



Melissa Engle/MCC

Who Is My Neighbor?

U.S. MILITARISM IN AFRICA

by **Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach**

Earlier this year, President Obama noted that resolving the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East “is a vital national security interest of the United States . . . because whether we like it or not, we remain a dominant military superpower.”

Afterward, former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin critiqued Obama’s statement. “I would hope that our leaders in Washington, D.C., understand we like to be a dominant superpower,” said Palin.

There is no question that the U.S. remains a military superpower. In 2007, the U.S. spent more on defense than the next 14 highest spending countries combined. Within the U.S. government, there are more military band members than foreign service officers.

Many have welcomed the Obama administration’s greater focus on a “whole of government” approach—ensuring that development, diplomacy and defense are better integrated. But because the size and capacity of the Defense Department is so much greater than any other agency, when this coordination takes place, it is the military who takes the leading role.

The “integration” of tasks has also meant that the military increasingly is building schools or hospitals. To Anabaptists, this surely sounds preferable to using “hard power.” But it also raises significant concerns, including putting humanitarian workers at risk,

and prioritizing projects that bring about short-term security gains but may be ineffective and unsustainable.

As church members, I hope that we can engage in active debate over what these trends mean. For starters, let me suggest that a militarized foreign policy does the following:

- *Elevates security as paramount.* Rather than acknowledging that God is the source of our security, it keeps our trust in weapons.
- *Prevents the establishment of trust.* When a U.S. military unit enters an Iraqi town, carrying loaded weapons while pledging to help them, Iraqis read between the lines: “we don’t trust you.”
- *Remains rooted in self-interest.* The U.S. determines which projects will benefit our own security needs, and on what timeline.
- *Hinders meaningful community relationships.* Rather than allowing community members to have a say in what they would like to see happen, the agenda is decided in Washington.

In the long run, a foreign policy built on mutual relationships and trust is much more likely to bring about true security. This does not fit well with a focus on the next election cycle. But it would go a lot further toward resolving the conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere than boasting about our dominance as a superpower. ✱

A foreign policy built on mutual relationships and trust is much more likely to bring about true security.

IN THIS MEMO

- 2 Africom’s Big Footprint
- 4 Worship Resources
- 7 Scars of War
- 8 Health Care Reform Begins
- 9 Washington Memo Online
- 10 Advocates’ Corner

Africom's BIG Footprint



A Zambian soldier and a Marine from U.S. Marine Forces Africa receive instructions during an exercise sponsored by Africom.

by Mary Stata

Stories of hope abound in Africa. Mennonite Central Committee partners with communities and local organizations as they grow food, adapt to climate change, manage disease, and heal the wounds of war.

Despite these efforts to promote peace and economic development, the policies of the U.S. government all too often threaten to undermine the hard work of MCC's partners. The activities of Africom, the U.S. military command for Africa, have proven to be particularly damaging. The following examines how and why the United States is expanding its military footprint in Africa.

U.S.-Africa Policy in Context

Historically at the bottom of the foreign policy heap, Africa often receives far less attention than the Middle East, Europe and other national security interests of the United States and the rest of the world. Throughout colonialism, Western powers treated the continent as territory to conquer and a source of lucrative natural resources, rather than as an equal economic and political partner.

World War II foreshadowed the swift wave of decolonization and independence that brought opportunities and pitfalls for the continent's democratization and economic well-being. The simultaneous emergence of the Cold War soon took precedence, rather than efforts to strengthen struggling former colonies.

The tug-of-war between the U.S. and Soviet Union governed political relationships, alliances, and investments on the continent, at the cost of undermining democratic African governments. Ultimately, the West continued to benefit from Africa's economic and political vulnerability.

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new U.S. foreign policy. As rigid anti-Communist ideologies were deemed irrelevant, "national security" emerged as the pre-eminent foreign policy measuring stick. U.S. policy towards Africa was, therefore, largely seen as charity because the region held little national security importance.

Meanwhile, detrimental trade and fiscal policies created by international financial institutions and the U.S. government wreaked havoc on the conti-

ment's economic and political health. In addition to brutal civil wars and the explosion of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poor governance plagued the continent's overall development.

