

'PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU' WAR & CONFLICTS

PENTECOST SUNDAY, YEAR C

Lectionary Texts: Gen 11:1-9 Psalm 104:24-34, 35b John 14:8-17, 25-27 Acts 2:1-21 Ro 8:14-17

Focus Text: John 14:8-17, 25-27

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. ¹⁵ If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [the Spirit] nor knows [the Spirit]. You know [the Spirit], because [the Spirit] abides with you, and [the Spirit] will be in you."

²⁵ "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

NRSV

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

The LORD looks down from heaven; [the LORD] sees all humankind. From where [the LORD] sits enthroned [the LORD] watches all the inhabitants of the earth— [the One] who fashions the hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds. A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save... Our soul waits for the LORD; [the LORD] is our help and shield. Our heart is glad in [the LORD], because we trust in [the LORD's] holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

Psalm 33:13-17, 20-22

In my distress I cry to the LORD, that [the LORD] may answer me: "Deliver me, O LORD, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue... Woe is me, that I am an alien in Meshech, that I must live among the tents of Kedar. Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war."

Psalm 120:1-2, 5-7

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:1-3

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Matthew 5:9

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

BY FATHER DAVID MCBRIAR, O.F.M.
ECUMENICAL OFFICER, DIOCESE OF RALEIGH

Lectionary Texts for This Week:

Genesis 11:1-9

Robert Alter, in his endearing and enduring work, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), identifies the Tower of Babel as a "monotheistic fable." (p 58) The tale has often been interpreted as an attempt to scale the heights of heaven. But according to Alter, the story is against the overwhelming confidence of humanity in its own power, in this case, the power of its technology. As in the Garden of Eden, we want to "be like God," dissatisfied with our creatureliness. Confusion and chaos result in this struggle for power.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

This is a magnificent hymn praising God's creation, wisdom and power. Again, God is the center of this hymn, not man/woman. Our gaze is toward God. The marvels of creation stir the psalmist's rhapsody on God's goodness. Just as God's spirit (30) is the source of all life in nature, so is God's Holy Spirit the source of all supernatural life. In the *sensus plenior*, this "Holy Spirit" has been applied by tradition to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is the Holy Spirit Jesus promised to send his disciples.

John 14:8-17, 25-27 (Focus Text)

Chapters 14-17 in John's gospel contain the body of Jesus' Last Discourse. Raymond Brown, in his *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996, pp. 352-358) says that this discourse is comparable to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. The Johannine Jesus is still in the world and no longer in the world. He seeks to console those he must leave. But, at the same time, he wants to encourage them, much as a parent to his or her children when the time for leaving arrives. It is here where Jesus identifies the one who will be "alongside them." It is the Paraclete. The Paraclete dwells in all who love Jesus and keep his commandments and is with them forever. (353) The Paraclete is in an adversarial relationship to the world because what the Paraclete inspires is peace, whereas the world fosters discord.

Acts 2:1-21

Acts uses the imagery of Moses on the mountaintop with its mighty wind and tongues of fire to paint the picture of the new Sinai. This Pentecost is the renewal of God's covenant. But now there are nationalities that will receive the covenant as a result of the fearless evangelizing of the disciples of Jesus. Even the Gentiles will be made God's people. This Pentecost is more momentous than Sinai. To be noted for our purposes is the oneness of the nations. No one nation has priority, rather all have been gifted and all in turn must recognize that giftedness.

Romans 8:14-17

Paul calls us to live, not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. Here again, the dichotomy is made between this world and the Kingdom, the peace that Jesus brings and the peace the world cannot bring. Living according to the spirit of Jesus is to fulfill our adopted status as God's children. This is what God has predestined and it is our claim on God's mercy and love.

PASTORAL REFLECTION

BY FATHER DAVID MCBRIAR, O.F.M.

As a Franciscan friar, surely you will indulge me if I begin this reflection with a legend from *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi*. It's the story, "How St. Francis Taught the People of Gubbio to Feed their Wolf," a strangely humorous account with layer upon layer of meaning.

