

LMPC Newsletter

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

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Growing Participation in LMPC Clergy Clinics

"Thanks for a memorable *Advanced Clergy Clinic!*" headlined the e-mail message recently received from a current participant. "I'm not sure I can sum up how significant was the entire time. The impact my work with LMPC has had on my ministry is enormous."

Those who most appreciate the contributions of family systems theory to the understanding of human functioning also know that lasting change in ourselves requires a long-term effort.

Since 1999, therefore, LMPC has offered its *Clergy Clinic in Family Emotional Process*. The one-year program is designed to introduce participants to the basic concepts of Bowen family systems theory, as they apply to both family and church.

Beginning in 2000, LMPC added the *Advanced Clergy Clinic in Family Emotional Process*, with LMPC staff and prominent guest speakers offering varied presentations.

The 2006-2007 program year has seen a marked increase in participation in these programs. The basic *Clergy Clinic* has grown to fifty participants.

In response to the increased interest in *Clergy Clinic*, therefore, the 2007-2008 program will be expanded. Two separate groups of participants (Group A and Group B) will each have their own track, meeting throughout the year.

This change is designed to eliminate waiting lists, allow for expansion of the program, and maintain an optimal learning environment for participants.

Advanced Clergy Clinic (ACC) has also remained well-attended, with thirty-five participants this year.

John Casey, who attended the program for six years, has reflected on the importance of longer engagement with Bowen theory: "To keep learning and living out family systems theory at home and at church, I needed the year after year community of the *Advanced Clergy Clinic*."

The recent fall sessions of *Advanced Clergy Clinic* were notable for the guest presentations of Dr. Michael E. Kerr, from the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family in Washington, D.C., where LMPC staff have journeyed for training.

Dr. Kerr offered one way of thinking about the goal of working at self through a long-term effort.

We all, Kerr said, "have stimuli coming in from the social environment, real or imagined, and they generate threat and anxious responses.... Bowen theory is like putting on a lens that you try to learn. You're trying to process some of these inputs through this

lens – such as being able to see a triangle."

"People can get better at that," Dr. Kerr said. "And in getting better at that I think it becomes more interesting. People can be more neutral about it, take it less personally, and then that puts them in a better position to think clearly about how they're going to respond."

This year's *Advanced Clergy Clinic* participants look forward to our remaining guest presenters. In January 2007, Ronald W. Richardson will present on *Birth Order and Leadership*. In April, psychiatrist Judith M. Bowen will present on *Defining a Self in One's Own Family*.

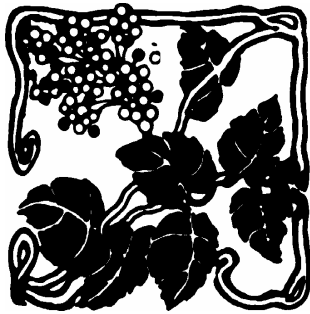
LMPC plans to arrange an equally

attractive lineup of guest presenters for the 2007-2008 *Advanced Clergy Clinic*.

Given the growing interest in our *Clergy Clinics*, it's not too early to plan to attend next year's programs. While no quick fix, a long-term effort to integrate family theory into one's functioning as a leader pays dividends.

In the words of Tom Sakiyama, "As a third year participant in the clinics, I've witnessed many, many of my colleagues transformed into more effective leaders through the ACC training."

Contact the LMPC office for more information on the 2007-2008 programs.



2007 Training Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- March 12-16 - Tulsa, OK
- May 7-11 - Plymouth, MA
- August 6-10 - Glen Ellyn, IL
- October 8-12 - Columbia, SC
- November 12-16 - Portland, OR

Here I Stand:

- March 20-22 - Portland, OR
- August 21-23 - Bensenville, IL

Healthy Congregations:

- March 9-10 - Brentwood, TN
- May 18-19 - Minneapolis, MN

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations:

- April 27-28 - Newport, KY
- October 12-13 - Washington, D.C.
- November 9-10 - Houston, TX

Leadership & Anxiety in the Church:

- March 2 - Warren, MI
- March 22 - Albuquerque, NM
- April 20 - Columbia, SC
- October 2 - Kettering, OH
- October 30 - Philadelphia, PA

For registration brochures contact LMPC at 630-627-0507.

