

## Worship and Action Update, 1/3/03

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

The Christmas-New Year's period often is a unique opportunity to gather together with family, Friends and community for worship, reflection and rebirth. As we emerge from this time of special sustenance and spiritual restoration, Friends may feel renewed vigor to engage the powers and worldly concerns.

Representative Charles Rangel of Manhattan announced in an op-ed page article in the New York Times this week that he intends to introduce legislation to reinstitute the draft. The representative argues that, while he opposes war on Iraq, if we are to go to war all (except those with health disabilities or conscience objections) should share in shouldering the burdens. Charles Rangel is not taking this step out of a desire to bolster America's already overwhelming military power, but as a tactical maneuver to bring about a more considered examination of the desirability of going to war against Iraq. Nonetheless, his action makes even more pressing concerns about protecting rights of conscience and living our peace testimony in seemingly belligerent times.

Summit Meeting offered a training program for counselors on conscience and war in October, and Purchase Quarter will be holding one tomorrow. Will other regional or monthly meetings in NYYM organize similar programs in the near future?

Weekends focused on worship and action - Living the Peace Testimony Now: What Shall Our Witness Be? - have been organized for Friday evening through Sunday, January 10-12, 2003, at Poughkeepsie Meetinghouse, and Friday evening and Saturday, February 7 and 8, 2003, at Perry City Meetinghouse (near Ithaca). Information and registration forms are available on the Events page of the NYYM Web site.

In conjunction with the Peace Witness in a Time of Crisis Conference organized by Friends World Committee for Consultation for January 17-20, 2003, at Guilford College, North Carolina, FWCC is hosting a virtual peace conference on the internet from now through the end of January. You are invited to participate by going to <http://www.friendspeace.org/fp>.

People also are preparing for the next demonstration in Washington, DC to stop war on Iraq on January 18-19, 2003, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. anniversary weekend. Friends and peace groups have organized buses to offer affordable travel. Information on the demonstration is available on the United for Peace Web site ([www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org)), and at [www.InternationalANSWER.org](http://www.InternationalANSWER.org) or [www.VoteNoWar.org](http://www.VoteNoWar.org).

Concern is continuing to be expressed over the persecution and harassment of immigrants, particularly persons of Arab or Muslim background. The Immigration and Naturalization Service has begun a program of forced registration that appears to be focused on immigrants from Muslim countries and used the first round of registrations as an opportunity to engage in mass arrests of persons with no connection to terrorist activity or organizations.

In August 2002, Brooklyn Monthly Meeting and New York Quarterly Meeting approved a Minute on Detention of Muslim and South Asian Immigrants, which is available on the Peace Action page of NYYM's Web site. The minute states:

We endorse non-violent actions on behalf of the detainees, including the ongoing protests at the Metropolitan Detention Center, and will continue to do so until we are convinced that the detainees are dealt with fairly according to U.S. and international law.

The Muslim Public Affairs Council has launched a campaign to provide monitors in Los Angeles at the next round of registrations on January 10th. Information on this campaign is available on the MPAC web site at:

[http://www.mpac.org/home\\_article\\_display.aspx?ITEM=309](http://www.mpac.org/home_article_display.aspx?ITEM=309).

NYYM Friends have passed on a proposal to mobilize U.S. citizens go to INS sites in several major cities to register solidarity with those being harassed on the second deadline, January 10th. The proposal that was forwarded notes: "If a million people could show up to accompany those men in their moment of risk, it would send a message both to the Muslim community and the rest of the country that not everyone agrees with the policy and that many deem it a violation of civil liberties."

This proposal is modeled on the effort in Billings, Montana, in 1993 to demonstrate solidarity with a Jewish family who had a brick thrown through a window of their home because they had a menorah stenciled on the glass in celebration of Hanukkah. A mother in the community organized Sunday school children to make paper menorahs for all families in the community and to put them in their windows in a show of solidarity, and between 6,000 and 10,000 families did so to accompany the several dozen Jewish families in town. (More information on the Billings action can be found at: <http://www.education.mcgill.ca/455-410-03/abdou/hatecrimes5-menorah.htm>.)

