

let justice roll down

Witherspoon

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Caring for the world ... or fighting over it?





The Co-Moderators' Column

Hard drive crash – and finding a neighbor as human back-up

by Trina Zelle, Co-Moderator of the Witherspoon Society board

Hard drive crash. Something I'd heard about but never experienced until last week. "You did have all your data backed up," was the response of my computer techie son when I described the sounds coming from the interior of my computer. He went on to identify those sounds as the telltale "clicks of death," made by hard drives in distress.

Less than a week later, thanks to the actions of my daughter's friend's boyfriend, I have my life back along with a new hard drive, an external drive and a new appreciation for the concept of "back-up." Of course back-up refers to the actual preservation of crucial data in a secondary location, but, being clergy, it has now become a pointed illustration for some future sermon.

Besides data protection, back-up can also refer to those safety contingencies we put in place as we anticipate all manner of emergencies – whether it's extra water in the car while driving in summer time Arizona, cash tucked away in the sock drawer, or the development of a Plan B, in case A doesn't come through.

But my rescue by someone in the 3 degrees of separation category tells me that back-up is also about that web of human relationship and compassion which not only makes life livable but possible. An informal network of caring that theologian

Ched Meyers refers to as "hidden capital." Sean had never laid eyes on me – yet he spent the better part of a week repairing my computer. "Just buy me a beer sometime," he said, when asked about payment.

As final preparations are made for the Witherspoon conference this fall, "Becoming Neighbor: An Invitation to Global Discipleship," it is important to acknowledge the informal but no less legitimate functions of being neighbor. The sharing of skills without personal gain; the sharing of self with no guarantee of appreciation or even acknowledgement.

As Church, we like to have plans, objectives, and programs in place before new initiatives are launched and certainly, careful planning is important. But being neighbor, locally or globally, is fundamentally about being there for others; it's about presence. You might even say, it's incarnational.



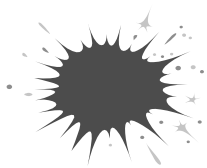
Trina Zelle

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The Editor's Spot

Working for peace ... "beginning from within"

by Doug King

A couple weeks ago I deeply enjoyed a five-day retreat at a Trappist monastery near Atlanta. Five days with a dozen men on retreat, 10 of them Presbyterian ministers. Five days mostly in silence, except for the times of worship (beginning at 4:00 am) and times of work alongside the monks (including picking up trash along the road outside the monastery, and cleaning the nursery where the monks grow bonsai trees to sell). It was a good time.

I realized how much the silence meant when, riding back to Atlanta with three others, we very soon engaged in the same tired arguments: "Our church is losing members because we're compromising with the culture." "But we need to be faithful to Jesus' love for all people." "But we can't let these differences split our church." I began thinking a rule of silence for Presbyterian clergy might not be a bad thing.

But I returned home ready to say something for this issue of *Network News*. Our Witherspoon board meeting in San Jose a few weeks ago decided that this issue should focus on something we have not dealt with recently, but that still demands attention – and action: the war in Iraq. We've gathered a number of pieces on the subject that we hope you'll find helpful, but I'd like to look at the issue of war from a slightly different angle.

To quote a line from one of the hippy types during the activist '60s (was it Timothy Leary?), we might revise the old line "Don't just stand there, *do* something!" – "Don't just do something; *stand* there."

I wandered into this line of thought from one of the books I was reading at the monastery, *A Path with Heart*, by Jack Kornfield. He writes as a teacher of Buddhist meditation, to introduce that practice to people with little background in meditation. He calls his second chapter "Stopping the War," by which he means the war that rages within each of us. He quotes his teacher, Achaan Chah, as describing that inner battle thus:

We human beings are constantly in combat, at war to escape the fact of being so limited, limited by so many circumstances we cannot control. But instead of escaping, we continue to create suffering, waging war with good, waging war with evil, waging war with what is too small, waging war

with what is too big, waging war with what is too short or too long, or right or wrong, courageously carrying on the battle.¹

Because we cannot accept the realities of life, including our insecurity and pain and loss and death, we are constantly struggling to protect ourselves from them, and we must defend ourselves against them – and the people who confront us with them daily – as our enemies.

This insight came to me in a fresh way, perhaps because it came through a Buddhist way of inhabiting the world. But it is nothing really new to those of us who are grounded in the Christian tradition. Paul certainly was painfully aware of this war, as he wrote in Romans 7:21-24:

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

But what does all this have to do with America's current adventures in Iraq and elsewhere? Two things, I think: First, this reminds us that the roots of this war (and maybe of all wars) are spiritual. We are in this war because of fear of those who are different from us, fear of being attacked and hurt again, fear of a world that is so different from the one we thought we knew. And it appears that those on the other side of the conflict, militant Muslims, are motivated by the same kinds of fears.

Our leaders, as well as the leaders on the other side, have exploited those fears brilliantly for their own purposes, perhaps to consolidate and expand their power, to enrich themselves and their friends, to make a name for themselves as defenders of democracy or freedom or Islamic purity or ... you can fill in whatever else should go in this long, long list.

We cannot work effectively against our nation's culture of violence unless we understand the deep spiritual sources from which it draws its power.

But also we need to draw on the deep springs of peace to rein in the wars within ourselves, and to find the strength for the long, long struggle to transform our culture into one of peace, *shalom*, for all. Until we confront the deep conflicts within ourselves and in our cultures and religions and nations – what Paul called principalities and powers – we won't move far toward true peace.



Certainly there's a danger that such a focus might lead us to withdraw from the hard struggles in the political arena, but many great campaigners for peace have known they had to start there. Mahatma Gandhi once said:

I have only three enemies. My favorite enemy, the one most easily influenced for the better, is the British Empire. My second enemy, the Indian people, is far more difficult. But my most formidable opponent is a man named Mohandas K. Gandhi. With him I seem to have very little influence.²

If the Witherspoon Society has a fault, it may be that we tend to emphasize head and hands over heart in our life as an organization, and many of us may do the same as individuals. We are deeply committed to study and reflection, and to action, but we may neglect the spiritual and emotional depths of our own lives. A number of people – from both left and right – have commented that one of the weaknesses of the Rev. Jerry Falwell was that he subordinated his evangelical faith to the political right wing in this country. I wonder whether we do the same thing, and so undermine our own witness for peace and justice, both in our Presbyterian Church and in our society as a whole.

So here's an invitation to all you Witherspooners: Let's talk about the spiritual roots of this war, and let's deal with the spiritual wars within each of us, and experiment with ways to move toward peace. To use the title of a great book written during World War II by the Quaker scholar Douglas Steere, let's work for peace by "beginning from within."³

Let's restore to our lives, and even to the life of our church, the kind of balance that the 4H clubs seek, among head, heart and hands – and so take some steps toward the fourth "H," health, which our Biblical tradition teaches us is really health for persons, for communities, for nations and the world: *shalom*.

¹ Jack Kornfield, *A Path With Heart: A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life* (New York: Bantam, 1993), p. 23.

² Quoted by Jack Kornfield, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³ Douglas V. Steere, *On Beginning from Within* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943).

Your Board at work



The Witherspoon Board met in San Jose, California (looking toward next year's General Assembly), on April 12-14. Seated around the meeting table are (l. to r.) Darcy Hawk, David Zuverink, Trina Zelle, Gene TeSelle (back to camera), Jake Young, Peter Barnes-Davies, Bill Dummer, John Harris, and Mitch Trigger.

Among the actions taken were plans for our September conference in Louisville (see p. 26) and for the 2008 General Assembly; an increase in membership dues (see p. 24), plans for election of officers (p. 21), and much more.

We left looking forward to what's coming in the months ahead.

"Let Justice Roll Down"

The Witherspoon Society Mission

We are a network of concerned Presbyterians responding to God's call to let justice roll down, and to work for healing in a wounded world.

Our mission is:

- To listen and learn from those who have been silenced as we seek solidarity with them;
- To nurture the prophetic voice of the church;
- To equip Presbyterians for faithful participation in the church and world;
- To challenge unjust relationships of power;
- To advocate for peace, justice, the integrity of creation, and the full inclusion of all God's people in church and society.

We seek to revitalize the church's proclamation and action, informed by the whole gospel, and living into the promise of God's reign.

Confronting a never-ending war

At our Witherspoon board meeting on April 12-14, we decided that we need to pay attention to the continuing war in Iraq, and that this issue of *Network News* should be a step in that direction.

We offer four articles on this sad subject:

- A prescient essay by Dr. Ron Kraybill, Professor in the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University, beginning on this page.
- A sermon preached by Rick Ufford-Chase at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, on

March 18, 2007, toward the end of the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq. (pp. 8-11)

- A short article by Bobbie Wrenn Banks and Kathleen Allen, summarizing a bold proposal by former PCUS Moderator Al Winn, calling on Christians to call for (and work for) an end to war. (p. 12)
- A recent report from the Presbyterian Washington Office on the current legislative efforts in Congress to place some of limits on this endless war. (pp. 13-14)

Still Marching into Hell?

By Ron Kraybill, Professor, Conflict Transformation Program, Eastern Mennonite University

January, 2006

“Yes, yes, and the sky is falling, the sky is falling,” taunted my conservative pastor friend in Minnesota for a full year, responding to essays I sent him about why the U.S. invasion of Iraq would fail and make America more insecure than ever. Sadly, Joel, unlike in the folk story, the sky *is* falling for the people of Iraq and the hapless American soldiers sent to fight there. Below is a piece written in November, 2004, as the US was launching a major assault on Fallujah. Fifteen months later, and several vicious turns farther in the terrible cycle of escalation of violence, the analysis continues to be the same, with one major change. The wielding of violence is finally diminishing the power at home of those American leaders who on falsified premises led our nation into a trap that attention to history would have helped us avoid. In the last year I’ve had opportunity to speak with senior U.S. military officers. I was astonished at their anger at the Iraq situation. One used an obscenity to refer to Donald Rumsfeld. Several others spoke eloquently about the limits of force to resolve the situation in Iraq. “As long as people in Iraq don’t have water and jobs,” said one, “we’re wasting our time.” “Marching into Hell” is the title I used in 2004. Today I alter the title with a question mark. Is America perhaps ready at last to look

seriously at alternatives to force as a way of building a just and secure world?

A lifetime in peace negotiations has given me considerable exposure to insurgency movements. The past never fully predicts the future, but it often offers useful pointers. Here is what we can say about those fighting against the United States in Iraq and what patterns of the past suggest we can expect:

1. The majority of those fighting the American forces see themselves as patriots and lovers of their homeland, fighting for the future of their sons and daughters. They are not carefully calculating gains against costs, rather they fight with the passion of those who consider dignity and home to be under attack. Foreigners, by all accounts, are a minority, less than one in five.
2. Their doctrine of resistance is guerilla warfare, whose aim is not to defeat but rather to exhaust the enemy in a protracted war that cannot be won by conventional means. Guerillas seek just enough engagement with the enemy to attract heavy investment of soldiers and equipment. Then they fade, for a repeat in other times and locations.
3. Guerilla warfare advances not through military success but by turning the broad population against the enemy. “We spent a lot of time carefully selecting locations where we felt

we could get the army to engage in major action that would really anger local people,” a veteran of a modern insurgency in Asia once told me. “Then we would work hard to build trust with local people afterwards.”