Christmas Blessings

As we await the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, LMPC would like to wish you a blessed holiday season. May the Advent season be a time when all heed the call of the Prince of Peace and embrace his message of nonviolence, justice, and love.

Commentary

Incarnation and Vulnerability

by Charletta Erb

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.”

— *Philippians 2:5-7*

What most inspires me and convinces me of the Divine nature of Jesus are his traits that are backwards from typical human ways. For me, it is his upside-down kingdom that affirms that Jesus is truly the Son of God.

It is not the healing miracles that most inspire me, though they are important. It is his way of being a servant leader, the opposite of what everyone expected of a Messiah.

Jesus came not as a king with trumpets blaring, on a white horse. He was a vulnerable little baby, born on a worrisome night to a poverty-stricken couple.

Jesus mingled with the people of low social class, the sinners. He upset the status quo. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He washed his disciples’ feet. He died between two thieves on a cross. Perhaps the most important thing Jesus reveals to me is that God accomplishes God’s will through powerful vulnerability.

My favorite images of Christmas last year came from Trafalgar Square in the center of London, famous for its old statues of war heroes. A new addition last year was a sculpture of Alison Lapper, a disabled, pregnant woman, on the fourth corner of the square. Alison gazed away from the square’s center, seemingly unimpressed with all the fuss



and glory of military might on display.

In the center of the square at Christmastime, was a statue of baby Jesus, a naked little infant, completely human, taken from St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church. He was lying just below the famous centerpiece of the square, Lord Nelson’s column surrounded by massive stone lions.

In my imagination, Jesus smiled at Alison Lapper. Both knew the transformative power of vulnerability. The two are inseparable in my mind.

During the Christmas season last year, indeed all winter, my heart went out to the four hostages, held captive in Iraq, who were serving with Christian Peacemaker Teams. On March 10, the body of one of the men, Tom Fox, was found in Baghdad. Thirteen days later, the other men were released.

With the bittersweet sense of resurrection mingled with death, I wrestled with this “backward” God who demonstrated in the life of Jesus that we are called to move out beyond security. These peacemakers who followed Jesus’ example inspired me, while critics called them naïve for going anywhere in a war zone without armored cars.

What is the power of vulnerability, or of a little babe, to stand against the powers of violence? God’s character is a mystery to us, contrasting our human instincts for survival and security.

The mystery is revealed in the Christmas carol by Robert Southwell, sung powerfully, even shockingly, in a Christmas concert I attended at St. Paul’s Cathedral:

*This little Babe, so few days old,
Is come to rifle Satan’s fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake,
Though he himself for cold do
shake;
For in this weak unarm’d wise
The gates of hell he will surmise.*

Such vulnerability in human terms is really great strength on God’s terms. That sentiment is at the heart of a song included when I was leading worship with those who kept vigil for months in Trafalgar Square on behalf of the Christian Peacemaker Teams captives in Iraq.

Coming out of the Iona Community, the song includes the lines: *Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate, light is stronger than darkness, life is stronger than death.*

God shows us in the incarnation that, ultimately, love cannot be overcome. Indeed, it empowers us to live in resurrection hope.

Since God demonstrated the way to transform and overcome evil, we must take courage and have faith that we are secure in love, even when conflicts tempt us to close down and blame and attack – even while humans call us naïve for going into danger zones without an armored car.

The Prayer Closet

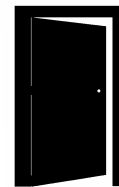
As we celebrate the God who comes in weakness, we pray for those who live under the threat of violence.

We pray for William Valencia, a Columbian Mennonite pastor, and his wife, Marina Gil, who recently visited LMPC. Due to their ministry to people displaced by civil war, they had to flee Columbia amidst death threats. In January, after six months of sanctuary in Chicago, they return to Columbia.

