

Be Bold: Nonviolence Works

Volume 73 Spring 2017

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Photo, Eric Ledermann

PPF Activist Council Gathers in Chicago for Direct Action Training

On April 27-29, over 70 members of the PPF Activist Council gathered in Chicago for training on how to apply nonviolent direct action to three areas of PPF focus: Climate Change, Colombia and Preventing Gun Violence. Provided brilliantly by Sarah Thompson and Sarah Sommers of Christian Peacemaker Teams, the training covered "Undoing Oppression," with a group process on sexism; "How to be an Ally;" and "How to Organize a Campaign," with the Montgomery, AL bus boycott as a case study. The keynote address was offered by Jim Atwood, author of *Gundamentalism & Where it is Taking America*. Worship was coordinated by Jessie Light and Matt Black, with song, art and spirited reflection.

Three small groups convened to plan for next steps in PPF action. The Climate Change group, led by Abby Mohaupt, designed three campaigns to support action for fossil fuel divestment at the 2018 Presbyterian General Assembly: a presence on June 12-13 at the Mission Responsibility through Investment meeting in Grand Rapids and other possible direct actions; a campaign for a statistically significant number of concurring overtures calling for divestment in 2018; a campaign to enhance the quality of discussion at GA on fossil fuels by encouraging more overtures and more perspectives on the relation between fossil fuels, climate change and peacemaking.

The Colombia team, led by Lora Burge and Linda Eastwood, reflected on the urgent need for accompaniment for Presbyterian Church leaders in Colombia as they now help mediate peace talks with remaining rebel groups. This PPF team will utilize social media and create an Accompaniers Alumni Association to build support for the Accompaniment Program and to seek individuals to serve as accompaniers in the months ahead.

Meeting in the city with the highest level of gun violence in America, the Gun Violence Prevention group received the first copies of the new PPF Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit. Chair Margery Rossi reviewed how the new Toolkit can support local education and action, including a sample sign for "No Guns in God's House" for church buildings. A panel of five from the First United Church of Oak Park in Chicago came to share their efforts to raise awareness, provide education and promote action to reduce gun violence. See Toolkit, p. 3.

At the end of the AC gathering, a delegation participated in the Chicago Climate Change March, part of a national day of witness. Now 110 members strong, the next AC gathering will be in Sept. 28-30 in Stony Point, NY. See Calendar, p. 2.

Announcing...

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship 2017 Recipient of the

Anne Barstow & Tom Driver Award for Excellence in Nonviolent Direct Action in Retirement

Melinda Thompson,
Bridgeville, Delaware

This 4th Annual Award will be presented
to Melinda Thompson in Washington DC
in October 2017 to honor her visionary leadership
on behalf of peace in Israel-Palestine
and other work for nonviolence in her retirement.

Please Plan to Join Us!
Tentative Dates Oct. 20-21.

Join the PPF Activist Council!

The ABCs of the Activist Council are: **A**ffirm the nonviolence of Jesus, **B**e active in PPF, **C**ontribute each year as generously as you are able.

Sign up at presbypeacefellowship.org/ac



Pairs of AC members viewed YouTube TedxTalk, Erica Chenoweth, *The Success of Nonviolent Civil Resistance*

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A Peacemaker's Calendar

May 29- June 4 The Migrant Trail, a walk from Sasabe, Sonora to Tucson, AZ. To attend gatherings on first and last days, see facebook.com/groups/92300350558/

June 2 – Wear Orange for National Gun Violence Awareness Day. Find local events at www.everytown.org
June 12 is the anniversary of Orlando's Pulse Massacre

June 12-13 PC(USA) Mission Responsibility Through Investments meets in Grand Rapids, MI. To attend as a witness to call on the PCUSA to divest from fossil fuels, contact Fossil Free PCUSA's Moderator Abby Mohaupt forcreation@fossilfreepcusa.org

Jul. 22-Aug. 4 Interfaith Network for Justice in Palestine Delegation to Israel and Palestine – Sponsored by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, American Muslims for Palestine (MP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)

Aug. 7-18 Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Travel Seminar to Guatemala and Costa Rica. Focus on peace-making, climate change and faith in Central America. presbymission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/

Fall 2017 PPF Colombia Accompaniment Training, colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org

Sept. 26-29 Blessing the Waters of Life - Presbyterians for Earth Care 2017 Conference. Menucha Retreat Center on the Columbia River, OR. presbyearthcare.org

Sept. 3-Oct. 1 PC(USA)Peace& Global Witness Offering

Sept. 28-30 PPF Activist Council Gathering, Stony Point, NY. Meet with PPF activists from across the USA to plan for 2018 and beyond. Stay tuned for details!

