



Peace

by Jane Anderson

Advent is a season of waiting, waiting for the Christ-child to be born and ultimately waiting for Christ to come again. I am mindful that most of you begin worship during this season by lighting the candles on the Advent wreath, each week leading up to Christmas. As each candle is lit, another aspect of the season is lifted up and celebrated—love, hope, peace and joy. I am mindful, though, that every church has a different liturgical order for the candle-lighting ceremony and each church uses different sung response to the scripture reading and prayers.

Traditionally I have turned toward peace on this third Sunday of Advent. One of my favorite songs for the candle of peace goes like this:

Kindle this flame of peace. May it burn bright and true.
God's realm is our desire, where peace and justice reign.
Lighting the way that is of God, the journey we pursue.
Heaven and earth combined as one, when Christ shall come again.

We wait, we wait for Christ to come. We wait for Christ to come and bring peace to us; peace to our broken, heartbroken, conflicted, war-torn world. We hope and pray for it daily. Now, more than ever we stand in need of peace. But, we need not wait for Christ's coming in some ultimate time and place. Christ comes in the here and now. When the light of peace burns in our hearts and spreads to actions of peacemaking and justice-making in our world, then Christ's peace is made known in this time and place.

Peacemaking and justice-making are never easy, as you well know. There is often much pain and heartache along the journey toward ushering in peace and justice. Think of how much pain, heartache, and loss of life it took to bring peace to the nations involved following both World Wars. Think of what it took to bring peace in Northern Ireland and how fragile it still is. Think of what it took to bring peace to our nation following our Civil War. Think of the sacrifices made during the Civil Rights Movement and how fragile race relations still are today. Consider all that the First People of this country have had to endure and what's happening today at Standing Rock, all the sacrifices that have been made to protect their water supply and their burial sites.

Peacemaking and justice making are painful and sometimes demand great sacrifices, but lighting the way of God is the journey we are all called to make.

I am aware that even in our churches peacemaking needs to happen, which is why we have been called to launch Conflict Mediation Teams in the Conference. Each association in the conference has contributed to the training of two individuals from the association to be trained by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. They spent an entire week dedicated to learning mediation skills that will help you along the way. These individuals have agreed to offer workshops and work with our local churches that may be experiencing conflict. In the new year, look for a workshop in your area. If you have a church conflict that you would like help in bringing resolution, please call your Associate Conference Minister.

May Christ kindle the flame of peace in our hearts and may it burn bright and true in our lives.

Peace of Christ be with you all,

Jane Anderson

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