The global "war on terror" and access to oil governed U.S. foreign policy interests under the George W. Bush administration and resulted in military intervention and unilateralism. The Obama administration, by contrast, has advocated for a foreign policy that recognizes the need to work with other countries to address issues such as climate change and infectious disease. In sum, this foreign policy is pragmatic and sympathetic to engagement.

After centuries of neglect, Africa is now emerging as a geo-politically and geo-strategically important region to the United States. Despite President Obama's rhetoric about the importance of development and diplomacy in foreign policy, it is apparent that his administration is continuing to increase U.S. involvement on the continent through military training and assistance. Efforts to combat terrorism, oil interests, and competition between the U.S. and China for economic and political power, are at the roots of this interest.

Advent of Africom

Due to the establishment of Africom, the U.S. military's Africa Command, in 2007, U.S. military activity now overshadows diplomacy and development in Africa. Formed under the Bush administration, Africom consolidates U.S. military operations in Africa under one military command. The establishment of this new command has led to suspicion from African governments and concern from civil society.

In general, with the exception of Liberia who offered to host Africom, African nations were afraid a U.S. military command on the continent would be a security risk to the host country and the region.

An additional concern is that Africom is part of a further militarization of America's foreign policy. Africom is somewhat unique as a command because it was formed with

the intention of embracing the 3D approach (prioritizing development and diplomacy, along with defense).

While other U.S. commands have some degree of civilian integration, Africom is intended to reflect the 3D mission of current U.S. foreign policy by integrating staff from the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other government agencies into its structure. But the precedence of defense over development and diplomacy in Africom means that instability in Africa will be handled primarily through military “solutions” that fail to address the root causes of the instability.

Because Africom seeks to combine military and civilian operations, the roles of military and civilians are blurred. In addition to sending a confusing message to African civilians, this approach puts development and humanitarian workers at risk of attack by insurgent forces since their work is no longer viewed as neutral.

Past U.S. military assistance in the continent has often made conflict worse. Now that the command brings together U.S. military operations in Africa and comes with an increased budget, it is likely that U.S. military assistance and intervention will increase,

but will not be any more effective in mitigating conflict and encouraging good governance than it has in the past.

Africom and Operation Lightning Thunder

For the past 23 years, Northern Uganda, and more recently neighboring countries, have experienced conflict and turmoil at the hands of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group. The LRA is responsible for murdering civilians indiscriminately, maiming victims, and abducting children. As far as rebel groups go, the nature of this conflict has been as ruthless as they come.

After losing patience in a peace process widely accepted as responsible for Northern Uganda’s current stability, the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF) teamed up with armies from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan in late 2008, promising to rout the LRA and free abducted civilians once and for all.

This joint offensive, dubbed Operation Lightning Thunder (OLT), was widely condemned as a failure. It failed to apprehend top LRA commanders, resulted in vicious backlash attacks on civilians, and caused the

(continued on page 6)



Master Sergeant Jim Fisher/U.S. Air Force



Petty Officer 1st Class Jonathan Kulp

Petty Officer 1st Class Martine Cuaron/U.S. Navy



Africom intentionally portrays itself as a military command committed to engaging in traditional humanitarian activities, as evidenced by these photos from their official website. *Top right: Major General Ronald R. Ladnier, commander of Air Forces Africa, takes part in a tree-planting ceremony. Above center: Petty Officer 2nd Class Craig Kleffel begins constructing a primary school on the East African island nation of Comoros. Below: U.S. Army Captain Eric Slater plays soccer while on a medical mission at an orphanage and school in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The medical screening took place during an Africom-sponsored exercise for special operations forces. Left: Commander Antonio Rodriguez participates in a medical outreach program, part of a U.S. Naval Forces initiative to improve maritime safety and security in West and Central Africa.*



Master Sergeant Jeremiah Erickson

Who Is My Neighbor?

Worship Resources and Reflections

by Ken Nafziger

The world in which we live is not the same one into which we were born. It has shrunk, it has become more vulnerable, with regard to water, air, oil, land, and resources of all kinds. We share the desire for being shown mercy by one's neighbors, and we long for the grace of loving one's neighbor as one's self.

GATHERING

Who Is My Neighbor—in the Presence of an Expansive God?

A reading from Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 39, selected verses

These verses from the apocryphal book Sirach are full of exuberance and can also open up questions about the ease with which we make value judgments. The service could begin with the reading of this excerpt, followed by singing. The emphasis should be on exuberance, choosing songs to respond to the infinite variety and color with which God created the universe and all living beings therein. There are four lists of hymns; choose some from each. The reading may be divided among several exuberant voices.