In a nutshell, the people of a little Italian town named Gubbio have a problem. The bloody remains of some of their townsfolk start showing up on the streets of their beautiful city when people awake in the morning. Since the citizens of Gubbio are a very proud people, they are convinced that a stranger passing through must be responsible for the terrible crime. Nevertheless, they begin to lock their doors at night. When more deaths follow, the same denial: no one in Gubbio could be responsible for such a thing. And then, someone sees a wolf wandering the streets one night after everyone has retired. The people realize that a wolf is living in the dark woods on one side of their fair city. Of course, this could not be their wolf because they never asked this wolf to come to Gubbio. Immediately, they begin to find ways to dispatch this creature.

After a number of futile attempts, the people get desperate enough to approach the holy man of Assisi who has a reputation for being able "to talk to animals." St. Francis "speaks" to the wolf and gives the people what appears to be some strange and not entirely welcome advice. He tells the people of Gubbio that they must "feed" their wolf. At first, the people are not impressed with this suggestion and begin to wonder why they ever approached the holy man in the first place. But then, something miraculous happens. Bit by bit, people begin to leave food out for the wolf as he prowls the streets of their town.

The violent deaths cease, and it is not long before every man, woman and child has learned how to "feed their wolf." As a result, the people of Gubbio are transformed. They become more easy-going, less arrogant human beings.

Is this just a sweet legend that makes us smile, made more for Disney than for real life? Or, is the story a life-mirroring parable? The people of Gubbio are haughty folk who blame their troubles on strangers, refusing to acknowledge that the problem is their own. Is the wolf their way of life? Does everyone have a hungry wolf inside?

What's yours? What needs to be changed, healed, and tamed in your life? What's ours? What needs to be healed in our nation's life? What is its "wolf"? What about your community? Your city? Is the invitation of St. Francis the invitation to everyone with a wolf inside? Perhaps his invitation is to first acknowledge what you fear. In this way, perhaps you may come to a new and healthier understanding of yourself, of your country, of your church, and of your community. Maybe it is when we acknowledge the enemy, even feed him or her, that it is then that we tame the enemy.

As I write (August 10, 2006) war is raging in Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, and the Occupied Territories. Killing continues in Afghanistan and the Sudan, and the United States and Britain are on heightened alert for a terrorist attack. We are living in a society which believes that our safety can only be achieved through domination, or others will seek to dominate us first. The world is not at peace. Moreover, on the home front, our cities continue to be torn by racial and economic discrimination. Is a living wage possible? Is health care for all possible? These are human issues and as such they claim our individual and our communal response. If we are to fulfill our vocation as believers, as faith filled people, our churches and synagogues and mosques must ask: "What does the city need? How can we help?" We can't be paralyzed by the magnitude of the task.

One example of response is given by Tikkun, which means "reconciliation." The Tikkun community of Christians, Jews and Muslims ask, "Where is our strategy of generosity? Don't people have an enormous capacity for goodness and generosity? Can't we recognize the humanity of the other? Can't we repent and atone for the long history of insensitivity and cruelty to the other side?" What has proved unrealistic time and again – whether we are talking about the U.S. policy in Vietnam and Iraq or Israeli and Arab policies in the Middle East – is the fantasy that one more war will put an end to wars. The path to peace must be a path of peace. This is the belief, the hope, the challenge of Tikkun. Our well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else. This is not only the peace for which Jesus prayed, it is at the same time the path to that peace. There is within every man and woman the power for good. We Christians call this the Holy Spirit. This Spirit was poured out upon us at the creation of the world when the Creator breathed into us a soul, making us in the very image of the Creator. Jesus calls this "breath of God-life" the Holy Spirit. It is given to us, each of us and all of us. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, is our Consoler, our Advocate for peace. The world does not give us this peace, if by the "world" we mean the spirit of domination and power, the spirit of aggression and control.

Are we the new people of Gubbio, haughty folk who blame our troubles on strangers, refusing to acknowledge that the problem is ours? Has the wolf become our way of life? What needs to be changed, healed, and tamed in our own lives, our nation's life, or in our congregations? Is the invitation of St. Francis the invitation to everyone with a wolf inside? Perhaps his invitation is to first acknowledge what we fear. This may be the beginning of claiming that same Holy Spirit which is Jesus' spirit of peace and reconciliation.

WORSHIP AID – 'PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU'

RESPONSIVE READING

Child 1: Do you come in peace?

All: What do you have to do with peace?

Child 2: Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?

Child 1: Cries of fear are heard—terror, not peace.

All: We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there was only terror.

Child 2: The Lord is Peace.

