



... BRIEFLY

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Vol. 70 Fall 2014

www.presbypeacefellowship.org ppfwitness@presbypeacefellowship.org
Trusting the Nonviolence of Jesus Christ Today

Anne Barstow and Tom Driver Honored at Un-Gala

By Peggy Howland, Orlando FL

“The vanquished know war”, began Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and war correspondent turned Presbyterian minister Chris Hedges in an hour long major address to friends and admirers of the peacemaking activities of Anne Barstow and Tom Driver. Seventy-two peace activists gathered at Stony Point Center on October 18th for the First Un-Gala of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, where the inaugural Anne Barstow and Tom Driver Award for Excellence in Nonviolent Activism in Retirement was presented to the couple for whom it is named.

The celebrators came from far and near, from Wisconsin, Florida, Kansas, Alabama, Illinois, Arkansas, several from Maryland and Virginia in the DC area, as well as Colombia in South America. They included PPF members, family and friends, former Colombia accompaniers and Colombia delegation members, and former students of the two professors.

Two representatives came from the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia, presenting Anne and Tom with a framed Certificate of Appreciation in Spanish and English for all that they have done for the people of Colombia and the peacemaking work of the IPC. Germán Zárate, Director of the Office of Diaconia (Mission and Service) of the IPC, presented the certificate with the love and gratitude of the church with whom the PPF and the PC(USA) have been in accompanying partnership for ten years. Yasmin Mosquera, from the Urabá Presbytery, gave a beautiful blessing in Spanish at the end of the evening, translated by PPF Executive Director Rick Ufford-Chase. Alice Winters, our long-time Presbyterian mission co-worker in Colombia, now retired in Florida and unable to travel for health reasons, sent her love and best wishes to Tom and Anne. Alice was the catalyst for bringing PPF into partnership with the IPC, when Anne Barstow stepped out of retirement to organize and form the Colombia



Rick Ufford-Chase presents award to Tom Driver and Anne Barstow at Stony Point Un-Gala

Accompaniment Program with Milton Mejia, then General Secretary of the IPC.

Shannan Vance-Ocampo, PPF National Committee member and chair of the Colombia Programs, organized the Un-Gala and along with Rick Ufford-Chase presented the award to Tom and Anne. They each responded with their own stories of how their peacemaking actions developed and grew with Witness for Peace in Nicaragua and Haiti and with the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship in Colombia and at the vigils held at the School of the Americas, and much more.

The powerful and stirring address on “The Culture of War” by Chris Hedges is available on our website, presbypeacefellowship.org and on our Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Facebook page. Contributions to PPF in honor of Anne and Tom will continue to be received through the end of the year.

...BRIEFLY is the newsletter of the

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

17 Cricketown Road Stony Point, NY 10980

presbypeacefellowship.org 845-786-6743

ppfwitness@presbypeacefellowship.org

Roger Powers and Elizabeth Shannon, Co-Moderators

Len Bjorkman, Moderator Emeritus

Judy Lee, Secretary Will White, Treasurer

Peggy Howland, Asst. Treasurer Carrie Dixon, Bookkeeper

Shannan Vance-Ocampo, Colombia Program Director

MaryAnn Harwell, Office Administrator

maryann@presbypeacefellowship.org

Sarah Prager, Web Content Manager

sarah@presbypeacefellowship.org

Rick Ufford-Chase, Executive Director

Rickuffordchase@gmail.com

Fritz Gutwein, Associate Director 202-681-3437

fritzg@presbypeacefellowship.org

...BRIEFLY is funded entirely by gifts from our readers, members & friends. Send donations, address change/ subscription needs to MaryAnn Harwell at our Stony Point office. Write to the editors at: Jan Orr-Harter PO Box 930, Aledo, TX 76008 JanOH4@aol.com 817-291-3952 and Marilyn White 2705 Edenwood Dr Austin, TX 78745 marwhite@igc.org 512-450-2766.

A Peacemaker's Calendar

November 21 - 23, 2014 – Vigil to Close the SOA

Join the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship at the annual vigil in Columbus, Georgia to close the School of Americas (SOA). Thousands of activists will converge at the gates of Fort Benning once again to remember the martyrs and to denounce the continued SOA violence against our brothers and sisters in Latin America. PPF will host a workshop on immigration on Saturday night at the Columbus Convention Center and participate in the Saturday vigil and the Sunday procession at the gate. Contact Marilyn White at marwhite@igc.org for more information.

