



Peace & Justice Journal

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Prophetic witness:

A look back at 2024 and ahead to 2025



You joined us

1700+ people joined seminars, webinars, experiential learning activities and other events

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

At this Restorative Justice Peace Camp in Chicago in May, participants gained valuable insights through interactive learning experiences. Photo courtesy of Christian Berambaye Nawai



You wrote letters

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You visited

75 meetings with policymakers, 51 of them including constituents or MCC partners

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You studied

800+ people downloaded or ordered small group curricula

mcc.org/peaceful-practices

From the director's desk

There is a particular anxiety in watching a hurricane form, in knowing the storm is approaching and that people are in harm's way. As we enter 2025, there is a similar sense of fear and dread as we anticipate mass deportations, rising global hunger, increasingly overt racism and sexism, and much more.



Charles Kwuelum, Galen Fitzkee, Kirstin De Mello, Nathan Toews, Saulo Padilla; front row: Tammy Alexander, Margaret Schrag, Zachary Murray, Daniela Lázaro-Manalo. MCC photo/Brenda Burkholder

None of this is new, of course. But if the arc of the moral universe does indeed bend toward justice, its peaks are too short and its valleys unbearably cruel.

How do we prepare for the coming storm, for the harm we fear will come to God's people? As Jesus taught in Matthew 22, we love God and love our neighbors. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," he said. Rooted in this love, Jesus gave priority for those most vulnerable. He used storytelling and creative, nonviolent action to challenge dehumanizing narratives and corrupt authorities.

As we work for greater peace and justice we must strive for mutual transformation, listen with curiosity, and act with humility. We must have the courage to imagine a better world and the faith to persist through obstacles.

Read on to be inspired by what we've done together in 2024 and what we'll continue into 2025 and beyond. Keep having difficult conversations. Keep pushing powerholders to do better. Keep planting seeds of peace and justice.

We're in this together for the long haul. Be impatient but be persistent. Tomorrow is too long to wait for justice. But today is too soon to give up. —*Tammy Alexander*

Toward a more peaceful world

Middle East

In the prayer of the Psalmist, "Rise up, O Lord, O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed (Psalm 10:12)." It has been an incredibly difficult year for communities in the Middle East, particularly those in Gaza and Lebanon. Since October 7, 2023, Israel has killed tens of thousands in Gaza and hundreds of thousands have been displaced and are at risk of famine—with much of the death and destruction caused by U.S. weapons.

The entrance to Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, West Bank, where MCC partner Lajee Center is located, symbolizes the hope of return for all refugees to their ancestral homes (2018). MCC Photo/Lynn Longenecker





Participants at an MCC Peace Camp at Camp Deerpark in New York focused on the U.S. criminal legal system. MCC photo/Jes Buller

Since late 2024, Israel has increased attacks on Lebanon, including the wanton destruction of residential buildings.

Throughout the year staff met with congressional, State Department and other Biden Administration staff, and facilitated meetings for the MCC representatives for Jordan, Palestine and Israel. Staff also supported activities of Mennonite Action and other groups in Washington, D.C. We continue to be inspired by the bold action of Anabaptists advocating for peace, raising awareness in their churches, and performing acts of nonviolent civil disobedience.

In 2025, we will continue to engage congressional offices and, as possible, Trump administration officials, advocating for a full ceasefire, support of UNRWA, a U.S. arms embargo, and an end to the occupation of Palestine. In Syria, we will continue to advocate for humanitarian carveouts in U.S. sanctions that primarily harm everyday Syrians. —*Zachary Murray*

Peace education

In 2024, Jes Stoltzfus Buller ended her term as Peace Education Coordinator, with Nathan Toews stepping into the role in September. We give many thanks to Jes for her more than eight years of service to MCC U.S. and the enormous impact she made on peace education!

Some of the more notable achievements of her time include the Peaceful Practices healthy dialogue curriculum that many churches and communities have utilized, and the Peace Camps that have garnered significant interest amongst young adults across the country. In 2024 there were five Peace Camps covering themes such as immigration, restorative justice, and biblical justice. Along with in-depth experiential learning, Peace Camps offer an opportunity to meet and hear from MCC partners engaging in these topics.

With Nathan Toews' arrival, many of the projects that Jes started will continue into 2025—and beyond! Staff are actively planning several Peace Camps, on topics such as the U.S.-Mexico border, climate change, gun violence, immigration, and intercultural exchanges. Watch mcc.org/peace-camps for more information. In addition to the Peaceful Practices curriculum (mcc.org/peaceful-practices) congregations and other groups can also engage with “FEAR NOT: Creating a plan to respond to active violence” (mcc.org/fear-not). Both are available in English and Spanish.

In 2025 we see an urgent need for peace education as we continue the Anabaptist call to live in a world whose brokenness often divides us. We invite you to see how you can be a part of peace education in your church. What are the ways you and your community need to be strengthened in order to work toward greater justice and peace for all? —*Nathan Toews*

“In 2025 we see an urgent need for peace education as we continue the Anabaptist call to live in a world whose brokenness often divides us.”

