

Covenanting for Justice in a time of terror and torture

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See page 28 for details!

The President's Corner

Making sense of Social Security

If the President in Washington can't do it, let's ask the President of Witherspoon.

by Ken Smith

Although my initial column as your Witherspoon president mentioned my work as an actuary, I shared very little about what I actually did. What difference did it make? Now our country has before us an issue, the revision of Social Security, where my experience is particularly relevant. So it is time to come out of the closet. I worked for almost 22 years as a consulting actuary, advising large corporations on the design and funding of pension plans. As a social justice activist, it seems appropriate to use that experience to look at the changes being proposed to the pension plan that covers most Americans.

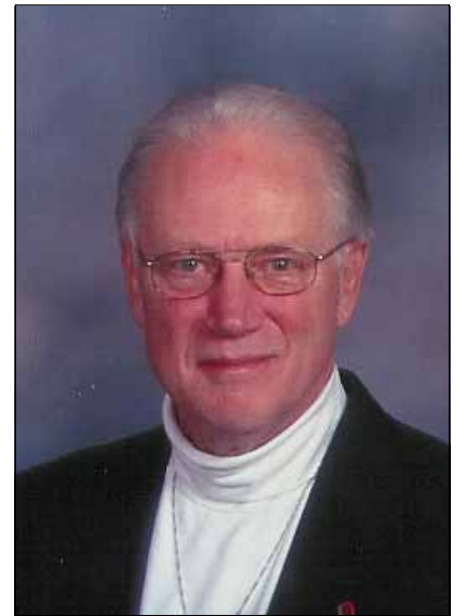
Social Security is not a funded pension plan; rather it is social insurance. This means that current contributions/taxes go to pay current benefits, rather than funding an account for the individual contributor. Secondly, it also means that the retirement benefits provided are a higher percentage of earnings for lower paid employees than they are for higher paid employees, even though the contributions are the same percentage of covered earnings for all employees.

President Bush's initial proposal will allow employees to allocate a portion of their contribution/tax into an account in their name. The value of that account and the resulting benefits would be a function of investment performance. Much has been written about the problems with the President's proposal; points such as the fact that it doesn't address the projected shortfall in Social Security *benefits*, and that benefits may prove inadequate in times of poor investment performance, are quite valid. Recently, the President has made a proposal to freeze projected increases in benefits for higher paid

employees while continuing the projected increases for lower paid employees. Not only does this surprisingly rational proposal address the projected shortfall; it also strengthens the social insurance aspects of the system.

One important point that I haven't seen commented on in the current Social Security debate is how the proposed changes fit with what is happening to private sector retirement plans. There are two types of private retirement plans: defined benefit plans in which the plan defines the benefit to be paid at retirement, and defined contribution plans in which the plan defines the amount to be contributed each year. In a defined benefit plan, the employee's benefit is known and the employer's cost depends on investment performance (and other factors). In a defined contribution plan, the employer's cost is known and the employee's benefit depends on investment performance.

During the past 15 to 20 years, there has been a major shift in the private sector from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans. Corporations have left defined benefit plans because of the unpredictability of costs and because unfunded costs now have to be reflected on the corporate balance sheet. They



Ken Smith

have been drawn to defined contribution plans for predictable costs and the fact that contributions can be defined as a percentage of profits, requiring no contributions in poor years. Corporations have not been motivated by the desire to provide more secure and adequate benefits for employees.

Social Security is currently a defined benefit plan. The President's original proposal would turn a portion of Social Security into a defined contribution plan. Given what is happening in the private sector, this is the wrong direction for Social Security to go. Society needs a core defined benefit plan to provide benefits for all retirees, and Social Security is the vehicle to play this role. Defined contribution plans, like personal savings, should supplement rather than replace the defined benefit core. For almost 70 years, our society has provided a basic level of retirement benefits for

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Americans. This cooperative effort of employees, employers and government must continue.

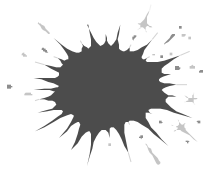
Another president comments on Social Security

Pres. Dwight Eisenhower on conservatives' efforts (in the 1950s!) to abolish Social Security: "Their number is negligible and they are stupid."

Thanks to Jane Hanna, who sent part of this quotation from former President Eisenhower. Looking at the full paragraph, it's interesting to note that he says this as part of his argument for restraining the expansion of federal government functions.

"Now it is true that I believe this country is following a dangerous trend when it permits too great a degree of centralization of governmental functions. I oppose this—in some instances the fight is a rather desperate one. But to attain any success it is quite clear that the Federal government cannot avoid or escape responsibilities which the mass of the people firmly believe should be undertaken by it. The political processes of our country are such that if a rule of reason is not applied in this effort, we will lose everything—even to a possible and drastic change in the Constitution. This is what I mean by my constant insistence upon 'moderation' in government. Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you can do these things. Among them are H. L. Hunt (you possibly know his background), a few other Texas oil millionaires, and an occasional politician or business man from other areas. Their number is negligible and they are stupid."

For the full text: <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/first-term/documents/1147.cfm>



The Editor's Spot

What shall we do when torture becomes The American Way?

by Doug King

Back in December, during an earlier round of revelations about the US use of torture at Guantanamo and various other places of detention, the Rev. Bruce Gillette sent this note:

In the name of Jesus Christ Almighty, why are people representing *our* government, paid by us, writing filth on the Korans of helpless prisoners? Is this American? Is it Christian? What are our moral values? Where are the [clergy] on this?

He referred to a column by Molly Ivins, published on December 5, 2004, which you can read at <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/1205-01.htm>

A member of the church I attend, St. Luke Presbyterian in Wayzata, MN, is able to speak about this from first-hand experience. Born in El Salvador in 1958, René joined the Salvadoran military as a paratrooper in 1974, and two years later joined the Treasury Police. This was in the beginning of the political unrest in which the US military became heavily involved in El Salvador, working with the Salvadoran military and para-military groups to resist the efforts of the people who were engaged in a fight for greater political freedom and economic justice in their land.

René explained how he witnessed the use of torture to get information from detainees. Choking back tears, he recalls talking with one prisoner, a former professor, who was locked away and ignored, left with almost no food or water, reduced to nothing but skin covering his bones.

The torturers had been trained by U S agents in psychological interrogation techniques. He and his fellow soldiers had been convinced that Marxists were the

enemy, and that any action to defeat them was justified.


Through this experience he learned that "torture is a weapon of mass terror," aimed at subduing people, not at gaining information. Under torture a person will say anything to satisfy the torturer – but then, getting information isn't the only goal. He learned too that once people have been subjected to torture they are rarely released, for they will tell what has happened to them. And that cannot be allowed to happen. (Though as we are witnessing again today, it does happen. The truth sometimes *does* get out.)

René says he can't sleep these days, because "a lot of the things that are happening now are the things that were happening then" in El Salvador, against the Marxists, "the enemy."

What makes it worse, he says, is that the American people know what's going on, and they apparently won't protest. "Beware when you fight with monsters," he warns, "not to become a monster yourself. And we have become monsters."

We know that torture is happening, he says, "but nothing happens" in protest. "This," he adds, "is what happened in Germany."

And just a week ago a woman in our church was reflecting on what she heard a few months ago from a Holocaust survivor who spoke to the youth in the church. He described, she said, how the Jews saw their neighbors and friends simply stand by, silent, as the Jews were removed from their homes to face unknown fates of which we now know too much. And the churches, said the speaker, were silent. The pastors and priests said nothing.



And now, she said tearfully, "I see it right here." Our nation is doing terrible things, and we're standing by, silent, doing nothing. And where's our church?

So why this echoing silence? Why aren't all of us in the streets demanding an end to our government's betrayal of our nation's heritage, our affirmations of human dignity?

There seem to be a number of reasons for our silence. Perhaps the most important one is President Bush's success in legitimating torture as a legitimate tool in "the war against terror." So many of our fellow citizens (and fellow Christians!) are convinced that "torture is OK," that we argue against it at the risk of being called unpatriotic or worse.

[Just a small example of that from an e-mail comment to our web site: "It is sad that you seem to spend your time hating your own country and everything that it does. It is even sadder (not to mention a bit alarming) that folks who call themselves 'Christians' should seem to take such positive delight in any problems US policy might seem to be having under George Bush. Shame on you all!"]

Perhaps another reason for our silence is that the acts of torture are well removed from where we might witness them, or even stand in protest at the sites where they're happening. Guantánamo is off limits in Cuba. It's hard to visit Iraq or Afghanistan, and we're outsourcing a lot of the torture work now to places even harder to get to – and harder to find.

And there's the perennial question: What can we do? Obviously no words or actions so far have made a dent in the administration's policy of torture. The denials continue, as do the justifications. (So the argument seems to be "We're not doing it, but if we were it would be OK.")

Well, what can we do?

First, we need to offer clear answers to the question, "What's wrong with torture?" Many of us who oppose war might still acknowledge that in some situations (such as genocide) the use of military force seems (tragically) necessary. Just

war? Well, maybe. Sometimes. But "just torture"? It's hard to imagine any moral argument that could justify the intentional, systematic destruction of a human being – physically and psychologically – for no clear reason other than to cause pain.

Jonathan Schell wrote in *The Nation* last January, commenting on Alberto Gonzales as the President's nominee for Attorney General. He said it brilliantly:

Torture is not wrong because someone else thinks it is wrong or because others, in retaliation for torture by Americans, may torture Americans. It is the *torture* that is wrong. Torture is wrong because it inflicts unspeakable pain upon the body of a fellow human being who is entirely at our mercy. The tortured person is bound and helpless. The torturer stands over him with his instruments. ... [T]he victim bears no arms, lacking even the use of the two arms he was born with. The inequality is total. To abuse or kill a person in such a circumstance is as radical a denial of common humanity as is possible. ... Torture destroys the soul of the torturer even as it destroys the body of his victim. The boundary between humane treatment of prisoners and torture is perhaps the clearest boundary in existence between civilization and barbarism. Whether the elected representatives of the people of the United States are now ready to cross that line is the deepest question before the Senate as it votes on the nomination of Alberto Gonzales.

Well, they crossed that line. As René put it, "**Torture is a weapon of terror.**" So who are the terrorists? And what can we do to resist our nation's imperial designs, and the abuse of human beings that seems to go with those designs?

We must begin by making clear in every way we can, that torture is wrong, and no words can justify it. When President Bush says (as he did in Brussels last February about what he was going to tell

Vladimir Putin of Russia) that democracies are based on "the rule of law and the respect for human rights and human dignity," we must agree with him, and demand that he try it.

Certainly truth-telling can be an act of resistance, and we must do all we can to help people see what is being done in our name. We must help people recognize how deeply those actions betray our heritage as Americans and as people of faith.

But I am becoming convinced – reluctantly – that it is time to go beyond arguments to action, and specifically action of resistance.

What else can we do?

How about finding ways to stand with the victims of torture? Can we do more to support legal defense for them? Can we help get their stories out when they are able to speak? As some of them are finally released, can we help them find help from organizations like the Center for Victims of Torture?

And as René reminded us, the torturers too are often victims of the system they have fallen into. Can we provide support for them as they return to their homes and families – medical and emotional and spiritual support for them and their loved ones? Can we help them find ways to speak of what they have witnessed?

We can certainly support the growing movement of parents and young people who are resisting the use of our public schools to help military recruiters in their work. Under the No Child Left Behind laws, schools are now required to provide personal data on their students for the use of recruiters. Parents can demand that their children be left out of that process, but efforts are now being made to require that parents "opt in," so that their children will be left out of the process unless the parents explicitly ask to have them included.

We can join with groups that are focused on non-violent resistance and conflict

Continued on page 26

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN AN AGE OF TERROR

Peter C. Hodgson

Part II: Theological Virtues in an Age of Terror: Truth, Courage, Justice, Love, Hope

This essay is also on the Web at http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/theol_of_war_on_terror_2.htm.

Part I of this essay, "A Theological Critique of the War on Terror" was published in the Winter 2005 issue of *Network News*; it is on our web site at http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/theology_of_war_on_terror.htm.

Some background

In my first article I pointed out that few people expected the opening years of the new millennium to turn into an age of terror. We had other dreams and hopes, having seen the end of the Cold War, but we found ourselves after 9/11 becoming engaged in a new kind of war, which has many of the aspects of a holy war. On the one hand this is a holy war aimed at the United States and other Western nations by a violent form of Islamic fundamentalism. On the other hand, the war on terror is a holy war waged by the United States against its enemies on behalf of a grandiose vision of a new American empire in the 21st century. The ideology of empire is basically that might makes right, and thus as the only remaining superpower the United States has a right to impose its will where and how it chooses. The doctrine of preemption is an arrogant and dangerous extension of the logic of empire. Its use to justify the invasion of Iraq involved deceptive claims regarding Iraqi involvement in terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and the result has been greatly to increase the risk of terrorist attacks and violent retaliations. I do not suggest that we should not defend ourselves against terrorism, but the defense must be restrained and focused in the recognition that the use of armed force and violence is always an evil, hopefully a necessary and lesser evil.