October 20 or 21 TBA Barstow Driver Award Banquet to Honor Melinda Thompson in the Washington DC area.

Nov. 10-12 School of the Americas Annual Vigil, now at the US-Mexico border. soaw.org See p.3

Nov. 16-18 - Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Travel Study Seminar to Madagascar will focus on creation care and reconciliation. presbymission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/

Dec. 14 – Fifth anniversary of the Newtown, CT school shootings. What will your community do as a witness?

June 16-23, 2018 223rd Presbyterian General Assembly, St. Louis. Deadlines for Overtures with Constitutional Changes: Feb. 16, 2018; Overtures with Financial/Future Budget Implications: April 17, 2018; all other overtures: May 2, 2018. All overtures require at least one other presbytery concurrence. See pcusa.org and search for "How to Submit an Overture." Be sure to coordinate with PPF on your plans. Come to GA to volunteer for PPF!

Gun Violence Prevention New PPF Toolkit



The PPF Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) Working Group has updated and expanded the PPF GVP Congregational Toolkit. Educational, pastoral and action tools are included, as well as a 50 state listing of local gun violence prevention groups. The back cover provides a sample for the "No Guns in God's

House" signage called for by the 2014 General Assembly of the PC(USA). Currently 70 pages, the toolkit is designed to grow as new GVP action emerges. A limited run of print copies can be ordered from JanOH4@aol.com or call 817-291-3952 The pdf is now available free to download and print at presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/resources

PPF Co-Sponsors Summer 2017 Israel-Palestine Delegation

PPF is joining with Jewish Voice for Peace and American Muslims for Palestine to send a 30 person interfaith delegation to Israel-Palestine this July 22-Aug. 4. The goal is to learn about reality in the region now and prospects for ending the occupation. Follow news from the group at presbypeacefellowship.org/interfaithip

To have a returning delegation member speak at your church, campus or presbytery, contact Emily Brewer at emily@presbypeacefellowship.org

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

Seven Christian Leaders Arrested in Protest Action



PPF members Christine Caton, MaryAnn Harwell, Art and Mary Hunt and others attended the April 2017 Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington DC to dialogue with elected officials and their staff

about the immorality of the federal budget, which places the pursuit of war far above the pursuit of justice and human community. Presbyterian Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson gave a keynote sermon and participants fanned out across congressional offices. As EAD ended, seven Christian leaders were arrested, kneeling for prayer in the lobby of the Hart Senate Office Building. They were: Patrick Carolan, Traci Blackmon, Bob Cooke, Doug Grace, Elizabeth King, Eli McCarthy and Scott Wright.

International Peacemakers Sept. 22-Oct. 16 Features PPFer Doug Baker

Every year the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program coordinates a US speaking/preaching tour of Presbyterian peacemakers serving around the world. This year's tour includes long-time Presbyterian Peace Fellowship member Doug Baker, *below right*, who has promoted peace and facilitated the work of nonviolence and reconciliation in Northern Ireland for 37 years on behalf of the PC(USA).

July 1 is the deadline to apply for an International Peacemaker to visit

your community. Presbyterian peacemakers from 16 nations will be touring the US, including Presbyterians from Vietnam, Venezuela, Palestine and South Sudan. www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/international-peacemakers/



School of the Americas Witness at the Border Nov. 10-12

This November 10-12, join SOA Watch in Nogales (both sides of the border south of Tucson) for the second bi-national convergence at the militarized U.S./Mexico border, to build the grassroots power necessary to challenge the racist status quo and push back against U.S. intervention in Latin America. As we call attention to the militarization of the border and Latin America, we also call for an end to state-sponsored terrorism and violence against our communities inside the United States. Similarly, the mobilization at the border in Nogales is one more way to fight for the closure of the School of the Americas/WHINSEC and put an end to U.S. intervention in Latin America. Visit soaw.org for information. If you would like to join other PPFers who will be participating, contact Marilyn White at marwhite@igc.org

Are You Called to Colombia?

PPF needs new volunteers to go in teams to Colombia for service of one month or more. The Presbyterian Church of Colombia needs our eyes, ears and presence as they do the difficult work of finalizing and bringing to life a peace process to heal their nation. Be part of history! Spanish is helpful, but not required. Contact Lora Burge at colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org

Are You a PeaceLeader?

