



... BRIEFLY

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Vol. 71 Fall 2015

www.presbypeacefellowship.org ppfwitness@presbypeacefellowship.org
Trusting the Nonviolence of Jesus Christ Today

Join Our Delegation to Iraqi Kurdistan May 17-31, 2016

*By Emily Brewer
Co-Director, PPF*

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is partnering with Christian Peacemaker Teams to travel with a delegation of 7-12 young adults to Iraqi Kurdistan. This delegation will focus particularly on the role and impact of fossil fuels in the region and how we might respond faithfully and in solidarity with our partners there.

The delegation will be based in Sulaimani, in the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Delegates will meet with representatives of non-governmental organizations, human rights groups, displaced persons, and government officials. They will gain a perspective on the challenges facing people in northern Iraq and the impact there of violence in other areas of Iraq and along the borders of the KRG. The delegation will participate in the work of CPT's longer-term project of reporting on human rights abuses and supporting local reconciliation. Some physical rigors may be involved.

The goal of this delegation is not only to witness, learn, and be in solidarity with those we meet, but also to share experiences and stories with the larger Presbyterian Church (USA) upon our return. For this reason, we ask that the delegates also commit to attending the Presbyterian Church (USA) 222nd General Assembly in Portland, Oregon June 18-25, 2016. A portion of the fundraising goal will go towards this second part of the delegation.

Delegation Dates: May 17-31

General Assembly Dates: June 18-25 in Portland, OR

Fundraising Goal: \$4000



500,000 barrels of oil are produced every day in Iraqi Kurdistan.
(Al Jazeera photo)

Applications should be submitted by January 15. In the case of high interest, we will select and notify the delegation participants by February 1.

PPF will work with you to raise funds for this delegation, but you will be expected to fundraise for the cost of this trip. Limited scholarships may be available.

Please email PPF co-director Emily Brewer (emily@presbypeacefellowship.org) for more information.

Overtures to the General Assembly

This issue of Briefly... contains important information about how to bring peacemaking concerns to the 222nd General Assembly. Original overtures and concurrences must be submitted by these deadlines:

February 19, 2016 (overtures with an amendment to or interpretation of Book of Order)

April 19, 2016 (overtures with financial implications)

May 4, 2016 (all other overtures)

See pages 3, 4, and 7 for details about the overtures we are working on.

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Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

17 Cricketown Road Stony Point, NY 10980

presbypeacefellowship.org 845-786-6743

ppfwitness@presbypeacefellowship.org

Rick Ufford-Chase and Elizabeth Shannon, Co-Moderators

Len Bjorkman, Moderator Emeritus

Judy Lee, Secretary Dylan Rooke, Treasurer

Emily Brewer Co-Director

emily@presbypeacefellowship.org

Fritz Gutwein, Co-Director 202-681-3437

fritzg@presbypeacefellowship.org

MaryAnn Harwell, Office Administrator

maryann@presbypeacefellowship.org

Linda Eastwood, Colombia Accompaniment Coordinator

linda@presbypeacefellowship.org

Sarah Prager, Web Content Manager

sarah@presbypeacefellowship.org

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A Peacemaker's Calendar

November 20-22, 2015 – SOA Watch vigil and solidarity conference at Fort Benning, Columbus Georgia. For schedule of activities, see soaw.org

Dec. 10-13, 2015 – National Gun Violence Sabbath. For events in your area, see DecemberSabbath.org

January 18, 2016 – Martin Luther King Day. “On this day we commemorate Dr. King’s great dream of a vibrant, multiracial nation united in justice, peace and reconciliation; a nation that has a place at the table for children of every race and room at the inn for every needy child. We are called on this holiday, not merely to honor, but to celebrate the values of equality, tolerance and interracial sister and brotherhood he so compellingly expressed in his great dream for America.” (Coretta Scott King)

March 10-14, 2016 Colombia Accompaniment Training, Stony Point, NY. Can you give one month to walk with church members in Colombia as they live out the gospel in their nation? Explore this by contacting linda@presbypeacefellowship.org.