In the first article I offered a theological critique of the war on terror. The critique is grounded in the first commandment: "I am the Lord

your God, and you shall have no other gods before me." Other gods are idols--finite things and human agendas that are hyped into being infinite and holy. War, especially when legitimated by claims of empire and preemption, is such an idol. It is a totalizing practice that absorbs everything into itself and legitimates the most terrible brutality. It is justifiable only as a last resort, not as a strategic option.

The first commandment, I suggested, needs to be supplemented by the teaching of Jesus. He envisions a human community in which there are no ranks and privileges, where the logic of grace prevails over that of ordinary consequences, where the needs of others take priority over personal desires, where God's will is

done and God's purposes fulfilled in the form of healing, release from servitude and debt, sharing of wealth, forgiveness of sin, care of neighbor, love of enemies. Jesus' radicalization of the commandments relativizes all human pretensions of virtue and brings about a reversal of values. Here is a text from the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:21-24, 33-35, 37-48.

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; . . . and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. . . .

Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord." But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. . . . Let your word be "Yes, Yes" or "No, No"; anything

more than this comes from the evil one.

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so

Truth is ... at risk in our political system as a whole, and as a consequence our democracy is at risk.

that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Oh really, we say, what does this have to do with the realities of terrorism? Are we supposed to turn the other cheek and invite the terrorists to strike again? Are we supposed to *love* them? Jesus' ethic might work in a more perfect world, but ours is a very imperfect one in which self-defense and preemptive strikes are sometimes necessary. Yes, true enough; this gospel is too much for us. We cannot live up to it. But perhaps it provides some guidance. Jesus is condemning anger, false or profane witness, vengeance, hatred of enemy. Instead of them he offers reconciliation, truth-telling, non-violence, love of enemy. Isn't this ultimately the only way to break the cycle of hatred, violence, and terror?

In light of this radical, impossible gospel, I propose a middle way by which some of its objectives might be realized. I shall focus on the themes of truth, courage, justice, love, and hope. These, I suggest, are theological virtues in an age of terror.

Truth

Jesus is connected with the theme of truth not only by his advocacy of simple truth-telling and his declaration that "the truth will make you free" (John 8:32), but because he *is* the truth – a favorite theme of the Gospel of John (e.g., 14:6). His gospel brings truth into the world, whereas by contrast deception and the telling of lies are the essence of the demonic ("When the devil lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies," John 8:44). In other words, evil is rooted in deception, illusion, lies. Idolatry flourishes in a context of deceit because it is based on a tissue of fabrications.

Truth has been a casualty in the war on terror. We know that we were led into war in Iraq on false pretenses, on hyped intelligence regarding weapons of mass destruction and the threat of terrorism. The President and his counselors decided that they wanted to overthrow Saddam Hussein almost as soon as they came into office. They didn't tell us that but made it seem as though they were responding to the attacks of 9/11. When weapons could not be found, they said that the reason for invasion was to liberate the Iraqi people from oppression and to establish a model democracy in the Middle East. But this is not the reason that was debated by Congress; had it been, the risks and illusions of such an action would have been discussed, and it is likely that the public would not have supported a war on

these terms. Since then almost everything about the war has been conducted in as secretive a fashion as possible.

Truth is also at risk in our political system as a whole, and as a consequence our democracy is at risk. The most egregious example of lying in the electoral process is the political attack ad. Barrages of TV attack ads can be viewed as a form of domestic terrorism. In the last election both sides used them, but the Bush campaign and its surrogates perfected the form, had greater resources to deploy them, and did so more viciously. The attack ad lies with facts, real or invented, facts selectively chosen and taken out of context, for the sole purpose of distorting the position of the opponent and scaring people into believing that he is or she is dangerous, incompetent, or dishonest. The ads play on fear and emotion with psychological sophistication, honed through decades of deceptive advertising of products. The objective, as Karl Rove frankly admitted, is to get "our definition" of you the opponent so firmly implanted in the public mind as to prevent you from dislodging it. We have a right to appropriate your identity and manipulate it. Apparently most people obtain their basic political information from these advertisements, and as a consequence they are remarkably unfamiliar with the candidates' true positions. It is difficult to see how democracy can survive if the most affluent and effective liars win elections.

Courage

Jesus enjoins his followers not be anxious about their lives, not to worry about what they will eat, drink, or wear, not to be afraid of what tomorrow brings (Matt. 6:25-34). Such anxiety, he says, is a sign of a lack of faith that God cares for us. Such faith is not the foolish notion that God is directly in charge of all that happens.

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**PATHS TO A JUST
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**details on
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Jesus points rather to natural processes such as the feeding of birds and the growing of grass, and he suggests that what we humans need to strive for is the kingdom of God and God's righteousness; then the things that we need will be given to us. This is a way of saying that our fate is in God's hands and that our task is to strive for the right without worrying about the consequences. Life is a fragile and risky thing; we could die tomorrow; let us live for today knowing that God is with us and sustains us, that our destiny after death is to be in and with God, not to be annihilated in a heartless cosmos.

Courage is the opposite of anxiety. It is useful to have in an age of terror. The primary purpose of terrorists, it has been said, is not to defeat or even to weaken the enemy militarily but to gain publicity and to inspire fear, to obtain a psychological victory. Politicians are adept at playing on such fear, and indeed the politics of the war on terror has done just that. Obviously the horrendous attacks on the World Trade Center are frightening, traumatizing events; and we all know that similar, even worse attacks are possible in the future because there is no foolproof defense. Indeed, the likelihood of such attacks has been increased rather than decreased by our actions in Iraq and our failure to address any of the fundamental causes. Our lives have become less secure. But on what does our security depend? On the national security state? The best way to hand the terrorists a posthumous victory would be to become so obsessed with security as to let our democratic freedoms slip away.

Living in a democracy requires courage – the courage of openness and freedom, the courage to let a sometimes messy and contentious way of deciding things prevail, the courage not to strike back in kind, the courage to live with diversity and disagreement, the courage to trust in the (often foolish) wisdom of the people. Courage means to act in the absence of certainty and in the face of enormous challenges. Without it we could not live for a single day on this earth. Courage requires faith in an ultimate whence and whither of life, an ultimate mystery of things that is good and true. This mystery for Christian faith is God, whose nature is revealed in Christ and the prophets and saints and who is known to be compassionate and trustworthy. With faith in God we know that truth is greater than lies, that good is more powerful than evil. With faith in God the only thing to fear is fear itself. Yet we also know that we are people of little faith.

Justice

I think of justice and love as forming a pair of virtues, with justice pointing more to a goal achievable in human relations and love to the ultimate goal that transcends human possibilities. Justice is a central theme of the Hebrew Bible, where it is associated with the idea of judgment. Jesus rarely mentions it specifically, although he does condemn the Pharisees for neglecting “justice and the love of God” (Luke 11:42); and we are told that he fulfils the

prophecy of Isaiah about a servant of God who will “proclaim justice to the Gentiles” (Matt. 12:18). How does Jesus proclaim justice to the Gentiles? Perhaps one of his parables about the kingdom of God offers a clue: all the privileged citizens of a town who were invited to a great banquet declined to come, giving excuses, so the owner of the house sent his servant out into the streets to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame (Luke 14:12-24). The parable reminds us that, according to Luke, the Messiah is one who is anointed to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed (Luke 4:18:19). These works of justice have something to do with providing the material conditions for human wellbeing, and also, it seems, for adjusting inequities between the haves and the have-nots.

Hope empowers us to act: it gives us a vision of new possibilities ...

Perhaps in our case the “Gentiles” to whom justice is due include the Arabic/Islamic world. They are among the outsiders, the foreigners, the ones not invited to the Western feast. I believe that the only long-term solution to the problem of terrorism is to enhance justice throughout the world, including not only the Middle East but also sub-Saharan Africa where hunger and disease and political chaos are forming the next fertile breeding ground for terrorism. Terrorist acts are ultimately an outcry against injustice intensified by religious fanaticism and hatred. We cannot expect to live in a terror-free world as long as the world's resources are so inequitably distributed. Islam itself was born in the social vision of the prophet Muhammad, who denounced false contracts, usury, and the exploitation of the poor, orphans, and widows. He called all true believers to join the community of God, a universal community that transcended tribal bonds and authority. One of the pillars of Islam is almsgiving, which means that Muslims are bound to attend to the social welfare of their community by redressing economic inequities. Christians, Muslims, and Jews could make common cause in the struggle for justice, which is deeply rooted in their traditions.

For our part this would mean reallocating the enormous resources we have poured into the war on terror into a peace initiative that would begin the process of building educational, social, economic, and political programs to draw the Arabic world out of its poverty, tyranny, anger, and resentment. Sacrifices would be required in our own consumption and standard of living that Americans are not likely to be willing to pay. The challenge is enormous given the complexity of issues and legacy of hatred.

Perhaps it is too late for such an initiative. Upon seeing the horrific images of torture, humiliation, and sexual abuse of Iraqi detainees, Senator Diane Feinstein remarked, “If somebody wanted to plan a clash of civilizations, this is how they'd do it. The pictures play into every stereotype of America that Arabs have.” In retaliation, al Qaeda captured and beheaded a number of Western civilians, posting videos of their executions on a website, thus playing into our stereotype of Arabs. If we allow ourselves to be drawn into a



contest to see who can produce the most grotesque acts of inhumanity, it is a contest we will lose and justice will never come. Yet people throughout the world yearn for it. Against all odds, we must hope that the clash of civilizations might be overcome in a vision of God's community of justice such as that shared by Jesus and Muhammad. It will not happen automatically but only if people of good will on all sides resolve to make it happen.

Love

In order to work, justice requires love, the ultimate truth-force or soul-force, as Gandhi called it. This is the love of God--God's love for us as well as our love for God. If God is love, we have to believe that love is a greater power than hatred, reconciliation a deeper truth than vengeance, non-violence a more effective strategy than violence. The world hungers for this soul-force. God is not a transcendent coercive superpower, says theologian Catherine Keller, but a power of persuasion, a strange attractor amidst indeterminacy, a wisdom of open ends, a force of truth, a love infinite in desire, a compassionate suffering, a transcoding of worldly power. The transcoding means that the love of God disrupts normal human codes; it demands love of neighbor as well as self, and, more shockingly, the love of enemies as well as neighbors.

The neighbor described in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) is not your normal next-door neighbor but a stranger in need. The victim of the robbery on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was abandoned by his fellow-Jews. A foreigner, a Samaritan--a Palestinian!--took pity on him and cared for him. In this way two persons who were traditionally at enmity became neighbors to each other. Is it conceivable that we might someday regard Muslims as our neighbors, and that they should regard us likewise? Or that Jews and Palestinians would do the same? The most radical version of Jesus' love commandment is found in the Sermon on the Mount: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:43-48).

What a ridiculous prescription for living in an age of terror! Yes, I know that we must defend ourselves against terrorist attacks, strike terrorist cells before they strike us, track their networks and interrogate their operatives. But if this is all that we do, we shall be doing it forever, depleting ourselves in the process. To break the cycle of destruction we must have the courage to love, the wisdom to seek justice, the clarity to tell the truth. These virtues are practical in their very radicality.

Hope

One more virtue is needed if the radicality is indeed to become practical: hope. Paul includes hope along with faith and love as the greatest of the virtues (1 Cor. 13:13), and he tells us that we hope for what we do not yet see and must await in patience (Rom. 8:25). Hope is not something Jesus directly mentions, but it is

interesting that the same prophecy from Isaiah that identifies him as the servant of God who will proclaim justice to the Gentiles also says that "in his name the Gentiles will hope" (Matt. 12:21). This can only mean that God's promise of a new day of justice, given originally to the people of Israel, is now extended to Christians and Muslims, indeed to all the peoples of earth. Hope empowers us to act: it gives us a vision of new possibilities, even if we cannot directly see what they are, and the faith that by God's grace they might become realities. In the present situation it is very difficult to see what will bring an end to terrorism and a reconciliation of Arabs and Americans. We are at a dark moment in history. Patience is needed for a long process. Let us not abandon hope for the dawn of a new day.

Peter C. Hodgson

This essay was first presented as the Armstrong Lectures at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, October 21-22, 2004. The author is an emeritus professor of theology in the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University, and a member of The Witherspoon Society.

"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.

Revised by action of the Witherspoon Society

Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth

A statement adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 24th General Council, Accra, Ghana, July 30 – August 13, 2004

This statement will provide a basis for much of the thinking in our Witherspoon mission conference in September, and since it is clearly an important action by an important gathering of Reformed and Presbyterian churches, we are publishing the statement in its entirety here.

Introduction

1. In response to the urgent call of the Southern African constituency which met in Kitwe in 1995 and in recognition of the increasing urgency of global economic injustice and ecological destruction, the 23rd General Council (Debrecen, Hungary, 1997) invited the member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into a process of “recognition, education, and confession (*processus confessionis*)”. The churches reflected on the text of Isaiah 58.6 “...break the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free,” as they heard the cries of brothers and sisters around the world and witnessed God’s gift of creation under threat.

