



## The Birth of the Rebel Jesus

Rev. Trey Hammond, Congregation-Based Community Organizing, PHP

Are Christmas carols for you, as they are for me, an important aspect of the celebration of Christmas? We need glorious music, full of beauty and hope, embedding poetry deep in our souls, with a vision of the world God intends.

However, we also need music that jars our seasonal over-sentimentality and upends the status quo, like Jackson Browne's folk song, *The Rebel Jesus*. One verse cleverly exposes the charity/justice paradox:

*"And once a year when Christmas comes  
We give to our relations  
And perhaps we give a little to the poor  
If the generosity should seize us  
But if any one of us should interfere  
In the business of why they are poor  
They'll get the same as the rebel Jesus."*

—Jackson Browne

The Chieftain's Bells of Dublin

Browne describes himself as a "heathen and a pagan on the side of the rebel Jesus." He celebrates the birth of the Christ child, precisely because He grows into the man Jesus, who stands with the poor, who undermines the value systems of the principalities and powers, and who overturns the tables of the compromised religious institutions.

Browne laments the hijacking of Christmas, turned into a turbine for consumer spending. That would not be the agenda of the rebel Jesus, turning this holy day, when a new and just world dawns, into a celebration of the current arrangement of things. Charity cannot substitute for justice. In truth, the reign Jesus inaugurates is an on-going revolution. Not a revolution as the world understands, but certainly one with political and economic implications.

Another song of Christmas is found in Luke's gospel, *The Magnificat*. I wish we had the original music that accompanied the poetry of Mary's prophetic vision of what God will accomplish in the remarkable child she bore:

*"God has brought down the powerful  
from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly.*

*God has filled the hungry with  
good things,  
and sent the rich away empty."*

As his mother's song anticipated, the rebel Jesus caused quite a stir with his first sermon, taking his text from the prophet Isaiah, recorded in Luke 4:16-19. He boldly claims, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the Jubilee year of our Lord." Jesus was more than a prophet, but he certainly was no less than one.

We best celebrate Christmas by working for a world where there is no more homelessness, hunger, poverty, racism, or

*continued on page 11*

### In this Issue

Page 2: Letter from the Coordinator	.....
Page 3: Joy	.....
Page 4: Peace	.....
Page 5: Love	.....
Page 6-7: Reclaiming the Holidays	.....
Page 8: Hope	.....
Page 9: Biblical Reflection	.....





## Letter From the Coordinator

By Ruth Farrell, Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program

Our task within Presbyterian mission is to engage and equip Presbyterians to alleviate hunger and eradicate its causes. Ending hunger and its causes in the world is a pretty big task on the To Do List! And as goofy as it sounds, it is right there as a goal for which we will be measuring how our activities result in impact. Some days I leave meetings and email encounters and feel super energized – I see Presbyterians engaged with partners and we see tangible progress as a result. Other days, I am overwhelmed with the 2 steps forward, 5 steps backward feeling, especially when it comes to working at the systemic level. And yet our partners keep telling us that no amount of development work will change their lives long-term if the systemic causes are not addressed. When I read the pieces for this PHP Post, it made me reflect on two experiences I had this month.

One of the truly wonderful things I get to do is visit Presbyterian congregations. I was invited to thank a congregation who takes the CentsAbility offering on the first Sunday each month and sends the international portion to PHP. While there, I attended a random Sunday school class — and you know how those random classes can have a word for you. I learned that Presbyterians, in addition to any work undertaken within their own congregation, are super involved in non-profit work to improve their communities. In

fact, for a number of theological and socio-economic factors, Presbyterians are perhaps the group most engaged. We have personal resources to allow us to volunteer; we have theological understanding that propels us to do something; we have an educational background to understand the problem; and perhaps, most interesting, we have the self-confidence to believe that others will listen to us and do what we ask. All this is great, but the study found that what we don't do as well is evaluate if we are actually accomplishing what we set out to do. To evaluate, we need to step back and ask the very folks we are working to "help," how is this working? Is this indeed addressing the causes of the problem?