Bill and Genie Durland are Friends from Inter-Mountain Yearly Meeting who are involved with Friends Peace Teams and with Christian Peacemaker Teams. (CPT is an initiative of the historic peace churches - Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, and Quakers - with support and membership from a range of Catholic and Protestant denominations.) They currently are in Baghdad, Iraq, with a CPT delegation. Here are some excerpts from their first report:

We have heard a presentation at the United Nations Development Program office by the Director of the International Depleted Uranium Study Team who is Domacio Lopez from Socorro, New Mexico. We had to come halfway around the world to meet him and hear his powerful message. We have visited the infamous Ameriyah Shelter, now a memorial, where 408 women and children were incinerated on February 13, 1991 by two direct hits of so-called "pinpoint" computer-guided U.S. missiles. We have visited two hospitals

- the Saddam Central Teaching Hospital for Children and the Al Mansour Hospital's pediatric surgical wards - wards full of innocent victims seen and touched on the Feast of the Innocents, incarnating the worst of human ferocity.

We staged two public witnesses at the U.N. Compound where the weapons inspectors work - New Year's Eve and New Year's Day - with much singing, an Iraqi wedding band, beautiful banners and two doves released when the inspectors emerged this morning. We have visited families in the neighborhood of our hotel and every face we see smiles at us. Finally, late this evening we met with a delegation of the National Council of Churches just arrived.

It is simply work, speak, cry out, write letters, make phone calls, pray! Do whatever you can to stop this madness. These are a gentle, harmless people, full of life, love and beauty. They are gracefully hospitable and generous to the very people who represent their impending doom - Americans. They do not deserve to be killed for the lust for oil or for any leaders' transgressions. This is beautiful land, which is the first cradle of all western culture and civilization, full of art and antiquity.

Peaceable Greetings,

*Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer  
NYYM Worship & Action working group*

Newton Garver shares reflections on the Pope's message ("*Urbi et Orbi*") included in last week's Update:

John Paul II speaks of a "senseless spiral of blind violence. . . ."

Is either the violence or the spiral really "senseless"? Can we not see perfectly well why certain political leaders engage in such violence? Is it not apparent that leaders exercising unchallenged domination, the power to command and control, would have to share power with persons they do not trust if a reconciliation were to be achieved?

The "sense" behind spirals of political violence is the desire to achieve or retain command and control, or domination. I know all too well from my own experience the logic of such a spiral, having fallen all too often into spirals of recrimination about matters over which I was unwilling to give up trying to control the outcome. Do we

not all fall into such spirals from time to time, and know their logic and their power experientially?

Even when the attackers do not know the names of the victims, we see perfectly well that the attack is aimed at a target. Nor does it seem "blind" in the sense of not having a goal. Its political aim may indeed be vague, but no harder to fathom than the firebombing of Dresden or the atomic destruction of Hiroshima, or the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The sense and rationale for violence and confrontation are easily seen within a context of command and control, and the desire for command and control arises from fears. Fears of what may happen to us if "they" decide what is to happen. Fears and a lack of trust in a process that incorporates others or in the Spirit of Light in the hearts and minds of others.

Such fears and distrust are not without foundation, but alternatives have equally strong foundations. Fear is always of the future, a shadow that the Unknown casts on the present. Hope is a different shadow the future casts on the present. George Fox said that there is no time but this present, but these shadows are real in the here and now. Hope is a shadow of light and life, fear a shadow of darkness and death. So let us choose life. "Walk in the Light, wherever you may be; walk in the glory of the Light, said he."

I like to think that the peaceable tone of John Paul's recent messages comes from his deep sense of hope and trust. We can resonate with that underlying sense. It is what was expressed so powerfully, in the darkest of times, by George Fox: "Sing and rejoice, ye children of the Day and of the Light, for the Lord is at work even in this thick night of darkness that may be felt."