December 10, 2014 – Human Rights Day

January 23 – February 1, 2015 – Voices from the Border and Beyond: PC(USA) Travel Study Seminar to US/Mexico Border & Central America

Presbyterian World Mission, together with our partners on the US/Mexico border and in Central America, is offering a Travel Study Seminar for

Presbyterians who want to understand the context and respond to the needs of the thousands of Central American children who are crossing the border. The trip will include visits with a Presbyterian Border Region Outreach (PBRO) ministry site as well as visits with ecumenical partners in Guatemala and El Salvador. For more information email Marisa Bustamante, program assistant for Latin America and the Caribbean, at marisa.bustamante@pcusa.org or call her at 502-569-5103.

January 24 - February 2, 2015 – Colombia Delegation

Leaders from the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, the PC(USA), and the Presbyterian Church of Colombia (IPC) will meet in Colombia to engage in reflection around our first ten years together and discern together where God is leading us into the future. The delegation will visit churches and projects in three different regions of Colombia. For more information, contact Shannan Vance-Ocampo, svanceocampo@gmail.com.

April 17 - 20, 2015 – Ecumenical Advocacy Days

The theme is Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation. Join over 1,000 Christian advocates in Washington, D.C. in building a movement to shake the foundations of systems of human exploitation (Acts 16:16-40), including a prison-industrial system that incarcerates millions of people in the U.S. and abroad. A world that incarcerates so many and allows some to profit from the exploitation of slave, trafficked and forced labor remains far from the "beloved community" which we are all called to seek.

As people of Hope, we are reminded that Jesus' radical message was one of liberation for all and restoration of right relationships. Through prayer, worship, advocacy training, networking and mobilization with other Christians, we will face the reality of mass incarceration and corporate exploitation, and call for national policies that bring liberation both to the prisoner and to a world in need of restoration - all culminating with END's Congressional Lobby Day on Capitol Hill.

Go to AdvocacyDays.org for more information, downloadable brochures and bulletin inserts, hotel information and to Register NOW!

June 4 - 7, 2015 – 2015 Convocation of Peacemakers, sponsored by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship at Stony Point Center in New York. Keynote speaker Paul K. Chappell will lead us in considering "The Art of Waging Peace." For more information, visit www.presbypeacefellowship.org.

PPF Endowment Campaign Update: 70 by 70 Wills Campaign

So far PPF has received 45 personal covenants to remember PPF in will or planned gift of some type. Our goal is reach 70 covenants by 12/31/14, in celebration of PPF's 70th year. Are you called to help the work of peacemaking go forward? See the enclosed form to make a personal covenant. Often we print personal testimonies. Let us know if you would like to share your Message to the Peacemakers of the Future.

Message to the Peacemakers of the Future by Jan Orr-Harter, Aledo TX

Where there's a will there's a way. The trouble for us was getting the darn will signed and done. Yack. Tom and I started this process when we were new parents. We went to a lawyer. But we never actually signed the will.

We could never decide who would "inherit" our child. Our family was spread all over the US and it was not clear what to do. Year after year went by... *We've got to do the will. We've got to decide.* It hung over us on a permanent to-do list. It was worse than taxes. Finally we procrastinated long enough that the first child was old enough to inherit the second child. Problem solved.

The will got signed and my husband and I included gifts to the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Endowment because we want to help PPF's work go into the future. In the event that something should happen to all four of us, our entire estate will go to the Peace Fellowship—and it will be a heck of a yard sale!

Tom Harter and I both grew up as Baby Boomers with fathers just returned from war. My first ambition in life was to be an army general. It did not occur to me that girls weren't generals then, but it did occur to me to fill my fort out on the Texas prairie with lots of band aids. I would steal band aids from the medicine cabinet because I knew that generals needed lots of band aids. At age 11, I won a debate on why the US should be in Viet Nam, mostly parroting my father's views from the dinner table. My favorite song was "Over hill, over dale, as we hit the dusty trail and those caissons go rolling along..."

But that all changed for our family when we joined St. Francis Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth. As a faith community in the 1960s and early 70s, we came to see that war was not God's way for the world. And from that fundamental faith change came our ministry of peacemaking with the West-Park Presbyterian Church and the Jan Has Presbyterian Church in New York City: the US-Soviet Nuclear Freeze Campaign; human rights and sanctuary work for El Salvador, Nicaragua and Haiti; South Africa Divestment; opposition to wars and violence; commitment to the victims of the cost of violence.