We pray for them to know God’s presence in the midst of danger. We pray for just peace and sustenance for those who have lost homes and loved ones.

We pray for an end to the cyclical violence – that Columbians may have abundant life and freedom from fear.

May faith-filled churches in Columbia be channels for Christ’s healing, wholeness, and peace.



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The Bookshelf

Peace, Justice... and Order?

by Bob Williamson

At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security, and the Wisdom of the Cross, edited by Duane K. Friesen and Gerald W. Schlabach. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2005. 456 pp. \$20.00.

September 11, 2001, raised the anxiety of many, while occasioning thought in a few. The editors and authors of *At Peace and Unafraid* are clearly among the latter.

The twenty-one authors of this collection of essays were part of a two-year "Peace Theology Project" concluded in 2004, sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

More than a response to 9/11, *At Peace and Unafraid* is an effort to address questions often bypassed among Mennonites and others committed to nonviolent discipleship.

According to Gerald Schlabach, "The Biblical vision of *shalom* includes safety and freedom from harm." This invites more reflection than has been traditional in Mennonite theology about what

contributes to the stability and social order of the larger society.

The contributors to *At Peace and Unafraid* wrestle with notions of "security" and "public order." Are these legitimate, even necessary, concerns of those committed to Christ's way of peace? If so, how can such concerns be addressed in ways that fulfill the biblical vision of *shalom* rather than rationalize accommodation to violence?

In his chapter, *In Search of Security*, Duane Friesen observes that "many Christians committed to nonviolence have accepted the assumption that public order is ultimately dependent upon violent force."

This "ontology of violence" cuts short efforts both to see the world more accurately, and to fashion an effective approach to chaos and killing that is more than mere counter-violence.

Friesen makes a provocative distinction between coercion and violence. "Coercion," he says, "is an element in the process of socialization that 'orders' individual human life to serve a broader communal good.... [C]oercion is not inherently violent."

It's in the socialization process in the daily life of families and communities that a culture of peace is created and maintained, Friesen points out, not

through the "top-down" actions of the state or the violence of a militarized police.

At Peace and Unafraid is grounded in biblical reflection. For example, the Old Testament "wisdom" motif is cited by Lydia Harder as a scriptural mooring for efforts toward building institutions that seek the common good in society.

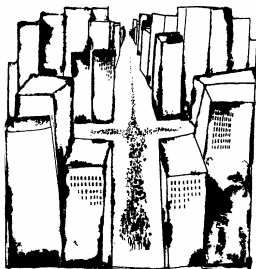
At Peace and Unafraid, however, is Christocentric throughout. Its many authors orbit around the cross and its wisdom in their varied reflections toward a faithfully responsible stance.

The book adds practical experiences and proposals to its theology. Alfred Neufeld reflects on issues of security in Paraguay from the perspective of Anabaptist theology, while Alix Lozano describes activities of the Columbian Mennonite Church in support of a more humane and peaceful society.

At Peace and Unafraid, with its varied views, unresolved tensions, and unanswered questions, nevertheless makes a significant contribution to a contemporary effort to think faithfully about the challenges posed by violence and chaos.

It's important reading for anyone committed both to nonviolence and to thoughtful engagement with our society.

Until February 28, *At Peace and Unafraid* may be purchased from LMPC for \$18.00 (10% off the regular price), plus \$3.00 shipping. Illinois residents please add 6.75% sales tax (\$1.35).



Previews

A Selection of LMPC Winter Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- At Southern Hills United Methodist Church, Tulsa, OK, March 12-16.
- For Illinois South Conference, UCC, at Trinity United Church of Christ, Belleville, IL, March 26-30.

Advanced Clergy Clinic:

- At Redeemer Lutheran Church, Hinsdale, IL, January 29-31.

Clergy Clinic:

- At First Church of Lombard, UCC, Lombard, IL, February 5-7.

