**Peace Crane Week #1 Devotional** March 22, 2024

I’m not a politician.

I don’t follow the news as closely as I should.

I’m certainly no geography expert!

But what I am is a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, a friend.

And someone who loves children.

I understand Israel was attacked by a Palestinian terrorist group called Hamas and now the Israeli armed forces have waged war on Gaza where many Palestinians live.

I see the pictures on television.

Bombed out areas that will take years to become inhabitable again.

I see children and families walking away from their homes.

Away from everything they know.

Everything they have.

I hear political pundits talk about strategies and timelines.

But my eyes keep returning to the children.

They have no part to play in this conflict.

Yet – they suffer.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

Say that there are at least 17,000 Palestinian orphans as of March 4th.

Over 1 million people have been displaced in Northern Gaza.

Meaning families have taken their belongings – what they can carry

and along with members of their families and have started walking.

Walking to an unknown destination in the southern part of Gaza.

Can you imagine walking while not having food or water?

Mass famine is happening, and hundreds of thousands will die.

This conflict isn’t the only war happening right now though.

According to the website, Geneva Academy,

There is a organization, the Rule of Law in Armed Conflict (RULAC), that classifies all situations of armed violence that amount to an armed conflict under international humanitarian law.

Today, it monitors more than 110 armed conflicts and provides information about parties, the latest developments, and applicable international law.

Some of these conflicts make the headlines, others do not.

Some of them started recently, while others have lasted more than 50 years.

Have you ever noticed our culture jumps from one news story to another.

We never spend much time on any one issue – we get sound bites from the news.

How many of us take a deep dive into any of these kinds of situations?

It’s overwhelming.

Breathtaking really.

And what can I – we – do about all this in Wheeling, WV?

We can shine a light on the situation, so people don’t forget what’s happening.

We can speak the truth about its impact on people.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 reads “a time to tear and a time to mend,

 a time to be silent and a time to speak,”

We can also speak about this conflict with our hands.

We can make cranes.

Peace cranes.

And we can pray.

The cranes we make will be a visual reminder over the next few weeks

that while we certainly can’t change policy or impact military actions

We can pray – asking God to protect the people impacted by war.

We can pray the leaders of the world find their moral compass.

We can pray the helpers in that part of the world receive resources they need to make people’s lives better

* Food, medicine, safe places to stay

Matthew 5:9 ~ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

As we begin our peace crane making, let us offer a prayer by

John van de Laar – a Methodist pastor

**Our Small Difference**

We may not be able to confront queens,

or challenge presidents;

We may not have the capacity to divert resources,

or uplift communities;

We may not have the voice to silence the noise of war,

or the words to negotiate peace between armies;

But, as we follow you, O Christ, we are able to do something.

And so, we pray that you would inspire us

to commit to and act on

the small difference we can make:

May we bring peace

through small acts of gentleness

and reconciliation;

May we bring wealth

through small contributions

and collaborations;

May we bring safety

through small acts of consideration

and acceptance;

May we bring wholeness

through small acts of care

and service.

And in the small ways, O God,

may our small difference make a big contribution

to your saving work in our world.

Amen.