

FOR  
PEACE  
SAKE



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
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REV. DR. DEBRA J. HANSON

# Peace with Justice Sunday Memorial Sunday

## Welcome

**Hymn:** “Here I Am, Lord” (UMH #593, vv. 1,2)

**Scripture:** 1 John 3:16-17 (The Message)

This is how we’ve come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God’s love? It disappears. And you made it disappear.

**Message:** “For Peace Sake”

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Memorial Day brings to my mind red poppies being sold as a reminder of those who have given their lives in service to their country. My Dad donated money to support the programs that the red poppies helped. As a veteran, he was a member of the American Legion and proudly marched in the yearly Memorial Day parade. Dating back to World War I, the poppies have been a way of honoring fallen soldiers and are made by veterans who distribute them across the country so that the donations can help other veterans who are disabled and hospitalized.

As a child, I never fully grasped the significance of the poppies, but I always wanted to have one. When I see them being offered even now, I donate toward their very worthwhile mission. The poppies are symbolic in many countries in honoring those who have given their lives in fighting for freedom.

We are citizens of this great country, and, as Christians, we also have our citizenship in the Kingdom of God. I would like to share a reflection from Retired General Roger Brady from an article that he wrote for Christianity Today:

*As I now view life in America as a private citizen, I am struck by the similarity of our expressions of patriotism and faith. Occasionally I wonder if we get the cross and the flag confused. As American Christians, we are indeed twice blessed, but we should not get the two confused. America is an imperfect place, an unfinished project, an ideal we hope to make a reality.*

*Our citizenship in the kingdom of God is a gift extended to us freely by God's grace. Paul told the Ephesian Christians, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:8-10). ("Memorial Day: For What Shall We Live?" Christianity Today, May 25, 2018)*

We never want to take our freedom for granted, and I believe we never want to forget the sacrifices of the men and women who serve our country. Let's face it, most of us don't serve in the military, so, even as we honor those who do and work to support and encourage them, we can ask ourselves where we are called to serve as those who are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works," as the passage from General Brady's comments says.

Today is also a special Sunday called "Peace with Justice." As I considered how to tie Memorial Day and Peace with Justice together, I found the connection that is the title of this message and the cover of our bulletin: "For Peace Sake." Our military fights for our freedoms in order to promote peace. Peace often isn't the absence of war, but a call to find justice for those who are oppressed, marginalized, suffering, and who have no voice.

As General Brady writes:

*Whether or not we wear the uniform of our country, we all have a service to offer, a service to those ideals that reflect God's universal truths and that our*



*American ancestors captured in the formation of this country. When Jesus left this earth to take his place at the right hand of God, he left us . . . his Church, to carry on his work. So when evil strikes in the form of a school shooting or when nature, its fury devastates property and lives, when children suffer, when people are hungry or homeless and ask, "Where is God?!" we must be there and have them see Christ in us. (Ibid.)*

Peace with Justice programs promote ways that can help others become peacemakers by offering for communities to find reconciliation and healing. Peace with Justice ministries are at work in many areas of our country and world, working toward these types of solutions. Here are just a few examples: *Peacemakers are in Arizona border towns and communities who are facing social challenges and are dramatically divided. In Liberian villages, advocates speak up and find ways to help where the citizens' human rights are being violated. In many local U.S. communities, women and girls are being bought and sold against their will through sex trafficking, and agencies are finding ways to make changes to rescue and prevent this from continuing. (Information is from the Peace with Justice Sunday web site.)*

Our calling is to find ways to seek and work toward justice, even as Jesus did when he ignored the social norms of his day by healing the sick, interacting openly with women and children, connection outcasts and marginalized people, and caring for those whom society had rejected. He loved all of us so much that he gave up his life for us so that we might have forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

As the Church, we carry on his work in the world. The verses from 1 John 3:16-18 that we heard earlier remind us that Jesus loves us, and we are to share that love with others. Even as there are those who gave their lives in fighting for our freedom, Jesus gave his life to set us free from sin and death. We, in turn, give of ourselves, offer our lives, in order for others to find peace and justice in their lives. We do it "For Peace Sake."

**Prayer:**

Almighty God, we seek peace in our world, but we know that there are times when it comes at a price. We are so thankful for all those who have given their lives to preserve the peace and freedoms we have. May we live and do our part as your children by seeking peace with justice and sharing your command to love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

**Lord's Prayer:** (Sherri J. Weinberg)

God, heart of the world: revealed through every aspect of creation: understood through our awareness. May we honor the holiness of creation and act accordingly so that your love is reflected in the way we live. May we always be thankful for the food we eat and the friends we have. May we forgive those who transgress against us and be forgiven for our own. In the freedom of love may we live as your heartbeat and not be compromised by hesitation. Through our freedom, may your justice be seen and heard and experienced forever and ever. Amen.

**Hymn:** "Let There Be Peace on Earth" (UMH #431)

**Sending Forth**



# WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER

Juliann  
Joan Allen  
Naomi  
Erin Frane  
Madeline  
Charles Gilman  
Josh Jones  
Aerial Silanpaa

Harry Junkins  
Marilyn & Gil  
Donna Smith  
Sophia  
Bobbie Noble  
Dan Strange  
Danny Westbrook  
Pastor Sue Ellery

Christine & her parents  
Jenn-Stebbins daughter-in-law  
Those in nursing and assisted living care  
Our Church family





# WHO WE ARE

## FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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