Here I Stand:

- At Bridgeport United Church of Christ, Portland, OR, March 20-22.

Leadership and Anxiety in the Church:

- At First United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, MI, February 19.

- At Warren United Methodist Church, Warren, MI, March 2.
- At All Saints Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM, March 22.

Healthy Congregations:

- At Orangethorpe United Methodist Church, Fullerton, CA, January 20-21.
- For Southeast Unity Ministries at First Unity Church, St. Petersburg, FL, February 9-10; Atlanta North Unity Church, Marietta, GA, February 16-17; Unity of Delray Beach, Delray Beach, FL, February 23-24.
- At First United Methodist Church, Belvedere, IL, February 24.
- For Episcopal Diocese of New York at St. Michael's Church, New York, NY, February 28-March 1.
- For Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at Mercy Center, Farmington Hills, MI, March 3.

- For Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics, Reformed Church in America, at Middlebush Reformed Church, Middlebush, NJ, March 3.
- At Brentwood Presbyterian Church, Brentwood, TN, March 9-10.
- At St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church, Pewaukee WI, March 16-17.

Other:

- "Let's Dance: Living Within Emotional Triangles" at Epiphany Catholic School, Chicago, IL, December 15.
- "Through the Impenetrable Thicket of Triangles: A Meddlesome Brother's Adventures in Differentiation" at Family Service Center, Wilmette, IL, February 2.
- "Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches" at Western Yearly Meeting of Friends Church, Plainfield, IN, February 17.
- "Transforming Church Conflict" for Episcopal Diocese of New York at St. Michael's Church, New York, NY, February 28.

The A-V Shelf

Peace: The Best of the Best

by Erin Dalian

Peace DVD: Especially for Youth. Mennonite Media Productions, 2 hours, 2005. DVD.

In **Peace DVD: Especially for Youth**, it is said that peace is “everything being the best it can be.” While the statement may sound trite, the resource explores how to achieve such peace by addressing the question, “What can one person do?”

Peace DVD is divided into six sessions and offers multiple topics to discuss with pre-teens, teenagers, or young adults. With the accompanying study guide, the leader can dive into such topics as: *Peace with God*, *Peace and Community*, *Peace and the Earth*, *Peace and Service*, *Peace and the Nation*, and *Bits and Peaces*.

Peace with God invites viewers to reflect on God’s reconciling acts in our lives. The challenge to see the Sermon on the Mount as a blueprint for our lives is presented as the key to overcoming evil.

Peace and Community moves viewers to a more concrete setting for implementing the idea of peace – their own community. Through examples such as Habitat for Humanity, “Challenge Day,” business collectives, and fair trade coffee, the vision of individuals and groups making everything “the best it can be” is lifted up.

Viewers have an opportunity to discuss vegetarian options, an eco-farm, and locally grown produce in *Peace and the Earth*.



By exploring issues involving food and its impact on the world, the group will see how decisions in all aspects of life can be addressed through the lens of Christ’s call to peacemaking.

Peace and Service invites each individual to think about the role they can play in working toward peace by serving others. The session includes segments highlighting young people who have chosen to participate in voluntary service programs throughout the U.S. and beyond. Serving others, just as Jesus was a servant to all, is presented as a path to justice.

Peace and Nation asks viewers to consider conscientious objection to war and what it means to give loyalty to Jesus above nation, class, or ethnic group. The last segment of this session shows a Cheyenne peace chief who agreed to reenact a massacre that his tribe suffered. Through the experience of the reenactment, which at first brought forth anger, the peace chief is able to achieve healing.

The final section, *Bits and Peaces*, presents a pantomime play that serves as an allegory on the escalating nature of violence. Afterward viewers are encouraged to review what they have learned over the six sessions about what one person can do for peace.

Peace DVD takes viewers on a comprehensive journey of peace, challenging them to do their part to make everything – whether at the interpersonal, community, national, global, or environmental level – “the best it can be.”

To borrow this DVD, call LMPC at 630-627-0507.

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