This past weekend, I had a troubling experience. I was navigating for a stranger to Louisville, and when we arrived at the destination, the security guard stopped us and started giving the driver, a young African American woman, a very hard time. It was obvious that he was not going to let us enter. I jumped in, and in the end, he begrudgingly allowed us to enter to wait for others in our group to arrive. That afternoon this woman shared with me how she felt about allowing herself to be silent and let the white woman take over. On the one hand, it hurt to hear the words "take over." Had I taken over

*continued on page 11*

### Spotlight

Trey Hammond  
Congregation-Based Community Organizing



Trey Hammond has worked in Congregation-Based Community Organizing with PHP for 16 years. He also currently serves as the pastor of the La Mesa Presbyterian Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, though much of his ministry has been outside of the church's walls. He has worked relentlessly to engage issues of poverty, hunger, racial justice, homelessness, and public education in the communities he has served. A recent recipient of McCormick Seminary's 2015 Distinguished Alumni award, he was described as "having stood staunchly with the most vulnerable for whom the biblical prophets spoke."

### PHP Staff

**Ruth Farrell**, Coordinator  
[Ruth.Farrell@pcusa.org](mailto:Ruth.Farrell@pcusa.org)

**Valéry Nodem**, International Hunger  
[Valery.Nodem@pcusa.org](mailto:Valery.Nodem@pcusa.org)

**Eileen Schuhmann**, International Program Asst.  
[Eileen.Schuhmann@pcusa.org](mailto:Eileen.Schuhmann@pcusa.org)

**Andrew Kang Bartlett**, National Hunger  
[Andrew.KangBartlett@pcusa.org](mailto:Andrew.KangBartlett@pcusa.org)

**Jenny Oldham**, Administrative Assistant  
[Jenny.Oldham@pcusa.org](mailto:Jenny.Oldham@pcusa.org)

**Jessica Maudlin**, Managing Editor, Enough for Everyone,  
[Jessica.Maudlin@pcusa.org](mailto:Jessica.Maudlin@pcusa.org)

**Jennifer Evans**, Program Assistant  
[Jennifer.Evans@pcusa.org](mailto:Jennifer.Evans@pcusa.org)

**Rebecca Barnes**, Environmental Ministries  
[Rebecca.Barnes@pcusa.org](mailto:Rebecca.Barnes@pcusa.org)

**Trey Hammond**, CBCO  
[Trey.Hammond@aol.com](mailto:Trey.Hammond@aol.com)

## Joy in Hard Places: Sri Lanka

Valery Nodem, Associate for International Hunger Concerns, PHP

Early this year on February 11th, I received a phone call with joy-filled voices from friends in Sri Lanka. Members of Praja Abilasha, our Joining Hands partner there, were celebrating a great victory after years of accompanying communities demanding justice and resettlement in Panama, a coastal village in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. The newly elected president had decided by decree to release land under the control of the Air Force to landless people.

More than 11,000 acres of land that was under the control of security forces during the war period had already started being released to local people, with a plan to provide them with financial assistance to build houses! There were plans as well to build a school, a preschool, a hospital, places of worship, community centers and more. The decision, yet to be fully implemented, symbolizes something that no one would have imagined a couple months prior to be possible. In this time of Advent, where we the church anticipate the joy of encountering the coming Christ, it feels appropriate to celebrate this joyful victory along with our Sri Lankan brothers and sisters.

The struggle that led to the presidential decision had not been easy; it took a lot of time, effort and persistence. The joy now being felt is all the deeper for the stark contrast it holds to the incredible injustice and long-suffering of the people. For years, the many evicted people who protested and asked for justice were threatened, jailed or worse. Many still remember the “white vans” that came out of nowhere and kidnapped people demanding justice. Civil society organizations were denied the right to organize, protest and train communities. In a country that only recently emerged from 26 years of civil war, it was extremely hard to ask for justice in the midst of repression, threats and



Fishermen gather with Praja Abilasha coordinator Francis Raajan (white shirt, no hat) to discuss their concerns about forced eviction from their beach.

intimidations. Joy was a hard thing to find.

Following the civil war that ended in 2009 and killed between 80,000 and 100,000 people, the former president of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa, decided to invest massively in tourism in this beautiful island nation south of India to generate revenues to boost the national economy. Construction projects for hotels, resorts and spas were going on everywhere. Meanwhile, to “pacify” and keep an eye on the separatist movement in the North that had lost the war against the government, whole villages were forcibly displaced by the navy, the army and the police. People were evicted from their homes and villages, without a relocation plan or package.

