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## God-talk in Wartime

Eric Massanari, Executive Conference Minister

*Force is as pitiless to the man who possesses it,  
or thinks he does, as it is to its victims;  
the second it crushes, the first it intoxicates.*

-Simone Weil

I write these words two weeks after returning from a delegation to the West Bank of Palestine, and just one week after the United States and Israel launched an unprovoked war against the nation of Iran. As expected, the violence rapidly spread throughout the region we refer to as the “Middle East.” At this moment the intensity of the warmaking increases unabated, while at the same time, the rationale given by the U.S. and Israel for initiating the violence remains muddled and contradictory.

One story that caught my attention within the first days of the war originated with the [Military Religious Freedom Foundation \(MRFF\)](#), a watchdog group monitoring religious liberties within the branches of the U.S. military. The MRFF reported that a commanding officer in the United States military told troops that they need not be afraid, because the combat operations against Iran “are all part of God’s divine plan.” He proceeded to quote from the book of Revelation, and then reportedly stated, “President Trump has been anointed by Jesus to light the signal fire in Iran to cause Armageddon and mark his return to Earth”

I read this report on the same morning a news story emerged about a bomb that struck a primary school in Minab, Iran, killing 175 innocent civilians, most of them children at the school. [It has since been determined that the bomb strike was likely a Tomahawk cruise missile launched by U.S. forces.](#)

If your first response to such xenophobic and hateful God-talk in the midst of mass violence is nausea and horror, as mine was, it is understandable. Our next response, however, must be something more than shocked silence. As followers of the Way of Christ we must confront such desecrating theology for the profanity that it is. Nothing in the gospel message of Jesus condones the cruelty we are witnessing at this moment; nothing about God’s incarnate love in Christ justifies the murderous brutality of war, or the grinding, dehumanizing oppression faced by people in lands far away or right here in our own communities.

How do we proclaim the message of Christ’s love in times such as these? What should our God-talk sound like? What does a Christ-like response look like? The Palestinians with whom we engaged in our recent delegation to the West Bank offered me some challenging examples that I am praying with and trying to live into:

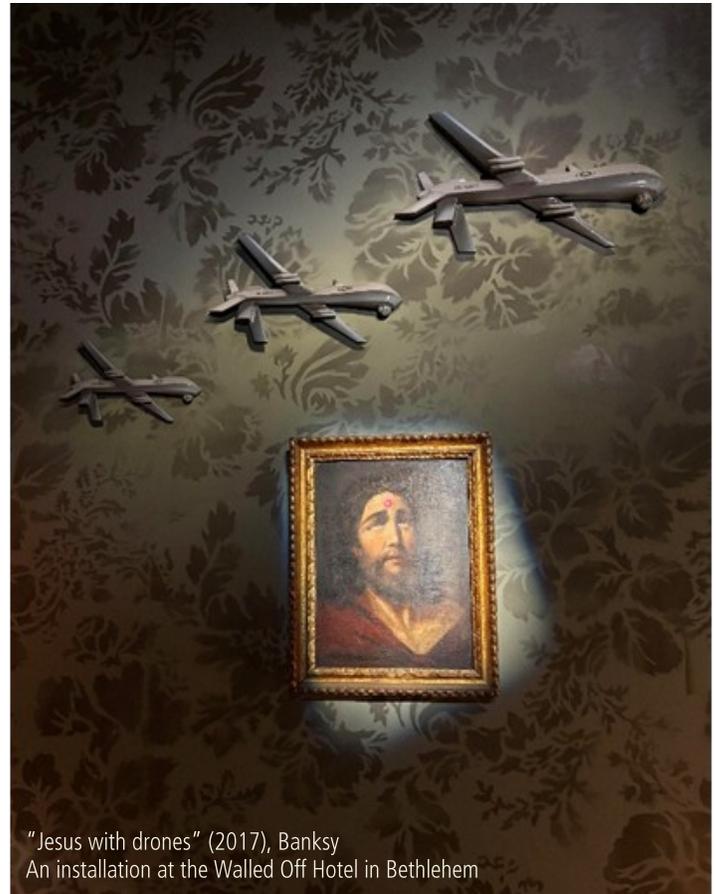
*[As Christians] we are not asked to keep people together. We are asked to follow and be faithful to a way of life, the Way of Jesus . . . It’s time to stop being the corporate church and to be the church.*

