

## 2015 Season of Peace, Peace & Global Witness Offering

### 2015 Path of Peace Reflections

#### Introduction

This year's Path of Peace Reflections are based on the themes and stories being shared in the 2015 Peace and Global Witness Offering. Writers were recruited for each week to help us explore the following areas:

*Week 1: Peace in the Family/Nonviolence in our Households*

*Week 2: Peace in the Community and Neighborhood*

*Week 3: A Human-rights Lens for our Peacemaking*

*Week 4: We are Stronger Together—Considering our Systems and Structures*

Individuals and households are invited to make use of these daily reflections beginning on Sunday, September 6, and concluding on World Communion Sunday, October 4.

#### Authors

##### Week 1: Peace in the Family/Nonviolence in our Households

*September 6–12*

*The contributors for the first week's reflections are all associated with the Southtowns Family Justice Center, a ministry of Orchard Park Presbyterian Church in Orchard Park, New York. The collection was edited by Linda Babcock, Director of Education and Mission at Orchard Park Presbyterian Church.*

*Sunday, September 6*

**Gregory White** is the Director of Music and Organist at Orchard Park Presbyterian Church; Director of Catholic Charities Domestic Violence Program for Men, Buffalo, New York; and member of the National Council of National Organization for Men Against Sexism.

*Monday, September 7*

**Rev. Janet James** is a United Methodist minister currently serving at Calvary United Methodist Church in Latham, New York. Formerly a family therapist in a child sexual abuse prevention clinic, Janet was a catalyst for the Southtowns Family Justice Center while serving at Orchard Park, United Methodist Church.

*Tuesday September 8*

**Rev. Dick Young** is the pastor at the Orchard Park Presbyterian Church who was moderator of the Park Parsons, the local ecumenical ministerium. Dick was both catalyst and groundbreaker for the creation of the Southtowns Family Justice Center.

*Wednesday, September 9*

**Terrie Benson Murray**, Partner at Cohen & Lombardo, Attorneys at Law and her daughter, **Katelyn Murray**, J.D., L.M.S.W., Clinical Systems Specialist with Horizon Health Services, are members of Orchard Park Presbyterian Church. Terrie was the “mover and shaker” for the renovation of the Southtowns Satellite of the FJC. Katelyn volunteered alongside her mom and was president of the SUNY Buffalo Law School’s Domestic Violence Task Force for two years.

*Thursday, September 10*

**Peg Simons** is an ambassador for the Family Justice Center of Erie County, Buffalo, New York. She speaks in the Western New York area, sharing the story of her path from a domestic violence relationship to finding the rest of her life.

*Friday, September 11*

**Linda Babcock** is a co-author and trainer for the child protection policy whose administration is part of her responsibilities as director of education and mission at Orchard Park Presbyterian Church. The vista from Linda’s office window is the Southtowns Family Justice Center.

*Saturday, September 12*

**Rev. Allyn Foster** is a retired United Methodist minister serving as pastoral assistant at Orchard Park Presbyterian Church and spiritual counselor at the Southtowns Family Justice Center.

## **Week 2: Peace in the Community and Neighborhood**

*September 13–19*

**Rev. Phil Lloyd-Sidle** is a United Methodist minister who is also a member of the Mid-Kentucky Presbytery, where he served James Lees Presbyterian Church for 13 years. Currently he is working for the Center for Women and Families, a Louisville-based organization dedicated to the elimination of domestic violence and sexual assault. As a family advocate, he works with survivors, counseling, accompanying, and engaging community partners in the work of awareness and prevention. Phil has also served congregations in Uruguay and Philadelphia.

*From the writer:*

The Book of Isaiah offers us a timeless store of compelling insights and challenges into our ways of living, our choices, our assumptions of what is important, and the values that drive us, consciously or unconsciously. Isaiah puts up a mirror not just to our individual lives, but to our lives in community and in this world. And Isaiah, while diagnosing our un-health, also provides us with unforgettable images of wholeness and peace, as well as a way toward that vision, toward that reality—a path of recovery. It is not impossible!

In Week 2 we will spend time on several parts of chapters 55 and 58. These chapters offer us a vantage point or a lens through which we might reflect on the depth and quality and nature of lived-out peace. Where are the seeds and expressions of true peace, reconciliation, mutual respect, and justice in our communities today? Where are we falling short? What is it like in your neighborhood or community? How might we, as individuals and communities, be peacemakers rather than peace-destroyers or peace-ignorers?

As we engage in this week of devotions, you are invited to consider the various forms of violence which harm or destroy the fabric of our communities: gun violence, inequality by class, race, and gender in terms of jobs, education, and housing, not to mention our habits of fear and division.

*Personal Note:* In the synchronicity of things, I have started writing this devotional for “Peace in our Neighborhoods and Communities” four days after the tragic shooting in the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Four days ago, nine churchgoers were murdered, all African American, all at a midweek prayer service, at the hands of a young white person with a gun. It appears that the killings were premeditated and strategic, “Mother Emanuel” being a historic and symbolic house of worship since the early 1800s. Needless to say, echoes from past bombings and murders reverberate today and are being felt most acutely in Black communities throughout the South. The alleged killer is a white, 21-year-old boy-man. And while we lift up in prayer both the alleged killer and the fear that took captive his mind and heart, still we must recognize that his choices and actions arise out of a much larger context of pernicious, persistent, and deeply rooted racism which our country continues to struggle with and too often denies. These murders have shocked. They have ripped, once again, the fabric of community life in Charleston and throughout our country. They awaken fears. They fill us with despair at the senselessness of such violence. And they reveal the intractable cancer of racism that continues to feed off of and inside our national body. Along with race, these murders also remind us of other symptoms of our collective un-health—our gun policies, to name one, and the underlying notion that violence is a means of resolving our problems, to name another .

As we reflect for this week on peace in our communities and neighborhoods, we are reminded that “peace” is always a choice; “peace” arises out of historical contexts, its call always presenting particular challenges as it is applied to particular contexts; and “peace” is not some spiritualized, easy feeling but a goal

to be striven for with intention and with concrete, collective, and collaborative actions that span the divides we know so well in our country that keep fear alive, to be “repairers of the breach.” —*PL-S*

### **Week 3: A Human Rights Lens for our Peacemaking**

*September 20–26*

**Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow:** writer, speaker, parent, and pastor. A third-generation Chinese/Filipino, armchair sociologist, and technology enthusiast, Bruce writes, speaks, and teaches on faith, race, parenting, and technology in a variety of contexts from seminaries to conferences to congregations to preschools. Author of three books, he is currently writing a parenting book with his wife, Robin Pugh, titled *Don't be an Asshat: 100 Lessons to Teach Your Children*. Bruce was the moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) from 2008 to 2010. Bruce currently lives in San Francisco with his wife, three daughters, and two canines. You can connect with Bruce on most social networks via @breyeschow.

### **Week 4: We are Stronger Together—Considering our Systems and Structures**

*September 27–October 4*

**Rev. Matt Gaventa** has served as pastor of Amherst Presbyterian Church since 2013. He is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and also holds degrees from Georgetown University and the University of Iowa. He is the 2012 recipient of the David H.C. Read Preacher/Scholar Award given by Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. He lives in Lovingson, Virginia, along with his wife Sarah and their son Charlie.