

“Blessed Are the Peace Makers”

Matthew 5:9

Richard C. Allen

January 29, 2006

South Glastonbury

Connecticut

“Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God.” I have always been both moved and challenged by this teaching; moved by the high standing granted to peacemakers, challenged by the enormity of that calling.

I wanted to lift up this text on our annual meeting Sunday because it feels so basic to our identity as a Christian church. We pray for peace. We imagine peace. We work for peace. We teach peace. We preach peace. We study peace. We sing of peace.

When I think about being a peacemaker in the world, there is one overwhelming truth that abides: without justice, there can be no real peace. Justice is to peace as a foundation is to a house. Justice is to peace as a tree trunk is to the branches. As we read through the Jesus narratives, we see him exposing the injustices of his day: double standards for men and women, a disregard for the poor, a lack of compassion for the weak, a disrespecting of children, an abuse of power among the elite. He seems to know that peace won't come until these basic injustices are addressed.

So, when I think about an individual being a peacemaker or a church being a peace-making church, I look around the community to see if there are signs of justice being done. And here is what I see. I see at the High School what is known as the Gay/Straight Alliance. These are students who are choosing to stand together to work for the dignity of all God's children. To tolerate homophobia is to tolerate injustice. The gay/straight alliance is a place where justice is being done.

I saw justice last night and early this morning on the front lawn of the church as our youth boldly and unashamedly drew the community's attention to the injustice of homelessness. They raised some money out there as drivers pulled off route 17 and turned into the parking lot, money they will spend in June for lumber and sheet rock and nails, restoring row houses in Baltimore, Maryland, restoring hope for the homeless. The whole youth mission endeavor is a place where justice is being done.

I see justice when our Social Action Board invites us to an Environment Fair where we learn about recycling and composting and worm farms and ground water and the links between our stewardship of the earth and our own health. Justice was unfolding at that fair.

I see justice when a bunch of women and men in their late twenties come together from all over the country to play a hockey game at the Wesleyan rink to honor their friend, Danny, and to raise money for the Perini Clinic of the Dana Farber Institute, so children with cancer can have a life-affirming week at the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp. Justice is done on that ice!

I see justice when a town begins to map out a bike trail for its citizens, not just because I am an avid cyclist myself, but because it provides access to anyone who wants to invest in physical fitness, maintaining the body God has given us. Justice is being done by those planners.

I see it when our nursery school offers tuition scholarships so that three and four year olds who happen to come from economically-challenged homes can receive the same enrichment as their peers. Justice is done at High Street School.

I'm sure I could extend my list for many pages. But you get the idea. Wherever people are laboring for justice, that is where peace has a chance to flourish. My vision for our church always has been, and always will be a community where peace abounds because justice is the agenda. I believe it is the Risen Christ who equips us and empowers us to live into this vision. In the greatest of hope, Amen!