Through all of this, the constant has been the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. PPF calls forth and cheers on a national community of activists and congregations. It works to transform an entire denomination toward peacemaking and toward supporting those who stand up for conscience. Thank you, PPF, for the friendship, support and accountability that we all share together. It keeps our family part of the work for peace, decade after decade. Thank you, PPF.

Perhaps because I evolved from army general to nonviolence, my message to the peacemakers of the future is complicated:

For me, part of faith is the belief that most people are created with an inclination toward nonviolence. I think that some people are violent by nature. But all over the world, most people go about solving difficult daily problems without ever even considering a resort to violence. If people are mostly created in the nonviolent image of God, then why are we who call ourselves the peace movement not more successful in preventing war and reducing violence in the world?

From my teenage years, our family was influenced by the Church of the Savior in Washington DC. Their late pastor, Gordon Cosby, wrote about the need to reflect on our motivation as peacemakers. He said that no motivation is entirely pure. For instance, many of us as peacemakers have an innate distrust of authority and this drives our peacemaking work. Others of us have extremely high control needs and this impacts our work. Some of us are naturally passive. While these drives can be perfect in some situations, they won't be helpful in all situations.

Cosby taught that it's important to strive to make at least 51% of our motivation to connect with the nonviolence presence of God that already exists in most people—that is, in peacemaking we strive to reach out to God in others. My experience has been that we are more successful in peacemaking when we use strategies that build consensus, that can include lots of people, not just ourselves – people across party and other social realms, veterans and military families, people who are not all pacifists. To me, this calls for practical peacemaking steps that will move beyond our own personality motivations and that will actually reach and help more people move toward more change so that the world becomes less violent. While our vision is always large, interim achievable steps can be enormously faithful. That's my take!

God bless you, peacemakers of the future. And if PPF ever uses its endowment to become a boring, safe bureaucracy instead of the front lines of peacemaking service, I promise to come back and haunt you—and bring an army!

Think Globally, Act Locally: San Antonio, Texas

Presbyterian peacemakers in the San Antonio area are busy with refugee response, community advocacy, peacemaking education, and more.



San Antonio Presbyterians joined with other partners in a prayer vigil for women and children in detention in Karens City on October 20.

Churches Denounce Refugee Detention and Create Bond Fund

By Kelly Allen, San Antonio TX

A diverse group of congregational leaders held a press conference on Thursday, October 23, 2014 in front of Immigration Courts in San Antonio to denounce the federal government's policy of labeling young refugee women and children as "threats to national security" and to announce the creation of a Bond Fund to help release families from detention.

The federal government is detaining women and children fleeing violence in Central America in places such as Karens City and requiring inordinately high bonds to release them until their court date. Religious leaders object to this treatment, referring to an San Antonio Express-News story, dated October 11, 2014, which reported that "Smugglers charge migrants thousands of dollars for passage, regularly holding clientele ransom to bleed their families dry."

"We're holding young women and their children hostage until their families come up with thousands of dollars for bond," said Rev. Paul Ziese, pastor of MacArthur Park Lutheran Church; "this is eerily similar to what smugglers do to refugees on their way here—we can't tolerate our government doing it too!"

Local congregations are doing something about it. Members of University Presbyterian Church have met with refugee women and children and heard their stories. Our

leadership is outraged that they are locked up for months. Our contribution of \$50,000 to the Bond Fund will help release moms and their kids immediately. We shouldn't have to pay ransom to free refugees, but we must act now and we invite others to join us.

The Bond Fund is administered by RAICES (Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services) and contributions can be made at www.raicestexas.org.

Peacemaking in the City and the Congregation

By Phin Washer, Spring TX

On Oct. 20, 2014 a small delegation co-led by representatives of The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and San Antonians for Peace met with Ray Lopez, a member of the San Antonio city council. A plan was laid out that looks strongly like it will lead to a cooperative effort between the two peace groups and the San Antonio City Council to address violence in the city in a more positive and assertive way than has been the case. The first step in this effort will be to design a resolution to be passed by the council that will express the council's resolve to improve the response to violence in the city. The peace groups have been asked to submit a draft proposal of such a resolution. If all goes as planned, an item in the 2015-2016 San Antonio budget will include the support of new programs and projects designed to reduce violence in the Alamo City.

