



Disciples Peace Fellowship ~ Fall 2016

NewsNotes

A Lifetime of Service, rooted in peace

In 1966, James Hamlett graduated from Wichita High School North in Kansas. He served his last day as the President of the Pension Fund of the Christian Church on August 31, 2016, after serving for nearly 46 years in various ministries within the Christian Church including the United Christian Missionary Society, Board of Church Extension and the Pension Fund. Here we share the story of how that journey of service began. *[This interview has been condensed to fit. Read the full version at www.dpfweb.org/jameshamlett/.]*

DPF: For those who didn't experience it personally, can you explain what it was like to be a young man in the US when there was an active draft?

JH: The draft was re-instituted in 1970 with a lottery in February of that year based upon year, month and date of birth. I was included in that first ...

(interview continued on page 4)

It Takes a Village!



There are so many partners who help make our Peace Intern program happen. We give thanks to Global Ministries for sponsoring our Missionary-in-Residence interns! And to everyone who helped with our Intern Training Week: Ken Barger (Military Perspectives–Veterans for Peace), Joel Cooper (Military Perspectives–Former GM Intern & Nat'l Guard Chaplain's Assistant), Ron Degges (DHM), Stephen Yarbrough (Peace & Justice Bible study), H. Fredrik Spier (Handling Difficult Conversations–Pastoral Counselor), William Almodovar (Interim National Pastor of Obra Hispana), Sheila Spencer (DHM), Sharon Watkins (GMP), Kerry Armstrong & Derek Penwell (GLAD), Timothy James (National Convocation), *(cont. on p. 3)*

DPF T-Shirt Design Contest ~ Deadline Extended!!!

DPF is planning to unveil a new t-shirt at the Indianapolis General Assembly in 2017. Are you the artist who will provide the design? We invite you to submit a design inspired by our mission to "keep alive the passion for peace and justice." Visit www.dpfweb.org for full contest details. Youth entries are encouraged!

Designs must be submitted by November 30, 2016. Submissions should come to DPF as print-ready as possible, either by creating a .pdf (vector graphic) document of artwork, a .jpg or .png and submitting it digitally, or by sending a clean hand-drawn artwork that can be easily translated into a vector graphic.

Designs should be appropriate for the front of a t-shirt and should utilize no more than three colors. Copyright to the design will be owned for DPF for its exclusive use.

The creator of the winning design will be featured in the 2017 Summer NewsNotes and receive a \$100 camp or book scholarship, two tickets to the DPF breakfast at the 2017 General Assembly, and two t-shirts.

Send hard copy entries to DPF, P.O. Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN, 46206.

Email digital entries to maryjacobsaz@yahoo.com.

What a whirlwind summer it has been!

We've been traveling for two and a half months and have been in 19 different regions and at 23 different events. We've represented DPF ecumenically at the National Youth Event hosted jointly by the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ. We got to experience our church's ethnic constituency events and were privileged to be part of NAPAD, Obra Hispana and National Convocation's biannual meetings. We met young people all around the country along the way and worked with the youth of our church, witnessing and nurturing their passion for social justice. These are the facts and statistics, yet, when one asks what DPF's Internship Program actually does, rarely will the same answer be given twice. It's hard to effectively convey the incredibly intricate impact of this program if you haven't lived it and seen it in action. So...

What Exactly Do You Support as a Member of DPF?



- + You support interns like me! You gave me, a usually introverted and unconfident person, a perfect, sacred opportunity to become a joyous and eager teacher. I would have never been able to grow so much in my confidence or my teaching skills if it weren't for Disciples Peace Fellowship and the affirming community of camp. ~ Lexie Ofe
- + You support bringing global issues to your local and regional camps. You are giving an opportunity to Peace Interns from all parts of the United States and the world (like me, a Palestinian Christian) to literally meet your church's youth where they are, challenge kids to get out of their comfort zones and become more globally aware. I found that DoC youth, when given the opportunity, are excited to experience new perspectives and embrace diversity. ~ Rachel Shomali
- + You support the creation of safe spaces to have the difficult conversations that need to take place in the church and society at large. For example, what do we as Christians mean when we say that God loves *everyone* and that we are called to share that love? In one camp, I was able to talk about how God's love applies even to those who commit horrific acts of violence... even terrorists. We grappled with the fact that while politicians and media pundits endorse bombing terrorists (and sometimes their family members), God calls us to embody the love of God—even to those that society views to be undeserving. Youth were hungry for conversations like this and my summer experience made me realize that youth of the church have a passion for peace and justice that is desperately needed in the church and in our world. DPF ensures that this passion continues to be nurtured in our youth! ~ Naomi Gonzalez

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+ You support innovative ways of exposing youth to the world's diversity. This summer, the youth of this country and church were made more aware of the world's diversity through DPF's partnership with Global Ministries and the Middle East Initiative. Not only does DPF enable youth to meet people who are different from them, they lived a whole week with us, created relationships with us and witnessed differences in habits, traditions and lifestyles. The impact of learning about injustices and human rights violations from someone who is part of your community is so valuable. What is it like for our youth to learn that people in this world live under military occupation? After my first week of the internship, a girl from Texas wrote to me: "You have opened a new passion for me to learn more about what is happening in the world, to seek peace & justice. You have opened my eyes. I had no idea that this is happening right now. I will try to help and make a difference and will be praying for you and your country." ~ Minerva Halteh