I have more on my mind to express;
I am full like the full moon.

Listen to me, my faithful children, and blossom
like a rose growing by a stream of water.

Scatter the fragrance, and sing a hymn of praise;
bless the Lord for all his works.

Ascribe majesty to God's name
and give thanks to God with praise,
with songs on your lips, and with harps;
this is what you shall say in thanksgiving:
All the works of the Lord are very good.

The basic necessities of human life
are water and fire and iron and salt
and wheat flour and milk and honey,
the blood of the grape and oil and clothing:
all these are good for the godly,
but for sinners they turn into evils.

No one can say, "What is this?" or "Why is that?"—
for at the appointed time all such questions will be
answered . . .

No one can say, "What is this?" or "Why is that?"—
for everything has been created for its own purpose . . .

No one can say, 'This is not as good as that',
for everything proves good in its appointed time. . . .

So now sing praise with all your heart and voice,
and bless the name of the Lord.

Hymns (more suggestions online)

Choose some from this list:

- HWB 1 What is this placee
- HWB 14 Come, we that love the Lord
- HWB 46 I sing the mighty power of God
- HWB 76 Je louerai l'Eternel/Praise,
I will praise you, Lord
- HWB 299 New earth, heavens new
- STS 30 Arise, your light is come!

Some from this list:

- HWB 7 Here, O Lord, your servants gather
- HWB 9 Jesus A, Nahetotaetanome/Jesus Lord,
how joyful you have made us
- HWB 55 Cantemos al Señor
- HWB 397 God loves all his many people
- STJ 12 Cantai ao Senhor/O sing to the Lord
- STS 75 Heri ni jina/Blessed be the name

And some from this list:

- STJ 9 Come, now is the time to worship
- STJ 27 God of the Bible
- STS 5 Open my ears, open my eyes
- STS 89 Christ is alive
- STS 113 I will stand in the congregation

End with one, or both, of these hymns:

- HWB 145 There's a wideness in God's mercy
(stanzas 1, 3–5)
- HWB 353 Lord, listen to your children praying





CONFESSING

Who Is My Neighbor—in the Presence of a Welcoming God?

A prayer of confession

STJ 132 Lord Jesus Christ, we are your body . . .

This is a very powerful and moving prayer of confession. It needs to be allowed spacious time in order for those praying to absorb the words they are hearing and seeing. Lengthy silences after each congregational response will do that. Better, however, would be replacing the spoken responses with the first stanza of STJ 47, Oh, Lord have mercy, a capella or accompanied.

Another suggestion: at the line of the prayer, Let the body of Christ join hands and become one, there is the recommendation that the congregation join hands. On this occasion, it would be effective if, instead of joining hands, there would be spaces open to the right and the left of each person. People could be asked to imagine the presence of a neighbor, and then the prayer can continue. (Use the alternative ending.)

Hymn

STS 117 How can I say

PROCLAIMING

Who Is My Neighbor—in the Kingdom of God?

Reading from the Gospel: Luke 10:29b–37

To call attention to the spaciousness of the Kingdom of God, read this Gospel passage in several languages. Since this is a familiar story, one could divide the story among several readers (in different languages) in these segments: verses 29b–30, 31, 32, 33–35, 36–37. Conclude with re-reading the Gospel in English.

The exposition on this familiar story could be stories of “one who showed mercy.” Invite a number of people from the congregation to introduce a friend who was one such person. Only a first name, real or imagined, is needed. There should only be enough information so that hearers have insight into the merciful act of this friend; 100–150 well-chosen words should be enough. Prior to the first reading, and again after a respectful silence when each reader is finished, an alleluia refrain should be sung (e.g., STS 17, 24, or 87, or STJ 41).

PRAYING/SENDING

Who Is My Neighbor—in Repairing and Restoring?

Hymn

HWB 395 Here I am, Lord

Reading from the Prophets (arranged for four readers and congregation online): Isaiah 58:6–12

Intercessory Prayer: This prayer time should be an extended time, and not generic! Invite members of the congregation ahead of time to plan to lead an intercessory prayer for a place or a person they know that cries out for someone to repair a breach. Give time and space for each prayer to be spoken; a spoken or sung response could follow each. The prayer time can conclude with the hymn, If you believe and I believe, STJ 32.

