

Peace Epistle June 09

I read this week in Nicholas Kristof's column in the New York Times a quotation from Professor Haidt of University of Virginia, "Minds are very hard things to open and the best way to open the mind is through the heart. Our minds were not designed by evolution to discover the truth; they were designed to play social games. Liberals and Conservatives don't just think differently, they feel differently. This may even be a result in part of divergent neural responses."

I have often been labeled a "bleeding heart liberal". Talking about Peace can label a person a "liberal" and highlighting injustices so they may be rectified may be labeled "bleeding heart". I gladly bear the labels in order to achieve the results.

Next week most of our congregations will take a Peace with Justice Offering. Try to keep the focus on the heart when you talk with your congregations about Peace with Justice. Tell them the stories of people enduring war, like Zareed. When asked about the war in Afghanistan he could only say, "my house is gone, my wife is dead, my children are burned" this is called COLATERAL DAMAGE. We know Peace is more than the absence of war, but peace enables us to pick up the pieces after a war and gives us a chance to put them back together.

Decades ago Rev. Dick Truitt, Wisconsin pastor and delegate to General Conference felt so strongly about Peace that he proposed this offering and it was accepted into our Book of Discipline. It is now a part of our congregational special days of giving.

**WHY DO UNITED METHODISTS ENGAGE IN A PEACE WITH JUSTICE OFFERING?** So we can exercise our commitment to PEACE with JUSTICE. When our congress votes this week (May 25..) on funding the war in Afghanistan, it will be United Methodists and other committed Christians who will tell our congressional leaders to stop and think about what is happening there and be sure what the US does moves the country toward PEACE.

**WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR OFFERING?** One half of it stays in WISCONSIN. This year the offering was used to support the Wisconsin Council's workshops on Hunger and Poverty and to enlarge the church connection with the Interfaith Coalition on Worker Justice in South Central Wisconsin.

**WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GLOBAL PORTION** of our offering? \$52,805.00 was received and disbursed to 28 Peace with Justice Ministries, 19 of them in the USA. The remaining grants were global. Read about these programs from links on the UMC-GBCS.ORG website. Here are a few of those programs:

- East Angolan Seminars on Peace and Reconciliation
- Quezon City, Philippines youth Mission for Peace and Development/Human Rights.
- Liberian Conference for strengthening the church and promoting social justice and human rights.
- Taraba, Nigeria to unite Islamic and Christian Communities facing escalating violence.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and Puerto Rico also received grants.

Knowledge may be power, but compassion and faith move the mountain.

I hope you will visit the Church and Society Table at Annual Conference. Pick up a new bumper sticker and take the time to string a few blessed beads on a bracelet for peace.

Shalom,  
Betty Henderson