



Disciples Peace Fellowship

Twenty years ago this summer, I packed up my backpack, grabbed my guitar, and headed off to serve as a Peace Intern for the Disciples Peace Fellowship. Four other interns and I had a week of orientation in Indianapolis, where staff of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) taught us about national and international issues of concern and how to inform others of them. Then we headed to church camps throughout the US and Canada to bring the witness of peace and justice to the youth of our church.

That summer, I went to camps in West Virginia, Florida, Texas, Indiana, Kentucky, and Michigan, where I served as a counselor and led programs to raise the consciousness of young people about peace and justice issues, teaching peace songs, organizing role playing games, leading Bible study, and trying to challenge youth to think about their Christian social responsibility. It was an amazing summer that transformed my life. Each week, I dealt with controversial issues that elicited strong reactions, debated with those who disagreed, developed intense friendships, and finally went through the pain of saying good-bye – and then the next week I started it all over. I met extraordinary young people who were eager to think and learn and seek to live a more Christian life. I also met amazing adults who had given a week of their summers to serve as camp leaders. And most importantly, I learned more about who I was and what I believed.

Serving as a peace intern helped to shape my future, as I became aware of my connection to all God's world and my need to serve as an agent to help transform that world. I went on to earn a PhD in Political Science, specializing in Africa, then served as director of the Human Rights Watch office in Rwanda, before taking a position as a college professor that gives me the opportunity to raise the social consciousness of hundreds of students. I continue to spend holidays doing human rights missions in Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo. Serving as a Peace Intern has in some ways become a lifetime work for me.

In the 25 years of the Peace Intern program, over 100 young people have served as Peace Interns. Many interns have gone on to seminary and become pastors. Others, like me, have become college teachers or followed different career paths. ***But all of us have been transformed by our experiences.*** The Peace Intern program has been an amazing incubator for leaders in our church and our community. Interns leave their summer with a strong sense of the difference that they can make in the world.

Please consider supporting the Peace Intern program by sending a donation to Disciples Peace Fellowship. The issues may have changed since I was an intern in 1984, but the need for Peace Interns is as strong as it has ever been. With the war in Iraq, continuing attacks on civil liberties at home, and a vital election taking place, it is more important than ever that our youth learn about peace and justice as an alternative. And the Peace Intern program is a wonderful opportunity to train the leaders for peace and justice of tomorrow.

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