

The Advocate

Active Prayer, a Fundamental of Faith

One of the fundamentals of faith is prayer. When I was working with congregations in either church planting or church revitalization one of the first questions we asked was, "Can you call out three to five people who would be willing to gather to be in prayer for the church, the community and the leadership." If a church

couldn't find three to five people who were willing to take time to pray, it seemed feasible that they needed to work on their own spiritual foundation to plant a new church, or revitalize the one in which they participated. Prayer is foundational in any spiritual endeavor or ministry.

If prayer is a foundational piece of any spiritual endeavor, then as the new year begins and you reflect on your own faith journey, how is your foundation? Are you able to find time each day to be in the presence of God? Many of the great teachers of the faith and contemporary spiritual direc-

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The Faith of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Putting Dr. King in perspective and in relationship to other leaders of his time, it becomes very evident that the substance of his faith distinguished him in the noblest of ways. His internal constitution was constructed of a very specific understanding of love and justice. Love for him was the personification of God in the man Jesus. He not only knew Jesus' teachings, he felt a direct spiritual connection with the love of God through him. He believed that ultimately the law of love through which the universe was created and by which it operates would prevail. He knew the Sermon on the Mount and he intended to live according to its teachings. His definition of love included forgiveness, generosity of spirit and initiatives for justice and equality because that is how he understood the nature of God. And he believed he was at one with God's intent for the world. Across the historic sweep of generations of human beings, there have risen up a few extraordinary souls who, surrounded with the immediacy of violence and the cultural reinforcements for the use of violence, have remained pacifists. Dr. King was one of those rare souls.

Reverend Dr. Carroll C. Meyer

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Special points of interest:

- Jan 12: New Testament Challenge
- Jan 13: Supper Club
- Jan 14, Jan 21: Friends Center Work Days
- Jan 21: Young Adult Party
- Jan 22: Cohousing Seminar

Active Prayer, a Fundamental of Faith

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tors agree that at some point we have to stop and be in the presence of God. We have to stop talking and begin listening. Mother Teresa has said, "The beginning of prayer is silence... God speaking in the silence of the heart?" Often times we are not used to this listening part of prayer. It taxes our patience and provides uncomfortable feelings because we might not be doing anything. I would like to suggest five easy steps to entering into the silence and becoming more attentive to the Spirit in connection with a book of prayers, or the devotional you use each morning.

1. Read an entire prayer/section slowly, out loud if possible.
2. Take some deep breathes and

3. sit quietly for a few minutes.
3. Read the prayer/selection again. What part do you respond to most strongly? Be comfortable with silent spaces between thoughts.
4. Read the prayer/selection once more. Be quiet. Be open to its effect on you. Where is God nudging you to go, to be, to listen?
5. Trust that whatever you experience during this time, God's grace is at work in you.

Now try this process with this prayer from the Iona Community, Scotland:

*You keep us loving.
You, the God whose name is love,
Want us to be like you—
To love the loveless and the unlovely
or the unlovable;*

*To love without jealousy or design or threat;
And most difficult of all, to love ourselves.
So thank you... for the loving time.*

*And in all this, you keep us,
Through hard questions with not easy answers;
Through failing where we hoped to succeed
And making an impact when we felt we were useless;
Through the patience and the dreams and the love of others;
And through Jesus Christ and his Spirit,
You keep us.
So thank you... for the keeping time,*

*And for now, and for ever.
Amen.*

Congregational Conversation Groups

As we move into the New Year, Pastor Sara is requesting that we engage in conversation about where we have been and where we want to go in 2006 and beyond. We, as a congregation have participated in these types of conversations in the past years as we have moved into the future that brought a call to Pastor Sara. Working with the deacons she has scheduled several opportunities to gather and help her understand our congregation a little better. There will be three meeting dates and times for you to choose from: Saturday, January 14 at 5:30 pm, Sunday,

Members of the congregation will meet with Pastor Sara to help her learn about the congregation and their dreams for the future of this church: January 14, February 5 and March 10.

February 5, after worship and again on Friday, March 10 at 6:30 pm. The format will be a potluck, where pastor Sara will provide the meat and beverage. After the meal we will gather in the parsonage

living room to answer five questions. Pastor Sara hopes to come way from these meeting times recognizing some patterns to congregational thinking; hopes, dreams, and/or points for healing. At the conclusion of these meetings Pastor Sara will take some spiritual retreat time to reflect, pray and discern with these issues developing a plan that will help the congregation move forward into a time of re-inventing, revitalizing, renewing who we are as we respond to God's yearning for our congregation.

