

Be Bold: Nonviolence Works

Volume 72: Fall 2016

presbypeacefellowship.org @presbypeace

SOA Watch Converges on US/Mexico Border

By Gary Cozette, Chicago IL

In early October I traveled to the Arizona desert to participate in the SOA Watch International Border Convergence in Nogales, a town which straddles the US/Mexico border.

Here's the backstory, which you largely know. The longtime mission of SOA Watch is to close the US Army's notorious School of the Americas (SOA) that has trained Latin American soldiers who have subsequently carried out egregious human rights violations against their own people. After the US House of Representatives voted in 1999 to defund the SOA, the Pentagon renamed it the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in an attempt to whitewash the SOA's legacy of torture, assassinations, massacres, and military coups. Each year on the anniversary of the assassination of 6 Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter by SOA graduates in El Salvador, a weekend vigil has been held at the front gate of Ft. Benning GA (where the SOA is located), to remember the thousands of people killed by SOA graduates, and to call for the SOA to be closed. SOA Watch continues efforts to close WHINSEC/SOA as today it engages in a broader grassroots campaign to demilitarize US policy and practices in our hemisphere.

For the first time, SOA Watch relocated its annual grassroots mobilization to the US/Mexico border at Nogales, Arizona, to better understand the causes that prompt immigrants and refugees to cross into the United States. This year, we learned how US trade and economic policies have displaced thousands of rural farmers in Mexico and Central America, converting them into

US-bound immigrants seeking work to sustain their destitute families. We also learned how the militarized US "War on Drugs" has fomented waves of refugees seeking to escape this drug-and-gang-related violence as well as the repressive violence of the state.



Puppetistas on both sides of the border present a tale of immigrants crossing the border into the Arizona desert, the border patrol tracking them down, and butterflies and hummingbirds flooding the scene to remind the world that borders are artificial barriers to life.

Friday evening, October 7, opened the Border Convergence with a vigil organized by Puente Movement & SOA Watch in Eloy, Arizona, at the massive immigrant detention center located in a desolate stretch of the desert between Phoenix and Tucson.

Saturday morning, October 8, included a march through the streets of Nogales on both the US and Mexico side of the border, culminating in a joint rally within sight of the

spot where a 16-year-old Mexican boy, Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez, was shot and killed by a US Border Patrol agent. The march was followed by afternoon teach-ins on both sides of the border, and an evening concert at the border fence.

Sunday morning, October 9, was highlighted by a morning memorial vigil held jointly on both sides of the border fence. It honored victims murdered by Border Patrol agents and SOA trained soldiers. On Sunday evening, SOAW and local activists converged on the US Border Patrol's mandatory traffic-stop checkpoint at kilometer 41 on the highway between Nogales and Tucson. A direct action "die-in" portrayed SOA and Border Patrol victims with wailing women between the Border Patrol highway checkpoint office and the passing cars. No arrests were made as protesters negotiated to leave after the 20-minute die in.

As with past SOAW grassroots mobilizations at Fort Benning, Georgia, and in Washington, DC, I found the Border Convergence was empowering, illuminating, and energizing.

**...BRIEFLY is the newsletter of the
Presbyterian Peace Fellowship**

17 Cricketown Road Stony Point, NY 10980

presbypeacefellowship.org

@presbypeace

ppfwitness@presbypeacefellowship.org

Aric Clark and Shannan Vance-Ocampo, Co-Moderators

Len Bjorkman, Moderator Emeritus

Rick Ufford-Chase, Secretary Dylan Rooke, Treasurer

Ben Heimach-Snipes, Assistant Treasurer

Emily Brewer, Executive Director 929-251-3277

emily@presbypeacefellowship.org

Art Hunt, Deputy Director art@presbypeacefellowship.org

Kathy Dean, Bookkeeper

Lora Burge, Colombia Accompaniment Coordinator

colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org

Sarah Prager, Web Content Manager

sarah@presbypeacefellowship.org

...BRIEFLY is funded entirely by gifts from our readers, members & friends. Send donations, address changes, and subscription needs to 17 Cricketown Road, Stony Pt NY 10980 Contact the editors at: Jan Orr-Harter PO Box 930, Aledo, TX 76008 JanOH4@aol.com 817-291-3952 & Marilyn White 2705 Edenwood Dr. Austin, TX 78745 marwhite@igc.org 512-450-2766

