



# Seek & Pursue Peace

Fall 2009

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## Kids as Peacemakers

### A Lancaster Celebration of Children and Peacemaking

“Peace tastes like watermelon: healthy and sweet,” was one of the messages to Lancaster baseball fans during an International Day of Prayer for Peace event exhibiting Kids as Peacemakers murals from across Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Others included “Pass the Peace of Christ,” “Working Together for Peace,” and “Let’s Talk.”

On September 19, 150 children and adults from twenty churches and schools in Lancaster County (urban, suburban, and rural) gathered at Clipper Magazine Stadium to display their Kids as Peacemakers murals that were meant to be educational and entertaining for the audience. The event, co-sponsored by Lancaster Interchurch Peace Witness and On Earth Peace, included a mural gallery walk of the twenty murals created throughout the summer and a presentation by Heidi Beth Wert and her troupe “Drummers for Peace,” a Lancaster-based organization. One hundred fifty people joined in the morning’s celebrations. The murals remained on display for the day’s two Barnstormer baseball games which hosted at least 5000 fans. The children, murals, and International Day of Peace were recognized on the field at the start of the evening game.

The events on September 19 were a culmination of many months of work and education. In the winter, Lancaster Interchurch Peace Witness (LIPW) organized a team to plan for a children’s peace education initiative within the county. On Earth Peace’s Kids as Peacemakers mural project was selected and shared with churches and organizations through a resourcing event held in May. Throughout the summer, churches and schools led the program in many different formats: summer day camps, Sunday School, children’s church, and back-to-school

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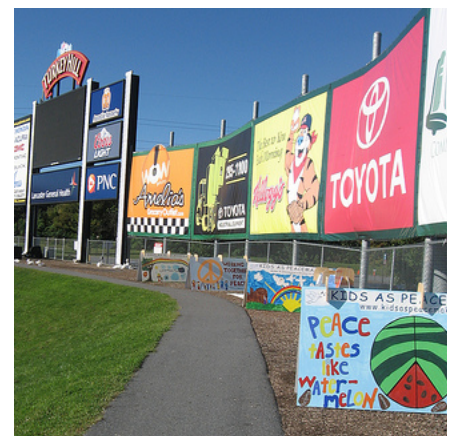
## On Earth Peace

P. O. Box 188  
New Windsor, MD 21776-0188

Website: [www.onearthpeace.org](http://www.onearthpeace.org)  
E-mail: [oepe@onearthpeace.org](mailto:oepe@onearthpeace.org)

Ph: 410-635-8704  
Fax: 410-635-8707

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## Kids as Peacemakers

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United Church of Christ, St. John's Episcopal Church, the

programs. The children's murals included a variety of images encouraging a more peaceful community and world.

Participating churches and schools included Alpha and Omega Iglesia de los Hermanos, Laurel Street Mennonite Church, Church of the Apostles, East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Grace Lutheran Church, Hamilton Park United Church of Christ, Hempfield Church of the Brethren, St. Andrews

Second Grade Class at Lancaster Country Day School, Camp Fox Tales of Lancaster Monthly Meeting, Landisville Primary Learning Center, Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, Wayside Presbyterian Church, and the West End Mennonite Fellowship.



## Meet John-Michael Pickens 2009-2010 Peace Education BVSer

I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, but I moved to Ivory Coast when I was eight months old. Then to Kenya when I was only three years old and I lived there until I was ten, but I remember it like I just moved away yesterday. When my family returned to the United States, the first three years were a huge adjustment period.



It was in high school in Kentucky and while studying at Messiah College that I really began to appreciate my upbringing in Kenya and Ivory Coast. It has taught me what it means to be a global citizen of this world and how we are all connected no matter where we live. During those years I was also searching for new expressions of my faith, a church family that embraced peace, and a community that strove to be more inclusive.

I know that no part of the body of Christ is perfect, but I have found the Church of the Brethren to be challenging and refreshing. Spending time on the Youth Peace Travel Team last summer really educated me in the heritage and culture of the Church of the Brethren. It was last summer when I was also introduced to On Earth Peace and other Church of the Brethren organizations like BVS.

I just graduated from Messiah

College with a degree in theology and peace and conflict studies. While I was a student I wondered what I would do with myself after graduation. I knew that I didn't want to throw myself into the rat race and find a 40-hour-a-week job just to pay off some bills. I desired to give back to the global community and that is why I've chosen to do a year of service as a BVS volunteer with On Earth Peace.

While working with On Earth Peace I'll be organizing and leading peace retreats all across the country while also trying to establish a BVS and On Earth Peace presence in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which is where I'll be based this year. I'm excited to be involved with peace education and to be a student in a new environment in Harrisburg.

