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**“May the God of Peace … grant you peace at all times in all ways.”**

It was a daring prayer, all things considered, to ask the Thessalonians to pray — and it is also a daring one for us, I imagine. The second letter to the Thessalonians arrived at a time of turmoil, strife and confusion. The Christian community was experiencing persecutions so severe that some believed the time of judgment had come, while others took advantage of their doubt, spreading misinformation and sowing dissent. The letter ends with a benedictory prayer: for God’s peace to be granted at all times in all ways. It might have been daring enough to consider asking them to imagine peace at “any time,” much less at “all times,” or to imagine peace in some sort of way at all, much less in all of them. Have you ever felt so far from God’s peace that you couldn’t even imagine it?

Peace is so often a daring prayer and so often provoked in the imagination, first. Artistic expression and movements for justice and peace often dance together. In turmoil, strife and confusion, visual artists and theatrical performances can point us to God’s peace-creating presence in our midst. We can listen for God’s voice in lamenting or angry poems, and in songs of freedom from those most vulnerable to violence and oppression. And the Church can dance with all whom God loves.

Artistic expression can light up our imaginations and lift our spirits. Our own choir is a shining example of this, as I am sure you will agree. Art may help imagine peace, as it has in Lebanon where war has been a daily reality for far too long; or at the southern U.S. border, where Presbyterians are imagining a season of peace with those who flee from violence; or it might join in songs of hope and inner peace with those considering taking their own lives. The Church joins with those imagining a new world, so we can create it, together.

The Peace & Global Witness Offering helps us imagine and create in each of our individual expressions, and together as a whole Church, a witness to the God of Peace. Twenty-five percent of our collection will be used by our congregation to ­­­­(SHARE YOUR LOCAL WORK HERE). Twenty-five percent is shared with our mid council region, and 50% is shared with our denominational partners so that our witness to peace is extended, and we help fulfill the daring prayer in 2nd Thessalonians: that the God of Peace is known “at all times in all ways.”

There is so much peace we are only beginning to imagine, and so we pray hard, with our minds, our gifts, with our Church and all those who inspire a sense of God’s peace.

For when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

***Let us pray:***

*O God of Peace at all times in all ways, grant us your peace and help us to imagine a world where your justice and peace are ever known.****Amen****.*