April 4-16, 2016 – Mosaic of Peace conference, sponsored by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. The itinerary includes visits to Jerusalem’s

Western Wall, Bethlehem’s Christmas Lutheran Church and a boat trip on the Sea of Galilee — and more. For details and application information, see www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/mosaic-peace/

April 15-18, 2016 – Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Washington, DC. Lift Every Voice: Racism, Class & Power is the theme of this election year national gathering and lobby day in our nation’s capital to address solutions to issues of injustice to communities of color and immigrants, voter suppression, and economic exploitation. Info at advocacydays.org

May 17-31, 2016 – PPF delegation to Iraqi Kurdistan with Christian Peacemaker Teams. (see p. 1)

June 18 - 25, 2016 – 222nd PC(USA) General Assembly, Portland OR. We have volunteer and intern opportunities – email ga@presbypeacefellowship.org



June 22, 2016 – Peace Breakfast at the General Assembly, Portland, Oregon. The keynote speaker will be Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, an activist, theologian and author. He has helped train thousands in civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance. In 2015, he moved to St. Louis to support local groups in the ongoing struggle for economic and social justice and an end to police brutality. Reverend Sekou was recently made the inaugural Bayard Rustin Fellow by the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Join us in honoring our 2015 Peaceseeker Award recipients, anti-trafficking activists Evelyn Chumbow and Jill Bolander-Cohen, and our 2016 Peaceseeker, global mission advocate Bill Coop. Ticket information will be available in early 2016 on the PPF web site, in the Winter issue of Briefly, and in the General Assembly event schedule.

PPF Divests from Fossil Fuel Corporations

By Jan Orr-Harter, Aledo, TX
Chair, PPF Endowment Fund Committee

On the International Day of Peace, September 21, 2015, and on the eve of the visit of Pope Francis to the United States, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship announced a vote to divest its endowment of fossil fuel extraction investments. The vote was the first action of the newly-formed PPF Activist Council, following a six month study and recommendation by the Fellowship's Endowment Fund Committee.

"We are divesting of fossil fuels precisely because we are a peacemaking organization," said the Fellowship's Co-Director Emily Brewer. "For our children, grandchildren and those who come after them, unmitigated climate change will lead to a future of war and violence over access to drinkable water, breathable air, safe food and diminishing land. We sound this alarm to reduce that violence. Already some impoverished communities, least responsible for climate change, are early victims of it. On this most complex issue, we act out of faith in a creator God and a love for creation itself."

The divestment statement is entitled "Investing for Life: Fossil Fuels are Not Healthy for Children and Other Living Things." In addition to the divestment action, it affirms the need for multiple strategies to reduce greenhouse gases, and highlights concern for the large number of families whose income is now dependent on fossil fuel extraction. "The importance of creating new alternative energy industries and jobs cannot be overstated," said Brewer.

The full text of the fossil fuel divestment action is printed below.

Investing for Life: Fossil Fuels are Not Healthy for Children and Other Living Things

The commitment of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship to prevent war flows from a belief in the dignity and worth of human life and of creation itself. Because the welfare of our species is intimately bound up with the welfare of all living creatures and the ecosystem as a whole, we recognize the urgent need to act to mitigate global climate change. Without an immediate and significant reduction in our use of fossil fuels, we foresee the prospect of violent climate-related conflict for basic survival: wars over access to clean water, breathable air, safe food and diminishing land.

We agree with Pope Francis who said in his recent encyclical on climate change, *Laudato Si'*, that underlying the division and conflict between people is a breach in our relationship with the world:

"If we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously." (*Laudato Si'* pp. 11)

We are all implicated in the daily use of fossil fuels and we commit ourselves to changing both our consumer and investment behavior. We lift up our concern for the impact of climate change on those who live in poverty and those who have been uprooted from their homes already. Mindful of the many families whose income is now dependent on fossil fuel extraction, we recognize the need for the development of new sources of income through creating alternative energy industries.

Addressing this crisis will require an array of strategies that will test our conviction and our creativity, requiring an unprecedented mobilization of human genius, unity and love. We applaud work to reduce carbon use by individuals, churches and institutions, as well as all other genuine efforts to help abate climate change and the violence it will bring.