Sending Hymns

STJ 2 Hamba nathi/Come, walk with us

STJ 67 Let there be light, Lord God

Benediction

HWB 769 Guide us, O Lord . . .

An expanded version of these worship resources can be found online at washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/summer2010.

Ken Nafziger is professor of music at Eastern Mennonite University and was on sabbatical during the spring semester in the MCC Washington Office.

Abbreviations HWB *Hymnal: A Worship Book*
STJ *Sing the Journey*
STS *Sing the Story*

Africom's Big Footprint (continued from page 3)

violence to spread to neighboring areas that previously were not affected, displacing thousands. This operation marked Africom's inaugural activity on the continent, since they provided technical and logistical assistance to the UPDF.

The UPDF are still receiving substantial support from Africom to actively pursue the LRA across central Africa. Training and equipping

African armies for military operations, and then failing to take responsibility for the results of those operations, shows that there is little accountability for the actions of the new command.

Congress recently passed legislation (H.R. 2478/S. 1067) that has the potential to spur development and promote healing and reconciliation in Northern Uganda. However, this bill also requires the Obama administra-

tion to develop "an interagency framework to plan, coordinate, and review diplomatic, economic, intelligence, and military elements of United States policy across the region regarding the Lord's Resistance Army."

Given the current realities of U.S. foreign policy, military mechanisms—including Africom—are privileged over diplomatic avenues or development efforts. A military operation aimed at the LRA is not a new strategy.

Since OLT, the LRA have decentralized into small bands of soldiers that operate in three separate countries. This makes a targeted military option nearly impossible, given the challenging terrain and the number of splintered LRA groups that now operate. Secondly, the Ugandan government last year arrested individuals accused of organizing a new rebel group within the country. Additionally, the LRA's financial supporters remain unknown. These reasons illustrate that no quick fix exists.

Change is Possible

The Obama administration is increasing Africom's budget and expanding military assistance and training programs to African countries. Africom's formidable budget and number of personnel far outweigh that of the State Department and USAID.

This imbalance of resources not only runs the risk of over-militarizing small and underdeveloped nations, but also becomes the face of U.S. foreign policy for Africa. Privileging military expansion over investment in sustainable economic development ensures a continuation of the colonial cycle of poverty and insecurity for the peoples of Africa. The United States must dramatically change its current policy course for Africa by heavily investing in programs that promote democracy, human rights, and economic wellbeing. ✨



Melissa Engler/MCC

Support peace projects in Sudan

In southern Sudan, building trust and relationships is a key part of rebuilding communities after decades of war. In addition to Sudan's civil war, southern Sudan has been impacted by the bloody attacks of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

As the LRA's activity in northern Uganda spread across the border into southern Sudan, mistrust has grown between Sudanese and Ugandan border communities.

MCC, through the Sudan Council of Churches, is funding an effort to bring communities together to talk. Peace Mobilizers is a people-to-people initiative promoting dialogue and meetings between southern Sudanese and northern Ugandan people.

Your gift helps communities explore how to replace a culture of war and survival with grassroots efforts at building peace.

- \$20 will train one person to become a peace mobilizer.
- \$75 helps cover travel and accommodations for one person to attend a conflict management workshop.

Give online at mcc.org or by mail at MCC, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501.

The Scars of War



Matthew Lester/MCC

Angelina Atyam, along with other parents whose children had been abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army, founded the Concerned Parents Association. A partner of MCC, the organization provides psychosocial and educational support to families affected by the war, while advocating for the release of all children abducted by the LRA.

by David Otim

In October 2008, the U.S. Africa Command (Africom) became a fully unified command for the African region. A year later, Uganda hosted Africom's humanitarian training program in East Africa.

The training brought together armies of five East African nations: Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. The aim of this training was reportedly to equip East African military institutions with skills in humanitarian work.

Much could be said about the military fidgeting with humanitarian work, whether Africa is really short of agencies that do humanitarian work and whether the misconduct of most African armies is due to the lack of such skills.

The Africom humanitarian training was conducted in northern Uganda, in the Kitgum district. For the last 23 years this region has been the center of gunfire between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and the government of Uganda.

