



NEWSLETTER

Interfaith Peace Working Group

WINTER 2022

This Winter 2022 issue of the IPWG Newsletter includes reflections on the Season of Lent and articles on the following subjects: the war in Ukraine and faith communities' response to it, issues posed by the deployment of F-35 Fighter Jets in Wisconsin and the recent celebration of the first anniversary of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It also includes a poem by Gerry Bertsch, a United Church of Christ pastor. We hope you find it helpful.

LENT: A Call to Reflection, Repentance and Renewal

Intro by Jerry Folk; Prayer by Frederick Trost

For the Christian community the Season of Lent began on Ash Wednesday, March 2. Lent is a time when Christians remember our call to love God and one another and reflect on how we are responding to that call. It is a time for Christians and the Christian community to acknowledge and repent for our frequent failure to practice the love to which we are called and a time to grieve the pain that failure causes God, others and ourselves. It's also a time to be renewed in hope—hope that the Holy Spirit, God within us, will enable us to practice the radical love of the Gospel, which includes even the enemy, more fully and in ways that will transform the world.

A PRAYER FOR LENT

We lay aside our festive garments, O God and we bend our knees. We shed our tears, and place around our shoulders the purple of mourning and repentance as we remember all of the suffering

we inflict on one another. We remember especially the dear and broken lands of Ukraine and beyond, where the winds of war have come, and the raging clouds of death threaten so much that is humane. Amidst the crucifixions of your people, be present, Holy One, as you have always been present; breathing close to the broken hearted and renewing life among those who tremble or faint with the burden of these days. Our minds cannot fathom the depth of it all. Our words are too small to express what we feel. But we grieve and we kneel down. Sustain with your presence all who seek to help, all who offer themselves for their neighbors, all who bind the wounds, all who seek to mend the fractured places. Be close to those who love all the lands we are devastating and seal deep within them the assurance of a new day that is coming when the hills and forests shall blossom in bright colors, and sweet fruit will

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IPWG

is made up of advocates from communities of faith and conscience committed to the struggle for justice, peace and the care of creation.

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burst forth from branches all across the countryside, and children shall sing again their songs of hope and dance in the brilliant light of the morning sun. You, who know the tears and tragedy of this moment, have mercy upon us all. We make this prayer in confidence for we know you are gracious and the Lover of all you have made. Amen.

Frederick Trost is a retired pastor of the United Church of Christ. Fred also served as Conference Minister of the Wisconsin Conference UCC.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers for They Will Be Called Children of God

by Jerry Folk

The confrontation between the world's two nuclear superpowers in Ukraine poses the threat of unprecedented global disaster to our planet and its people. If there ever was a time when the leaders and people of the world's faith communities were challenged to pursue boldly and courageously the mission of peace and reconciliation to which they have been called, **it is NOW!**

Some faith leaders are rising to the challenge. Pope Francis declared Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the penitential Season of Lent for Christians, as a *Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace in Ukraine*. The Pope also went to the Russian Embassy in the Vatican to meet with Ambassador Andriy Yurash, express his dismay at the attack on Ukraine and plead for peace. Vatican Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, recently announced that the Vatican is ready to mediate talks between the two warring parties. The World Council of Churches released a statement on Ukraine expressing its firm belief "that dialogue...is the proper path for the resolution of tensions surrounding Ukraine." The statement calls for "an immediate

end to the current armed hostilities" and urges all member churches and people of good will to join in prayer for peace in Ukraine. Following Russia's invasion, the Dalai Lama shared a statement calling for the restoration of peace in Ukraine.

People of faith who care about the well-being of the Earth and its people appreciate these strong statements from religious leaders but recognize they are not enough. There are many national faith leaders who have not yet added their voices to this chorus for peace. We hope to hear from them. We also hope that regional faith leaders will speak out publicly for peace in Ukraine and will urge all local faith communities to include prayers for peace in Ukraine in their worship services.

All people and communities of faith can pray for peace in Ukraine and perhaps the solidarity of millions or billions of people praying for peace can generate an energy that will affect the course of events there. But is there anything else we can do on behalf of peace in Ukraine?

We can reach out to others and join our prayers and energy with theirs. I am thinking especially of



To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history of not only cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage and kindness...To live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous thing.