If these patterns hold true in Fallujah and other locations of pitched battle in Iraq, the outcome is likely to look like this:

1. Just enough resistance will be invested in a given hotspot to attract heavy attack and serious damage from the Americans. American troops will always “win,” at the cost of high losses to civilians, homes and public structures.

2. It will be discovered in the days following “victory” that most of the insurgents fled prior to or during battle and are continuing their struggle from multiple other locations.

3. Enormous attention will be given in Iraq and abroad to the damage caused by the Americans and the suffering imposed by them at the site of battle. The stories told will be a mixture of significant truth and fabrication. It will be impossible for the U.S. to defend itself against these stories because there will be no denying the core truth of vast destruction and suffering.

4. The extremist wing of the resistance will retaliate against any persons thought to have cooperated with the invading Americans. Average Iraqis will face the exhausting dilemma of navigating between widely despised foreigner occupiers and ruthless “you’re either for us or against us” extremists who have risen to power trying to drive them out. Conventional powers commonly assume that all resistance is alike, deserving to be crushed. “Deadenders” was the word Rumsfeld used for months to describe a broad range of opponents of the American invasion. This black/white approach strengthens extremists by driving even more moderate resistance into their arms.

5. Voices of moderation will fall silent. The influence of thoughtful people that exists in every society and whose strengthening is critical to any hope for sustainable peace will grow weaker due to intimidation, elimination, and exhaustion. Polarization will deepen; violence as a way of life will become more deeply entrenched in Iraqi society.

6. Following American “victory,” fighting will end in Fallujah or subsequent sites of battle for a number of months. Normal life will gradually return. But after a lull, and after civilians have returned, guerilla attacks will be renewed and the cycle will begin again.

7. In the meantime, a new wave of recruits, incensed at the barbarity of the foreigners, will have joined the insurgents. Conflict throughout the country will continue to spiral

upward.

8. Internal conflict among Iraqis will increasingly become a major factor. One reason is the disappearance of Iraqi moderates who might build bridges within. Another is the inescapable dynamics of armed resistance: autonomy and issuing orders becomes a way of life for insurgent leaders. Protracted armed struggle brings money and power and rewards intransigence. Those whose power has arisen in violence rarely yield their resources readily to anyone, including their fellow countrymen.

9. It will be deemed necessary by American leaders – whose internal power has also risen vastly from the threat and wielding of violence – to throw yet more soldiers, weapons, and money into the fray as the violence and chaos increase.

10. Return to step one, at a more murderous and destructive level than ever.

With few exceptions, this has been the pattern so far in Iraq and there is little reason to believe it will not be repeated. The frightening truth is that America is now trapped, having repeatedly played the role most desired for it by guerrilla strategists. They could not succeed in demonizing the U.S. in the eyes of average Iraqis without active help and so far American leadership has assisted at every step.

The only way out is to remove all doubt that this is an invasion motivated primarily by American imperial purposes. America must face the truth – our leaders pretended to have global support but in fact had little all along, and made things worse by insisting on controlling everything about the invasion and reconstruction. The price of getting out with any credibility left at all will be bearing the continued costs of stabilizing Iraq, while giving up American control over events and structures there: administrative, economic, political, and military.

The history of conventional military powers directly involved in guerrilla warfare abroad suggests loss of control is likely. In the present situation, things are already far beyond American control and are in fact, moving rapidly towards loss of constructive *influence*. The big question is how much more pain Americans will bear – and tragically that suffered by ordinary Iraqis will be exponentially higher – before admitting the folly of thinly veiled unilateralism and narrow reliance on force as a tool for change.

Stark choices are at hand: America will either choose a path of genuine multilateralism with the accountabilities political and ethical that come with it, or bleed itself into degradation.

The sooner the true sharing of control happens, the more likely it is that others will step in and give meaningful assistance in addressing a problem that threatens a vast region. The longer it takes, the harder it will be ever to recover from the perception – now held globally – that beneath smooth talk of liberation it is arrogance and selfishness that motivate America. Relinquishing the ability to call the shots in Iraq may seem to some a bitter price to pay. The alternative? In the best case scenario, a decade of war and enduring alienation from most of the world.

The author:

Ron Kraybill has worked in peace processes and peacebuilding institutions throughout the world, including Ireland, South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Burma and elsewhere. He was founding director of the Mennonite Conciliation Service 1979-1988, director of training at the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town 1989-1995, and professor of conflict studies in the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University 1996-2006.

Currently he is a consultant and trainer based in Takoma Park, Maryland, and runs Riverhouse ePress, a publisher of conflict style inventories and other peacebuilding materials. This essay was first published on his blog (www.RiverhouseEpress.com) on alternative perspectives on national security.

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This article is available online at <http://www.cpt.org/iraq/CPTIraq-KraybillAnalysis.htm>

40 Years in the Wilderness: 40 Years of Occupation Sabeel International Young Adult Conference July 19- July 29, 2007

- Do you want to know more about Current Realities in Palestine, during this 40th year of the Occupation?
- Do you want to visit Biblical Sites and share Biblical reflection with Young Adults from around the world?
- Are you between the ages of 18 and 35 and want to be involved in advocacy for peace with justice in the Holy Land?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, then we invite you to participate in Sabeel’s 2nd International Young Adult Conference.

Our vision for this conference is to gather, network with, and further educate young leaders from Palestine and around the world, during this 40th year of the Occupation, so that they may be trained, commissioned, and equipped with the tools to act in advocacy to end the Occupation.

The conference will include:

- Visits to Palestinian Towns and Villages
- Events Celebrating Palestinian Culture
- Worship and Biblical Reflections
- Volunteer Experience
- Advocacy Workshops
- Sharing Experiences and Ideas with Palestinian Young Adults

The registration and program fee for the conference is \$700. This includes all of your land costs – food, accommodations, ground transportation, speakers and activities – but it does not include airfare. When scheduling flights, please keep in mind that participants should arrive on July 18th.

SPECIAL OFFER- For those interested in traveling in the Galilee there will be an option for a two-night tour for an additional \$150 after the conference.

REGISTER BY JUNE 15th AT WWW.SABEEL.ORG or e-mail youth@sabeel.org for more information

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No Pollyanna He: Following Jesus in a Time of Fear

A sermon preached by Rick Ufford-Chase
Executive Director, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

New York Avenue Presbyterian Church
March 18th, 2007

Texts:
Isaiah 58: 6-9
Luke 6: 27-31

Everything I am going to share with you this morning is true, except for the part that hasn't happened yet . . .

Once upon a time, not so very long ago . . .

The people of our churches across the United States were afraid. No one knew exactly where the fear had come from, for they knew that their churches had not always been held captive by their fear, but somehow they had grown more and more comfortable, and from comfort it had been a short jump to the sin of worshipping false gods - mostly the false gods of wealth and materialism and the capitulation to the seductions of over-consumption. As they grew increasingly attached to their belongings and to the illusion that they themselves had created their own good fortune, their comfort led them surely and inexorably down the slippery path to fear, for when we believe that our good fortune has been the result of our own efforts, when we slowly lose the certain knowledge that our help and our hope comes only in the Lord, the pressure to maintain our good fortune becomes almost unbearable, and we eventually dig ourselves into a pit of fear so deep that it is impossible to see God any longer.

Don't get me wrong. It's not that our people intentionally turned away

from God. It's more that the foundation of our faith changed in subtle and largely unnoticed ways. We still, many of us, anyway, went to church each week, but our services of worship in too many places became empty platitudes about our dependence on God that few of us actually believed.

As our worship and our preaching and our prayers became more and more disconnected from the growing reality that our lives were now dedicated to false gods and to the security offered by other gods, it became harder and harder to convince our children and our grandchildren that there was any need to go to church at all. "Of what use is a community of believers that lives in denial," the next generations asked?

No one smells hypocrisy faster than a teenager or young adult, and in our most honest moments, most of us had to admit that our sanctuary had become havens of hypocrisy. Whatever the message about the foundations of our faith that we espoused from our pulpits, it had become clear that we were a people living far from the gospel values we espoused and that we had little intention of questioning our growing independence from God or challenging our obsession with securing our own safety.

Then, on September 11, 2001, the narcissism of our individual races to the illusion of security, and the empty promises of churches that no longer

were filled with a people who needed God, were transformed into a national obsession with security for a people who lived in fear. Almost overnight, our fear as a people became our defining characteristic, and as it did so, we lost all sense of reason. Though our nation was, by any reasonable measure, the most powerful of power brokers in the world, our entire country fell captive to the most potent and frightening of combinations - we became a super-power that understood itself to be the victim.

Though I'm not trained as an historian, it does seem to me that such a combination has inevitably marked the beginning of the end for the great nations of the world throughout history. In the same way that a playground bully inevitably finds himself isolated, alone and spiraling into a life of self-destruction, a nation whose churches have lost the ability to correct the bullying characteristics of their own people also will eventually fall.

But then, one bitterly cold, rainy and snowy day in Washington, D.C. in the late winter of 2007, something happened that suggested to a few careful observers that things were beginning to change. It wasn't a lone event, and those who had the good fortune to participate were not particularly special. It was more like a tipping point that U.S. Christians of future generations would look back on as a moment that marked a new day - a Boston Tea Party kind of moment whose very inevitableness gave it a special, maybe even an overblown kind of deeper meaning. Individual Christians had already been experiencing similar epiphanies for some time. What made this moment special was that it was such a powerful sign to the participants and to the world that this was a collective "gathering up" of the vision of

the people of God.

That night – March 16th, 2007, in defiance of a valiant attempt by the weather to keep it from happening (some reflected that perhaps it was God’s way of trying to test the resolve of God’s people), almost four thousand Christians from across the United States gathered at the National Cathedral and New York Ave. Presbyterian Church in Washington D.C. Simultaneously, thousands of others gathered at more than two hundred churches in communities across the country.

- They heard the voice of a mother who had lost her son, a fallen soldier who was a member of the National Guard, and many wept as she expressed the anguish of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of mothers who have wept for the sons they have lost throughout the foolish course of the countless wars of human history.
- Rev. Raphael Warnock rose that night to beg his church and his nation to give up their meaningless arguments about winning or losing the war on terror and instead to embrace the far more critical challenge of avoiding the loss of our nation’s soul.
- Many other wonderful words were spoken that night as the National Cathedral was filled with candles and the congregation sang as if they genuinely believed that their song had the power to move the entire country to reclaim its foundational values.

I had the good fortune to be there that night. As I participated in that worship to reverse the Church’s obsession with fear – as I listened to the Rev. Jim Wallis shake the very walls of the Cathedral with his insistence that this worship would mark

the beginning of the end of the war in Iraq – I had an overwhelming sense that we were reclaiming our very souls.

Later that night as the worship came to an end, three thousand people spilled out into the snow and the bitter wind to carry their candles – the light of the nonviolent Jesus – to the White House. And then, there was a small miracle – the sort of little miracle that has always appeared at critical moments to give hope to the people of God. Almost in a single instant, the wind ceased and the snow stopped falling and there was a dead calm. It reminded me of the story of the stormy sea crossing in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Mark.

Together, the three thousand people walked through the cold with their candles. They sang and they prayed and they held hands and the children ran on ahead and they lifted their candles high and they continued to reclaim their souls. When they arrived at the White House, they were met by more than six hundred sisters and brothers who had walked from New York Ave. Presbyterian Church and whose candles welcomed them to Lafayette Park.