Poor communities felt they were paying a high cost for all the tourism and national security projects: for the construction of luxurious places that they would never be able to afford. They had to give up the lands where they were growing their food

and the beaches where they caught fish and shrimp for their subsistence. For national security (disguised land grabs), they were displaced from the villages where their ancestors had lived for generations, where their cultural heritage had been kept.

*“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”-Psalm 30:5*

Through education, community organizing, persistence, patience and courage, thousands of communities around the country who had lost their livelihoods continued for years to pressure

*continued on page 11*

### » GIVE

To support joyful work like that done by our Joining Hands partners in Sri Lanka, please consider making an online gift at [www.presbyterianmission.org/donate/E051608/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/donate/E051608/).

# A Perspective on Peace

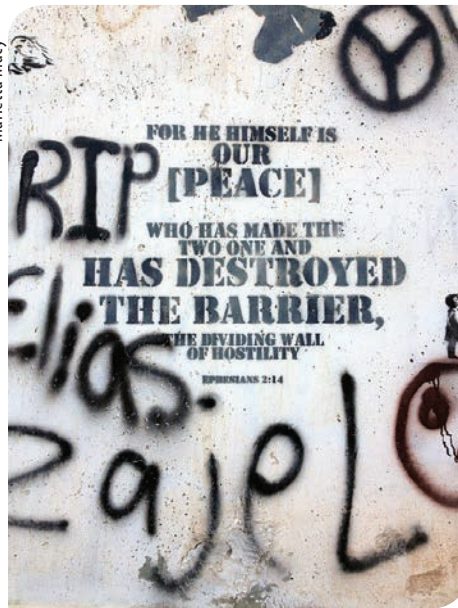
Marietta V. Macy, Vice Moderator, Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the PC(USA)

*“They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.” - Jeremiah 8:11*

Peace. Shalom. Salam. We use the word often in our worship services, prayers, and greetings especially this time of year, but how often do we actually stop to think about what it means? Do we actually think about what it requires of each of us to make peace a reality? I used the word as flippantly and obliviously as any other, until I visited Palestine/Israel. Over the course of my visits to Palestine in the last several years, I have come to use the word less and less frequently because of the seeming impossibility of it all. With the multiplicity of obstacles to peace, the sacredness of the word grows and my comfort with its use decreases.

Too often we are tempted to say the region is peaceful when we are not hearing of fresh outbreaks of violence, but this is not true peace. It is not peace when people’s lives and lands are being destroyed every day by the Israeli occupation of Palestine (including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza). While many Israelis and Palestinians work for peace, the state of Israel, in its policies, perpetrates daily violence. God’s shalom does not just mean a state free of war, but that a state of wholeness, perfectness, and harmony has been achieved; that a wrong has not only been righted, but that full restoration to wholeness has been made. As things currently stand, the Israeli occupation has made this peace impossible for the land and the people. The land has been carved up, scarred, and poisoned by the occupation; perhaps as much as the people themselves have been.

Countless acres of land have been cleared for the building of Israeli settlements, settler only by-pass roads, the apartheid wall, and confiscated for closed military



zones and military sites. These lands were not only cleared of their Palestinian residents and caretakers, but their forests, fields, flora, fauna, and wildlife as well. In the West Bank over 70% of the total forest area has been damaged. As a result, natural migration patterns and habitats of numerous species have been permanently disrupted and some are even facing extinction due to the destruction of their nesting and breeding sites. The Jordan River and other ancient water ways that cut deep through the land and our history are now no more than slimy, polluted ditches in many places. The water levels of the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are dropping by the year due to excessive use and irresponsible mineral mining practices by Israel. Raw sewage flows down the hills from the Israeli settlements unchecked and untreated into Palestinians’ water sources and fields, poisoning drinking water and ruining farm ground which contributes to the desertification, hunger and poverty of the Palestinian territories.

As if that were not enough, hazardous waste from Israel is also disposed of in the Palestinian territories, including

industrial, medical, and radioactive waste. Palestinian residents are exposed to these dangerous and toxic substances through crop contamination, air pollution, and groundwater contamination. In some areas near these dumping sites higher than average rates of cancer have been recorded in the local Palestinian populations. The Israeli occupation and the infrastructure that goes with it threaten all aspects of natural and human life alike, and all prospects of peace.