To contact John-Michael Pickens about youth retreats, email him at [jmpickens@onearthpeace.org](mailto:jmpickens@onearthpeace.org).

## Listening Initiatives Are Heard During Third Annual On Earth Peace Campaign for International Day of Prayer for Peace

Some 130 congregations participated in the On Earth Peace 2009 campaign for the International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDOPP). This year congregations were organized by the type of event they were holding: observance, vigil, or listening initiative. What they all had in common were their prayers for peace: some churches prayed about local hard times, immigration issues, and religious intolerance. Others prayed for relief from local gang and gun violence. Still others prayed for peace in Iraq and Afghanistan. There were prayer walks that asked God to help us see our neighborhoods with new eyes. New peace poles were planted, expressing blessings of peace in several languages. Celebrations ranged from concerts and plays to solemn assemblies and moments of silence.

Building on ecumenical work that began last January, Heeding God's Call (a multi-faith action group) in Philadelphia joined the On Earth Peace IDOPP campaign and held a prayer vigil in front of Colosimo's Gun Center. It was the last of sit-ins and vigils that urged the owner, James Colosimo, to sign a voluntary covenant from a national organization of mayors not to sell guns knowingly to persons engaged in criminal activity. The next day, after nine months of weekly demonstrations and twelve arrests, federal charges were filed against Colosimo's, Inc. for



Ken Brown, his daughter Katy Brown, and her sons, Milo and Calvin Hupp-Brown. K

making false statements to authorities and for not keeping proper records. The day after that, Colosimo's lawyer announced the gun shop would close September 30.

At Kansas City First Central Church of the Brethren, organizers decided to lift up the need for God's peace in discussions of the health care reform measures before Congress. They held a health care Town Hall meeting to help clarify some of the complexities of the health care reform debate. Aware of the explosive nature of some health care town meetings this summer, Christian Peacemaker Team members were there to handle any possible disruptions. However, the sixty attendees were civil and well-behaved. And prayers were offered. Event organizer Paul Cesare reported, "An imam gave a prayer (in Arabic) about Jesus and Mary that sounded more like a song — beautiful, even without a translation!"

If we pray for peace, it will happen.

A list of participating congregations, and more on these and other campaign stories may be found at the On Earth Peace IDOPP website, <http://idopp.onearthpeace.org>.

Olden Mitchell is 97, and Milo Hupp-Brown is 15 months. They were the youngest and oldest participants at the North Manchester, IN vigil on September 21, 2009.



Offered in Cooperation with Brethren Benefit Trust and the Church of the Brethren Credit Union

## Faith, Family, and Finances: How to Live Faithfully Within Your Means & Keep Peace in the Family

Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said,  
"I will never leave you or forsake you." Hebrews 13:5 (NRSV)

As Christians our faith tells us that Christ is always with us, even during times of crisis. When there's an illness or a death or a natural disaster, we draw strength from our faith as we reach out to our families and our faith communities with love and support. But what about financial crises? Often money matters are considered too private to share, even within our own homes. Then, when there's a job loss or other financial disaster, we suffer in silence or (perhaps worse) lash out at the ones we love the most.

In early 2009, the Church of the Brethren Western Plains District Conference Planning Committee was wading through the offers it had received from various agencies as it worked toward deciding what kinds of workshops to offer. Nothing seemed to quite fit until one committee member wondered aloud whether Brethren Benefit Trust's "Living Within Your Means" could be combined with On Earth Peace's "Peace in the Family" to create an offering that would directly address the economic crisis plaguing so many. The answer was an enthusiastic, "Of course! Why hadn't we thought of that before?"

The result was a three-hour workshop where participants acknowledged the important role money management plays in our lives by speaking openly about how to live within their means. In addition, they worked through ways to actively love each other while facing the unique challenges that financial crises bring. After the event, participants evaluated their experience by using words such as "useful," "applicable," and "informative." They particularly

appreciated the opportunity to share experiences and ideas, as well as the chance to link finances with faith and to find ways to listen in the midst of crisis.

Interestingly, when the two one-hour workshops were offered in a three-hour block, the most common suggestion was that it needed to be expanded to at least four hours — maybe more! The response was so positive and the need is so great, that Brethren Benefit Trust, Church of the Brethren Credit Union, and On Earth Peace Ministry of Reconciliation are working together to offer Faith, Family and Finances in 4-hour, 8-hour, or weekend retreat formats. Topics include budgets, spending plans, credit cards, and debt as well as active listening, how to argue respectfully, and how to engage difficult issues such as money matters.