A short time later, most of those assembled carried their candles around the White House to encircle our President with light and to pray for a new kind of courage – the courage to stand against fear. Two hundred and twenty-two people crossed a police line that night and were arrested as they closed the circle of light around the White House, praying on the sidewalk in front of the White House until the last of them was arrested and taken away at about 2:30 in the morning on that bitterly cold night.

What took place that night as our

people stood against our obsession with fear and reclaimed our souls reminded me of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., forty years and three weeks earlier, as he stood against the fear and the violence of war of his own time. Dr. King said that:

The past is prophetic in that it asserts loudly that wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows. One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. How much longer must we play at deadly war games before we heed the plaintive pleas of the unnumbered dead and maimed of past wars? Why can’t we at long last grow up, and take off our blindfolds, chart new courses, put our hands to the rudder, and set sail for the distant destination, the port of peace?"

Dr. King went on to say:

We will not build a peaceful world by following a negative path. It is not enough to say ‘we must not wage war.’ It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not only on the negative expulsion of war, but on the positive affirmation of peace.

My friends, what took place on that night was critically important as a collective sign from the participants that things were beginning to change, but what mattered far, far more was what happened next . . .

As those Christians left that night

and returned to their communities, they discovered many others like them who were on fire with the possibility of reclaiming their own biblical traditions and the words of the earliest prophets of the Old Testament, who called their people to account in similar moments of fear in their own time. They recalled the words of the prophet Isaiah, recorded in the 58th chapter of the book of Isaiah, in which he said:

Is not this the fast (the kind of sacrifice) I choose:

To loose the bonds of injustice,
 To undo the thongs of the
 yoke,
 To let the oppressed go free,
 and to break every yoke?
 Is it not to share your bread
 with the hungry,
 And bring the homeless poor
 into your house;
 When you see the naked, to
 cover them,
 And not to hide yourself from
 your own kin?
 Then your light shall break
 forth like the dawn,
 And your healing shall spring
 up quickly;
 Your vindicator shall go before
 you,
 The glory of the Lord shall be
 your rear guard.
 Then you shall call and the
 Lord will answer;
 You shall cry for help, and
 God will say,
 Here I am.

Together, Christians across the United States began opening their eyes to Isaiah's call for justice for the poorest among us, and little by little, their churches and their communities were transformed as they recognized the fundamental truth of Isaiah's words – that all people – all over the world – are in fact our family, and that any attempt to hide from

them, or to abuse that core conviction, is deeply displeasing to our God.

They began re-reading the stories and the words of Jesus, among them those we read from the 6th chapter of the book of Luke this morning:

But I say to you that listen,
 love your enemies, do good to
 those who hate you, bless
 those who curse you, pray for
 those who abuse you. If any-
 one strikes you on the cheek,
 offer the other also; and from
 anyone who takes away your
 coat, do not withhold even
 your shirt. Give to everyone
 who begs from you; and if
 anyone takes away your
 goods, do not ask for them
 again. Do to others as you
 would have them do to you.

Together, in small groups at first – and then in larger and larger communities – they reclaimed the gospel and committed to stand against fear, to eschew the glittering illusions of security promised by the war on terror, to end the war in Iraq, and to stand firmly once again as communities of faith that functioned as resistance to the empty promises of the powers and the principalities of their time. Instead, they opted for the harder work – but surer bet – of safety that is built on community, on reaching out to those of whom we are most afraid, of following Jesus' clear command to love our enemies and of building the real safety that is found only in the Isaiah notion of justice and in Jesus' consistent insistence that our security is found only in right relationship.

You see, many in the church of that time still believed that Jesus was kind of a little bit Pollyanna – that he didn't really mean what he said, or that his words were no longer really relevant. But let me share what took place because of that wonderful wit-

ness on a cold March night in Washington:

- A reporter from Al Jazeera was present in the Cathedral that night, and the following day, a newspaper in Tehran picked up his story and ran a picture on the front page of the Tehran paper that showed Christians who were willing to risk arrest to stand against the war. A seed was planted among some Muslims in the Middle East who began to believe that there might be potential Christian partners with whom they could build relationships. Together, in the months that followed, Muslim and Christian moderates committed to stand together against the extremists in their own traditions who cloaked their violence in religious language. Their efforts eventually led to a global, interfaith movement to create a world of genuine security – a global community that would overcome the vagaries and abuses experienced by so many who were on the underside of the global economy.

- A group of students had traveled by car from Whitworth College in Spokane, WA. When their car slid on the icy roads of the Pennsylvania turnpike and they collided with a tractor trailer and ended up unscathed but in a totaled car in the median, they left the car behind and hitchhiked the rest of the way to Washington to be at the Cathedral. Later that night they were arrested as they prayed and witnessed to their faith in front of the White House. Deeply moved by their experience, the students returned to their campus committed to creating a new definition of family – an "Isaiah 58" notion of family. The students created alternative housing at Whitworth called an Isaiah 58 house in which the students committed to simple living and to specific peace and justice projects. When other students heard about it, they copied

the model and the movement began to spread like wildfire to campuses all across the country. By March of 2012, there were tens of thousands of students on campuses across the United States and they were transforming the neighborhoods in which they lived. Few people realized that it had all started on that night in Washington with the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, but God knew.

- There was a chaplain there that night who was deeply moved and inspired by Rev. Warnock's call for a surge in God's nonviolent army, and by the deep pastoral concern that the participants lifted up for U.S. soldiers and their families. On that night, he committed to work with groups like Christian Peacemaker Teams, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and the Presbyterian Church's Colombia Accompaniment program to build what eventually became, by the year 2025, an international movement of more than 250,000 Christians deployed as nonviolent peacemakers in situations of conflict all over the world. Though it is clear in looking back that the movement took off as a direct result of that chaplain's experience on the cold night, no one at that time would have guessed that God could make such a thing happen.

- In the months that followed the witness, a group of seminary students and faculty created a new religious order in an effort to hold themselves accountable to the transformation they experienced at that worship at the National Cathedral. They took vows to live lives of simplicity and to devote themselves in their ministry to the end of war, the creation of a just global community, and the deepest care for all of God's creation. Eventually, that religious order, which crossed all denominational boundaries, grew to include more than 50,000 pastors, nuns,

priests and lay people across the country and around the world, and it all started on March 16th, 2007.

- The people of New York Ave. Presbyterian Church, having been inspired as they played host to thousands of Christians who came from across the country to witness to their faith, rededicated themselves to recovering their long history of being the voice for the voiceless, the strong prophetic voice calling for justice two blocks from the White House. Coming out of that weekend, a small group of members of the church dubbed themselves the "no more business as usual" committee, and vowed that they would dedicate themselves to leading the way among historic, inner city churches, which were transformed to the work of peacemaking and justice across the country.

- And what happened to the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and some thirty other partners who had come together to plan the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq during that amazing weekend in March of 07? They were transformed also, by the power of what had happened to them when they committed together to boldly and unapologetically proclaim the gospel of the Prince of Peace. They became the primary protagonists – the "outside agitators" - in a faith-based peace movement that swept across the country. Historians later looked back on that time as the next great awakening – a revival and renewal of faith that opened the path to genuine security that defined the global community by the end of the twenty-first century.

My friends, everything in this story is true, except for the part that hasn't happened yet.

We have a choice. We can opt – on this morning – to continue to live into

the bland and uninspiring work of institutional maintenance that characterizes so many of our churches today. We can choose to continue our commitment to place a theological veneer over a culture of emptiness, unfulfilled promises, and fear. We can choose, if we wish, to continue to create churches that bless our affluence and our power based on a corrupted reading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Or . . .

We can choose on this day to dedicate all of our lives to the creation of a new movement of followers of Jesus Christ who know that we are called to transform the world. Someday, this weekend could be understood to have been the tipping point. The choice is ours.

Amen.

I am indebted to peacemaker and storyteller John Paul Lederach for the central idea of the power of imagination in this sermon. All of the conjecture is entirely my own. I expect that God is capable of far more creative imagination than I am able to fathom.

Biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Dr. King's words are taken from his speech against the War in Vietnam on February 25th, 1967. I encourage you to read the entire speech, which can easily be found by typing his name and the date into an internet search engine.

Rick Ufford-Chase

Christians called to consider seriously the abolition of war

by Bobbie Wrenn Banks and Kathleen Allen

“I think we can share a dream with the Empire. Those without status or portfolio can still dream, and their dreams can have strange power, like the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. We can badger the Empire with that dream, refuse to be silent about it. I would propose that our dream be the abolition of war.”

– Albert Curry Winn, *Ain't Gonna Study War No More*

The Rev. Albert Curry Winn, former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church USA, provides a strong biblical and theological foundation for the Christian call to work for the abolition of war in his 1993 book, *Ain't Gonna Study War No More*.

Rev. Winn makes a careful study of relevant Old and New Testament texts, facing head-on the ambiguity of scripture toward war and peace. He insists that this ambiguity, rather than providing an opening for Christians to participate in war, “questions us and demands that we take a stand.” Our model is Jesus who chose the way of peace.

For individuals who follow Jesus' example there is conscientious objection, refusal to participate in war. For the community there is the call of corporate witness by “patient subordination and willing suffering as a peaceful community in a warring world.”

But there is more. Those who choose the way of peace must also embrace the goal of abolishing war. As improbable as this goal might seem, it is “certainly as possible and as scriptural as the abolition of slavery,” which was just as entrenched in human history and scripturally justified as war. We must take seriously the dream of abolishing war, claim that dream and share it with others.

It is possible to accept this challenge because we do not take our cues from the nightly news and the sad resignation to war that pervades our world. Rather, we act out of God's promise of the final victory of *shalom*.

Abolishing war would not actually be *shalom* because only God can usher in that all-encompassing wholeness and well-being. Abolishing war would not mean the end of all weapons

and force. It would not mean the end of all fear and oppression. But it would mean the end of battlefield and civilian casualties, and the end of training young men and women to kill. It would mean freedom from enormous military budgets. It would mean the end of military dictatorships.

Abolishing war would be “a practical, imperfect step in honor of the kingdom, a distant approach to *shalom*.”

Rev. Winn suggests four strategies for moving forward:

- **Torah**, instruction, which when taken to heart will produce important psychological, religious and cultural change
- **Adjudication**, a way of settling disputes between nations without resorting to the arbitration of arms
- **Conversion of weapons** of war to instruments of peace; conversion also of research and development for war to research and development for peace
- **Economic Justice** through land reform and other efforts to give more of the world's people access to the means of production and a stake in the commonwealth.

“The practical difficulties are staggering,” he admits. Yet “what is urged here is simply that the goal of abolishing war be considered.” The fact that we lack a complete blueprint for action does not excuse us from taking the first steps. And ours are confident steps because “we can trust God to shed light as we turn each corner in a long and circuitous route.”

What do those four strategies look like?

In the church school class where Dr. Winn's book was discussed, Kathleen Allen offered some examples of the strategies he suggested. Among other things, she mentioned these:

For Torah:

Our two-year long class, “Lord Make Me An Instrument of Thy Peace,” not only discussed facts and figures with regard war and its human and economic costs, but also looked at war in the context of scripture.

