



Fall 2007

International Day of Prayer for Peace September 21, 2007

On Earth Peace is partnering with the Brethren Witness/Washington Office in a special campaign, planning for at least forty public prayer meetings/vigils sponsored by Church of the Brethren congregations on or near the International Day of Prayer for Peace, September 21, 2007.

Congregations and faith communities will pray publicly about violence in their communities and the world. The International Day of Prayer for Peace, sponsored by the World Council of Churches, is coordinated with the International Day of Peace, sponsored by the United Nations, and both take place on September 21 each year.

Many congregations already hold regular vigils about street violence, killing, and war. Others hold regular (even weekly) gatherings around their peace pole to focus their congregation's hearts and minds on God's promise of peace.

Would your congregation consider organizing a special vigil on or near September 21?

Your event could consist of a prayer meeting in the streets, a vigil of some kind, or an ecumenical or interfaith worship and prayer service to raise concerns about violence and lift up God's promises of abundant life for all people.

More ideas, info, and updates are available at www.onearthpeace.org.

People of faith know in their core that prayer changes things. . . I truly hope and pray that on this International Day of Prayer for Peace, thousands — perhaps millions — of believers will strengthen their conviction that peace IS possible, and re-dedicate themselves to being more effective instruments of God's Peace.

~ Linda K. Williams, San Diego (CA) First Church of the Brethren

IDOPP Grassroots Organizer Named



Mimi Copp explores ideas with Beatrice Myers and Lucile Vaughn at the On Earth Peace breakfast.

On Earth Peace and the Brethren Witness/Washington Office have announced the hiring of Mimi Copp (Philadelphia, PA) as the International Day of Prayer for Peace Grassroots Organizer. This short-term position has been created to develop and carry out publicity, outreach, and organizing plans for the International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDOPP). Mimi is

leading the way in providing resource materials and program support to congregations who choose to become involved. As of July 31, she has successfully recruited nineteen congregations to participate in IDOPP with more than fifty more considering it. Mimi comes to this position having served in Brethren Volunteer Service in Chicago and Nigeria, with a Master's degree in Peace and Development Studies from Universitat Jaume I. Persons interested in participating in the IDOPP are encouraged to contact Mimi at 260-479-5087 or miminski@gmail.com.

International Day of Prayer for Peace

. . . and Let it Begin with Me

It started with one woman — that is, one woman's idea. Linda Pieri of the First Mennonite Church of Middlebury, Indiana, and her husband had worked for peace in Ireland, in Chicago, and in Washington, DC, but never in their own hometown. The realization that peace keeping efforts should be taking place in her own backyard started the conversation with her pastor, and then the ideas quickly came to life.

Soon three Anabaptist congregations were working together at peace initiatives. Although all are from Historic Peace Churches, there was no memory of these congregations working together to make a public proclamation of the peace position which they share at so fundamental a level. Two significant events grew out of their time of praying and planning together: a staffed booth at the town's annual Summer Festival, where Mennonite and Church of the Brethren peace and justice materials were displayed; and a candlelight prayer walk to the park in the town center where a peace vigil was held.

At the prayer walk, candles were lit as

the sun was getting low in the sky and groups moved toward the center of town, arriving just as darkness gently fell on the candle-holding crowd. The 80 to 90 who gathered sang songs for peace and heard from a local peace activist who inspired listeners to work harder for peace in our homes, churches, communities, and the world. As the evening drew to a close, participants gathered in small groups, from which murmurs of prayers for peace could be heard, followed by the musical refrain "O Lord, hear our prayer."

For many in the park, that night was the first time they had made a public stand for peace. For others who had been active in other parts of the world, it was the first time they'd made a stand for their beliefs in their hometown. Many found making a public stand for peace required courage, much more so than is required when participating in rallies and marches in anonymous large cities away from home.

Although we were a few dozen people



Following a time of prayer, participants departed from their church building for the half-mile walk to the town park.

in one small town park, there was a distinct sense of being part of something bigger as we were reminded that on this International Day of Prayer for Peace, many brothers and sisters around our fragile world were also praying for peace. We left knowing we are part of the work God is doing in the world: work to bring about God's reign of love and justice and peace on earth.

~ Melissa Troyer

Middlebury (IN) Church of the Brethren

... We need peace so desperately at this time.

People all over the world can pray. Our combined prayers are perhaps the best way to stop the violence and war. Please do your part!

~ Suzanne Schaudel, Lancaster (PA) Church of the Brethren

As a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams, it is the prayers of the team and of others around the world that empower us to face the violence and help transform a potentially violent situation into one of reconciliation. Taking the time to devote a day of prayer for peace is a way to connect spiritually to all those around the world working for peace.