PeaceLeaders sustain our work all year with recurring gifts of any amount, monthly or quarterly. Why? New technology makes your PeaceLeader gift go further by cutting administrative costs. For a tech-savvy and stewardship-savvy group like PPF, this can transform our work together. Please join PPF's growing family of PeaceLeaders at presbypeacefellowship.org/leader

PEACE CHURCH! First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, CA

When the Presbyterian General Assembly called for a period of discernment about becoming a Peace Church, First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, CA took it seriously. They not only participated in the denominational discernment process from 2010 to 2016, but went further to involve their whole congregation in discerning whether their congregation should declare itself a Peace Church, beyond what the PC(USA) might do.

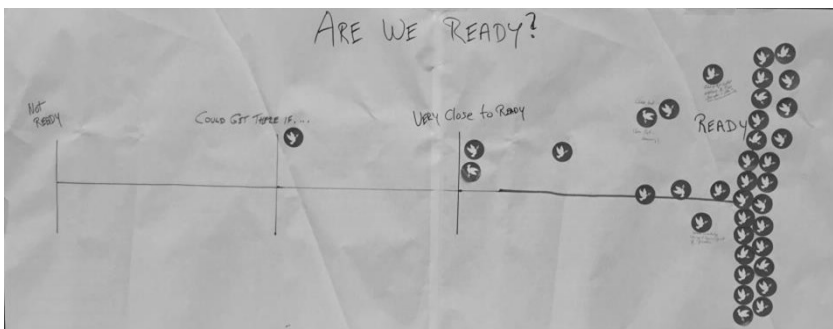
Traditional Peace Churches, like the Quakers, the Church of the Brethren and others, renounce violence and war as contrary to God's plan for humanity and to the witness of Jesus. After the six-year Presbyterian discernment process, in 2016 the General Assembly resolved 5 affirmations that place the witness of Presbyterians in the community of peace churches with an emphasis on proactive nonviolence as a way to lessen the resort to violence and war.

But for First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, the GA action was just a beginning. Among the reasons was the commitment of this church to its youth.



The church offers an Inventory of Conscience Workshop in its youth confirmation process, helping youth reflect on faith values in relation to violence and war. "As youth go through confirmation, we don't take a position on violence and war," says Peacemaking Advocate and congregational participant Geoff Browning. "We help them determine for themselves what their conscience is telling them." Quite a few young people from the church have declared themselves Conscientious Objectors to war and have compiled the required files to have on record at the church office and at the PC(USA) Office of the Stated Clerk. In the event of a draft, CO status is automatically approved for youth in traditional Peace Churches. Not so for Presbyterians. "We felt that, by declaring ourselves a Peace Church, we would be better able to support our young people in the same way that other Peace Churches do," said Browning.

The key to the Peace Church process was involving the congregation in many discussions. The Social Justice Committee distilled the statement from eight pages to one, including language that met most of the concerns of those who disagreed, but still retained the Peace Church meaning. They used a variety of methods to inform and solicit feedback from the congregation including adult study, small groups, an after-worship panel that featured pro and con speakers, as well as youth. They also met one-on-one with members who had questions and concerns. Browning reports that one member said, "This is the best conversation we have had in this church for a long time."



Finally, a chart was posted for congregants to place a mark on a spectrum: Are we ready to take this proposal to the Session? So the final step, not the first step, was unanimous action by the Session in Dec. 2016 to declare First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto to be a Peace Church. The church is now working to flesh out and publicize its new Peace Church status. Other congregations in the area have taken note and started their own conversations. For more information on the Palo Alto experience, contact

Geoff Browning, Peacemaking Advocate for San Jose Presbytery, at geoff.browning@stanford.edu
See the Peace Church Resolution at prespa.org/our-commitment-to-being-a-peace-church/

PPF PEACESEEKING CHURCHES

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship embraces the radical nonviolence of Jesus Christ and is energized by the peace seeking work of congregations like First Presbyterian Palo Alto. PPF's "Peace Seeking Churches" program is a network of congregations who use worship, study and reflection as the basis for actions - consistent with the comfort level of their group - addressing local, national and international peacemaking issues. For more information on PPF or Peace Seeking Churches, please email Art Hunt at art@presbypeacefellowship.org or call 203-288-3530.

Have an IRA? Are You Over 70½?

Did you know that Required Minimum Distributions can be taken for charitable gifts at any time during the year? *Why wait till Christmas?* ...Plus, you can set up recurring PeaceLeader gifts directly from an IRA to support PPF all year long. See presbypeacefellowship.org/IRA Thank You!