People in this region are so traumatized that they do not want to hear gunfire or see military personnel. In

this region folks still experience phantasms of their dead; students hardly concentrate on studies because they "still hear" military boots walk towards their hostels to abduct them.

This part of the country is not the official training base for Uganda's military forces. It is also close to Sudan and Somalia, two states that the U.S. has accused of providing hideouts for terrorist activity. There is also exploration of oil in the adjacent Amuru district—but that is a separate debate.

Much of Africa is young; most of these nations are less than 50 years old. Their independence was largely attained by military means. Most of the "big guys" acquire and maintain power militarily; and swiftly surround themselves with a military system.

For instance, Uganda now has more than 30 different paramilitary organizations. Even where elections are conducted, the long arm of the military is visible. Africom's partnership with these armies should be very clear; otherwise many see it as being a partner in crime.

For Africom to meaningfully contribute to peacebuilding in northern

Uganda and elsewhere, it must appreciate that military gear (boots, caps, shirts, gun power) has been a source of trauma for most communities.

Secondly, building roads and bridges (another thing Africom was seen doing in Pader district) does not necessarily bring peace to the communities; rather, the people here need a break from watching military talent and acrobatics.

When Africom does all these good things, but in military uniform, the likelihood for the villagers to be more affected by the sight of the military gear, rather than the good bridge, is high. For they know that military activity, legitimate or illegitimate, is what left human skulls and bones scattered in their community.

For the people in northern Uganda, peace will need to begin in their bodies and minds before the availability of roads, bridges and an army full of skills in humanitarian work. ✪

David Otim is a Program Officer for Mennonite Central Committee in Uganda.



Health Care Reform: Now It Begins

by Tammy Alexander

The long, often contentious, debate over health care reform legislation is over. Now, the hard work of implementation and education begins. At the MCC Washington Office, we will be working with other faith-based organizations to help patients, providers and small business owners understand their rights and responsibilities under the new law. And we will continue to advocate for administrative and legislative changes to ensure that health care reform benefits the most vulnerable in our society.

In 2007, Mennonite Church USA—in consultation with MCC and several other Anabaptist agencies involved in health care—adopted a set of principles on health care reform which called for, among other things, eliminating financial and health status barriers to health care access, strengthening public health systems, and a greater sharing of risks, costs, and responsibility by all. The bills signed into law in March generally support these goals.

Basic Framework

1. Health Insurance Reforms

- Extend dependent coverage to age 26 (6 months after enactment for the following plan year, though some insurers are extending this coverage immediately)
- Prohibit rescissions (retroactively canceling policies)
- Create temporary high-risk pool
- Require 85 percent of premiums be spent on services (80 percent for individual/small group market)
- Prohibit pre-existing condition exclusions and annual/lifetime limits (existing plans grandfathered until 2014; children with preexisting conditions covered 6 months after enactment)

2. Exchanges

- Marketplace for purchasing health insurance plans (for individuals, families, small businesses)
- State-based
- Plans required to offer “essential benefits”
- Age rating limited to 3:1; tobacco use rating limited to 1.5:1

3. Individual Mandate

- U.S. citizens and legal residents will be required to have “qualifying health coverage”
- Tax penalty phased in (2014: \$95/1.0 percent of income; 2016+: \$695/2.5 percent of income)
- Exemptions for religious objections

4. Affordability Provisions

- Expansion of Medicaid to 133 percent of FPL (Federal Poverty Level); include single people and adults without children
- Subsidies reduce both premiums and out-of-pocket expenses on a sliding scale (100-400 percent of FPL)

5. Employer Penalties & Incentives

- Penalty of \$2000 per full-time employee receiving subsidy (excludes first 30 employees)
- Exemption for small businesses with 50 or fewer employees (more than 80 percent of firms)
- Incentives: Small business tax credits; assistance for covering retirees age 55–64

Abortion

- Federal law prohibits federal funding of elective abortions
- States can prohibit coverage for elective abortions in Exchanges
- Those who receive subsidies could choose plans that cover elective abortion, but would have to make a separate payment (not covered by subsidies)

Immigrants

- Only legal immigrants can receive subsidies
- Only legal immigrants can purchase insurance on the Exchange—even with their own money

Additional Provisions

- Wellness
- Long-term care
- Comparative effectiveness research
- Reduce waste, fraud, and abuse
- Gradually close Medicare prescription drug “donut hole”
- Workforce development—training new doctors and nurses, with attention to rural areas
- \$11 billion for community health centers
- Indian Health Care Improvement Act reauthorized