A Peacemaker's Calendar

Nov. 19 - 26: PPF Delegation to Standing Rock, ND will show solidarity with the water protectors who are being subjected to arrest and police abuse for peacefully protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. (emily@presbypeacefellowship.org)

Nov. 27 - Dec. 24: Advent. *The 2016 Advent Devotional: Proclaiming the Good News of God's Peace* focuses on the need for Christ's transformative hope amidst the themes of desolation and isolation found in immigrant detention and mass incarceration. (store.pcusa.org/2435816003)

Jan. 9 - 20, 2017: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and Environmental Ministries Travel Study Seminar to Guatemala and Costa Rica. (www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/)

Jan. 16: Martin Luther King Day is a time to practice, promote, and celebrate nonviolence.

April 21 - 24: Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Join us in Washington for "Confronting Chaos, Forging Community" to grapple with the intersectionality of racism, materialism, and militarism. (advocacydays.org)

April 24 - May 6: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Travel Study Seminar to Madagascar. (www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/)

April 27 - 29: PPF Spring Activist Council Gathering in Chicago. We'll learn from activists in the Alianza Community and Christian Peacemaker Teams and offer a witness on the intersection of overcoming racism and preventing gun violence. Everyone welcome! Registration will begin in January. (presbypeacefellowship.org)

Spring, 2017: Colombia Accompaniment Training. Stony Point, NY. Date TBA. (colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org)

Sept. 26-29: Presbyterians for Earth Care 2017 Conference. Menucha Retreat Center on the Columbia River, OR. (presbyearthcare.org)

Gene Lefebvre Receives Barstow Driver Award

By Emily Brewer, New York NY
Photos by Elizabeth Smith



PPF Volunteer Timothy Wotring helps serve 100 delicious dinners.

On October 9, a hundred peacemakers gathered at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona to celebrate Rev. Gene Lefebvre, who is the 2016 recipient of the *Anne Barstow and Tom Driver Award for Excellence in Nonviolent Direct Action in Retirement*. Many had come from out of town to participate in the School of the Americas Border Encuentro happening throughout the weekend, gathering at the wall to pray and sing and demand that the wall be torn down.



John Fife makes the award presentation.

Rev. John Fife, Moderator of the 204th General Assembly, said a few words about his friend and co-founder of No More Deaths / No Mas Muertes. In his remarks, John told a story about how Gene uses his age to his advantage as he walks migrant trails in the desert. For the times when he encounters the Border Patrol and is at risk of arrest for his humanitarian work, Gene carries a list of all the medications and medical attention he will

require should he be arrested. While some think that old age prohibits activism, Gene uses his age to his advantage.

It was made clear throughout the evening that Gene helped found an organization and a community that is truly multi-generational, sharing leadership, experiences, and relationships as they seek to provide humanitarian aid to migrants and challenge unjust policies and laws. Rick Ufford-Chase's keynote address also emphasized the importance of intergenerational relationships in these faith-based justice movements. If the Church is to survive into its next life, we must share power, access, wisdom, and resources



Gene LeFebvre is honored for his work with No More Deaths.

among people of diverse ages, backgrounds, experiences, and identities.

The evening was truly a celebration of the inspiring life and work of Gene and many others who have been a part of the movement for migrants' rights. We raised over \$8000 through this event, and a portion of what we raised was donated to No More Deaths / No Mas Muertes. We give thanks for Gene, for all who came to the dinner, for all who donated in Gene's honor, and for all of you who give your energy, time, and resources to work for peace in our world.

Visit nomoredeaths.org to learn how to support or volunteer with No More Deaths.

"This is My Church" A Reflection and Summary of the PPF Activist Council Fall Meeting

By Emily Brewer, New York NY

"This is my church," wrote one person at the end of the PPF Activist Council Fall Meeting at Stony Point Center where about 50 Peace-seekers gathered. Another person posted on Facebook: "These are my people, yes they are."