HOWARD ZINN



Peace Cranes at Peace Park in Nagasaki, Japan

the tens of thousands of people in Russia who, at great risk, are demonstrating in cities throughout the country, thousands of whom have been arrested. We can send them greetings and thanks for their courage and assure them that we are standing or kneeling in solidarity with them and wishing them and their country well. RootsAction, an online action organization working for demilitarization and peace, has made this easy by setting up a [site where people can write a message of friendship to their brother or sister Peacemakers in Russia.](#)

A Dream We All Share–Threatened

by Jane Kavaloski
Graphics by Clare Norelle

We all want to live in a community where our children can grow to their fullest potential, where everyone has clean air and water. We also want a vibrant and equitable economy and a life that is peaceful and sustainable.

What prevents this from happening? In a speech in 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King named the three evils that prevent such a dream from becoming a reality, Militarism! Poverty! Racism!

Fifty-five years later, these three evils continue to thrive. An example of that is reflected in the decision to base a squadron of 20 F-35 fighter jets at Truax Field, next to the Madison. Airport. In the Air Force's Environmental Impact Statement, they actually acknowledged that basing the F-35s at Truax will have a "significant disproportionate impact on low-income and minority populations, as well as children."

Here is a scenario that I wrote, based on medical research and the experiences of those living with F-35s in Burlington, Vermont:



"Marie lies in bed with her eyes open. She and her husband, Oscar, have hardly slept. Their five-year-old daughter, Luna, and four-month-old son, Luis, have been in their bed most of the night. The training missions of the F-35s terrify Luna and she runs to their room every night that they occur. Luis becomes inconsolable with the noise and only quiets when Marie nurses him with her hands over his ears.

Marie wishes that the family could move, but her husband and she work for minimum wages. They cannot afford the higher rents in other parts of the city.

Luna's teacher confirms that Luna and the other children, are terrified by the noise of the F-35s' flights during the day. The school staff have tried a number of things to lessen the excruciating noise level to no avail. The noise is deafening, terrifying and disruptive to the children's learning and napping. The school staff has asked for noise abatement but that may take 10 or more years, because there are inadequate funds for that purpose.

The family doctor is very concerned about Marie's high blood pressure and Oscar's PTSD, which are made worse by the intensity of the jet noise. The doctor also explains that the noise level from the F-35s is four times greater than that of the F-16s and is contributing to the growing cases of hearing problems in children and adults.

Oscar learned yesterday that he should no longer fish in the neighboring creek to supplement their food costs. The PFAS (toxic chemicals) level there is dangerously high and has contaminated the fish. Marie wonders how long this has been a problem. Could those toxins have harmed Luis and Luna when she was pregnant?"



Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

THE TALMUD



Trapped, poor and scared, this family—and hundreds' more like them—are innocent victims of the decision to base 20 F-35 fighter jets in close proximity to their neighborhood.

These are our neighbors, being subjected to governmental and military decisions of which they had no part! They are bearing the brunt of what Dr. King called the "three evils" of militarism, poverty and racism.

We must make our voices heard!

Call and urge these elected officials to raise their voices in protest against basing the F-35 squadron in Madison:

- Senator Tammy Baldwin: (202) 224-5653
- Representative Mark Pocan: (202) 225-2906
- Governor Tony Evers: (608) 266-1212
- Dane County Executive Joe Parisi: (608) 266-4114
- Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway: (608) 266-4611

Learn more at safeskiescleanwaterwi.org.





What's all the noise about?

by Tom Boswell
Art (left) by Jesse Azarian

The F-35 joint strike fighter jet is the most expensive weapons program in the Pentagon's history, projected to cost taxpayers \$1.7 trillion in the coming decades. Beyond the appalling cost for a jet that doesn't work, local communities are opposing the military jets because of the very real threat they pose to their health and well-being.

Now residents of the Burlington, Vermont area and Whidbey Island on the west coast are being traumatized by Air Force and Navy fighter jets. Madison is next in line, unless we can resist this militarization of our communities. Please watch these two short documentaries about the negative impact of military jets on civilian communities. Then contact the Interfaith Peace Working Group to find out how you can help protect Madison and Dane County from the assault being experienced in other places.

LEARN MORE

- [Jetline: Voices from the Flight Path](#)
- [When the Jets Fly](#)

number of animal miscarriages, Amish buggy accidents and livestock stampedes are too many to count. When a Truax-based F16 crashed in the UP of Michigan in December 2020, killing the pilot, it was, fortunately, in a remote region. With a worse safety record, we may not be so lucky with the F-35.

