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Peacemakers: The Next Generation

Stories of Youth Using Skills Learned in Agape-Satyagraha Training

"I didn't get in a fight today," said Tony,* a middle schooler who is enrolled in the Agape-Satyagraha Training. In the past, Tony would have pushed the student who had cut in front of him in the lunch line. Tony now has a new response; 'I remembered how we had talked about cooling off first. So I counted backwards for a while. Then I said to myself, This isn't worth getting into a fight about and then getting suspended. I'll just let it go this time.'"

Tony is one of 120 youth who have passed through the Agape-Satyagraha program developed by Gerald Rhoades, the director of Brethren Community Ministries in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He developed the program in 2001, in response to school shootings sweeping the country. Gerald still says, "Youth need alternatives to solving conflicts rather than fighting."

For Todd, a graduate of the five-level program, finding these alternatives has changed his daily life. Recently, on a trip to the mall, he was able to use his new skills to mediate with friends who decided to pool their money to buy a newly released video game. Once at the store and not being able to agree on which game to buy, they became frustrated and angry with one another. Todd guided them outside to talk about what they really wanted. It turned into a brainstorming session and they were able to agree on a game that they all had wanted for a long time but could not afford to buy individually. Todd was applying Agape-Satyagraha training to his daily life.

It is stories like these that attracted On Earth Peace to the Agape-Satyagraha Training. From the youth in the program, to the others they come in contact with in their day, and the adults they will become, it is clear that the principles of conflict resolution and social change are impacting lives. On Earth Peace is

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On Earth Peace

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Peacemakers: The Next Generation

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excited to share about a partnership with Brethren Community Ministries to develop and expand Agape-Satyagraha. This leadership training program for youth teaches skills for conflict resolution and social change based on the nonviolent teachings of Jesus and Gandhi. In our partnership, it will be combined with the Peace Education ministry that has been developing leadership for peace in each new generation for more than thirty years.



*Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of young adults.



Sasha Simpson and Gerald Rhoades plan next steps for protecting kids on the streets of Harrisburg.

Become a Peace Practitioner

The Ministry of Reconciliation (MoR), has created a Practitioner Network to provide a way to call out and recognize qualified persons to serve the church at all levels. Practitioners will be recognized in one or more of three areas of practice: facilitators, interveners, and teachers. When requests come to MoR for workshops, conflict intervention, meeting facilitation, or other services, MoR will be able to recommend, with confidence, persons who have been recognized as part of the Practitioner Network.

Application Process:

Applicants need to meet three kinds of qualifications in order to be recognized as MoR Practitioners: training, experience, and abilities/attributes. On Earth Peace can provide training, opportunities for experience, and cultivate skills. For more information and to join this important work, contact Leslie Frye at lfrye@onearthpeace.org or call her at 620-755-3940.

Life, Full Speed Ahead

By Leslie AB Frye, Ministry of Reconciliation Coordinator

From an early age I have been one of those people who acts as if everyone has a right to my opinion. Yet I have also been keenly aware that no one has all the answers. In fact, each of us in any group, family, or in the body of Christ



brings something unique and necessary to the whole. It is ironic — and fitting — that for the past 31 years I have sought out training in the areas of communication and interpersonal conflict transformation. Many of those trainings have come from the Ministry of Reconciliation.

On Earth Peace first touched my life at a Church of the Brethren Shenandoah (VA) district youth retreat in the 1970s, when I heard about conscientious objection to war from young people associated with On Earth Peace. They opened my eyes not only to how I could respond to war as a person of faith but also to the fact that I was not alone in insisting that Jesus meant what he said when he commanded us to love our enemies (Luke 6:27, 35).

Recently I heard for the first time the saying, “You live life forward; you understand life backward.” Just a year ago, that sentiment would have baffled me. Now, my immediate response was, “Exactly!” I was amazed to consider how just a year ago that sentiment would have baffled me.