By the time you read this the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship will have completed a two year endeavor to design a short term course for adults on the constructive management of conflict. The developing course has been piloted in seven Presbyterian congregations in Central Texas (also known as the Hill Country). About two hundred participants have been involved. The course is now being shaped into "distributable" form and should be available through PPF some time in 2015. Phineas Washer and Marilyn White, on behalf of PPF, have served as the coordinator-administrators of this project with funds supplied, in part, by PPF and Mission Presbytery (San Antonio-Austin).

Tell Briefly... how you are "acting locally" in your own community so that we can feature your peacemaking activities in a future issue. Email marwhite@igc.org or JanOH4@aol.com.

Close the SOA!

By Marilyn White, Austin TX

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is once again preparing to participate in the SOA Watch vigil in Columbus, Georgia on November 21 - 23, 2014. As SOA Watch's 25th anniversary Vigil approaches, we remain committed to converging at the gates of Fort Benning yet again to remember the martyrs, and to denounce the continued SOA violence against our brothers and sisters in Latin America.

Thousands are expected for a rally at Fort Benning, music and street theater, an immigrant prison protest, nonviolent direct action, concerts, films, workshops and more. On Saturday night, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship will host a workshop on "Ministries of Welcome: Reports from the Texas Border and the New Sanctuary Movement." Kelly Allen, chair of the Mission Presbytery Immigration Task Force, will report on how churches in Texas are responding to the surge of children and families fleeing violence in Central America. PPF National Committee member Linda Eastwood, who worships with a New Sanctuary Movement congregation in Chicago, will present ways for congregations around the country to advocate for immigration reform and protection of refugees. On Saturday afternoon, visit the PPF information table at the gates of Fort Benning, and on Sunday morning, march with fellow Presbyterians behind the PPF banner in the solemn memorial procession that is the highlight of the weekend's activities. We will conclude the weekend with our PPF tradition of Communion at the Gate, led by the Rev. Christine Carton.

For more information about how you can join PPF in Columbus, Georgia this November, please email Marilyn White at marwhite@igc.org or call 512-450-2766. Check the SOA Watch website (soaw.org) for a complete list of events.

Columbus Police Attempt to Suppress SOA Watch Vigil

By Hendrik Voss, SOA Watch National Organizer

The Columbus police department received some national and international attention after Columbus police chief Ricky Boren announced unconstitutional restrictions on the annual November 21-23, 2014 Vigil to Close the School of the Americas (SOA, renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) at the main gates of Fort Benning, Georgia. According to the police, the annual gathering of thousands of should be limited to 200 people,

and the permit to set up a stage and sound system was denied.

Twelve Members of Congress intervened in the conflict. In a letter to the Columbus mayor and police chief, Representatives John Conyers, Jr. (MI), Jim McGovern (MA), John Lewis (GA), Hank Johnson (GA), Sam Farr (CA), Danny K. Davis (IL), Barbara Lee (CA), Michael Capuano (MA), Peter DeFazio (OR), Jan Schakowsky (IL), Maxine Waters (CA), and Luis Gutierrez (IL) asked the local authorities to lift the restrictions and to let the Vigil go forward unimpeded. The lawmakers wrote "While the demonstration may impede traffic and constitute an inconvenience to Ft. Benning, these types of disruptions are part and parcel of our country's proud tradition of vigorous free speech."

Thousands of activists and more than 75 national and international human rights and social justice organizations, including the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, signed petitions and wrote letters to Columbus authorities in support of SOA Watch's first amendment rights.

Writing on behalf of PPF, Associate Director Fritz Gutwein said, "The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship gives its support to SOAW. We intend to join them at the November vigil. As people of faith and followers of Jesus we are called to be peacemakers, to stand with the oppressed, and to follow our conscience."

Following this coordinated grassroots pressure campaign, and negotiations with the Columbus Police Department and their team of private and public attorneys, they backed down and ended their efforts to curtail our constitutional rights.

Thousands have gathered every November for the nonviolent demonstration since the first anniversary of the 1989 SOA graduate-led massacre of 16-year-old Celina Ramos, her mother Elba Ramos and six Jesuit priests at the University of Central America in El Salvador. SOA Watch calls for the closure of the institute, which exports the militarization of police, perpetuates coups, torture, extrajudicial killings, and human rights abuses in the face of social and political problems.



75 Years of Support for Conscientious Objectors

By Maria Santelli, CCW Executive Director

As we begin our 75th year of work in support of conscience, the Center on Conscience & War is busier than we have been in recent memory. Our caseload of conscientious objectors seeking discharge from the US military is higher than it has been in years. Thanks in no small part to the steadfast and generous support of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, we have been working steadily to increase our outreach efforts, making it possible for so many soldiers of conscience to find us and get the technical support they need to succeed in achieving discharge from the military.

