

## The Peace and Justice Task Force

E--Letter # 4

Fall 2009

*And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.....Micah 6:8*

Since its creation in 2005 the Peace and Justice Task Force has discussed and urged parishes and missions to pray, discuss and act upon issues concerning peace and justice in the Diocese. There is much more we can do, and need to do. For many of us the idea of this concern is new. We believe that sharing information is one of the best ways to promote this purpose. Perhaps the best way would be in the type of personal contact that the Diocese does so well in other areas of its activity. Our Task Force invites anyone who wishes to take part in our meetings to do so. Of course we would like to share our work with those who wish to be involved in these matters, but we would be delighted to welcome anyone to come to our meetings at St. John's Franklin on Saturday \*\*\*\*\*.

In the meantime the theme of this newsletter hopes to suggest ways of promoting reconciliation at the three levels of activity mentioned in the resolution. Our goal is to suggest way that the goal may be realized. At the 2008 the Diocesan Convention adopted the following resolution:

### **On the Importance of Fostering Reconciliation**

(Resolution, adopted at the 2008 Diocesan Convention)

**Whereas:** Events that are occurring both within and outside the Church have made the achievement of reconciliation a core challenge to its mission, and

**Whereas:** The continuation of strife and conflict of all kinds are happening within our communities, our nation, and the world, and

**Whereas;** The consequences of said strife and conflict demand a conscientious effort toward reconciliation on the part of all Christians, therefore

**Be it resolved:** That the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania reaffirm its ministry of reconciliation and encourage the development of Christian community in the following ways:

**Within the Church:** That the Diocese continue to foster dialogue, both corporal and individually, with those outside the Diocese, where the usual channels of communication have been disrupted or severed.

**Within our Communities:** By examining ways that we may open ourselves to reach out to others who are victimized by the consequences of addiction, poverty, or war, while remaining mindful of such efforts already undertaken.

**Within the World:** To both continue and expand those already active outreach ministries in India, Guatemala, and Tanzania and to continue our support of the Millennium Development Goals.

**Be it further Resolved:** That the Peace and Justice Task Force make available specific measures, focused on the task of reconciliation and to report the success or failure of such measures at the 2010 Diocesan Convention.

### **Reconciliation within our Church**

One of the more demanding and needed acts of reconciliation lies within our own congregations. Seeking reconciliation requires good listening and humility. One possibility is to engage the workshops offered by the Diocesan Health Team under the leadership of Father Adam Trambley of St. Johns in Sharon.

Typically involvement in workshops that assess spiritual gifts and types of congregations can be good place to start. In addition ChurchSmart (<http://www.churchsmart.com/store/listHotDealsProducts.asp>) offers *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict*. The book is sold as a "kit" of guides for leaders and participants along with both audio and power point CDs. The premise is that "cultural, spiritual and theological conflict is usually about leadership, community and character. The book describes

responses to conflict (passive, evasive, defensive and aggressive) and provides an approach to each. This book received two five star reviews (the best) from readers at Amazon.

As we all know, one of the saddest fact we confront is the division within Church involving questions of authority and sexuality. As we write the outcome of creating a separate “traditionalist” Episcopal entity is something many of us feel unable to stop. The result is deep division within congregations and a troubling image for many who would join the Church. What can we do? One possibility is simply to keep open communication between congregations. The Diocese of Pittsburgh and Bishop Duncan is a founding member of the Anglican Church of North America. He has left a Diocese divided between those who have followed him and those who have remained with the Episcopal Church. **One way for us to deal with this challenge is to keep open avenues of contact with parishes both in that part of the Diocese that remains in the Episcopal Church and that which has broken way. We propose for members of individual parishes and missions, , especially vestries/bishop’s committees and wardens to initiate writing a letter to a parish companion in either or both parts of the Pittsburgh Diocese.** The two parts of the Diocese maintain separate web sites that part remaining in the Church <http://www.episcopalpgh.org/> and the one that has left the Church is at <http://www.pitanglican.org/parishes>. *Each website includes addresses of member parishes.* Although it is not necessary, churches in our Diocese that do write may wish to inform the Chair of the P&J Task Force, Zach Irwin, at [zti1@psu.edu](mailto:zti1@psu.edu). Some **possible** points to consider in your letter:

- \*We believe that the reasons for the schism are not as important as seeking to heal its consequences*
- \* We wish simply to write as fellow Episcopalians. Clearly those who have chosen to remain within the Church deserve our encouragement, but those who have left should not be condemned or criticized.*
- \* You may simply describe what is happening in your Church and invite nothing more in return.*
- \* You may wish to include a prayer such as the passage in Prayers of the People VI, “that we all may be one.*

## **Reconciliation within our Communities and the Nation**

**Truly the work of the Church is reconciliation in its broadest sense. Of course all forms of outreach amount to reconciliation.** Supporting a food pantry, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, or Tutoring students after school are all ways of fulfilling the call of Jesus to become reconciled with one another. Nevertheless here are several approaches to reconciliation .