For decades, PPF has been church to many people. We realize that we have been through tremendous transitions over the past 18 months at the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship -- our staff and Executive Committee leadership has changed almost completely, we created the Activist Council to be the real 'hands and feet' of the organization, and we transitioned our office from a physical to a virtual one so that more of our resources are going to programming instead of overhead costs. That is A LOT for any organization. Yet I have been amazed at how PPF has embraced these changes, supporting each other through these transitions, and laughing and learning from our mistakes when we discover them. Being church together.

I shouldn't really be surprised. It's one of the things we do best. Rick Ufford-Chase has often described PPF as an organization that is "quick and light on its feet," and we have certainly embraced change and moved into this new era of our life with grace, humor, and flexibility. And at this Activist Council meeting we spent more time than ever meeting in working groups to figure out how best to live into the calling to be peacemakers in the world over the next year and beyond:

The Colombia Accompaniment working group formed a new Alumni Council that will help recruit for and support the program as we prepare to respond in whatever ways our partners need as Colombia enters a "post-Accords" time that will certainly bring new challenges and accompaniment needs.

The Climate Change & Conflict working group strategized with Fossil Free PCUSA moderator Abby Mohaupt about how our organizations can best work together to continue to

push for divestment and prophetic action for climate justice in the PC(USA).

The Middle East working group made plans for further education and learning through delegations (stay tuned for more information and dates coming soon!) and has plans to work more closely with the Israel/Palestine Mission Network to continue to advocate for peace and be in solidarity with Palestinians.

We have new energy and ideas for how to promote Gun Violence Prevention work in the



PPF Executive Director Emily Brewer
(photo by Elizabeth Smith)

United States by working with other denominational bodies and educating churches about gun violence and what they can do to prevent it in their own communities.

We also formed an Anti-Racism working group that will look at PPF as an organization to see how we are perpetuating White Supremacy through our policies and structures as well

as engage in the Black Lives Matter movement for racial justice in the United States.

The Development Committee met over meals and throughout the weekend to think about how to support the work of the PPF and ensure that we have the financial resources needed to do the work that we commit to.

We also had groups talking about the Peace Communities Initiative that has been going on now for several years, immigration, what it means to be a Peace Church, and other topics related to peace in our communities, country, world, and Church.

We talked, dreamed, planned, schemed, worshipped, and shared meals, discerning together the ways that we are being called in this moment to seek “the things that make for peace,” as the gospel-writer says. We gathered as people of all ages, from many places in the US and the world to be Church together.

We hope you'll join us. The PPF Activist Council is open to anyone who affirms the nonviolence of Jesus Christ, commits to being active in the life of PPF, and contributes financially in whatever amount feels generous. If you are not a member yet, you can sign up at presbypeacefellowship.org.

Let us work together to resist the war-like values that the Empire teaches us -- racism, violence, greed, and consumption -- and to embody the values that the Gospel teaches us -- mutuality, actively working for peace, equality, and wholeness and justice for all creatures. Let us recognize on this day the things that make for peace, roll up our sleeves, and get to work.

PPF Welcomes New Staff

Rev. Lora Burge has joined the PPF staff as the part-time Colombia Accompaniment Program (CAP) Coordinator. Lora is a graduate of McCormick and lives in Chicago. She was an accompanier for several months, is fluent in Spanish, and has served on the CAP volunteer team as the contact person with the Colombian Presbyterian Church. As we welcome Lora, we thank outgoing coordinator Linda Eastwood for all of the hours, energy, and wisdom she has poured into this work. Linda will continue as a CAP volunteer.

As we bid thanks and farewell to Co-Director Fritz Gutwein for his work with PPF, Activist Council member Art Hunt has stepped forward to serve for one year as unpaid Deputy Director, covering some of the work that Fritz did. Godspeed, Fritz! Thank you, Art!

Welcome to the world, our newest little PPFer, Eleanor Hermione Prager. Congratulations to moms Sarah and Liz.

A Response to the "No" Vote in Colombia

From the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

With our sisters and brothers in Colombia, we lament and grieve that during the plebiscite vote on October 2, 2016 in Colombia, by a slim majority of just 50,000 votes, the country has voted “No” in its referendum on the peace process with the FARC. This was a peace process that was negotiated over the last four years in Havana, Cuba.

