

LMPC Newsletter

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

Fall, 2005

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LMPC Trains Church Leaders in Europe

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (LMPC) has a wide reputation among many denominations in the U.S. as being a primary resource for helping church leaders understand how they can manage themselves in a more calm, less reactive manner in the midst of congregational anxieties.

Such training became a transatlantic experience in late May and early June, when Richard Blackburn, LMPC Executive Director, was invited to provide training for church leaders in Mennonite centers in England and the Netherlands.

On May 24-27, 2005, he presented *Family Emotional Process for Church Leaders* at the London Mennonite Centre. He then presented two similar training events on May 30-31 and June 3-4, 2005, for the Mediation Service of the Dutch Mennonite Taskforce on Non-Violent Coexistence at Mennorode in Elspeet.

The courses in England and the Netherlands were the first time LMPC had offered such training outside of the U.S. Both events served to equip church leaders with new understandings of how the church functions as an emotional system.

Since 1996, LMPC had been presenting an annual course on mediation skills in the United Kingdom, working with Bridge Builders, the conflict transformation program of the London Mennonite Centre. Thus, a number of those who attended the new course on *Family Emotional Process for Church Leaders* were clergy who were seeking an advanced training experience that would build on their previous

training in mediation skills. In commenting on the course, Rev. Pat Quint said, "I gained a greater understanding of conflict and the surprising correlations between conflict in family of origin and congregation."

Rev. Maureen Wilson, a United Reformed Church minister from Scotland, summarized some of the key course themes in saying, "This course is an invaluable resource for all church leaders and for the health and well being of churches. It offers a challenging opportunity to examine self – to self-differentiate and see the implications for healing within the system."

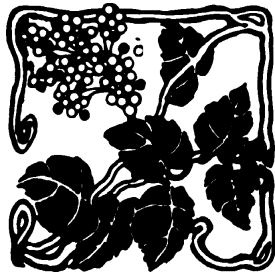
Those attending the courses in the Netherlands expressed similar thoughts when reflecting on their experience. The May 30-31, 2005, course on *Family Emotional Process in Church and Society* was advertised as a master class for experienced church mediators, while the June 3-4, 2005, workshop on *Family Systems Theory and Emotional Process in the Church* was designed for pastors and lay leaders.

In all courses, leaders were coached to focus on their own functioning as they deal with challenging behaviors in the church. The more leaders can maintain nonanxious presence, stay connected, and practice self-definition, the better anxiety can be managed. Thus, participants were invited to recognize that the only part they can change in a reactive church system is their own – but that such change in the functioning of leaders will have an impact on the whole system.

The courses included didactic input

on family systems theory as applied to church systems, with Jesus being presented as a model of how self-differentiated leaders can respond to resistance to change. There was also opportunity for participants to reflect on how the new insights applied to their own congregational system via small group interaction and roleplay exercises.

Ingrid Verhey-Laan, a Mennonite lay leader in her church in Nijmegen, reported: "The message of this workshop is clear. Focus on self, stay grounded in prayer, and turn to Jesus Christ for inspiration. The better we are able to act in a self-differentiated manner, the better we will be able to help our congregation stay focused on its mission. This way attention can be diverted from conflict to giving shape to the kingdom of God on earth."



LMPC Seeks Administrative Assistant

LMPC is seeking to hire an additional Administrative Assistant. The new staff person will assist in various administrative tasks, including bookkeeping and database management. Interested candidates can contact Richard Blackburn, LMPC Executive Director, at 630-627-0507, for a job description and application materials.

2005 Training Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- October 3-7 – Denver, CO
- November 14-18 – Atlanta, GA

Here I Stand:

- October 18-20 – Raleigh, NC

Healthy Congregations:

- September 23-24 – Deerfield, IL

Leadership & Anxiety in the Church:

- October 13 – Stillwater, MN

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations:

- October 14-15 – Rock Island, IL
- November 4-5 – St. Louis, MO

God's Own Peace:

- November 2 – Dearborn, MI

Charting Self:

- November 3 – Warren, MI

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

Commentary

What Do I Do?

by Bob Williamson

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor...?

