

News and Notes from PIET

History and Purpose of the Organization. The Peacebuilding Institute of East Tennessee (PIET) is a project of the Institutes for Christian Spirituality (ICS), a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization established in 1988. PIET has a broad mandate to organize and educate for the practice of peacebuilding from an ecumenical and interfaith perspective. It began in 2000 as a local initiative to bring peacebuilders from around the world together with local peacebuilders for the purpose of establishing mutually supportive relationships and a worldwide perspective on the work of peace. Peacebuilding is one area of practice we believe to be integral to the teachings of Christ, and one that Christianity holds in common with a number of other religious traditions, notably Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Baha'i. At least one of these religious traditions is pervasive in each of the great world civilizations and, therefore, offers a broad base on which to build both a philosophical grounding for peacebuilding and peacebuilding practices. Each of the religions named above has representation on the ICS Board of Directors. We partner with Protestant, Catholic, and Anabaptist churches, with the religious centers and educational institutions of Islam and Baha'i, and with other non-profit organizations worldwide [such as Justipaz in Colombia and WIAM in Palestine] to initiate, implement, and sustain peacebuilding programs. We currently have connections with peacebuilders in approximately 90 nations.

REPORTS



PIET Fall Peacemaker's Workshop, in October, was a resounding success. It was facilitated by Michael and Lorri Hardin of Preaching Peace (www.preachingpeace.org), who addressed a variety of topics related to peacemaking from a biblical perspective. Their careful exegesis of the biblical text demonstrated that the God of both Jews and Christians is a God of peace and love, not a God of violence and vengeance. (The workshop scheduled for March 15, 2008, (se calendar below) will follow up on this understanding as it relates to the death of Jesus Christ.)

An additional session, facilitated by PIET, brought together Mennonite, Unitarian-Universalist, United Church of Christ, Hindu, Baha'i, and Muslim presenters to discuss the peace teachings of their respective faiths.

Participating churches included St. Thomas the Apostle Roman Catholic and Central United Methodist in Lenoir City; and in Knoxville Concord Mennonite, Peace Lutheran (ELCA), St. James Episcopal, St. Thomas Episcopal, Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal), and Church of the Savior (United Church of Christ).

Peace Group Coalition Launched

Peacebuilders representing nine peace groups met on October 10th to discuss ways to organize for more effective peacebuilding. As one of the problems we face is lack of communication between groups, it was decided to meet quarterly to share information with each other. It is understood that members of this ad hoc group need not be officially appointed by their respective groups, but are members of the coalition primarily to share information on what is going on. Leadership of the coalition meetings will rotate among the participants, with each meeting being the occasion for continuing dialog on strategies for effective peacebuilding, including possibilities for cooperative actions. January 5, 2008 will be the first regular quarterly meeting of the group. Reverend Kay Reynolds, rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, will host the group

LETTERS

An open letter to the people of America, in particular to Human Rights Organizations:

The latest invention of the Congress of America is a new plan to slice the land of Iraq and to slaughter more Iraqis in the name of democracy and freedom. This foggy thought brought by one of the Senators of the Democrats. This Congressional resolution created more resentments and anger among Iraqis. It is fully rejected by Iraqi people North and South, East and West, all politicians, parties, resistance, opposites, and government. Fifty-three months after occupation and many Americans are still ignorant about the Iraqis and their passion for unified Iraq, and their sacrifice for their land. People of America, you have the plea to encourage your leaders to learn more and provide more budget for think tanks to carry research and studies about the nation of Iraq.

Naba S. Hamid

Editor's note: Naba Hamid is an affiliate of ICS who was working in Iraq for women's rights until she was forced to leave because of death threats. She continues her work from her country of refuge.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

December 15, 2007, 12 to 3:00 PM – Workshop at West Knoxville Friends Meeting of persons interested in counter recruitment program in our local schools. Lunch provided. Call 573-4089 for directions.

January 5, 2008, 9:00 AM to Noon -- Meeting at St. Thomas Episcopal Church of the East Tennessee Peace Group Coalition of for sharing of information and discussion of cooperative activities.

January 12, 2008, 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM – PIET Planning Committee meets at Panera Bread on N. Peters Road to prepare for upcoming events. New people with fresh ideas and a willingness to work are always welcome.

January 19, 2008, 9:30 to 3:00 PM – Quarterly meeting of ICS Board of Directors. Place to be announced.

February 1-2, 2008 -- PIET Winter Workshop: "Teaching Nonviolence: A Workshop for Teachers and Parents." Friday, 6:00 to 10:00 PM; Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM. (Potluck dinner on Friday, Saturday lunch provided)

February 9, 2008, 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM -- PIET Planning Committee meets at Panera Bread on N. Peters Road to prepare for upcoming events.

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CALENDAR, Continued from page 2

February 23, 2008 – Counter-Recruitment Counselor Training at West Knoxville Friends Meeting. Times to be announced.