We affirm our full and complete commitment to our partners in the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia and to the Gospel of nonviolence, hope and reconciliation as found in the life and death of our Savior Jesus Christ. We intend to continue with the practice of accompaniment, walking side-by-side with communities and leaders who are seeking new ways forward in Colombia. We intend to continue to press our own government for funding for Colombian that supports the peace process. We will continue to press against our own government to oppose any and all military funding for Colombia. We renounce violence in all its forms.

Our partners in the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia wrote a letter to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in which they lamented the “no” vote, affirmed their trust in our partnership and re-committed themselves to the work that is before us in both Colombia and the United States which is deep soul-work, renewing and reforming our spirits to conform to that of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace:

“For this reason, today more than ever, we invite you to continue accompanying us with your prayers and with your actions and may you know that from this corner of the world, the Church continues to stand firm, guided by the light of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. From our communities, our schools and university, from our social ministries, we will continue to work to build a better country.”

We are mustard-seed people. And so we live in hope. God calls us to peace, justice and reconciliation. There is much work to do to change and reform our hearts, minds, and souls individually and collectively away from violence and towards discipleship in Jesus Christ which is nonviolence. This is the work we pledge to be about: walking hand-in-hand, side-by-side with our sisters and brothers in Colombia who are our family.

As we continue the ministry of accompaniment we still have spots open for our next training. Please email colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org to receive more information and to register.

Blessed are the peacemakers...

...Briefly recently asked members of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Activist Council, "Have you been doing anything interesting lately?"

Melinda Thompson (DE): "Emily Brewer, Christine Caton, Timothy Wotring, Don Mead, Dylan Rook and I attended the annual Israel/Palestine Mission Network meeting, which was a celebration of 10 years of existence for IPMN. Fahed Abu Akel, Hunter Farrell, Victor Makari, and Phillip Woods were with us at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. I'm also helping PPF plan a joint trip to Israel-Palestine next summer with American Muslims for Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace. Dates will be announced soon!"



Dylan, Christine, and Emily at IPMN meeting

Peggy Howland (FL): "Being in the 'battleground state' of Florida, I've spent some time making phone calls for the Hillary for America campaign, attended rallies with Tim Kaine and President Obama, and have been working with a small group of residents in my retirement community to research all of the local candidates and ballot questions for early voting. In Florida, we're trying to get the word out that the proposed Amendment One, while disguised as environmentally friendly, is actually helping corporations to keep the citizens from all of their benefits from solar heating."

Bruce Gillette (DE): "Carolyn's hymns are getting lots of visibility these days with the NPR feature story on her hymn writing and Presbyterian Outlook promoting her new Advent hymns. I just wrote an long article on resources for preaching on gun violence for the *Journal for Preachers*. Jim Atwood gave me some helpful tips for it."



Kathryn McLean (FL): "I've spend the last few years doing my doctoral research through McCormick Theological Seminary's 'Building Beloved Community' tract. The title of my thesis is 'Steps Toward the Other - The Labyrinth's Role in Building Beloved Community'. My proposal was accepted to present the results of my study in a workshop at The Labyrinth Society's Annual Gathering in Houston Nov 10-12, and my hope is that the World Peace Labyrinth that I helped create will continue to be used for peacemaking work, restorative justice, and alternative dispute resolution. It is a 24' canvas labyrinth with 7 small focal points within the labyrinth design that represent the 7 continents -- the original design was commissioned by the Chaplain's Interfaith office at the Salt Lake City Olympics for the olympic athletes and the para-olympic athletes and visitors to use -- and it included symbols of peace from different cultures of the world."

Barb Smith (MI): "More Light Presbyterians (MLP) is presenting a three part online teach-in on racism and racial justice. Part 1 was presented by Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training, which our Dismantling Racism working group will be recommending to all of PPF. The MLP teach-ins are free, available in the comfort of your own home, no need to travel. Sign up at www.mlp.org."

Elizabeth Welliver (NC): "I am serving for one year in the Chaplain's Office at Davidson College to support students of minority faith traditions and build relationships around religious diversity across the institution."