2. Since then, nine member churches have committed themselves to a faith stance; some are in the process of covenanting; and others have studied the issues and come to a recognition of the depth of the crisis. Further, in partnership with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and regional ecumenical organizations, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has engaged in consultations in all regions of the world, from Seoul/Bangkok (1999) to Stony Point (2004). Additional consultations took place with churches from the South in Buenos Aires (2003) and with churches from South and North in London Colney (2004).

3. Gathered in Accra, Ghana, for the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, we visited the slave dungeons of Elmina and Cape Coast where millions of Africans were commod-

ified, sold and subjected to the horrors of repression and death. The cries of “never again” are put to the lie by the ongoing realities of human trafficking and the oppression of the global economic system.

4. Today we come to take a decision of faith commitment.

Reading the Signs of the Times

5. We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Romans 8.22). We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation.

6. The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death.

7. We live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all. The annual income of the richest 1% is equal to that of the poorest 57%, and 24,000 people die each day from poverty and malnutrition. The debt of poor countries continues to increase despite paying back their original borrowing many times over. Resource-driven wars claim the lives of millions, while millions more die of preventable diseases. The HIV and AIDS global pandemic afflicts life in all parts of the world, affecting the poorest where

generic drugs are not available. The majority of those in poverty are women and children and the number of people living in absolute poverty on less than one US dollar per day continues to increase.

8. The policy of unlimited growth among industrialized countries and the drive for profit of transnational corporations have plundered the earth and severely damaged the environment. In 1989, one species disappeared each day, and by 2000 it was one every hour. Climate change, the depletion of fish stocks, deforestation, soil erosion, and threats to fresh water are among the devastating consequences. Communities are disrupted, livelihoods are lost, coastal regions and Pacific islands are threatened with inundation, and storms increase. High levels of radioactivity threaten health and ecology. Life forms and cultural knowledge are being patented for financial gain.

9. This crisis is directly related to the development of neoliberal economic globalization, which is based on the following beliefs:

- unrestrained competition, consumerism, and the unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth is the best for the whole world;
- the ownership of private property has no social obligation;
- capital speculation, liberalization and deregulation of the market, privatization of public utilities and national resources, unrestricted access for foreign investments and imports, lower taxes, and the unrestricted movement of capital will achieve wealth for all;
- social obligations, protection of the poor and the weak, trade unions, and relationships between people, are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation.

10. This is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and creation. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through the creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.



11. We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire. In using the term “empire” we mean the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests.

12. In classical liberal economics, the state exists to protect private property and contracts in the competitive market. Through the struggles of the labour movement, states began to regulate markets and provide for the welfare of people. Since the 1980s, through the transnationalization of capital, neoliberalism has set out to dismantle the welfare functions of the state. Under neoliberalism the purpose of the economy is to increase profits and return for the owners of production and financial capital, while excluding the majority of the people and treating nature as a commodity.

13. As markets have become global, so have the political and legal institutions which protect them. The government of the United States of America and its allies, together with international finance and trade institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization) use political, economic, or military alliances to protect and advance the interest of capital owners.

14. We see the dramatic convergence of the economic crisis with the integration of economic globalization and geopolitics backed by neoliberal ideology. This is a global system that defends and protects the interests of the powerful. It affects and captivates us all. Further, in biblical terms such a system of wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor is seen as unfaithful to God and responsible for preventable human suffering and is called Mammon. Jesus has told us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Lk 16.13).

Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction

15. Faith commitment may be expressed in various ways according to regional and theological traditions: as confession, as confessing together, as faith stance, as being faithful to the covenant of God. We choose confession, not meaning a classical doctrinal confession, because the World Alliance of Reformed Churches cannot make such a confession, but to show the necessity and urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time and the call of Debrecen. We invite member churches to receive and respond to our common witness.

16. Speaking from our Reformed tradition and having read the signs of the times, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and therefore we confess before God and one another.

17. **We believe** in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (Jn 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world.

18. **We believe** that God is sovereign over all creation. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24.1).

19. **Therefore, we reject** the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God’s covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God’s sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God’s just rule.

20. **We believe** that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Is 55.1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the “least of these” (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos 2.18ff).

21. **Therefore we reject** the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system, or any other system, which claims there is no alternative.

22. **We believe** that any economy of the household of life, given to us by God’s covenant to sustain life, is accountable to God. We believe the economy exists to serve the dignity and well being of people in community, within the bounds of the sustainability of creation. We believe that human beings are called to choose God over Mammon and that confessing our faith is an act of obedience.

23. **Therefore we reject** the unregulated accumulation of wealth and limitless growth that has already cost the lives of millions and destroyed much of God’s creation.

24. **We believe** that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation, and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged, and the abused (Psalm 146.7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation.

25. **Therefore we reject** any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation, and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all. We reject any teaching which justifies those who support, or fail to resist, such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

26. **We believe** that God calls us to stand with those who are victims of injustice. We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God's way (Micah 6.8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, "so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5.24).

27. **Therefore we reject** any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the fault of the poor. We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations – gender, race, class, disability, or caste. We reject any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature.

28. **We believe** that God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (Jn 10.10). Jesus brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind (Lk 4.18); he supports and protects the downtrodden, the stranger, the orphans and the widows.

29. **Therefore we reject** any church practice or teaching which excludes the poor and care for creation, in its mission; giving comfort to those who come to "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn 10.10) rather than following the "Good Shepherd" who has come for life for all (Jn 10.11).

30. **We believe** that God calls men, women and children from every place together, rich and poor, to uphold the unity of the church and its mission, so that the reconciliation to which Christ calls can become visible.

31. **Therefore we reject** any attempt in the life of the church to separate justice and unity.

32. **We believe** that we are called in the Spirit to account for the hope that is within us through Jesus Christ, and believe that justice shall prevail and peace shall reign.

33. **We commit ourselves** to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.

34. **We humbly confess** this hope, knowing that we, too, stand under the judgement of God's justice.

- We acknowledge the complicity and guilt of those who consciously or unconsciously benefit from the current neoliberal economic global system; we recognize that this includes both churches and members of our own Reformed family and therefore we call for confession of sin.
- We acknowledge that we have become captivated by the culture of consumerism, and the competitive greed and selfishness of the current economic system. This has all too often permeated our very spirituality.

- We confess our sin in misusing creation and failing to play our role as stewards and companions of nature.

- We confess our sin that our disunity within the Reformed family has impaired our ability to serve God's mission in fullness.

35. **We believe**, in obedience to Jesus Christ, that the church is called to confess, witness and act, even though the authorities and human law might forbid them, and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Acts 4.18ff). Jesus is Lord.

36. **We join in praise** to God, Creator, Redeemer, Spirit, who has "brought down the mighty from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands" (Lk 1.52f).

Covenanting for Justice

37. By confessing our faith together, we covenant in obedience to God's will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships. This binds us together to work for justice in the economy and the earth both in our common global context as well as our various regional and local settings.

38. On this common journey, some churches have already expressed their commitment in a confession of faith. We

urge them to continue to translate this confession into concrete actions both regionally and locally. Other churches have already begun to engage in this process, including taking actions and we urge them to engage further, through education, confession and action. To those other churches, which are still in the process of recognition, we urge them on the basis of our mutual covenanting accountability, to deepen their education and move forward towards confession.

39. The General Council calls upon member churches, on the basis of this covenanting relationship, to undertake the difficult and prophetic task of interpreting this confession to their local congregations.

40. The General Council urges member churches to implement this confession by following up the Public Issues Committee's recommendations on economic justice and ecological issues

41. The General Council commits the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to work together with other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and people's movements for a just economy and the integrity of creation and calls upon our member churches to do the same.

42. Now we proclaim with passion that we will commit ourselves, our time and our energy to changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants might live (Deuteronomy 30.19).

Witherspoon joins other faith groups to call for “peace not poverty”

National bus tour is presenting the national budget as a moral document

On Monday evening, April 4, Riverside Church in New York saw an interfaith gathering to celebrate the anniversary of Martin Luther King’s speech that he called “Beyond Vietnam,” in which he said:

“I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continue to draw men and skills and money like one demonic, destructive sucking tube.”

The event drew support from over 50 religious groups, including Christians, Jews and Muslims – among them the Witherspoon Society and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.

In the conviction that King’s prophetic words of April 4, 1967, apply just as painfully today, if you simply substitute Iraq for Vietnam, the group has begun a national bus tour of religious leaders, aimed to capture the attention of the media and counter the influence of the religious right. We hope it will serve as a catalyst to turn the tide of our nation’s drift to darkness toward the light of goodness.

[Adapted from a communication from True Majority]

Witherspoon was there

Two Witherspoon members represented us in the procession that opened the service.

One of them, The Rev. Phyllis Zoon of Newark, NJ, sent a quick, personal response to the service:

Monday night’s event was amazing and exciting. The church was full and their service lasted 3

hours, which went by very quickly because the speakers were so inspiring—and there were many of them. For me, Sister Joan Chittister, who spoke on conscience, and the Mayor of Cleveland, Jane L. Campbell, who spoke on hope and its loss in our cities, were the highlights. And Jesse Jackson was very inspiring. Afterward there was ice cream from Ben and Jerry’s. I hadn’t had dinner and was rather sugar-shocked by the time I left.

Tom Philipp, a Presbyterian minister now serving on Long Island, joined Phyllis Zoon to represent Witherspoon in the service, which also functioned as a send-off rally in New York for the “End the Silence” tour of the US, raising people’s awareness of the terrible consequences of the war in Iraq, particularly for American’s poor. He sent these impressions of the event:

Attending the event was similar to the events of the past when church people and others came together to rally around the causes of peace and justice and civil rights. I remembered being at Riverside in the past for several of those occasions. This was the first time, however, where I had the honor to carry a banner for a particular group.

I am glad that Witherspoon was able to make a statement boldly and clearly, as Phyllis and I walked the center aisle of Riverside Church carrying our banner. My only concern was that I know many people present did not know who Witherspoon is, and I would



Phyllis Zoon and Tom Philipp

suggest that we add something to our banner identifying us with the PCUSA.

The speeches were inspiring. Sister Joan [Chittister] always speaks with passion and compassion, always raising up truth with power, always centering her remarks in the Gospel that calls us to work on an agenda that we cannot ignore: hunger, justice, peace. The two speeches that moved me the most, however, were those of the two women who had lost their own in Iraq, and were able to turn their grief and anger into action, speaking out to our political leaders as well as to the public at large on the immorality of our country’s action in Iraq.

See next page for the “Declaration for Peace not Poverty,” which was read at the Riverside service.

For the latest information on this project of conscience and the Break the Silence bus tour, go to <http://www.drivedemocracy.org/breakthesilence/>

A Declaration for Peace not Poverty

As part of the Riverside event, a declaration of conscience against the Iraq War was read. It was developed through an on-line process in which thousands of people took part, expressing their own perceptions and concerns. A process of on-line editing gathered the many statements into the coherent Declaration that was presented to the gathering.

The Declaration was completed on April 2, and was read for the first time in Riverside Church, New York, on April 4 by Kelley Ogden of Houston, Texas, the final consensus leader of the Peace Not Poverty Write-In.

Thirty-eight years ago today, Dr. King reminded us of those moments in life where silence is betrayal. Our lives begin to end the day we remain silent when our conscience tells us to speak. Today, we walk in the footsteps of Dr. King, Fred Korematsu, Mahatma Gandhi, and countless others who have walked this road before. Their examples guide us along the path.

War poisons the moral fiber of every individual and destroys the intricate fabric of life. As a nation, we value peace and have prided ourselves in non-aggression towards other sovereign states. The war in Iraq, however, violates this principle of non-aggression. The Iraq war is a war of choice. We did not engage in diplomacy, but rather, bullying. Saddam Hussein did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Iraq did not invade our country or attack it. It is painful to admit that we invaded another sovereign nation without cause and without provocation. Our conscience tells us that we must end this war.

The war in Iraq violates law and perverts our sense of justice. We are no longer viewed as an impartial arbitrator of disputes, but as a biased proponent of our own self interest. We have lost the moral high ground for condemning the aggression of others. Our compassion and care for fellow man has been replaced by intolerance, hatred, and bigotry. The war in Iraq has curtailed the freedoms and liberties that our founding fathers, and those like Dr. King, worked so hard to secure. The war in Iraq promotes fiscal insanity for us and future generations and it narrows and degrades our soul. It is a cancer, that if left unchecked, will only spread.

Our conscience tells us that now is the time for action, before the war destroys all that we hold dear. We must speak so that our families, our children, our loved ones, and our nation, are not poisoned by hate, bigotry, and intolerance. We must end this war.

We must cease all combat operations. Troops should be withdrawn in an orderly fashion, with only a small portion remaining to assist in the rebuilding efforts. To the extent that troops are necessary to maintain order, peacekeeping activities should be turned over to the UN or the Arab League.

We must dismantle our military bases, which only serve to remind the Iraqi people of our presence. We have done enough damage and must remove the vestiges of this transgression.

We must fund the rebuilding of Iraq's roads, buildings, and infrastructure destroyed by this war, as this is our moral and legal obligation. Iraqi engineers, labor, and business, not US corporations that profit from war, should be employed to rebuild. Our actions must be pure in deed and in heart. We must give international relief agencies full access to help the people of Iraq and alleviate their suffering. We must help rebuild the lives of the Iraqi people and restore the fabric of life.

