

The Newsletter of the Anabaptist Peace Center – Washington, DC

Peace Worship in the Works for March '08

Christian Peace Witness for Iraq Planning Worship and Witness Event in DC as War in Iraq Continues

As war continues to rage in Iraq and the diplomatic standoff between Iran and the U.S. grows more tense, Christians from around the country will gather in their community churches and at Washington's National Cathedral to voice their continued opposition to war. In what is unfortunately becoming an annual event, the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq will take place March 7, 2008.

In addition to a major interdenominational worship service in Washington, organizers are encouraging those who can't make it to DC to hold local community gatherings in their churches. It is hoped that having gatherings scattered throughout the country will help increase participation and reduce the risk of weather related

problems. In 2007, a severe winter storm blocked several groups from coming to DC, including several busloads of Mennonites from Pennsylvania and Harrisonburg.

In addition to the interdenominational gathering at National Cathedral, there will also be a gathering of Mennonites and Brethren on Saturday morning sponsored by the Anabaptist Peace Center. More details about this gathering will be published on the peace center's website.

The Christian Peace Witness for Iraq has provided a positive forum for Christian resistance to the war in Iraq. Broad-based anti-war demonstrations several years ago have grown increasingly militant and

mean-spirited, with the tenor of them becoming increasingly hateful. Those larger groups responsible for most of the mass demonstrations, ANSWER and UFPJ, have even split and now no longer plan joint actions. The Christian Peace Witness for Iraq provides an inspirational atmosphere to join with other faith based activists who speak the same language of belief that we do.

Two conference calls were recently held to begin to finalize plans for the service and other possible activities that may take place as part of the weekend. More details can be found at the website christianpeacewitness.org as the date approaches.

Hesston Conference Continues Faith, Politics Dialogue

As presidential primary season approaches, and in the wake of a new study suggesting an increase in political polarization in Mennonite and Brethren Churches, the relationship between faith and politics is becoming a popular topic of discussion. The latest venue was at the Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series conference held in October at Hesston College. The conference explored how involved a Christian should be in politics and how Christians should interact around political issues.

The Co-Keynote presenters for the conference were Greg Boyd, pastor of Woodland

Hills Church in Minneapolis, MN, and John D. Roth, Professor of History at Goshen College. Both have written and spoken extensively about the intersection of politics and Christian faith. Boyd is most well known for having actually lost most of the members of his church after rejecting partisan politics and encouraging members to not blindly adopt part doctrines.

Roth has stirred discussion in the Mennonite Church by his suggestion of a taking a sabbatical from politics to help refocus the church on Christ.

Perhaps most interesting from this conference is that Boyd is the latest of an increasing number of people from outside Anabaptist denominations, challenging them to be bolder. Whereas Boyd called for a more visible and honest witness to our beliefs, Roth emphasized the need to re-examine ourselves, to see where we have merely co-opted the message of the world rather than proclaimed the good news of Christ.

In addition to Roth and Boyd, a number of workshops were held as well, bring a broader perspective of how faith, politics, discipleship, and peacemaking interact.

Speaker's List Nearly Complete for April Conference

Speakers to Include Armster, Jones, Keynote Speaker Augsburg

Final preparations are beginning for a major conference exploring political divisions in the Church. "Bridging Divides", sponsored by the Anabaptist Peace Center – Washington, DC, will bring together a wide variety of speakers to provide perspective and practical tools on how Christians should interact with one another around political issues.

Among the speakers

already confirmed are Michelle Armster, Director of Mennonite Conciliation Service; Phil Jones, Director of the Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office; and Keynote Speaker Myron Augsburg, pastor, evangelist, and author.

In addition to the conference, the annual Hymn Sing for Peace will be held at the close of the weekend as well. This

years' hymn sing will take place at the steps of the Capitol Reflecting pool. The dates of the Conference are April 11-12, 2008. Registration and more details about the conference are available online at apcwdc.mennonite.net. To register by mail, contact the office at 202-546-0010 to request a paper form.

On My Shelf

A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity by Chris Huebner. Published by Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA, 2006.

Faith is tricky. The term is used occasionally to imply a sense of certainty or correct belief. Yet the essence of faith is belief without proof. In spite of this, we humans seek to prove our faith or discover the one true faith through Bible study or theological study. But is it really possible to ever find the right theology or discover what a true Christian ought to believe? Chris Huebner, in his book *A Precarious Peace*, offers a critique of traditional approaches to doing theology and warns against the chauvinistic belief that somehow we can fit God into a particular theology.

To frame his argument, Huebner borrows from John Howard Yoder's work that consistently ran against the tide of the religious establishment. Theological disestablishmentarianism however runs the risk of quickly becoming theological anarchy. A very delicate and tense balance must be maintained to keep the whole thing from collapsing under its own weight. According to

Yoder, the only relatively stable platform that we have to stand upon is the example and teachings of Jesus. But using this as our basis even exposes us to instability, as the way of Jesus is counterintuitive to humans and this world.

Once situated, Huebner's "precarious peace" becomes apparent on several levels. First, we fall short of truly imitating Christ and therefore even as we seek to act in the world around us, we must maintain an attitude of humility and confession. Second, in seeking the gift of the Peace of Christ, we are constantly upsetting our own beliefs and ways in which we try to describe our reality. Third, patience should characterize a life of discipleship rather than a desire to be effective. This framework moves beyond peace defined as an absence of violence. It is, as Huebner suggests, a rejection of power over and the creation of artificial boundaries and accepting the unknown and yet very real peace of Christ.

This book provides a wonderful challenge to

those within Anabaptism who consider themselves part of the peace movement (myself included). Huebner challenges those who can lay claim to the heritage of the Historic Peace Churches to make their peace witness less historic and more vital to who they are not as Anabaptists but indeed as followers of Christ.

The very nature of the peace of Christ and being a disciple is an unsettledness. Our boundaries, theologies, and understandings of God and Christ are constantly being pushed, stretched, and even destroyed from time to time. The key to being church is learning how to grow and stretch together as we seek to follow Christ and yet remain patient and humble with one another.

**Building Bridges: Uniting
the Church for Peacemaking**

**April 11-12, 2008
Washington, DC**

**To register, log on to
www.apcwdc.mennonite.net**

“... is it really possible to ever find the right theology or discover what a true Christian ought to believe?”

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Calendar

Upcoming Peace Events from Around the Church

January 27 – World Fellowship Sunday, Mennonite Church USA

February 8-10 – Spruce Lake Winter Peace Retreat, Franconia Conference/Eastern District Peace Committee

February 16-17 and 23-24 – On Earth Peace, Faith Based Mediation Training, Camp Mack, Milford, IN

March 2-4 – MCC Washington Office Spring Seminar, email mccwash@mcc.org for details.

April 11-12 – Building Bridges: Uniting the Church for Peacemaking. Conference on dealing with political divisions in churches.

April 12 – Hymn Sing for Peace, Washington, DC

About Our Organization...

The Anabaptist Peace Center – Washington, DC engages in education, action, and cooperation to help the Church and society put into practice Jesus'

call to peace and justice. It works with Mennonite and Brethren churches to help them reclaim peace and justice as the central defining

characteristic of what it means to be Christian in an Anabaptist context. APCWDC also seeks to work with other denominations to help their peace witness.

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