Barbara Clawson (NC): "I recently attended the PC(USA) conference at Montreat, 'God's Seeking Grace Amidst the Disgrace of Racism.' Challenging, heartbreaking, hopeful—excellent conference. I've also read and recommend 'Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism' by Drew Hart. In addition to addressing numerous issues related to racism, he 'offers concrete practices for churches that seek solidarity with the oppressed and are committed to racial justice.'"

Phin Washer (TX): "Over the last several weeks I have taken the lead in our congregation (Northwoods, Houston) organizing a six week series to begin early in 2016 on 'Understanding the Muslim Faith from (mostly) the Inside.' We have a line up that includes an activist housewife, a prison chaplain, and Andy Deadman (a non-Muslim), associate dean of Fuller Seminary, TX. New Covenant Presbytery awarded the congregation a grant that is fully covering expenses."



Lois Baker (WI): "I would like to see some thought [and a great deal of prayer and commitment] given to ways we need to act to heal the great dissension and disunity in our nation."

Parrish Jones (FL): "Since returning from the SOAW Border Convergence, I've been recovering from Hurricane Matthew. In the midst of the mess the neighbors have banded together. One rented about 8 U-Haul pods to provide for free to the neighbors despite her own house being genuinely trashed."

Rick Ufford-Chase (NY): "I felt called to go to Standing Rock to be there for the clergy and church leader witness on Nov. 2. It's just a few days and such a tiny, personal step to take responsibility for the ways Christians paved the way - led the way - in this colonization project."

Timothy Wotring (NY): "The School of the Americas Protest has become my activist family reunion. For the last five years, I've marched with many of the same people from organizations I trust and love. This year we converged on the Mexico/US border in Nogales. This choice, in my opinion, was politically necessary. With the fascist rhetoric of anti-immigration, mostly about those from the global South, it seems only appropriate at this time to show our solidarity. And it's true, overall, I don't know much about the border, so when a Colombian activist said, 'You can tell me about the politics of Latin America, but you don't know what's happening on your own border,' it struck me. One weekend in Arizona is not going to give me the full story about the militarization at the border or the use of drones or the great work of solidarity by churches to those crossing the desert. I have much more to read, experience, and stories to listen to. Throughout the weekend, as usual, much creativity was on display: from the puppetistas to the Peace Poets to the noisy demonstration outside the ICE Detention Center. I decided then I didn't want to only write a reflection, but a song. You can watch me sing it on YouTube (just put 'Timothy Wotring' in the search bar)."



Border Convergence (photo by Gary Cozette)

Marilyn White (TX): "I've been reading 'Faithful Resistance: Gospel Visions For the Church in a Time of Empire,' by Rick Ufford-Chase on my Kindle. It fills me with hope that the church of the future will be courageous, activist, creative, and anti-empire. (Available in paper and e-reader from Amazon.) I've also been putting together the Fall issue of Briefly with support from Jan Orr-Harter, Emily Brewer, and all of our wonderful contributors. I hope you're as inspired by the people and work of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship as I am."



Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
17 Cricketown Road
Stony Point, NY 10980

www.presbypeacefellowship.org
@presbypeace

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

FALL 2016

Inside: Convergence on the Border
Join the Activist Council! - p. 5

PPF Joins Call to End the War in Syria

On September 21, the International Day of Peace, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship participated in the Global Day of Action and Prayer in New York City. At the New York press conference on the day of action, 28 co-sponsoring organizations presented an interfaith "Call for an End to the War in Syria." The call stated "It is long past time for war and violence to stop and to advance the hard work of finding a new way forward, toward a future where all Syrians can live together in peace and justice. We must use a just peace approach: scaling-up trauma healing, restorative justice, unarmed civilian protection, and transformative dialogue with all stakeholders involved in the conflict to build a sustainable just peace." Over 100 people participated, including about 25 PPF Activist Council Members, and we hope that you, too, will continue to remember the people of Syria. For resources on "the things that make for peace," please visit http://www.globalministries.org/global_day_of_action_and_prayer_for_syria.



**GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION
AND PRAYER FOR SYRIA**