We must accept the form of government freely chosen by the Iraqi people, without US influence. Our insistence upon a particular form of government only poisons the political process. Democracy cannot be imposed upon others by the barrel of a gun.

We must take steps at home to change the mindset of the American people. Describing the war in Iraq as a 'front' provides us with a false sense of justification for our actions. We were wrong, and we need to recognize that we were wrong.

Americans must be reminded that truth and honesty, freedom, and liberty for all are our core values. The freedoms and liberties that have been taken from us must be restored. We must also take steps to safeguard our freedoms and liberties, to ensure that they are not taken from us so easily again.

We must also address the root causes of this conflict, not only in our hearts, but in our daily lives. We must reduce our dependence on oil, which fuels our aggression.

As a result of this war, countless lives have been ruined, and our integrity among nations has been compromised. We must repair our relations among nations, and strengthen the ties that bind us all. We must hold those responsible for this war accountable.

We must also demonstrate the power of forgiveness. We must release those we have imprisoned, even those who may wish us harm. The men, women, and children of Iraq should be free to begin rebuilding their lives, regardless of their actions or our suspicions. We must remove the log in our own eye before attempting to remove the splinter in another's.

We must right our wrongs. We must demonstrate our strength at home and abroad by apologizing to the Iraqi people and to the world. By redressing the wrongs that we have inflicted upon the Iraqi people, and the damage that we have done to relations among nations, we demonstrate respect for freedom and democracy. By redressing the wrongs, we strengthen the bonds of humanity, we make peace possible, and we restore our soul.

Let us all lift our voices for as our conscience tells us, now is the time to speak.



Exploring Jubilee today Exploring Jubilee today Exploring Jubilee today

Two Presbyterians, Ross and Gloria Kinsler, are deeply involved in work for fair trade as a way of reflecting the biblical principle of Jubilee in our global society.

We have asked them to share a bit of what they're doing these days.

Here's their response, along with three good samples of their work, on these two pages:

We have been working primarily on the biblical Jubilee as an important foundation for our struggle for life, i.e., for justice in society and the environment. To follow up our book (*The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life*) we continue to develop workbook materials on TODAY'S WORLD, BIBLICAL FAITH, and RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLESHIP (the hermeneutical circle). These are one page sheets that present material for group reflection. They deal with aspects of globalization, poverty, injustice, exploitation, imperialism, and fair and unfair trade. If you would like to look at some samples, Jubilee Workbooks IV and VI are available at www.jubilee4-justice.org and Jubilee Workbook V is at www.sabbath economics.org. Soon Jubilee Workbook VII will be available at the latter site. ...

You may know that our new book, *God's Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America*, is coming out in June from Orbis.

We are hoping to organize with our Synod and Presbyteries in Southern California an event to focus on the Accra accords of the WARC. This seems to offer a unique opportunity for Presbyterians and other Reformed Christians to face the two greatest threats to life as a challenge to our faith, i.e., as a call to confess our faith and resist the powers of death in our world and especially in this country. This event may take place next February or April, depending on the availability of Cliff Kirkpatrick and Rick Ufford-Chase.

Shalom, Ross and Gloria

Today's world

FAIR TRADE COFFEE

In recent months alarming reports have been circulating about the global glut in the coffee market and its effect on more than 25 million coffee farmers, their families, and their communities. *Co-op America Quarterly* (Spring 2003) reports that 600,000 coffee farmers and workers have lost their jobs in Central America; 700,000 families in Ethiopia face economic instability complicated by the HIV/AIDS crisis; in many places prices have fallen so low that the farmers cannot feed and care for their children adequately; in some cases sales do not even cover the cost of production. At the same time major companies and investors are enjoying windfall profits. "Under conventional trade, the race for profit drives companies to minimize their costs by exploiting workers and the environment in developing countries." (14)

"Fair trade is based on the principle of putting workers and the environment first, while still working in a healthy business model. Businesses committed to fair trade agree to adhere to the following criteria in their relationships with farmers and workers:

Cooperative and healthy workplaces
A fair and living wage
Environmental sustainability
Consumer education and public disclosure
Respect for cultural identity. (14)

"Fair trade guarantees farmers a fair wage for their labor, lifts them out of poverty, and puts farmers on the road to self-determination. Fair trade is bringing hope and justice to coffee farmers throughout the world." (16) We the consumers can play a major role in this growing movement, which reaches out not only to coffee farmers but also to other workers in similar circumstances. Co-op America lists five fast ways to act:

Buy fair trade products.
Encourage fair trade business practices.
Educate others.
Invest in fair trade businesses.
Join campaigns.

Many of us have been deeply concerned about the enormous inequalities in our world and our seeming powerlessness compared with the corporations that dominate trade. The fair trade movement brings the realities of global economics right down to where we live, what we buy, eat, and wear, how we practice our faith. Some faith communities begin simply by serving and selling fair trade coffee after worship and at other meetings, making available information about the movement and inviting friends to consider this option for themselves. They in turn can pass the word along to others, and some may take steps that will affect businesses, investments, and the environment as well as workers. By 2001 there were 7000 retail outlets selling fair trade goods in the US and Canada, an increase of 271% in just one year. The Fair Trade Federation estimates that worldwide sales of fair trade goods have reached \$500 million already. Safeway, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, and Starbucks now carry fair trade coffee—but it must be requested. To find fair trade coffee, chocolate, tea, crafts, jewelry, etc. see Co-op America's *National Green Pages* (www.greenpages.org) or TransFair USA (www.transfairusa.org/do/whereToBuy).

Consider the ways in which your family and faith community are already participating in the fair trade movement and additional steps you may wish to take with them.

Exploring Jubilee today Exploring Jubilee today Exploring Jubilee today

Biblical faith**TRUEFASTING, TRUESPIRITUALITY****Isaiah 58:1-12**

When the people of Israel returned from Babylonian captivity, following the Edict of Cyrus in 538 BCE, they were challenged to live in keeping with God's will. But this passage from Third Isaiah indicates that once again they practiced a false, pretentious spirituality, expressed through false fasting and through the omission of true spirituality. This passage takes on special importance when we note that Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61:1-2a at the beginning of his ministry, in the Nazareth Synagogue, includes the addition of an important phrase from Isaiah 58:6: "to let the oppressed go free." The Luke 4:18-19 text begins with the phrase, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me," and it ends with the phrase that links Jesus' ministry with the Jubilee: "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." So Jesus confirms the lesson of Isaiah 58:1-12, that true spirituality is to free those who are oppressed and to care for those who are in need. This is his calling; this is the meaning of Jubilee; this is our calling.

V. 1-2. God calls the prophet to denounce his people's rebellion. They were practicing daily some kind of spirituality or religiosity, but apparently they were not practicing righteousness/justice. The question arises whether it is possible "to draw near to God" without practicing justice.

V. 3a. The people complain that God does not see their fasting, does not accept their pious expressions, does not hear their petitions.

V. 3b-5. God denounces their fasting and refuses to hear their requests, for they oppress their workers, they quarrel and fight and strike each other, even on their fast day.

V. 6-9a. God poses an alternative understanding and expression of fasting: to let the oppressed go free, to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless into your houses, to clothe the naked. God will see this true fasting, God will heal, God will vindicate, God will hear their cries and respond.

V. 9b-12. God further explains that true spirituality is to not speak evil of one another; it is to feed the hungry and care for the afflicted. Then God will guide them, meet their needs, nurture their lives, and enable them to rebuild their foundations.

1. Compare this lesson from Isaiah with Jesus' teaching in the Parable of the Judgment of the Nations in Matthew 25:31-46.

2. Consider the relevance of this lesson from Isaiah and from Jesus for our churches today. How would you teach this lesson through drama or roll playing?

3. Examine and explain your own practice and understanding of spirituality in the light of Isaiah 58:1-12, Luke 4:18-19, and Matthew 25:31-46.

Responsible Discipleship**TEN WAYS TO SUPPORT FAIR TRADE**

We may think that we can do nothing to really make a difference in relation to the vast economic trade forces that are wrecking havoc in the lives of millions of small farmers around the world. TransFair USA affirms that "Consumers are the key to ensuring that farmers around the world get their fair share." It offers the following list of "simple things you can do to make a difference." For further information contact TransFair USA (www.fairtradecertified.org).

1. Buy Fair Trade Certified products whenever and wherever you can. Fair Trade Certified products are how available in more than 10,000 locations, including many retail chains and independent natural food stores and cafes.

2. Ask for Fair Trade Certified coffee, tea and chocolate at your local café and grocery store. Ask to speak with the manager or fill out a store comment card requesting Fair Trade Certified products.

3. Educate yourself, your friends and your community. Download fact sheets, backgrounders, recent articles, a powerpoint presentation or order a video from our website that you can use to educate yourself and share with your friends and community.

4. Write letters to the editor and help get Fair Trade in the news. Write to your local newspaper citing Fair Trade as a critical alternative to the current coffee crisis, or submit a Fair Trade article to your company, community organization or congregation's newsletter.

5. Get your City Council to adopt a Fair Trade Resolution. City halls across the country have passed resolutions pledging to use Fair Trade Certified coffee in government offices.

6. Host a Fair Trade event/fundraiser. Host a gathering with friends to sell Fair Trade Certified coffee, tea and chocolate.

7. Make Fair Trade coffee your congregation's coffee of choice. Share Fair Trade coffee at your place of worship while educating your congregation about the social and environmental issues surrounding coffee and supporting farmers and their families around the globe.

8. Choose a Fair Trade brew for your workplace. Serving Fair Trade coffee in the workplace is a simple thing your company or organization can do to directly support family farmers and the environment.

9. Bring Fair Trade to your college campus. Students are a driving force in building the Fair Trade movement across the country.

10. Join TransFair's monthly e-mail update. To subscribe, send an e-mail to fairtradebulletin-subscribe@topica.email-publisher.com

More perspectives on fair trade

The Rise of Disaster Capitalism

Naomi Klein shows how the American economic system is feeding off of areas of the world that are struck by both natural and political disasters.

Tom Driver, retired professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, has recommended this to his friends in the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship as a helpful way to understand the US role in Haiti.

Driver writes:

I have been wondering all year why the U.S. Government has stood by while Haiti descended into chaotic violence. It was no surprise that the U.S. got rid of Aristide, for the aim to make it impossible for him to govern was clear from 2000 onward, if not before. But once he was gone, why let chaos reign?

[An article] by Naomi Klein in the May 2, 2005, issue of *The Nation* Magazine, goes far to explain it. She shows how the American economic system is feeding off of areas of the world that are struck by both natural and political disasters. In the latter part of the article, Haiti is shown to be an example. We should all be aware of the fact that although Haiti is one of the most extreme victims of predatory imperialism, it is by no means unique. Klein's article is chilling reading, but it's also clarifying.

Tom F. Driver

You'll find Klein's article in the May 2, 2005 issue of *The Nation*, or online at

<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20050502&s=klein>

Debt Cancellation: historic victories, new challenges

The Presbyterian Church has repeatedly called for various measures by the US government (and others) to ease the crushing burden of debt on many developing nations.

To find some examples of PC(USA) statements, go to <http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/>. Click on [compilation of social witness policies](#), then type "debt" in the search box at the top of the page. The first result ("International Trade and Investment") will give you plenty to start with.

In 1996, for example, the 208th General Assembly "call[ed] upon all governments, all multilateral lending institutions, and commercial banks . . . to strive to insulate the poor of indebted countries from the costs of debt repayment and to consider seriously debt forgiveness or debt relief for the most heavily indebted and poorest countries."

A new study paper from Foreign Policy in Focus reports on "how 100% debt cancellation for poor countries—now being debated by wealthy nations—was transformed from an implausible demand into a winning issue, and what barriers lie ahead for the debt relief movement."

Read the article on the FPIF web site: <http://www.fpif.org/papers/0505debt.html>

Or see the printer-friendly pdf version <http://www.fpif.org/pdf/reports/SR0505debt.pdf>

Fair trade partnerships empowering business model for Haiti's coffee growers

A commentary from the International Relations Center

The fair trade market offers small coffee farmers a chance to benefit from globalization through direct links to markets in wealthy countries. The experience of Recocarno, (Reseau des Cooperatives Cafeieres de la Region Nord) a network of seven small coffee-producer cooperatives in northern Haiti, illustrates both the potential benefits of fair trade, and the challenges of making these benefits sustainable.

Recocarno was launched with support from several partners, including a fair trade buyer, local and international NGOs and an international strategic marketing expert. Since becoming certified through the Fair Trade Labeling Organizations (FLO) in 1997, Recocarno has steadily implemented a plan to build a producer-owned and operated export business.

Recocarno's experience holds many lessons for small farmers in countries with a similar history of elite control of export markets. The organization has shown that small farmers who act collectively, are organized as a business, and have on-going technical and financial support can challenge the old export monopolies. A 'double bottom line' business approach has a broader economic and social impact than focusing narrowly on marketing and production. This approach has both corrected market inefficiencies in favor of small producers and reinforced socially responsible business principles such as ecosystem management, democratic and accountable leadership, gender equity and direct reinvestment of dividends into community projects.

