

GIFT OF PEACEMAKING (WEEK 4 OF LENT)

STUDY GUIDE FOR SECTION FOUR

- Pray a centering prayer for guidance for the discussion of the “Gift of Peacemaking.”
- *They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2.4) Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5.9)*

Africa is a war-torn continent; yet, its people long for peace. As students from different nations and tribes live, learn, and work together at AU, old suspicions and hostilities give way to understanding and acceptance as the peace of Christ, a peace that the world cannot give (John 14.27), becomes their new reality. As God’s spirit works in the hearts and minds of young people who learn to put aside their differences, there is new hope for the continent and its people who yearn for peace.

1. Jim Dorff asks why we can’t get along with one another when we have so much in common. Why do people have a tendency to degrade each other and fight among themselves? How does Christ show us a better way to live? How are you learning to be a peacemaker?
 2. Kathy Guier describes AU as a powerful force for peace in the world. She ponders if God is using its young students as the instruments of peace, who will beat swords into plowshares. What are the ways that programs at AU have a direct influence on building peace and understanding?
 3. Clara Reed calls us to be bearers of mercy, peace and love, able to face the biases, prejudices and fears that divide us. Are there biases, prejudices and fears that you struggle to overcome? Where do you find courage to face these challenges? Does a particular experience stand out in your mind?
 4. Vic Casad describes how Mande Muyambe challenges the ancient male dominance mentality of his country to open up educational opportunities for women. How does educating women enhance peacemaking in Africa and the world? What difference has education made in your life?
- Close the session with prayer, remembering the students and faculty at AU and all of those sharing in this Lenten challenge. **ASK FOR GOD’S GUIDANCE ALONG THE WAY.**

DAY 18, FEBRUARY 26, 2008

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

— ISAIAH 2:4

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

— MATTHEW 5:9

In July of 2007 we traveled to Zimbabwe, Africa, on mission to visit Africa University. My first impression was of a vast, brown country. I knew that this country and its people faced many hardships, and many of the difficulties were obvious as we traveled from Harare to Mutare. Yet when we arrived at the campus, it was as if we had entered a different country.

We spent seven days at the university, hearing stories about the dream of Bishop Hartsell to educate young people in this place, of how the university was started and of the number of different countries represented in the student body. But the best stories were of what these young people are accomplishing in their home countries when they graduate.

It kept occurring to me that this is a powerful way to initiate peace in the world. We as a connectional church have a more powerful tool for peace than our government, by the education of one young person at a time!

I began to wonder, *“Is God using these young people as instruments to beat swords into plowshares?”*

THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES TO BEAT BACK ILLNESS. . .

THE FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE TO BEAT BACK HUNGER. . .

THE FACULTY OF PEACE, LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE TO BEAT BACK TYRANNY. . .

THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY TO BEAT BACK SPIRITUAL EMPTINESS. . .

PRAYER: Dear Father, thank You for the many blessings you have given to my family and me. Thank You for giving me the opportunity to share the blessings I have with others. Help me to be an instrument of peace for the world. Amen.

CHALLENGE: We began speaking together of ways we could help make education at this university available to more of Africa’s youth. Now in the North Texas Conference we are each being challenged to participate in bringing these opportunities to more young people. I am thankful to God that I have this amazing opportunity.

Kathy Guier, Christ UMC Farmers Branch

DAY 19, FEBRUARY 27, 2008

May mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you.

— JUDE 1:2

THE MISSION TRIP TO AFRICA WAS THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME. I went with evangelistic zeal, desiring to share the good news of the gospel and the love of God within me. I was open and eager to learn and experience the novelty and the antiquity of the motherland.

We went prepared to give and had no idea how much we would receive. From the moment we deplaned we experienced expansive hospitality. When visiting the orphanages, the children sang of love for God and took our hands to lead us into the gracious welcome of their little homes. University students openly expressed the joy they experienced because we cared enough to come, to share and to learn. Perhaps the most memorable moment of the trip occurred during a circle of sharing. African students from many countries shared that their villages had been at war. Initially while at AU, they held on to their biases, prejudices, and pre-conceived notions with fear and distrust of each other. As they ate, worked, sang and prayed together, they discovered they were more alike than different. They learned to love one another, resolving that they would no longer perpetuate division. They would study war no more. They would use all they had learned and experienced to actively promote mercy, peace and love. We were amazed that God would send us as missionaries bearing love and allow us to be greeted with such an awakening of mercy, peace and love.

PRAYER: O God of mercy, peace and love, reveal yourself to each of us. Enable us to release our prejudices, distrust and fears so that we can give ourselves and your love to others. Let it be that by doing so, mercy, peace and love will be increased, and your name will be given glory and honor. In Jesus' name. Amen.