One member of the class participated in the accompaniment program in Colombia, which involves not just his physical presence there but the dissemination of information about what is happened in Colombia to individuals and congregations.

Continued on page 14

THE FUTURE OF IRAQ

by Catherine Gordon,
Presbyterian Washington Office

This material was published recently in the May-June 2007 issue of the Washington Report to Presbyterians, which is produced by the Presbyterian Washington Office to help us keep informed on Congressional action (or lack of it) on issues of concern to us and our church. This article reports specifically on funding for the war in Iraq and efforts to combat the humanitarian crisis facing that country.

As debate continues on funding for the Iraq war and setting a time line for withdrawal, the humanitarian crisis in Iraq has worsened. In late March the Congressional Research Service issued a report on the situation in Iraq stating that “the humanitarian crisis many feared would take place in March 2003 as a result of the war in Iraq appears to be unfolding.”

According to the report:

Throughout areas in western and central Iraq, the security situation is deteriorating, and many of Iraq’s neighbors fear that they are being overwhelmed by refugees fleeing over Iraq’s borders. There are now heightened concerns about the absorptive capacity of neighboring countries, whether they can provide adequately for the populations moving across borders, and the impact of refugee flows on stability in general. Some experts think that the Iraq situation could well begin to outpace other refugee crises worldwide.

The conflict has caused some 1.5 million Iraqis to be internally displaced and two million more to be refugees. The internal displacement of Iraq’s population is adding to the humanitarian crisis.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has issued a report on the dire humanitarian situation in Iraq, calling it “a conflict that spares no one.” The ICRC says health care facilities in Iraq are stretched to the limit. Medical professionals are fleeing the country in large numbers, leaving the hospitals desperately short of staff. Staff and resources are stretched thin because of the daily attacks and mass influx of casualties.

Lack of maintenance has left Iraq’s infrastructure in poor repair. Security concerns have hindered work on electrical power grids, water and sanitation systems, and medi-

cal facilities. Electricity and fuel shortages and lack of infrastructure have caused the supply of water to be irregular and unreliable and pose a risk to public health. Water is scarce and often contaminated, and malnutrition has increased in the past year.

While current Iraq war policy has focused on military means of winning the war, many military leaders are arguing that there needs to be more emphasis placed on diplomacy and development. In late January, Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the U.S. armed forces in Iraq, stated that “ultimate success in Iraq will be determined by actions in the Iraqi political and economic arenas.” He testified that military action is not a sufficient solution for the challenges facing Iraq.

The Administration and Congress are debating supplemental funding for the Iraq war. At press time, the House and Senate have passed different versions of an emergency supplemental spending bill for the Iraq war. While the Administration pushes for a troop surge, the House version sets a hard August 2008 deadline for troop withdrawal and the Senate version sets a nonbinding target of March 31, 2008. Neither version includes the legislative means to enforce a withdrawal – a prohibition on funding of combat operations.

The legislation will go to conference and is expected to reach the President’s desk by the end of April. It will most likely be vetoed because of the withdrawal language. Then Congress is expected to acquiesce to the President on the Iraq withdrawal language, at least for now. There have, however, been some positive steps in the funding of humanitarian and peace building efforts.

The Administration and Congress have taken critically important first steps to insure the relief and development needs of the Iraqi people. Both the Senate and House versions of the supplemental provide funding for development and humanitarian aid, including funds for community development programs that have been highly successful at promoting stability through the rebuilding of communities, bringing together participants from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Critical funding was also allocated to support the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian groups that assist the 1.7 million Iraqis displaced inside Iraq and the two million Iraqi refugees in nearby states.

Other positive steps include the work of the State Department’s Office for the Coordinator of Reconstruction and

Stabilization in Iraq, and recent steps taken by the Secretary of State to meet with Syria and Iran on the Iraqi situation. These talks are a huge development in U.S. diplomacy, indicating the Administration may now recognize that long-term stability requires both a diplomatically engaged Middle East and strong economic development.

Key religious and humanitarian organizations urge more support for Iraqi civil society, peace building, humanitarian relief, and responsible economic development. During the budget and appropriations process, there will be a push to increase funding for these programs. Steps by the U.S. and international community that support diplomacy, political processes, and international cooperation might help end the violence and establish a process to end the civil war. These steps could lead to a stabilized Iraq, making reconstruction and reconciliation possible.

Congress will have several opportunities in the near future to insist on further changes in policy. Your long-term involvement supporting changed Iraq policy is needed.

**We hope you can join us
for one of our special events
at Ghost Ranch or in Louisville!**
(See more about them on pages 26 - 30.)
**But if you can't be there yourself,
do the next best thing,
and help someone else to get there!**

We hope you'll consider a special gift to Witherspoon, to provide a "scholarship" for someone who could not otherwise attend one of these very important events.

\$190 will cover registration and meals for someone — perhaps a Young Adult Mission Volunteer, or a seminary student, or simply a person with limited resources — at the Louisville conference on Becoming Neighbors, September 16-19.

\$240 will provide the registration fee for one person to attend the Ghost Ranch seminar, A Week for Peace, Global Justice and Creation, July 30 - August 5.

You can use the envelope in this issue of *Network News* to send a special gift to cover one registration — or more or less. Just note in the envelope what it's for.

All of us will thank you!

Continued from "Abolition of war," page 12

Each of us was encouraged and equipped to speak out for non-violence and the abolition of war.

For adjudication:

One example came from Walter Wink's book *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*. Nurses in a Saskatchewan hospital were tired of being treated with disrespect by the doctors. With the approval of the hospital administration they devised a plan called "Pink Alert." Whenever a nurse was being abused by a doctor, a "pink alert" was sent over the intercom, and nurses who were free would converge at the designated location. They would surround the doctor, holding hands and waiting for him to move. When the doctor tried to get out of the circle, it would give but not break (like the game of Red Rover). Eventually the doctors got the message and began treating the nurses with respect.

For conversion of weapons of war:

Liberia has been plagued with civil war and poverty. Many families are fatherless. Families have lost their homes and sources of income. Their fields and roadsides are strewn with spent bullet casings. A group called Liberians United Against Violence (which is supported by the PCUSA Peacemaking Program) gathers those casings and transforms them into crosses. With simple tools they transform instruments of death into symbols of hope and new life in Christ. Proceeds go to help homeless families find shelter, children attend school, and sick people obtain medical care.

For economic justice:

About 150 village women nonviolently took over an oil pipeline terminal in Nigeria. They stopped exports of oil, kept about 700 workers inside, shut down the docks, airfield, and helicopter pads. They wanted jobs for their husbands and sons and electricity for their homes.

The authors:

Bobbie Wrenn Banks, who provided the summary of Dr. Winn's book, is the founder and president of Pathways To Peace, Inc. She began working in 1982 with Atlanta Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC), and has been active in Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND) since 1984.

Kathleen Allen, who provided the examples, has served on the Peace and Justice Committee of North Decatur (GA) Presbyterian Church since becoming a member in 1998.

A report from Israel/Palestine

Small steps toward a just peace

by **Shannon O'Donnell**, Presbyterian Volunteer in Mission, serving in Jerusalem with the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center. The Witherspoon Society is providing partial support for her work as part of our commitment to global mission for peace and justice.

“Just peace: An orientation toward conflict transformation characterized by approaches that reduce violence and destructive cycles of social interaction and at the same time increase justice in any human relationship.”

— from *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, by John Paul Lederach

This past month I've had a number of experiences that continue to shape my thoughts, faith, and point of view. I was able to help rebuild some houses that had been destroyed, serve as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Yanoun, and participate in a protest in Bil'in. Each experience taught me something about what it means to work for peace, how to live out my beliefs, how to put actions behind my words, and when to rest within silence.

One weekend, I went with the Ta'ayush group to a village south of Hebron to rebuild some structures that had been destroyed by the Israeli Army. Ta'ayush (Arabic for “life in common”) is a grassroots movement of Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel that began in the fall of 2000. In their purpose statement, Ta'ayush says that a future of equality, justice and peace begins today, between us, through concrete daily actions of solidarity to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and to achieve full civil equality for all. Dozens of Israelis, internationals, and Palestinians came together to build foundations, stone walls, and roof-tops. We mixed cement, formed assembly lines, and broke bread together throughout the beautiful exhausting day.

I found it strange that the Army



House-building with Ta'ayush

would bulldoze one house but not another. It was like visiting the scene after a tornado, a seemingly random occurrence of destruction. People in the village did not have a permit to build, because permits are very expensive and difficult to obtain. A villager cannot build without knowing that retribution will likely occur, yet a settlement outpost was illegally built nearby, and the legal system doesn't seem to care about that. The villagers were quite capable of rebuilding on their own, but they requested that the Ta'ayush group come, to make their struggle known to the outside world. I asked one of the Israeli group leaders if this would merely provoke the Army to destroy the building after we were finished working on it. He said that is possible, and a risk that the villagers are aware of, but the point of the task was to provide a presence, to build in solidarity with the people. “Besides,” he said, “if the building is destroyed again, then we will return and rebuild again.”

Yanoun

In the middle of the West Bank, near the city of Nablus, close to the small town of Aqraba, is an even smaller village called Yanoun. There are about 100 people living in this village. Starting in 1996, Yanoun came under attack from the fundamentalist Jewish settlers, whose buildings are now visible from most points in the village. The illegal settlement is known as Itamar. Its inhabitants are armed and make it clear they want the villagers out. The residents of Yanoun have suffered a number of violations, such as destruction of the town generator, having their land and animals stolen, beatings and harassment, the poisoning of livestock, destruction of olive trees, and having their homes broken into.

In 2002, the residents of Yanoun reached their breaking point, and the entire village packed up and fled to the nearby town of Aqraba. This was the first instance in which an entire Palestinian town was emptied due to settler violence. With the help of international and Israeli peace activists, who also moved to Yanoun for extended periods, the villagers eventually moved back. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Program of Israel/Palestine (EAPPI) has been providing a presence in the village since 2003.

I went to Yanoun with no idea what to expect. It felt like I was stepping back in time to the way things were centuries ago. People earn a living by raising sheep and goats. As one of the shepherds was returning with his flock in the evening, he invited my friend and me over for dinner. That was the first dinner invitation I'd ever received from someone riding a donkey. Imhani, the mother of the family that we had dinner with, invited us

back the next day to help make bread in an outdoor oven, and cheese from sheep's milk. So, after the morning walk through the village, we went back to Imhani's house for our first lesson in bread and cheese making. Mostly we sat and chatted about the recent news from an Israeli soldier who said that the separation wall would be built between Yanoun and Aqraba.

This news weighed heavily upon the family, because it threatens their whole livelihood. Aqraba is where they sell their goods, and where they buy items



Imhani making bread

that they cannot make. I loved seeing people live off the land. Nearly everything in Yanoun is used and reused, in ways that made me rethink our modern standards of recycling. Plastic containers are used until they fall apart, food scraps are fed to the animals, cardboard makes a good potholder, rain water is conserved and used to the last drop. Still, the relationship between the people of Yanoun and Aqraba is extensive. Many times during our Arabic conversations with Imhani, we would just pause and look at the peaceful scenery. I was finding it difficult to imagine the gray separation wall intruding on the beauty of the area.