See full article online at: <http://www.americaspolicy.org/citizen-action/series/18-recocarno.html>

Hunger program serves up 'Just Eating' curriculum

Seven-week program examines links between faith and food

by Evan Silverstein, Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE – April 20, 2005 – The Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP), in collaboration with two other organizations, has developed a seven-week curriculum for congregations exploring the relationship between the way we eat and the way we live.

Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table aims to bring into dialogue daily eating habits, the Christian faith and the “needs of the broader world” through readings, action steps and healthy eating tips.

“Never before has the Presbyterian Church produced a full curriculum on eating,” said Andrew Kang Bartlett, a PHP staffer who oversaw the project’s completion. “The 2002 PC(USA) General Assembly report, ‘We Are What We Eat’ provides Presbyterians with great analysis and a picture of many emerging alternatives, and *Just Eating?* gives people, including high schoolers, tools that help us ponder the wider impact of what we eat.”

Scripture, prayer and stories from the local and global community are used to explore four key aspects of Christians’ relationship with food:

- the health of our bodies
- the health of the earth that provides our food
- the ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships
- the challenge of hunger

Other objectives of the *Just Eating?* curriculum include exploring faith practices that encourage healthful eating and supporting each other in taking personal and congregational action that reaches beyond the curriculum.

“The title of course has a double

meaning,” Kang Bartlett said. “We can *just eat* as a mundane activity done without mindfulness, or we can *eat justly* and explore the relationship between our food and justice. Eating can be a vehicle for practicing our faith.”

Written by Jennifer Halteman Schrock, a freelance writer and active lay member of the Mennonite Church U.S.A., the curriculum takes participants on a journey from the “table of the Lord to the table of the world that will challenge, encourage and enrich all who participate,” Kang Bartlett said.

Advocate Health Care, a faith-based health system serving metropolitan Chicago, and Church World Service, an international hunger and development agency, worked with PHP on the project. The development of the curriculum was funded by grants from the Valparaiso Practice Grants Program, the Genesis Fund of the United Church of Christ, the Presbytery of Chicago Hunger Mission Team, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program.

PHP was established in 1969 as a vehicle for Presbyterians to be engaged in the fight against hunger in the United States and around the world.

To order the new curriculum, call the Presbyterian Distribution Service at (800) 524-2612 or visit www.pcusa.org/marketplace. It is also available for download at no cost at <http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/food/justeating.htm>.

When ordering, use PDS# 74365-05-361 for participant guide. The price is \$4 (one to nine copies) or \$3 (10 or more). The leader’s guide, PDS#74365-05-362, is priced at \$5.50.

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An 'accompanier' sees the realities of life in Colombia

Erik J Mason of Santa Fe, NM, returned to the US a few weeks ago after spending 5 weeks in Colombia as part of the PC(USA) effort to provide North American Christians to accompany sisters and brothers in Colombia whose lives are threatened because of their work for peace and human rights. He is a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Santa Fe.

He offers a moving report of the realities he experienced there.

We were "accompanying" Maria, a human rights volunteer with the "Association of Solidarity with Political Prisoners," a good friend of the Presbytery of the North Coast of Barranquilla, Colombia. Our visit with five of the prisoners in the jail at Santa Marta had been disturbing. It had been built with a capacity of 250, but 673 persons were presently incarcerated there including 49 women, one with a new baby. There is not enough room even on the floors to sleep, and often there is no water in the few showers. One of the prisoners had recently been strangled, and there were rumors that another murder was planned. Although we had talked *sotto voce*, the five persons we had interviewed had continually looked around fearfully and once directed another prisoner who had moved too close to move away—some prisoners are paid informants.

To me, four of these prisoners had seemed mere children, but with unbelievably beautiful, intelligent, educated faces. One had been convicted and sentenced to sixteen years for storing a "suspicious" telephone number on her cell phone. Before we departed, the only adult, at age 42, had told us, "Remember us. In truth, we are rebels, but there are no protections here for persons who disagree with the government."

While we drove back to Barranquilla, Maria received a call on her cell phone—there was an emergency at Atlantic University requiring her attention.

In an empty classroom the young and frightened Francisco admitted he had previously attended some leftist rallies, but for the past six months he had been concentrating on his studies. This afternoon, however, he had been accosted by two men, in civilian clothes but

with short military haircuts, who showed him xeroxed copies of his identification papers and copies of photographs of his home, his parents, and his presence at political rallies. He had been offered a deal—join the government's information network and earn \$600 a month. If he helped them arrest his friend Antonio, who had gone into hiding a month earlier, he would receive a \$1,000 bonus. Refuse, and there would be "consequences" for him and his family. He had taken refuge at the university.

I walked very close to him as we left the university and climbed into our vehicle. At Presbytery, whose Executive Secretary was in Geneva, Maria and Francisco were told that Presbytery had no safe houses, so they left. I was rapidly expanding my vocabulary—*amenazas*, threats; *rehen*, hostage; *secuestrado*, kidnaped.

Several weeks later Maria told us they had found a relatively safe refuge for Francisco in another city. Then she showed us a flyer, just received, announcing that the following-named 19 human rights workers had been declared "military objectives," a sentence of death. They had no funds for 19 more safe places. Maria herself has received so many death threats that she is being strongly advised to go into hiding. She became emotional, explaining that it is difficult not to be able to visit her mother or sister for fear of putting them in danger. "Yes, I am afraid that I might be killed but that's part of our work. I'm mostly afraid for our youth, like my teenaged son who marches in street demonstrations with a megaphone."

She had brought with her many photographs of her human rights work over the last twenty years. One by one she held up

about 25 photographs of professors, students and union leaders assassinated in Barranquilla in the last several years. In a flat, emotionless voice she recited the data fixed in her mind for each photo, "Juan Jose Torres, union worker, assassinated March 25, 2002; Diego Avila Zavala, professor at the Atlantic University, assassinated January 17, 2004." Her voice trembled several times, "Oscar Manuel Vargas, union worker, assassinated April 19, 2003, tortured while in prison, burned with acid, a horrible death; Jairo Perez Barrios, student, assassinated October 18, 2004, a wonderful boy, he was like a son to me."

This is the reality of Colombia, which our US Department of State has recently taken off the "poor" list of countries in human rights. When my team partner, Ted Collins from Kansas, and I passed a lighted torch to Britt Johnson and Danna Larson after our five weeks of accompaniment in Colombia, the Catholic priest conducting the ceremony told us, "Your presence is enough; your presence is eloquent." I was grateful for his comment, but "presence" is not really enough. Our protest and advocacy is required.

Note:

Names above have been changed

**Don't miss
our 2005
Ghost Ranch seminar!**

**Details are on
page 27.**

Five Presbyterian 'accompaniers' being sent to Barranquilla

Colombia network sets ambitious goals

by Alexa Smith, Presbyterian News Service

CHICAGO—May 17, 2005—Five more Presbyterians have been commissioned by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Colombia Network to accompany Colombian church, union and displaced leaders who are threatened by death squads for their work in human rights.

At its May 9-11 meeting here the network set eight different goals for its work, some intended to directly assist churches in Colombia, others targeting U.S. corporations for study about reported abusive labor practices. Continuing accompaniment — and stepped-up recruitment — were high on the agenda, as well as debate about how to address labor practices in Coca-Cola's bottling facilities in Colombia, where some union organizers reportedly have been intimidated or killed.

Sixteen U.S. Christians have completed accompaniment training so far, and a third training program is planned in Washington, DC, in mid-July.

Scheduled to go to Colombia are Jane Moore and Marilyn White, both members of the Community Church of the Servant-Savior in Houston, TX; Cat Garlit Bucher of Grand Avenue Presbyterian Church in Sherman, TX; Phil Gates of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Prescott, AZ; and Gert Walsh of First Presbyterian Church in Sheboygan, WI.

Ordained members of the network laid hands on the commissioned accompaniers during a short worship service at the end of the meeting. Also present for the service were the Rev. Milton Mejia, executive secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, and the Rev. Alice Winter, a Presbyterian Church (USA) missionary who teaches at the Protestant seminary in Barranquilla.

The accompaniers go to Colombia in teams of two for month-long stints with

the PCC, which is headquartered in Barranquilla, a port city on the northern coast. The church deploys the teams as needed, with union officials, displaced communities and churches under threat.

The accompaniers serve as international eyewitnesses and file reports with the church that are forwarded to human rights organizations.

The program has been under way since December 2004, coordinated by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF), a pacifist group within the denomination that has long backed accompaniment as a strategy to deter violence.

"In the first instance, these threats are not personal," the Rev. Dick Junkin, a former accompanier from Hunt, TX, said during a panel discussion. "The real threat is to a better world ... and to those who are doing the work to make the world better. The real threat is to what we perceive as the kingdom of God. ... And (the opposition) is doing anything it can to keep that kingdom from coming into existence."

The PCC's Barranquilla office has been under constant government surveillance. The life of its executive secretary, the Rev. Milton Mejia, has been threatened repeatedly, as well as those of his wife and two young sons.

Mauricio Avilez, a 25-year-old law student and church volunteer, was jailed for more than four months after a paid informant accused him of involvement with guerrillas. He is still living in hiding even though the charges have been dismissed.

A pastor, the Rev. Jesus Goez, is living with threats as well. He was forced to leave his Cartagena parish to protect the lives of his family after unidentified men beat up his 15-year-old son and promised

that Goez' coffin is ready and waiting.

Another volunteer, Guillermo Larios, is in jail now on similar charges, but Mejia told the *Presbyterian News Service* that the PCC is anticipating that those charges also will be dropped.

PPF is seeking volunteers for its third training session, and will continue placing accompaniers until the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Worldwide Ministries Division (WMD) completes its search for a full-time accompanier to live in Barranquilla and coordinate delegations of U.S. Presbyterians in Colombia.

Both Anne Barstow (annebarstow@peoplepc.com), who is handling PPF's recruitment efforts, and Junkin, who led PC(USA) delegations in Central America in the 1980s, said delegations are essential to reducing the fear of U.S. citizens traveling to Colombia. Junkin said delegations to Central America gave U.S. Presbyterians a history with the region — and when accompaniers were needed in the 1980s, the church was flooded with volunteers.

"Trying to build a base of concern takes years," said Barstow, noting that she has been trying to do two things at once — educate and recruit. "We've got to figure out a better strategy," she said. "We run into a stone wall with fear, and, I understand that.

"However, the accompaniers who come back don't feel that what they've done is irresponsible at all, but very reasonable. The question is: How to get through that barrier?"

Among its other goals, the Colombia Network cited:

- Celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Colombian church next year with delegations and other activities.
- Urge U.S. Congressional representatives to help the Reformed University get accreditation from the Colombian government.
- Raise funds to help boost ministries of the Colombian church, particularly for the university and for work with the displaced.

- Continue recruiting accompaniers.
- Evaluate the existing accompaniment program and look toward its expansion in even more remote presbyteries.
- Organize within presbyteries and congregations to advocate changes in U.S. policies concerning Colombia — most notably its ongoing support of the Colombian military, despite its spotty human-rights record — and to help the Colombian church, making it a prayer priority.
- Explore how WMD and the network can work together.
- Work with the denomination's investment watchdog, the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI), which is monitoring the harassment and deaths of union organizers in Coca-Cola's bottling plants in Colombia. MRTI also has raised questions during Coca-Cola shareholders' meetings.

Moore, a former Presbyterian missionary in Cameroon, told the networkers that she'd like the PC(USA) to launch a full-blown boycott of Coca-Cola, based on labor practices at its bottling factories. "I don't see why we can't boycott," she said.

That question was set aside after Lois Baker of Monroe, WI, said the network needs to wait on MRTI's recommendations. "Starting a boycott may not be the smartest way to go," she said. "They may not sit down and negotiate then."

WMD has established 21 networks in recent years for presbyteries, congregations and individuals engaged in mission activity abroad. This is the second gathering of the Colombia network. About 50 Presbyterians took part — about twice as many as last year.

ORTHODOXY AS A CORRECTIVE TO REFORMED TRADITIONS

Jean Rodenbough, Madison, NC

Jean Rodenbough, a retired Presbyterian minister, reflects on a two-week visit to Belarus and Russia by ten representatives of Salem Presbytery.

Eastern Orthodoxy may be just the corrective necessary for our Presbyterian rigidity and retentiveness. The conflicts during the past years over who is in and who is out, women, gbt's, law and grace have managed to wring out the last degree of conformity to our polity, and the litmus paper for our "correctness" has run dry. We are a left-brained bunch, bound to the rational, ordered theology of the written word in scripture and interpretation and the *Book of Order* strictures.

But wait! There may be a remedy. During a two-week visit in February to Belarus and Russia by 10 representatives of Salem Presbytery from eight congregations, we studied Orthodoxy in a variety of settings. In that time we were exposed to an alternative for our studied intellectual approach to faith. First we attended a Forum on Orthodoxy in Minsk and then traveled to Moscow and St. Petersburg for additional exposure to this Eastern-oriented Christianity and came home with new understandings and perspectives that speak to our own Reformed tradition. Our hosts, the Belarusian Round Table and the Brotherhood [which includes women as well] of the Three Vilnya Martyrs, provided a feast in many courses, from worship liturgies to polity to iconography and architecture, filling us with many good things.

