



Peace & Justice Journal

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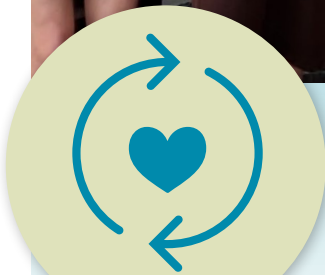


Prophetic witness:

A look back at 2023 and ahead to 2024

Ten Messiah University students visited Washington, D.C., in May 2023 to learn about the multiple histories and cultures of the city. They visited the MCC office for an advocacy training and spoke with congressional staffers on issues related to Palestine and Israel.

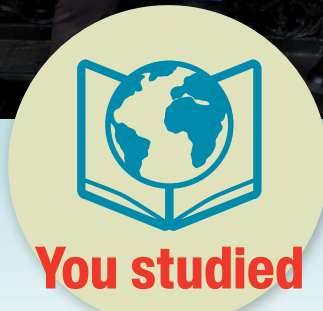
MCC photo/Galen Fitzkee



You joined us

3900+ people joined seminars, webinars, experiential learning activities and other events

Check mcc.org/events or email npjm@mcc.org to invite us to speak



You studied

1000+ people downloaded or ordered small group curricula

mcc.org/peaceful-practices



You wrote letters

9,200+ emails to Congress or the White House

Sign up for updates at npjm.mcc.org



You visited

56 meetings with policymakers, 33 of them including constituents or MCC partners

Download *How to be an advocate* at npjm.mcc.org

From the director's desk

As 2023 came to a close, my heart was heavy with sorrow witnessing the humanitarian catastrophe unfold in Gaza and seeing other crises continue or worsen. It is difficult to find hope in such times, the brokenness of our world laid bare.

But hope is there.

It is in the testimonials of young adults attending peace camps. In groups engaging with *Peaceful Practices* so that, rather than avoiding conversations about polarizing topics, they can listen to one another more deeply. In those, of all ages, bravely advocating to policymakers for the first time. In activists, courageously confronting unjust structures. In peacemakers, boldly reimagining and remaking a better world.

In MCC U.S. National Peace & Justice Ministries (NPJM), we are appropriately frustrated and uncomfortable in this moment. We are also unreasonably hopeful and stubbornly determined—to keep at this work until all of God's beloved children can live their fullest and best lives, free from violence and oppression.

Will you join us? —*Tammy*



As we continue to witness the pervasive impact of racism on our global landscape, our call is to cultivate a critical lens that questions dominant narratives and seeks to amplify the voices too often left unheard. Recognizing human dignity as a universal right, there is an urgent call to welcome the complex stories of those society places at the margins, acknowledging the richness, knowledge, and power they bring. This urgency fuels our commitment to reimagining and realizing a just world.

Over the past year, staff developed workshops and trainings to deepen our understanding of systemic oppression, its root causes, and the entanglements with the colonial project. Through Bible studies, sermons, and professional sessions, staff engaged with constituents, fostering profound insights into the nuanced challenges we face.



NPJM staff in November 2023. Back row: Zachary Murray, Boris Ozuna, Jes Stoltzfus Buller, Saulo Padilla, Aidan Yoder, Charles Kwuelum; front row: Kirstin De Mello, Galen Fitzkee, Tammy Alexander, Daniela Lázaro-Manalo, Serim Park MCC photo/Brenda Burkholder

Toward racial equity

Puerto Rico Peace Camp participants act out hunting and gathering in an activity on the history of the world. MCC photo/Saulo Padilla

A few highlights include the webinar series, *Beyond incarceration: A hard look at dismantling the prison system and building healthy communities*; our first ever AITI (Addressing the Impact and Trauma of Incarceration) training where diverse leaders from across the U.S. gathered to learn; and multiple young adult peace camps that have focused on themes of decolonization, anti-racism and the criminal legal system.

In 2024, staff will continue to create new opportunities for learning at the intersections of social justice topics, striving to help participants recognize the connections between diverse issues while emphasizing the interdependence of our collective liberation. Together, we weave a tapestry of understanding that transcends boundaries, paving the way for a world where every story is heard and valued. —*Daniela*

Toward dignity and rights for migrants

Education

The year 2023 was one of increased migration. War, poverty, economic and social instability, and the desire for a better future continue to be migration drivers, as they were in biblical times. How should the Church respond? MCC continues to provide opportunities to consider faithful ways to respond to God's call.

