

Olive Branches

PJSN at Charlotte 2005

by Leo Hartshorn

Having the Peace and Justice Support Network gathering as part of the Mennonite Church USA national assembly at Charlotte 2005 was successful and appreciated. Responses from those who attended the worship and Bible study sessions indicated a strong affirmation for continuing to hold PJSN-sponsored events in conjunction with the national convention. A number of people indicated that they would not be able to attend a separate gathering otherwise and that it gave greater visibility of peace and justice to the wider church. The greater majority of those who attended the Bible study were persons who had not been to previous peace gatherings.

Losses with holding PJSN events with the national convention included not having times for local sharing concerning peace and justice, community building, and networking. We will work on these elements for the next convention. At the same time, having regional peace gatherings on the off years of the convention provide a way for PJSN to network and connect with conference peace and justice committees and regional constituents.

PJSN Activities at the Convention

PJSN sponsored three evenings of worship, peace storytelling, PJSN business, and Bible study, led by Perry Yoder and Mary Schertz, Old and New Testament professors at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Attendance for the three evenings averaged about 78 adults. On Friday evening Lawrence Hart, Cheyenne Peace chief, was honored for his life of peacemaking work with a Peace Pitcher presentation. Roger Farmer was selected to serve on the Peace and Justice Support Network Leadership Team.

The Proclaiming Truth and Healing public action involved a time of worship with reflections

from Janet Plenert, Mennonite Church Canada mission administrator, and a march to a local recruitment center in Charlotte. John Powell, director of Missional Church Development for Mennonite Mission Network, reminded the group that the "the cost of war is our soul." Tim Coil, a Gulf War veteran shared his experiences of the pain of war. Dick Davis, pastor of Peace Mennonite and former Army chaplain, offered a prayer for U.S. soldiers. The event was attended by around 300 people, including many younger people. Marchers experienced a downpour of rain during the outside gathering.

Hundreds of youth and adults gathered twice daily to hear the pounding rhythms of Drumming for Peace and received pamphlets on PJSN youth material. PJSN-sponsored workshops were lively and well attended. Titus Peachey's workshop interviewing Military veterans was attended by some 250 youth and adults. The PJSN display booth made around \$5000.00 in sales of peace products and saw many congregations and young people filling out forms to put on file to document conscientious objector status.

Considering all the PJSN-sponsored events at Charlotte, on various levels contact was made with thousands of people informing them of aspects of PJSN's work within and beyond Mennonite Church USA. Thanks to all the PJSN friends and supporters for making our events at Charlotte a success!

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Peace and Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA is to proclaim and promote God's desire for justice (Micah 6:8), Christ's call to peacemaking (Matthew 5:9), and the Spirit's reconciling work (Ephesians 2:11-22)

PJSN financial report

Thanks for your generous donations and purchases of resources at Charlotte 2005! We were delighted to receive support from new folks and past strong donors. We need each of you! Your donations made possible:

- thoughtful evening Bible studies,
- free buttons to people taking their first step for public peace witness, and
- drumming for peace activities.

PJSN operates at a severe deficit until December donations. Please include us in your giving habits and help keep peace and justice strong in Mennonite Church USA. You may use the enclosed envelope or donate online: www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace

New PJSN Structure within Mennonite Mission Network

The Peace and Justice Support Network, Mennonite Church USA, will be starting a process of transition to a new structure within the Mennonite Mission Network beginning in the Fall of 2005.

PJSN Staff, volunteer leadership, and leaders from Executive Leadership Mennonite and Mennonite Mission Network have worked together to address problematic issues of identity, accountability and communication. The following is a summary of changes and their implications:

- PJSN will be directly connected to the Missional Church Development Department of Mennonite Mission Network making clearer lines of responsibility for Leo Hartshorn, minister of peace and justice, focus organizational identity, and provide better communication.