Among our group were a church educator, minister of music, elders in a variety of services, and clergy. Joining us from the PC(USA) was Gary Payton, Regional Liaison for Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland. On sabbatical from Pittsburgh Seminary and studying Orthodoxy in St. Petersburg was John Burgess, who also participated in our Belarusian adventure. Our time in Moscow was brief, as we visited churches in the Kremlin and then went on to St. Petersburg for more exposure to the Orthodox world as well as to art of the Hermitage. Our most

significant time there was spent with Father Vladimir Fedorov, Director of the Orthodox Institute of Missiology and also serving with the World Council of Churches in developing theological education for Eastern Europe. He visited the US in 2002 as part of our Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and met with several of our churches then.

What in particular is it about Orthodoxy that provides an example for our Reformed tradition? Is it the central focus on worship, delivered in most cases in ancient Slavonic, or perhaps the *a capella* music that is integral to worship (where instruments are never used)? Perhaps it is the immersion in the frescoes of biblical scenes and the icons that cover the walls of sanctuaries there. Perhaps it has to do with the theological understanding of Orthodox church architecture or the purpose and interpretation of icon paintings.

If none of these, then might it be the polity that declares the equality between church leaders where the only true head of the Church is Jesus Christ? Human power lies in a construct of Bishops over each diocese, a Metropolitan over a regional or state unit of the church, and the Patriarch, only one in each "autocephalous" (self-ruling) church, over the whole church. For example, there is one Patriarch for the Russian Orthodox Church and its branches, which includes Belarus. Yet even though the Patriarch holds a position of priority in relationship to the other leaders, he does not hold greater power. He is the "first among equals." In addition, there is no merging of power. Bishops hold priority in their own districts only and the Patriarch has priority only in the Russian church, not in other branches of Orthodoxy, in contrast to the power wielded by the Roman Catholic Pope.

All of these factors create a certain unity

that a “connectional” church such as our Presbyterian system lacks. Conciliar in nature, defined as *sobernost*, some churches deemed “autonomous” are ruled by councils rather than by a single head. The various parts of a church such as the Russian Orthodox Church hold on to a unified theology and biblical understanding, in part because of a belief that the Holy Spirit came to all of the various churches equally and all are subject to the same teachings. To do otherwise would bring about a separation from the Orthodox church in a particular region for those opposed to the central teachings. Unity is essential, resting on the claim that “the seamless robe of Christ cannot be divided.”

How then does an understanding of Orthodoxy speak to the divisions and conflicts among US Presbyterians? Similarities would include the principle of “first among equals” in regard to the distinction between clergy and elders, conciliar in that we do not have a single head of our church but instead a Council (at presbytery, synod and General Assembly levels) or Session (in the individual congregation), and a centrality of worship, although quite different in style. A major difference has to do with the unity of the church. Whereas in Orthodoxy all parts hold to the same teachings and scriptural interpretations, Presbyterians go all over the map on that one. Is there a way “to seek the peace, purity and unity” of the church Presbyterian style without becoming authoritarian or hierarchical in our polity and teachings?

We acknowledge, as do the Orthodox, that Jesus Christ is the true Head of the Church, in whom ultimate authority lies. This theological statement is principal to our Christian faith even though it may be stated in different terms by the two churches. Earthly leaders then submit to that divine authority, expressing their leadership in various, but human, ways, depending upon the nature of our constitutions and church teachings. Is there controversy among the Orthodox if they are to submit to one interpretation of things by the collective Church? Of course. Is there variety? Yes. In Belarus,

for example, many local churches now use the Belarusian language in worship rather than the ancient Slavonic texts. In Russia, it is rare to find contemporary Russian used during a service. Have the two subdivisions of the Russian Orthodox Church split over this development? No, they exist as one body, and have endured as a single body since 988 when Christian Orthodoxy came to Russia.

What might be a key to Presbyterian endurance as a unified Body of Christ if we look at our Orthodox sisters and brothers and their shaping of this Body?



Starting at left: Jean Rodenbough, Charles Howell, pastor of the Madison (NC) Presbyterian Church, Father Sergey and his son Sasha, and Jean's husband Charlie

As a starter, and perhaps as the way to conclude the effort eventually, consider the mystical, spiritual nature of Orthodox belief. Worship is riddled with mystery, with experiencing the Invisible God who is present, with the overriding cloud of witnesses all through the history of faith. It is out of an Eastern culture, whereas we Presbyterians are children of the West. I know of Presbyterian sessions which shudder at the very use of the words “mystery” and “mysterious.” Try to set up a study curriculum on Reformed spirituality in some congregations and you may come face to face with suspicion, opposition, and perhaps even accusations that you are into “that New Age stuff.”

We are afraid of the God of Mystery, and well we might be. Yet when we dare to come into that Presence with singing each time we worship, we open ourselves to the unexpected. We are so intent upon having everything explained to us with clarity, taught in a way that entertains us and holds our attention, that we never

seem to get around to the simple act of sitting with the Mystery that surrounds us in worship. We seldom are willing to conduct our lives of faith through recognizing the awesome power of the Risen Christ. We forget that in our missions of mercy we are truly representing that Christ moving among the least and the powerless, the forgotten and overlooked ones of the world. In seeking to increase our numbers or bemoaning our dwindling memberships across our denomination we find it difficult to be where we are and as we are as children of the Mystery.

I love mysteries. Many detective novels use as the main character a clergy person. Some British mystery writers also have strong ties to the church professionally and as theologians. The connection between mystery and Mystery is there. We just have not, as Presbyterians, gotten the message very clearly. The spiritual dimension of faith holds untapped opportunities for Presbyterians to loosen up a bit, to stop being so determined to convince others of our version of scriptural truth, and to rejoice in the oneness of our existence.

Taking part in the church at the threshold of Mystery, however, does not automatically dissolve our numerous polarities. We aren't likely to love those “other” folks without reservation, but then isn't that the work of Jesus? We certainly seem to prefer to leave that up to him. We aren't likely to resolve all the pending court cases against those who seek justice rather than conformity to our current *Book of Order*. We aren't likely to stop the bleeding out of our memberships any time soon. We do, nevertheless, have resources through other Christian traditions which can strengthen us in our own. The beginning point, and the ending point if I have read scripture correctly, is with the great Mystery, the God who called us out from the world around us into the Body of Christ, to become as Jesus was in a new unity. It's all a mystery to me how that can bring about the peace and unity and maybe even the purity of our PC(USA), but perhaps we can dare to re-focus upon worship and mystery and then our rules and our orderliness will fall into place, the right place.



Theological musings

One, Holy, and Catholic

Reflections on popes old and new

A regular column by Dr. Douglas F. Ottati,
Professor of Theology, Union Seminary/PSCE

This spring I taught the second half of an introduction to theology for Master of Divinity and Master of Christian Education students. The course covers (roughly) christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and points in between, and we were almost through our segment on the church when Pope John Paul II died. Seventeen days later, Cardinal Ratzinger was elected Pope and took the name Benedict XVI.

John Paul's death and Benedict's election were not especially big events on our campus, although they certainly had an unavoidable impact on the news. *The New York Times*, CNN, Fox, *Time Magazine*, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and more tried to take the measure of the two men. And they said all sorts of things. John Paul II was a media star. He opposed women priests. He was Polish. He was anti-Communist. He criticized capitalist consumerism. He was compassionate. He was strong willed. Had he slipped into a coma, the Church might very well have faced a crisis of leadership. He made important efforts to address historic rifts with Jews and Judaism. He clamped down on theological innovation. He opposed the war in Iraq. An American commentator called him "the Ronald Reagan of Roman Catholicism." English tabloids complained that, when he changed the date of his wedding to accommodate the papal funeral, Prince Charles did something no self-respecting past and Protestant British monarch ever would have done. (Where is Henry VIII when we really need him?)

At first, there was not as much about Benedict, but then the media came up to speed. The new pope is conservative.

He is academic. He is German. He is a quiet person, and already 78. Liberal and liberationist Catholics in Europe and the Americas greeted his selection with skepticism. Hans Kung, who questioned infallibility and whose license to teach Catholic theology subsequently was revoked while the man now called Benedict was Bishop of Munich, noted that the Pope's initial statements struck a collegial tone. Might the weighty challenges of the papacy change even Joseph Ratzinger? English tabloids ran headlines noting that Benedict had once been enrolled in the Hitler youth; one called him the "panzer pope."

Photos without commentary also told a tale. Lighted windows in the papal apartment on the evening of John Paul's death, thousands gathered in vigil, then mourning and even celebration, striped Swiss guards, red-clad cardinals, the book of the gospels at the dead pope's side, the many heads of state gathered to pay their respects, cardinal-electors sworn to secrecy, crowds in St. Peter's square awaiting a decision, black smoke, then white with bells ringing, the new pope's initial public appearance clad in traditional white. Most things are at least partly in the eye of the beholder, and I can't begin to say how all of this looked to everyone. But to a Presbyterian theologian who had just taught a segment of a course on ecclesiology, it looked as if, here, on worldwide display, was a powerful and particular understanding of church. The solemn pageant and traditional transition visibly embodied a single global reality, one holy community and institution inclusive (as no Protestant church really is) of virtually every culture and tongue. One hierarchy governing Catholic Christians in every land, addressing the world

with a single voice, witnessing and speaking with moral authority for the single largest religious association on earth. (No wonder the American president was there. No wonder other presidents and prime ministers were, too.)

Protestants also affirm that the church is one, holy, and catholic (or universal). But, in saying these things, we do not understand ourselves to be referring to the Presbyterian Church in the United States or to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (organizations that, even in their names, seem restricted to specific places). We mean instead that Jesus Christ is the only head of an *invisible* multitude of saints, citizens of heaven chosen by God from every age and realm. We say, in addition, that there are *visible* churches and congregations made up of people who confess Jesus Christ, where the Word is preached, and where the sacraments are duly administered. These particular churches, in turn, whether in Rome, Rio, or Richmond, are organized into larger visible communions and institutions that we also call churches, e.g., the Presbyterian Church of Korea, the United Church of Christ.

Moreover, as Protestants, we worry that God and God's purposes will be too easily and too thoroughly identified with human structures and ideas. We acknowledge no single visible organization and, especially if we are Reformed Protestants, we are wary of hierarchical structures that concentrate power. We affirm the authority of the Bible, but we insist that the Bible must be interpreted. And, we know of no way to guarantee that the teaching and interpretation of any particular church will be right. Most often, we prefer representative courts and assemblies peppered with limits, constitutional checks and balances that enfranchise dissent. All of this sometimes makes it embarrassingly difficult for us to decide matters even among ourselves, and we rarely speak to the world with a single voice. Instead, we have disagreements, debates, and splits. Ask us for a list of essential beliefs. Ask us about gay ordination, gay marriage, religious pluralism, and end-of-life issues. Ask us about one or another war.

We don't agree. We argue, and we acknowledge no single, authoritative, and central institutional authority to which we might defer. Even if the world wanted to listen to us, it would still have to decide whom among us to listen to. There is no single pageant, and it's hard to imagine either news media or heads of state from around the globe gathering to hear a particular Protestant church say or do anything at all.

We Protestants should recognize, of course, that there is considerably more to the Roman Catholic Church than its central hierarchy (a point that some liberal Catholics probably also have had occasion to remind themselves of since Benedict's election). But just now I want to make another point. We shouldn't let our different, inherently contentious way of being church keep us from recognizing the exceptional spiritual power and more easily acknowledged authority in the Roman idea: one *visible* catholic church, one tangible embodiment of the holy right here on earth. Here is a single sacramental institution capable of inviting the whole world into courts and cathedrals where the world itself may be turned toward holy things. That is a truly grand influence strategy, and it is one that is likely to remain forever beyond the pale of pluralistic Protestant possibility.

Even so, I can't quite shake another, more critical view. One hundred and fifteen men, appointed by another man in a position of supreme authority, meet in secret conclave to elect yet another man to the newly vacant position of central authority. The person they chose most recently has had the job of enforcing official doctrine. He abhors "moral relativism," opposes feminism, says that homosexuality tends toward "an intrinsic moral evil," insists that my church is not really a church at all but only "an ecclesial community," and nevertheless begins his pontificate by saying that he wants to be collegial, ecumenical, and conciliatory. I want to raise some questions about all of that. But, then again, even though I'm impressed by the pageant, I'm still a Protestant.

What's in a papal name?

by Gene TeSelle

A new pope's choice of name can be significant. When Roncalli was elected in 1958, he came out and said, "I shall be called John." It was an allusion, of course, to Luke 1:60. But it also contained a message--that he intended to resume the conciliar movement that saved the papacy following the Great Schism (the years were 1415-17), then was betrayed by the papacy, which ignored or bypassed most of its decrees.

Pope Benedict XV's years were 1914 to 1922. His first task was to hold the Catholics of warring European powers together. His entries in the Denzinger collection of authoritative decrees mostly hold the line against the softening of doctrine and biblical interpretation.