The Faith, Family, and Finance Workshop is for anyone  
who is currently experiencing financial challenges,  
who anticipates they might be in the future,  
or who ministers to those who are struggling (in other words, everyone!).

To schedule this, or any other On Earth Peace Ministry of Reconciliation workshop,  
contact MoR program coordinator Leslie Frye at [lfrye@onearthpeace.org](mailto:lfrye@onearthpeace.org) or 620-755-3940.

## An Excerpt from the Pastoral Letter about the Ongoing Economic Crisis

The economic crisis we are experiencing this year continues to demand attention from all levels of the church. Individuals are losing jobs; congregations are struggling with smaller budgets; community social services are being threatened. The economy dominates our life, and it is easy to succumb to a culture of fear.

...We follow a God of abundance and generosity. Our values are not tied to the stock market. Our joy does not come from acquiring more things. Our trust is not in human institutions....

The economy may seem to dominate our lives today, but in a sense it always has. We confess that when the economy was expanding, we as a society were fascinated by the prospect of wealth and the accumulation of material goods. Wherever we stood on the economic ladder, it was more appealing to look up than to look down. This economic crisis is a struggle, but it is also an opportunity to remind ourselves of gospel values. And it is a time to deepen our own connection to God so that we have the wellness — mental, spiritual, physical, and relational well-being — to endure economic adversity.

None of us knows what the future holds for the Church of the Brethren. What we do know is that God is with us. The presence and power of the Spirit are available to us. The example and witness of Jesus Christ are set before us.

May the ever-generous blessings of this Triune God be with you.

## Deepen the Spirit A Liturgical Prayer

As we face the consequences of economic uncertainty together, for these we pray:

Some among us are suffering;  
may the fruit of adversity be compassion.  
Some among us are facing difficult choices;  
may the fruit of uncertainty be faith.  
Some among us are paralyzed;  
may the fruit of despair be humility.  
Some among us are blind;  
Bring light into the darkness of denial.  
Help us to help each other.  
Grant each one hope,  
wholeness and peace.  
Amen.

## Peacemaker Profile LeAnn Wine

“Violence reflects misunderstanding, power-seeking, and living from a place of fear,” says LeAnn Wine, Director of Finance for the Church of the Brethren, Inc. “I want to be part of breaking that cycle.”

Growing up in the Enders, Nebraska, congregation and attending Camp Colorado were formative influences in LeAnn’s early life, as was her experience at McPherson College. Her commitment to interpersonal peacemaking comes from her belief in the importance of positive relationships and of openness to diversity.

As a peacemaker, LeAnn pays close attention to those around her. “One thing I attempt to do on a personal level is to listen well. I’ve found that discussions can turn into arguments or accusations quickly when we don’t listen to one another.”

LeAnn supports the work of On Earth Peace, and names the Ministry of Reconciliation, the Welcome Home Project, and peace education for children and youth as priorities for her. “I believe that children are vital in bringing peace to this world,” she says. “Teaching children peacemaking as a way of living is so important.”



## After a Shooting, Peacemaking Is Possible On Earth Peace On the Ground in Rockford, Indiana

Samuel Sarpiya, pastor of new church start-up, Rockford Community Church of the Brethren, was the first to sign up for an IDOPP listening initiative. Using tools learned in On Earth Peace training calls early in the summer, he and local pastor Gary Schwerin held conversations with clergy, community leaders, and the public to learn what real-life problems confronted the city. The identified need was for better schools for all its citizens and the clergy started planning for an IDOPP vigil around the need for better education.



That changed on August 24, when two police officers shot and killed a wanted, unarmed black man at a church childcare center following a foot chase. Rallies were held by Jesse Jackson, the NAACP, and by supporters of the police officers involved in the shooting. It was a tense situation with potential for further violence and the IDOPP vigil suddenly needed to address the more immediate issue and its aftermath.

After the IDOPP vigil, Samuel and other clergy met with Rockford's mayor to discuss next steps for the community. Samuel, who holds South African citizenship, mentioned his country's experience with the Truth and Reconciliation process. The idea of finding another way out of the crisis, by building community strength overall, struck a responsive chord with the mayor and some religious leaders. The idea went next to the Rockford Roundtable, a group of influential civic and business leaders.

I am excited," Samuel told Matt Guynn, On Earth Peace Program Director, days after IDOPP, "because I see a bright light at the end of the tunnel." He felt that the pastors were beginning to see the promise of a united response to the problem in Rockford. He also noticed the importance of ecumenical cooperation, by saying, "And I don't see one church claiming credit for it."