San Diego Brethren Offer Support to Sister Churches

When San Diego Brethren learned that delegates of the Allegheny Mennonite Conference had voted to suspend Hyattsville Mennonite Church for becoming “open and affirming”, we joined together in signing a letter of support for the Maryland congregation. The letter stated: “As a fellow “Open and Affirming” Christian congregation, we fully believe that God welcomes all people to serve and worship in Christian love and fellowship. We therefore wish to express our support and concern for your congregation, as you continue to welcome the ministries of your LGBT sisters and brothers in your church. May

God bless and keep each one of you. You are in our prayers.”

Replying to our letter, Hyattsville Pastors Joe Roos and Cindy Lapp thanked us for our supportive and encouraging letter, and said they felt a strong bond with us as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Another bond was formed when we reached out to a fellow peace church, the All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena. Our congregational letter read in part: “We have learned that the Internal Revenue Service may remove your tax-exempt status because of an anti-war sermon given by a guest

preacher on the eve of the 2004 presidential elections. We understand that the sermon upheld your core values as a self-identified “Peace Church”, and that the preacher did not urge parishioners to support a particular candidate, but was critical of the war in Iraq. We too are a “Peace Church”, and we stand in solidarity with your right to practice your faith in freedom, to speak out against war, and to follow the example of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Sally Kurzdorfer

Friends Center Project Planting Fruit Trees

With the completion of concrete work inside the Friends Center building, construction volunteers are anxious to begin wall and roof framing. Steel framing sections and roof panels are currently being fabricated and hopefully will be delivered soon.

In the meantime, money from a grant was spent for fruit trees and irrigation materials to start a fruit orchard on the north end of the church property. For all fruit lovers, we will have peaches, nectarines, plums, apples, persimmons,

pomegranates, guavas, avocados, oranges, lemons, tangelos, red grapefruit, and tangerines. Something for everyone’s taste!

Trench digging for irrigation lines and hole digging for tree planting has been completed and the drip irrigation system has been installed.

Two opportunities to participate in workdays are coming up in January. On Saturday the 14th we will rent a chipper to chip brush that has been trimmed from trees on the north plot. The chips can

be used to control erosion on bare soil banks. On Saturday the 21st Peace Corps Association volunteers will be planting the trees in prepared holes.

All are welcome to participate in these workdays and to get the fruit trees on the way to producing a good fruit crop. We appreciate the help of all volunteers, contributors and supporters in this project for peace and justice.

Ken Aeschbacher

16th Annual Peace Writing Contest for San Diego County High School Students: “What Will My Generation Do to Help Create a World Free of War and Violence?”
Winners will receive \$100 for an essay or a creative writing (poem, story, play, etc.).
All entries must be received by Tuesday, April 25, 2006, at Peace Resource Center.

Vigil for Kidnapped Christian Peacemakers

On December 11th, Pastor Sara Haldeman-Scarr led a prayer vigil for the Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) members captured in Iraq by the Swords of Righteousness Brigade. Their lives have been threatened, and it is unknown if they are still alive. The captured peacemakers include Tom Fox, Norman Kember, James Loney, and Harmeet Singh Sooden.

International CPT members have worked for the rights of Iraqi prisoners who have been illegally detained and abused. They were among the first witnesses who spoke up about the atrocities at Abu Ghraib prison, and they continue to express loving concern for detainees, abductors, and armed parties on all sides of the tragic situation in Iraq.

The San Diego vigil, sponsored by the Witness Commission, included a litany of liberation and a litany of prayers for peace. An array of candles were lit in the darkened sanctuary as prayers were intoned for the CPT abductees, their families and friends, and for all involved. The vigil concluded with the song, 'Dona Nobis Pacem', which translates as 'Grant Us Peace'.

Sally Kurzdorfer

Seminar on Cohousing

Cohousing can overcome the alienation typically found in modern subdivisions, in which neighbors do not know each other and there is no sense of community. It is characterized by private dwellings with their own kitchen, living-dining room, etc., but also extensive common facilities. A common house may include a large dining room, kitchen, lounges, meeting rooms, recreation facilities, library, workshops, and children's space.