Bil'in

Every Friday, the people of Bil'in, and usually some internationals, hold a demonstration protesting the building of the separation wall. Close to 60% of Bil'in land has been confiscated for the building of Israeli settlements and construction of the wall. I went to the protest, which promoted a non-violent resistance to the situation.

However, the reaction from the Israeli Army was anything but non-violent. The whole demonstration at Bil'in made me wonder: Is this the solution? The theory of non-violent protests is something that many people will commend, yet the situation seemed to prohibit a peaceful outcome. I am still questioning the actions of both sides. It felt like we were poking a bee's nest, and expecting not to get stung. I did feel the sting of the tear gas that day, and it was something that I hope never to experience again. I wonder what would have

happened if the Army hadn't shown up for our protest. We'd probably have had our demonstration and left in a couple of hours. What would the harm have been? I also wonder what would happen if the demonstration didn't occur where the Army was expecting it to take place. They would be waiting, with all their ammunition, and have nobody to use it on.

One of the participants in Friday's protest was Mairead Maguire, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 for her peace efforts in Northern Ireland. She is the cofounder of the Community for Peace People, and a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Here is her take on the demonstration that day:

We were then tear gassed, and as I helped a French woman to retreat, I was shot in the leg with a rubber bullet. Two young women, one from the USA and one from New Zealand, helped me towards an ambulance. I saw an elderly Palestinian mother carried on a stretcher into the ambulance, as she was shot in the back with a plastic bullet. I saw a man whose face was covered in blood and a Palestinian youth overcome with the gas. About 20 people were injured. I was overcome with gas and had a nose bleed, which resulted in being carried to an ambulance for treatment.

On the road towards the village we watched two children playing in their garden, oblivious to the nerve gas floating down on the wind towards their home. This permeates their clothes and their lungs, and the question has to be asked: What will the health of these children be like in a few years' time?

This is not only a question of the abuse of human rights and international laws by the Israeli government; it is a health and environmental issue. We were all traumatized by our experience, and with the gas on the air came the words flowing back to me of a Palestinian doctor who said, 'The whole Palestinian people – after 40 years of occupation, the whole people of Palestine are traumatized. It is time the international community acted to put a stop to this suffering and injustice of our people.'

I agree: enough is enough. It is time for action to force the Israeli government to enter into unconditional talks to end this tragedy of tragedies of good and gentle Palestinian people."

As I am learning more about the situation here in Israel/Palestine, I see that there is no easy solution. I also see people continue to work for a just peace, for a constructive change.



Tear gassing in Bil'in

I am seeking to understand what those concepts mean and how they can be implemented in every day life. Without faith in the life, death, and resur-

rection of Christ, these would remain to be only unreachable concepts.

I pray that Christ may continue to work in the hearts and minds of people here and everywhere.

Good news:
 Shannon O'Donnell is planning to be with us, sharing out of her experiences in Israel/Palestine, for the Witherspoon conference on global mission and justice in Louisville, September 16-19.
 See pages 26-27 for details.



Friends at Bil'in protest, recovering from effects of tear gas.

“Constructive Change: The pursuit of shifting relationships from those defined by fear, mutual recrimination, and violence toward those characterized by love, mutual respect, and proactive engagement. Constructive social change seeks to move the flow of interaction in human conflict from cycles of destructive relational patterns toward cycles of relational dignity and respectful engagement.”

—from *The Moral Imagination*, by John Paul Lederach

ABOUT SABEEL: Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity, justice and love. Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups worldwide to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

After the Virginia Tech “massacre” ... Sorting through the questions

Witherspoon Issues Analyst Gene TeSelle considers some of the lines of thought that were articulated in the days and weeks after the killing of so many people on April 16.

In the wake of the Virginia Tech “massacre” on April 16, there has been plenty of discussion - questions, accusations, suggestions for future policy. Radio and TV reporters had to offer their own instant analysis or find instant commentary by affected persons or by experts in various fields. The print media followed quickly in their wake.

Some of the comments were primarily “background,” looking at the life of Cho Seung-Hui and how his school, teachers, classmates, and dorm mates reacted to him. Some were “causal explanations,” asking why it happened - and why the results seemed worse than they might have been if warnings had been issued sooner. And inevitably there were “policy recommendations,” suggestions concerning how we could make it less likely that events like this would happen again, or on the same scale.

Four lines of commentary emerged fairly quickly, and they continue to be the main themes of discussion. In some cases the killings at Virginia Tech seem to have functioned as a Rorschach blot, bringing out attitudes to which people were already disposed. In other cases the novelty and sheer scale of the events caused people to reflect along new lines. I shall leave it to readers to try sorting out why they reacted as they did. I want chiefly to invite readers to offer their own reflections on these events and see what long-term recommendations they have.

1. Inevitably the first reactions looked into the narrative of Cho’s life and death - how he seemed to most people a loner, how several English professors were disturbed at the content of his “creative writing,” and how he fell between the cracks in the system. He had been ordered by a judge to undergo counseling after stalking two women, but that was now in the past. Campus Security did not find any evidence of criminal behavior that might warrant their intervention; they did not refer him to the Counseling Center, though it might have helped; and laws of confidentiality meant that it was difficult to share information and approach him in ways that might have been helpful.

Bruce Shapiro noted in *The Nation* (May 14, 2007) that the U.S. has tended to abandon the mentally ill, dumping them from state hospitals and eventually warehousing the most violent of them in prisons. Even on the more “normal” side, mental illness has been ignored by many health insurance plans. His closing plea: “Connect the dots.” Or, quite simply, “Connect.”

We may be sure that there will soon be a spate of legal proposals, federal and state, aimed at facilitating the sharing of information - between police, counselors, and medical doctors - about people who might be a danger to themselves and others. This could be helpful. But in the wake of the Patriot Act we have a new level of concern about what

information should be shared and how it might be misused. We may hope that the ACLU and other such bodies will be an integral part of the discussion.

2. Even before the videotapes made by Cho were broadcast by NBC, and certainly afterward, questions were raised whether his acquaintances made his situation worse - by avoiding him, or treating him as a “weirdo,” or making hostile remarks. Simultaneously the news media were dealing with the Don Imus scandal and asking how far name-calling, “hate speech,” or simply “speaking one’s mind” and “saying what no one else dares to say” are to be protected as “freedom of speech” - or be tolerated by networks and advertisers.

In our increasingly pluralistic society there is a constant undercurrent of concern about bullying in elementary schools, exclusive cliques or aggressive gangs in the higher grades, and the use of stereotypes or demeaning language among people of all ages and callings. The Letter of James (3:1-12) warns that the tongue is a small fire that can cause a huge blaze. Fifteen years ago, when there was a debate on college campuses over “hate speech” versus freedom of speech, it was clear that most deans of students wanted not penalties but something like subpoena power, the ability to draw both parties together for a discussion that might clarify and perhaps even reconcile. It is easier to do this at the scale of the campus rather than a state or the nation as a whole. If there is not new legislation, there may be at least a new degree of considerateness, even though it is often put down as “political correctness” or “multiculturalism gone wild.”

3. Questions were immediately raised about how Cho got his two pistols, and it soon emerged that both of them had been bought legally in the state of Virginia, often mentioned as one of the laxest states and often the source of weapons used in crimes in the Northeast.

The world community reacted once again with shock at the ease of getting lethal weapons in the U.S., and those who have been seeking more effective regulation of firearms geared up for another legislative campaign, although Congressional Democrats were cautious, not seeing vocal leadership in such a campaign as a political winner.

4. Gun control was not the only remedy bruited about. Others wished that Cho had been gunned down before he could kill 32 people. They called for broader rights to bear arms wherever one might be assaulted by others bearing arms - on college campuses, in this case, perhaps even in churches, as some political jurisdictions have decreed.

Popular culture in the U.S. still maintains the self-image of the Frontiersman - or of the heavily armed characters in the Book of Judges, or, in our own day, the tribesmen of Afghanistan. To be sure, this posture is part of the heritage of both the Bible and civil society. But it is not the principal part of our heritage, and certainly not its most constructive part. We may anticipate a long and intense debate between fewer guns and more guns, between more controls and greater permissiveness. And once again it is likely to be a divisive debate between urban and rural, blue and red regions.

Juxtapositions

Easter, War and Virginia Tech

by John Harris, Witherspoon Membership Coordinator

As I was checking out through the express lane at Wal-Mart a few days before Easter, I could not help noticing the commercially prepared Easter baskets sitting on a line of tables next to the express check out, inviting hurried and stressed parents to buy one last item on their way out of the store. Filled with colored grass and various brands of candy, each commercially cellophane wrapped basket also contained one or more toys. There were plush rabbits and other stuffed animals, plastic trucks and cars, dolls, balls, and other various novelties, each basket containing different toys.

The commercialization of our most sacred Christian day did not bother me as much as one particular commercially prepared Easter basket. There among the Easter baskets containing various toys was one with green plastic soldiers, jeeps, tanks, planes, and guns! What more ironic way was there, I wondered, than to celebrate resurrection and the victory of life over death than by giving an impressionable young child an Easter basket with toy implements of death and destruction? Is this what our commercialization of Easter and our culture of violence has come to?

Waiting in an airport pub on my way home from the most recent Witherspoon Board meeting, most of the televisions in the pub were tuned to cable news stations broadcasting nonstop images and commentary about the recent shootings at Virginia Tech. One TV set on the opposite side of the pub, however, was tuned to one of the outdoor sports channels rather

than a news channel. The channel was broadcasting a show about shooting. It featured images, interviews and commentary about various weapons, ammunition, and target shooting. Another example of our culture of violence, I thought. In some people's troubled minds, is it really that big a step from shooting real bullets from real guns at nondescript targets, or video bullets and video guns at video victims, to shooting real bullets from real guns at real people?

Now that we are entering the fifth year of an unjust war in Iraq, I cannot help but wonder how our culture of violence contributed to its beginning and perpetuates its senseless killing. A week after the shootings at Virginia Tech, I ask how our culture's fascination with guns and violence in the media permitted such a senseless killing to happen.

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Recent issues include:

- Winter 2007, with a report from Shannon O'Donnell in Jerusalem, a report on the "New Social Creed," and more
- Fall 2006 on Witherspoon's new "global initiative"
- Summer 2006, with reports on the 2006 General Assembly
- and many more ... just ask!

Theological musings

Easter Hope in a Good Friday World

We welcome Dr. Paul E. Capetz, who is joining Douglas Ottati in the writing of this regular column.

Capetz is Associate Professor of Historical Theology at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. A member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), he is the author of (among other books and articles) *God: A Brief History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

Doug Ottati will be moving this fall from Union Seminary/PSCE to teach at Davidson College, as the Craig Family Distinguished Professor in Reformed Theology and Justice Ministry.

Today is Easter Sunday. At church this morning we sang the triumphant Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's *Messiah*. And then we gathered around the table to eat the traditional ham dinner, with a hefty dose of chocolate Easter eggs afterwards. All in all, it's been a fine day. Yet as I sit down to write this column, my mind keeps going back to the more troubling events celebrated this past week: Maundy Thursday and especially Good Friday.

Somehow I have the nagging suspicion that we Christians impatiently wait for those days of the church calendar to be over as quickly as possible so that we can once again assure ourselves that "God's in his heaven – All's right with the world" (Robert Browning). Oh, how we do want to believe that is true! Speaking for myself, however, I have to confess that the Easter celebration has never spoken as deeply to me as have Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Not only have I had my doubts about what really happened on the first Easter Sunday, but I have even wondered whether the resurrection of one person really changes much of anything. I often think that Good Friday may be a more truthful depiction of the world we live in than is Easter.