— Luke 10:36

I read in the newspaper recently that actor Martin Sheen visited war protester Cindy Sheehan outside of President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

The motives of each are different, I'm sure. Cindy Sheehan has lost her son Casey in the Iraq war. Sheen is a long-time antiwar activist. But neither was required by others to be where they were, doing what they were doing. They were each registering their protests because they gave it some thought, and chose to be there.

When reading the newspaper, listening to National Public Radio, or just hearing stories over lunch at a workshop – I sometimes catch myself wondering: "Should I be doing something about that?"

It can come up when I hear stories about the continuing fighting in Iraq. But it also comes up when I hear of a shooting at a church in Texas, or the details of a church conflict closer to home.

The way I frame the question has something to do with the directions my answers take.

I can ask myself, "What should I do?" and "What am I required to do?" Or I can ask myself, "What can I do? What could I do? What might I choose to do?"

One of the most famous questions ever put to Jesus was the lawyer's question, "And who is my neighbor?"

This question came as a follow-up to the lawyer's first query, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus' first answer was to love God and love your neighbor.

But after hearing Jesus' first response, the lawyer wanted Jesus to describe the circumstances in which he was *required to act*.

"Define for me, Jesus," he was asking, "the qualifications of someone I'd need to treat as my neighbor."

"What criteria, Jesus, does someone have to meet before I'd be obliged to do something for them?"

So Jesus tells a story, the story we've come to call the parable of the Good Samaritan.

At the conclusion of his story, Jesus asks his own question: "Which of these was a neighbor to the man...?"

And the lawyer responded, "The one who showed him mercy."

Jesus' question invited a different notion of neighbor. The neighbor isn't the one who needs help. The neighbor is the helper.

In other words, Jesus was saying to the lawyer, "The question isn't who is *your* neighbor. The question is — who's neighbor are *you* going to be?"

This notion of neighbor pushes the listener beyond requirements, toward responsibility.

Jesus' notion of neighbor moves beyond a passive stance which waits until the requirements of the other have been met. He invites his listener to an active stance in which one becomes the neighbor of the other through a choice to take responsibility.

Jesus is teaching that neighbors aren't defined for me. I myself choose to be a neighbor or not.

This is just the kind of teaching which made being with Jesus so uncomfortable.

I'm often more comfortable having someone tell me what I have to do (who I have to regard as "neighbor"), than I am being responsible for deciding what I will do (acting as "neighbor").

The war in Iraq has gone on for a long time now. So has the violence in

our communities at home, and the conflicts in our churches. We can become complacent even in the face of the news we hear every day.

Jesus' question can disturb our complacency. He reminds us that the question for us is not, "How does a situation need to measure up before I'm obligated to do something?"

Jesus calls us to the more responsible stance of asking, "What can I do? What do I choose to do? What — given my beliefs and principles — do I decide to do?"

The difference between those two sets of questions is the difference between the lawyer's question of Jesus, and the question Jesus asked in reply.

The question isn't, "Who is my neighbor?" The question is, "How can I be one?"



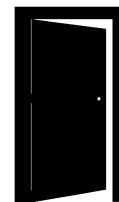
The Prayer Closet

As we witness the human tragedy caused by the overwhelming force of hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast, we are challenged to respond.

We recognize that many of those most severely impacted are also the most vulnerable — the poor, the sick, the elderly, those without cars who bear a disproportionate burden when an order to evacuate comes.

Where to go, how to pay for lodging, how to manage with compromising health issues, are all unanswered questions that become more acute for those without health insurance, financial resources, and a web of extended family and friends.

As we pray for the victims of the storm, will we choose to put our prayers into action? Will we choose to see the face of Jesus in the faces of the "least of these" — those who may have lost everything? Will we choose to be a neighbor? May it be so.