In spite of all of this, most Palestinians maintain their commitment to peace. The steadfast example of the majority of Palestinian people, especially the farmers, who get up day after day, face these challenges, and continue to believe in peace requires that I not give up on the possibility either. The Palestinian Christians that I have gotten to know have shown the Gospel to me in ways I never could have understood without them. They know that there can only be peace for the people when there is peace for the land as well. For thousands of years, generation after generation, the Palestinians have been rooted to this land like the olive trees they plant and tend. In spite of the very real threats their lands and bodies face every day, they remain hopeful and confident that peace is possible.

The hope of the people and the hope present in the season of advent invite me to re-examine its potential once again. This is the season we prepare for the joy of Christmas, but also for the radical message of justice and peace that our Savior is bringing with him. In this season we are reminded that peace is not only a state of being, it is an action. Peace will be only possible when we no longer have to fight for justice. We must actively work for peace and in so doing we actively prepare ourselves for the coming of

*continued on page 11*

## Pedagogy of the Heart: Love For Earth's Sake

Rev. Dr. Neddy Astudillo, Pastor of San José parish, a Lutheran and Presbyterian Latino community in Beloit, WI

As a pastor, I wish I had the magic sermon or piece of information to produce a change of heart strong enough to change any senseless path towards destruction of life on earth. In times of restlessness I like to remind myself a verse attributed to the Talmud that reads:

*"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work. But neither are you free to abandon it."*

Faith is a gift from God, and only God can give it. Perhaps, from the Church standpoint, our issue is not the need to strengthen our faith in a time of environmental crisis, but discerning how to carry further our faith in Jesus Christ, towards one that produces gifts inspired in God's love for all creatures, including humans.

The environmental crisis is asking us to re-imagine our faith in Jesus Christ, and how to love beyond human centered expressions (Mk 16:15). This is the thought of Pope Francis' encyclical letter, *Laudato Si' On Care For Our Common Home*. Pope Francis believes humans are still capable of intervening positively in society, because we

were created in love, to love.

*"Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself."* (chapter 66)

Like us, the whole universe is infused with God's Spirit and speaks of God's love; *"Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God"* (84), a reflection of God and a manifestation of God's presence.

When we look at the world through these lenses, our hearts, which *"are authentically open to universal communion"* (92), experience the desire to worship the Lord, develop ecological virtues, and care for the environment with a concern for future generations. *"The world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others."* (159)

From this perspective, sin is the rupture of our relationships with God, with neighbor, and with nature. Christ came to the world to reconcile all that exists back with God.

The rupture of relationships we see today manifests itself not only in the exterior

world through wars, exploitation, violence and destruction of the earth; but also in our hearts, when we look at the world and one another in utilitarian ways; as objects to be used and abused, rather than loved, cared for and respected.

To bring about a change of heart, needed for our reconciliation, Pope Francis invites us to learn individually and communally how to pay attention and appreciate beauty; stop and give thanks to God for God's providence; be present to the other and the here and now; use every opportunity available to share love, through *"attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness"* (220); become aware of our values and worldviews and how they influence our thoughts and actions; and create a new paradigm *"about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature."* (215)

While we seek to comprehend the bigger picture of our challenge today and find new ways to be faithful to our Creator God, it is good to be reminded of the power of that which is done with a humble heart, for love, in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as he did:

*"We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread. Furthermore, such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile."* (212)

In order to live life more fully and to allow more space in the world for God's goodness to spread, we are called to efforts of loving God, loving one another, and loving the whole creation, knowing that loving action is our call and is what makes our living worthwhile.

Christ Community Church in Cortland, NY



On Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2015, members of Christ Community Church in Cortland, NY, gathered outside to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit by releasing Eastern Monarch butterflies.

# Reclaiming the *Holidays*

## Decorations

Rather than purchasing a fresh Advent wreath, you can make one. The lower branches of a Christmas tree that were cut to fit it into a stand make excellent wreath material. Use beeswax candles in your wreath. They are organic and biodegradable. If you have an artificial tree, it is best to use it as long as you can. If you purchase a live tree, go local.

## Holiday Activities

Volunteer at a local shelter, food bank, community center or church. Other forms of service and outreach you can embrace this Christmas include food donations, meal delivery, and opening your home to newcomers. Take up a collection at your meal to support local efforts to alleviate hunger, or have your guests bring nonperishable items to donate. Take a sabbath from electronic devices.