+ You support the strengthening and growth of the eternal fabric that connects us all. In one camp, a young boy asked in the sincerest voice, "Why do we even need to call anyone gay at all? Why can't we just call it *love*? When a boy loves another boy, why can't it just be love?" and then he waited for an answer. First, I wanted to reiterate the empowering action that proclaiming a sexual identity has for some. *Yet it is society itself that laid the framework for a need to proclaim an identity at all*, my mind told me. Then as quick as he asked the question, I imagined a world just as he described it. In that world, would I feel any need at all to proclaim an identity? No, I never had a problem with my sexuality to begin with. It was completely normal to me. I remember it didn't have a name at all until society itself named it. It was society all along that created the label and continues to need it. I could only respond with "I don't know, but that is the best question I've heard all summer." ~ Matthew Capestro

When you support DPF, you support so much more than an intern program. You support the creation of leaders, the creation of peacemakers and the perpetuation of God's beloved community. You support individuals and communities. You support a link between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as a denomination and individual regions, churches, camps and parishioners. Each summer, you support all of this and so much more. Thank you for your gifts to this incredible program, for investing in us this year and for enabling us to bring your gifts to the young people of our church. Though our summer as DPF Peace Interns has concluded, the mission continues! As we transition from interns to members, please join us by renewing your commitment to Disciples Peace Fellowship, future interns and our whole church!

Blessings, Lexie, Rachel, Naiomi, Minerva & Matthew,
2016 Disciples Peace Interns and *Missionary-in-Residence Peace Interns*

Thanks to Our Village! (cont.)

(Training partners, cont.): Olivia Bryan-Updegrove (Child Development–DHM), Linda McKiernan-Allen (dinner host), Randy Kuss (Self-Care & Spiritual Practices), Chrissy Stonebraker-Martinez (Workshop Building–Former Intern–InterReligious Task Force on Central America & Colombia), John Brock (Conscientious Objection), Jim Higginbotham (Healthy Boundaries), Bruce Ervin (Disciples & DPF History). Global Ministries training partners: Stacy Kitahata (Cross-Cultural Communication & Cultural Competency), Sunitha Mortha (Story of Mission), Jessica Vazquez-Torres (Anti-Racism Training), Cathy Nichols (GM). We thank our support staff: Lonna Owens & Kelly Harris; and BIG THANKS to those who hosted the interns: Allisonville Christian Church & Rev. Diane Spleth (training week and mid-summer retreat); Camp Christian, Advance Conference & Ohio Region (closing retreat); along with Craig Watts, Jeff Hon, Jackie Twedell, Melinda Wood, and Cody Bailey for extended individual stays.

Interview with James Hamlett, (cont.)

JH: lottery. There was great turmoil on college campuses about the Viet Nam War in general and especially about the lottery. Those selected, if not otherwise deferred, were confronted with a series of potentially life-changing questions. Those selected in the lottery had to face these questions. Those not selected were off the hook. The difference in treatment only enhanced the divisiveness around the war.

DPF: How did you come to the decision to register as a Conscientious Objector? Who influenced your choice? Who helped you make this decision?

JH: As a young person I was active in my church. I had seriously considered the possibility of attending a church related college and preparing for ministry. I had been taught by my parents to think for myself. As the Viet Nam War expanded, I came to the belief that our country's involvement was wrong. And as I questioned myself about why, I came to understand that I believed all killing of human life to be wrong and therefore could not condone nor participate. My decision, against the advice of family and some friends, was to declare as a CO and then work at having some influence in how I might serve my two-year commitment in Alternative Service.

DPF: What happened once you made the decision? What were you required to do, and how did the Christian Church become involved?

JH: Once I made my decision, I contacted the pastors at my church. They gave me their support and put me in touch with a community ministry specializing in Conscientious Objectors, led by a Disciples pastor. I prepared the required forms, offered character advocates and prepared my personal statement regarding what I believed and why I was conscientiously opposed to serving as a military combatant. The community ministry opened a network of resources and support for those who sought CO status, [including] information about where one might serve. This was a broad list of hospitals, social service organizations, and one United Christian Missionary Society. I contacted a number of these organizations. I subsequently received a letter from the UCMS saying that they had no real opening, but if I would come and be willing to start by serving in their mailroom, they would see what they might have for me that would fit with my education and skills. So as a leap of faith, I moved to Indianapolis to start Alternative Service in the UCMS mailroom, intending to return to my childhood home after two years.

DPF: How do you think the decisions you made at that point in your life affected the trajectory of the rest of your life? Would you do it again? What advice would you share with young people?

JH: Had I taken another path, I would not have had the opportunity to serve at UCMS, to become acquainted and be nurtured by some of the great saints of this church. I likely might have become an attorney and served a career in a secular environment. Would I do it again? I would like to think so. Being clear about one's faith positions and being willing to stand for those positions, even if standing alone was the real issue. The draft was simply the facilitator for crystallization and action. So if I were to give advice, it would be this. Seek opportunities that will test and provide clarity to your faith and what you believe you are called to do. Be firm in your faith, willing to stand against the tide of opinion or peer pressure. Be open to God's leading as God opens doors for service consistent with your faith. And be confident that you will find blessing in your decisions. It can be life changing.

DPF: *Thanks so much for sharing your story with us! Blessings in your retirement, Jim!*

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