I had been living my life forward, some might even say full steam ahead, for 48 years, but I had very little understanding of what my life was about. Along the way I had always done what seemed to be in line with God’s will for my life: I served in Brethren Volunteer Service; married a wonderful man; helped parent two children; found myself called to ministry at the age of 40; completed a seminary degree with a peace studies emphasis at the age of 44 and had gone on to serve on the free ministry pastoral team of our rural Kansas Church of the Brethren congregation. But I still struggled with the question of what God was calling me to do.

Part of that answer has been found through the Ministry of Reconciliation. With joy, I have been helping congregations and other groups work through conflict; organizing workshops that teach conflict transformation skills; discerning new ways for On Earth Peace to call out and support peacemakers who are gifted in conflict transformation; working with the other On Earth Peace staff to coordinate our efforts as we work together for peace. What a privilege to pass along the skills and opportunities that have blessed my life so richly!

New Program! Agape-Satyagraha

Leadership Training for Youth in Conflict Resolution and Social Change

Agape: Greek, meaning love. It is the word in the New Testament used by Christ when commanding us to love others as intended by the love God shares with all.

Satyagraha: Sanskrit, meaning Truth Force. Gandhi popularized this term during the Indian independence movement as a way of impacting social transformation without violence.

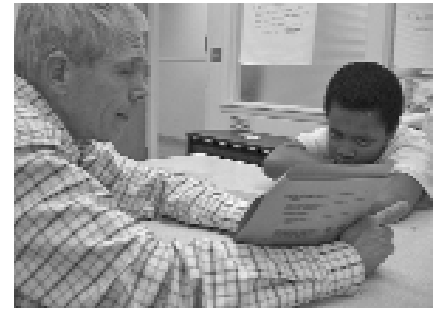
Agape-Satyagraha combines two of the most revolutionary ideas of pacifism, believing that loving others and social change are linked. It is an innovative leadership training program for youth based on principles of neighborly love and peaceful social change. Youth are trained to become leaders in their communities by resolving conflicts without violence.

Adult volunteers coach youth individually or in small groups, using individualized techniques, allowing youth to pace themselves through each level. Current Agape-Satyagraha programs meet once a week for an hour and a half.

The program mentors youth (ages 11-18) through five levels of skills training:

- White Level- Understanding conflict escalation.
 - Green Level- Anger management.
 - Blue Level- De-escalating conflicts.
 - Brown Level- Dynamics of power in conflict.
 - Black Level- Negotiation and mediation skills.
- In addition to the above skills training, On Earth Peace is revising the curriculum to include

community engagement and nonviolent social transformation components. Encouraging, equipping, and accompanying youth as they put their faith into practice as leaders in their communities will be a strong focus as the program develops.



On Earth Peace is seeking pilot sites which will host Agape-Satyagraha and work closely with On Earth Peace as the program develops. If you are interested and want more information on the program, contact Marie Rhoades at mrhoades@onearthpeace.org or call (717)861-1902.

Agape-Satyagraha Joins the River

Sasha, a recent graduate of the Agape-Satyagraha program in Harrisburg, attended our first You Can't Stop the River Workshop, organized by the Peace Witness program of On Earth Peace. She travelled halfway across the country and was the youngest member of the workshop. There she and Gerald Rhoades came up with a plan to help youth in her neighborhood and identified the next steps to take. Afterwards, Sasha reflected, "I will have to use a lot of my Agape-Satyagraha in this process, because things are going to frustrate me and things I do will frustrate others. I'll have to use my skills to get through those things."

To read more about You Can't Stop the River and Sasha's plan, please turn to page 4.



You Can Help Us Launch the Agape-Satyagraha Project

And your gift will count double!

On Earth Peace has received a \$12,500 challenge grant from the Shumaker Family Foundation in support of the Agape-Satyagraha Project. This provides an opportunity for contributions to the project to be doubled. The challenge grant will only be awarded if an equal amount is raised from new or increased* gifts designated for the Agape-Satyagraha Project, so we really need your help to make it possible.

Please use the enclosed donation envelope to make your contribution to the project.

Thank you!

*A "new" gift is any gift from a donor who did not contribute in 2009.

An "increased" gift is the part of a 2009 contribution that exceeds the amount a donor contributed in 2008.