What may be most memorable about him, however, is that he brought to an end the anti-Modernist crusade carried out under Pius X by the secretive Sodalitium Pianum, a sort of papal FBI. He himself, like Roncalli, the future John XXIII, had been under suspicion. He told the leader to clear out his office, saying, "We forgive but we cannot forget."

The papacy of John Paul II saw not only the enforcement of orthodoxy (carried out by Ratzinger) but the centralization of power, resented by many of the bishops, even many of the cardinals. If taking the name Benedict means that there will be some loosening of the reins of authority, perhaps even the undoing of past abuses, then this, at least, could be good news.

The paradoxes of ministry

Amy Ukena has sent a note listing the 21 paradoxes that are analyzed in Judson Edwards' book, *The Leadership Labyrinth: Negotiating the Paradoxes of Ministry*. You may find them helpful or not, but they're pretty funny.

Here's a sampling:

1. The Leadership Paradox: The harder you try to control a group, the less control you will have.
2. The Calendar Paradox: The busier you are, the less you will accomplish.
4. The Anxiety Paradox: The less you worry about the church, the better it will do.
9. The Power Paradox: The weakest people in the church tend to wield the most power.
13. The Controversy Paradox: The issue you are arguing about is not the issue at all.
16. The Ministry Paradox: The more you try to help people, the more helpless people become.
21. The Attitude Paradox: Only pastors who are having fun can seriously proclaim the Gospel.

WSLCD?

by Berry Craig

“Nice guys finish last,” baseball Hall of Famer Leo Durocher said of the National Pastime’s good sports.

Liberal Christians are nice guys. The Religious Right is clobbering them.

Liberal Christians either don’t fight back, or they pull punches. They like to quote Voltaire, the famous French philosopher who supposedly said, “I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

On the other hand, Religious Rightists neither ask for, nor give, quarter as they smite liberal Christians with the “sword of the Lord.” They pretty much dismiss liberal Christians – liberals, period – as hell-bound heathens.

“To a lot of fundamentalists,” Bruce Bawer wrote in *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity*, “God’s love just isn’t any fun unless you can find somebody else to deny it to.”

Admittedly, conservative Christendom isn’t monolithic. Not all “conservative Christians” believe their liberal brothers and sisters in Christ will end up sizzling with Satan.

Many conservative Christians aren’t fundamentalists. Many, too, are draft dodgers in the Religious Right’s verbal holy war against liberal Christianity. I know some conservative Christians who even vote Democratic.

Nonetheless, fundamentalist Religious Rightists think they are the future of American Christianity. The election of President George W. Bush and a host of other “family values” Republicans proves that “mainline” churches (including the PCUSA) are now “sideline” churches, a Religious Right leader recently bragged.

The Religious Right’s strongest selling point seems to be certainty in an uncertain world. “God said it. I believe it. That

settles it,” is a popular Religious Right bumper sticker.

Liberal Christians may dismiss bumper sticker theology as glib. But everybody wants easy answers to hard questions. What could be simpler than “Trust Jesus,” another well-traveled Religious Right bumper sticker slogan?

Liberal Christians believe in the old Social Gospel, which held that instead of focusing solely on the afterlife, Christians should help the poor and powerless in the here-and-now.

The Religious Right concentrates on the hereafter, preaching yet another simple but effective message: What is a short earthly life, no matter how difficult, compared to eternal bliss with Jesus in Heaven?

“Don’t be fooled by this car. My reward is in Heaven” is another common Religious Right bumper sticker, especially on rusty old cars.

Religious Rightists’ other big incentive for coming to Jesus is, of course, the unpleasant alternative: everlasting perdition. “Accept Jesus and live forever. Reject Jesus and burn forever” warns a series of hand-made, Burma Shave-style road signs near my old Kentucky home.

Liberal Christians question the tenets of their faith, a process which they see as healthy exercise for the soul. They think no belief system is worth anything if it can’t withstand the challenge of difficult questions.

Liberal Christians believe that thoughtful, prayerful introspection is an essential part of their spirituality. As a result, liberal Christians don’t promise easy answers to hard questions. Liberals offer nothing like the Religious Right’s “repent or roast” message.

But here’s a chink in the opposition’s armor: simple might work in the short term, but is “God said it. I believe it. That settles it” long-term nourishment for the soul?

Human beings are by nature questioning critters. God made us so. The Creator gave the human animal, and no other organism, a brain capable of critical thought.

Religious rightists condemn critical thought as dangerous and “worldly.” Could it be that deep down inside, the likes of the Revs. Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and James Dobson really fear their theology can’t stand up to critical thought?



Berry Craig

Here’s a pair of posers for Religious Rightists: If God didn’t want people to think critically, why did the Almighty wire us for critical thought? Since God gave us the power to think and reason, wouldn’t thinking and reasoning be a good way to worship God?

Critical thought leads to tolerance, another plus among liberal Christians. Unlike those on the Religious Right, liberal Christians don’t claim theirs is the only water. That’s scriptural, too. “Judge not, lest ye be judged,” the Good Book says.

But judge the Religious Right does, in churches and on campaign trails. The Religious Right has wedded itself to the Republican Right. Both groups have made “Christian” and “political conservative” synonyms to many Americans.

The Religious Right would have Americans believe that the Bible supports laissez-faire capitalism, the Republican Right’s most cherished belief. The Religious Right acts as if GOP stands for “God’s Own Party.”

Thus, Democratic U.S. Senators – the majority of them Christians – who object to Bush’s judicial nominees are “against people of faith.” “You can’t be a Christian and a Democrat” and “You can’t be a Christian and a liberal” are stock charges from GOP Christian soldiers in the Bluegrass State, and I suspect elsewhere.

The “Patriot Pastors” are among the GOP’s newest shock troops. “Patriotism,” observed the eminent 18th-century English critic Samuel Johnson, “is the last refuge

of a scoundrel.”

Okay, quoting Samuel Johnson might sound like sour grapes to Religious Right preachers who boast of their “mega-churches.” Some of these clerics barely hide their glee at the empty pews in “liberal” churches on Sunday mornings.

So WSLCD? (What Should Liberal Christians Do?)

Most importantly, liberal Christians ought to make it clear they too are “Bible-Believing Christians.” Just as the Republican Right has hijacked the Stars and Stripes, Religious Rightists have stolen “Bible-Believing Christian” for themselves. The implication is obvious -- only Religious Right Christians believe in the Bible.

But in the Good Book, Jesus:

- admonishes us to do unto others as we would have others do unto us.
- says the meek, not the moneyed, shall inherit the earth.

- runs the moneychangers out of the temple.

The Bible is also plain that wherever He went, Jesus preached love over hate, peace over war, charity over greed, and brotherhood and sisterhood over bigotry and exclusion.

Thus, liberal Christians ought to be asking Religious Right Christians to show us where in the Bible Christ preached religious or political conservatism. Don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying “You can’t be a Christian and a Republican” or “You can’t be a Christian and a conservative.”

But based on scripture, I don’t see the Son of God as a right-wing Republican Social Darwinist or union-buster. I don’t see Christ joining the GOP chorus in opposing worker safety and health and environmental protection laws because such measures, too, might cost Him a few extra bucks.

I can’t imagine Christ railing against “wel-

fare cheats,” running up a Rebel flag and cozying with the GOP’s neo-Confederate wing. Nor do I believe Jesus would bash gays, the Religious and Republican Right’s *demons du jour*. I can’t envision the Prince of Peace making like the president, who got in the National Guard to get out of the Vietnam war and yet sent young men and women off to fight and maybe die in Iraq with a cheeky, “Let’s Roll.”

So gimme that old time religion -- the liberal faith that inspired abolitionists, suffragettes, and farmer, labor, civil rights, women’s rights and peace activists. *Liberal Christians* have been at the forefront of every important reform movement in U.S. history.

Make that *Liberal Bible-Believing Christians*.

The author: Berry Craig is a professor of history at the West Kentucky Community and Technical College in Paducah. He and his wife, Melinda, are members of the Witherspoon Society.

Thoughts on the Terri Schiavo Case by Trina Zelle, Witherspoon Secretary/Communicator

The sad but good news is, she finally got to die. The bad news is everything else about the pitiful drama we all watched being played out on TV. Like Peter Sellers’ character in the film, “Being There,” Terri Schiavo, the flesh and blood human being disappeared beneath an avalanche of political ambitions and religious agendas belonging to other people. The irony of a woman whose condition was brought on by an eating disorder being force fed was ignored. What looked to be a dizzyingly complex family dynamic was framed in simplistic terms: loving parents versus the cold and calculating husband. Or the reverse: caring husband, wacko parents.

But maybe it was all of the above and more. Maybe everyone involved was, after years and years of struggle, so thoroughly confused and depleted that only outside intervention could get them through it. The law played its part valiantly, with the courts repeatedly ruling the only way they really could have. But what Terri and her family also needed – and didn’t get (up close, anyway) – was love. Authentic love. Agape love. Love without a personal agenda. The kind of love that doesn’t announce itself with press releases and waving signs. Love that can unify in the face of tragedy rather than alienate and divide. Love that embraces life in all of its dimensions, including a dignified and humane end to it. Love that is the mark of a shepherd who enters through the gate rather than over the wall.

However, it would be a mistake to lay all of this at the feet of anti-choice fanatics whose concern for the living excludes those who struggle under the weight of poverty or suffer the ravages of war. Hard right wing politicians hoped to turn the Schiavo case into ammunition for their assault on an independent judiciary in upcoming Senate hearings. In the end, it didn’t work. Perhaps they didn’t realize that most Americans are already acquainted with illness and death and have, therefore, learned that death is not the worse thing that can happen to a person. At least one politician conveniently ignored his own decision not to prolong the life of his gravely ill father, while castigating others who only want the same thing for their loved ones.

And with the fortunes of Senate majority leader, Dr. Bill Frist, tied to the hospital industry, the possibility of a future assault on non-hospital hospice facilities doesn’t seem out of the question either. Let’s be honest here. The last couple of weeks of a person’s life is often the most expensive due to futile medical interventions. Hospice care replaces that with comparatively inexpensive services, most usually in the person’s own home.

In the end, Terri Schiavo herself remains a mystery. Earlier pictures and later videotapes don’t show us much more than the brilliance of a smile that even devastating brain damage could not destroy. What is especially tragic is the lack of faith on the part of many self-identified Christians, that the person behind the smile would continue beyond death and is, even now, in God’s own brilliant and unfathomable presence.

Continued from "Spot," page 4

resolution, to shape better ways to deal with the threats of terrorism, and to find creative ways to resist our own practice of terrorism through torture.

We can help organize vigils to pray for those imprisoned, and for those few who have been freed – and for those who have been guilty of abusing them. *And* for those in places of power who have condoned or even encouraged the torture of human beings.

And how about the Presbyterian Church (USA)?

The 216th General Assembly (2004) passed a Resolution and Confession on the Torture and Abuse of Prisoners, which is worth reading – see the next column.

But a staff person in the Presbyterian Washington Office recently noted that the Washington Office has so far received only two inquiries or expressions of concern from Presbyterians about the whole issue of torture. The Washington Office is paying attention to this issue, but can't do much until people across the church speak up.

You can speak up by contacting the Presbyterian Washington Office, 100 Maryland Ave. NE, Suite 410, Washington, DC 20002

Phone 202-543-1126

E-mail rhouston@ctr.pcusa.org

You might also contact Sarah P. Lisherness, Coordinator of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202

Phone 888-728-7228, ext. 5779

E-mail slishern@ctr.pcusa.org

There are many good resources on the PC(USA) web site. For starters, you might look at "Ask U.S. Officials to Say 'No' to Torture," by Catherine Gordon.

<http://www.pcusa.org/washington/issuenet/gs-050414.htm>

We would welcome your thoughts, and especially your suggestions for what we – as Witherspooners, as Presbyterians, as Christians – might say or do to resist the torture.

"A Resolution and Confession on the Torture and Abuse of Prisoners" adopted by the 2004 General Assembly

The treatment of those incarcerated in the naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba, and in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (and perhaps elsewhere), has highlighted serious legal and moral issues that cannot be ignored and must not be allowed to pass unexamined. Violations of international law as well as serious moral malfeasance are involved.

Such treatment is contrary to the Geneva Convention Relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War (1949), particularly Articles 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18. Article 17, Fifth Paragraph, provides:

Neither physical or mental torture nor any other form of coercion may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.

Objections to such practices have been voiced by lawyers within the armed services as well as by human rights organizations. Such practices have been deplored by a great majority of the citizens of our country, quite irrespective of their views as to the legitimacy of taking military action against Iraq. These actions have undercut American claims to a moral high ground and opened the way for enemies to maltreat members of our own society that fall into their hands. Moreover, they constitute flagrant violations of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, to which the United States is a signatory [<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/911.htm>].

As citizens of our country, members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been urged to engage in repentance for these actions, even if their personal responsibility for them is indirect and minimal. That call for repentance is an indication of the extent to which these actions must be deplored.

But efforts must be made to ensure that such actions are eliminated from future practice. This can be done only if there is a complete and adequate understanding as to why they have arisen – a matter of present uncertainty and possible confusion.

