

Shalom / UN-NGO Newsletter

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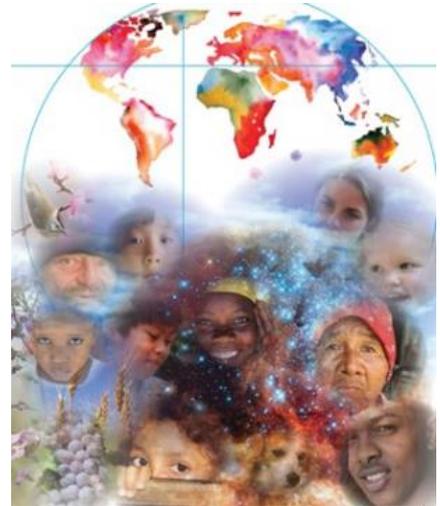
December 2017

Advent and *Love Cannot Wait*

By Sister Kathy Schmittgens, International Shalom Coordinator

*You keep us waiting.
You, the God of all time want us to wait
for the right time in which to discover
who we are, where we must go,
who will be with us, and what we must do.
So thank you... for the waiting time.*

Iona Community Worship Book



The Advent season is our waiting time. As we look forward to contemplating and studying our new directional statement over the next six years, I take one last look at the direction that has led us for these past five years and that has been the guide for our work in *Shalom*.

This season, we both anticipate and remember Jesus' coming into our divided world. The crises then were different from the ones we face today. Nevertheless, he didn't just come for those times; he came for all times. It is because we believe this that we enter once more into the mystery of Emmanuel, "God with us."

Even though it comes last in *Love Cannot Wait*, we know that "grounding who we are and all we do in the love of the Triune God" must be where we both begin and end. This time of Advent, the time of waiting, is our "grounding" time.

The quote at the beginning of this article, which I found in *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year*, caught my attention because of its similarity to our Chapter prayer based on the words of Blessed M. Theresa. All that we hope to do – to embrace dialogue as a way of life, to live more simply, to intensify our efforts to witness to unity, to direct our resources and ministries toward education that transforms – all of it becomes our mission in a time of contemplation and quiet waiting for God to reveal God's self to us.

The readings for the Sundays in Advent are a call to us about our call. "A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!" (Is. 40:3) How are we preparing the way? What is it we can do to create a path for God in our world? We believe our call to dialogue is the beginning. Our listening to God gives us the words we need to begin the dialogue. In Psalm 85, we hear, "I will hear what God proclaims; the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people." How can we proclaim peace?

Sometimes it is our actions, our attitudes, our approach to people that are more important than words. That is our witness to unity in a divided world, in addition to holding all in common.

We also hear the words of Jesus' mission (and ours as well) on the third Sunday of Advent. "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners." (Is 61:1-2) And so we struggle to eliminate the root causes of injustice. And we work toward that day when all will be one in Christ.

Although this is the season of "waiting", we still understand that LOVE CANNOT WAIT. Blessings of the season!

Marking the United Nations International Day of Peace: September 21

By Sister Kathy Schmittgens, International Shalom Coordinator



Pre-school students in **Brazil** (above) find themselves on the chart that tells them that "peace starts inside each one of us" and their hands saying "yes" to peace.

Pre-school students in **Peru** (right) formed their own "peace sign" with their little bodies and colored the words "Peace is the Fruit of love for a better coexistence."

Wilton residents, a Syrian refugee family, and Sisters of three congregations, gathered in the chapel at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton, Connecticut, USA, on the vigil of the UN's International Day of Peace to pray and celebrate together. Others within the Atlantic-Midwest Province participated via livestreaming. The dialogue between Sister Leonora Tucker and Manal Alazzam, sitting together at the front of the chapel, was a highlight of the evening. Manal, a widow,



spoke in English of leaving Syria, walking 15 days to Jordan with baby Ghaith in her arms, the small boy Yaqoub on her back, and the two older boys Ahmad and Mohammed, and the girl Bisan walking beside her. On her head was a basket of food and warm clothing for the children.

The community's Peace Pole with the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth" faced the congregation from the left center altar rail. It stood near the bare branches of a large tree that by the end of the evening would be covered with white paper doves symbolic of messages of peace.

Hilton Funds New Coalition of Religious NGOs at the UN

By Sister Eileen Reilly, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office

A group, including SSND, representing 18 Roman Catholic Religious member organizations, all of which are accredited by the United Nations (UN) in New York, was recently granted funding for three years by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR) will use these funds to enhance collaboration among JCoR's member organizations in their work both at the UN Headquarters in New York and at the grassroots.

The goals of JCoR correspond to the Hilton Foundation's strategic focus, which is to contribute directly to a just implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Member organizations of JCoR are ideally situated for this task, as they are represented at the UN and among marginalized populations around the world

Religious NGOs are a moral presence at the UN. They advocate for those who are rendered poor, vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized by existing global systems. The Hilton grant will assist the member NGOs of JCoR in responding collectively to the challenges presented by global poverty, injustice, discrimination, and unsustainable development, and to advocate for the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals through the lens of human rights.

One of the first efforts of this new coalition will be a set of workshops on the Sustainable Development Goals which I and one of my NGO colleagues from New York, a Medical Mission Sister, will offer for religious men and women in Ghana. We are deeply grateful for the SSNDs in Ghana who are hosting these two workshops.

Evaluating the SDGs

By Sister Eileen Reilly, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office

Each year since the passage of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), member states of the UN are invited to present "Voluntary National Reviews" (VNR) of their progress in implementing the goals. It is understood, that these reports are to be prepared by the government, in consultation with those who are actually implementing them, such as SSND.



In July 2018, the countries being reviewed and in which SSND is present include Poland, Hungary, Romania, Paraguay, and Canada. In the coming months we will be exploring the methods each of those countries are using to prepare these evaluations and investigate ways we might contribute.

Global Compact on Migration

By Sister Eileen Reilly, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office

After a series of six thematic meetings and at least five regional meetings during the past 12 months, the UN is now preparing to assess the findings of these meetings and begin to draft a “[Global Compact on Migration](#),” which is scheduled for approval in September 2018.



This has been precipitated by the fact that over 65 million people are currently in some stage of the migration process and there is a recognition at the UN that the responsibility for these migrants needs to be shared more equitably. The call from the Summit that occurred in September 2016 is for “Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.”

Human Rights Day: December 10



[Human Rights Day](#) is observed every year on December 10, the day in 1948 on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, Human Rights Day kicks off a year-long campaign to mark the upcoming 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being – regardless

of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

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