

Peacemaker's Pulpit – October 2020

Rev. Kim McKerley

Pastor, Bethany United Church of Christ in Randolph

The wonderful Willem Lange tells of a group of eight-year-old boys in a Sunday School class playing a game called "I Can Stop the Hurt". The boys stood in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. The game began when one boy punched the shoulder of the boy next to him, who then did the same (a little harder) to the one next to him, and on it went.

When they'd made it once around the circle, the teacher said to them, "When it is your turn, you can end the game by saying, 'I can stop the hurt. Do that and the game will be over.'"

Round two began and then round three, the blows landing with increasing force. It seemed it would never end.

Finally, one of them blurted out, "I can stop the hurt!" With that, the game was over. And the boy who ended it, instead of being shamed, was celebrated, and became a hero to his peers.

"Kids recognize courage at least as quickly as the rest of us", Lange observed.

Indeed, making peace takes courage.

It takes courage to break the cycle of violence.

It takes courage to refrain from repaying evil for evil.

It takes courage to speak truth to power.

Around our tables, across our nation, throughout our planet...may we summon the courage to stop the hurt.

I pray you courage in the struggle...