



Peace that Passes All Understanding

Michael Neuroth
Policy Advocate International Issues

These are unprecedented times. I think CNN's Jake Tapper's description of the Presidential basically debate sums up 2020 for me: "a hot mess inside a dumpster fire inside a train wreck." Many of us have been white-knuckling daily life throughout this pandemic, and somehow the news keeps getting worse. These days, I am looking for some signs of hope. Some light at the end of the tunnel. A word of comfort in these trying times. Growing up as a PK (preacher's kid) in the Anglican Catholic tradition, the rote prayers of the liturgy remain a comfort to me. These words are deeply engrained in my memory, though not all of them reflect my theology now. Some words keep coming back to me in this season, especially the benediction and how my father said it, always the same words, always the same cadence, "The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God."

As a child, honestly, I liked those words most because they symbolized that church was almost over. But in years since, I have taken comfort in their repetition and mystical meaning, pointing to the assurance that God's peace is promised even as it is beyond our comprehension. In the chaos of 2020, that reminder of God's peace, even a peace beyond our understanding, is reassuring to me.

In the United Church of Christ, we prefer liturgies that are inclusive, creative, and change with the season. We also have worked to unravel the mystery of what makes for peace. Peace is a promise, but, for us, peace is also a practice. Our Just Peace pronouncement in 1985 affirmed "Peace is possible!" not only based on God's faithfulness but also on our willingness to work at being a justice- seeking, peace-building church.

How is God's peace a promise for you? I encourage you to reflect on prayers, hymns, or words that may bring you comfort or assurance of God's faithfulness, God's peace that is "beyond our understanding" in this season. And further, how is God's peace a practice for you? I challenge you to not only keep up your engagement with the [Our Faith Our Vote Campaign](#), but also consider how you

and your church might respond in any post-election scenario to be a resource for peace, justice, resistance, and reconciliation if needed.

Over the next month, we may be stretched to live out our Just Peace commitment in new ways. If there is election tampering or the outcome is contested, we could face massive unrest and potentially violence. Our churches may be called to accompany nonviolent protest, to become a resource in the community, or, in some cases, to deescalate violence directly. Now is an important time to plan for how you and your church might respond along with other community institutions should these previously unthinkable scenarios play out. Trainings and articles are being circulated by many local and national peace organizations and faith organizations that you can find online.

Sometimes the memories of childhood prayers or learned scriptures can lift us up when our own voices waiver. They remind us of who we are. They remind us that we are carried into the future by the prayers of those faithful ones. We are God's promises lived out for them. We can trust, work and hope for the promise of God's peace still to come. God's peace as a promise. God's peace as a practice. May the peace that passes all understanding be yours today, and grant us all the courage to keep building it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Neuroth is the Policy Advocate for International Issues for the United Church of Christ.

LEARN ucc.org/justice

DONATE ucc.org/donate

ARCHIVE
WFJ bit.ly/witness4justice

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.