Migration, trauma and biblical hospitality continue to be key topics for immigration education activities, including for young adult Peace Camps in New York, Colorado and Puerto Rico. In February, staff presented at Conferencia Andina Anabautista in Quito, Ecuador, for a diverse group from Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, and conducted a seminar on migration and trauma for Marriage and Family Program students at Fresno Pacific Seminary in collaboration with Elaine Zook Barge.

MCC hosted two 40-hour immigration law trainings, in April and September. In May, staff participated in the organizing, planning and activities of the Migrant Trail Walk in Arizona. In June, staff conducted a Peace Camp with Congolese and Cameroonian immigrants from U.S. Mennonite Brethren congregations in Ohio. In November, staff co-facilitated the first "Addressing the Impact and Trauma of Incarceration" seminar in Akron, Pennsylvania.

Looking forward to 2024, staff will continue walking with churches and individuals to faithfully respond to God's call to welcome newcomers, providing educational resources, migration trauma seminars, immigration law trainings, and experiential learning activities. —Saulo



Saulo Padilla presents during an Addressing the Impact and Trauma of Migration (AITM) seminar in Akron, Pennsylvania in April 2023. MCC photo/Kirstin De Mello

Newcomer Connections

Boris Ozuna joined NPJM as Newcomer Connections Coordinator in June. To aid U.S. churches in the call to welcome migrants as Christ welcomed us, MCC's Newcomer Connections work focuses on educating and equipping Anabaptists to welcome newcomers into their communities.

In August, Boris traveled to the Lower Rio Grande Valley and visited three major migrant camps in Mexico where expressions of solidarity, creativity and resilience were abundant.

In 2024, Boris will continue to work to help increase the capacity of churches and individuals to support asylum seekers and refugees. While asylum seekers have been granted admission to stay in the U.S., they often face long delays in obtaining work permits and other services.

In addition to inviting churches to practice hospitality by sponsoring asylum seekers and supporting refugees, staff will also help to connect churchgoers with educational opportunities and resources to respond to the root causes of migration. —Boris



Children play under the shade of a blanket in 97-degree weather, as their families wait for weeks or months for an appointment through the CBP One App, in a tent city in Reynosa, Tamaulipas State, Mexico. MCC photo/Saulo Padilla



Beautiful murals, including of a bird in flight, cover the Mexican side of the border wall in Agua Prieta, Sonora. MCC photo/Galen Fitzkee

Advocacy

In 2023, advocates like you helped bring an end to the harmful “Title 42” border policy and spoke out forcefully against border militarization and the criminalization of migration. U.S. immigration policy has experienced a few positive shifts this year, but political leaders have fallen short of enacting sorely needed policy reform. Many migrants still encounter extreme barriers to safety and security throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and at the U.S. border.

In 2024, MCC will continue to advocate for the rights of people on the move and work to reduce the underlying causes that force many to leave their homes. Unite with us again as we urge Congress to allocate sufficient resources and remove unnecessary barriers so that all our neighbors can thrive. –Galen

Toward living sustainably

On Earth Day last year, MCC kicked off the binational Climate Action for Peace advocacy campaign (ClimateActionForPeace.com). Featuring stories from partners from around the globe, fact sheets, and action alerts, these resources are available to anyone who wishes to take action to preserve God’s creation. As temperatures increase and extreme weather events become more frequent, MCC staff—with your help!—ask policymakers to support adaptation and mitigation efforts in the U.S. and other countries. In practice, this also means demanding a change in the type and amount of energy we consume. In other words: fewer pipelines, more solar panels!

In 2024, MCC will continue to pressure the U.S. government to dedicate more funding for humanitarian assistance and disaster response, rather than increase already exorbitant military spending. Countries that have contributed the least to climate change often experience the worst of its effects, and there is growing global support for restitution and reconciliation in the form of a fund for “loss and damage.”



“We are showing the world that going green is the only way.”