Child 1: This is what the Lord says: "I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid."

All: We will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make us dwell in safety.

Child 2: I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever.

All: We will submit to God and be at peace with God; in this way prosperity will come to us.

Child 1: My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.

All: Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

Child 2: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. . . . And he will be called . . . Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

All: The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to the people on whom God's favor rests.

Child 1: Christ came and preached peace to you: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

All: LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.

Child 2: As God has sent me, I am sending you. Blessed are the peacemakers.

All: How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace.

Child 1: All your daughters and sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children's peace.

Child 2: You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

All: Amen.

(adapted from "Peace in the Home," Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day 2005, wm.gc.adventist.org/AbusePreventionEmphasisDay/2005%20Abuse%20Prevention%20Day/APED2005.htm)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Spirit of God, forgive us. For two thousand years, we Christians have failed to live the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Instead of sharing with our sisters and brothers, instead of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and healing the sick, we have stored up treasures and sent from our door the vulnerable, sick, hungry and homeless.

Instead of forgiving, we have sought vengeance, retribution, harsh punishment and death. We have asked the state to kill in our name.

Instead of fighting against injustice, we have dominated, discriminated and demeaned; we have benefited from the economic oppression of our neighbors.

Instead of loving our enemies, we have demonized them. Instead of peace, nonviolence and reconciliation, we Christians have unleashed in your name: violent crusades, slavery, the Holocaust, and nuclear war. We have killed through landmines, depleted uranium, bombing runs, smart weapons and economic sanctions.

We confess that we have neglected our prayer life and community building. We have lost our way and are not the people you called us to be. Accept our prayer and restore us. In your mercy, forgive us. Forgive us. Forgive us. Amen.

(edited, by Janet Chisholm, Vice Chair of Episcopal Peace Fellowship, from "Lenten Fast from Violence 2005," World Council of Churches, www2.wcc-coe.org/dov.nsf/0/88fedfe1d5295b9ec1256fd300352f8c?OpenDocument&TableRow=6.4)

SUGGESTED HYMNS

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ✓ Let There Be Peace on Earth | GA 731/CH 677/UMH 431 |
| ✓ For the Healing of the Nations | CH 668/MW 685/GA 719/UMH 42/
NCH 576 |
| ✓ Comfort, Comfort You My People | PH 3/MW 264/NCH 101/LW 28/TH 67/
GA 326/CH 122 |
| ✓ Blest Be the Tie That Binds | AM 522/CM 359/BH 387/PH 438/
MW 680/LW 295/NCH 393/UMH 557/
CH 433 |

w Hymnal Legend w

- | |
|-------------------------------------------|
| † UMH – United Methodist Hymnal |
| † PH – Presbyterian Hymnal |
| † TH – The Hymnal 1982 (Episcopal) |
| † MW – Moravian Book of Worship |
| † AM – African Methodist Episcopal |
| † CM – Christian Methodist Episcopal |
| † CH—Chalice Hymnal (Disciples of Christ) |
| † BH – Baptist Hymnal |
| † NCH—New Century Hymnal (UCC) |
| † GA—Gather Hymnal (Roman Catholic) |

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

Prayer for Peace

O God, Creator of the universe, who extends your concern over every creature and guides the events of history to the goal of salvation, we acknowledge your strong love when you break the resistance of humanity. In a world torn by strife and discord, you make us ready for reconciliation. Renew for us the wonders of your mercy. Send forth your Spirit to work in the intimacy of hearts, that enemies may begin to dialogue, that adversaries may shake hands and peoples may encounter one another in harmony. May we all commit ourselves to the sincere search for true peace which will extinguish all arguments, for charity which overcomes hatred, for pardon which disarms revenge. In the name of Christ, Amen.

(adapted from Pope John Paul II, "Prayer for Peace," www.usccb.org/liturgy/prayersforpeace.shtml)

Where All Can Speak Gently and Truthfully

Loving God,

In the not so distant past, matters of war and peace have caused much division and pain in our churches.

Please guide us through our discussions about war, the draft, and conscientious objection.

Help each of us to be prayerfully open to your calling in our lives. Remind us to be in continuous prayer for one another so that we can support and respect one another even when we do not agree.

May our churches provide a rare sanctuary in our society where people seek to genuinely understand and love one another.

Help us to create a place of safety for differences of opinion. Let this be a place where all can speak gently and truthfully without fear of judgment and hate.