~ Rick Polhamus, Pleasant Hill (OH) Church of the Brethren

Resources and Organizing Ideas

- Visit www.onearthpeace.org for the latest updates on participating congregations and their plans.
- Register your commitment and look for other vigils being planned in your area at www.idpvigil.com.
- Use prayer and liturgical resources developed by the World Council of Churches' office of the Decade to Overcome Violence, on the theme, "Make me an instrument of your peace" (www.overcomingviolence.org).
- Have volunteers from the church commissioned to work for peace that entire week.
- Sponsor a prayer breakfast about violence and peace in your town.
- Hold a prayer-meeting-in-the-streets to lift concerns about violence in your community, sponsored with members of at least one other church.

Song & Story Fest

The 2007 Song and Story Fest — that blessed gathering of children, grandparents, story-tellers, families, musicians, cousins, and friends new and old — took place the week before Annual Conference, at Camp Inspiration Hills just south of Cleveland.

The Fest is a time when music fills the air and a place where peace prevails. It is a family camp where everyone is family, whether they are related or not. It's a time for six-year-old musicians to play for an appreciative audience, and for accomplished story-tellers to draw their listeners into the beauty and heartfelt truth of their tales.

Some families and individuals come to the Fest every year, and every year there are new people who are welcomed into the experience. Most are present for the whole week, but some come for a shorter stay.

At this year's Fest, with its daily pattern of morning gathering, workshop groups, afternoon free time, evening campfire and concert, participants enjoyed a wide variety of musical styles from perennial favorites and new performers. Bluegrass gospel,

Celtic, folk, and old-time music were among the many genres enjoyed by the 130 participants.

The 2007 Fest was the eleventh in the series — all planned by Ken Kline Smeltzer, founder of the event. On Earth Peace has sponsored the past five Fests. Next year's Fest will be at Camp Brethren Woods, in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Put the dates of July 6-12, 2008, on your calendar, and come enjoy the twelfth Fest with us!

~ Bob Gross



Annual Conference

Annual Conference Breakfast

The On Earth Peace breakfast at Annual Conference has grown in popularity each year, becoming one of the largest meal events of the conference. This summer, the 150 tickets were sold out a full day before the conference even started.

Peggy and Art Gish spoke at this year's event, outlining the call to Christian peacemaking in these times, drawing on their wide experience of violence reduction in Iraq, Israel/Palestine, and their home community of Athens, Ohio.

Art pointed out that many young people go into military service without ever hearing that war might be inconsistent with Christian faith. He called upon those gathered to communicate their peace witness in their local communities by speaking, demonstrating, writing letters to their local papers, creating leaflets or ads for newspapers or local radio stations, and calling in to local radio talk shows.

“There is no excuse for anyone living within twenty miles of a Church of the Brethren congregation not knowing that some Christians believe that war is contrary to the will of God. If they have never even heard that message, then we are not doing our job.”



Fran Nyce (Westminster, MD) donated a beautiful watercolor of a bridge to be given away in a drawing at the On Earth Peace breakfast. John Glasscock (Beaverton, MI) was the lucky recipient.

Review and Evaluation Committee Report

The report of the Review and Evaluation Committee was adopted by the conference delegates, calling for a merger of the General Board with the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC). This conference action also assigns the responsibilities of the Annual Conference Council to the newly created organization, and calls for the elimination of the Council.

The report also suggests that On Earth Peace should consider joining this new program agency. In presenting the report, the committee noted that the histories and present circumstances of ABC and On Earth Peace are quite different, and that merger may not be the best course of action for On Earth Peace.

An Implementation Committee was called by Annual Conference to consider how to move forward in shaping this new organizational pattern. The staff leaders of the agencies involved — Lerry Fogle

(Annual Conference), Bob Gross (On Earth Peace), Stan Noffsinger (General Board), and Kathy Reid (Association of Brethren Caregivers) — will be members of the committee, along with three elected members: Gary Crim (Dayton, OH), John Neff (Bridgewater, VA), and David Sollenberger (Annville, PA).



The On Earth Peace booth was a popular place once again for persons to gather.

First-Hand Reports from Iraq

Over 250 persons flooded into the room for the Insight Session, “First-hand Reports from Iraq.” The two speakers could hardly have been more different, yet both have experienced the tragedy in Iraq very personally.

Peggy Gish has been a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams Iraq team since the fall of 2002, before the war began. She has spent most of each year since then in Iraq, primarily in Baghdad and more recently in the Kurdish north of the country. Sgt. Maj. Coral E. Gillham has served four seven-month tours of duty in Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps.

While some of the descriptions given by Gish and Gillham were very similar, their analysis of the causes and solutions for the present situation of chaos and violence are, not surprisingly, quite different. The tone of the session was intense and respectful, and there were many more questions from the audience than time permitted the speakers to answer.