- Susan Mark Landis, Peace Advocate, will continue to work under the Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership Office, utilizing PJSN when needed for advocacy projects. She will continue to publish *PeaceSigns*, the monthly e-zine.

- A new Peace and Justice Partnership Council, convened by Executive Leadership, will be formed with high level representatives from various Mennonite agencies and partners, including PJSN representatives. The Partnership Council will set church wide policies and priorities regarding peace and justice work within Mennonite Church USA. This new council provides a voice for peace and justice within the wider church structure of Mennonite Church USA. Susan will work with this council.

- The new Peace and Justice Support Network Leadership Team will include the minister of peace and justice, representative volunteers and supporters, representatives from Area Conference Peace and

Justice groups, and a Peace Center representative. The work of the PJSN Leadership Team will be to set the direction and priorities of PJSN and its projects, develop and make connections with the support network constituency, and assist staff with planning peace gatherings. Leo Hartshorn will be staff for this team.

- The Minister of Peace and Justice staff position will be fully funded by Mennonite Mission Network and the PJSN members will continue to be one source of funding for peace and justice work through the Mission Network. The PJSN Leadership Team will participate in the budget process for all of Mission Network peace and justice resource work.

- Funding management will be done by the Mission Network staff, relieving Susan Mark Landis, Peace Advocate, of this major responsibility and freeing her

to focus more on the work of peace advocacy and inter-church peace relations.

- As part of the Missional Church Development department of Mennonite Mission Network, which includes urban ministry and church development, there will be a concerted effort to enhance the domestic peace and justice work of PJSN and to integrate peace with mission.

- Mennonite Mission Network will continue to be the financial agent, provide support for communications (e.g., PJSN web site, with volunteer assistance from Stan Harder) and publications (*Olive Branches* and *Dove Tales*, with volunteer graphic designer Cynthia Friesen Coyle), and handle PJSN products through Mennonite Media. Valerie Weidman, PJSN administrative assistant, and Lisa Amstutz, Peace Advocate Administrative Assistant, will continue in their work.

Spread the Peace Grants

Peace and Justice Support Network seeks to encourage congregations and conferences within Mennonite Church USA to "spread the peace." Your generous support of PJSN in 2003 has provided us with funds for offering small grants to start local peace and justice projects. One time grants of \$500.00 and \$1000.00 will be given:

- to Mennonite groups (congregations or conferences, rather than individuals) for projects based in the U.S.;
- for church initiative;
- for witness, reaching out, and sharing peace and justice;
- through congregations or conferences (rather than individuals);
- to recipients who will raise matching funds from individual donors both within and outside the congregation to demonstrate local ownership and commitment.

Applications for Spread the Peace grants are due October 1, 2005. Decisions about disbursements will be made at the October 2004 Peace and Justice Reference Committee meeting in Philadelphia, PA. Funds will be distributed in December, 2005. Please contact us for an application form:

Valerie Weidman, Administrative assistant, Peace and Justice Support Network
543 Garden Hill Lane, Lancaster, PAS 17603
717-397-3855



Olive Branches is a publication created by the Peace and Justice Support Network, Mennonite Church USA, to resource individuals and congregations in our collective peace and justice work. Ideas, articles, and reports can be sent to the Editor. **PJSN Reference Committee:** Leo Hartshorn, Susan Mark Landis, Valerie Weidman, Dick Davis, Titus Peachey, Mark Frey, Yvonne Diaz Keeler, Jorge Vielman, Andy Piefer, and Roger Farmer. **Editor:** Leo Hartshorn, Minister of Peace and Justice, Mennonite Mission Network, 202 South Ann Street, Lancaster, PA 17602, 717-399-8353, LeoH@MennoniteMission.net **Designer:** Cynthia Friesen Coyle, volunteer, Americus, Ga. **Web site:** www.mennoniteusa.org/peace. Opinions expressed in *Olive Branches* are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of Mennonite Church USA or the Peace and Justice Support Network.