Teach us how to be united by your love even when we are not united in our opinions.

Amen.

(by Audrey Osborne Mazur, from "Lenten Fast from Violence 2005," World Council of Churches, www2.wcc-coe.org/dov.nsf/0/88fedfe1d5295b9ec1256fd300352f8c?OpenDocument&TableRow=6.4)

Prayer in Time of War

Eternal God, in whose will is our enduring peace, we find ourselves again in the wilderness of war. With hopes dashed on the rocks of failed diplomacy among nations filled with distrust and fear, we cry out to you for mercy.

With memories of a fragile peace now lost, we ask for courage to face the uncertainty of a world vulnerable to unimaginable death. God, in your mercy, save us.

Loving God, we confess our complicity in the misunderstanding and hostility which have brought us to this tragic hour. Forgive our callousness to the hurts of others and our contempt for the heritage that shapes their lives.

Hear the lament of our hearts for anything and everything worthy of peace which we have neglected on the road to war. God, in your mercy, forgive us.

Righteous God, in whose sacred justice both mercy and truth embrace, forbid that we fail to see in all persons, including those we now call our enemy, the grandeur of your image and likeness.

Across the chasm of our separation, open our eyes to our common humanity pronounced good by your voice at the dawn of creation. God, in your mercy, reconcile your people.

Saving God, sustain us in the things necessary for a just peace in the aftermath of this conflagration. Deliver us and all others from the use of wanton weapons of wrath which promise only to poison the earth and fan the expanding fires of human hatred.

Deliver us from the temptation to imitate what we say we deplore and from cowardice to embody the costly freedom we seek to defend. God, in your mercy, save us from the enemy within our hearts.

Healing God, guardian of those in harm's way, hold close our sons and daughters who serve our nation in this conflict fraught with contradiction. Return them soon and safely to us and the land of their hopes and dreams.

In obedience to your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray as well for those who are at enmity with us in this struggle and who are sons and daughters beloved in their own land. Return them soon and safely to their families and the land of their hopes and dreams. God, in your mercy, hasten the end of this war.

Eternal God, One in the communion of the Holy Trinity, by the power of your Holy Spirit transform your world into the global family you created us to be.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, whose promise we remember in faith: "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid."

Amen.

(from "A Service for Peace In a Time of War," United Church of Christ, www.ucc.org/worship/ways/peace/iturgy.pdf)

ADDITIONAL HELPS

• QUOTES •

It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them.

Alfred Adler

Peace is the work of justice indirectly, in so far as justice removes the obstacles to peace; but it is the work of charity (love) directly, since charity... causes peace.

Thomas Aquinas

We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing that we know about living.

General Omar Bradley

We used to wonder where war lived, what it was that made it so vile. And now we realize that we know where it lives, that it is inside ourselves.

Albert Camus

The non-violent technique does not depend for its success on the goodwill of the oppressor, but rather on the unfailing assistance of God.

César Chávez

There is no squabbling so violent as that between people who accepted an idea yesterday and those who will accept the same idea tomorrow.

Christopher Morley

• PERSONAL VIGNETTE •

THE RUTBA HOUSE—A MODEL OF LOVE

BY JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE

When the United States invaded Iraq in the spring of 2003, my wife Leah and I were part of a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation that went to Baghdad to be with the people there while the bombs fell. We knew no way to stop the bombs from falling. But we believed that part of what it means to follow Jesus is to stand with those who are suffering as they suffer. So we followed Jesus to Baghdad.

It wasn't long, however, before Saddam's police decided they didn't want Christian peacemakers in Baghdad any more than the U.S. Army did. So we were deported in three taxi cabs by way of the highway that goes to Jordan through the western desert of Iraq. Close to a town called Rutba, one of our cars hit a piece of the shrapnel that littered the road after nearly two weeks of bombing. A tire blew and the car careened into a side ditch. But those of us in the other two cars were driving so fast that we didn't notice our friends were no longer behind us. By the time we returned, we found the car overturned and splattered with blood and our friends gone.

What we didn't know then was that a car of Iraqis had seen our friends in the ditch by the roadside and stopped to pick them up. They carried them into the town of Rutba and found a doctor who spoke perfect English. "Three days ago your country bombed our hospital," the doctor said. "But we will take care of you." He sewed up two of our friends and saved their lives.