March 15, 2008, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM -- Non-Violent Atonement Workshop, for Christian Clergy and Lay leadership. Facilitated by Michael and Lorri Hardin of Preaching Peace; Tony Bartlett, Beckley Hall Episcopal Seminary; and Sharon Baker, Messiah College. Lunch provided.

March 16, 2008 -- 7:30 to 9:30 PM --Seminar on the "Mimetic Theory of Peacebuilding" -- This is a "must do" for preachers and teachers of theology!

June 5 to 8 2008 -- Summer Peacebuilding Institute. Come join the dialogue with peacebuilders from around the world. Times and places to be announced.

Watch this space for announcements of noon-time International Forums on a variety of countries and international crises. These will each be led by persons with first-hand knowledge of the areas and situations addressed.

THE SPARROW SINGS

A monthly collection of comments, quotes, facts and Tamarac Notes written and collated by Roberta Thurstin and Don Timmerman, published in collaboration with PEACEBUILDING INSTITUTE OF EAST TENNESSEE.

COMMENTS

We hear from President Bush and his conservative supporters that the US military must stay in Iraq until we see success. The question is then as to what exactly is success. In the dictionary success is defined as "the accomplishment of an aim," or "a favorable outcome," or "the attainment of wealth, fame or position." If we apply these definitions to the US occupation of Iraq there is little hope of success. The aim of the invasion and occupation, as pointed out by Alan Greenspan by his recent book, is getting access to the oil in Iraq. This aim is not attainable because the Iraqis are never going to allow this to happen. There can never be a favorable outcome to the invasion and occupation since 2.4 million Iraqis have left the country with very little, millions more in Iraq live in poverty and destitution fearing every day for their lives, and the killings still occur every day in the country with little hope for the Iraqis getting back their country.

To me success is following one's conscience. My conscience tells me that the secret of success is to love all, including my enemies, and doing good to all. However, others do not have that conscience. Their conscience supposedly tells them that it is moral to do whatever is necessary to get what they want. This would include bombing, invading and occupying a country. It would include intimidating, maiming and killing whoever stands in their way. It would include disrespecting others who do not agree with them. People still do not realize that the way to success is not with ridicule, cruelty and force. This is unfortunate, and because of the unwillingness of many to love all people, there will continue to be wars and rumors of wars. We will fail to succeed. - *Don Timmerman*

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QUOTES

"I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil." -*Alan Greenspan, former Federal Reserve Chairperson*

"If Americans are upset with the war in Iraq today, it's mainly because it failed. If we could have 'ended evil' with this war, it would have been a good thing....If we have to destroy the world in order to purify it of evil, that's all right....The destruction of Iraq was an act of purification." Most Americans naively still do not believe the invasion was for oil.

"The chaplains I knew didn't see themselves as having a commission to preach the Gospel at all. You bent over backward NOT to do that when you were dealing with soldiers outside the chapel." - *James Carroll*

"We have to remember that God loves all men (and women), that God wills all men (and women) to be saved, that all men (and women) are brothers (and sisters). We must love the jailor as well as the one in prison. We must do that seemingly utterly impossible thing: love our enemy....As you come to know the seriousness of our situation - the war, the racism, the poverty in the world - you come to realize it is not going to be changed just by words or demonstrations. It's a question of risking your life. It's a question of living your life in drastically different ways."

- *Dorothy Day*

"A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined..." - *H.D. Thoreau*

INCONVENIENT FACTS

* As many as 45% of all suicide bombers in Iraq are Saudi nationals. Saudi Arabia gives lots of money to the Sunnis in Iraq to help their cause. - *Los Angeles Times*

* A faucet leaking 1 drop per second wastes about 2,700 gallons of water a year. This is 5 times what an average car uses in gas. - *EPA*

* More than 14 million trees are used each year for making grocery bags. - *Greenpeace*

* A recent study involving interviews with over 2,000 Iraqis found that they were more pessimistic than 6 months earlier. Today 70% of Iraqis think security has deteriorated, and conditions for political dialogue have worsened. Some 65-67% of them think the troop increase has interfered with government functioning, reconstruction and economic development, and 47% now want foreign troops to leave immediately. - *BBC, ABC News and NHK of Japan*

* The money spent on one day in Iraq would buy homes for almost 8,500 families or health care for 423,529 children or could outfit 1.27 million homes with renewable electricity. - *American Friends Service Committee*

* The occupation of Iraq, if you include ongoing factors such as long-term health care for veterans, interest on debt and replacement of military hardware; is costing Americans \$270 million a day or \$500,000 a minute - *Washington Post, 9-22-07*

