



An Invitation to Fast for Disarmament

by Linda Cataldo Modica, Jane Addams Branch/DISARM Committee (*Resource guide #6*)

This year marks the 75th commemoration of the incineration of Hiroshima & Nagasaki by US nuclear weapons, and WILPFers are taking this anniversary very seriously.

From August 6th (Hiroshima atomic bombing) to August 9th (Nagasaki hydrogen bombing), an intentional fast will be held around the world. As the organizers say, the fasters are “casting the body ballot -- a sincere, intentional and bodily commitment” dedicated to nuclear weapons disarmament. WILPF branches – and individual members – are invited to participate.

Intentional fasting is not only a spiritual practice with deep roots in Scripture, but it is also a tactic employed by movements for social justice. Think Gandhi, Chavez, Gregory among many others. This fast, led by the Trident Plowshares in Britain, demands disarmament.

Abstaining from nourishment (not water) is one way to fast, but even with that approach there are options. The organizers of the International Peace Fast ask that those who sign up as fasters follow these broad guidelines:

1. Make a sincere commitment that's intentionally directed at ending nuclear weaponry;
2. Publicize your branch's fast – through news releases & social media – and the fact that people around the world are fasting for disarmament;
3. Alter your diet in a notable way (notable to the peace faster, maybe not to others), such as
 - not eating between certain hours that one would ordinarily be doing (e.g. fasting from food, not water, between 10am and 4pm, at least one day),
 - cutting out at least one staple (carbs, flesh/meats, caffeine, etc.) from your diet,
 - doing one of the above for at least one day between August 6th and 9th.
4. If a branch member chooses to fast for several days then other branch members can offer moral support via phone calls and visits following local COVID-19 rules.

If you choose a liquid-only fast, the Master Cleanse beverage has been adopted by Jorja Green, a long-time peace activist who uses her fast to raise funds for Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF). The ingredients of the Master Cleanse drink per 8-12 ounces of purified or spring water are:

- 2 T fresh-squeezed lemon juice (about ½ a lemon)
- 2T pure maple syrup
- 1/10 tsp cayenne pepper (or more to taste)

Not into fasting? Not a problem! There are plenty of ways to help end the tyranny of the bomb that has oppressed the world for far too long. August 6th is a Thursday, so the local offices of federal legislators

will be open. Call them to express your outrage about these WMDs that annually siphon off billions of dollars from health care, education, and affordable housing for families to shelter in during the pandemic. Demand not one more dime be spent on new nuclear weapons or tests. Write, if you prefer. Commit your branch to 75 calls or letters to each federal office. Make Congress listen!

All these expressions of solidarity -- for the Hibakusha, for test site downwinders, for downstreamers of nuclear facilities, for Plowshares activists who risk their lives to prevent omnicide – they too are true fasting because they help “loose the bonds of injustice” (Isaiah 58) that nuclear war spending and downwind & downstream contamination represent.

Here is the official statement that as a faster you will be endorsing, please use this text in your publicity about your own fast:

**Call of the international groups of fasters
We demand nuclear disarmament!**

We are groups of fasters who have decided to forego nourishment for at least 4 days, from August 6th, 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, until August 9th, anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, to express our total opposition to nuclear weapons, and to call for their complete abolition.

This year will go down in history as the year when a major calamity struck all nations of the world with equal force. Exposing as it has the fragility and interdependency of the human race, the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to calls for radical change – changes in the governance of the world, changes in our priorities, an end to the devastation wreaked on our planet.

The world spends \$2,000,000,000,000 a year on weapons; a significant proportion of this goes into the maintenance and development by just 9 nuclear-armed states of the world's 14,000 nuclear weapons, a small fraction of which would be sufficient to destroy the planet several times over. Citing the nuclear threat and climate change, the Atomic Scientists who monitor the clock of the Apocalypse have again brought it forward, to just 100 hundred seconds before midnight.