You Can't Stop the River: Community Change for Congregations

April 2-5, 2009 – Kansas City, Kansas

“. . . The angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:1-2, NIV).

“I was worried about kids in my community, but I didn't know how to do something about it until I came to the training. This weekend made me realize I can do stuff like that even though I am only a teenager. It's not as hard as it looks!” Sasha Simpson, from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, went home from the April 2-5 workshop, “You Can't Stop the River,” ready to swing into action and help protect kids from recruitment by drug dealers on the blocks of her neighborhood.

It was conditions back home that brought twenty-six motivated participants from nine congregations, from Modesto, California, to Brooklyn, New York: Gun violence. Child neglect. Meth abuse. Slumlords and the need for



low-income housing. Drug dealers and drug houses. Unemployment. Despair, alienation, and grief. The group that gathered from nine congregations across the country came for inspiration, tools, and perspectives to focus and strengthen their peacebuilding efforts.

In the course of the weekend, worship, Bible study, prayer, and experiential activities provided concepts and concrete tools for nonviolent community transformation, rooted in the agape love of Christ. Participants practiced how to analyze their communities, plan carefully, reach out to new community members, and gather hope through storytelling and prayer.

As part of the team from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Sasha, a high school sophomore, used the weekend to develop a strategy for protecting kids in her neighborhood. In the hours after school, kids without oversight are in danger of being recruited by drug dealers. Afterwards Sasha shared, “We are hoping to get more supervision for children while they are outside playing. Around here parents don't watch their kids, so they get introduced to drugs early on. By having more supervision, we want to lower the risk of kids getting into drugs at a young age.”

Since the training, Sasha has already met with Gerald Rhoades, another participant in the event, who is community minister for the Harrisburg Church of the Brethren. Sasha and Gerald developed a contact list for potential leaders (three moms from each block, and older kids with younger siblings, from the streets they are planning to protect), who will be invited to an informational meeting later in April.

For more information please visit our website, www.onearthpeace.org.



What Participants Said...

“I am taking back a menu of ideas, not a recipe for guaranteed success, but ingredients that I can use, with God's help, to inspire my congregation to create a feast of involvement with our community.”

— Luella Cole,
Modesto (CA) Church of the Brethren

“We were invited to be transformed; to use the anger of our righteous indignation to ‘fight’ non-violently. The workshop added knowledge and skills to our ‘tool box’ for continuing the work of Jesus.”

— Glenn Timmons,
Trotwood (OH) Church of the Brethren

International Day of Prayer for Peace 2009

Where is the Good News?

Not on the evening news, full of scandals and reports about corporate misdeeds and broken trust. Not from the companies that are closing factories, while unemployment spikes. In this time of economic uncertainty, the world around us is yearning for messages of hope and peace.

We're not talking about just any peace.

The real needs of our world are too diverse for us to be confined to a peace tradition focused only on war. A call to love enemies is at the heart of reality ("Father, forgive them. . ."). But if understood as refraining from violence alone, our peace tradition is left too fragile. The Gospel-rooted Word that our times need, now, is broader than many of us have been able to previously articulate. Peace is not just the absence of violence. It is a positive presence, in the face of violence. It's not just about not hitting people --- it's also about employment and paychecks.

Our peace is also about shalom, a full-bodied Jewish concept that means well-being – physical and economic as much as spiritual and relational. For Jesus-followers turning toward the agape love of God, peace/shalom is about a positive sense of abundant life – in all realms of life.

What if our peace vigils for the International Day of Prayer for Peace this September were about shalom? What if we could lift a word of Good News in communities yearning for hope? What if we could lift the hope that a positive sense of "life-giving spirit" (to use Sonja Griffith's term) might change our hearts and also address the concrete realities on our streets – realities like gang violence, hate crimes, foreclosures, and debt?



We're asking congregations to consider three possible ways of being involved:

An Observance might be good for a congregation that's doing this for the first time. Keep it simple, and plan a special prayer for your congregation.

A Vigil is a public event planned with one or two other congregations or community groups.