**One of those approaches involves taking a personal vow of non-violence, a pledge that involves more than promising not to be physically violent!** The following “vow of non-violence may be found at the Pax Christi website [http://www.paxchristiusa.org/news\\_events\\_more.asp?id=55](http://www.paxchristiusa.org/news_events_more.asp?id=55) . . Truly it demonstrates that finding peace is an ecumenical exercise that involves all communities of faith. The vow may be undertaken individually or collectively.

### **VOW OF NONVIOLENCE**

RECOGNIZING THE VIOLENCE IN MY OWN HEART, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God...You have learned how it was said, "You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy"; but I say to you, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven."

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

by striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;

by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;

by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;

by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;

by living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live; by

actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own

heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in Your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.

After reading and reflecting on the Vow of Nonviolence, people often commit themselves to trying to follow it daily for a year. If a group of people is committing to the vow, a ceremony can be planned. We invite all who take the vow to sign the following commitment statement and return it to us at Pax Christi USA, 532 West 8th Street, Erie, PA 16502 or at [info@paxchristiusa.org](mailto:info@paxchristiusa.org)

### Helping Returning Veterans

**Contact Person:** Patricia A. Lavery-Pitkin 136 Garden Ave. Grove City, PA 714 372-3513

The diaconal project will focus on 1.) helping to support Military Service Members who are currently serving overseas and their families who remain in our communities; 2.) providing clergy and congregations with the tools to help recognize potential red flag behaviors of the returning military member and their family; and, 3.) introducing the use of the labyrinth, centering prayer, and reconciliation in helping to heal the unseen wounds of our returning military members.

### Join the Episcopal Public Policy Network

**For decades the Episcopal public policy network has been involved in promoting policy goals that reflect a commitment to peacemaking.** Some areas of concern have included support of Congressionally appropriated assistance for refugees, signing the Gulf Coast Civic Works Campaign Interfaith Statement, new efforts on behalf of peacemaking in the Middle East, The American Clean Energy and Security Act. The Episcopal Policy Website is of value not only in alerting us to the current issues of public policy that deserve support of concerned Christians and congregations, but also of providing the theological and offering the theology and information necessary for informed action. The website is located at [eppn@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:eppn@episcopalchurch.org)

### Support the activity of the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice (ENEJ)

The ENEJ (<http://www.enej.org/news.htm>) is an advocacy organization that was created in 1988 to continue work undertaken by the Economic Justice Implementation Committee and its vision of economic justice. **The Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania is supports the work of the Network through its annual dues.** ENEJ offers technical assistance for developing local initiatives, such as credit unions, affordable housing, and micro-finance organizations. In addition the organization offers at its website position papers on issues that have been of concern to General Convention, such as low wage workers, health care, immigration rights. It has published the *Economic Justice How to Action Manual and Twenty Years Later: Response to a Crisis*. Materials are available at the website or from P&J Chair, Zach Irwin

### Reconciliation in the World

**In the words of its official website ([http://www.episcopalchurch.org/1834\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/1834_ENG_HTM.htm))** “The Episcopal Church has a commitment to justice and peace in the world that is expressed in our baptismal covenant, our catechism, our prayers and our worship. That commitment also is expressed through many legislative acts of our General Convention and resolves of our Executive Council. This office supports Episcopal, Anglican, ecumenical and interfaith efforts to restore justice, seek reconciliation, and overcome violence in the world. The program officer works with other members of the Presiding Bishop’s staff to gather information, provide support, stand in solidarity, and initiate advocacy when violence and oppression cause harm, especially to our partners in the regions. **One of the easiest ways for individuals and parishes/missions to support the Church’s goals is to learn about and support the organization, One Episcopalian.**

### Joining One Episcopalian

At its 2006 Convention the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania voted to support the Millennium development Goals through contributing .7% of its administrative budget, a measure endorsed by the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop. Our contribution has supported the MDGs through direct support of the Ministries Rev. Charl Kapp in Tanzania, and Rev. Gail Winslow in India. Nevertheless we recommend that individuals and Dioceses join the ONE Episcopalian, a campaign to rally Episcopalians one by one to the cause of ending extreme poverty in our world and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654\\_35495\\_ENG\\_HTM.ht](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654_35495_ENG_HTM.ht)

### **Healthy Youth Development to Sponsor First Annual *Erie Peace Fest***

Healthy Youth Development of Erie County (HYD) sponsored the First Annual *Erie Peace Fest* on October 10, 2009 from 1:30-4:30pm at Grace Church, 730 Grubb Road in McKean Township. This is a youth-driven, community event designed to promote civility, peace, kindness, and lower the incidence of violence and bullying. The *Erie Peace Fest* took place during Healthy Youth Development Week 2009, when Erie County celebrates positive youth development with HYD sponsored events all week long.

