

## Let It Begin With Me

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I get chills every time I sing “Let There Be Peace on Earth.” It is not only a moving song musically, but inherent to its message is a reminder of the power each of us has to influence and change the world. I spent time in Germany on behalf of the Conference and the United Church of Christ with our partners in the Evangelical Church of Westphalia this past November. What an experience that was for me. I was reminded of the power we each have to change the world. But, it was more than that. Their ecumenical and global approach to their faith reminded me that our voices, our ministries, and our passion for God’s world matters each and every day. While I was there, I had the privilege of participating in a global consultation on the issue of Church and Migration. If ever there was a time to discuss these matters it is now. There were people from Hungary, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Germany, and me from the United States. We spoke about the global migration issues in each of our countries and the impact these matters have all around the world. I was struck by how different and, yet, how similar our circumstances are in our countries. But it was made clear before I spoke just how intentionally important it was to our German partners that our voice in the U.S. context be heard as they form and shape their perspective as people of faith.

As you read this note from your Conference Minister, I am currently tending to matters of migration at our southern border along with members of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Arizona. I have no doubt that these matters are complex, and that people of good faith, conscience and beliefs can disagree amicably around matters of immigration policy. What does seem central, however, to our Christian heritage in these conversations is our recognition of the humanity, dignity, and identity of people from Central America who are deeply impacted by our policies. We are called upon as people of faith to offer compassion, aid to the neighbor who is struggling, and both spiritual and physical companioning on the journey. It occurs to me as I reflect upon a trip to Germany to address matters of global

migration and a trip to our own borders here in the U.S., that the great hymn “Let There Be Peace on Earth” can be a great guide.

The hymn instructs us that there is a deep desire for there to be peace on earth, but that peace must begin with me. It is in my daily life, my daily work, my daily interactions that peace is enacted. It is the same in your life. I believe deeply in the activity of advocacy, holding sacred space for the wounded, standing with the poor and oppressed, and yet, even those activities must first begin within me or my interactions with others will be useless at best and paternalistic at worse. In this New Year as the Church in the United States continues to struggle with our identity into this new era of what it means to be the people of God, perhaps we must begin with us. I do not mean that in a navel gazing narcissistic kind of way. I simply mean perhaps peace, kindness, gentleness, hope, grace, and compassion all begin within us as we deal with the stranger, the migrant, the neighbor whose theology or politics are different, the family member who differs, or the denominational positions we may or may not fully embrace. In the midst of all of these conflicts and divisions, the great hymn reminds us that for there to be peace on earth, “let it begin with me.” May it begin with me. May it begin with you. May peace begin to grow in all of us for such a time as this. May it be so.