While 2014 has been a wonderfully busy year for CCW, still, we know there are many more members of the military out there struggling with their "mission," not knowing where to turn. We have been hearing for months now that they are being briefed to expect deployment orders. When a soldier (or marine, or sailor, or airman) of conscience gets orders like these, they often feel that their options are limited: violate your orders or violate your conscience.

We understand the consequences of violating your orders, and they are finite, measurable, and manageable: maybe you'll be court martialed; serve some jail time; lose rank and pay; even get kicked out with a bad discharge. Not the greatest parting gifts, to be sure, but certainly all of these consequences are predictable, measurable, and manageable by most people.

The consequences of violating your conscience, on the other hand, are immeasurable and infinite, and we are only just beginning to understand the harm that is caused by transgressions against the conscience. We are happy to see community-based programs to help veterans heal from moral injury sprouting up all over the country. Yet, these programs do not replace the critical work we must continue to do to be sure that those still in the military, facing these questions of conscience, know they have a choice.

For three quarters of a century, the Center on Conscience & War's primary mission has been to defend the right to follow one's conscience, and to provide technical support and expertise along the way. These recent months have been hopeful for us, but they also have been challenging, as we witnessed the loss of a veteran friend and colleague to suicide; the escalation of violence once again in the Middle East in our name; and the struggles of those who reach out to us for help. These challenges won't slow us down. As we embark on our 75th revolution around the sun, we

do so with more commitment than ever. We look forward to sharing the journey with you.

To learn more about the CCW, visit centeronconscience.org.

A Faithful Response to Ferguson

By Fritz Gutwein, PPF Associate Director

While we struggle to find words to describe our grief over the death of Michael Brown and all related violence, we encourage you to check our website (presbypeacefellowship.org) for updates and resources, including a Democracy Now! interview with Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, a FOR organizer whose family lives in Ferguson.

J. Herbert Nelson, director of the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness, said "It isn't enough to feel outrage, but do nothing. Or to feel fear, but do nothing. Or to feel utter, bone-crushing grief, but do nothing... We must be willing to challenge the culture that tells African American boys that their lives are worth less than the lives of White boys. We live in a culture that attempts to justify itself by claiming 'self-defense' when we really mean fear and bigotry, or pride, or individualism. But all of this is sin. Our faith reminds us that God is all sovereign and that 'God calls us to love our neighbors, not protect ourselves against our neighbors.'"

Executive and Stated Clerk of the Synod of Mid-America, Landon Whitsitt issued a statement quoting the Belhar Confession: "I call on the members and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (USA), over 90% of whom are White, to stand with the people of Ferguson and 'witness against and strive against' systemic, institutionalize racial injustice. We must 'as the possession of God...stand where the Lord stands, namely against the injustice of the wronged.' Sisters and Brothers, we must stand arm in arm with the people of Ferguson. Black bodies matter and our white bodies will signify that the killing of black bodies is unacceptable. If you live in or around St Louis please come and walk with the protestors. Listen to their cries, and join them in the call for justice. If you live farther away, find the members of your own community who are standing against this injustice. Listen to their cries, and join them in their own call for justice."

One of our own National Committee members, Brian Merritt, joined Landon in Ferguson in September. Read Brian's reflection on this experience and a statement from PC(USA) leaders on our website.

Did You Hear What They Said?

About Divestment:

It does seem at times that the Jewish community wants to repress the Presbyterian voice. The problem appears to be not so much what they say but that they have the temerity to say anything at all. There is great condescension in that move. It implies that Presbyterians have approached discussion of the issues at hand mindlessly and are dismissive of Jewish concerns. It implies that Presbyterian understandings are inherently deficient if they do not accord with views of the Jewish community, or vocal portions of it. Clearly the PC(USA) cannot accept such a constraint. That they have done their homework is clear to any who care to look.

...Whitney Bodman, Associate Professor of Comparative Religion at Austin Theological Seminary, in the July 2014 issue of UNBOUND (justiceunbound.org)

About Ferguson:

There are many things I don't understand about race in America. Making a few days' trip to Ferguson doesn't give me special insight into their situation. There are many things I still need to be taught by those who suffer its brutal reality and my part in it. One thing I do know is that every person from Ferguson who thanked me profusely for being with them in their community's pain had given me so much more than I could ever receive. I am grateful for so many wonderful people who witness to the spirit that pervades this community and can shine a mirror into our shortcomings in giving dignity to our fellow humans.