– Omar Haramy, Director of [Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center](#)

*We are trying to talk less and do more. We never go into any community telling them what we are going to do. We listen for what they need us to do. With privilege comes responsibility.*

– Hamed Qawasmeh, Director of [HIRN \(Hebron International Resource Network\)](#)

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“Jesus with drones” (2017), Banksy  
An installation at the Walled Off Hotel in Bethlehem

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*Do not look on us with pity. Pity creates distance and separation. We are more than a people who suffer. We are full human beings. Palestinians are a joyful people, a warm and welcoming people. We are engaged in a common struggle with you, a global struggle.*

– **Danya, Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT)** staff member and Hebron resident

*There is a strange perception in Palestine that Christians do not exist here. Christianity has become synonymous with the West. Judeo-Christian values have become synonymous with Western values . . . Palestinian Christians do not fit the binary categories you are familiar with in the West. Palestinian Christians, across traditions, choose nonviolence on the whole . . . When your siblings in Christ are asking for your solidarity, you should not first respond "Is it safe?"*

– **Rev. Munther Isaac**, Palestinian Lutheran pastor and author of Christ in the Rubble

*You cannot be silent about this situation. If you do, you lose your dignity and your life . . . I will lose my dignity if I hate.*

– **Basem Tamimi**, grassroots Palestinian activist

I also want to share with you a prayer that was offered this week by the Sabeel Ecumenical Theology Center:

Holy God, we echo the despair of the Psalmist: "Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10: 1) And yet, like the Psalmist, we hold onto faith that "you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear, to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more." (Psalm 10:17-18) We plead, O Lord, for an immediate ceasefire and deliverance from the yoke of oppression.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer

May we not remain silent. May we not give ground in our hearts to hatred or cruelty. May our words and our actions proclaim and embody a just peace for those who are far off, and those who are near. May we proclaim with our whole lives the radically inclusive, nonviolent and reconciling love of Christ. May the Holy Spirit be our breath, our strength and our guide through all that is and all that will come.

## Reporting from the Trees/Land/Jesus Delegation to the West Bank of Palestine

**On Zoom: Tuesday, April 7 6:30-8:00pm Pacific Time**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83870395987>

Meeting ID: 838 7039 5987



You are invited to join in an evening meetup on Zoom to hear stories from PNMC members who joined in the recent ***Trees/Land/Jesus Delegation to Palestine***, sponsored by MennoPIN and Mennonite Men. Our group spent almost three weeks in the West Bank of Palestine, planting olive trees with Palestinian farmers and meeting with Palestinian peacemakers, theologians and activists. We are eager to share our experience and hope you can join us! If you have questions please contact **Eric Massanari**, PNMC Executive Conference Minister at [eric@pnmc.org](mailto:eric@pnmc.org).

### PNMC Representatives:

Portland Mennonite Church: Lisa Hughes, Tyler Friesen, Noah Massanari

Seattle Mennonite Church: Liam Elias, Morlin Elias

Evergreen Heights Mennonite Church: Mike Oesch, Lorren Oesch, Jake Holub

PNMC Conference Minister: Eric Massanari

### In the Unraveling

The thread that binds us is impossibly strong. Like the Jeweled Net of Indra, we have more connections than we see at first.

Seams sometimes split. Some tears in the cloth need more tender care. In mending, time has a strengthening way of altering the original for the better.

Sometimes in the unraveling we find and follow the thread that binds us; It's then we see how strong we are and what we have been together.

- Jaqui Eicher

## PNMC CONGREGATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MINISTRIES

### Albany Mennonite Church

Spring Warm-Up for MCC - AMC is hosting a comforter tying blitz on **Saturday, March 21 from 9:30am-3:00pm**. A soup lunch will be provided. Come and go as your schedule permits. Please RSVP by email to [amcoffice3405@gmail.com](mailto:amcoffice3405@gmail.com).

### Portland Mennonite Church, *From Kriss Voss-Rothmeier*



“As many of you know, I’ve been serving Portland Mennonite as their transition pastor since September of 2024. I’d already been attending PMC since 2016 and have been very active these past 10 years in the life and ministries of the church. I’ll be leaving Portland Mennonite soon, however, to serve another congregation outside of the PNMC as their transition pastor. My last day at PMC will be **March 22** and my first day as the transitional pastor at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Beaverton, OR will be April 6th.