More information is online at washington.mcc.org/life/health. *

Washington Memo Blog

The Washington Memo Blog offers quick updates on current issues and news relevant to work here at the MCC Washington Office. Here are some excerpts from recent blog posts:



New Orleans Lady/Flickr

Putting the BP Oil Disaster in Context

May 4, 2010

“As we watch the growing oil spill off of the Gulf Coast, I wonder about the vulnerable communities I visited in the area at the end of March. While visiting with MCC service worker Pam Nath, we drove to the Gulf in order to see the affects of continual wetland and coastal erosion in Louisiana. Dangerous eroding since 1920 has depleted this natural barrier for hurricanes and adversely affected historic communities based on the water. . . .”



Melissa Engle/MCC

Support the Conflict Minerals Trade Act!

April 21, 2010

“The Conflict Minerals Trade Act, introduced in the House by Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.), would help develop the means to ensure that the multimillion dollar trade in minerals from eastern Congo stops financing the ongoing conflict.

“The trade in Congo’s conflict minerals, namely tin, tantalite, tungsten and gold, which are used in electronic devices such as cell phones and laptops, is a major source of funding for armed groups in eastern Congo who commit atrocities against civilians. . . .”

Website Resource Highlights

The MCC Washington Office website provides information about the office, action alerts, upcoming events, and resources on domestic and international issues. Recent highlights include:



Melissa Engle/MCC

Justice in Haiti The MCC Washington Office continues to advocate for justice, human rights and economic sustainability as Haiti rebuilds from the devastating earthquake last January. A new webpage, online at washington.mcc.org/haiti, will be kept up-to-date as the situation on the ground changes.



Africom A new web resource on the U.S. military command in Africa. U.S. military activity now overshadows diplomacy and development in Africa after the establishment of the U.S. military Command for Africa (Africom) in 2007.

Africom consolidates U.S. military operations in Africa under one military command. The establishment of this new command has led to suspicion from African governments and concern from civil society. Visit washington.mcc.org/africom.

Immigration The MCC Washington Office has started producing monthly legislative updates on the efforts to reform the U.S. immigration system. To access these updates see washington.mcc.org/issues/immigration.

Health Care Now that health care reform has been signed into law, we take a look at what the final legislation actually includes. New resources to help navigate through the new legislation are available at washington.mcc.org/life/health. These include the MCC Washington Office statement on the passage of the legislation, a summary of the final health law and 12 Reasons to Embrace Health Care Reform.

Advocates' Corner



The Advocates' Corner highlights current advocacy work by Anabaptist congregations. Please let us know what your congregation is doing, so that we can include it in a future issue.

SAMPLE LETTER ON AFRICOM

Dear Member of Congress:

As a person of faith, I believe that the U.S. government must support a security doctrine that prioritizes peace and justice. Africom is not what the people of Africa need. The U.S. should redirect its resources towards investment in education, health care, and job creation in Africa. Sustainable economic development will address needs in a way that the military cannot.

More specifically, it is essential that:

- Diplomatic efforts remain under the jurisdiction of civilians and not the military.
- Congress is empowered to conduct robust oversight of Africom and its activities.
- The voices of local civil society are highlighted and consulted when developing and executing U.S. foreign policy and foreign assistance programs.

Sincerely,

[Name and address]

A version of the letter is also available online at washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/summer10.

STORIES OF CONGREGATIONAL ADVOCACY

Abundant Life Sunday: Trade for the Common Good

April 25 marked the final Sunday in the MCC Washington Office's year-long campaign, Abundant Life: Economic Justice for All. Congregations throughout the United States participated in the campaign through prayer, worship, education and advocacy focused on trade that is fair and just.

Some of the participating congregations included **Jubilee Mennonite Church (Bellefontaine, Ohio)**, **Prairie Lake Covenant Church (Chetek, Wis.)**, **Living Hope Fellowship (Ithaca, N.Y.)** and **Seattle Mennonite Church**.

Cluster Bomb Advocacy

First Mennonite Church (Hutchinson, Kan.) recently asked their Members of Congress to stop the indiscriminate maiming and killing caused by U.S. cluster bomb munitions. After a mid-week presentation on cluster bombs from Titus Peachey, Director of Peace Education for MCC U.S., congregants signed and sent 60 postcards to Congress asking that they co-sponsor the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act (S. 416/H.R. 981). Cluster bombs were also the focus of an article in the congregation's newsletter.

