



Know Justice. Know Peace.

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A few years ago, I posted something on my Facebook page that offended a friend from church. He responded vehemently. I requested posts on my Facebook page be respectful. He responded that my post didn't deserve respect.

Obviously, we weren't going to resolve this online.

On Sunday morning, he walked into the church sanctuary, we saw each other, and we immediately hugged in front of God and everyone. We murmured apologies to each other, realizing that though we were both "right," we had wronged each other.

What saved us was the humanity of our in-person relationship.

As I write this, conflict is all around us. News updates are barely able to keep pace with the escalation between the U.S. and Iran. Harvey Weinstein's trial has begun, while additional charges against him have been unveiled. Australia is on fire. Actors once again used an awards platform to speak about voting, the climate crisis, women's right to choose, and privilege.

Relationships are strained. Accusations are flying. Lines are being drawn. Times like this can leave us questioning our faith, wondering if peacemakers are truly blessed, and asking what we can possibly do to preserve peace. Prayer shields on full!

There is a well-known phrase: "No Justice. No Peace." Know Justice. Know Peace. It seems simple enough, but it represents a challenging call.

Praying for peace is something many of us do routinely. Establishing justice requires us to understand issues from angles that might not be familiar to us. To work for justice requires us to consistently contemplate what we don't know, what we need to humbly and bravely consider, and what actions we need to take. It requires us to resist dehumanizing people with whom we disagree.

Jesus intentionally kept company with people who were dehumanized by much of society, and he called on us to love each other—outside of our comfort zone of

friends. Much of his ministry included traveling, gathering for meals, and sharing stories about how to treat each other. “Do this,” he said, “in remembrance of me.”

Working for justice is an ongoing and often humbling challenge. Posturing and finger-pointing are not building blocks of peace. Diplomacy is. Gathering together to discuss how to treat each other is still the way to establish justice and peace.

Justice and peace thrive when we are willing to grapple with in-person relationships. We do not have to agree with each other in all things in order to understand each other and work together for justice and peace.

As we begin this new year of 2020, let us not only pray for peace but also work for justice. Let us remember that the commandment to “Love your neighbor as yourself” means none of us are free until all of us are free. And let us always be willing to struggle with our in-person relationships with every beloved child of God, in the name of justice and peace.

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