When we found our friends and heard this story, I thanked the doctor and asked what we owed him for his services. "You do not owe me anything," he said. "Please just tell the world what has happened in Rutba." We came back to the U.S. telling that story every chance we could get. The more we told it, the more we realized that it was a modern day Good Samaritan story. The people who were supposed to be our enemies had stopped by the roadside, pulled our friends out of a ditch, and saved their lives. In the midst of a terrible war, God had sent some Iraqis to show us what love looks like.

After returning from Iraq, we moved to Durham, North Carolina to start a house of hospitality in the summer of 2003. We said we wanted to try to practice in our daily lives the love we had seen in Iraq. So we called our little experiment the Rutba House.

What we do here day in and day out is hardly as dramatic as rescuing enemies from a roadside while bombs are falling. But the drama of Rutba was not the important thing. What mattered was the gift of love. We've tried to find ways to shape our community life together around receiving and sharing God's love.

So we remind ourselves of how much God loves us by reading Scripture and praying together each morning and evening. We celebrate the supper in which Jesus gave us his body and blood while we were living as his enemies. We share our space, our money, our meals and our stuff with one another. We take Jesus at his word—"my peace I give to you"—and try to live together in unity. We fail at this pretty often, but we are reminded of the forgiving love that got us into this thing to start with. And we try to live in that love.

We invite others into this little experiment. Neighbors join us for dinner and we make space for a couple of people who are homeless to come and live with us. Almost always these are people who struggle with addiction. They help us see how many of our own struggles could be named "addiction." We struggle together, believing that God still loves us even when it looks like everything is falling apart. We try to live as Sarah and Abraham learned to live—"by faith."

Not long ago a kid from our neighborhood stole some money from a community member's wallet. It certainly wasn't the first time this had happened, but in this case, we were almost sure we knew who had done it. We confronted her and found the money she'd taken in her sock drawer. We talked with her about why stealing is wrong and we talked about repentance. Then the woman she had stolen from said she forgave her. But the kid just stood there crying, overcome by grief and fear.

The next day I watched as the woman from our community returned from a local pool with a carload of kids from the neighborhood. As they filed out of the back seat, there was the kid who had stolen the day before, laughing with all the rest. As the Book of Isaiah says, her tears had turned to laughter. She skipped across the street with an inflatable alligator float under her arm, and I thought about how forgiveness has the power to transform. I remembered those good Iraqis who gave their enemies a ride to Rutba. And I thought of a God who returned to the company of those who betrayed him to say, "I give you my peace."

• CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES •

- W www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/issues/peace/peace_issue.html—North Carolina Council of Churches' "Peace" page, providing the Council's focus, upcoming event notification, and many useful links.
- W www.ncpeacejustice.org—North Carolina Peace and Justice Coalition, a movement-building coalition whose primary purpose is to coordinate and support the work of existing groups and build linkages and solidarity across the many issues of peace and justice. The Coalition links the wars abroad with the assaults at home, and U.S. militarism to the corporate economic interests it serves.
- W www.ncpeaceaction.org—Peace Action, the North Carolina affiliate of the effective national organization. From the 1963 treaty to ban above-ground nuclear testing, to the 1996 signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, from ending the war in Vietnam, to blocking weapons sales to human rights abusing countries, and eliminating funding for new nuclear weapons, Peace Action and its 100,000 members have been, and continue to be, at the forefront of the international movement for peace.
- W www.cpt.org—Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) offers an organized, nonviolent alternative to war and other forms of lethal inter-group conflict. CPT provides organizational support to persons committed to faith-based nonviolent alternatives in situations where lethal conflict is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy. CPT seeks to enlist the response of the whole church in conscientious objection to war, and in the development of nonviolent institutions, skills and training for intervention in conflict situations. They have maintained violence reduction teams in places such as Gaza/West Bank, Bosnia, Columbia, Iraq, and along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- W www.mcc.org—Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is a premier relief organization with a particular historical emphasis on the task of peacemaking. MCC seeks to demonstrate God's love by working among people suffering from poverty, conflict, oppression and natural disaster, serving as a channel for interchange by building mutually transformative relationships. MCC strives for peace, justice and the dignity of all people by sharing its experiences, resources and faith in Jesus Christ.