For us as a peacemaking organization, turning away from fossil fuels is a peacemaking issue. For us, to follow Christ means to refrain from profiting from investments that we believe will lead to the rawest forms of human violence for survival.

On September 21, 2015, the International Day of Peace, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship announces our intention to divest our endowment fund of all investments in fossil fuel extraction corporations.

We encourage others to consider the same action. May the God of creation and history hear our prayers and help us to change.

– Approved by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Activist Council, Sept. 17, 2015

Can you join the campaign to divest the PC(USA) from fossil fuel companies? Ask your church's session to request that your presbytery concur with the overture to divest from oil, gas and coal companies. For the full text of the overture and rationale, see www.fossilfreepcusa.org.

You're Invited!

What: To join the new PPF Activist Council

When: Now!

Where: Anywhere in the world

Who: Anyone who can commit to the ABC's of the Activist Council:

Affirm the radical nonviolence of Jesus and my intent to follow the way of Jesus

Be active in the life of PPF

Contribute financially

This is not a secret, so please tell all your friends!

Since 1944, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship has sought to work for justice and peace in our world and our denomination. Over seventy years later, God continues to call us as an organization to turn always toward peace. Just last month, we gathered as the National Committee and together discerned new ways we think God is calling us into peacemaking. After a year of conversations and hard work by many, we voted to change the structure of PPF to be able to include more people in our work, forming an Activist Council that will be like the hands and feet of the organization—the hands and feet in the world working for peace. Anyone who commits to follow the nonviolent way of Jesus and be active in and contribute to the work of PPF is welcomed and encouraged to join the Activist Council. We have yet to discover all the ways of being active in the life of PPF. Some ways will most certainly be joining our witness and work at the General Assembly; writing for the PPF blog and Briefly newsletter about issues of peace in the world and in your local community; attending the biennial Convocation of Peacemakers or the biannual Activist Council meetings; attending the annual SOA Watch vigil with PPF; participating in a delegation to a war-torn part of the world; serving on one of working groups which works on issues around the Middle East, Colombia, or Gun Violence, or on our finance or personnel committees; or being part of a PPF Peace Community. These are just a few of the ways that we are already working for peace, and we know that there are many new possibilities for being active in the life of PPF. We also ask that Activist Council members commit to contributing financially to PPF in a way that is faithful for each person, whether that is \$5, \$500, or \$50,000. This work depends on the dedication and generosity of people like you who are committed to working for peace. We celebrate the ways that this Activist Council will help us continue to work for peace in new ways and we hope that you will join us. Please see and return the insert to join the Activist Council or visit us online at www.presbypeacefellowship.org/joinactivistcouncil.

Host a Speaker on Gun Violence

By Jim Atwood, Harrisonburg, VA

If you are concerned about preventing gun violence in America, this is an offer you don't want to miss.

The Activist Council of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship at its yearly meeting in September, established a Speaker's Bureau of qualified individuals who are ready, willing, and able to come to your church, ecumenical gathering of churches, or Presbyteries to speak about America's pandemic of gun violence from a Biblical, spiritual, moral and ethical point of view. We offer our Speaker's Bureau to you and because we are convinced the knowledgeable and committed voice of the faith community on gun violence is the most needed voice in our country today.

We are prepared to meet with your young people, teach an adult education class on Sunday morning, preach at worship, and/or take the lead in community forums or workshops.

What we ask in return is that you pay our travel expenses, provide meals while we are in your community, and give us a place to sleep.

If you are interested contact the Chair of our Speaker's Bureau, Sara Dorrien-Christians, at sbdorrien@gmail.com.

Will the General Assembly Strengthen the Peacemaking Witness of the Church?

By Marilyn White, Austin, TX

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) will present a report to the 222nd General Assembly recommending a new set of affirmations on peacemaking which have emerged from the six-year discernment process initiated by the GA in 2010. While we do not yet know what this report will recommend, we believe that overtures to the General Assembly could encourage it to adopt a bold endorsement of nonviolent approaches to resolve conflicts at the personal, community, national and international levels.