It has occurred to me that there may be a perfectly good psychological explanation for these sentiments. I first learned about Jesus' crucifixion when I was in the third grade. My family went to see George Stevens' star-studded film *The Greatest Story Ever Told* which had just been released. As if it were only yesterday I can still recall the shock and disbelief with which I watched Jesus being nailed to the cross in vivid Technicolor. It is no exaggeration to say that I was completely traumatized by it. I had to leave the auditorium and sit in the lobby of the

theater on account of my hysterical sobbing. I could not understand why anyone would do such a cruel thing to the best person in the world.

My father, hoping that I might be consoled, gently led me by the hand back into the auditorium so that I could witness Jesus' resurrection. But it left me cold. Nothing could undo the horror of what I had just experienced. Unable to eat dinner, I cried myself to sleep. It is this experience, no doubt, that for me has always lent an aura of realism to the old hymn, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" I can honestly say, "Yes, I was there." I saw it as though at first hand and I was just as unprepared for it as were Jesus' first disciples. I was one of those "before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified" (Gal. 3:1, RSV).

We live in a time when there has been much doctrinal debate about the salvific significance of Jesus' death.

Among the many doctrinal reasons for challenging the upcoming ordination of Damayanthi Niles, a professor at Eden Theological Seminary, members of her presbytery have charged her

with denying the necessity of "blood atonement." I, too, have been similarly accused. In an editorial printed in *The Layman* ("Theology Professors say Atoning Death is Outdated," November 11, 2002), John H.

Adams attributes to me the following statement: "What about atonement? We don't need any more crucifixions."

Given the reputation for journalistic accuracy that *The Presbyterian Layman* has earned for itself, it will come as no surprise to Witherspoon readers that I was misquoted to the point of distortion. I never presented such a view as my own; I did, however, attempt to explain the reasons given by the womanist theologian Delores Williams who does advocate this position. She believes that the traditional doctrine has conspired to delude oppressed persons into believing that the violence they suffer should be accepted as a religious duty. I share her concern if not her specific argument about the place of the cross in Christian faith. Still, I doubt that many of us today would subscribe to Anselm's statement of the doctrine of the



Paul Capetz

atonement. In fact, there has never been a doctrinal formulation of the atonement that commands the assent of all Christian churches. Probably that is the way it should remain.

It is not the doctrine, but the story of Jesus' crucifixion that is essential. The gospel is, after all, a story about a messiah whose victory does not look very messianic. It is the story of a faithful Jew, whose fidelity led him to the cross and who calls us to the same fidelity even if it might also lead us to the cross. To illustrate what such fidelity means for modern people we only need remember Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oscar Romero. The story is as timely today as it was in ancient Palestine.

If I had preached the Good Friday sermon this week, it would have focused on the issue of torture. The German New Testament scholar Martin Hengel has written an exhaustive, though concise, historical study of Roman crucifixion that should be required reading of us all during Passion Week if we really want to come to grips with what Jesus endured on that first Good Friday. Sadly, throughout Christian history torture has been used to silence heretics (those with whom we disagree). Even in our own Reformed tradition we have to confess the sins of torture that our forerunners in the faith employed to squelch theological dissent. Not only was Michael Servetus burned at the stake in Calvin's Geneva for refusing to subscribe to the Nicene Creed, but also the Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier was tortured on the rack in Zwingli's Zurich for his denial of infant baptism.

As we Americans have recently learned, our government is not above using torture as an instrument to secure itself against perceived enemies. In this respect it is no different from ancient Rome. If there is a hope this Easter Sunday, it is that the story of Jesus and those of all the other victims of torture might lead us to repent and resolve to abolish torture altogether. Indeed, the French philosopher Renè Girard locates the real significance of Jesus' passion in its challenge to us that we break the cycle of violence in our world forever.

I do believe in hope, even if it is not as grandiose as some of our Easter celebrations imply. Still, the modest hopes I have on this Easter Sunday are tempered by the recollection of Good Friday which I cannot forget. Instead of hunting for Easter eggs and making merry this afternoon, I prefer to listen to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* or to watch the most realistic and beautiful film about Jesus ever made, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* by

Pier Paolo Pasolini (who, by the way, was an atheist, a communist, and a homosexual). I am not without hope; but my hopes are tempered by realism. This is nothing other than to say that we must not let Easter be our opiate for the world's pain. Now that Easter and Holy Week are behind us, let us, as the members of Christ's broken body, go into the world with the good news that the cycle of violence can be broken.

Calling for Nominations!

It's time to seek people who are ready and willing to play an active role in leading our Witherspoon Society through the coming years. We are especially interested in identifying persons who haven't had a leadership role in Witherspoon to date, who come from those groups who are female or non-Anglo or are younger than Boomers.

The nominating committee is ready to go to work on your behalf but needs your help. Board positions needing to be filled are:

- Co-Moderator, two-year term
- Secretary/Communicator, two-year term
- Issues Analyst, two-year term
- Two Members at Large, two-year terms
- Other Members at large at the discretion of the Nominating Committee, 1 or 2 year terms

Board members are expected to attend the General Assembly in even-numbered years and our biennial conference in odd-numbered years, as well as one additional board meeting per year. Travel expenses and room and board are reimbursed.

Board members are also expected to participate in a monthly one-hour conference call, to keep involved in on-line discussions by e-mail, and to carry out the tasks assigned to their office, as well as supporting Witherspoon in any other ways they can.

Please contact the chair of the nominating committee, Edie Gause, with your suggestions, including contact information for the person(s) you are suggesting, and why you think they would make a good board member.

And please don't hesitate to volunteer by suggesting your own name!

To suggest names of possible nominees, please contact:

Edie Gause
2869 Pasqual St # D97
Pasadena, CA 91107-5364
momgause@sbcglobal.net
Phone 626-792-8191

Learning to live with G-6.0608 and the Authoritative Interpretation

by Gene TeSelle, Witherspoon Society Issues Analyst

Ever since the 2006 General Assembly adopted the recommendations of the Peace, Unity, and Purity Task Force, including its proposed Authoritative Interpretation (AI for short), there has been much posturing and maneuvering on the part of those who opposed the AI.

The AI adopted by the 217th General Assembly declares:

- that the Book of Confessions and the Form of Government set forth the standards for ordination and installation;
- that these standards may be interpreted by the General Assembly and the Permanent Judicial Commission (as they have often been interpreted in the past);
- that ordaining and installing bodies have the responsibility to apply those standards when examining persons elected to office, and this includes asking (a) whether the person has “departed” from scriptural and confessional standards and (b) whether such departure concerns the “essentials” of Reformed faith, practice, and polity.

This is language drawn straight out of the Constitution of the church (G-6.0108). The AI simply restates and reinforces this constitutional language.

Even before the Assembly took this action, and certainly since this action, opponents have attacked it with various actions. All of these measures are versions of the movement for “strict subscription” that divided the Church of Scotland in the early 18th

century and was rejected by Presbyterians in the American colonies from 1729 on. And all of them try, in various ways, to offer interpretations of the Constitution that would have the same authority as the Constitution itself—a move that was rejected by the General Assembly of 1927 in approving the report of the Swearingen Commission.

1. Some presbyteries — first San Diego, then Santa Barbara — have drawn up their own lists of “essential tenets” and “Reformed distinctives.” They claim that these statements do not constitute a new creed, do not supplement or alter the Book of Confessions or the Form of Government, but only offer a helpful list of issues that should be touched on during the examination process. But when you look at the lists you see that they come from a *selective reading* of the confessions, to the extent that some stances *permitted* by the confessions are declared *suspect or heretical*.

2. Some presbyteries have declared that all statements in the Book of Confessions and the Form of Government that say “shall” are to be regarded as essentials of Reformed faith and practice. At first they tried to get this adopted by the General Assembly as an Authoritative Interpretation. When that failed, they adopted it on their own. This means that an AI is being issued *by presbyteries, not the General Assembly* — a move that has dubious, and certainly not final, authority. And it clearly contravenes G-6.0608, which assumes that some statements in the Constitution are *not* essentials and

does not say how they are to be identified.

3. Perhaps the most subtle approach comes from the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks in northeastern Colorado. Its examination policy, proposed in February of 2007, includes the statement that “Governing bodies do not possess a ‘right of conscience’ that would permit them to violate mandatory provisions of the Constitution.” Reading this, you might think they are making the obvious point that, while *individuals* have the right under G-6.0608 to state “exceptions” or “scruples,” *governing bodies* do not have that same right. But they head off in a different direction, declaring that presbyteries are “bound” by the third sentence of G-6.0106b, which states that “Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed.” The meaning of this sentence is assumed to be self-evident, needing no interpretation, no application in light of the entire Constitution of the church. Any governing body that takes this to be an unalterable “essential” will find few candidates worthy of ordination.

In at least these three ways, presbyteries have defied the 2006 AI — and have defied G-6.0608, which lies behind it. They have arrogated to themselves an authority that the Constitution has not given them. To be sure, presbyteries are given the responsibility of discerning whether a candidate has “departed” from the “essentials” of Reformed faith and practice. But these presbyteries have taken two additional steps:

- They have declared in advance what the essentials are, by preparing their own *list* of essentials, or declaring *all statements containing a “shall”* to be essentials, or focusing on G-

6.0106b, which concerns the real center of controversy and was recognized to be such even before it was added in 1996-97.

- They have made *sweeping decisions*, in advance and in the abstract, when G-6.0608 and the AI clearly state that judgments about essentials are to be made in considering the statements of faith made by individual candidates.

What will happen? The 2006 AI includes the statement that the procedures and decisions of governing bodies as they conduct examinations are “*subject to review*” by higher governing bodies. We may be sure that all parties to the dispute over the ordination of GLBT members of our church are preparing the way for *judicial cases* and scrutinizing them for their suitability as vehicles for gaining approval of their own perspectives. We may also be sure

that the various Permanent Judicial Commissions will not look favorably upon the tendency of governing bodies to create their own creeds, or give selective interpretations of the Constitution, or prejudice matters that require subtle discernment in the prism of particular cases. It is likely to be a long process.

We have begun to see the judicial process at work. When the Presbytery of Olympia declared that the shalls are essentials, a number of persons filed a complaint. The PJC of the Synod of Alaska Northwest went down the middle. It did not “sustain” the objections. But it reminded the presbytery to heed the call of the 217th General Assembly and noted that the presbytery’s resolution does not preclude the presbytery from conducting its exams on a case-by-case basis and “in a thorough and fair manner.” The Synod PJC’s decision can be found at www.presbycoalition.org, along with a list of presbyteries that

have adopted similar interpretations.

Many presbyteries are currently trying to develop policies with, and for, their Committees on Preparation for Ministry and their Committees on Ministry. They recognized that, if they take the AI and G-6.0608 seriously, they will have to go beyond simplistic judgments. But it can be done. In my own Presbytery of Middle Tennessee a special task force with representation from the whole theological spectrum developed a statement that has received general assent. The Presbytery of San Francisco has had a “Discernment Team” at work since last fall, and it will be voted on next month.

