



Sunday, October 4, World Communion Sunday

Holistic Peace

Practicing Holistic Peace

Henry Koenig Stone

Philippians 4:9

Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (NRSV)

Reflection: As we reach World Communion Sunday, a time each year when we try to connect with Christians around the world and live into our shared nature as children of God, we can't help but be aware of all that has not yet been done for peace. But we do have a path laid out before us for the work of peacemaking at every level of human interaction. One important spiritual practice is to support institutions that promote peace and justice, locally and globally. Participating in the Peace & Global Witness Offering is an effective way to extend our reach as individuals by empowering churches, mid councils and the Presbyterian Mission Agency to provide materials for learning, advocacy for peace and resources for all God's children.

We know that the work of peace must start in our own hearts, as we are called to wrestle with the weeds of racism and gender bias, and reject all divisions that are sown in us by society's expectations and our own fears. In practicing internal peace, we wash away the toxic influences that bar us from God's path.

We know this work continues as we define ourselves in relation to each other — with family, friends and even with adversaries. We are called to speak truth, not out of hate, but out of love, and to seek justice, not in the form of revenge, but in the form of reparation. Practicing peace in our relationships with each other is part of being in right relationship with God.

We know that at the levels of both local and larger communities, we have let structures of privilege and norms of "order" get in the way of the work for justice and peace. We are called to put the mission of peace through justice ahead of our own self-interest, comfort and expectations. Practicing peace in community means living out God's call to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves.

We know the world suffers from many fires, whether they be ecological or political. We are called to renounce the temptation of domination and instead, to practice collaborative, multilateral approaches to peace and prosperity in the world. Practicing peace in the world means rejecting the human power dynamics of struggle, and seeking instead a balance rooted in mutual covenant.

In all times and places, we are called to find a path to God's holistic peace, which surpasses all of our human understanding and assumptions. This path is difficult; it is scattered with easy excuses for inaction and the emotional challenges that are present in every human soul. But on this hard, unusual path of peacemaking, we get to walk alongside our Creator.

Practice for Peacemakers: Throughout the past month of this resource, we have been given ways to tie peacemaking into all levels of humanity: internal, interpersonal, communal and worldwide. Today, reflect on which piece of the peacemaking puzzle is most intuitive and spiritually fulfilling to you. Then identify an area that is less comfortable. Challenge yourself to take at least one step forward in each area.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to cast aside the psychological, social, structural and cultural excuses that we find to be at war with each other. Lead us gently and firmly to the water of your life and love that we may learn to share it freely among all your children, reaching a state of Just Peace for all. Amen.



Henry Koenig Stone is the editor for this year's Season of Peace Reflections. An activist and public policy wonk, he has previously served as editor of "*Unbound*" in Louisville, KY, and as associate for young adult social witness to the Advisory Committee for Social Witness Policy.