

STREAMS OF JUSTICE

Let justice flow down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24)

Winter 2017-2018
Volume 19, Issue 2

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Abolishing Nuclear Weapons - A Dream?

In 2017, the scientists responsible for reporting on the Doomsday clock announced that the minute hand is being moved to 2.5 minutes to midnight – the closest this clock has been in decades to the hypothetical nuclear Armageddon which midnight represents. Let's imagine a world without nuclear weapons.

The 1983 Presbyterian General Assembly stated that no nation has the right to resort to nuclear weapons. Today, there are over 17,000 nuclear weapons – 90% of which are held by Russia and the United States. China, France, the UK, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea all have some form of nuclear capabilities.

130 member states participated in United Nations discussions to abolish nuclear weapons. 40 states did not participate, including Canada. The Government of Canada stated that it believes that all states that possess nuclear weapons must be part of the discussions. In spite of this 122 countries adopted the treaty and on September 20, 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was opened. 50 countries must ratify the Treaty for it to come into legal force. To date 3 countries have done so (Guyana, The Holy See and Thailand). This is a landmark step in a long journey toward the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

Nobel Prize awarded to International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

The 2017 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) earlier in October. ICAN is a coalition of several hundred non-governmental organizations from over 100 countries, promoting the prohibition of nuclear weapons. The award will be accepted by ICAN leaders, Setsuko Thurlow and Beatrice Fihn, in Oslo this December. The prize was awarded in recognition of ICAN's role in the creation of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted July 7, 2017 by 122 UN member states.

Project Ploughshares, an operating division of the Canadian Council of Churches, has worked closely with ICAN for many years. Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the 1945 bombing of Hiroshima and advocate to abolish nuclear weapons, was the guest speaker at Project Ploughshares' 40th anniversary celebration, held last spring at Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo. She spoke passionately about the unimaginable suffering that would occur in the event of any nuclear exchange and urged Canada to sign the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Kathryn Hare is the Presbyterian representative to Project Ploughshares



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Unknown Neighbors - Stories of Migrant Workers

On October 20-21, 2017 the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Regional Meeting of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives hosted "Unknown Neighbours: Stories of Migrant Workers" in Barrie, Ontario. This meeting put a human face to the challenges and injustices facing many migrant workers in Canada.

Gina Bahiwal is from the Philippines. Under the Foreign Temporary Workers' Program, employers must bear the cost of recruiting and transportation for workers. Some employers use recruitment services which unfairly pass these costs on to the worker. When Gina's visa renewal was being processed, her recruitment agency demanded thousands of dollars. After seeking free legal aid in Canada, she got the visa at no cost, but the recruitment agency rescinded her employment contract. She found another job and now has permanent residency, an open work permit and advocates for migrant workers. Michelle, also from the Philippines, paid a recruiting fee and airfare to Canada to a bogus recruiting agent and arrived in Canada to find that the job she had been promised did not exist. Strengthening and implementing mandatory monitoring of agencies that recruit foreign temporary workers can reduce the vulnerability of migrant workers in Canada.

Rev. Ted McCollum, an Anglican priest in Beaverton Ontario, spoke about his church's ongoing hospitality and outreach to Mexican seasonal agricultural workers. The

church began providing a space to watch sports and eventually hosted Spanish church services. Over time, relationships between church members and workers were formed.



KAIROS event speaker: Michelle

Some migrants in Canada, such as Live In Care Givers, have a pathway to permanent residency in Canada. Most workers come to Canada through the Temporary Foreign Workers Program and do not have a pathway to Canadian citizenship. Often temporary foreign workers do low-skill work, earn low wages and live in vulnerable conditions because of their work. They may face harassment and racism. Working conditions can be dangerous. It is time to consider opening pathways to permanent residency for more temporary foreign workers.

Leslie Walker is a Presbyterian minister in Waterloo, Ontario and a member of the International Affairs Committee, a standing committee of the General Assembly.

Synthetic Biology—the next stage in genetics

In 2015 there were 212 million new cases and 430,000 deaths from malaria. Can we re-engineer the malaria-bearing mosquito so it can't carry the parasite that causes malaria? A new area of genetics called synthetic biology may demonstrate this possibility. If successful, millions may be spared.

Synthetic biology combines biology and engineering and is concerned with re-designing and re-assembling life forms – and creating new life forms. Current research is on the simplest forms of life, such as bacteria. The United States Department of Defence is a major funder of synthetic biology research into infectious diseases. Research intended to reduce suffering is to be welcomed. But there are possible military applications in synthetic biology as well - mosquitoes or other insects could be re-engineered to spread lethal toxins in their bite.

How do we weigh the benefits and risks of this research? What are the implications for our faith? These questions were considered at the *Redesigning the Tree of Life: Synthetic Biology and the Future of Food* conference that took place in Toronto November 2-4, 2017, sponsored by Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches.

Resource people included Drew Endy from Stanford University, one of the leading scientists in synthetic biology who sees great possibilities in this new phase of genetics; Jim Thomas, a research associate with the ETC Group brought a critical perspective. Manoela Pessoa de Miranda from the UN Convention on Biological Diversity spoke about the various treaties and conventions intended to protect biodiversity. Synthetic biology may well bring benefits, but the potential risks suggest proceeding cautiously.

Merry Christmas from Justice Ministries

Throughout our Advent journey, we have been preparing to celebrate Jesus' birth. With his birth, all conventions are turned upside down. Jesus was born in a manger. God's reign is not what is expected.

We are called to watch for the signs of comfort, of hope, of joy, of redemption. While there are reasons to feel despair about our world today, consider the passage in Isaiah 52: 7-10 - *how beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."* Regardless of the obstacles, of the seemingly impossibility of change, there are men and women all over the world striving for peace and justice.

