



# Benedictines for Peace

December 2024

Dear Friends,

“Let peace be your quest and aim.”

As the Roman Empire was collapsing, Saint Benedict wrote this message in the Prologue to his *Rule for Monastics*, a guide to a way of life for communities made up of people seeking God. More than fifteen hundred years later, amid the same kind of trouble in our country and around the world, Benedictines for Peace continues to follow that message and put it into practice.

Throughout this past year, we have done that in many different ways, and we expect to continue to advocate and work for nonviolence and justice in the year ahead. That’s possible because of you and many other members of the community, who faithfully pray with us, participate in our events, collaborate with us on projects, and support us financially. Some of the peace work you’ve enabled includes:

- Take Back the Site Vigils, which began twenty-five years ago. People continue to be moved, challenged, and comforted by these prayer services at the location of each homicide in the Erie area, where friends, family, and neighbors reclaim the area for nonviolence, and pray for both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Forty-four years of Good Friday Pilgrimage for Peace, which brings the Stations of the Cross to the streets of Erie. This year’s pilgrimage theme was the suffering of war, and approximately 120 people joined on foot and by chartered bus, praying with the people of Gaza and the entire Holy Land, Ukraine and Russia, Sudan, Haiti, and all other places torn apart by war.
- Encouraging people to walk 25 miles, the length of the Gaza Strip, at the end of the summer, culminating in a five-mile walk together at the Peninsula. Over sixty people, from as far away as Oregon and California, participated in this experience, contributing to Mercy Corps’ work in Palestine and growing in solidarity with those suffering from the war in Gaza.
- Raising awareness and deepening conversation about environmental concerns regarding IRG, a proposed plastics processing plant in Erie, to ensure that new industries in our city and region are not exploitative of vulnerable communities and harmful to the Earth.

- Protesting and praying at the Shale Insight Conference, the annual meeting of the largest fossil fuel lobby in the United States, held at the Bayfront Convention Center this September.

Perhaps most importantly, in the lead-up to the general election in November, we sponsored a nonviolence training in conjunction with the Blue Coats and other local peace activists. It was encouraging to see that several college students were in attendance, curious about what they could do to de-escalate conflicts and be part of peacemaking efforts.

We expect that in the year ahead, offering more nonviolence trainings, especially to young people will be an important use of our time and resources. Your support will make it possible to rent gathering spaces in the City, pay trainers from organizations like DC Peace Teams, and advertise these opportunities to those who could most benefit from participating in them. We are grateful for anything you can give.

[Please click here to make a donation.](#)

As we look back on this past year and ahead to 2025 and beyond, it's clear we have our work cut out for us on many different fronts. Our city, country, and planet face many unknowns, and have been through tumultuous times. But we are grateful for our many friends and collaborators who share our convictions about nonviolence, equality, and respect for all life and for the Earth. As Saint Benedict encourages us to do, we continue aiming for peace in all things. Thank you for being part of this important work, and for all you do to make our world more peaceful.

In peace and gratitude,

The BFP Steering Committee

Anne McCarthy, OSB, Coordinator, Kathleen Kutz, Juan Llarena, Ann Muczynski, OSB, Mary Nelson, Priscilla Richter, Jacqueline Sanchez-Small, OSB