



EXTENDING BEYOND

Choosing to do justice

By Marisa Smucker, Executive Director



I believe that Micah 6:8 is one of the clearest verses in the Bible concerning exactly what God expects of us. All we are required to do, depending on the translation you read, is to act justly, love

mercy and humbly walk with God. It's simple, right? However, I don't believe this is actually a question of simplicity but rather a question of choice. In taking a closer look at this verse, I want to approach it in the opposite order, starting with our relationship with God, because I believe this is key to identifying our choices.

Beginning with the choice to walk humbly with God, we ask ourselves: Are we willing to acknowledge God in our daily walk? While we have the ability to choose to be independent, walking humbly with God is about choosing a life of dependency on God. This is counterculture to a society that often encourages us to be self-sufficient — to depend on no one and trust nobody. Will we

choose to trust and follow God?

If we choose to follow God, then we, too, will love and care about what God loves and cares about. We are called to embody what it means to love, truly and genuinely. This is a love that is deep and abundant, that expresses itself in kindness, mercy and compassion. It is both a way of being and doing — a way of living love that is expressed in everyday encounters.

"If we choose to follow God, then we, too, will love and care about what God loves and cares about."

Are we ready to live out this kind of faithful love?

Now that we have chosen to be in relationship with and walk with God, and to embrace this faithful love, we are left with a choice to do justice. This is about action. It is a call to do what is just and right. This action is a result of following God and embracing faithful love. We are called to care for all that God has made, such as the air, land, water, plants, animals and people. Doing justice means living in right relationships with our ourselves, our neighbors near and far, all of creation, and with God. Are

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During a 2022 Christ at the Borders pilgrimage, the group created a poem, with each member contributing a line. These lines were written as reflections on their learning experiences during the pilgrimage. Photo by Arloa Bontrager.

"He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God."

— Micah 6:8 (CEB)



“Perhaps there is only one person’s voice lacking for peace and justice to come about in the world.”

Building community, building peace

By Joani Miller

I recall a piece of paper I held onto for years. This was before memes became popular on the internet, but it had the same feel, only it was in print, instead of on a screen. It was a line drawing of two birds sitting on a tree branch, with snowflakes falling all around. The text said:

“Tell me the weight of a snowflake,” a robin asked a dove.

“Nothing more than nothing,” was the answer.

“In that case, I must tell you a marvelous story,” the robin said.

“I sat on the branch of a fir tree, close to its trunk, when it began to snow, not heavily, not in a raging blizzard, no, just like in a dream, without any violence. Since I didn’t have anything else to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the next snowflake dropped onto the branch — nothing more than nothing, as you say — the branch broke off.”

“Having said that, the robin flew away.

“The dove, since Noah’s time, an authority on the matter, thought about the story for a while, and finally said to herself: ‘Perhaps there is only one person’s voice lacking for peace and justice to come about in the world.’”

You likely have read this same tale. I first read it in 1982, when I was a part of an Iowa Mennonite School (now Hillcrest Academy) music ensemble that sang and spoke about peace as we traveled across several states. It was part of my responsibility to read these lines when we performed.

I remember that, at the time, I felt some tension within myself. What did this mean for me? Might I be that snowflake? I felt the same tension as we sang “One Tin Soldier” by The Original Cast:

“Go ahead and hate your neighbor.

Go ahead and cheat a friend.

Do it in the name of heaven.

You can justify it in the end.”



Photo courtesy of Maplewood Mennonite Church

Left, Ana Alicia Hinojosa, senior executive for Ventures and leader of the Christ at the Borders pilgrimages, stands with Michele Bollman of Maplewood Mennonite Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, next to a water station that has been placed by the South Texas Human Rights Center (STHRC). STHRC places and maintains many water stations in the South Texas brushlands and desert to help prevent migrating people from dying from dehydration. The pilgrimage participants accompanied STHRC workers to stock the water stations, while learning about the hardships faced by people who are migrating.

This tension was because I knew that justification, even in high school. I already knew that we say and use words to lift up the concept of global peace, while we ignore the needs of those next door.

The tension has never left me. I hope you feel it, too, and it motivates you to action. Might your voice be the one that is lacking in the chorus for justice and peace in our world?

According to Mennonite Mission Network's *Missio Dei* 18, Palmer Becker describes these Anabaptist tenets:

1. **Jesus** is the center of our faith.
2. **Community** is the center of our lives.
3. **Reconciliation** is the center of our work.

Becker adapted these principles from *The Anabaptist Vision*, a statement made in 1943 by Harold S. Bender, who was the president of the American Society of Church History. Bender explained that, from his understanding of Scripture and Anabaptist history (bolding added):

1. Christianity is discipleship. It is **following Jesus** in everyday life.

2. The **church is a family**. Members not only commit themselves to Christ but also, individually and voluntarily, to one another.
3. Followers of Jesus have an **ethic of love and nonresistance**. As transformed people, we seek to be reconcilers who reject involvement in violence and war.

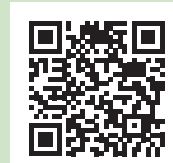
The Ventures division at Mennonite Mission Network collaborates across the agency, with international and domestic partners and the congregations of Mennonite Church USA, to bring opportunities for joining God's kingdom. We realize it takes every one of us. This includes you and me, even as individuals who feel we can accomplish nothing alone. It takes us living as disciples each day. It requires that we not only embrace the community of faith around us, but we welcome others. We do this within what Bender called the ethic of love. This is the church's faith in action.

Let us continue to open the doors of our churches, homes and hearts, as we strive toward peace on earth. ■

RESOURCE



Order or download *What is an Anabaptist Christian* by visiting our website: MennoniteMission.net/MissioDei or scan the QR code below.



We can accomplish little alone . . . Join us in striving for peace on earth. Support Mission Network's programs, partners and ministries, by visiting MennoniteMission.net/Donate today!

WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD.

— Micah 6:8



Photo by Gisselle Guity

Members of the 2022 Youth Venture civil rights learning tour cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. The bridge is the site of the Civil Rights Movement's Bloody Sunday incident, in which civil rights marchers on their way to the state capital were attacked by law enforcement on March 7, 1965.

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we ready to stand up for justice?

Truth be told, making these choices is often hindered by our human tendency of inertia, and we often become discouraged by the overwhelming injustices in today's world. However, if we take the first step of choosing to

trust and depend on God, then God will show us what faithful love looks like, day by day, and provide us with the strength to do justice, one small action at a time. ■

Marisa Smucker
Executive Director

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www.MennoniteMission.net
Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

Office locations:
Elkhart, Indiana
Newton, Kansas