Who could imagine 122 member states of the United Nations agreeing to a prohibition against nuclear weapons? Project Ploughshares, part of the Canadian Council of Churches, worked with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) for many years contributing to an important step toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. In recognition of this contribution, ICAN was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. The messengers of peace included Setsuko Thurlow who, as a young girl, survived the bombing of Hiroshima.

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections was established by the churches over 40 years ago to bring the biblical principles of restorative justice to our justice and corrections system. Those who commit crimes need to atone for their actions. But they also need to be healed if they are to function and contribute to the communities they return to when they have completed their sentences. Victims must be heard and need healing. A National Symposium on Restorative Justice took place in November. It brought together those involved in the justice and corrections system to share and to learn about best practices and innovations in Canada and from other countries about restorative justice.

These and other issues are touched on in this issue of *Streams of Justice*. Regardless of the obstacles or the height of the mountain, there are messengers of peace and justice among us. The Good News has been announced. We are invited to work for justice while anticipating the unexpected.

Merry Christmas from the staff and members of the Advisory Committee in Justice Ministries.

Stephen Allen

National Restorative Justice Symposium

The 2017 Restorative Justice Symposium took place November 19-21 in Ottawa. The Symposium was co-hosted by Ottawa's Collaborative Justice Program (CJP) and the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) in partnership with Corrections Canada. Close to 400 people attended the Symposium. Guest speakers included: Ontario's Attorney General, Yasir Naqvi; Supreme Court of Canada Justice Malcolm Rowe; Federal Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale; Canadian Bar Association President Kerry Simmons and Algonquin Elder Claudette Commanda.

One of the Symposium's keynote speakers was Hayley Mackenzie of New Zealand, who spoke about best practices for embedding restorative justice (including Maori restorative justice practices) into justice processes from the experiences in New Zealand. Several workshops explored ways to indigenize justice through implementation of restorative practices. Dr. Jane Dickson of Carleton

University, Dr. Allen Benson, Chief Executive Officer, Native Counselling Services of Alberta and Dr. Patti Laboucane-Benson, Director of Research, Training & Communication, Native Counselling Services of Alberta were speakers whose presentations dealt specifically with Indigenous issues and intergenerational trauma stemming from colonialism and the residential schools.

Minister Goodale announced a multi-million dollar commitment to COSA (Circles of Support and Accountability).

Rebecca Bromwich is the Presbyterian representative on the Church Council on Justice and Corrections' Board where she serves as President. Rebecca teaches law at Carleton University. She is a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa.

Celebrating Presbyterian Justice Seekers

Who are the Presbyterians that have done justice, loved mercy and walked humbly with God? Who has brought the church's voice for justice to the public square? This new section of Streams of Justice will name these saints, witnesses and advocates. Their ministries have formed part of the church's public witness for justice.

Dr. Heather Erika Johnston (1930-2014) was a lifelong ecumenist and justice-seeker. Born in Coelbe, Germany, her Lutheran clergy father was forced to choose between state and church and became one of the founding members of the "Bekennende Kirche" – the underground church in Nazi Germany.

After the war Heather became a translator and began work for the Refugee Department of the World Council of Churches and later, for the Lutheran World Federation. She married a Canadian Presbyterian minister – Dr. John Johnston - and moved to Canada. They had three children: Andrew, Ian and Mary.

In 1975, Heather attended and became the first Canadian woman elected to the World Council of Churches' Central Committee. One of the more difficult aspects of her WCC work was with the Program to Combat Racism (1979-1983): "some church leaders were so harsh. How could I persuade them that *all* people, regardless of colour, gender or religion are equal? It was very difficult."

Heather's passion for justice expanded to include global economic justice. In the 1990s she founded Oikocredit Canada – part of an international ecumenical organization that supplies loans for people in the Global South at reasonable lending rates. Shareholders accept a lower dividend and support initiatives of fair trade, co-operatives and other means of ethical investing.



Heather was the first lay President of the Canadian Council of Churches and the first woman and lay person to be conferred with the Honorary Doctor of Divinity by Knox College in Toronto.

Heather's justice legacy is seen through the ongoing work of the ecumenical organizations she served, supported and founded. We give thanks for Heather's life and ministry for justice!

Light up the World workshop on evangelism and justice

On Saturday, October 28, 2017 18 people from the Presbytery of Niagara met at Drummond Hill Presbyterian Church in Niagara Falls for a half day workshop entitled "Light Up the World" (Matt. 5: 13-16). The workshop was developed in partnership between the Presbytery of Niagara's Evangelism and Mission Committee and Justice Ministries to explore discipleship, evangelism and justice. What are the differences between these vital expressions of Christianity? What are the similarities? How do they intersect?

A guided activity helped small groups decide, by consensus, on definitions, concepts and values related to evangelism and justice. Participants found common ground and set priorities for initiatives related to mission and ministry. Specific points of disagreement were identified for future conversation.

Participants were then invited into small group bible study, using Matthew 5: 13-16 (salt and light), and based

on the Lectio Divina method which includes silence and contemplative reflection on a scripture passage. Lectio Divina was first developed in the early Christian church. Participants read the passage four times. Following each reading, there was a period of silence and then the small groups reflected on a different question. For example, the fourth question was: "what does this passage tell you about what God is calling you and the church to do?"

A plenary discussion invited participants to reflect on and share what they heard in the activities, witnessed throughout the workshop, and new points of learning or challenges. The Evangelism and Mission Committee members and Justice Ministries both affirmed and appreciated this partnership.

Anita Van Nest is the minister of Stamford Presbyterian Church and chair of the Evangelism and Mission Committee of the Presbytery of Niagara.