This situation has to stop. We cannot continue to let a small minority of nations hold the rest of the world to ransom, and squander vast sums of money on these terrifying weapons. Speaking in Nagasaki in November 2019, Pope Francis unambiguously denounced the immorality not just of the threatened use of nuclear weapons, but also of their *possession* and *development*.

His plea echoes the terms of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, approved by 122 nations at the United Nations in July 2017, and since signed by over 80 nations and ratified by 40. When 50 nations will have ratified it, this will come into force as a component of International Law. This is just a matter of time, of the pressure of public opinion, and of the determination of the overwhelming majority of civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens, who resolutely oppose the folly of nuclear weapons.

The possession, production and threatened use of nuclear weapons must be prohibited. The United Nations Treaty, along with all other anti-nuclear treaties, must be upheld, and enforced!

We, the undersigned groups of fasters, call on each and every person to join us in expressing this urgent call:

**Nuclear disarmament must happen now!
Join the Fast! Demand that your country signs the Treaty!**

More than ever this year, in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic and its devastating consequences, we are aware that our freely taken decision to fast highlights the fact that we are not amongst the many millions threatened by malnutrition or famine. We will keep this in mind, and recommend that participants in the Fast donate the money they would be spending on food to organizations or charities helping to feed the destitute.

RESOURCE GUIDE #7 : ALL ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE WAVE AND HOW WILPF BRANCHES CAN TAKE PART IN IT BETWEEN 6TH and 9TH August 2020

Some of you will have heard about the PEACE WAVE, which is being organized by a Japanese organization representing hibakusha, their descendents and supporters. The PEACE WAVE is essentially an effort to collect into a single database all the events/actions going on somewhere in the world between 8:15 am Hiroshima time on 6th August and 11:02 am Nagasaki time on 9th August, so their database contains a conceptual wave of action passing from one time zone to the next in a westward direction. The organizers will then advertise this wave of events, through SNS (Social Networking Services), websites, emails, the main and social media, as it encircles the globe several times between the beginning of 6th and the end of 9th August (in your own time zone) .

We know many of our branches are already organizing events in this time period and we wish to show a concerted effort by WILPF US branches to honor the suffering of the hibakusha and to advocate for the abolishing of nuclear weapons, **so I will collect information from you and pass it onto the PEACE WAVE organizers.** We will also make our own list of WILPF US events in this time period and that will be posted on the WILPF US website as soon as I have time to develop the solidarity season's web-pages! Please refer to my 9th July email about using the peace cranes you were sent to plan including them into your activities.

So, as soon as your branch's event/activity (even online) between 6th and 9th August *is confirmed* please send me, cherrill.m.spencer@gmail.com , an email with this info about it: Title of event, your town & state, date and time it starts, your time zone, your WILPF branch name, 2-3 sentences about the event , a website where more details are posted and your event contact person's email address, so the Japanese organizers can be in touch with you. It does not matter if you do not have a website.

Please make the event description that you send me a succinct 2-3 sentences, the PEACE WAVE organizers do not need a 3 paragraph description, and I will not have time to edit long descriptions down, or extract descriptions from flyers.

Please take photos/videos of your activities and record your ZOOM webinars and later I will tell you where to send them, for our own use, and/or your event contact will hear directly from the PEACE WAVE organizers, who will be posting them on the web during the peace wave period and after 9th August.

RESOURCE GUIDE #8. Ideas for finding a local public bell that could be rung on 6th or 9th August to commemorate the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on those dates 75 years ago in 1945.

Symbolism of the Bell

The ringing of bells is often used to symbolize peace and freedom. In many religions, a pealing bell is said to herald the arrival of a supernatural power or spirit, to be the voice of angels or the sound of revelations. In other beliefs, bells either summon or ward off spirits of the dead. Consider three types of public institutions that probably have bells that can be rung.