In the end we will learn, once again, to respect the richness and mystery of the whole counsel of God and to live with each other with forbearance, even with mutual respect and mutual dependence.

Presbyterians for Restoring Creation announces new Coordinator

A news release from Presbyterians for Restoring Creation

Presbyterians for Restoring Creation – a nationwide network that responds to the call of the Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA) to care for God’s creation – is pleased to announce that it has named The Rev. Renee Marie Rico as its new national Coordinator. She replaces Rebecca Barnes-Davies who was PRC’s first Coordinator (September 2001-May 2007), who will be moving on to attend Louisville Seminary in the fall. Rico will begin her duties on June 1, 2007.

Rico has over 14 years of experience working in environmental issues and eight years in pastoral ministry. She brings great gifts to the position. From 1980 to 1994, she was the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Director and Branch Chief of the Acid Rain Division in addition to working as a program analyst in water, toxic chemical and air programs. She played a major role in

setting up and administering the innovative and successful sulfur dioxide emissions trading program at the US EPA to reduce acid rain.

Rico served as a coordinator for the Interfaith Coalition for Green Planning and contributed various eco-justice committees in National Capitol, Utah, Sacramento, and Redwoods Presbyteries. She has served as an interim pastor in four congregations throughout the West over the last eight years, and on the Presbyterian national faculty for interim ministry education since 2002.

As she faithfully has served on the Steering Committee of Presbyterians for Restoring Creation (2003 to present), Rico comes to the position familiar with and committed to Presbyterians for Restoring Creation’s strong grassroots network. She has organized many successful regional events for PRC in the Bay Area over the past few years and has served as worship leader at national PRC eco-justice conferences. She is currently completing an interim pastorate at Sleepy Hollow Presbyterian Church in San Anselmo, CA.

The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew and the Heart of the Middle East

by Sandy Tolan, Bloomsbury USA, 2006

a review by Ken Smith, at-large member of the Witherspoon Board, and former President of the group.

The subtitle of this important book (*The Lemon Tree*, by Sandy Tolan, Bloomsbury, 2006) describes it very well. What the author has done is write about the events in Israel/Palestine from prior to 1948 up to the present day against the background of the story of two individuals and their families. If Sandy Tolan had created these two individuals as a literary device to ground this story, it would have been very effective and powerful. The fact that Dalia and Bashir, a Jewish woman and a Palestinian man, are real people, living today, makes the story positively amazing.

In 1967, during the lull following the Six Day War, Bashir and his cousins return to al-Ramla to visit the place where they had lived as children. Nineteen years earlier they had been expelled from their town and their homes by the Israelis. He finds the house with the lemon tree in the garden; it had been built by his father and he had lived there for his first six years. He meets nineteen year old Dalia, who invites Bashir and his cousins in to see the house. Dalia's parents are Bulgarian Jews who had emigrated to Israel in 1948 and this is now their house. Thus began a friendship that has continued for the past 40 years.

There are many other stories about these two remarkable individuals and their relationship, but my favorite occurred in 1988. Dalia is now 40 and confined to a hospital bed with a high risk pregnancy. Her only child, a

son, will be born five months later. Her husband comes to visit her and tells her that Bashir is about to be deported, suspected of helping organize the intifada. Her husband encourages her to write about her relationship with Bashir. Dalia flatly refuses, but later that month an article appears on the editorial page of the *Jerusalem News* titled "Letter to a Deportee". It is Dalia writing an open letter to Bashir. The letter tells their story, criticizes Bashir for "past terrorist actions" (never confirmed nor denied) and "appeals to both Palestinians and Israelis to understand that the use of force will not resolve this conflict on its fundamental level."

I hope that my sharing a little bit of Dalia and Bashir's story will attract you to this book. As powerful as their story is, this book's importance comes from the balanced look it takes at the events in Israel/Palestine over this past sixty-plus years. My own understanding of this period was uneven and this book filled in a lot of holes. For the early years, I gained an understanding of the strength of the Zionist movement and the extent of Jewish settlements prior to World War II, as well as the role of the British mandate during this same period. In the 1990s, I had not been fully aware of the hopes that many had for the Oslo accords and how these hopes were dashed by Rabin's assassination in November, 1995. The author follows this with a detailed report on the failure of the Camp David talks in 2000, in-

volving Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, Yasser Arafat and Bill Clinton.

More recent events have done little to make us more hopeful. Yet we are still called to hope. I know my hopes were raised by hearing an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian soldier, calling themselves Combatants for Peace, speak at a synagogue in Detroit earlier this year – and by reading this book.

Board revises membership dues

At its April 12-14 meeting in San Jose, the Board acted to raise memberships by \$10 beginning January 1, 2008.

Beginning next year, Regular Memberships will increase to \$60 a year (\$110 for two years). Student and Limited Income Memberships will increase to \$25 a year. That means if you renew before the end of 2007, you can avoid the increase for another year.

The Board also adopted the following renewal policy: Renewal notices will be mailed to members three times a year, once prior to the expiration of a membership and twice following the expiration of a membership. If membership has not been renewed after three notices, the person's name will be removed from the membership list and the person will no longer receive *Network News*.

John Harris,
Membership Coordinator

A book note**To Love a City**
by Rev. Bill Barnes

A pioneering urban pastor tells the story of his congregation, his inner-city community in Nashville, and his ministry – *To Love a City*

The Rev. Bill Barnes has written about Edgemoor Methodist Church in Nashville, where he has served as pastor for forty years.

Gene TeSelle, Witherspoon's Issues Analyst, who knew Bill Barnes first at Yale Divinity School and then in Nashville, says that there is no one in the U.S. who knows more about the house church movement and base communities than Bill Barnes. He bummed his way around Europe in the postwar period, observing the worker priests in France and the house church movement in England.

He has devoted his life to the predominantly black Edgemoor community in Nashville, near where he grew up. He has helped that community fight battles over urban renewal and affordable housing. Right now he is the chief advocate for doing more about housing displacement in Nashville, starting with keeping records. (The Mayor, although he has committed himself to promoting affordable housing, doesn't want too many statistics of this sort floating around.)

This book, then, offers not only the record of an extraordinary life but a series of observations on the urban situation, based on both extensive reading in urbanology and intense personal involvement. It's one of those books definitely worth having.

Barnes himself summarizes the

book:

The book is about a small and diverse congregation making a go of it in a low income minority inner city neighborhood.

There was giving and receiving, loving and fear, anger and reconciliation, tears and laughter, success and failure – all in trying to live out a Christ led vocation in the city. Herein is described a multitude of strategies and approaches, all emerging out of a foundation of love, sure that "we love because God first loved us."

**It's good to share,
right?**

So why not give a gift membership in the Witherspoon Society to someone who might be glad to find friends among progressive Presbyterians.

Just use the return envelope in the center of this issue.

An announcement from More Light Presbyterians**National Welcoming & Affirming Presbyterian Conference**

Come join your justice-seeking, peace-making, fun-loving, welcoming and affirming friends from around the country for your National More Light Presbyterians Conference in Atlanta!

Liberating Love, Celebrating Hope! August 29 - September 2, 2007

North Decatur Presbyterian Church, Decatur, Georgia

Registration Open now online at www.mlp.org

If you believe that the Presbyterian Church (USA) should embrace LGBT persons in its life, ministry and witness, **then this conference is for you.**

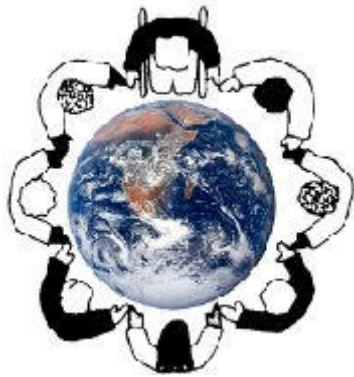
If you believe that God's love and the Gospel has "no boundaries," **this gathering is for you.**

If you believe that God does not discriminate and neither should we, then **make plans now to be part of this extraordinary Liberating Love, Celebrating Hope! Conference.**

Please download the Conference flyer to share with your church, youth group, MLP Chapter, college or seminary campus, network of friends and family -- <http://www.mlp.org/fmd/files/flyerconf2007.pdf>

Download the Conference registration form --
<http://www.mlp.org/fmd/files/regconf2007.pdf>

Michael J. Adee, M.Div., Ph.D., National Field Organizer
More Light Presbyterians, 369 Montezuma Avenue # 447, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501 (505) 820-7082, michaeladee@aol.com, www.mlp.org



BECOMING NEIGHBORS: An Invitation to Global Discipleship

A Witherspoon conference
on global mission and justice
September 16 - 19, 2007
Louisville, KY

About the conference

Globalization, America's new imperialism, terrorism, a widening rich-poor gap, controversy over immigration, lack of health care, and so much more going on. Is this how we thought the 21st century would begin?

What is our calling as Christians in this challenging new world? And equally important, how are we to live it out?

We will look at the world and our mission through three different lenses:

- **"Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth,"** a project initiated by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, in their Assembly in Accra, Ghana, in 2004, provides us with a truly global perspective on the changes going on in these early years of the 21st century.
- **"A New Social Creed,"** which is being drafted by the Presbyterian Church (USA) along with other members of the National Council of Churches to commemorate a "Social Creed of the Churches" that was adopted in 1908, will lead us into rethinking our social mission today.
- **Specific campaigns for justice** will provide us with concrete examples to consider the ways that mission and justice can be combined in very powerful and effective ways.
 - Coalition of Immokalee Workers
 - Shannon O'Donnell, serving as a Volunteer in Mission with the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem, plans to be with us. She will join Young Adult Volunteers in Mission, and others, talking about their experiences in many parts of the world.

About the speakers

On "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth" –

Stated Clerk of the PC(USA) the Rev. Dr. **Clifton Kirkpatrick** will be with us in his capacity as President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and a participant in the Accra Assembly that drafted that important statement.

The Rev. **Roberto Jordan** of Argentina, another participant in the WARC assembly, will help us to see the Covenanting for Justice statement through the eyes of a nation and a church in the Southern Hemisphere. He is president of the Reformed Church in Argentina and was a member of the working group that drafted the Accra Confession.

We are delighted that the Rev. Dr. **Setri Nyomi**, the General Secretary of WARC, who is originally from Ghana, will also be with us for part of the time.

The "New Social Creed" –

The Rev. Dr. **Christian Iosso**, a long-time Witherspoon member who is now the Coordinator for Social Witness Policy of the PCUSA, will keynote our discussions of this new statement-in-process.

The Rev. Dr. **Elizabeth L. Hinson-Hasty**, who Assistant Professor of Theology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, and has been on the task force drafting the new Creed, will join him in discussing this project.

The Rev. Dr. **Gene Te Selle**, Witherspoon's Issues Analyst, who has also been a member of the drafting team, will join in this discussion.

Mission and Action for Peace and Justice –

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers will be represented either by Lucas Benitez, the president of CIW, or by the Rev. Noel Damico, the PC(USA) liaison to CIW.

Andrew K. Bartlett will contribute to our discussion out of his experience on the staff of the Presbyterian Hunger Program in Louisville.

The Rev. **Trina Zelle** will bring us up to date on the development of a "**New Sanctuary Movement**" in which churches will provide hospitality to undocumented immigrants who are currently being pursued as "illegals."

