

Peace Poles - The Shalom Peace Movement



The Shalom Peace Movement

In the last two spotlights I have shared my quest to unravel the mystery of the three Crestwood Peace Poles seemingly hiding in our clear sight. We know that their history sprang from the Shalom Peace movement that was an important part of Crestwood's past for more than twenty years. This week we'll delve more into that movement. So little has changed in the world. So much is needed.

But first, what is Shalom? There are many variations of the definition, but the one I like most, that encompasses them all, is that Shalom is the deepest level of peace. It is a Hebrew word that means more than hello and goodbye. It is a wish of a wholeness and completeness with God's peace.

In 1987, the Disciples of Christ National General Assembly was held here in Lexington. Part of their considerations that year was centered around the world's problems. They addressed the need for Shalom and passed Resolution #8715 "Resolution Concerning Shalom" after an in-depth discussion.

It is worth reading the problems they felt were plaguing the world in 1987:

- The crisis of American farmers and the problem of world hunger
- The continued depletion of our resources by our dependence upon massive armaments
- The fear which stalks our lives, and the lives of all God's children, in a world overcome by terrorism, injustice, repression, and the threat of violence.
- The resistance of social structures to universally equitable systems
- And the continued marginalization in our society of members of minority races, women, children, the aged, and strangers in our midst.

Startling how little things have changed in the past thirty-seven years, isn't it?

The resolution continued:

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED ... we declare that:

- God is at work building Shalom.
- We are a people of God's Shalom.
- We hereby identify ourselves as shalom people and reaffirm our commitment to the principles of shalom.

Be it further resolved that we commit ourselves . . . to:

- 1.The elimination of any policy or program which divides nation from nation; system from system; class from class; person from person;
- 2.The building of systems of equity and justice between estranged persons;
- 3.The actualization of every person and the establishment of well-being for all people;
- 4.The sharing and stewardship of the world's wealth, food and natural resources;
5. And the building of new political, social, and economic structures which embody justice and make peace available to all."

Soon after the Resolution Concerning Shalom passed as a denominational commitment, Crestwood fulfilled the requirements for being formally declared a Shalom Congregation. I do not have the will power to retackle the endless boxes of material to find the particular date, but I am guessing that is when the Peace Pole was placed at the corner entrance sign of our church. There was also a peace banner hanging behind the pulpit. I would love to have a picture of it and wonder whether it was similar to the doves of peace hanging in the sanctuary today.

Picking monthly Crests and Administrative Board Reports from random in the material from 1994 to 2007, it is clear that the church formed a Shalom Committee that operated independently from other committees. They offered detailed reports of their activities for each of the board meetings. And they had a related column in each Crest. Dr. Bill Barr and Rev. Ellen Frost each led the group for a number of years and wrote the reports.

Unfortunately, when our new church historian, Tippy Wallace, and I dug through the endless boxes for several hours, we were working backwards in time, not realizing how long ago this whole movement started. We wore out in the 1994 records although it was clear the committee started well before that. I am assuming the committee was established about 1988 from other information gathered. It is frustrating leaving this research hanging, but the time commitment was getting a little above my paygrade. There is a potential dissertation or research paper buried in our well-maintained church records, thanks to former long-time church historian Fran McKinney.

The material we did get through indicated that Shalom was an active committee in 1994 and was still going in 2007. Their activities were varied and sometimes could be considered controversial:

- They published reviews of books in our library involving peace and made displays of publications and community activities involving inequality.
- They developed a partnership with Bethsaida Baptist Church and once celebrated with a rained-out picnic that moved to LTS for conversation and worship. Together the churches collected food items for God's Pantry.
- They published commentary and prayers in the Crest concerning peace-keeping forces in Bosnia, Hiroshima Day, Peace with Justice Week, and Peace Sunday.
- They sponsored a Human Sexuality Class taught by Sharon Warner.
- They published the National Council of Churches USA's ten principles for evaluating candidates for the upcoming Presidential election.
- They corresponded with partner congregations throughout the world and printed excerpts from those letters.
- They provided a church school class on Christian Faith and American Citizenship.
- They invited representatives of other faiths to speak at Crestwood. The Seekers Sunday School class was frequently involved with Shalom Committee activities.
- They began a service of communion for inmates at the Fayette County Detention Center.
- They hosted a guest speaker who educated the congregation on the damage to the Appalachian Mountains caused by mountain top removal and sponsored a trip to the area to learn more.
- LaVece Hughes reports that the prison reentry program Mission Behind Bars and Beyond fell under the umbrella of the Shalom group, no doubt recounted in the years I did not reach.

They obviously did much more during the years I didn't discover.

I have been deeply touched by my new knowledge of the Crestwood Peace Poles and the Shalom movement of the past. Please go back and read the items to which our denomination and congregation formally committed when we became a Shalom congregation. If any of those items speaks to you, give Rev. Kory Wilcoxson a call, text, or email. He is interested in gathering a group to address those issues that still remain in

today's world.

Thanks to the many people I have called and pestered for memories, with special thanks to former associate ministers, Liz Woodward and Cyd Cowgill, and to Tippy Wallace, who did not even groan as she carted out heavy boxes of memories. No doubt I've failed to acknowledge or even ask others who might have known answers – it is never too late to share information.

Shalom

Let's continue to explore together. If you have ideas for future Spotlights, contact me, Gaye Holman at [gdholman@bellsouth.net](mailto:gHolman@bellsouth.net).



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