I want to tell you how much I’ve enjoyed being part of the PNMC community, if even for a short time. I have felt warmly welcomed and I deeply appreciate all who have made me feel at home among you. I feel particularly fortunate to have been able to join you in Kalispell last June and again in Greensboro in July and I look forward to staying in touch with you, Spirit willing. Thank you for teaching me and for blessing me so richly.”

### BendMennonite Church

Bend Mennonite is excited to announce its **20th anniversary of being a church on Saturday, March 28th at 4:30pm**. We will gather as usual for church, but will have a time of sharing about the church’s beginnings and where we are now. If you happen to be in Bend that day, we love to have you join! We meet in the annex of the First Presbyterian Church at 230 NE 9th St, Bend, OR 97701.

### Drift Creek Camp

Sign up for DCC’s [Work Weekend](#) planned for **April 10-12, 2026**. Your helping hands make a difference!

### Mennonite Disaster Service, Oregon Unit

The 2026 Annual Meeting of the OR Unit of Mennonite Disaster Service is scheduled for **April 25, 2026**, at St. Barnabus Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St., Portland, OR. To register, please contact Clyde Hockman, by email at [agent1943@canby.com](mailto:agent1943@canby.com) or by phone at 503-592-4490 before the **April 18, 2026 deadline**. Please include your name, email address and telephone number. The free event will begin at 9:00AM and a complimentary lunch will be provided. Speaker **Ralph Bloeman** will address fire mitigation in our communities and **Quinn Butler** will present on flood and earthquake preparation.



## MENNONITE CHURCH USA & OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

### Ridgeway Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, VA

What does it really mean to love your neighbor? Dorothy Shank—of Ridgeway Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, VA—pondered this question as the 2024 U.S. presidential election divided communities, families, and neighbors. This tension led her to reflect on Jesus’ words in Luke 10 about the most important commandments: love God and love your neighbor. One phrase kept coming to her: “[Vote to Love Your Neighbor](#).” What began as a local idea quickly became a shared project. With the support of Ridgeway, a small team printed yard signs and placed them around town ahead of the November election. But when the ballots were counted, the message didn’t fade. It spread.

Soon, yard signs, car magnets, and T-shirts were making their way across the country to people who wanted to bring a visible reminder of compassion and unity into their own communities. The word “vote” catches attention—and sometimes raises eyebrows. But it also leads to conversation. Ridgeway hopes that viewers will think of voting in a broad sense. “**To vote means to choose**,” Shank says. “It means taking action and giving your support to something. It can be as simple as how we behave in traffic and as complex as how we care for creation.”

Yes, the message is political. “We believe it always will be,” Shank says. “From Jesus’ birth to his death, his life created political tension. Similarly, our church fathers and mothers, the Anabaptists, were killed for their courage to redefine what it meant to follow Jesus.”

At its heart, the project isn’t at all about partisanship. It’s about making deliberate daily decisions—to treat neighbors across the street and across the world with compassion, respect, kindness, dignity, and care. More information available [here](#). (Please note, Ridgeway Mennonite Church does not profit from these sales; we simply hope you will share our message with your neighbors.)

### Mennonite Church USA

In a world reeling from conflict, the church has a powerful opportunity to be an **instrument of peace**. Following the example of Christ, who came to reconcile humanity to God and to one another, believers are called to be peacemakers in their communities and beyond. Follow along [here](#) to see how [Pasadena Mennonite Church](#) chooses peacemaking as an active practice of resilience and resistance.

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#### Upcoming e-Bulletins:

Apr 6 (submissions by 3/30)  
Apr 20 (submissions due by 4/13)  
May 4 (submissions due by 4/20)  
May 18 (submissions due by 5/11)

If you would like to contribute, please send a **brief announcement** in Spanish & English with website links to [brenda@pnmc.org](mailto:brenda@pnmc.org). Our goal is to provide a valuable resource, not an In-Box jammer. If space is tight, we may omit announcements that are not as pertinent to PNMC. Announcements will run ONE time only, unless specified otherwise. *We welcome your feedback!*

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For more PNMC updates: <http://pnmc.org> e-Bulletin Archives: <http://pnmc.org/Resources/eBulletin>