Toward a more peaceful world

Korean Peninsula

In March, staff helped organize the annual Korea Peace Advocacy Week. In 2024, more members of Congress sponsored the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act (PKPA) than ever before. In November, MCC hosted several organizations in Akron, Pennsylvania, as they strategized how to best work together toward peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In 2025, MCC will continue to advocate for the PKPA, the Enhancing North Korean Humanitarian Act (ENKHA), for opportunities for divided Korean families to reunite, and for the Trump administration to move away from militarism and toward diplomacy. Join us for Korea Peace Advocacy Week in summer 2025. —Zachary Murray

Latin America and the Caribbean

As violence rises in places like Mexico and Haiti, advocates across the Americas have dedicated renewed energy to addressing the root causes of insecurity, including the trafficking and sales of U.S. guns in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In June, MCC partners from Mexico met with congressional staff and Biden administration officials to share stories of loved ones who had been “disappeared” and plead for change. During a virtual lobby day, MCC Haiti alumni educated congressional staff about the impacts of illegal U.S. weapons trafficking to Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2025, we expect the incoming administration to cultivate relationships with governments in Latin America that share their political ideology, focus intently on militarized immigration enforcement, and take a more adversarial approach to foreign policy by threatening tariffs on Mexico and tighter sanctions on Cuba. Strong coalitions and increased grassroots involvement will be necessary to carry positive advocacy momentum into the new year. —Galen Fitzkee



Read more in the Spring/Summer 2024 issue of the *Peace & Justice Journal*: *Planting seeds of peace: U.S. policy toward the Korean Peninsula* at mcc.org/pj-journal.

Toward living sustainably

The MCC Climate Action for Peace campaign (climateactionforpeace.com) began 2024 with the U.S. leg of the Global Voices Tour featuring Victor Odinda, Climate Solutions Partner Advisor for MCC in Cambodia. Odinda presented to more than 650 people in 25 churches, universities and other venues across the U.S. on the how MCC partners in Cambodia and beyond are addressing climate change and working for peace.

In April, over 500 people in Canada and the U.S. participated in a month of climate actions for peace. The actions ranged from washing clothes in cold water to sending a letter to policymakers on international climate finance. The climate campaign wrapped up the year with

a podcast and a virtual workshop on the theme “Talk climate, practice peace,” encouraging conversations on climate.

In July, staff accompanied students from Messiah University to meet with their members of Congress and discuss provisions in the Farm Bill that support agroforestry, cover crops, and other methods of farming that benefit the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The extension of the current Farm Bill for one more year means more opportunities in 2025 for Anabaptists to engage with Congress to advocate for the protection of climate-smart policies.

Students and staff from Messiah University's Sustainability Office debrief a lobby day on climate change and the Farm Bill with MCC staff on the Capitol grounds in July. MCC Photo/Chris Hon Xin Yi

Climate action will be critical in 2025 with a new administration and Congress expected to dismantle air and water pollution regulations and loosen permitting requirements for mining. Educating on climate topics and advocating for policies that shift from an extractive economy to one that is regenerative—in a way that is equitable and just—will continue to be a priority in the coming year. A truly just transition will require significant reductions in consumption and equitable policies



that bring socio-economic benefits for all. It will also require an emphasis on local solutions and consent, whether for mining on Indigenous land or building refineries in communities of color. —Kirstin De Mello

Toward racial equity

As we navigate a time when overt racism and xenophobia feel increasingly emboldened, the urgency of racial equity work cannot be overstated. The struggle for justice is not only about dismantling oppressive systems but also about creating spaces where all people can live with dignity and freedom. Now more than ever, we are called to confront both the visible manifestation of racism and the hidden structures that sustain it.

Over the past year, our team has worked to deepen understanding of systemic oppression and its ties to colonialism. Through workshops, trainings and profes-

sional gatherings, we've fostered conversations about privilege, power and pathways to reconciliation.

This year, racial equity staff co-facilitated MCC Peace Camps in New York, Colorado, Chicago, and Oregon, equipping young adults with tools to engage in restorative justice, racial equity, migration and peacebuilding within their communities. The experiential tool *You Got Booked*, which highlights racial disparities in the criminal legal system, underwent significant revisions to enhance its impact. Additionally, our first learning tour in Los Angeles, in partnership with ReconciliAsian, explored the rich histories of Indigenous, Latine, and AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) communities, uncovering stories and learnings of resilience and solidarity.