W www.peacetaxfund.org—National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund is dedicated to the implementation of taxation policies that allow conscientious objectors to pay all of their taxes towards peaceful, non-military government expenditures. It seeks to grant conscientious objectors the right to refrain from paying for war, just as they already have the right to refrain from fighting in war.

KEY FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

- q According to the National Priorities Project, the war in Iraq has cost the U.S. over \$315 billion. The average cost per person is \$1,065, per hour is \$10.18 million, and per day is \$244 million. The taxpayers of North Carolina have paid \$8.5 billion for the war in Iraq. Taxpayers in Charlotte, for example, have contributed almost \$700 million, while Raleigh taxpayers have paid almost \$350 million. In addition, the war has cost Asheville over \$60 million, Boone \$7.5 million, Person county \$35 million, and Union county \$170 million.¹
- q As of July 2006, 57 native North Carolinians have been killed in the Iraq war. Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, NC, is home to one of the largest military bases in the U.S. with about 46,000 active-duty soldiers.²
- q Governments around the world continue to allocate vast amounts of resources toward military expenditures. There is an enormous gap between the resources allocated for war-making and those directed toward peace-making. For example, the Pentagon has requested \$440 billion for 2007. This does not include war spending or spending on our nuclear arsenal; a more accurate estimate of military spending is about \$600,000,000,000 (that's \$600 billion!). This amount exceeds the combined military spending of the next 25 countries. This is also more than eight times the amount spent on all non-military security tools, including diplomacy, foreign aid, nonproliferation, and homeland security. By contrast, the annual budget for the U.N.'s largest peacemaking body (Department for Political Affairs) is about \$60 million, or one ten-thousandth of one percent (0.0001) of our military budget. Also, the \$1.4 billion designated for international aid in the form of the Child Survival & Health Programs Fund represents a mere 0.2 percent of our military budget.³
- q The United Nations Development Program estimates that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year, about half of what we spend each year simply maintaining our vast arsenal of nearly 10,000 nuclear weapons.⁴
- q According to the White House's proposed budget for 2007, defense spending will increase by about \$30 billion—7 percent—from 2006. The Department of Defense will then account for over half of the U.S. Government's discretionary spending. According to the ONE campaign, if we were to increase international assistance by \$27 billion—an amount equal to just 4.5 percent of military spending, we would be able to: prevent 10 million children from becoming AIDS orphans, help get 104 million children into grade school, provide water to almost 900 million people around the globe, and ultimately save almost 6.5 million children under the age of five from preventable deaths.⁵
- q The Selective Service will recognize objections to serving in the armed forces for either religious or moral reasons. According to Selective Service guidelines, conscientious objectors must object to military service on principles that are central to one's life. The reasons may be religious or moral but cannot be based on not wanting to fight in a particular conflict or simply not wanting to get hurt or killed or simply because one does not like the present government. However, the government's stance is deeply problematic for those adhering to the Christian tradition of Just War, who must constantly evaluate the morality of particular conflicts, particular military strategies, tactics, and targets towards particular military objectives as the condition of their participation.⁶

1. National Priorities Project, "Local Costs of the Iraq War," updated May 8, 2006, www.nationalpriorities.org/warcitycost.

2. Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, "US Fatalities by State," <http://icasualties.org/oif/USMAP.aspx?hndState=North%20Carolina>. See also NC Peace and Justice Coalition, "Soldier's Families to Hold Anti-War Rally at Ft. Bragg," <http://www.ncpeacejustice.org/article.php?id=123>.

3. Foreign Policy in Focus' report, "A Unified Security Budget for the United States, 2007," May 3, 2006, www.fpiif.org/fpiftxt/3253. See also the U. S. Department of State's "Fiscal Year 2007 International Affairs Budget Request," February 6, 2006, www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/iab/2007/html/60199.htm; United Nations Department of Political Affairs, "DPA's Budget and Trust Funds," www.un.org/depts/dpa/budget.html; "Groups Urge Overhaul of Pentagon Budget" by Jim Lobe, May 4, 2006, www.antiwar.com/lobe/?articleid=8940.

4. "Learn Hunger Facts," Bread for the World, www.bread.org/learn/hunger-basics.

5. "Issues," One: The Campaign to Make Poverty History, www.one.org/Issues.html.

6. Mennonite Central Committee's "Conscientious Objection Quiz," www.mcc.org/us/co/quiz.