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The *LMPC Newsletter* is published four times a year by Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. A minimum subscription donation of \$10 per year is encouraged. LMPC bases its peacemaking in a biblical view of salvation and Christian discipleship as understood in the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. LMPC is a 501(c)(3) organization to which donations are tax deductible. LMPC Staff: Richard Blackburn, Executive Director; Bob Williamson, Associate Director; Marty Farahat, Assistant Director; Jay Wittmeyer, Assistant Director; Erin Dalian, Assistant for Communications; Sheryl Reynolds Slack, Administrative Assistant.

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The Bookshelf

Peacebuilding Primer

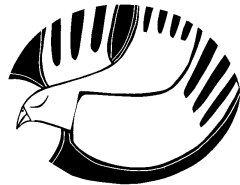
by Jay Wittmeyer

The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding by Lisa Schirch. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2004. 89 pp. \$4.95.

What is peacemaking? Peacebuilding? Are they just different words for the same thing or do they mean different things? How do they relate to our efforts to be instruments of God's peace in the global community?

To answer some of these fundamental questions, the faculty of Eastern Mennonite University created a series of books titled *The Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding*.

In *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, Lisa Schirch attempts to "bring together the various fields and activities related to peacebuilding to integrate



them into one conceptual framework." The little book takes on the big task of describing a broad range of peacebuilding approaches, such that one understands the complexity of the task more fully than is commonly conveyed by the term "peacemaking."

Schirch's book, thus, builds upon the first book in the series, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, wherein John Paul Lederach explained why "conflict resolution" does not adequately describe the process that is envisioned by his Anabaptist faith that understands peace as being fully embedded in justice.

Like "conflict transformation," "peacebuilding" is a term that better articulates the vision of a fundamental constructive change process that emphasizes the importance of building right relationships and creating social structures that fully express a radical respect for human rights and life.

Schirch identifies fifteen interrelated areas that can be considered aspects of peacebuilding: humanitarian

assistance, human rights, education, trauma healing, research, governance and policymaking, advocacy, legal systems, and others.

Peacebuilding, Schirch explains, grows out of a core set of values that seeks to meet human needs – physical, social and cultural. Peacebuilding includes: waging conflict nonviolently, building capacity, reducing direct violence, and transforming relationships. The book provides practical strategies for designing peacebuilding programs and helps the reader ask the fundamental questions of mission and vision that lead to effective engagement.

The call to peacebuilding is to every individual. *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding* can serve as a useful primer to help us be effective in our efforts to love mercy and to do justice as we walk humbly with our God.

Until November 30, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding* may be purchased from LMPC for \$4.45 (10% off the regular price), plus \$3.00 shipping. Illinois residents please add 6.75% sales tax (\$0.30).

Previews

A Selection of LMPC Fall Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- At Christ Church United Methodist, Denver, CO, October 3-7.
- At St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Atlanta, GA, November 14-18.
- At Southern Methodist University-in-Legacy, Plano, TX, November 28-December 3.

Healthy Congregations Facilitator Training Institute:

- At First Church of Lombard, UCC, Lombard, IL, September 26-28.

Advanced Clergy Clinic:

- At Blanchard Road Alliance Church, Wheaton, IL, October 24-26.

Clergy Clinic:

- At First Church of Lombard, UCC, Lombard, IL, November 7-9.

Here I Stand:

- At Ridge Road Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC, October 18-20.

Healthy Congregations:

- At St. Gregory's Episcopal Church, Deerfield, IL, September 23-24.
- At the Community Church of Wilmette, Wilmette, IL, September 24.
- For Austin District, Southwest Texas Conference, UMC, at St. John's United Methodist Church, Austin, TX, September 30-October 1.

- For Cape Atlantic District, Greater New Jersey Conference, UMC, at Zion United Methodist Church, Egg Harbor Township, NJ, October 11.
- For Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, at First Congregational Church, Bloomfield, CT, November 5.
- For Eastern District of the Northern Province, Moravian Church in North America, at East Hills Moravian Church, Bethlehem, PA, November 11-12.

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations:

- At Church of Peace, UCC, Rock Island, IL, October 14-15.
- At St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO, November 4-5.