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- * Since the US invasion of Iraq an estimated 1.2 million Iraqis died violent deaths. - *ORB, a British polling organization*
- * As many as 8 million Iraqis are in need of emergency assistance. An estimated 4 million lack food security. Nearly half the population is unemployed and living in absolute poverty. Some 50-70% lack adequate water supplies, and child malnutrition has risen to 28%. - *Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns*
- * When costs of CIA operations and embassy expenses are added, the occupation of Iraq currently costs taxpayers about \$12 billion a month. The new spending request of \$200 billion is likely to push the cumulative cost of Iraq alone through 2008 past the \$600 billion mark, more than the Korean War and nearly as much as the Vietnam war. - *LA Times, 9-24-07*
- * Hundreds of Shiite and Sunni residents staged a protest on Sept. 12th against a wall being constructed by US troops between their adjoining neighborhoods in NW Baghdad. It is part of a US effort to divide Iraq's population among religious lines. - *World Socialist Web Site, 9-18-07*
- * Neither the Defense Dept. nor the Dept. of Homeland Security have met even basic accounting requirements, leaving them vulnerable to waste, fraud and abuse. Officials admit that there is no way of holding these departments accountable for tax money they received in the past. "There is no way of knowing, if it (Defense Dept.) can't even be audited." (Ronald W. Johnson of RTI International)- *A.P., 9-14-07; "The Pentagon still cannot account for \$1.1 trillion it received in the past."*
- * CEOs of top military corporations have reaped annual pay gains of 200% or 688% in the years since 9-11. They made an average of \$12.4 million a year, easily more than the average CEO. The CEO of General Dynamics, Nicholas Chabraja, tops the list at earnings of \$97 million or \$19 million a year followed by Halliburton CEO, David Lesar, who earned \$79 million or nearly \$16 million a year. - *Center for Defense Information*
- * About 35,000 people die of hunger every day – *Source unknown*
- * At least 835 books were already written and published about the Iraq war in the US, and 32 of these are children's books. *Source unknown*
- * Poor roads cost Americans \$67,000,000,000 each year for repairs and other extra operating costs. – *Source unknown*
- * It is estimated that over the next 20 years it will cost \$390,000,000,000 to maintain US sewer systems. *Source unknown*
- * Solid waste generated by an American has increased by 24% since 1980. Americans throw out 48 million tons of edible food each year. As many as 288 US colleges have closed since 1990. – *all from Harper's Index, Sept. '07*
- * Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK) called global warming 'the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people.' He is the ranking Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee who accepted more than \$1 million in gifts from the oil and gas industries. - *League of Conservation Voters*
- * Some 76% of Palestinians live on less than \$2 a day. The Israeli government siphons off 84% of their water. Some 10,000 Palestinians remain in Israeli jails. There are more than 450 checkpoints which they have to deal with on a daily basis. A wall built by the Israelis with US help encircles the West Bank, and

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Bethlehem is now a "ghetto." Israel has violated 77 UN resolutions since 1955. Palestine is the most densely populated place in the world with over 4 million Palestinians in refugee camps. -- *U.N.*

* The US has developed a 14-ton super bomb more destructive than the vacuum bomb just tested by Russia. It has the penetrating power of 30,000 pounds. The bomb would be launched by 65-70 stealth bombers and 400 bombers of other types. - *Lt. General McInerney, chairman of the Iran Policy Committee*

* Blackwater, USA, the mercenary group hired by the US government to provide security, is being investigated for killing innocent Iraqis. It has an estimated 1,000 employees, who make about \$1,000 a day in Iraq, and has at least \$800 million in government contracts. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Blackwater worked under a no-bid contract with the Dept. of Homeland Security at a cost of \$240,000 a day. Blackwater founder Erik Prince, a former Navy SEAL, trains 40,000 people a year at its 7,000-acre base in North Carolina. Right now in Iraq there are about 180,000 US contractors operating alongside 165,000 to 175,000 US troops. - *Jeremy Scahill author of Blackwater.*

* Jubilee USA is asking that we support HR 2634, a bill that would cancel the debt of nearly 67 impoverished countries allowing USA funds to be used for meeting basic needs of people in keeping with the UN Millennium Goals instead of using the funds to pay crippling debt. Call your Congress person. - *Jubilee USA Network*

* As many as 1,448-plus barrels of toxic and probably radioactive chemicals were dumped into Lake Superior by the US Army Corps of Engineers between 1957 and 1962. The Save Lake Superior Association is trying to get all the barrels removed and safely shipped to a hazardous waste containment site. - *NukeWatch Quarterly, Fall 2007*

NOTES FROM TAMARCK COTTAGE

This morning I paddled a canoe along the edge of Butternut Lake and into Butternut Creek. The trees were vibrant shades of yellow, orange and red. The colors were mirrored Monet-like in the water. As I slowly paddled soaking in the season of fall I saw Belted Kingfishers, 3 River Otters cavorting in the water, an elegant Great Blue Heron taking flight, a Green Heron flitting along the shore, ducks, geese and a Long-Tailed Weasel. I returned home reminded that we are but a single strand in the web of life. The sparkling beauty of this web shone clearly this autumn morning. May we all realize how glorious and fragile this web is. If we misuse or destroy part of it, the whole suffers. May we have the wisdom to revere and protect this beautiful complex web of life. Peace, Roberta -- **September 2007**

THE SPARROW SINGS

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