

Social Questions Bulletin

Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

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Mis estimados: Do not lose heart.

by Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Mis estimados: Do not lose heart. We were made for these times. I have heard from so many recently who are deeply and properly bewildered. They are concerned about the state of affairs in our world right now... Ours is a time of almost daily astonishment and often righteous rage over the latest degradations of what matters most to civilized, visionary people.

You are right in your assessments. The lustre and hubris some have aspired to while endorsing acts so heinous against children, elders, everyday people, the poor, the unguarded, the helpless, is breathtaking. Yet, I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because, the fact is we were made for these times. Yes. For years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement...

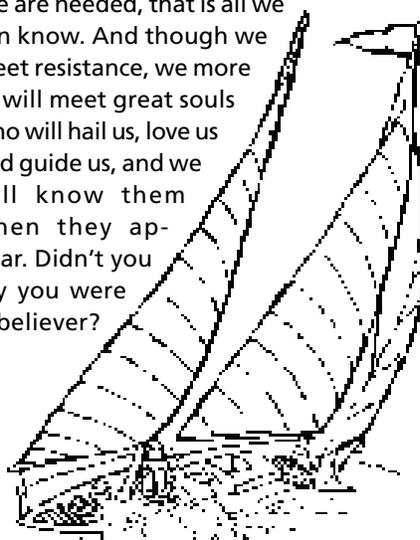
I grew up on the Great Lakes and recognize a seaworthy vessel when I see one. Regarding awakened souls, there have never been more able crafts in the waters than there are right now across the world. And they are fully provisioned and able to signal one another as never before in the history of humankind... Look out over the prow; there are millions of boats of righteous souls on the waters with you. Even though your veneers may shiver from every wave in this stormy roil, I assure you that the long timbers composing your prow and rudder come from a greater forest. That long-grained lumber is known to withstand storms, to hold together, to hold its own, and to advance, regardless.

We have been in training for a dark time

such as this, since the day we assented to come to Earth. For many decades, worldwide, souls just like us have been felled and left for dead in so many ways over and over brought down by naivete, by lack of love, by being ambushed and assaulted by various cultural and personal shocks in the extreme. We have a history of being gutted, and yet remember this especially — we have also, of necessity, perfected the knack of resurrection. Over and over again we have been the living proof that that which has been exiled, lost, or foun-dered can be restored to life again.

In any dark time, there is a tendency to veer toward fainting over how much is wrong or unmended in the world. Do not focus on that. There is a tendency too to fall into being weakened by perseverating on what is outside your reach, by what cannot yet be. Do not focus there. That is spending the wind without raising the sails.

We are needed, that is all we can know. And though we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will hail us, love us and guide us, and we will know them when they appear. Didn't you say you were a believer?



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United Methodism @ **RISK** A Wake-up Call

“Wake, Awake! Our denomination is at great risk.” So begins the preface to a new book written by Leon Howell and published by the Information Project for United Methodists (IPUM). This valuable new resource informs the reader about groups on the “right” end of the theological and political spectrum within The United Methodist Church. These self-identified “conservative renewal groups,” include Good News, Renew Women’s Network, Lifewatch, Transforming Congregations, the Mission Society of United Methodists and the Confessing Movement. The ways in which the Institute on Religion and Democracy undergirds the work of the above-mentioned groups is also covered.

Learning about the origins of the groups, their goals, strategies, tactics, sources of funding and interconnectedness gives one a sense of urgency. We must challenge them about the direction they are trying to take the church.

A **study guide** by Bishop C. Dale White (retired) and the Rev. Scott Campbell, is found in the book. It includes questions for discussion and reflection that are suitable for individual use or with a group.

Finally, there is a **Call to Action**. Most MFSA members are well aware of the threat posed by the “conservative renewal groups.” **United Methodism at Risk** provides the reader with a far deeper understanding of scope of that threat.

To purchase copies of the book, see the form on the back of this newsletter. ❖

Lord, make me an Instrument of your peace

Drew Theological School professor and NY Conference clergymember Traci West traveled with an interfaith, multiracial Prayer Pilgrimage for Peace to Baghdad right before the war began in March. She writes:

With deepest humility I pray:

“Lord make me an instrument of your peace”

FOR PEOPLE in Baghdad who were already suffering from the brutality of the sanctions, desperate for food and medicines

...still grieving their dead from the bombing of Baghdad in 1991

...weeping at the hospital bedsides of their children because of the high cancer rates among them caused by the toxic poison U.S. bombs leave behind.

NCCC USA Photo



...living in terror as they waited for us to bomb them again. And they were asking me why were we doing this to them? What did they do to us to deserve it?