CHALLENGE: Honestly face your own biases and prejudices and make a donation to AU as you commit to overcome them.

Clara M. Reed, Sherman McKinney District



**TRANSFORMING LIVES
TRANSFORMING AFRICA**

DAY 20, FEBRUARY 28, 2008

*...they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks...
neither shall they learn war anymore.*

— ISAIAH 2:4B

There are many remarkable stories I could tell about my experience last summer visiting Africa University. It became very clear to all of the members of our mission team that AU is making a significant impact for good on the continent of Africa that will reach far into the future.

Let me share with you just one example. The Rev. Mande Muyombe is a graduate student at AU studying at the Institute of Peace, Leadership, and Governance. As a United Methodist pastor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mande struggles to minister to a people devastated by civil war. As part of his AU education, he has developed and implemented a program to retrain and re-assimilate child soldiers into civilian life within his village. It involves a holistic approach to transforming young lives that have been conditioned to fear, hate and kill, into young citizens who hope, love, and care. He is currently working on a project, as a result of his AU studies, to challenge the ancient male dominance mentality of his people in order to open up new educational opportunities for women in his country. God is working through the ministry of Rev. Muyombe and his education at Africa University to spread scriptural holiness and reform a nation.

PRAYER: O Lord, I pray for your continued blessing upon the work of Africa University as it seeks to be not only a haven of blessing and peace for its diverse student body, but also as an instrument of justice and peace throughout the continent of Africa in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHALLENGE: Put the Rev. Mande Muyombe on your daily prayer list and be a part of a great work. Make a donation to AU for each staff member at your local church.

Vic Casad, Christ UMC Farmers Branch



**TRANSFORMING LIVES
TRANSFORMING AFRICA**

DAY 21, FEBRUARY 29, 2008

In all this I have given you an example that by such works we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

— ACTS 20:35

I've been blessed with the opportunity to visit AU twice. My husband and I agreed to journey to Zimbabwe, Africa, on a St. Luke "Community" UMC mission trip in 2005. Was I ever blessed by that decision! So much so...that I traveled back with the 2007 missionary team.

I was touched by a student who shared her AU experience with us. It was her first venture from her Nigerian home, so she had never met Africans from other parts of the continent. In Nigeria, her people were at war with her classmate's people. At AU, she and her classmates learned to respect and appreciate their differences. The power of education was in action!

NTC's commitment to invest \$1,000,000 in the university is so important. Our support is an investment... not just a sacrifice...not just a contribution to AU...it's about making a difference in the world. Future generations will benefit from the investment we make today. **THERE IS HOPE FOR AFRICA.**

God commands us to help others...the more we give, the more we receive.

Our NTC mission team was blessed by the experience.

PRAYER: Dear God, You command us to help others and the more we give, the more we receive. Let our mission team experience be an encouragement to all who join us in being a blessing to AU. Amen.

CHALLENGE: During this Lenten season, I commit to pray daily and donate one dollar per day.

Juliet Patterson, St. Luke "Community" UMC Dallas

TRANSFORMING LIVES
TRANSFORMING AFRICA

DAY 22, MARCH 1, 2008

*Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends
of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created
for my glory, who I formed and made.
Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past,
See I am doing a new thing; do you not perceive it? I am making
a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*

ISAIAH 43

In 1995 a Liberian family, Peter and Betty Weato, joined Lovers Lane UMC. Their powerful story of strife and civil war involved Peter being shot and piled in a heap of bodies and left for dead. Peter crawled into the bush and made his way home finding it burned and his family gone. They were separated for more than two years, not knowing if the others survived. Miraculously, Peter finds his way to Dallas from a refugee camp and discovers his family is indeed alive.

It is difficult for us to relate to the Weato's story. Their faith and testimony is inspiring. We put the Weato's story on wannaknowwhy.com. At that time we had four African families at Lovers Lane. We now have two African Fellowships, a Zimbabwean Fellowship that worships in Shona and a gathering with African sisters and brothers from twenty different countries that we call Heart of Africa Fellowship.

We see what these warm, kind, gentle, Christ-loving people are doing for the larger membership of our congregation. Many of them are coming out of war torn situations to which we may not be able to relate. Likewise, many of them are also coming out of a Christian revival movement that is just as alien to us.

PRAYER: *May the Spirit of the living God of the bloody cross and empty tomb move on the continent of Africa and truly make AU the hope of the continent. Let the spirit that moves in and through the university in the hearts of our African sisters and brothers be the hope for the church. Amen.*

CHALLENGE: *Tammy and I will be making a sacrificial gift in honor of the African members of Lovers Lane UMC.*

Stan Copeland, Lovers Lane UMC Dallas