...PPF National Committee member Brian Merritt, in the PPF Blog (presbypeacefellowship.org)

About Arming Syrian rebels:

This is a terrible idea.

For one thing, we have now six decades of interventionist policy experience upon which we can look back to give us a sense of how further intervention will wind up. Starting with the overthrow of the democratically-elected Iranian government in the early 1950s, the US has used its military and clandestine services to try and reshape the middle east to fit our interests. And it has been spectacularly unsuccessful, resulting in a worsening of the situation in each progressive decade. We are just now emerging from a 13-year debacle which demonstrated the uselessness of armed intervention, yet now the president seems committed to driving us back in to the abyss lest his party be booted from office and he lose the Senate. Not only have our ef-

orts to intervene in the middle east been unsuccessful either politically or militarily, what has happened in virtually every instance, is that the weapons and training provided to whomever will do our bidding at a given moment has ended up being used against us to kill our own people. Even during his own administration, the president has seen thousands of high-tech missiles given to Libyan opposition forces in their attempt to oust Col. Qaddafi vanish from sight and are now presumed by the CIA to be in the hands of persons of Islamic militants. From Libya to Afghanistan, weapons created by American defense contractors paid for by American taxpayers are being used to kill American men and women, having been given to unstable political and military allies in the mistaken hope that this time things would be different. How many times do we have to walk this road before somebody realizes that it's a dead-end?

...PPF National Committee member Tim Simpson, in the PPF Blog (presbypeacefellowship.org)

About 10 Years of Accompaniment:

In November 2004, our first team of two went to Barranquilla. We intended to stay for 3 months - it is now our tenth anniversary. Some volunteers have served twice, some three times, some even four. Now, when the death threats have stopped, we have a different assignment - a ministry to displaced persons, those millions of small farmers and their families, driven off their land, leaving behind most of what they owned, leaving behind the graves of loved ones killed in the violence. What can we do for them? We can listen to their stories, join their Bible study, hear the Sermon on the Mount with their ears. Odd as it may seem to us, just listening seems to heal. Then we return, to tell our congregations of the role the U.S. is playing in this huge land grab. We return to Washington to lobby against the growing U.S. military presence in Colombia, to protest the new Free Trade Agreement which is driving even more farmers into poverty. Now we have a bond between the IPC and the Peace Fellowship, two Presbyterian groups who both preach and practice peacemaking. We've been told that we developed a new model for Presbyterian mission work: we learn from you what it is to be church in these dangerous times, you learn from us that you are not alone.

...Anne Barstow, co-founder of the Accompaniment Program at the PPF Un-Gala where she was honored with the first Anne Barstow and Tom Driver Award for Excellence in Nonviolent Direct Action in Retirement.

A Challenge to Remember PPF's "Most Important" Witness

By Tom Driver

PPF is involved in a number of good and worthy projects – accompaniment in Colombia, a just peace in the Middle East, closing the SOA at Fort Benning, getting guns off the streets of America, and more. I want to suggest, however, that these important projects may be diverting PPF from its original and most important witness.

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship was launched in the 1940s to provide support to Conscientious Objectors to World War II. This was necessary because the Presbyterian Church itself was not, and is not, a peace church; and therefore conscientious objectors were more or less church orphans. They needed support. To use language that came in later for another cause, they needed a community that was open and affirming of the incompatibility between the call of Christ and the waging of war.

So here's my question: How open and affirming about that matter are we today? How much do we plan and strategize about how to implement Christian resistance to war when American bombs are falling, American drones are making targeted killings, and a so-called 'war on terror,' stretches out before us to the end of time? What is our calling as anti-war Christians today?

Christian opposition to war has been pushed into the corner by loud voices falsely claiming the mantle of 'realism.' The implication is that war is more real than peace. That claim is an ontological and theological betrayal of the Christian gospel – a surrender to the powers of this world with dreadful consequences.

On this matter, PPF needs to speak not timidly and occasionally but bravely and consistently.

...From Tom Driver's remarks at the PPF Un-Gala where he was honored with the first Anne Barstow and Tom Driver Award for Excellence in Nonviolent Direct Action in Retirement

... BRIEFLY

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

17 Cricketown Road

Stony Point, NY 10980

www.presbypeacefellowship.org



Fall 2014

Inside: First Un-Gala honors

Anne Barstow and Tom Driver (p.1)

What's in your will? (p.3)