Bells in Buddhist Temples

Bonshō are sited in Buddhist temples, usually in a specially designated building or tower called a shōrō (鐘樓). They are used to mark the passage of time, and to call the monks to liturgical services. In Buddhism, the bell's sound is considered to be calming and to induce a suitable atmosphere for meditation. Look at the photo in the webpage listed below that shows a bonsho in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco being “rung” for Japanese New Year. (sorry for copyright reasons I cannot put the actual photo here)

<https://www.sfgate.com/things/todo/article/Japanese-New-Year-Bell-Ringing-Ceremony-at-the-3299462.php>

and here is a photo that shows happy kids ringing the same bonsho: <http://www.friscokids.net/2012/12/new-years-with-kids-in-bay-area-2012.html>

Bells in Hindu Temples

In Hinduism, bells are generally hung at the temple dome in front of the Garbhagriha. It is said that by ringing the bell, the devotee informs the deity of his/her arrival. The sound of the bell is considered auspicious which welcomes divinity and dispels evil.

To see some photos of bells in Hindu temples go here: <https://navrangindia.blogspot.com/2018/09/why-do-hindu-temples-have-bell-20.html>

Bells in Christian Churches

A church bell in the Christian tradition is a bell which is rung in a church for a variety of ceremonial purposes, and can be heard outside the building. Traditionally they are used to call worshippers to the church for a communal service. Here's a photo of some church bells in a belfry.



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Finding a bell to be rung. Above are three types of bells you could seek out in your local community. Do a web search on “Buddhist temples near [name of you town]” for example. Go to the websites of the temples/churches that appear in the search results, look over their information to discern if they have any type of bell and if so then look in their “Contact” section to find an email address to write to, or phone number.

Make your request to the Priest of the temple/church with a short explanation about the 75th Anniversary of the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and your wish to have their bell tolled either on 6th or 9th August. If you can find a local Japanese Buddhist temple they will be very aware of this anniversary and may already be planning to ring their bell on those days.

Your request’s explanation could be along these lines: Since the horrific nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, ringing of bells has become a symbol to commemorate and honor the victims of the atomic bomb. As people hear the bells they will be reminded of all the lives lost on that same day in 1945. The sound of the bells are a reminder of how crucial it is that we come together for a world without nuclear weapons & that we make sure that something like that **never** happens **again**.

What to do at the bell ringing. Whether you can gather your branch members, friends and members of the public within earshot of the bell depends on your community’s pandemic rules. In any event make sure those gathered know the significance of the bell tolling by making a short speech. Bring your chains of peace cranes or individual cranes attached to explanation cards to hand out (see our Peace Crane resource guides for ideas of what to do with the ~1000 peace cranes you were sent by WILPF).

See the link to a photo of a typical Bonsho bell and how it is sounded on the other page, and if you find a willing temple then ask, ahead of time, if you can take turns in manipulating the pole to strike the bell and might it be struck 75 times? If you have found a church that will ring their bells discuss with their Minister or chief bell-ringer what kind of peal would be most appropriate. Church bells are more likely to be rung on Sundays so asking for a special peal on Sunday 9th August would be appropriate. To last for the duration of 44 or 47 seconds (the duration of the bombs’ drop on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively).

If your city has a sister city in Japan (many do) you should arrange to have bells of any type rung at the time in your time zone corresponding to the times the A-bombs were dropped in Japan; that would be at 4:15pm, Wednesday, August 5 (U.S. PDT) and at 7:02pm, Saturday, August 8 (U.S. PDT)

See this website for details; *you might discover someone else in your city has already arranged this:*

<https://sistercities.org/2020/07/15/u-s-japan-sister-cities-bell-ringing-75-years-of-peace-since-hiroshima-nagasaki/> This website has also created templates of a [letter to your mayor](#) and a [city proclamation](#) that you can use to get started on organizing your local efforts!

Inform the public & WILPF. If you find a willing temple or church you might offer a small donation to their general fund. Tell your local media about the bell ringing and its significance ahead of time. Invite the public to attend, following local pandemic rules. Use this hash tag: #USJapanBells .

If you manage to arrange a public bell ringing on the 6th or 9th August please send in the details of your event as requested in the Peace Wave instructions in “Resource Guide #7 Joining the PEACE WAVE”.