Cohousing can be a solution to the shortage of low to moderately priced housing in the San Diego area. To learn about this innovative lifestyle, please join us on January 22nd. For more information, contact Alan Ridley at (619) 660-4425 or alan.ridley@gcccd.edu.

Church Women United

We are just ending the Advent season, the anticipation and celebration of the Messiah's birth and our own spiritual renewal. For many of us it was also a time for family gatherings. We enjoyed Christmas music, decorations, plays, gifts, food and a general sense of peace and love. As we move into the next year, we begin our new theme "His Great Commission is our Commission Also". Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8.

Keep your calendars open for January 6, 2006, at 10:00 AM, for our Annual Meeting, which will be held at Logan Temple AME Zion Church, 302 S. 32nd St. We are planning an interesting meeting and we will install all officers.

Blessings,

Faustine Wilson, President

Church Women United in San Diego

Please call Anna Harshbarger at 619-287-8468 for luncheon reservations (\$5.00)

Sign-up Time for Interfaith Rotational Shelter

Every year our congregation participates in the Interfaith Rotational Shelter of the San Diego Ecumenical Council. We serve the homeless by providing five dinners at Our Savior's Lutheran Church. This year, we have an opportunity to help during the February 19 through March 5 rotation. If you would like to help provide and serve a meal during this time period, please contact Sally Kurzdorfer at (619) 445-6319. For information on the shelter program, visit www.interfaithshelter.org, or call (619) 702-5399.

Congregational Business Meeting Summary, December 4

- Moderator Judy Stout served as chairperson of the meeting.
- Pastor Sara Haldeman-Scarr reports that she doing strategic planning based on “*Look ahead with joy! Anticipate what God is creating.*” Sara will be holding conversation groups with the congregation at the parsonage beginning in January. She will be using those conversations to prepare a strategic plan for the church
- Sally Kurzdorfer identified 26 accomplishments of the Witness Commission. She reported that *The Gathering Place* has received donated carpeting and will have a professional painter upgrade the acoustical ceiling. Sally shared the story of hosting viewings of the presidential debates, filling a need in the community.
- Stewards Commission member Dottie Marsden shared a story about sharing church property with a number of organizations as part of witnessing for Christ. John Mortimer reported on projects to remodel the parsonage and church office. John is also working to repair a damaged bench in the patio. The church has signed an intent-to-lease contract with Cingular to build another cell phone antenna. Cingular has not indicated when it may start the project.
- Ken Aeschbacher reported Phase I of the Friends Center building

The Congregation approved an operating budget of \$120,450 for 2006.

- project is complete, which in involved installation of the concrete floor and footings. Future projects include the planting of a grove of fruit trees. Phase II of construction will begin as soon as the steel is delivered for framing. Ken and Alvin were recognized for working a minimum of 150 hours a month on the building project.
- Mary Aeschbacher reported how the Nurture Commission addresses the social needs of the congregation through pot lucks and other events, stimulates the mind through Sunday School programs and nourishes the soul through helping to plan worship services.
 - Memorial Fund treasurer Byron King reported that the board approved payments that total \$2,814.80 from unrestricted cash reserves to pay attorney William Fischbeck for reviewing and negotiating an intent-to-lease contract for a Cingular cell phone antenna.
 - Byron King reported that, with the approval from the

June 2005 Congregational Business meeting, \$2,375 had been withdrawn from the Brethren Foundation investment to pay for the balance of benevolence commitments in the Witness Commission budget. The total balance in the investment on October 31, 2005 was \$137,291.06.

- The Treasurer noted that all benevolences to organizations in the Witness Commission budget were paid. It is expected that the church will close the year with a positive balance.
- Ardyth Stern was elected Annual Conference Delegate (July 1-5 in Des Moines, Iowa) and Ken Aeschbacher was elected as the alternate. Ken Aeschbacher and Alvin Stern were elected to be voting members of the Friends Center Steering Committee, representing the Church of the Brethren. Sara Haldeman-Scarr, Gordon Jacobsen and Rae Stern will also participate in the steering committee as non-voting members.
- The congregation approved an operating budget of \$120,450 for 2006. It was understood that the Board Chair would apply for an Exceptional Needs Grant from the Pacific Southwest District to help close the gap between revenue and expenses in the budget.