Shannon O'Donnell, a Presbyterian Mission Volunteer now serving with the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, will be with us, along with a number of **Young Adult Volunteers in Mission**, will share what they are learning (and doing!) of mission today.

Worship

Our times of worship will again be led by the Rev. **Chip Andrus**, who is now Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Harrison, Arkansas.

Conference schedule

Conference activities will begin at 7:00 PM on Sunday, Sept. 16, and will conclude by Noon on Wednesday, Sept. 19.

Sunday evening

- Stories from mission in action around the world, told by Young Adult Volunteers and others
- Evening prayers

Monday morning

- Current situations in the nation and world - Coalition of Immokalee Workers, The New Sanctuary Movement, Israel/Palestine, and more

Monday afternoon

- The New Social Creed

Monday evening

- Worship service with Roberto Jordan preaching Fellowship Time (a.k.a. *party*)

Tuesday morning

- Covenanting For Justice in the Economy and the Earth Project - WARC President and General Secretary

Tuesday afternoon

- Accra Confession Continued - Clif Kirkpatrick and Roberto Jordan
- Breakout for discussion by regions of the world
- Set-up for Open Space Technology

Tuesday evening

- Open Space Technology gatherings (two sessions)

Wednesday morning

- Reports/recommendation from the Open Space Technology gatherings
- Concluding remarks and commissioning worship

Lodging

The conference will be held at the Hampton Inn in downtown Louisville, near the offices of the General Assembly. The address is 101 East Jefferson Street, Louisville, Kentucky, USA 40202. Phone: 502-585-2200 Fax: 502-584-5657 Website: <http://hamptoninn.hilton.com/en/hp/hotels/index.jhtml?ctyhocn=SDFDTHX>

Those who wish to reserve lodging will need to make their own reservations. Call the Hampton Inn at 502-585-2200. Be sure to mention that you are attending the Witherspoon Society Conference in order to get the conference room rate of \$89 per night. Breakfast is complementary for those staying at the hotel. The room rate will be \$89 per double room (whether occupied by one person or shared by two), with breakfast included.

If you want us to help you find a roommate, please contact the Rev. Dr. Bill Dummer by phone at 414-475-0076 or by e-mail at gardenerdummer@yahoo.com

If you want to eat dinner at the hotel on Sunday, Sept. 16, please indicate that on the registration form and add an additional \$20.00.

The registration fee will cover two lunches, two dinners and (of course!) a party.

Financial assistance will be made available to Young Adult Volunteers in Mission, seminary students, and others with limited resources, within the limits of our funds. Grants will cover up to the cost to registration, including meals, but not hotel or travel costs. To apply for funds, contact the Registrar, Bill Dummer, at 414-475-0076 or by e-mail at gardenerdummer@yahoo.com

**Registration form is on the next page.
Send it in soon and get an early-bird discount!**

**My registration for
THE WITHERSPOON CONFERENCE
Louisville, KY
Sept. 16-19, 2007**

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Roommate Preference:

Rooms accommodate two people. If you want us to help you find a roommate, please contact Bill Dummer (see contact information below).

Registration payment

I am enclosing to cover my registration:

(please check one)

_____ \$180 for early registration (by July 1, 2007)

_____ \$190 until August 15

_____ \$210 for late registration (after August 15)

_____ I'm including an extra \$20 to cover the cost of having dinner at the hotel on Sunday, Sept. 16.

Please make your check payable to The Witherspoon Society, and send it with this form to
Bill and Katherine Dummer, Co-Registrars
5109 W Washington Blvd
Milwaukee, WI 53208-1704
Phone: 414-475-0076
E-mail: gardenerdummer@yahoo.com

For more information, and to register online with a credit card using PayPal, go to
http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2007/witherspoon_conference_07.htm

The next issue of *Network News*

will focus on what we're calling "that other inconvenient truth" – the fact that the rich-poor gap is growing ever wider, both in the US and in most of the rest of the world. The rights of working people and of immigrants are major concerns for people who care about the dignity of human beings.

We welcome your contributions on this issue or anything else – in the form of comments, essays, news and announcements for the next issue of *Network News*.

The deadline for submissions is
July 10, 2007

Please let us hear from you!

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Let's keep in touch!

If you're a Witherspoon member, we would like to include you on our special e-mail list for members.

You'll receive only occasional notes – perhaps 10 or 12 a year – whenever we have a special bit of information or matter of concern to share with you.

Just send a note to Doug King at dougking2@aol.com, and you'll be added to the list.

A feast for minds and spirits ...

A WEEK FOR PEACE, GLOBAL JUSTICE AND CREATION

Ghost Ranch, July 30-August 5, 2007

This coming summer the Witherspoon Society is joining with the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, Presbyterians for Restoring Creation and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, along with Ghost Ranch, to provide Presbyterians with a rich selection of leaders and topics centering on just what the title says: peace, global justice, and the creation.

The groups collaborating for this week together share concern for how we, among the privileged of the earth, can live as Jesus taught, while so much of the world suffers extreme poverty, disease, homelessness, violence and exploitation of God's good earth. Evening sessions will be in plenary worship and time with Argentine pastor Robert Hugh Jordan, who has served Presbyterian and Reformed churches in Buenos Aires. Reverend Jordan has been active in ecumenical work since his teens in the Latin American Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and most recently as a member of the Executive Committee and Moderator of the Communication Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. His time with us will focus on the WARC statement, "Accra Confession on Economic Justice," which he helped draft in Accra, Ghana, in 2004. Saturday evening we'll gather to remember those who perished when atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to renew our commitment to work for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Morning sessions are planned as skills workshops led by the sponsoring Presbyterian justice, peace and environmental groups. Indicate your choice from the following on the registration form.

Advocating for Justice and Peace

How we frame the call for peace and justice matters. Behind words like "terrorism," "globalization," and even "development" lay different visions of community and social order. Many Christians share some distinctive visions of human purpose and, within the PC(USA), tested policies for advancing social witness concerns. We will look at strategies such as a new "social creed" for achieving gains for justice and peace in church and society.

Leader: Chris Iosso, Coordinator of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy for the PC(USA), former Issues Analyst for The Witherspoon Society and pastor in New York State.

Earth-honoring Faith

What if we did our theology as if creation mattered? What if creation care determined our daily habits and practices? What if all issues (water, wealth and poverty, peace, e.g.) were all informed by Earth-honoring worship? What can we learn from faith communities of eco-justice ministry? This triad—theology, issues, worship, all in community—will create the week together.

Leaders: Larry Rasmussen, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor Emeritus, Union Theological Seminary and author of *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, and PRC member John Preston, author of *Wrestling Until the Dawn: The Fight for Biblical Justice in a Postmodern World*.

The Israel/Palestine Conflict

This unresolved tragedy is not only globally divisive but also denominationally as faith communities debate divestment, Christian Zionism, anti-Semitism, settlements, occupation and terrorism. Participants will be helped to sort out the issues that dominate headlines and explore avenues of faithful action.

Leaders: Marthame and Elizabeth Sanders, PCUSA missionaries for three years in the Northern West Bank working in ecumenical support of local Christian Ministries. Information about them and their documentary film series, "Salt of the Earth: Palestine Christians in the Northern West Bank," can be found at www.saltfilms.net.

Speaking Truth to the Powerful and the Not so Powerful

This workshop offers an opportunity to learn how to talk about tough and controversial issues with neighbors and family, in our churches and in halls of power. The new and growing faith-based movement against torture has developed skills, both practical and spiritual, for building solidarity across theological and political fault lines. Insights will be drawn from history, law and social movement theory, scripture, prayer, theology and ethics for the skills, insight and strategies necessary for work on issues of torture and violence.

Leader: Carol Wickersham, PCUSA pastor, a coordinator of the NO2Torture movement advocating humane treatment of detainees.



Peacemaking 401

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship has for more than 60 years supported the promotion of nonviolent alternatives to war. This experience will facilitate an active search for genuine security in an age of violence. The week will help participants discern their own calling to risk-taking through peace vigils, direct actions, faith-based civil disobedience, and non-violent intervention such as accompaniment in defense of human and ecological rights.

Leaders: Rick Ufford-Chase, Executive Director of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, Moderator of the 216th General Assembly, and PPF members.

Building a Culture of Peace: Exploring the Terrain and Practice of Reconciliation

Peacemaking, building community, animating interfaith and ecumenical relationships are among the various paths of discipleship we can follow to respond to our call to be reconciling agents in our world. In this workshop we will explore how these paths are interrelated, and ways to help people become involved in them. Along with Bible study and discussion of the theological grounding for this work, we will look at specific techniques and approaches, such as conflict transformation, analysis of power dynamics, constructive mapping of one's situation to address a problem, and how to help ourselves and others discern our calling in relation to the gospel's call.

Leaders: Sara Lisherness, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program; Jay Rock, Interfaith Relations Office, PC(USA).

Discover the Vision, Discover the World: The Presbyterian Church and the United Nations

Did you know the Presbyterian Church has an office at the United Nations? Do you know what that office does? In this workshop, we will explore the basic history of the UN and the Presbyterian Church's part in this history. We will look at the work of the UN and how the Presbyterian United Nations Office bears witness to Jesus Christ by equipping Presbyterians for discipleship in the global arena and advocating the concerns of Presbyterian General Assemblies to the UN.

Leader: Joel Hanisek, Presbyterian Representative to the UN.

The Journey Continues: Peacemaking as a Life-Long Commitment

Do you want to reenergize your peacemaking ministry? Do you want to build the peacemaking ministry of your congregation? For individuals and congregations, the work of peacemaking is more than just a one-time activity; it is a life long journey following the nonviolent Jesus. Through Bible study, personal reflection and group interaction, participants on all stages of the peacemaking journey will explore ways to sustain our personal commitments to peacemaking and to nurture peacemaking ministries in our congregations.

Leader: Mark Koenig, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.

To get more information, and to register

For any new information, you can go to our website: http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2007/ghost_ranch_2007.htm

There you'll find links to all the Ghost Ranch pages listed below. Save yourself all that copying!

The Ghost Ranch catalog has been sent to those on the mailing list or you can read it all online, including the registration form. Just go to the Ghost Ranch website at <http://www.ghostranch.org/> and find your way from there.

Or to jump to the seminar listing and details, go to http://www.ghostranch.org/index.php?option=com_oscommerce&osMod=index&cPath=93

For details on registration, accommodations, transportation and more, go to http://www.ghostranch.org/component/option,com_docman/task,doc_download/gid,6/

For the registration form go to http://www.ghostranch.org/component/option,com_docman/task,doc_download/gid,8/

Registering early helps assure your housing choice. We hope to see you at Ghost Ranch on July 30th.

Questions? Contact Jane Hanna, Coordinator – Phone (505) 466-8755. E-mail mjhfos@aol.com

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You can help Witherspoon grow!

The Witherspoon Society, like any other group, needs to keep attracting new members to grow both in size and in effectiveness.

You can help us gain new members by ...

- encouraging friends to read

Network News, or visit our website, and to consider joining

- giving them gift memberships for a year
- creating a group of progressive Presbyterians in your area, and using Witherspoon as a basis for coming together, thinking and acting.

We want to help in any way we can!

Contact Membership Coordinator John Harris, or Membership Secretary Doug King (see above) for suggestions, free brochures or copies of *Network News*.

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