On Earth Peace has continued to advise Samuel about possible ways to work for reconciliation and nonviolent community engagement. Meeting October 1, the Rockford Roundtable agreed to formally ask On Earth Peace to help them organize. This is taking the form of a two day workshop about peaceful responses to conflict that will prepare leaders to respond to the community emotions following the upcoming trial and verdict.

On Earth Peace is committed to accompanying Samuel Sarpiya, Rockford Community Church of the Brethren, and the town of Rockford, Indiana through this crisis and beyond to reconciliation. This work is made possible by donations from individuals who believe peace is possible. Your support will cover the cost of the workshop, continued staff and volunteer support, and educational materials. Please consider helping us help Samuel and Rockford through the enclosed donation envelope or by giving online at [www.onearthpeace.org](http://www.onearthpeace.org).



## We Get By with a Little Help from Our Friends

### Financial News from Bob Gross, Executive Director

The economic recession has been difficult for On Earth Peace. Of course, we are not the only ones impacted during this time. It has been a hard year for most churches and congregations who in the past have supported our work have had to lower their donations due to decreased giving at the local level.

The staff and board of On Earth Peace have implemented careful financial oversight and strict control of expenses, without sacrificing essential ministries. This included a staff furlough plan that, if needed, would have implemented unpaid leave as a way of not going into our emergency funds. Preliminary figures for our fiscal year indicate that we will end the year with income and expenses in balance.

Yet the need for our work has only grown as communities in financial difficulty find themselves also dealing with rising

violence. We are very thankful to our supporters, new and continuing, who have responded generously to undergird exciting new ministries to children, youth, families, and communities. In the current climate, it is more important than ever for individuals who have a passion for peacemaking, and a vision of a world without violence, to financially support organizations and causes that are doing that work.

In the coming year we are facing rising costs as our programs grow and we reach out to more communities. With new programs for young people and workshops about finances, we are expecting a rise in requests for congregational accompaniment.

Your generous support will be vitally important. Thank you.

### Staff

Michael Colvin  
peace witness associate  
503-775-1636  
[mcolvin@onearthpeace.org](mailto:mcolvin@onearthpeace.org)

Leslie Frye  
program coordinator –  
Ministry of Reconciliation  
620-755-3940  
[lfrye@onearthpeace.org](mailto:lfrye@onearthpeace.org)

Bob Gross  
executive director  
260-982-7751  
[bgross@onearthpeace.org](mailto:bgross@onearthpeace.org)

Matt Guynn  
program director & coordinator  
of Peace Witness  
503-775-1636  
[mguynn@onearthpeace.org](mailto:mguynn@onearthpeace.org)

Darlene Johnson  
office manager  
410-635-8704  
[djohnson@onearthpeace.org](mailto:djohnson@onearthpeace.org)

Gimbiya Lim  
Communications Coordinator  
202-289-6341  
[gkettering@onearthpeace.org](mailto:gkettering@onearthpeace.org)

John-Michael Pickens  
Coordinator for Peace Retreats  
717-233-3786  
[jmpickens@onearthpeace.org](mailto:jmpickens@onearthpeace.org)

Marie Rhoades  
program coordinator –  
Peace Education  
717-917-9392  
[mrhoades@onearthpeace.org](mailto:mrhoades@onearthpeace.org)

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## An Aftermath of Peacemaking

During the summer of 2009, everything seemed to be going according to plans for Samuel Sarpiya who was organizing an IDOPP vigil for the recognized need for a better education for all citizens. Then, two police officers shot and killed an unarmed, wanted black man. The community erupted with emotion and Samuel found himself in a tense situation with potential for further violence. Suddenly, the IDOPP vigil suddenly needed to address the more immediate issue.

Samuel reached out to Matt Guynn, On Earth Peace Program Director who had been part of the IDOPP process. Rockford community leaders accepted the On Earth Peace proposal and in November we will be doing a two-day workshop for community leaders as they prepare for the publicity of the trial and verdict.

In a recent update, Samuel said, "The backbone of everything I've been doing is the church planting. Every morning we have a breakfast ministry at 6 a.m.

It has just exploded! People being slain in the spirit, people crying and asking for deliverance. God is on the move, touching lives! We have just baptized five people this week. We're getting ready to start a youth program and a discipleship school. This is all God's timing."

To learn more about what is happening in Rockford, links to media coverage, On Earth Peace's accompaniment, and how you can help, turn to page 6 or visit <http://www.onearthpeace.org/rockford>.



On Earth Peace Assembly, Inc.  
P.O. Box 188  
New Windsor, MD 21776-0188  
410-635-8704

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