Sgt. Maj. Coral E. Gillham and Peggy Gish

Consensus Decision-Making: Seven Essentials

On June 30, 2007, at the pre-Annual Conference “Exploring Consensus Decision-making” workshop, an overflow crowd of 55 participants experienced seven learnings that underlie the process of consensus decision-making. Led by Carol Mason of the General Board’s Congregational Life Teams and Annie Clark of On Earth Peace’s Ministry of Reconciliation, participants engaged with concepts designed to assist in experiencing the paradigm shift from the process of “majority rule” to consensus. In majority rule, members of a meeting come prepared to support or vote against a proposal. In consensus, members explore a proposal and work with it to best fulfill the needs and mission of an organization and its constituency. There is a spirit of openness to the creativity and will of the group. As one intuitive writer puts it, “The decision is in this room — your job is to find it.”

The following are the seven learnings from the workshop:

1. **Learning how to collaborate** and trust the Spirit. As Carol Mason sums it up, “Unity of the Spirit involves full engagement by all and may result in an unexpected ‘answer’ because it does not emerge until all contribute.”
2. **Understanding the concept of letting go**, being open to what others can offer, and being willing to put one’s own needs aside for the greater good of the congregation or organization.
3. **Discovering an awareness of power** and one’s relationship to power. Power in consensus decision-making is used to persuade without deception, coercion, or malice; by using truth, creativity, logic, respect, and love.
4. **Ascertaining self-awareness**, and being able to act from our truest selves.
5. **Becoming skilled at formulating questions well** for the consensus process, including the very important question of whether or not consensus is the appropriate process for making a particular decision.
6. **Learning the ability to suspend judgement**, which is an awareness of the biases, assumptions, and prejudices to which we have been exposed, which interfere with the spirit of cooperation and equal participation.
7. **Becoming aware of the sacredness of collaborative creativity**, including the humility needed to work together, and being open to the will of God.

Each teaching was accompanied by an activity or discussion. Participants expressed appreciation for the workshop and the possibilities it offered for their congregations and the denomination. As one participant reflected, “It gave me a lot to think about. I think I learned some useful tools that I can use in my congregation and other groups I work with.” If you would like to bring this workshop to your district or congregation, please contact Annie Clark with the Ministry of Reconciliation at 260-982-8595 or annie.clark@verizon.net.

Welcome Home Project

News continues to pour out of Walter Reed Army Hospital about substandard care for vets. The number of military personnel with service in Iraq or Afghanistan totals about 1.5 million, and the number of wounded troops exceeds 25,000.

On Earth Peace’s Welcome Home Project challenges congregations to develop relevant ministries for returning service members — ministries which go beyond yellow ribbons to respond to the real needs of men and women who return with a host of conditions, some of which, like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, may not emerge for months after their return.

Churches committed to Christian peacemaking need to address the real

needs of our communities. How might God move your congregation to respond?

To carry out this ministry, On Earth Peace has developed an informal partnership with *Point Man International Ministries*, a group with chapters in 38 states and six foreign countries, focused on Christian ministries for and by veterans. *Point Man* has provided speakers for insight sessions at Annual Conference and district conferences. *Point Man*’s President, Dana Morgan, traveled from New York to lead a session in Cleveland this summer, and he continues to support Brethren ministries for vets by helping find speakers for different regions of the country. Visit our website for more information or to contact *Point Man*.



Matt Guynn challenged participants at a peace witness at Annual Conference to go beyond being “ANTI-”activists, and move toward being Christ-rooted social change workers, as evangelists of love and builders of shalom.

Annual Conference

Creating a Safe Space

This year at Annual Conference, a “Safety for GLBT Youth in the Church” workshop was co-sponsored by On Earth Peace and Voices for an Open Spirit (VOS). This is in keeping with the 1983 Annual Conference statement, Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective, which calls on the church to challenge “fear, hatred, and harassment of homosexual persons,” and with the violence-reduction mission of On Earth Peace.

Workshop participants gathered in small groups to think about how we can open our hearts, minds, and doors, to become supportive faith communities for our young people as they grow to know themselves, and identify both the obstacles to and opportunities for moving towards safety and inclusion in our congregations. Here are a few ideas that came from that time together:

Obstacles	Opportunities for change
Language: assumptions made about other people; how we talk about relationships and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a panel discussion to talk about language that excludes or includes glbt folks; invite speakers from open and affirming congregations to share their experiences • Question and correct derogatory gay terms • Provide human sexuality education and sensitivity training in congregations (especially for youth groups) – the United Church of Christ has developed a full curriculum that can be purchased online (www.ucc.org/justice/issues/sexuality_education)
Faith: the idea that “faith equals absolute Truth” vs. the idea that “faith is a journey”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preach Jesus • Call out stories of glbt people in congregations and listen intentionally to their faith stories
Misuse of scripture: not taking historical and other contexts into consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education on biblical interpretation • Stop teaching silence on glbt and other justice issues • Develop literature and resources with biblical stories that encourage inclusion (“Out in Scripture” is a resource from the Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org/scripture)
Theological debate: endless talk gets in the way of acting on those issues on which there is agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your church to take a stand on concrete issues facing people: suicide, harassment, homelessness—not necessarily debating theology • Emphasize the urgency of creating safe space
Leadership: lack of role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be brave! Identify yourself as a “safe person” (for glbt youth and adults) in your own congregation

Youth Speak Out

Jonathan Ulrich, Dustin Chew, Audrey Hollenberg, and Chrissy Sollenberger shared at the Sunday night insight session entitled, “Youth Speak Out: What Is Our Peace Witness About?”

The four youth fielded discussion questions from moderator Susanna Farahat of On Earth Peace and then took questions from audience members. They shared about the various ways they personally work to create peace, which include taking care of the environment, consciously including outsiders, reaching out to soldiers returning from war, and sharing the biblical

basis of the peace position.

Said one of the youth, “The question is not where can Brethren peacemakers [be in witness], but really where can’t we be? ... Everywhere someone is needed to bring the peace of Christ.”

The role of family and church in influencing the speakers towards peacemaking was strongly affirmed. The youth all spoke of the witness that pacifists in their family and their church have had upon them.

~ Sarah Leatherman Young, *Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren*



Jonathan Ulrich shared how family and church supported his peacemaking.



At the Building Bridges insight session, Gilbert Romero and Duane Grady share their stories of building a friendship despite coming from very different backgrounds.

New Co-Coordinator of Communications

We're excited to introduce **Gimbiya Kettering** as Co-Coordinator of Communications. In this shared position with Barb Saylor, Gimbiya will focus on writing and editing newsletters, publicity for events, and other written communications. Joining the staff from Takoma Park, Maryland, Gimbiya brings a balance of writing and editorial skills. Raised in Nairobi, Kenya, by an interracial family rooted in the Church of the Brethren, Gimbiya also brings a unique perspective on issues of diversity and multi-cultural awareness. She has a B.A. in International Studies from Maryville (TN) College, and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from American University, Washington, DC. She is co-author of *Inside Sudan: People-to-People Grassroots*, published by the New Sudan Council of Churches. Gimbiya can be reached at gimbiyakettering@yahoo.com and 301-717-0971.



Calendar

September 19

*US Decade to Overcome Violence
Committee Meetings
New York, New York*

September 21

*International Day of Prayer for Peace
Prayer meetings and vigils will take place all over the world!*

September 21-22

*On Earth Peace
Board of Directors Meeting
New Windsor, Maryland*

October 8-10

*Western Plains Matthew 18
Training for Trainers
Great Bend, Kansas*

October 14-15

*Western Pennsylvania Matthew 18
Training for Trainers
Johnstown, Pennsylvania*

November 3

*Peaceful Family Playshop
Oakton Church of the Brethren
Vienna, Virginia*

November 4

*Surviving the Holidays:
A Toolkit for Families
Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren
Glen Arm, Maryland*

November 14-16

*Appreciative Inquiry/Practitioner
Consultation
Camp Mack
Milford, Indiana*

November 16-18

*Youth Peace Retreat
Virginia, exact location TBA*

Information available on these programs and much more at www.onearthpeace.org

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Mission Statement

On Earth Peace Assembly is a movement grounded in the Church of the Brethren dedicated to following the teachings of Jesus Christ in renewing and living out our biblical and denominational heritage of peace. Our purpose, through religious and educational activities, is to empower people to discern the things that make for peace – in ourselves, within families, in our global environment, among nations – and to advocate peace and justice, seeking the realization of God's will on earth as it is in heaven.



New Pamphlet Links God's Love, Grace, and Peacemaking

On Earth Peace offers a new pamphlet for reflection and evangelism: **Clenched Fists, Open Hands: A Meditation on God's Love and Peace in the Christian Life.** The simple pamphlet introduces God's love for all people and describes the connection between God's free gift and the commitment to open our hands to each other as peacemakers.

(Tambien se lo ofrece en español: **Puños Cerrados, Manos Abiertas: Una meditación acerca del amor de Dios y la paz en la vida Cristiana.**)

A great addition for a church literature rack, it can also be used for evangelism and outreach in public places. It includes space for you to add your local contact information.

You can see it in full on our website.

Order copies for \$0.10 each by calling 410-635-8704 or e-mail djohnson_oepe@brethren.org.



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