Your presbytery can add its voice to this important conversation by concurring with the *Overture on discernment and innovation in peacemaking*, which can be found on the PPF web site, presbypeacefellowship.org. Ask your local session or your presbytery peacemaking or social justice committee to submit this overture for consideration at the next presbytery meeting.

Contact PPF's GA team at ga@presbypeacefellowship.org for help and information about working with overtures. Deadlines are listed on page 1 of this issue of Briefly...

One State, Two States: The Goal is Restorative Justice

By Don Mead, Glen Arbor, MI

A study team of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) was appointed in response to last year's decision of the 221st General Assembly to study the "two state solution" to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Don Mead wrote these thoughts on behalf of PPF in response to an invitation from the study team to submit written comments or statements on the feasibility and nature of various concepts of statehood and the rights, values and characteristics attached to those concepts. ACSWP is expected to present a report to the 222nd GA in Portland next summer.

A conversation concerning the desirability of one or two states for Israel and Palestine must start from clarity as to the goals we seek. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship affirms that the outcome must be grounded in Restorative Justice, providing justice for all, Israelis as well as Palestinians, achieved in a context that includes movement towards reconciliation between the parties to the conflict.

A two-state solution could provide justice for all, Israelis and Palestinians. But the form of two-state outcome that could produce that result is adamantly opposed by the current leadership in Israel. Through the occupation, the Israeli government is establishing "facts on the ground" that make it very difficult for there to be two separate states in any form other than bantustans.

A one-state solution could likewise produce an outcome that provides justice for all, Israelis and Palestinians. But that form of one-state solution, where all have equal rights, would also be roundly rejected by the current Israeli leadership, since such a state would lose its essentially Jewish character. Alternatively, a single state could be Jewish, like today's Israel, apartheid, with Palestinians as second class citizens. Such an outcome would be rejected by Palestinians and by the international community and should be rejected by all American Christians.

Alongside a choice between one state or two state options, there have been discussions over the years of alternative patterns of power-sharing, operating in the conceptual space between one and two states. In various forms of federal arrangements, these have specified particular areas of authority assigned to each of the parties in particular locations, under a broader framework which maintains the overall authority and spells out the details of what each is authorized to do. Recently, this discussion has been pushed in new directions by suggesting that this governing authority might be assigned not on the basis of geography but of citizenship of the individual. This would mean that Israel would have authority over all Jews throughout Mandate Palestine, while the Palestinian government would

have a similar authority over all Palestinians. This approach has been spelled out in a recent book, *One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States* (Mark LeVine and Mathias Mossberg, editors).

Such intermediate positions, whether in the form of federations or of parallel states, have the potential to provide good outcomes – to provide Restorative Justice – to both Israelis and to Palestinians. In fact, it is hard to imagine any just outcome which did not build on one or more of these power-sharing arrangements. Achieving that outcome, however, would require agreement on the part of both Israeli and Palestinian leadership that is most unlikely to be freely given by current leaders as to the allocation of authority between them, and the ways in which such decisions are made.



This means that one could envisage either one state or two states or some intermediate solution where the rights of both Palestinians and Jews are equally respected; but each of those options is strongly opposed by the current Israeli leadership. In this situation, discussion as to which would be better is a waste of time, the counterpart to "peace negotiations," which have long been a smoke screen enabling the occupation to continue to grow through endless years of talking.

This formulation should make clear that questioning PC(USA)'s commitment to a two-state solution in no sense implies an endorsement of the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state. Rather it is based on a recognition that, as it is being implemented by the current Israeli leadership, the two-state solution is incapable of delivering an outcome which provides justice for all. The escalation of Palestinian home demolitions, the on-going expansion of settlements and the continuing policy of harassment of Palestinians in Area C (61% of the West Bank, including most of the Jordan Valley) all demonstrate an unrelenting commitment to expanding the breadth and depth of the occupation. Policy pronouncements by several leaders in the current

Israeli government have expressed a commitment to continue those policies, with strong expressions by many that they have no intention of allowing for a separate and viable Palestinian state.

