

Seek Peace and Pursue It - Reflections for Lent 2018
Week 3 – 4th March
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Peace in conflict

I know I am not alone in finding conflict situations difficult to deal with. I feel uncomfortable being in the company of people who are arguing. Children shouting at each other or dogs fighting in the street make me shudder. I wonder how I would cope in a situation of war, witnessing daily expressions of aggression, violence and hatred. I know that in arenas of conflict, women are especially vulnerable to aggression including sexual violence. How would I react if someone showed aggression towards me, or to a member of my family?



Major Seitebatso Pearl Block, a UN peacekeeper from South Africa, awarded the United Nations' Military Gender Advocate of the Year 2017

Major Seitebatso Pearl Block is pursuing peace. While serving with a United Nations peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of Congo, she took time to listen to the concerns of the Congolese women and subsequently trained fellow staff officers to be more fully aware of gender dynamics and the sexual violence related to the conflict. There are many other areas of the world where women suffer through violence. In Rakhine State, Myanmar, in Aleppo in Syria, in cities and rural areas and wherever women and children are on the move as refugees, they are vulnerable to appalling and abusive treatment. Agencies like All We Can and Christian Aid and the Refugee Council do what they can to provide protection. The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women encourages women to work for the 'healing of the nations' as they 'make Christ known.'

To ponder: Jesus wept as he looked over Jerusalem and said, 'If you, even you, had only recognised on this day the things that make for peace!' See Luke 19:41-44.

'These are our neighbours and our friends, The ones who run in fear from war,
Who dread abuse by power or state, Or seek the means to be less poor;
These are the ones we have denied, As in each one the Christ has cried.' StF 716 v 2

Think about those areas of conflict in the news today where 'women run in fear from war.' and offer those situations to God. Ask God to show you 'the things that make for peace.' Let us pray for those who work courageously for peace and justice.

Prayer: God of peace and justice, we thank you for the peacemakers in places of conflict. Help us all to be willing to listen to the concerns of those who are vulnerable to abuse. Give us courage to stand up for justice. Teach us when we should speak out. Show us how we can bring reconciliation to opposing factions. Amen.

Bible Link: Matthew 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

Hymn: Singing the Faith 707 Make me a channel of your peace or **702** I will speak out for those who have no voices