Cynthia Mutsindikwa
Engineer, Zimbabwe

ClimateActionForPeace.com

In addition, staff will put effort towards ensuring a just transition to sources of clean energy that does not further harm those most vulnerable. Updating standards for responsible mining and holding violators accountable will be one crucial way to truly address climate change without sacrificing even more livelihoods.

Please keep an eye out for future climate campaign events in your inbox and on the climate campaign website, and remember to make your voices heard in the halls of Congress in 2024! –Galen & Tammy

Toward health and wellbeing

Violent conflicts, escalating wars, and increasing global needs necessitate prioritizing and increasing U.S. foreign assistance. Effective assistance can address and reduce the shocks of various global crises and, importantly, support nonviolent local peacebuilding initiatives. Such assistance is crucial for millions of people globally who are unsure where their next meal will come from and for hundreds of thousands facing famine-like conditions.

In 2023, MCC staff, as part of the Nigeria Working Group and in collaboration with Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff, facilitated monthly congressional briefings on Nigeria's electoral preparedness. MCC partners participated in and made specific policy recommendations at the briefings. Also, MCC international program staff and partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo met with House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff, sharing policy recommendations related to ongoing crises in the country.

As part of efforts to decolonize peacebuilding work and enable more equitable partnerships, in September, in



*MCC Peace Sectoral participants pose for a group photo in front of the MCC Zimbabwe office.
MCC photo/Julia Weaver*

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, staff facilitated a workshop titled “Advocacy as a tool for innovative local peacebuilding” for MCC program staff and partners involved in peacebuilding throughout the continent.

Looking ahead to 2024, staff will continue (with your help!) to advocate for the Food for Peace program to be included in the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, to conscientize policymakers to prioritize humanitarian relief rather than militarized assistance, and to work with congressional offices to reintroduce the Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings Act (MINDS Act)—all while striving to increase opportunities to share local perspectives and stories from MCC partners. —Charles

Toward a more peaceful world

Peace education

Peace is central to the Gospel's message, to Jesus' ministry, and to our work in NPJM. Today, more than ever, we need bold peacemakers to work at changing systems of violence locally, and around the world.

Highlights of our peace education work in 2023 include healthy dialogue training, Peace Camps for young adults, and raising awareness about the harms of the U.S. mass incarceration system. Using *Peaceful Practices* (mcc.org/peaceful-practices) as a resource, staff facilitated numerous workshops nationally, providing tools for

(continued on next page)



Participants and facilitators from a young adult Peace Camp in Colorado in July 2023. MCC photo/courtesy of Saulo Padilla



Participants during a Korea learning tour listen to tour guide Kichan Lee (far left), overlooking the “Punchbowl” in Yanggu where many battles were fought during the Korean War due to its proximity to the 38th parallel. Photo courtesy of Tim Huber, Anabaptist World

Read more: For information on how U.S. economic sanctions impact MCC’s work on the Korean Peninsula and around the world, see our fall/winter Peace & Justice Journal at washingtonmemo.org/newsletter



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communities to engage conversations across differences. Four young adult Peace Camps were held in 2023, in collaboration with colleagues and partners. Peace Camps have become a cornerstone of our young adult peace-building ministries. (More information coming soon for 2024 Peace Camps!)

In early 2023, staff coordinated a powerful four-part webinar series, *Beyond Incarceration*, featuring expert partner voices sharing about the ways they work at disrupting and engaging the harms of the incarceration system. Additionally, in November, staff coordinated the

first training on Addressing the Impact of Trauma and Incarceration (AITI).

We recognize that learning resources can be a very helpful tool for

wrestling with the practical application of peace theology. As such, staff spent significant time working with others throughout 2023 to develop two curricula, one focused our peace witness amid the everyday structures of violence we find ourselves enmeshed in, and another focused on the transforming power of hospitality. There are plans for both resources to be released later this year—stay tuned for more information! —*Jes*

“Today, more than ever, we need bold peacemakers.”

Korean Peninsula

In June, staff participated in Korea Peace Advocacy Week in the U.S. Also in June, NPJM staff traveled to the Republic of Korea (South Korea) with MCC U.S. Executive Director Ann Graber Hershberger, Anabaptist World associate editor Tim Huber, and others to learn about the legacies of war on the Korean Peninsula.