FOR PEOPLE here in the U.S., who, when I tell them about my trip, refuse to believe me that the Iraqi people in Baghdad were not happy about us coming back to finish “liberating them.” ❖

UMCOR Relief to Iraq

Donations of humanitarian aid to Iraq can be made through the **United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)** - **Advance #623225-4 “Iraq Emergency.”** UMCOR is working with its ecumenical partners, including Action by Churches Together (ACT), Church World Service (CWS), and the Mennonite Central Committee. **One hundred percent** of your gift will be used for this response. Give through a local United Methodist church or send financial contributions to: UMCOR, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 330, New York, NY 10115. Call **(800) 554-8583** to make a credit card donation.

Do not lose heart continued from page one

Didn't you say you pledged to listen to a voice greater? Didn't you ask for grace? Don't you remember that to be in grace means to submit to the voice greater?...

Understand the paradox: If you study the physics of a waterspout, you will see that the outer vortex whirls far more quickly than the inner one. To calm the storm means to quiet the outer layer, to cause it to swirl much less, to more evenly match the velocity of the inner core — till whatever has been lifted into such a vicious funnel falls back to Earth, lays down, is peaceable again. One of the most important steps you can take to help calm the storm is to not allow yourself to be taken in a flurry of overwrought emotion or desperation thereby accidentally contributing to the swale and the swirl.

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take “everyone on Earth” to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale.

One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy



Now, more than ever it is important to witness for peace. Visit the following web sites for action suggestions:

Friends Committee on National Legislation: www.fcni.org
National Council of Churches: www.nccusa.org
General Board of Church and Society: www.umc-gbcs.org

world is to stand up and show your soul. Soul on deck shines like gold in dark times. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires, causes proper matters to catch fire. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these — to be fierce and to show mercy toward others, both, are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity. Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it. If you would help to calm the tumult, this is one of the strongest things you can do.

There will always be times when you feel discouraged. I too have felt despair many times in my life, but I do not keep a chair for it; I will not entertain it. It is not allowed to eat from my plate. The reason is this: In my uttermost bones I know something, as do you. It is that there can be no despair when you remember why you came to Earth, who you serve, and who sent you here. The good words we say and the good deeds we do are not ours: They are the words and deeds of the One who brought us here. In that spirit, I hope you will write this on your wall: When a great ship is in harbor and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But that is not what great ships are built for.

This comes with much love and prayer that you remember who you came from, and why you came to this beautiful, needful Earth,

Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D

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Church Leaders Encourage New Initiatives to Propel Israeli-Palestinian Peace

(WASHINGTON, April 11, 2003) As the world's political leaders continued to promise the release of a "Road Map" for Middle East peace, U.S. church leaders in Washington urged the Bush Administration to move swiftly and resolutely toward reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. At the same time, they offered elements considered essential if the road map is to compel both Israelis and Palestinians to take effective steps for establishing two peaceful and secure states side-by-side.

Commenting through Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition of 17 Catholic and Protestant organizations and denominations, the church leaders declared that the Israeli-Palestinian crisis remains the most critical matter to resolve in the Middle East.

"We are encouraged," said Corinne Whitlatch, director of the coalition, "by positive statements made by President Bush, Secretary Powell, and National Security Advisor Rice regarding the need to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. While we await the specifics of the Quartet's road map, Churches for Middle East Peace urges the U.S. to continue this cooperation with the United Nations, European Union, and Russia and to press forward with a vigorous plan. We believe, too, that the plan must contain provisions that both sides implement simultaneously. It's not a question of which party, Israel or the Palestinians, must act first. Rather, both sides must take comparable steps to build confidence of the other government and people so that an Israeli-Palestinian peace can be obtained."

Rev. Mark Brown, associate director of the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, enumerated one of the key elements that must be present in any road map. "Americans must understand how despair currently pervades both Israeli and Palestinian societies. The first objective of any road map must be to begin the process of restoring hope to the people. We have to display to them that the rest of the world is committed to helping build this peace, too. Both peoples now fear violence, whether an Israeli dreading the random possibility of a terrorist bomb attack or a Palestinian fearful that he or she might become the innocent victim of an Israeli

assassination or retaliatory attack."

Brown contended that a team of multinational observers would be essential if the road map were to succeed. "Our churches currently have people who have traveled to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza and who act as 'accompaniers' of both Palestinians and Israelis. Their presence is our attempt to limit the violence. But these church companions and others are there as ordinary concerned citizens interested in peacemaking. Obviously, they have no enforcement authority and can't prevent violence. In fact, in the last month one American has been killed and another injured while trying to prevent violence."