New Testament Challenge

The New Year has arrived and with it, the beginning of our challenge to read through the entire New Testament in a year. We will meet every Thursday evening except the first Thursday of the month at 7 pm to discuss insights, blessings, and thoughts on the reading. The first meeting will be January 12 at 7 pm in the sanctuary and the readings covered will be Matthew 1-10. Please join us for a great time of sharing and refreshments (even if you have not finished the reading)! For more information, please call Margi Secor at 619-527-0868.

Readings for January

Jan 1-7	Matthew 1-6
Jan 8-14	Matthew 7-12
Jan 15-21	Matthew 13-18
Jan 22-28	Matthew 19-24
Jan 29-Feb 4	Matthew 25-28, Mark 1-2

Adult Sunday School

The adult Sunday School class is currently studying a book by Rabbi Harold Kushner 'How Good Do We Have to Be?' Rabbi Kushner presents his case that humans have been imperfect from the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and have continued to make mistakes down through history. Regardless, God still loves and accepts us and encourages us to strive for improvement.

The class will continue this study dealing with parent/child relations, spousal relations, and sibling rivalry as well as other issues through the month of January. All are welcome to attend at 9 am Sunday mornings. Books are available for individual purchase.

Ken Aeschbacher

Christmas Gatherings Nourish the Body and the Soul

The Advent season was one of anticipation and joy as we gathered many times to share the Spirit of the Season. Carol Hayden and her friend Elizabeth provided turkey and dressing to which we each added our own dish. We got to meet Jerome and Penny, Carol's pride and joy.

Pastor Sara opened her home to us as we shared in an open house. Many people dropped in for a cookie, or some hot mulled apple cider. Sara had her home decorated and we enjoyed the beauty of the parsonage and the background Christmas Carols.

The all Church Christmas Party helped us think about the 'true meaning of Christmas' as we watched "Charlie Browns Christmas" and reflected about the com-

mercialism and the birth of a baby. There was time to share life stories and get to know each other a little more deeply.

Two opportunities for Christmas Caroling help us share Christmas songs with the community. Linda Williams with her guitar lead the carolers throughout the Fairmount park Neighborhood.

Our Christmas Eve service of music, candlelight and communion gave a wonderful backdrop for the celebration of Christ's birth. A poem entitled "Amazing Peace" by Dr. Maya Angelou brought a global awareness of our need for Peace in the season of Christmas. Victoria Scott sang "Away in a Manger" focusing

us at the side of the manger wishing for the presence of Christ in our lives.

"And it came to pass" the Christmas Eve Cantata, highlighted the musical talents of our choir under the direction of Susan Sanner. This story of Christ's birth provided solo opportunities for Ken Aeschbacher and Cynthia Colbert. Narration was provided by Victoria Scott and dramatic readings shared by Chelsea Haro and Chris Davis.

The evening concluded by the celebration of communion and candlelight on the patio. The words and music of "Silent Night" hung in the air as we left the church. God's blessing seeped into our hearts, warm smiles appeared on our faces. The Christ child is born! Alleluia! Merry Christmas!

Fundraising for 2006 National Youth Conference

NYC registration begins on January 1, 2006. The congregation has supported several fundraising efforts in 2005. We bought "Chicken soup for a Better World" and Linda Williams donated the proceeds to the NYC fund totaling over \$100. Dylan, Chelsea, their moms –Julie and Karen provided a pancake breakfast

for the congregation that raised \$130. With Christmas approaching we had a "Chicken Soup Book sale" where you could order any number of Chicken Soup books. This sale raised about \$113. The congregational business meeting provided the setting for the next fundraiser as Richard

Pearson provided a "Potato Bar." The Potato Bar gathered another \$160 for NYC. So with registration beginning in January we have about \$500 toward the trip. Dylan Haro, Chelsea Haro and our Advisor, Robert Neighbors thanks you for your efforts.

Year - End Reflection and Thanks

Restorative Justice Mediation Program (RJMP)

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Pearl Hartz wants to extend appreciation for the generous support Church of the Brethren and its individuals have given to RJMP this past year. We are happy to report we are closing the year in the black. Can you please take a few minutes to think of someone you know (men or women), who would be possible RJMP board members? Particular skills needed are: (1) **treasurer** and/or **accountant**, (2) assistant in updating a **strategic plan**, and (3) a person (on the board or not a board member) who would work on two or three computers. The organization also needs someone to serve as (4) a good **general member** of the board. Contact Pat Perry or Pearl Hartz.

