



December 12, 2022

The Prince of Peace

We're in the Season of Advent – the time in our Christian calendar when as people of faith we long for Christ's coming again. Due to the anxiety-producing pandemic and the horrific war in Ukraine – not to mention the upsetting political divide in our nation – we're especially yearning for the promised Prince of Peace. In his farewell speech to his disciples, thankfully, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." (John 14:27)

One unique aspect of our Presbyterian faith is that we have *The Book of Confessions* which, along with *The Book of Order*, comprise our constitution. *The Book of Confessions* includes twelve different faith statements. Each was written in a different era (between the 4th and the 20th centuries) to address a specific issue. While not every line of every confession remains relevant today and the language can be outdated, there are things in all of them that we still can confess we believe.

The Confession of 1967 is a case in point. Written at the height of the Cold War, it continues to speak to our current situation and the ongoing need for peace. One portion states:

God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding. Reconciliation among nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, diverting their manpower and resources from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of mankind. Although nations may serve God's purposes in history, the church which identifies the sovereignty of any one nation or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and betrays its calling.[i]

Following our Lord Jesus Christ isn't easy. Being a Christian and serving as ambassadors of the Prince of Peace isn't popular. Indeed, Christianity is declining in our country.[1] Nevertheless, our call as Jesus' disciples is to witness to the need for reconciliation and the peace it brings.

This Advent, as people of the Christian faith, may we pray and act in ways that bring reconciliation and peace to our relationships, our nation, and the world, even as we pray that the Lord will return to make his home among us and show us how to live in peace as he promised. Until Christ comes in glory, each of us must ask, "What can I do?" and then do it. Might we reconcile with a family member, friend, or neighbor? Might we seek to better understand the opposing political side? Might we give to a cause working for peace and justice?

Verse 7 of the Advent hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* captures our longing for the Prince of Peace:

"O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind; bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."

~Written by Rev. Margie Osborn

[1] *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Part I: Book of Confessions* (Louisville KY: Office of the General Assembly, 2016) 9.46. Download free @ https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/boc2016.pdf

[1] <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/modeling-the-future-of-religion-in-america/>



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