

# Shalom

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The International Network for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation  
of the Congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

## The Name: *Shalom*

The Hebrew word “*shalom*” speaks eloquently of the fruit of the ministry for justice. The biblical meaning of *shalom* signifies the dynamic action of restoring all things to their original integrity according to the intention of God. *Shalom* manifests itself in harmonious relationships with God, self, and all of creation. *Shalom* expresses the desire of Psalm 85 that kindness and truth shall meet, justice and peace shall kiss (cf. “Peace,” *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Xavier Leon-Dufour. England: Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973, pp. 411-414).

*The Lord answered him, “Be calm, do not fear. You shall not die.” So Gideon built there an altar to the Lord and called it Yahweh-shalom. (Judges 6:23-24)*

## Definition

*Shalom* is the International Network of the Congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation. It is built upon the dynamic relationship among all School Sisters of Notre Dame. *Shalom* ministers in such a way that it expresses the values and attitudes of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation on the personal, communal, national, and international levels. *Shalom* takes a prophetic stance by joining its voice with those who cry for justice and by providing a voice for those who are voiceless in their struggle for justice. It is action-oriented.

## Rationale

*Shalom* was founded in response to the call of the *Mandate for Action*: “As a congregation, we will establish an International Network for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation” (19th General Chapter, 1992). Indispensable to the meaning and functioning of *Shalom* are Jesus Christ, the church, the world, and our charism (cf. *YAS*, Prologue). Risking in faith for a more just and truly human world, we announce the potential for peace, the fruit of justice, for all creation. Urged by the love of Christ and of our sisters and brothers, we work actively toward enhancing just structures that foster fullness of life and toward changing unjust structures that inhibit it.

## Goal of *Shalom*

The goal of *Shalom* is to take actions which lead to reconciliation, solidarity with the oppressed, the promotion of human dignity, and collaboration with ecological movements to safeguard the earth. In other words, we commit ourselves to promote the culture of life. We also commit ourselves to work against violence, manipulation of the truth, attacks on the family, dehumanization of women, and the abandonment of children, what John Paul II referred to as the culture of death (cf. John Paul II, Easter Message to the World. April 3, 1994, *L'Osservatore Romano*. English Edition. Italy: Rome, April 6, 1994, p. 1). We are educators in all we say and do, and we believe that the goal of *Shalom* can be accomplished by ministering for the transformation of society through the transformation of persons (cf. YAS, C 22, 23).

*I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving your God, heeding God's voice and holding fast to God.* (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

*This is what the Lord asks of you, only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8)

*I came that you may have life and have it to the full.* (John 10:10)

## Objectives of *Shalom*

As *Shalom*, we School Sisters of Notre Dame will raise our consciousness and that of those with whom we minister by announcing justice, denouncing injustice, strengthening just structures, and changing unjust structures.

As *Shalom*, we will create viable alternatives to the culture of death.

As *Shalom*, we will permeate all activities with a persistent search for truth, and we will collaborate with others whose search contributes to the building of peace.

As *Shalom*, we will use opportunities to exert a positive influence on the mass media.

As *Shalom*, we will further develop and integrate into our ministry materials and models which enhance the liberation of peoples and diminish the reality of their oppression.

As *Shalom*, we will take actions when appropriate to respond quickly to unjust situations.

As *Shalom*, we will actively support by presence those whose lives are in danger because of their work for justice or their commitment to impoverished persons.

As *Shalom*, we will think globally and act locally and globally.

As *Shalom*, we will reverence the earth and seek to deepen our relationship with all creation.

## Membership

Membership includes all School Sisters of Notre Dame, women in initial formation, associates of the congregation, those employed by the congregation for the work of justice and peace, and our colleagues and friends who wish to join us in the promotion of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

## Mode of Operation

The elements and the functioning of *Shalom* must manifest justice, peace, and the integrity of creation thus “freeing us for the ways of the Spirit”.

1. *Shalom* will have an international coordinator appointed by the general council for a term of four years. The coordinator of *Shalom* is accountable to the general council.
2. As an international network *Shalom* is organized into branches based on geographic location; common justice, peace, and integrity of creation issues; and relative ease of communication, as well as other criteria.

Presently there are five branches:

- **Africa:** Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, The Gambia
  - **Asia and Oceania:** Japan, Nepal, Guam
  - **Europe:** Albania, Austria, Belarus, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland
  - **Latin America:** Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico
  - **North America:** Canada, United States of America
3. Contact persons are a significant part of the network. Ordinarily every unit and each country have one or more contact persons. The method of selection, as well as the number, is determined by the unit leadership. The contact persons are accountable to their respective unit leadership and work in collaboration with their branch representative and the international coordinator of *Shalom*.
  4. Every branch has a representative who is elected by the contact persons of the branch and affirmed by the appropriate SSND leadership of the branch. Each branch has its own unique model by which it will live out the goal and objectives of *Shalom*.
  5. In each branch the representative works in collaboration with the contact persons, unit leaders, and the international coordinator in the functioning of *Shalom*. The representative is accountable to the international coordinator and through her to the general council as well as to the appropriate leadership.

6. The international coordinator of *Shalom* and the director of the UN-NGO Office engage in collaborative planning in order to strengthen the one mission and the work for justice, peace, and integrity of creation.
7. The international coordinator, the general council link, the representatives from the branches, and the director of the UN-NGO Office meet every two years for purposes of dialogue, planning, and evaluation. These meetings rotate from branch to branch to broaden the global vision and to heighten the cultural sensitivity of *Shalom*.
8. The international coordinator is responsible to give information and progress reports to the general council on a regular basis. She is also responsible for providing ongoing communication to the congregation through the international communication office.
9. Guided by the directives of the Chapter, each branch will focus on urgent needs which call for a response from *Shalom*. The process of discerning these actions is prayerful, reflective, and dialogic. The cyclic movements of the process include gathering information about the experience under consideration, analyzing the data, reflecting on the experience in the context of faith, sacred scripture, the social teachings of the church, *You Are Sent*, and the directives of general chapters.

The manner of functioning of *Shalom* is the collaborative model. The international coordinator collaborates with the branch representatives and the respective unit leadership, with the general council and its resource staff, especially the NGO representative of the School Sisters of Notre Dame at the United Nations, and with national and international groups who share the goal, objectives, and spirit of *Shalom*.

10. Financial responsibility for the international coordinator rests with the general council. Financial responsibility for the branches will be determined by the international coordinator, the general council, and in collaboration with unit leadership.
11. Evaluation of the *Shalom* network is initiated by the general council. This includes an annual review of its activities in the light of its goal and objectives as well as the directives given by general chapters. It also includes a periodic review of the document in the context of its activities.