A Listening Initiative (see right column Deepen the Spirit) is an opportunity to walk the streets of your community and listen in new

ways to the needs people are feeling, and signs of hope they see. Listen, and then bring this information together to share with the community at a public vigil around September 21.

Let us move forward with a widening circle of peace- and shalom-making — with God's power spiraling through our hearts and intimate relationships, gathering up the hurt and broken on our streets, lifting visions of shalom and abundance — even in the midst of brokenness and despair. Through observances, vigils, and listening initiatives, this September may we be the angels, trumpeting "On earth peace and goodwill to all."

Deepen the Spirit

Community Listening Initiative

Many of us have strongly held opinions about the issues we care about, but how many of us have stepped out into our neighborhoods to listen to what matters to our neighbors? We are inviting participants in On Earth Peace's 2009 International Day of Prayer for Peace campaign to consider how a community Listening Initiative might deepen your peace leadership in the community.

A Listening Initiative is an opportunity to tune yourself, spiritually and relationally. This kind of approach is rooted in a style of nonviolence leadership that actively mobilizes its community around shared values. It can lead you to open yourself to listen to God in prayer, and listen in new and deeper ways to those who live around you. This makes it possible to root your congregation's peace witness in both stronger relationships, and in the real felt needs of your neighbors.

The Steps of a Listening Initiative
Pray before and after every step!

- 1) Ask God for guidance and focus.
- 2) Formulate briefly an initial statement of concern.
- 3) Find a team to work with.
- 4) With your team, translate your shared concern into one central question.
- 5) Develop a plan for "strategic listening," including people in key leadership groups in the community.
- 6) Gather up what you've heard and pray about it.
- 7) Use what you hear in this process, as part of your International Day of Prayer for Peace vigil, on or near September 21, 2009.

You can find a full description of this process on our website at <http://idopp.onearthpeace.org/>.

On Earth Peace at Annual Conference June 26-30, San Diego, California

Middle East Peacemaking

Saturday, June 27, 12:30pm

Each year, On Earth Peace co-sponsors a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation to Israel and Palestine. Hear reports from the January 2009 delegation about their meetings with Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers.

Educating Through Activities: Games, Art, and Music

Saturday, June 27, 12:30pm

Interested in more than book learning? Ready to engage all the senses in the learning experience? Looking for a fun-filled, active insight session for this afternoon break? Join in games, art, and music to spark your imagination, ignite your faith, and teach you about the love and peace of our God. (People of all physical abilities are encouraged to participate.)

What Christians Need to Know About Racism

Saturday, June 27, 9:00pm

Love Thy Neighbor — We have struggled with this commandment ever since Jesus gave it to us. This panel will discuss how the Bible's teachings about love can be applied in our modern, multi-cultural, and multi-racial society. We will share faith-based tools that we can use as Christians to identify and respond to racism in our communities.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, Our Nonviolent Commander-in-Chief

Saturday, June 27, 9:00pm

Following Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is challenging from within our various theological and sociological perspectives as well as when working across these spectrums. How do we encourage respect for conscientious differences, along with dynamic power in togetherness, as we all seek to obey our nonviolent commander-in-chief? We will address this challenging question by prayerfully studying the scriptures together.

Ministry of What?

Monday, June 29, 12:30pm

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation...All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17a,18, NRSV). Sometimes it seems easier to be reconciled to the Lord of all Creation than it is to be reconciled to each other, and yet God has given us the ministry of reconciliation! Get a taste of how the Ministry of Reconciliation (MoR) of On Earth Peace can help equip you and your congregation. If you are associated with a faith community whose members sometimes find it challenging to resolve their differences, this insight session is for you.

What's Beyond the Peace Vigil?

Monday, June 29, 12:30pm

Sometimes peace and community ministry seems flattened into holding a vigil for one issue or another. What does a more sustained vision of community action look like? What if we as Christians were able to live into God's vision of healing for the nations? This session will offer an overview of how to maintain a sustained focus on issues like violence, poverty, or racism in your community.