## Holiday Treats

Many baking items such as sugar, cocoa, vanilla, and spices are harvested under grueling conditions. Purchasing fair trade baking goods, as well as snacks, chocolate and beverages helps prevent child labor and oppressive working conditions and ensures workers a fair wage.

Attract wildlife outside with edible decorations. Coat pinecones with organic nut butter and roll them in seeds. Make garlands out of air-popped corn or chunks of stale bread.



If you feel called to celebrate differently this year, talk with loved ones and explain why you have made a switch. Be gentle in your explanations and invite others to journey with you through the process. For further ideas visit [www.presbyterianmission.org/justliving](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/justliving).

## Gifts

Knitted items, framed photos, handcrafted toys, works of art, and other personally made gifts show care and concern for the recipients because they require time and thought to create.

Minimize the impact your gifts have on local landfills by packaging them in reusable or biodegradable materials. Wrapping gifts in blankets or table linens creates practical and reusable packaging options.

If you are gifted with crafts, music, dance, or other talents, give the gift of knowledge, while passing on traditions and heritage.



## Hope Beyond Hope

Rev. Ellie Stock, Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy, St. Louis, MO

As we begin Advent and a new church calendar year, we often use the themes: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, each one revealing and grounding us in the presence of Emmanuel, “G-O-D with us”. But such revelation and grounding is not done in the abstract but rather in the reality of our daily existence.

Last June I facilitated a Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery Joining Hands Peru Partnership mission education trip to Peru. The purpose of the Joining Hands partnership (an initiative of the Presbyterian Hunger Program) in Peru and elsewhere is for U.S. churches and presbyteries to work with international partners to address root causes of hunger and poverty through accompaniment, education, advocacy, strategy, and prayer. One issue the Peru partnership addresses is diminished health and sustainability due to the lead and heavy metal contamination of everything in the Andes Mountain town of La Oroya, caused by the U.S.-owned Doe Run Peru metallurgical complex.

After winding our way through snow-capped mountains and over the Continental Divide, we met with Filomenas, a group of women who invited Joining Hands to help them work for the health of children and all residents who were suffering from egregious contamination. 97% of children living in Old Town La Oroya were severely lead-poisoned. Now, the smelter was mostly closed. Operations stopped due to the 2008 global economic downturn and bankruptcy. Non-compliance with environmental regulations agreed upon at the time of purchase in 1997 have prevented it from re-starting.

As we met with the courageous Filomenas who fought for their right to a healthy community and refused to believe that people had to choose between economic viability and environmental sustainability, my thoughts meandered to my first journey to La Oroya in 2002. Since then, Joining



Studies showed that 97% of children living in Old Town La Oroya were severely lead-poisoned. Since 2002, Joining Hands in Peru has worked with many local leaders and faith-based and NGO partners to help create a healthier environment.

Hands has worked with many local leaders and faith-based and NGO partners to help create a healthy environment. This has included working with media to shed light on and give voice to those who had neither hope nor voice; monitoring non-compliance with environmental standards; connecting people in La Oroya with people in polluted Herculaneum, MO, home to the largest lead smelter in the U.S, also owned by Doe Run; monitoring free trade agreements that give polluting corporations greater rights than communities who try to defend their right to a sustainable living; exploring bio-remediation processes for contaminated soil; working with St. Louis University School of Public Health to do the first independent health study in La Oroya; and working to bring adequate medical care to the people of La Oroya.

The journey has been marked with accomplishments and set-backs. Now,

the company is for sale, workers have been striking to get back to work and to roll back the environmental standards to previous unhealthy levels, and Doe Run Peru is suing the Peru government for \$800 million dollars, based on the U.S. Peru Free Trade agreement, saying their profits have been reduced due to having to comply with environmental regulations. And children are still not receiving needed medical care as promised by the Peruvian government.