Leadership and Anxiety in the Church:

- For the Great Lakes Region of the Association of Unity Churches at Indian Lakes Resort Bloomingdale, IL, October 11.
- At First Presbyterian Church, Stillwater, MN, October 13.
- For Joint Clergy Conference of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, ELCA and the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia at the John XXIII Pastoral Center, Charleston, WV, October 17-18.
- For Albany Synod, Reformed Church in America, at Lynnwood Reformed Church, Guilderland, NY, November 3.

- For Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, at First Congregational Church, Bloomfield, CT, November 4.
- At St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Pewaukee, WI, November 11.

Conflict in the Church:

- At First United Methodist Church, Newark, OH, October 7-8.
- For the Presbytery of Western North Carolina at Lake Junaluska Conference Center, Lake Junaluska, NC, October 28.

God's Own Peace:

- At Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, Dearborn, MI, November 2.

Charting Self:

- At First United Methodist Church, Warren, MI, November 3.

Other:

- "Mediating Congregational Conflict: Follow-Up Strategies" for Prairie Association, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ, at First Congregational Church, UCC, DeKalb, IL, September 19.
- "Healthy Leaders, Healthy Congregations" for the Southwestern Iowa Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Iowa City, IA, October 7-8.
- "Congregational Conflict: Dynamics and Strategies" for the Presbytery of West Virginia, at Rock Lake Presbyterian Church, South Charleston, WV, October 17.

The A-V Shelf

Change — Do Not Be Changed

by Erin Dalian

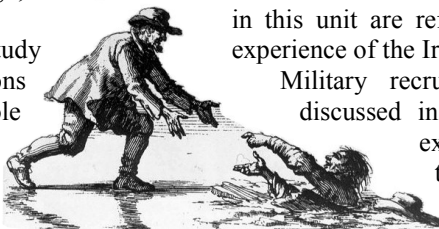
Thermostat: How Can We Turn Toward Peace in a Time of War?
Mennonite Central Committee, 3 hours, 2004. DVD.

Thermostat is a curriculum for high-school-age youth groups about war, peace and Christian conscience. The curriculum features a DVD and study guide with thirty-three sessions divided into seven units: *Peacemaking*, *Imagination*, *Allegiance*, *Security*, *Terrorism*, *Camouflage*, and *Nonviolence*.

The three-hour DVD and its 100-page study guide aid in the discussion of the various sessions of each unit. Sessions include Bible studies, role plays, personal stories, video clips, dramas, handouts, background reading, and more.

The first unit, *Peacemaking*, introduces the topic of peace and the witness of Jesus Christ. It is in this first unit that the title of the resource is explained. A thermometer reads the temperature; it is dependant upon the outside environment, whereas a thermostat changes the outside environment. The purpose of the video is to call youth to think critically through these issues and for them to affect change in their environments.

Imagination encourages the viewer to think creatively for ways to bring about peace in various situations. Stories of



peacemakers of the past are shown. The third unit, *Allegiance*, highlights the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance and questions whether reciting the pledge conflicts with our allegiance to God. Alternative pledges and stories of Hesston College's struggle with the pledge are part of these sessions.

Security examines what is needed to feel secure and considers the Biblical perspective on security. The stories about the effects of actions by nations in the name of "security" add to this unit.

Participants think about the definition of terrorism and consider different reactions in the unit on *Terrorism*. Included in this unit are reflections from a Mennonite pastor and his experience of the Iraq war.

Military recruitment and conscientious objection are discussed in *Camouflage*. Youth in the video clips

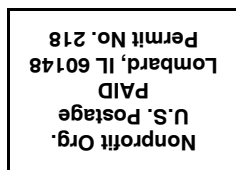
examine printed recruitment efforts against the backdrop of the Christian faith. The final unit on *Nonviolence* uses contemporary situations as well as history to examine the

power of nonviolence.

Though *Thermostat* is designed for youth groups, the concerns addressed are the concerns of the whole church. Many sessions would benefit from intergenerational conversation. Through discussion of each of the units, participants will be encouraged to think through their beliefs – and be challenged by the nonviolent message of Jesus.

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

Return Service Requested



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