Looking ahead to 2025, staff are developing a racial equity curriculum designed for organizations and communities alike, offering actionable pathways to foster inclusion and transformation. We remain committed to creating spaces for dialogue, learning, and collaboration. By connecting justice issues, we hold fast to the vision of a world where every person's humanity is affirmed, and every story is valued. This is not the work of a moment, but a movement—one that challenges us to imagine a shared, liberated future. —Daniela Lázaro-Manalo

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Participants visit The Wall Las Memorias mural by artist Mr. B Baby during the “Hidden LA” learning tour in Los Angeles. Photo courtesy of Sue Park-Hur

Toward health and wellbeing

In many places around the world today, we see increasing levels of displacement, food insecurity and human suffering. Various factors contribute to these trends, including unfair and corrupt government policies, violent conflicts, land grabbing, and human-induced climate change. Global inequality, instability and irresponsible mining practices also contribute. MCC continues to support the work of partners in peacebuilding, peacemaking, caring for God's creation, and supporting communities harmed by climate change.

In 2024, MCC staff in Washington, D.C., engaged congressional offices on the reauthorization of the Farm

Bill, which is overdue for a renewal. To address the impacts of hunger caused by violent conflicts, MCC has pushed for a Farm Bill that incorporates robust Food for Peace mechanisms. Food for Peace helps communities build resilience against hunger and includes provisions for more efficient delivery of emergency food aid to vulnerable populations.

In July, advocacy staff accompanied MCC staff from South Sudan and Burkina Faso to meet with congressional offices and State Department officials. In October MCC staff and partners from the Democratic Republic of the Congo met with House Foreign Affairs Committee staffers.

In these meetings and others, staff share policy recommendations to encourage U.S. government support for innovative local, indigenous, and evidence-based strategies. Such strategies empower communities to nurture a culture of peace and to be part of creating a more just society. Staff also call for government and corporate policies which affirm culturally- and context-sensitive approaches, create more equitable food systems, and boost food productivity.

As we face unknown national and foreign policy terrain, staff look into 2025 with hope for a substantive five-year reauthorized Farm Bill. Finally, as those displaced often face trauma, loss of livelihood, and life-threatening health conditions, we will continue to create awareness about the deteriorating situations of human brokenness where people are forcefully displaced from their lands and homes. —*Charles Kwuelum*



(From left to right) MCC staff Charles Kwuelum (Washington), Semei Kakungul and Suzan Nkinzi (South Sudan), and Cyprien Nkoma (Burkina Faso) in front of a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) office.

Photo courtesy of SFRC staffer.

Toward dignity and rights for migrants

At the end of 2024, global reports and risk indicators continued to point to involuntary migration as a significant area of concern. The deterioration of fragile peace agreements and human-created climate change, along with economic challenges and misinformation, impact our communities with increased polarization and increased suffering.

The increase of such violence and instability seems to be making “the love of many grow cold” (Matthew

24:12). MCC’s migration education work continues to provide opportunities that encourage connection and embrace. We walk with churches and individuals to faithfully respond to God’s call to welcome newcomers and each other by providing educational resources and experiential learning activities.

In early 2024, staff participated in the International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) retreat, where young adults from around the world had an opportunity



A group of MCC staff visit a section of the U.S.-Mexico border wall in Hidalgo, Texas, to observe the juxtaposition of two styles of border fencing and learn about the realities of migration to the U.S.

MCC photo/Galen Fitzkee

to learn about biblical hospitality, migration and peaceful practices. In March, July and September, migration education staff co-facilitated MCC Peace Camps, including one in Spanish, where young adults had opportunities to develop skills and practice tools for peacebuilding, such as dialogue, empathy and curiosity.

MCC hosted two 40-hour basic immigration law trainings, in April and September, where staff from non-profits across the U.S. learned about legal support for people navigating our complex immigration system. In February and August, MCC migration education staff supported borderlands learning tours in South Texas and Arizona. In May, staff participated in the annual Migrant Trail Walk in Arizona that brought attention to the deaths of 197 migrants in the Sonoran Desert in 2023.

In 2025, MCC will continue to walk with both immigrant established, and long-term resident established congregations. Staff will persist in efforts to offer support, guidance and educational opportunities that pursue peace and justice, foster practices of biblical hospitality, and invite us into communities in right relationship with God and one another. —*Saulo Padilla*

Advocacy: In 2024, the Biden Administration took measures to further limit access to asylum. MCC and its coalition partners continued to speak against these restrictions and in favor of crucial protections for vulnerable migrants at the border and within the U.S.

Staff led groups of youth in the “People on the move” experiential learning exercise, which simulates the journey of a migrant family forced to flee their home (contact npjm@mcc.org to host the activity for your church or school group).

In 2025, the incoming administration has promised to conduct mass deportations of undocumented immigrants, build more border wall, slash refugee resettlement programs, and end birthright citizenship. These promises have been accompanied by extreme rhetoric and misinformation.

To prevent the most harmful impacts of these policies, congressional action and public solidarity will be very important. MCC will continue to provide opportunities for constituents to take part in these efforts. —*Galen Fitzkee*



Saulo Padilla facilitates a session of a mini-Peace Camp in Lancaster, Pa.

MCC photo/Andrew Badden

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

A mass incarceration learning tool

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!

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