So, as I contemplate this Advent season and this particular situation in La Oroya, I ask myself, where is the hope? And, what is the HOPE beyond hope to which Advent points? Yes, I hope for healthy children, a clean environment, the end of poverty, environmental regulations and trade agreements that honor and support the well-being of local communities, and for consumers who use extractive-industry products to live more simply. However, it is my experience that Advent HOPE is not the hope(s) of escaping failure, waiting for rescue from a distant God or avoiding suffering. Nor is it wish-dreaming, seeking success, perfection or a security hook upon which to hang either strategic plans or unfulfilled desires. For me HOPE is immanently present and embodied in the midst of ongoing joy, risk, and struggle, no matter what the situation, when we fearlessly live in the Reality of the incarnate Christ, WORD of possibility, that boldly proclaims: *Life is good; that we all are loved by God; that the past is forgiven; and the future is open.*

When we enter any relationships or situations—be they in La Oroya, our own towns, congregations or homes—with this stance, then we indeed experience Advent, Emmanuel, G-O-D With Us: HOPE beyond hoping, Peace surpassing understanding, Joy and thanksgiving unceasing, and Love unconditional.



## Biblical Reflection: Advent and Justice

Pastor Mark F. Greiner, Takoma Park Presbyterian Church

*In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered...Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. –Luke 2:1-6*

A tyrannical power displacing people, a child at risk, a family on an expectant journey to find food and shelter. Sounds like a headline torn from the day's news of multiple refugee crises. As I write this, the image of a 3-year-old would-be immigrant is searing the world's conscience. Aylan Kurdi's lifeless body washed ashore on the coast of Turkey, galvanizing action from governments and citizens.

Advent always journeys to Bethlehem. The "little town of Bethlehem" stirs the sweetest memories of home and Christmas. And yet Bethlehem holds even deeper meanings.

David, the shepherd boy who would be king, went to Bethlehem to feed the sheep he tended (I Samuel 17:15). Matthew 2:6 says a ruler will come from Bethlehem to shepherd the people Israel. Even the Gospel of John (which has no birth narrative) recognizes the Messiah will come from Bethlehem (John 7:42). John further identifies Jesus with bread itself. Jesus invites, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" –John 6:35.

Indeed it is no coincidence that the Hebrew etymology of Bethlehem, is "House of bread."

So how are we to be a Bethlehem people, offering shelter, sharing bread, as a sign of the Messiah come?



Aylan's Canadian Uncle broke down when interviewed on National Public Radio. Canada had denied Aylan's asylum application, so the family hoped instead the boat journey would bring deliverance to a new home away from war. The uncle paid for that boat ticket that ended in tragedy.

The first Americans, from Aylan's uncle's part of Canada, have a powerful counter-tradition of hospitality: the potlatch gift-giving feast practiced by indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast of Canada and the United States, among whom it is traditionally the primary economic system. And while potlatch traditions vary among native peoples, they are all festivals of sharing. Sharing demonstrates true wealth. Troublingly, both the U.S.A. and Canada outlawed potlatches for decades from the late 1800's. Leaders and missionaries at the time even claimed the potlatch, "a worse than useless custom" contrary to "civilized values' of accumulation"; "by far the most

formidable of all obstacles in the way of Indians becoming Christians, or even civilized."

Christ, deliver us from the culture's acquisitive "Christmas season" to an Advent of discipleship, radical hospitality and abundant sharing.

And so we pray:

*"Lord, have mercy. Open our hearts to live expectantly, receiving you and the families like yours fleeing danger.*

*Bread of Life, agitate us to bold, even risky, hospitality.*

*Christ, have mercy. Transform our houses and churches that strangers would find among us shelter and bread.*

*In the name of the child of Bethlehem we pray, Amen."*

# BEEES ARE *more than* HONEY.



Bees bring food—one out of every three bites of food in the world is made possible by these hardworking insects. You could provide the tools and materials for a hive—and community—to thrive.

Bring positive change to a community today at [presbyteriangifts.org](https://presbyteriangifts.org).

*Rebel Jesus, continued from page 1*

war. Jesus was born to bring about that world. He fully incarnates God's justice. To fully celebrate his birth, maybe we should advocate for child nutrition, lobby for living wages, plant a community garden, or sponsor a refugee family, as well as sing beloved carols.

Browne cautions that those who meddle too much "in the business of why they are poor, they will get the same as the rebel Jesus." If heathens and pagans understand this, then we who serve Christ know where we must stand—with those at the margins. As Pope Francis has said in a charge aimed at all of Christendom, "Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument for the liberation of the poor, enabling them to be fully a part of society."