The poisoned legacy of military bases such as Fort McCoy has yet to be seriously addressed and remains a grave threat to public health and food safety. This includes PFAS "forever chemicals" tainting water, soil and wildlife. Sewage sludge laced with PFAS is being recklessly spread on WI cropland as "fertilizer," while the DNR warns anglers that their Friday fish fry may no longer be safe due to this toxic runoff. The F-35 proposal only adds insult to such ongoing injuries.

In his 1961 farewell address, President Eisenhower warned America about the looming military industrial complex. Over half a century later, the F-35 is the most expensive weapon system ever developed—\$1.7+ trillion over its lifetime. Imagine what we could do if those taxpayer funds were used instead for programs that challenge poverty and inequality, encourage farmers to shift towards agroecology and bring about a just transition across the entire U.S. economy that would effectively address the climate crisis? It is time to consign the F-35 boondoggle to the dustbin of history and instead sow the seeds for a more fruitful long overdue peace dividend.

REACH FOR IT

Peace. It's beyond our grasp.
It will never be achieved. Yet,
it is in the striving we find it.
We may see it on the horizon,
we may travel in its direction,
but we can't quite reach it.

Let there be an awakening
of an agitation of heart within
us, that stirs us to devote
our lives to live a vision of
peace when it takes hold of us,
troubles us to strive for it.

We need this restlessness of spirit
to be planted deep in our souls,
to hitch our wagons to it, to lead
us to walk by the streams that
flow toward justice and the ever-
flowing rivers of righteousness.

GERRY BERTSCH
PASTOR IN THE WISCONSIN CONFERENCE, UCC

F-35s Threaten Rural Wisconsin, Too

by John E. Peck, Executive Director,
Family Farm Defenders

Family farmers and other rural people should be just as upset about F-35s being based at Truax as anyone else. The dangers of the existing F16 flights across the Driftless are well known—the

Celebration of the 1st Anniversary of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

by Paula Rogge

Members of eight different peace, justice and environmental groups braved the cold to rally at the Wisconsin State Capitol on January 22 to celebrate the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and urge the U.S. to sign it. This event was part of a larger campaign promoted by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and Nuclear Ban US.

The Rally began with two area churches ringing their bells for the new Treaty. Representatives of Peace Action Wisconsin and the United Nations Association gave a brief history of the Treaty. A Physicians for Responsibility Wisconsin member noted its endorsement by Pope Francis and hundreds of faith communities around the world.

A testimonial by 99-year-old Navy veteran Lincoln Grahlf was read about his years advocating for atomic veterans who suffered from radiation related diseases and fighting to abolish nuclear weapons.

Madison Alderman Brian Benford spoke of how nuclear weapons threaten our ability to survive and thrive in these uncertain times. He mentioned the effects of the bed-down of F-35 nuclear-capable bombers in East Madison and how it will disproportionately harm poor communities.

A Poor People's Campaign spokesperson mentioned that the vast sums spent on nuclear weapons should be spent instead on education, housing, food



access and other critical community needs.

A Veterans for Peace member pointed out that climate change can increase conflicts leading to a nuclear war, which can have devastating environmental effects.

The TPNW grew out of a 10-year process of United Nations members by medical groups about the humanitarian impact of a nuclear war. In 2017, the Treaty was approved by 122 countries and was ratified by 50 countries on January 22, 2021.

Prior to the treaty's adoption, nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction not subject to a comprehensive ban, despite their catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences. Biologic and chemical weapons, cluster munitions and landmines had already been banned by the international community.

There are currently nine nuclear armed countries, only four of which have signed the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Treaty. None have joined the TPNW. Instead of decreasing their nuclear arsenals, all nuclear weapon states have been modernizing and expanding their nuclear forces.



People of all faiths need to shape a political and social movement that affirms the most generous, peace-oriented and loving truths of the spiritual heritage of the human race.

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

Because of this new “nuclear arms race,” the risk of a nuclear weapon catastrophe is increasing.

The Treaty is a crucial step in stigmatizing nuclear weapons as weapons of mass destruction and bringing pressure to bear on nuclear weapon states to disarm.

See [short video](#) about the treaty.

FOLLOW-UP RESOURCE

“No Place to Hide” – A [new report](#) from *The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* reveals that hospitals and doctors in ten major world cities would be overwhelmed by the impact of a single 100kt nuclear bomb.

Event cosponsors/participants: Interfaith Peace Working Group, Peace Action WI, Physicians for Social Responsibility WI, the Poor Peoples' Campaign of Dane County, the United Nations Association Dane County Chapter, Veterans for Peace Chapter 25 and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Madison).