

From the Pastor

Greetings, all!

I hope that you are enjoying a sense of refreshment and renewal. Even for those of us who seem like life has thrown at us about as much as (more than?) we can handle, this summer has been filled with moments to connect with one another, with friends, with family. Many have enjoyed vacations or staycations. Many have slowed their pace down in ways large or small. Regardless of what we have done this summer, we all seek a sense of peace.

I think we all yearn for peace. Peace with ourselves. Peace with others. Peace between nations. Peace with creation. In a world filled with anxiety and violence, in a country fed on a culture of fear, we long for peace. We long to be instruments of peace. Maybe we long for other people to be instruments of peace. We want the peace that passes all understanding to fill our hearts (Philippians 4:7).

We at Congregational UCC have stepped up efforts to live out our witness to peace and our call to be peacemakers. As you will read in this newsletter, we began monthly Peace Pole prayer gatherings in July. (Stay tuned for location changes in extreme cold or storm, although we might all be so glad to have a rainstorm that we celebrate outside). We will observe the Hiroshima Day of Remembrance at the Peace Pole on Monday, August 6, at 6:00 pm. We are interested in integrating people's hopes and interests so please feel free to share any ideas with me or with any officer or member of the Faith Ministry Team (Michael B, Meredith D, Fran R, Darlene N, John S, and any of you who would like to join!).

We are also in the midst of our first annual Peace Camp. So far 6 kids, with 3 more joining later this week, are enjoying making peace poles, planning and planting a peace garden, learning to drum together (harder than it sounds – we are making some very cutting edge rhythms!), using photography to capture what speaks to the kids of peace – including being silly with each other, and learning yoga. A very heartfelt thanks to all of you who have prepared the space in the basement, tilled the garden, planned the events, donated snacks and books, came to drum or support the kids, led the activities, prayed for the children and the planners, and all other acts that support Peace Camp.

Our Summer Sunday Study has been on Shalom and what that means in the Bible and what that means in our lives. We really do believe that the way of peace is important.

Why is peace something that matters so much? We believe Jesus calls us to the way of peace and we know that he declares peacemakers to be blessed and children of God (Matthew 5:9). The way of peace can heal the divisions in our country and our culture. Commitment to the way of peace offers hope after random violence erupts in a theater in Colorado. The way of peace calls out after an increase in racially, ethnically, religiously or gender/sexuality based violence. The way of peace challenges the rightness of war but demands that those who serve get adequate physical and mental health treatment. The way of peace questions allocation of resources (official FY2013 USA budget: Department of Defense - \$613.4 BILLION).

Peace is something we yearn for. Peace is something we can learn. Peace is the way of our Christ.

Shalom,

Pastor Lynn