sad, or powerless at this moment. As a group or individually, you may wonder if this is the time to quit or quietly fade away. Anyone who has been involved with social justice work for any length of time has an experience like this at one time or another. It’s a normal and natural result of hard work and honest assessment. However, there’s another side to this, too. These feelings often come to us right before a significant breakthrough. These moments can be an invitation from the Spirit to go deeper.
 

Here are five very simple things to do to accept that invitation:



Immigration Rally at General Synod 29 in Long Beach, CA.

**1. Take some Sabbath time:** Sabbath is a time to rest and to get some perspective. It's a time to realign ourselves with God, reflect on deeply held values and beliefs, remember "who we are and whose we are," and remember the stories that inspired us to do this work in the first place. Sabbath is a time to focus on some of those things we are most thankful for. Whether Sabbath time is taken individually or with a wider group of folks from your church or other churches, it can be a good way to renew dedication and commitment.

**2. Intentionally listen:** The initial plan decided on by the committee or task force may no longer be working. It may not have been as successful as it could be, or maybe it moved few people to a deeper place. So take a breath. Step back. Take some time to intentionally listen to folks within your church and community. Assess where they are and hear where they think the church may be called to go. Nobody promised we would get everything right the first time.

**3. Celebrate what's working, let go of what's not:** Sometimes we get so focused on a way of doing something that we lose the "why." One size does not fit all and situations change along the way. Make sure the members of the committee/task force are intentionally working to balance out hopes and expectations in a way that the goals you have are reasonable, doable, and effective for the "why" you're working towards.

**4. Remember that not everything can be perfect but everything can be better:** Although this faith walk of ours sometimes has some large leaps in it, most of our progress will be made in small steps. Honor each step your community takes towards living into the call as a Just Peace church. The success of this sort of work is rarely as suddenly evident as it is gradually evident. Remember the big picture as you focus on some of the smaller details.

**5. Commit to supporting each other:** Part of building a community is to start being one. What kind of support and accountability might be needed to continue your work?

+ **Keep it fresh** – Each year the congregation can mark the anniversary of the decision to become a Just Peace Church by re-reading the covenant together during worship and engaging in activities to re-commit to and celebrate the decision. At that time, events and activities related to the commitment that happened during the previous 12 months can be lifted up and celebrated.

+ **Share** with others what you are doing – Justice and Witness Ministries invites you to share your experiences by posting stories and pictures on the Just Peace Church website and Facebook page.



Sandra Sorensen engages in civil disobedience in Washington, DC

## VII. Statements and Resources

Below is a list of statements and resources which may help guide Just Peace Churches in their process. Links to the resources below and further information on the UCC's Just Peace program are available on the website at: [www.ucc.org/just\\_peace](http://www.ucc.org/just_peace).



### WEBSITES

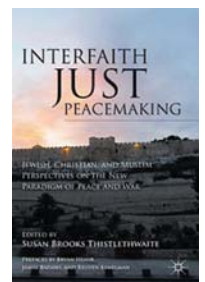
Justice and Witness Ministries: [www.ucc.org/justice](http://www.ucc.org/justice)  
Justice and Peace Action Network: [http://www.ucc.org/join\\_the\\_network](http://www.ucc.org/join_the_network)  
Justice LED- Leaders Engaging and Developing: [http://www.ucc.org/justice\\_training\\_index](http://www.ucc.org/justice_training_index)  
UCC Economic Justice Covenant Program: [http://www.ucc.org/justice\\_ejcp\\_index](http://www.ucc.org/justice_ejcp_index)  
UCC Green Justice Church Program: [http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries\\_just-green-congregations](http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_just-green-congregations)  
Global Ministries: [www.globalministries.org](http://www.globalministries.org)  
UCC Open and Affirming Movement: [http://www.ucc.org/lgbt\\_ona](http://www.ucc.org/lgbt_ona)  
UCC Disabilities Ministries: [www.uccdm.org](http://www.uccdm.org)  
UCC Women's Ministries: [http://www.ucc.org/justice\\_womens-issues](http://www.ucc.org/justice_womens-issues)  
UCC Sacred Conversations on Race: <http://www.ucc.org/sacred-conversation/>  
Justice LED (Leaders Engaging and Developing): [www.ucc.org/justice\\_training/index](http://www.ucc.org/justice_training/index)  
Church World Service: [www.cwsglobal.org](http://www.cwsglobal.org)  
Bread for the World: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)  
Ecumenical Advocacy Days: [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org)  
National Council of Churches: [www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us](http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us)

### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND RELATED ECUMENICAL STATEMENTS

UCC 15<sup>th</sup> General Synod Pronouncement: Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church  
World Council of Churches: Statement on the Way of Just Peace  
World Council of Churches: An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace  
World Council of Churches: Just Peace Companion  
National Council of Churches: Christian Understanding of War in an Age of Terror(ism)

### BOOKS ON JUST PEACEMAKING

*Interfaith Just Peacemaking: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on the New Paradigm of Peace and War* by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite (Author, Editor)  
*Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War* by Glen H. Stassen (Author, Editor)  
*A Just Peace Church: The Peace Theology Development Team* edited by Susan Thistlewaite



### RELATED ARTICLES AND RESOURCES

A 'Just Peace' Future: Part 1, by Rev. Dr. Susan Thistlethwaite  
A 'Just Peace' Future: Part 2, by Rev. Dr. Susan Thistlethwaite  
A 'Just Peace' Future: Part 3, by Rev. Michael Neuroth  
Abrahamic Alternatives to war  
Defining A 'Just Peace' Vocation  
UCC Justice and Witness Ministries "Another world is possible" resource  
Just Peace Making Theory: Ten Policies for Abolishing War  
Patriotism, Nationalism and the Christian Life

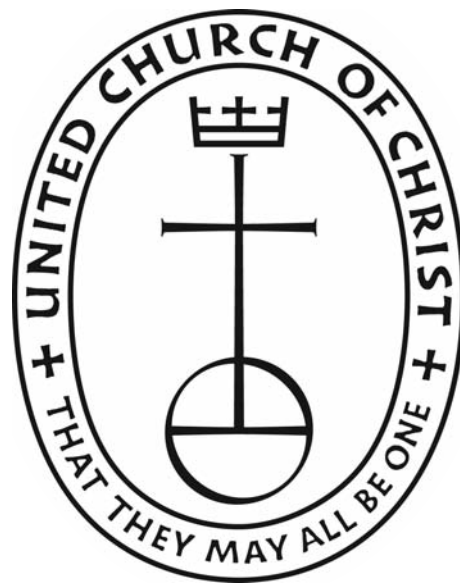


### LITURGICAL RESOURCES

WCC International Ecumenical Peace Convocation Hymns & Prayers  
Overcoming Violence: Bible Study Guide  
Sermon "The Sword of Peace" by Rev. Janet Parker  
*Gifts of Many Cultures: Worship Resources for the Global Community* and *Gifts in Open Hands More Worship Ideas for the Global Community* by Maren Tirabassi and Kathy Wonson Eddy, (United Church Press)

*“Although the doctrine of the ‘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.”*

–Rev. Dr. Robert V. Moss, United Church Herald supplement, 1971



For more information on the UCC's Just Peace program visit [www.ucc.org/just\\_peace](http://www.ucc.org/just_peace) or email the Just Peace Steering Committee at [uccjustpeace@gmail.com](mailto:uccjustpeace@gmail.com) or UCC staff contact Rev. Michael Neuroth at (202) 543-1517 or [neurothm@ucc.org](mailto:neurothm@ucc.org)

Connect with us on social media:

 Twitter: [@justpeaceucc](https://twitter.com/justpeaceucc)

 Facebook: UCC Just Peace Network

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