"What is really needed," continued Brown, "is for multinational observer teams to be on the ground. This would provide evidence that the international community is serious about restraining violence by both sides and would allow for the renewal of confidence and hope among the people. Such restraint and confidence-building is a key ingredient that allows the governments and people to make necessary concessions that can bring peace to the region."

From Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP). For further information, see www.cmeop.org. ❖



August 14-17, 2003

University of PA

Witness Our Welcome 2003

WOW2003 will be the largest ever gathering of Canadian and U.S. Christians – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and heterosexual – who support the full participation of LGBT persons in congregations and ministries. From diverse faith traditions, racial ethnic and cultural backgrounds, WOW advocates justice, equality and inclusion of all people. WOW2003 will celebrate and mobilize a broad, diverse and powerful grassroots Christian movement to fulfill God's vision for a welcoming community.

Make plans to arrive in Philadelphia one day early to spend a day with the Reconciling Ministries Network. Meet United Methodist allies who make the UMC a place of worship and welcome for all people. Wednesday evening will be open for social gathering, and Thursday will be programmed. As the details of the schedule are developed they will be posted on the Reconciling Ministries Network website, www.rmnetwork.org. Early registration ends May 14th. Register for PRE-WOW and WOW2003 at www.wow2k.org/ Address: PMB #111; 5250 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60640. 1-800-550-3500. ❖

Middle East Network of United Methodists MENU M

Interested in working with other United Methodists for a just resolution to the conflict in Israel/Palestine? Become part of MENU M, an affiliated network of MFSA folks who join together to promote Annual and General Conference resolutions on justice in the Middle East, share resources and engage in education and advocacy efforts.

MENU M just recently held its annual meeting in Washington, DC in conjunction with Middle East and Africa Advocacy Days at National Capitol city Church. Participants heard excellent speakers on a variety of topics, attended workshops, visited members of Congress to express their concerns and spent an evening networking specifically with other MENU M members.

The next gathering of the MENU M network will be in New York on September 4-5, 2003. MENU M members will attend an NGO conference of groups working for justice in the Middle East. Watch the next issue of the Social Questions Bulletin for further details about this event.

Visit the MFSA web site, www.mfsaweb.org, and click on MENU M to receive Middle East updates, signs of hope, action alerts, and more.

Check the MENU M box on the back of this page flyer if you are interested in receiving more information about becoming involved in MENU M.

Eliminate Offensive Sports Logos

As this newsletter goes to press MFSA is headed to Atlanta for the Voices of Faith conference, a gathering of progressive United Methodists. The criteria used in selecting a site for the conference included sufficient space, affordable lodging, and a large accessible airport. Atlanta fit the bill and we anticipate a great event.

We cannot hold an event in Atlanta, however, without noting the fact that Atlanta is has yet to eliminate the offensive sports imagery used by the "Atlanta Braves."

Conference participants will be urged to join the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) in their call for the United Methodist Church to be a "catalytic leader for the elimination of the use of Native American imagery and nicknames as mascots and other sports symbols in all vestiges of the American society, to insure that Native American people will no longer suffer the insensitivity, disrespectfulness, offensiveness and stereotyping and racial discrimination that such uses cause.

To find out more about GCORR's work on offensive sports imagery visit their web site at: <http://www.gcorr.org/>



There's too much at stake not to join MFSA!

Ways to be a part of this vital movement:

- I would like to join MFSA. Enclosed are my individual MFSA membership dues of \$50 (or family dues of \$75 or low-income/student dues of \$25 or less). No one is ever denied membership due to inability to pay.
- I do not want to join MFSA at this time but would like to subscribe to the newsletter, *Social Questions Bulletin* for \$12.00 per year.
- I would like to make an additional contribution to MFSA in the amount of \$_____.
- I would like _____ copy(ies) of the book **United Methodism at Risk: A Wake-Up Call** @ \$10 (includes shipping & handling) \$_____.
- Send me information on Middle East Network of United Methodists (**MENUM**).
- Add me to the **Social Justice Prayer Network** email list.

Checks payable to MFSA

Please charge \$_____ to my: _____ Visa or _____ Mastercard

CardNumber # _____

Expiration Date: _____/_____/_____

Signature: _____

Name

Address

Telephone

Fax

Email

Annual Conference

** When joining MFSA the national office informs the leadership of your local MFSA Chapter and you automatically become a chapter member. A portion of your MFSA dues is returned to your annual conference MFSA chapter (or to help organize new chapters). All members receive the bi-monthly *Social Questions Bulletin* for free.

Send completed form to address below.



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