

# The Mustard Seed



**Planting the things that  
make for peace.**

**July 2015**

## **United Methodist Social Creed Companion Litany**

God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ calls us by  
grace

*to be renewed in the image of our Creator,  
that we may be one  
in divine love for the world.*

Today is the day

God cares for the integrity of creation,  
wills the healing and wholeness of all life,  
weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day

God embraces all hues of humanity,  
delights in diversity and difference,  
favors solidarity transforming strangers into  
friends.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day

God cries with the masses of starving people,  
despises growing disparity between rich and  
poor,  
demands justice for workers in the  
marketplace.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day

God deplores the violence in our homes and  
streets,  
rebukes the world's warring madness,  
humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day

God calls for nations and peoples to live in  
peace,  
celebrates where justice and mercy embrace,  
exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day

*God brings good news to the poor,  
proclaims release to the captives,  
gives sight to the blind, and  
sets the oppressed free.*

## **Dear Great Plains Peace Advocates,**

This summer's Micah Corps internship had a group of ten dedicated young adults engaging in a variety of justice issues while developing their leadership skills and growing spiritually by learning different prayer practices. In this issue of The Mustard Seed, each team of two shares about their work and encourages you to join them in taking action.



We thank all congregations, groups and individuals throughout the Great Plains Conference and beyond who welcomed the Micah Corps interns and encouraged them to learn and to share about their work, linking their faith with action.

Shalom – Salam – Paz – Peace,  
*Andrea*

**The Great Plains Micah Corps** internship is based on Micah 6:8:

**Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.**



## Walking Humbly with God's Creation

Then God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. *Genesis 2:15*

Micah Corps interns **Ellen Sulser** and **Té Gatobu's** issue area was environmental stewardship:

Over the summer, we focused on how faith influences our relationship with the environment. Although some times news and media coverage make environmental problems seem distant and unsolvable, these issues affect all of us. However, it can be difficult to see the problems outside of our own neighborhoods. To a certain extent, as long as we can have green grass, singing birds and breathe freely it's difficult to remember the environmental crisis is ongoing. Even if you don't agree with Climate Change there are other aspects of our environment that humans have impacted and changed.

We've spread inorganic/toxic chemicals into our ecosystems through agriculture and war and dammed rivers and altered the course of their flow. We've raised sea levels to the point at which island communities have been forced to abandon their homeland as climate refugees because their fields are too saturated with seawater to be fertile. As United Methodists we are called to limit our impact on the environment.

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it.

For ways to engage in this issue go to:

<http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/environment>



Photo: Ellen and Te learn from farmers and ranchers in western Nebraska

## Food Security Team

From **Maddi Baugous** and **Kevin Kabunda**:

The USDA defines food security as all people at all times having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is not knowing where your next meal is coming from or not having the means necessary to obtain healthy or any food. The U.S. ranks worst among the IMF (International Monetary Fund) advanced economy countries on food insecurity.

Here are some facts about Food Security in the United States, especially in Kansas and Nebraska:

- There are 49 million individuals who are food insecure.
- In Kansas, there are over **400,000** people who are food insecure. Imagine more than the city of Wichita being food insecure.
- Kansas ranks 48<sup>th</sup> for feeding low-income kids in the summer, 46<sup>th</sup> for feeding families eligible for food stamps.
- In the state of Nebraska there are **246,960 people** who are food insecure.



Photo: Kevin facilitating discussions during a Sunday School class

For more information, go to:

- ✓ <http://neappleseed.org/>
- ✓ <http://kansasappleseed.org/>
- ✓ <http://www.feedingamerica.org/>: The Feeding America network of food banks is leading the fight against hunger in communities nationwide. Support Feeding America and help solve hunger. Learn more about how our network addresses the issue.

Support *Bread for the World* ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)):

- Endorsed by the United Methodist Committee On Relief
- Working on non-partisan legislation
- Working on root causes of hunger and poverty



Photo: Maddi personally hands over letters written by members of our Annual Conference to a staff person of Kansas Senator Jerry Moran in Washington D.C.

## Poverty Team

Although the United States is known as the land of opportunity, 22% of all children in the US live below the poverty line. **Brookelyn Brown** and **Sarah Nelson** worked at Voices for Children in Nebraska to learn more about how to help individuals break the vicious cycle of poverty.

And Jesus said; "The spirit of the Lord is with me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free."

*Luke 4:18*

## POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

- Participate in school board meetings to voice your concern that all children receive equal opportunities for education.
- Learn more about the Great Plains initiative for education partnerships. For more information visit <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/education>

- Get involved in outreach that focuses on structural changes to support people getting out of poverty, e.g. advocating for a living wage.



Photo: Brookelyn and Sarah at Voices

## Peace Making Team Becoming Peacemakers

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."

*Matthew 7:12*

**Amy Kenyon** and **Elysee Mahangama** share:

The Bible shows us that everything has value as part of God's creation. Therefore nonviolence challenge us to stand for justice by taking actions that honors the worth and dignity of every human being. God has called us to respect one another and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts. Peacemaking requires intention, organization, courage, and commitment.

### POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS:

- Education: How can we talk about these issues? Pay attention to issues in your community. Talk to people about what bothers you. Join meetings. Listen to people's personal stories. Recognize when your opinions are being clouded by

your personal perspective or by biased information.

- Research: How can we stop problems from escalating? Fulfilling a community's needs can help maintain peace. Notice issues in your community, talk to people about the underlying causes, and develop plans as a church or organization to create change. For example, Topeka JUMP (Justice Unity and Ministry Project) <http://topekajump.weebly.com/> brought community congregations together and presented a plan to the superintendent of schools to provide children living in poverty with the supports they need to be successful.
- Systemic Justice: How can we advocate on a broader scale? We want to establish policies that protect people and provide them with opportunities rather than harming them. This requires meeting with, calling, and writing to those with political power. Identify community leaders who have the power to make changes and talk to them about what you would like to see.



Photo: Amy and Elysee share during worship



## Immigration Team

“.....whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” *Matthew 25:45*



Photo: Ama and Ella facilitate conversations about immigration issues during an adult Sunday School class.

**Ama Agyabeng** and **Ella Sherman** are the two members of the Micah Corps team working with immigration issues this summer:

Immigration is a complex issue that is encountered by many people and politicians in the U.S. on a daily basis. Each year, several thousands of people migrate to the U.S both legally and illegally. Some migrate seeking refuge from war stricken countries or to escape environmental degradation which in turn causes unbearable poverty. Others flee violence and hunger. As United Methodists, we are encouraged by our Social Principles to “recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all.”

We have worked with and learned from organizations such as Nebraska Appleseed and Justice for Our Neighbors-Nebraska (JFON-NE). We have also shared in churches in Kansas and Nebraska and encouraged congregations to

contact their state and national representatives to advocate for compassionate immigration reform, a reform that treats each human being with dignity.

### POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

- Become knowledgeable about what compassionate immigration reform entails.
- Get involved with organizations working on immigration issues such as National Justice For Our Neighbors, JFON-NE, Nebraska Appleseed, Kansas Appleseed and others.
- Sign up to be part of the Great Plains Immigration Rapid Response Team by contacting Andrea Paret at [amparet08@yahoo.com](mailto:amparet08@yahoo.com).
- Contact your representatives and senators and ask them to support compassionate immigration reform.
- For further resources go to: <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/immigrationresources>

*Thank you Micah Corps interns!  
We wish you God's blessings as you  
continue your life's journey!*



The 2015 Micah Corps team around the Peace Pole at the General Board of Church and Society in Washington, D.C.

## Additional Peace Possibilities

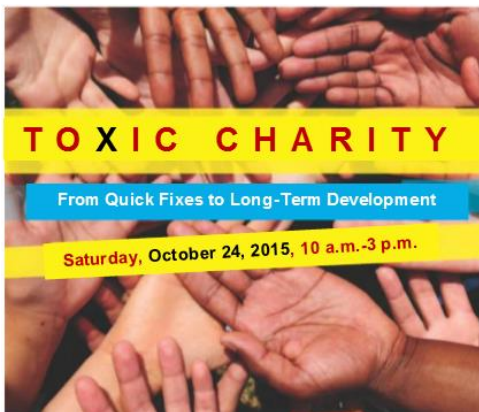
- ❖ A big thank you to all congregations that celebrated the **Peace with Justice Sunday**. In case your congregation hasn't participated in the Peace with Justice Sunday so far, this can still happen. It can be celebrated any Sunday of the year.



The Peace with Justice offering enables The United Methodist Church to have a voice in advocating for peace and justice through a broad spectrum of global programs. The offering benefits peace with justice ministries in our own conference and through the General Board of Church and Society.

<http://www.umcgiving.org/ministry-articles/peace-with-justice-sunday>

- ❖ **Toxic Charity** - Join us for this important event on October 24<sup>th</sup> offered through the Great Plains Mercy & Justice Team. John Wesley urges us to "do no harm." How can we help without doing harm?



[www.greatplainsumc.orgwww.greatplainsumc.org/eventdetail/786355](http://www.greatplainsumc.orgwww.greatplainsumc.org/eventdetail/786355)

- ❖ Social Justice Seed Money Grants are available through the Great Plains Mercy & Justice Team (deadline to apply is Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>) <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/1456753>
- ❖ The World Council of Churches invites us to participate in the **World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel Sept. 20 – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015**. The theme of the week in 2015 is: "God has broken down the dividing walls."

The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) of the World Council of Churches invites member churches, faith-based communities, and civil society organizations around the world to join together in 2015 for a week of advocacy and action in support of an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel. Congregations and individuals around the globe who share the hope of justice shall unite during the week to take peaceful actions, together, to create a common international public witness.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/world-week-for-peace-in-palestine-israel>

- ❖ If you are on Facebook, please "like" the Peace with Justice – Great Plains Conference facebook page.



\*\*More information can be found at:  
<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/peacewithjustice>

For questions contact Andrea Paret, Great Plains Peace with Justice Coordinator, at [amparet08@yahoo.com](mailto:amparet08@yahoo.com)

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To subscribe or unsubscribe, contact Andrea Paret, [amparet08@yahoo.com](mailto:amparet08@yahoo.com)