



Western  
District  
Conference

Joy Mennonite Newsletter  
February 2006

***The following is portions of an article written by Gene Stolfus, former director of Christian Peacemaker Teams.***

By this time many of you know that the four CPT workers were taken hostage in Baghdad. The crisis calls us back to our most basic convictions in life, what is worth living and what is worth dying for. This event reminds us that we build meaning into our lives by the choices we make.

In an age when millions are anxious about their security and long for the structures that bring peace, the sign of hope that a peace church can bring people everywhere is breathtaking. Peace and hope incorporate both our personal life styles and our ability to organize competently, explain our vision clearly and live out this vision in our homes and communities. Our work together up to this time has been preparation, like pilot projects where our faith and confidence are tested and our skills refined. Forty years of peace work has taught me that our world is waiting for us to move beyond pilot projects to invite the nonviolent Gospel of peace to become fully visible and an active choice for every citizen of the human family.

The effectiveness of nonviolence has been adequately tested but we are in fact caught in the history that still waits for is to demonstrate this powerfully. Over the last 20 years I have carried on conversations about nonviolence and faith in more than 20 countries often with people who are open to active nonviolence but until it is demonstrated more comprehensively, they believe the threat of a gun must be maintained in order for society to be secure. The final elimination of the military, armed police and armed national and

international guerilla actions will be accomplished when a broader culture of nonviolence that rejects the gun is expanded exponentially beyond the millions of people and the organizations they support.

**Pastors Corner**

In the twentieth century Mennonite Central Committee was the great influence to make the Mennonite church a people with global concerns. Our volunteers returned from countries all over the world with stories of the reality of poverty and suffering coupled with opportunities to serve and make a difference. Service became the watchword for the church. The amazing thing was how we laid aside denominational differences and united to serve the needs of those our volunteers brought to us.

Christian Peacemaker Teams have the potential to shape the life of the church in this century. If we have our ears tuned we can hear a great cry of frustration in the world today of justice denied. For the first time in many years the church is learning anew the meaning of martyrdom. CPT members are committed to place themselves between the oppressed and the oppressor, a commitment that can cost them their lives. Without martyrs we do not understand the meaning of the cross that Jesus taught us and we have a distorted understanding of salvation. Without martyrs in our experience we have made an ornament out of an instrument of death. Rather than being an ornament the cross represents the penalty the world gives to those who challenge their unjust rule, and the world as we have seen can be brutal. When we experience the cruel acts of a sinful world we will think of salvation in a new way. Not only do we pray for the salvation of a sinful

world, we pray for discernment and courage not to participate in the sinful actions of the world. If we permit them, CPT can lead us in a new and fresh understanding of the cross and salvation.

--Moses Mast

### **Recent Events**

The February delegation of CPT to Iraq was postponed until May. Laura Culbertson is now hoping to go in this delegation.

Condolences to the Ediger and Austin family for the passing of Nina Austin, mother in law and grandmother to this family.

Dec. 31 Several of us from Joy Mennonite attended the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Bill and Thea Klassen, former members of Joy Mennonite, in Hutchinson, Kansas.

Dec. 18 James Branum served a meal at the Joy church as a fund raiser for the Catholic Worker House.

Jan. 06 At a Spiritual walk for peace we remembered the CPT members who were abducted. We also used this event to launch the 64 ways in 64 days to practice peace. This is the time between the assassination of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Coming Events**

March 19.06 A walk for peace. This marks Three years since the beginning of the war in Iraq

Feb. 27.06 The ministerial committee of the Western district conference will meet at Joy Mennonite.

### **In Closing**

Remember when you were a little kid, maybe in the second or third grade at recess in school. Do you remember the one bigger kid, that would bully all the smaller weaker kids, and make their lives miserable? Seems there's always one around doesn't it.

Peace, keep on believing, keep on praying for it, and by all means work at it. Work hard at it, because it don't come easy.

--Terry

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