Global Cooperation: Faithfulness, Fantasy, or New Frontier?

Monday, June 29, 9:00pm

Explore current conditions that make global cooperation possible and prayer powerful. Experience activities that help us listen to and learn from each other. Discuss ways to build systems of encouragement in our congregations and in our world.

Confronting Militarism

Monday, June 29, 9:00pm

Christians need to understand how militarism affects people in our communities — particularly youth who feel they have no other option for a future, and those returning from the battlefield and trying to bridge back into society. Come hear why it matters for Christians to get involved in the "whole cloth" of confronting militarism: helping youth find a positive future, helping soldiers coming home, and pointing in another direction for a society bent on war.

Agape-Satyagraha: Skills Training for Youth

Monday, June 29, 9:00pm

Combining Jesus' example of love for community and Gandhi's truth force for social change, Agape-Satyagraha is an initiative of Brethren Community Ministries (BCM) to teach anger management and conflict resolution skills to junior/senior high youth. Learn more about this program and its exciting new partnership with On Earth Peace and explore how you might begin an Agape-Satyagraha program in your congregation or community.

For locations, stop by the On Earth Peace booth.



On Earth Peace's 2008 booth was a gathering place for those interested in talking about peace in their communities.



Peacemaker Profile

Jim and Elaine Gibbel

"I believed what we were told by Dan West in Brethren Volunteer Service training," says Jim Gibbel,

whose BVS service was in Quito, Ecuador. "He said that BVS is not a two-year commitment, but a lifetime commitment [to peace and service]."

For Jim and Elaine Gibbel of Lititz, Pennsylvania, a lifetime commitment is lived out in many ways, locally and globally. They have been active teachers and leaders in the Lititz Church of the Brethren and with the Brethren Peace

Fellowship. Hospitality is a special gift: they have welcomed refugees, international guests, and traveling peacemakers in their home, and have brought together interested persons from the surrounding area for special speakers and programs on issues of justice and peacemaking. The Gibbels explain, "Our Christian faith motivates us to be peacemakers, to walk the walk."

The Gibbels have been active leaders and supporters of On Earth Peace, including service on the Board of On Earth Peace, participation in work camps, and peace delegations. They say, "On Earth Peace is an important part of the Church of the Brethren. We have shared the conviction of M.R. Zigler from the beginning that the church needs to be intentional about its peace witness and peace education. We feel that his vision has become a reality in On Earth Peace."

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Appreciation: Phil and Louise Rieman



The day after Christmas, on their way to visit family, Phil and Louise Rieman were killed in a tragic car accident in central Indiana.

They were active peacemakers in the Church of the Brethren and were as loving as they were loved. Their deaths have been a tragic loss to the peace community including On Earth Peace, as for many years Phil and Louie were regular supporters, key volunteers, and frequent participants at a variety of our events. Thanks to all who have expressed their concern and joined us in prayer, for their family and celebrating their lives.

A family camp where everyone is family!
 Song & Story Fest: Round Again:
 Even the Stars are Singing!
 July 3-9, 2009 at Camp Peaceful Pines
 in Northern California

This is the ideal camp for those who enjoy a wide variety of musical styles and storytelling as part of their spiritual worship and growth! Single persons and families of any size and shape will enjoy this combination of performance and participation in the mountains of California's Sierra Nevada. We will be together in a daily routine of morning gatherings, workshop groups, afternoon free times, evening campfires, and concerts.



Looking to Do
 Some Good?
 Good Search!



Imagine if every time you logged onto the internet to make a general search — you earned money for peacebuilding work.

Good Search makes that possible. With each search you launch on goodsearch.com, about one cent goes to the charity of your choice. And we hope you will choose On Earth Peace. Simply go to www.goodsearch.com. In the second box, type in On Earth Peace (New Windsor, Maryland), from their database. You can even make it your homepage and On Earth Peace will come up automatically. Then, begin searching the internet and giving to your favorite nonprofit!

Tell your friends to tell their friends and so on. If 1,000 people search twice a day for a year, designating the donation for On Earth Peace, we would earn \$7,300.



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