Cluster bombs have poor targeting mechanisms, cover a wide land area and often fail to detonate on impact. Consequently, innocent people are killed or maimed by the bombs long after they have been dropped. The bombs have been used in over 20 countries and often affect a community for more than one generation. For more information visit: clusterbombs.mcc.org.

Peace Conference

July 28–31: **Peace Among the Peoples: Overcoming the Spirit, Logic and Practice of Violence** will be held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. The ecumenical peace conference is open to Christian peacemakers of all traditions and disciplines. Registration, schedule and programming information is available on the conference website: peace2010.net.

New Resource

MCC's new **PeaceParts toolkit** strives to introduce the breadth of MCC's work in justice and peace-building. In the lessons and materials we hope that you will also find inspiration to reflect on and enhance your understanding and commitment to peace. The toolkit includes a six-week study guide, children's resources and a Peace-Parts DVD. The toolkit is available on MCC's online store or can be borrowed from a local MCC office.



Members of Manhattan Mennonite display posters they made as part of Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia.

Days of Prayer and Action for Peace in Colombia

New Hope Fellowship (Alexandria, Va.), Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship (New York), and Circle of Mercy Congregation (Asheville, N.C.) were among dozens of churches that observed the Days of Prayer and Action for Peace in Colombia in April.

New Hope Fellowship member Nancy Sharpe wrote, “I think the event was well received . . . the kids really enjoyed connecting on the subject . . . by decorating the frames for the portraits [of Colombians displaced by the violence]. [They] learned about how Jesus, Mary and Joseph were displaced to Egypt because King Herod was killing all the baby boys.”

Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship prayed for Colombia during their worship service. Additionally, congregants made portraits for the Face the Displaced campaign. “Old and young enjoyed making the posters,” wrote Pastor Sylvia Shirk Charles. She noted that MMF did a three-week series focused on Colombia, starting with Days of Prayer and Action and continuing with two other MCC-promoted campaigns, focused on trade and immigration.

The Walker Wilson family, Susanne, Greg, and their two sons, are members of Circle of Mercy Congregation and are also currently serving a three-year assignment with MCC in Colombia. Ken Sehested, co-pastor of Circle of Mercy, wrote that the congregation marked Days of Prayer and Action by reading a meditation by Susanne Walker Wilson on their work in Colombia.

They then signed letters to President Obama seeking justice for the people of Colombia, including ending military aid and increasing funds for internally displaced persons (see a version of the letter to Congress at the link below). “Each of our members also has a copy of one of the photos of displaced persons at home [posted] wherever they might see it often. On Pentecost Sunday we’ll have everyone bring them back to worship for a special ritual of remembrance.”

The focus of Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia was on ending all military aid to Colombia, and prioritizing instead social and humanitarian funding for Colombians displaced by the civil war. Specifically, it highlighted H. Res. 1224, introduced by Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Ga.) to honor the work of Colombia’s Constitutional Court on behalf of internally displaced Colombians.

For more information on the campaign or to see a sample letter to Congress, visit washington.mcc.org/days. ✱

✱ IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3121
senate.gov

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 224-3121
house.gov

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
(202) 456-1111
president@whitehouse.gov

MCC U.S. Washington Office
920 Pennsylvania Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20003
(202) 544-6564
mccwash@mcc.org
washington.mcc.org
washingtonmemo.org

✱ SIGN UP!

Sign up for our e-mail action alert lists by going to washington.mcc.org or by contacting mccwash@mcc.org.

✱ UPCOMING DATES

July 28–31
Peace Among the Peoples
Elkhart, Ind.
peace2010.net

WASHINGTON MEMO is published quarterly by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. Send subscription requests to MCC, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500. For address changes, send both addresses to MCC.

Staff: Tammy Alexander, Rachele Lyndaker Schlabach (Director and Managing Editor), Theo Sittler, Mary Stata, Christina Warner.

All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

The Washington Office sends out timely email updates when action is needed on a specific issue.

**Join our Action Alert list.
Be an active advocate.**

Action Alerts

washington.mcc.org/alerts



Mennonite
Central
Committee
U.S.