Any movement towards a solution of the Israel/Palestine conflict based on principles of Restorative Justice will require a change in the mind set of many people: in Israel, in Palestine, and in the United States. Ultimately, such changes in people's minds and hearts are the work of the Holy Spirit. Seeking to bring about that type of change through the use of force will be counterproductive, entrenching those most firmly committed to winning by overpowering and defeating the other side.



If changes are required in the mind set of Israelis to bring them to accept an outcome that respects the rights of Palestinians, change is also required of Palestinians. It is true that there have been many statements over the years by Palestinian leaders, endorsed by those in the wider Arab and Muslim world, expressing a readiness to move towards full peaceful relations with Israel, if Palestinian rights in the West Bank and in Gaza are fully respected. The lack of response on the part of the Israeli leadership has made it difficult for moderate Palestinians to maintain their commitment to a peaceful approach. Furthermore, not all Palestinians have expressed a willingness to reach such a settlement, and those who disagree have often been able to disrupt any progress towards just outcomes. Corruption, nepotism, and political in-fighting have been continuing problems, made worse by external meddling in Palestinian affairs. American churches must continue to encourage Palestinians to be consistent and persistent in their expressed willingness to enter into a just peace with Israel.

Two types of actions are called for on the part of American Christians and the US government to nurture the changes that are needed:

a) Encouraging and supporting acts of reconciliation, in both micro (individual projects) and macro (larger policy) settings. Such encouragement could include expres-

sions and acts of solidarity as well as investments and financial incentives to reward steps in the right direction.

b) Imposing financial penalties and costs for moving in the wrong direction. The most important of these fall under the headings, Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. Each of these (B, D and S) is now part of our denomination's official policy towards Israel and Palestine. It is more important than ever that they be implemented with increasing effectiveness and reach.

Since the goal is not to overpower but to change the mind set, it is of great importance to combine actions of BDS with the work of reconciliation in ways that avoid adding to a "siege mentality." This means combining actions that challenge each side to change with continuing expressions of full commitment to the rights of all to live in security and in peace.

Finally, if we are to move towards the changes in mind set required for Restorative Justice, some of the most important changes are required in the United State: among our political leaders, in the population at large, and among those in the church. The worst set of policies from that point of view are ones that provide ever more military help to those engaged in the conflict. Such military support only escalates the conflict, feeding the impression on each side that ultimately the result will be settled on the battlefield. It will not.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine takes place in a region of the world increasingly fraught with violence. Israel finds itself surrounded by countries wrestling with terrorism. It is understandable that Israelis feel threatened. Yet their actions in relation to the Palestinians in the West Bank and in Gaza cannot help but exacerbate the anger that their neighbors feel towards them. The Palestinians and the Arab states as a whole have offered to Israel an opportunity to live in peace. Israel has responded by making life ever more difficult for Palestinians in the territories captured in 1967. Until the drive of the occupation is changed, it is hard to see any chance for Restorative Justice, and therefore for a meaningful peace between Israel and their neighbors. A policy of BDS, which challenges the occupation, combined with encouragement and continuing positive incentives for both Israelis and Palestinians to engage in acts of reconciliation, provide the context for existing leaders to revise their thinking and for new leaders with a different mind set to come forward, which we see as offering the only meaningful pathway towards a just and lasting peace.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

PPF celebrates the lives of peacemakers Joan Coop, Mary Louise Ellenberger, Jane Wood, and David McPhail. ¡Presente!

Action for Refugees

By Len Bjorkman, Owego, NY

During Sept. meetings of three PC(USA) groups especially concerned about our partners in Iraq and Syria, Teresa Waggener of our Immigration Office recommended that we give our support to a bill before Congress, HR 2798 – Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act. Below is the letter we hope you'll send to your Representative; you may edit the opening introduction in a way that's best for you. But please keep the rest of it as is. For more information or to report any response you receive about this, contact Len Bjorkman at LenandJudy@stny.rr.com.

As a member of _____ Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), in your district, I am writing to request that you support, and sign on as a co-sponsor to, **HR 2798 – Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act**, that was introduced on June 17, 2015 and referred on July 1, 2015 to the **Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security**.

