



January 25, 2022

Dear Friends,

Are you familiar with the Hebrew words: **tikkun olam**? It is the work Jews are called to do to “repair the world” or “heal the world.” The concept is what we mean when we talk about bringing light to darkness, sharing God’s love, striving for justice and working for peace. The Jewish prophets and Jesus call on us to heal God’s hurting world.

Last week, Camilla and I were invited to speak at Congregation Beth Shalom’s Friday night Shabbat service. The congregation is celebrating its centennial year and, throughout the year, they are highlighting various aspects of their life and work. On Friday, they were featuring the work of their Tikkun Olam Committee.

Rabbi Michael Beals asked Camilla and me to read Psalm 95 and to share thoughts about some of the wonderful interfaith work we have accomplished when members of Westminster and Congregation Beth Shalom have worked together to heal the world.

Rabbi Beals and I forged a close friendship more than 10 years ago when we co-chaired the **Peace Drums Committee**. With the help of members from Beth Shalom and Westminster, we created a steel drum band of Jewish, Christian and Muslim youth from two schools in northern Israel. The band was wildly successful when touring Israel, the U.S., and Europe. They were also wildly successful in building friendships and breaking down stereotypes. The children became close friends and a beautiful symbol of what is possible when people of good will work together for a positive outcome. As those children grew older, new children were recruited and today there are four bands in Israel and the West Bank. Currently they are stymied by the pandemic, but one day we will bring Peace Drums back to Wilmington.

Five years ago, members of our two congregations, plus members of the Muslim community joined forces in a beautiful interfaith effort to support our first **Afghan Refugee family**. The volunteers gave an enormous amount of time and energy, and their efforts were rewarded. The father has a wonderful job and the children are thriving in school.

A year and a half ago, we joined together again to help the oppressed and desperate men, women, and children of Syria living in refugee camps. Members of our congregations donated clothes, blankets, boots, medical supplies, hand tools, and education materials which were shipped to a port on the Mediterranean Sea and trucked to the camps.

Once again, beginning in August, our interfaith volunteers have been working in tandem to resettle another lovely family from **Afghanistan**.

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Two of our members – Mary Vane and Bob Stoddard – who have been deeply involved in our work with Congregation Beth Shalom and formed lasting friendships with our Jewish neighbors also attended Friday's service and were recognized.

Westminster is recognized as a leader in both interfaith relations and mission, and I am so proud of the many ways our members practice tikkun olam.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg".

Gregory Knox Jones
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff

P.S. This coming **Sunday, January 30**, we will hold our annual congregational meeting via Zoom at **10:30 a.m.** You will receive an email with a link on Friday afternoon or early evening. The email will come from Nicole Hughes using the email address notifications@onrealmmail.org (we are using our church database system to send the email). If you do not see the email in your inbox, please check your spam/junk folder (or your other email tabs if you are a Gmail user).

P.S.S. Because of the annual meeting, we will join together for *one* worship service at **9:00 a.m.** in the sanctuary. Our 11:15 a.m. *Living Mosaics* worship service will not be held this Sunday, but will resume on Sunday, February 6.