Peace Resource Center

Thanks to your generosity, the Peace Resource Center had another very successful Souper Supper on November 27, 2005. Our Birthday theme celebrated 25 years of actively working for peace and justice in San Diego. The evening included choice of 5 soups, corn bread and birthday cake, followed by great music, highlights of our year, a short history and your own Linda Williams and Candice Carter sharing stories from their very inspirational book Chicken Soup for the Soul. What a delightful time we all had! We cannot Thank You at Church of the Brethren enough for your many, many years of support and your hard work for peace.

Betty Imlay, PRC Board President

Pastor Sara

How wonderful it is to be appreciated at Christmas. The joy of sharing is so evident! Thank you for the cards, letters, and gifts you have shared with my family and me throughout the Christmas Season. Your presence at the open house, the joy of worshipping together, the gifts that appeared in my kitchen and in my mailbox, and the Christmas gift from the congregation I received just before Christmas warmed my heart and my spirit. May Christ continue to speak to your hearts in the New Year and might we together reach out to share God's peace and unconditional love to all we meet.

Toy Drive

Karen Zimmerman and Lee Albert want to thank the congregation for their generous donations this year for the toy drive. The toys will be distributed to the children of the two major hurricanes and the children of the Pakistani earthquake. There was such a huge response to Katrina nationwide that there were more toys than needed just for the children of Katrina, thus excess toys were distributed to the children of Rita and the Pakistani earthquake. Kudos to the congregation!!! This has been the best yet!!!

Poinsettia Donations

The Worship Committee would like to thank all those who contributed to the many poinsettias this year for the worship center during the Advent and Christmas holidays. They always add a festive feeling to the joyous season. Poinsettias that remain will be given to the homebound.



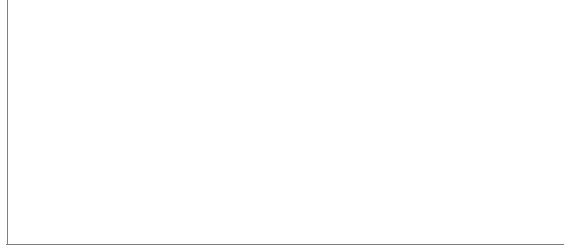
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"Continuing the work of Jesus..."

We're on the Web twice!
www.sdbrethrenchurch.org
www.sdpeacechurch.org



Living Peace Church News & Notes

Greetings from On Earth Peace! This is a column focusing on the peace & reconciliation ministries of the church.

So... what are your plans for the summer?

We know that this question is the bane of every college student's existence. There's a lot of pressure to make the most of your summer, and to have a great time, too.

That's a tall order, but we have a suggestion for you...

Apply for the **Youth Peace Travel Team (YPTT)**. A joint project of On Earth Peace, the General Board, and Outdoor Ministries Association, the team travels to Brethren camps, Annual Conference, and National Youth Conference. The YPTT leads **workshops, games, songs, and worship** which encourage campers to think about **Christian living in the context of peace and social justice**. We are looking for dynamic leaders, ages 18-22, who are interested in a summer of outdoor ministry.

You'd get a chance to hone your leadership skills, teach about living consciously, and spend a lot of time outside with new friends. Are you ready to...

A) lead a campfire, hang on a high ropes course, and sleep in a cabin, all the while planting seeds of peace and discipleship?

B) engage NYCers in conversations about conscientious objection, dealing with conflicts at home and school, and how faith and peacemaking connect?

C) go on that inter-state bus trip you've always wanted to take... weekly?

D) do all of the above — and more?



If you answered "D", you are ready to apply for the Youth Peace Travel Team!

Applications are due FEBRUARY 4, 2006 (downloadable at www.brethren.org/genbd/witness/YPTT.htm), which is right around the corner! Questions? Contact Susanna Farahat,

On Earth Peace Coordinator for Peace Education (email: sfarahat_oepa@brethren.org, or call: 410.635.8706).

On Earth Peace: An agency of the Church of the Brethren helping people discern the things that make for peace
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