This event will include music, motivational speakers, food, informational booths and a parent track on cyber-bullying and internet safety. The ultimate goal of the *Erie Peace Fest* is to empower young adults (through the 40 Developmental Assets model) to become advocates for peace and justice in their schools and neighborhoods. Additional goals of the *Erie Peace Fest* include:

- Promoting a positive climate in schools
- Promoting empathy for others
- Creating a caring community and neighborhood
- Seeing youth as a positive element in society

Erie County youth and community planners have been working on this event for over a year and have received a grant from the Janet Neff Sample Center for Manners and Civility at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College to financially support the festival. Also supporting this event are: The Ophelia Project; Erie Peace & Justice Center; Crime Victim Center; The Principal's Cabinet (General McLane High School), United States Attorney General's Office; The Refuge; Susan Hirt Hagan Center for Organizational Research and Evaluation (CORE), Grace Church, Inter-Church Ministries of Erie County, and many other local faith institutions. If you would like to help support or volunteer, please contact Joe Markiewicz, HYD Project Director at (814) 898-6515 or e-mail at:

[jhm21@psu.edu](mailto:jhm21@psu.edu)

### **BASIC CCP TRAINING**

During March 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, an eclectic group of two men and four women gathered at the Kirkridge Retreat and Study Center, located in the Poconos just north of Bangor, PA, for the basic CCP (Creating a Culture of Peace) training. Created by Janet Chisholm, this spiritually grounded, intergenerational, community-based twenty-hour program focuses on a variety of peace and justice issues and is designed to serve as an incubator, both to assist participants in the building of a working community and in the development of projects that address those issues. Two forms of active non-violence are emphasized: the Constructive focuses on the creation of a just

and peaceful culture and the Resistance, utilizing actions that oppose injustice and oppression. Less dependent on lectures or reading materials, the training includes storytelling, meditation, small group activities, brainstorming, role-playing, thought-provoking exercises, music and movement in its format.

Our facilitators were Janet Chisholm and Kat Malinsky. Janet has been active in the Episcopal Peace Fellowship for many years-she just recently completed her term as national chairperson. She spent her childhood in Las Vegas, in the shadow of the nuclear bomb test site, has had a variety of career experiences in teaching, social service and community organization, has traveled extensively and is a published author, is active in her parish and both local and national peacemaking organizations. She resides at Kirkridge. Kat, whose area of expertise is cultural diversity and international education, is a faculty member at Argosy University in Florida.

The six of us who completed the program were PA, NY or NJ residents: Mary, a teacher in a private school; Aileen, who lived with her family in a "green" community; Ray, an ELCA pastor; Joe, an ICU nurse and now a teacher; Dawn, a "professional" church worker; and me, a TEC deacon. We named our project Tri Youth Environmental Service or Tri-YES, which we envisioned would offer young people graduating from high school, who were not going to college, the opportunity to develop skills in the so called "Green Movement" as an alternative to military service.

*"To go alone into the mountain, and come back as an ambassador to the world, has ever been the method of humanity's best friends." Submitted by Charl Kapp*

***Book Review, submitted by Rebecca lash***

***LEFT TO TELL: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust***

***By Immaculee Ilibagiza***

***This story of a survivor of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda is riveting and fast-paced book.***

***Immaculee, at age 24, finds her world turned upside down as a bloody genocide tears apart her family and her country. She shares the horror of hiding in a small bathroom with seven other women for 91 days in order to survive. Immaculee tells a story - almost unbelievable - of former friends and neighbors, Hutu's, who became mobs filled with cruel hatred, seeking to kill her and all those whom they referred to as "cockroaches", the Tutsi's. While in hiding, she has a vision that God had a purpose for her in the future, that she would be telling this story to English-speaking people. The most amazing part of the story, however, is the message of forgiveness, which Immaculee finds for her family's killers as well as the nation as a whole. This true tale is one each Christian needs to read. A copy is now available in the Diocesan Library.***

### **A Jewish Prayer for Peace**

Come Let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord that we may walk in the Paths of the Most High.  
And we shall beat our Swords into plowshare and our spears into pruning hooks  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war a  
And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the lord has spoken.

**From "An Invitation to Prayer", St .Paul's Chapel, Trinity Wall Street**