It behooves the United States to open its doors wider to fleeing refugees from Syria and Iraq as we have done historically as a nation of refugees. Nations in the Middle East region are barely coping with the influx: Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon host 3.7 million Syrian refugees combined. Lebanon with a 4.2 million population has taken in more than 1 million Syrians; Turkey has more than 1.9 million Syrians; Jordan is overwhelmed with Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

The United States must do more. Currently, U.S. legislation and policy result in refugees enduring long waits lasting several years for processing; the hopelessness and desperation that result; the difficulties related to security checks; the separation of families; and the complicated system of providing services for those who are granted refugees status.

H.R. 2798 will:

- coordinate security checks to avoid negative impact on refugee processing
- provide English as a Second Language training and work orientation prior to arrival
- grant instant Legal Permanent Resident Status
- provide a more generous flow of refugees to join the program for family reunification
- make improvements to grants, cash assistance, and integration assistance to better equip resettlement agencies to serve refugees
- restore SSI to refugees who have lost benefits due to seven-year cap
- allow vulnerable children under the special immigrant, juvenile, and U visa programs to receive refugee benefits.

The United States Congress should do no less than pave the way for increased settlement of refugees from Syria and Iraq. I urge you to support and sponsor **H.R. 2798** and to act in the tradition of the United States and to be a welcoming home to fleeing refugees from Syria and Iraq.

More information on this issue is available from the Refugee Council USA (www.rcusa.org).

An Overture on Choosing to Be A Church Committed to the Gospel of Matthew 25

By Rick Ufford-Chase, PPF Co-Moderator, Stony Point, NY

The next General Assembly is shaping up to be a conversation about our vision of the future for the whole church. There are a series of eight overtures coming from Foothills Presbytery that propose a very narrow role for the church in terms of shaping social witness policy and engaging in issues of social justice.

For example, one of these Foothills overtures would require that any social witness policy statement or resolution to be proposed at the General Assembly shall first have the concurrence of one-third of the presbyteries. Another would prohibit the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) from presenting any positions to the GA for six years.

A Peace Fellowship working group has developed an overture intended to provide an alternative view of the future of the PC(USA). It is a future in which we are engaging the world more – ever-sharpening our witness and engagement around issues of justice and peace.

By passing this overture, we create two alternatives for the commissioners in Portland. This will give them a chance to choose between them, instead of trying to tinker with the variety of overtures coming from Foothills. It is extremely timely, and invites a much greater voice from those who believe that the church should be both more engaged in the world and more open in terms of our process of deliberation within the denomination.

If, like us, you are inspired to reshape entrenched institutional structures, and if you believe that this is the moment to shape our denomination's witness for decades to come, we hope you will consider using this overture to start a conversation with your own session. Together, let's make it clear that we are not satisfied with business as usual. Together, let's make it clear that we mean to take Jesus at his word and follow his example. Together, let's start a new kind of conversation.

Email us (ga@presbypeacefellowship.org) and please let us know if you need any support, and keep us abreast of the conversations that take place in your church or presbytery.

... *BRIEFLY*

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
17 Cricketown Road
Stony Point, NY 10980

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FALL 2015

Inside: Israel/Palestine: One State or Two? (p.5)
Why We're Divesting from Fossil Fuels (p.3)

Mary Gladly Told Her Cousin

*Mary gladly told her cousin, "Praise the Lord! My spirit sings!"
Young and humble, she'd been chosen! God was surely changing things!
God of love, her words ring true As we sing her prayer to you:*

*"Now my soul is gladly singing At the greatness of the Lord.
I rejoice, for God is bringing His salvation to the world.
All who live will say I'm blest Even in my lowliness.*

*"God is mighty, just and holy, And he's done great things for me.
Those who fear him know the mercy That God gives us endlessly.
Mighty ones are brought down low; Lowly ones find blessings flow.*

*"God has filled the poor and hungry, And he's sent the rich away.
God is active here in history, In a real and wondrous way.
God has promised, and I'm blessed, For I know God's faithfulness."*



IRBY 8.7.8.7.7.7 ("Once in Royal David's City")

A hymn for Advent by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. Copyright © 2009, reprinted with permission. Find more hymns with a peacemaking and social justice perspective at www.carolynshymns.com.