[3. Further, efforts must be made to ensure that such torture and abuse do not occur in the future. To that end, the 216th General Assembly (2004) directs the Stated Clerk to take the following actions:

[a. Commend all who have brought this prison abuse to the attention of the public as well as all who have recognized the seriousness of the issues raised and the need to deal vigorously with the policy and administrative questions that are involved;

[b. Urge the U.S. Congress to direct an appropriate independent and formal inquiry to determine what led to these events. This body should have full investigative powers and issue its findings publicly.

[c. Urge government officials to develop safeguards that will serve to prevent such behavior from arising in the future.

[4. Write and send a pastoral letter to the churches, communicating the intent of this resolution.]



CONFRONTING INJUSTICE

Looking toward the Ghost Ranch Seminar, July 25-31, 2005

by Jane Hanna

The Witherspoon Society began sponsoring seminars at Ghost Ranch in 1999. The first one, "Organizing for Christian Economic Action," set the format for using scripture to examine economic, environmental and international issues. In succeeding years, we have continued to explore the challenge to live faithfully and responsibly within the reality of economic polarization, ecological destruction, and a militaristic foreign policy. The ultimate goal has been to determine what we could do to make a difference where injustice dominates.

The 2001 seminar, "How Militarism Makes Globalization Possible" was the first to be joined in sponsorship by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. That summer, one of our presenters, Dr. Alice Winters, long time Presbyterian mission worker in Colombia, informed us of the tremendous level of violence and efforts of faith communities and civil rights workers in that war-torn nation who are modeling alternatives. Rick Ufford-Chase, director of Borderlinks and present PCUSA Moderator, brought to our attention many of the same issues of injustice he witnesses on the Mexican/US border. Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer detailed how the School of the Americas (now called Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) has accommodated violence in Latin America and continues to do so.

The outgrowth of that seminar led to several groups of Presbyterians traveling to Colombia with Witness for Peace to learn first hand about Colombia's conflict and the consequences of US involvement in that struggle. This past year, many who participated in that seminar have been responsible for establishing an accompaniment program sponsored by the Worldwide Ministries Unit. It is a positive collaboration of people who have been touched by both

Colombia and Borderlinks experiences. At the present time members of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship have been training those going to Colombia to stand with people whose lives have been threatened. (See the article by Erik Mason, recent returnee. Donations to this effort may be sent to PPF, PO Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.)

The history of our organizations' special concern for Colombia and US policies in Central and South America have shaped the direction of this summer's seminar, "Paths to a Just and Peaceful World." Dr. Mark Taylor, Professor of Theology and Culture at Princeton Theological Seminary will address the contrast between a Biblical view of empire and what has become U.S. international policy to dominate the rest of the world. We will look closely at U.S. policy in Colombia to better understand imperial ambitions and how we can help our nation change course. Maria Arroyo, Latin American and Caribbean Coordinator for the Worldwide Ministries Division and Anne Barstow, who has led three trips to Colombia will lead us to clearer discernment about the consequences of Plan Colombia, promoted by our government as part of the war on drugs.

Robin Kirk, researcher in Colombia for Human Rights Watch since 1992, in her book *More Terrible Than Death: Massacres, Drugs, and America's War in Colombia*, writes that to her the obstacles for change seemed insurmountable, that "Not the least of them was the United States. The casualties of our war on drugs are not limited to the addict, the teen pusher, the abandoned baby, the college student too addled to stand. America's consumer habits pay for the bullets that cut down people as well as the gas cylinder bombs that fall on churches filled with refugees and the chain saws that dismember farmers and

the rockets that slam into houses. Even if there were Colombians willing to stand up for something different, the other Colombians who fight over money that America pumps into their country shoot them down. New people rise. They, too, fall."

In the face of this seemingly endless tragedy, are there ways that we, as citizens concerned for the well-being of all God's creation, may make a difference? This is the challenge we will confront together as we meet at Ghost Ranch in July. Join your brothers and sisters in faith to grapple with the most serious trends of our time.

So ... get to

Ghost Ranch Seminar July 25-31

PATHS TO A JUST AND PEACEFUL WORLD

In partnership with The Witherspoon Society, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and Presbyterians for Restoring Creation

For information, contact:
Ghost Ranch Abiquiu
HC77, Box 11
Abiquiu, NM 87510
Phone 1.877.804.4678 or
1.505.685.4333

Email: info@ghostranch.org
Website: <http://www.ghostranch.org/index.php>
Seminar description is at http://www.ghostranch.org/pdfs/catalog05/16AbiquiuJuly25to31Seminars_pages45to49.pdf
(Scroll down to page 47, and look for the big dove.)

WitherspoonNews

The Witherspoon Society

in cooperation with

**The Worldwide Ministries Division
&
Stony Point Center
presents**

Dancing with God :



Global Mission on the Edge

*A gathering of
justice-oriented,
mission-minded Presbyterians*

**September 9-11, 2005
Stony Point Center
Stony Point, New York**

For more information ...

Contact Rev. Trina Zelle, 602-743-6976 or
zellerev@earthlink.net, or

Rev. Charles Ryu, Stony Point Center, 845-786-5674, ext.
111, or cryu@stonypointcenter.org

About the conference ...

Join with emerging church leaders, mission co-workers, young adult volunteers in mission, along with our global mission partners, for three days of learning, celebrating, renewing, visioning, and dancing with GOD and with each other.

We will worship together, share our own experiences in mission, hear reports from mission co-workers currently on global and national assignments, and explore the Biblical roots for mission and ministries of justice. Throughout the conference there will be an ongoing "oral history project" as stories from areas of mission are told and recorded for future generations. Using a modified "Open Space Technology" process, participants and leaders will together seek to discern the challenges and calls confronting the church in the 21st Century, and begin to formulate responses that are both practical and prophetic.

Need-based scholarships are available on a first-come, first-served basis, with returning mission personnel given priority. For more information, contact Rev. Trina Zelle, 602-743-6976 or zellerev@earthlink.net

About the speakers ...

- **Tony Aja**, Associate Director, People in Mutual Mission, WMD
- **Will Browne**, Associate Director, Ecumenical Partnership, WMD
- **Gary Cook**, Associate Director, Global Service & Witness, WMD
- **Marian McClure**, Director, Worldwide Ministries Division
- **Jean Marie Peacock**, Vice Moderator, 216th General Assembly
- **Rick Ufford-Chase**, Moderator, 216th General Assembly (appearing by tele-conference)
- **Philip Wickeri**, Flora Lamson Hewlett Professor of Evangelism and Mission at San Francisco Theological Seminary. He worked for more than twenty years in Asia, with the Amity Foundation (China) and the China Christian Council, before joining the seminary faculty in 1998.

REGISTRATION FORM

Dancing with God: Global Mission on the Edge
September 9-11, 2005

Name _____ Gender _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone (W) _____ (H) _____
 (Cell) _____ (Email) _____

Church _____
 Presbytery _____

Roommate Preference: _____

(Rooms accommodate two people. If you want to choose a roommate, please be sure each of you requests the other.)

Special needs:

Dietary needs: ___ Vegetarian ___ Vegan ___ Other (explain) _____

Accommodations needs (explain) _____

My hopes for this conference are:

___ I would like help in getting financial assistance.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

(Register today even if you don't have the following information. Just make a copy of this form and send it to Stony Point Center no later than August 19.)

General Arrival and Departure

___ Arriving on Fri. Sep. 9 morning and leaving Sun. Sep. 11 afternoon
 ___ Arriving earlier than Sep. 9 and need overnight accommodation
 Date and time of arrival _____ Extra nights of lodging ___
 ___ Staying after the conference is over on Wed. Sept 11
 Date and time of departure _____ Extra nights of lodging ___

Stony Point Center can provide transportation from airports and train stations, if you arrive before 11:00 AM on Sept. 9, and depart after 3:30 PM on Sept. 11. Otherwise you may have to pay more.

Travelling by air

Arrival Date _____ Airport _____ Time _____
 Airline _____ Flight Number _____ From _____
 (Reserve your flight so that you can arrive before 11:00 AM)

Departure Date _____ Airport _____ Time _____
 Airline _____ Flight Number _____ To _____
 (Reserve your flight so that you depart after 3:30 PM; there will be a surcharge for airport rides for earlier flights on September 11)

Traveling by train

Arrival Date _____ Station _____ Time _____
 Departure Date _____ Station _____ Time _____

___ **Traveling by bus.**

___ **Driving.**

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Registration, room and meals:

\$240 by June 1
 \$260 by August 1
 \$280 after that

Commuters:

\$140 by June 1
 \$160 by August 1
 \$180 after that

\$ _____

Extra nights of lodging

\$40 x _____ days = \$ _____

Airport/Train Station pickup

EWR, LGA, trains \$30 One-way, \$60 R/T
 JFK \$40 One-way, \$80R/T

\$ _____

My additional donation for the program:

\$ _____

Total

\$ _____

Payment Method

___ Check enclosed
 (Payable to Stony Point Center)

___ Visa ___ MasterCard

Credit Card # _____

Exp. _____

Signature _____

Please mail your payment with the completed registration form to:

**Registrar
 Stony Point Center
 17 Crickettown Road
 Stony Point, NY 10980
 FAX: 845-786-5919**

Conference Schedule

Friday, September 9

10:00a.m. Registration begins
2:00p.m. Opening worship

Afternoon theme: What's Going On?

Global Mission: A Contextual Analysis
Current Global Situations
The church in North America
Regional Reports

Evening theme:

Keynote Address: Dr. Philip Wickeri

Saturday, September 10

Opening Plenary: Study and Reflection on "Caring for God's People and Creation"

Mid-Morning Break

10:30 — 4:00 p.m.:
Theme: What are the new possibilities?

Doing It Differently: Looking at Mission in the 21st Century through Open Space Technology
(See box below.)

Prioritizing Issues and Shaping Recommendations from Open Space Reports

Evening theme: Celebrating the possibilities ... through story, song, and dance

Sunday, September 11

Morning theme:
Strategic Thinking: **So what are we going to do differently? And how?**

Closing Worship Service

12:00 Conference ends

Opportunities

Jan Hus Church (New York City) seeks Social Justice Intern

Jan Hus Church is seeking a person to fill the Social Justice Internship, which includes working with the Homeless Outreach and Advocacy Program and involvement with the church's Global Concern Committee's work. The intern will receive rooming at the church and a weekly \$200.00 stipend plus basic medical insurance.

Please, post this flyer and distribute widely within your organization/group and do not hesitate to get in touch with me should you need any additional information about our programs and the internship. Position will be available early August 2005.

Yours sincerely
Luciano Kovacs
Director, Homeless Outreach and Advocacy Program
Jan Hus Presbyterian Church
351 East 74th St.
New York, NY 10021
212-288-6743
www.janhus.org
lucianohoap@janhus.org

Menaul School seeks new president

The historic, Presbyterian related, [Menaul School](#) is seeking a new President (Head of School) to begin in July 2006. This school, begun by Presbyterian missionaries now with a contemporary mission, is located in Albuquerque and has a unique tradition of serving all three cultures in New Mexico – Hispanic, Native American and Anglo. Candidates for this position will need to understand and embrace the uniqueness of this school and its position in the local and wider communities.

Those interested in receiving additional information and details about this challenging and rewarding, educational leadership opportunity, may respond via e-mail directly to my address listed below. Please feel free to forward this announcement to others whom you believe may be interested and qualified. Thanks in advance for your help and best wishes in your continuing service to the Church.

The Rev. Gary R. Gruber, Ph.D.
PO Box 620
Abiquiu, NM 87510
505-685-0066 office
505-685-0606 fax
505-231-3228 mobile
grg@garygruber.com

Thanks to Fred Tilinski for his leadership in Protestant Justice Action

Fred Tilinski, an aviation engineer in the St. Louis area, has been the convener of Protestant Justice Action, a partnership of the non-official justice organizations in the mainline churches. He was a major planner of the Justice Works conference in 2003. He is having to retire from his activist work because of health issues.

The Disciples Justice Action Network and Christians for Justice Action suggested a gift to recognize his achievements, and the Executive Committee of the Witherspoon Society has decided to make an additional gift.

Our thanks to Fred for his many years of faithful work are accompanied by our pledge to keep on cooperating with kindred organizations in other denominations.

The
Next
Network
News

Your editor apologizes for the lateness of this issue – but with a little luck it will reach you before the first day of summer! So it's still spring, right?

We hope our summer issue will include some reading material in preparation for our "Dancing with God" conference on mission, and as always we welcome your contributions – on mission for peace and justice, local or global. Or on anything else you're engaged in! We'd especially like to hear about how local churches are engaged in mission.

**Deadline for submissions
is
July 15, 2005**

Please let us hear from you!

Network News Editor
Doug King
1418 Clarendon Drive
Wayzata, MN 55391-2103
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FAX: 952-473-2716
E-mail: dougking2@aol.com

**If you've recently renewed
your membership, we
thank you!**

And if you're not sure, check the date on your mailing label to know when your membership expires. You can send in your renewal a little early, and avoid our nagging letters!

**Just use the return
envelope in the center of this
newsletter, or contact our
Membership Coordinator:**

**John E. Harris
First Presbyterian Church
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