Let us roll up our sleeves this Christmas, along the lines of this benediction by Howard Thurman, another prophet/poet on the side of the rebel Jesus, entitled *The Work of Christmas*.

*"When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers and sisters,  
To make music in the heart."*

*Letter From the Coordinator, continued from page 2*

prematurely? I certainly line up with those Presbyterians who believe someone will listen to me. On the other hand, this friend shared that it was the system that stabbed her heart in that encounter. She chose to stop talking because it hurt so deeply to know that her talking would just exacerbate the situation. It also hurt to know that someone else saying the same words would be heard.

Reading the pieces for the PHP Post made me grateful anew for this time of reflection to

*Joy in Hard Places: Sri Lanka, continued from page 3*

the government. They protested during local and national events, and even with all the threats and intimidations, they never stopped claiming what was theirs: their land. It took having a new regime in the country for this decision to be made, but it was the capacity of people to organize and resist for so long that paid off.

*"Living in fear, intimidations, threats, abductions or media smear campaigns are no more, for the time being."*

Somasiri, a local farmer and organizer from Panama, said "This is a great victory for our struggle, which was supported by many groups around the world. We are grateful to all who engaged with us and strengthened our people's struggle. It is a collective effort and it is truly a people's struggle we launched amidst threats. But we all had the courage and commitment."

Since that decision by the Sri Lankan president, many communities and civil society organizations around the country feel empowered and continue to dream

of a society where they have rights and can express and enjoy them. Last July, the police in Sri Lanka lost a case after they took to court seven villagers who tried to return to their land before the presidential decree. Again, communities from all over the country rose to support their fellows in this case, and they won.

Herman Kumara, the convener of NAFSO, a member of the Joining Hands network and partner of PHP in Sri Lanka, said "Living in fear, intimidations, threats, abductions or media smear campaigns are no more, for the time being. Instead, we are invited for dialogues in the media, round tables, and policy dialogues."

The long-standing, persistent atmosphere of injustice makes joy all the more important, when it arises. Celebrating is crucial, to mark when people have found a way forward in spite of the odds. This kind of joy is not simple contentment or gladness, or lack of conflict. It is people having their land as a priority, rather than having more picturesque spaces for tourists to vacation. It is finding courage, solidarity, relationships, and small steps forward in spite of huge obstacles. Participating in decisions, finding community empowerment and one's own voice, and being able to live the life God desires for each person—that is where joy enters in.

*A Perspective on Peace, continued from page 4*

the Christ Child. Are we willing to be open to that message this year? Are we ready to prepare the way for peace? When you say, sing, and pray about peace this Advent and Christmas season, do not do so lightly or obviously, as if it were not serious, but with full and active conviction for all God's creation.

All research and statistics on the environmental impact of the occupation can be found in this report by the Middle East Monitor: <http://bit.ly/1OL4K7S>.



## PHP POST

100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
LOUISVILLE, KY  
PERMIT NO. 1215

### Give Us Your Feedback

The PHP Post encourages feedback! Submit letters to the editor, articles, ideas, or suggestions to [jessica.maudlin@pcusa.org](mailto:jessica.maudlin@pcusa.org).

The views represented in this publication are those of the writer and do not officially represent PC(USA) or PHP.

### Available Online!

Visit [pcusa.org/hunger/resources](http://pcusa.org/hunger/resources) to download a digital copy of this issue & previous PHP Posts. Send an email to [php@pcusa.org](mailto:php@pcusa.org) to change your subscription to the print version.

### » Join

#### PHP Food and Justice Webinars

The second Monday of each month at noon (Eastern); 11am (Central); 10am (Mountain); 9am (Pacific). Visit [pcusa.org/phpwebinars](http://pcusa.org/phpwebinars) to register.

### » GO

The Presbyterian Hunger Program is promoting experiential trips which analyze the root causes of hunger and poverty while calling participants to engage in solidarity actions with our local and global partners. To learn more about the available opportunities visit [pcusa.org/trips](http://pcusa.org/trips).

### » Give

Your financial support enables the Presbyterian Hunger Program to witness to the healing love of Christ and to bring hope to communities and individuals struggling with hunger. Give online at [pcusa.org/hunger/give](http://pcusa.org/hunger/give).

Or you can write "H999999 Hunger" on your check and send to:  
PC(USA)  
Box 643700  
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

*Thank you for your continued support!*