In July, staff helped to organize events in Washington, D.C., surrounding the 70th anniversary of the ceasefire agreement on the Korean Peninsula. MCC staff met with U.S. State Department officials and continued to press for family reunification.

In November, staff traveled to southern California to participate in events around the “Drawing Hope” art exhibit. The exhibit, co-sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and ReconciliAsian, contains a collection of paintings and notes created by North Korean, South Korean, Japanese and Korean American children. The pieces reflect the desire for friendship between groups who are divided due to political realities and offer glimpses of hope for a better future.

In 2024, staff will continue to work alongside partners such as AFSC to advocate for passage of the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act and for the Enhancing North Korean Humanitarian Assistance (ENKHA) Act to be reintroduced. We will also support the annual Korea Peace Advocacy Week in the spring and invite you to join us! —*Zachary & Serim*



This September 2023 photo shows visible damage from the February 2023 earthquakes is still dominant in the streets of Jabli, a remote city in Lattakia Governorate, Syria. Photo courtesy of Mohammad Said

Middle East

From August 2022 to July 2023, Anthony Jeer from Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine, joined our staff through the IVEP program (more information about IVEP below). Anthony had 46 speaking engagements in eight states, discussing the context in Palestine and sharing his migration story. Anthony and Zachary Murray often traveled together, combining storytelling with education on systemic issues and advocacy recommendations.

In May, Zachary traveled to several countries in the Middle East, connecting with many partner organizations. At the Mennonite Church USA convention in July, staff piloted an experiential activity titled “The Palestine Land Experience” and co-led a seminar on walls, connecting walls at the U.S.-Mexico border with those in Palestine.



Read more: For more on the effect of walls, specifically the separation barriers in Occupied Palestine and the physical walls along the U.S.-Mexico border, see our spring/summer Peace & Justice Journal at [washingtonmemo.org/newsletter](https://www.washingtonmemo.org/newsletter)

Since the tragic events of October 7 in Palestine and Israel, staff have advocated to policymakers (with your help!) for a permanent ceasefire and better access for humanitarian aid to reach those who need it, while encouraging a greater understanding that the recent violence did not occur in a vacuum.

On Syria, staff worked with partners in Washington, D.C., to call for further humanitarian “carve-outs” in U.S. economic sanctions and greater access for organizations such as MCC to provide humanitarian assistance after the early 2023 earthquakes.

In 2024, staff will continue to advocate for greater access for humanitarian aid in Gaza and in Syria, an end to the military occupation of Palestine, and a just peace for all Palestinians and Israelis. We will also continue to help both policymakers and churchgoers better understand the root causes of violence in Palestine and Israel, and the unintended effects of U.S. economic sanctions.

Learn more and give to MCC’s Gaza response at [mcc.org](https://www.mcc.org).



Serim Park joined NPJM in August as an international fellow as a part of the MCC International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP). Serim is from South Korea and has a B.A. in East Asia International Studies from Yonsei University, Mirae Campus. She will be working with NPJM until July 2024 on advocacy related to the Korean Peninsula and on various communications projects. Check out [mcc.org/ivep](https://www.mcc.org/ivep) to learn more about IVEP.

Serim Park outside the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy of Benjamin Hoffmann

Meet Serim Park

National Peace & Justice Ministries Resources for deepening your engagement



Peaceful Practices

A guide to healthy communication in conflict

mcc.org/peaceful-practices

Embracing Beloved Community

An introduction to understanding our biases on race

mcc.org/embracing-beloved-community



FEAR NOT

Creating a plan to respond to active violence

mcc.org/fear-not

Young adult Peace Camps

Find dates and details at

mcc.org/peace-camps



Advocacy

Sign up for action alerts and monthly updates

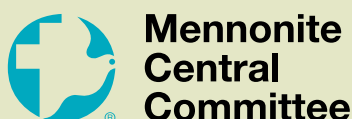
npjm.mcc.org

Invite us to speak

with your congregation or group

NPJM staff can speak on immigration, peace, racial equity, climate change, Palestine and Israel, foreign assistance and more!

npjm@mcc.org



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