

Seeds of Justice

Sowers of Justice Newsletter

DECEMBER, 2001

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PARTICIPATION BRINGS PEACE!

"Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give to you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." John 14:27.

Peace, peace, peace. Do you find it an elusive or impossible gift in this time of anxiety and uncertainty? If you do, it may be because the peace that is promised does not just happen. Real peace requires work—peace making and peace building have to happen before peace keeping. For those of us who live in a democratic nation, peaceful communities will only happen because people care enough to participate in their creation.

It's tough to model something different when our communities often choose violence as the first trigger response. But it doesn't have to be that way if people choose differently. I'd like to suggest that there are ten arts necessary to the creation of peace in a democratic society.

- 1. ACTIVE LISTENING:**
Listening to each other without pre-judging is critical; it is especially important for us to listen to those who are most affected by a problem. "Walking a mile in my moccasins" means something to everyone concerned.
- 2. EVALUATION AND REFLECTION:**
Rather than jumping to a conclusion after one conversation or one workshop or one experience—agents for

change who really want to integrate their own values and passions have to take the time to evaluate their experiences and to reflect with others. When we talk only to ourselves our evaluation is not going to be honest. This is a social process not an individual one.

- 3. CREATIVE USE OF CONFLICT:**
Conflict is good; it is a healthy measure of our willingness to engage with each other. It assists us in testing our values and positions. Instead of running from conflict we should be running toward it.
- 4. MEDIATION:**
It is possible to find some common ground on most issues if we give each other the grace to do it. Mediation on issues like housing or health care may involve finding new messengers. Perhaps we need to look at new messengers from mediating institutions like labor unions or business or teachers or health care providers. Finding common ground is possible for those who want to forge something different.
- 5. NEGOTIATION:**
It is one thing to have an idea about the ideal solution to the issue at hand. It is quite another to know

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what the political possibilities are and how to achieve the greatest success. Creating enemies on one issue may mean keeping an enemy on the next because you failed to negotiate. Doing a power analysis that identifies the key players requiring our attention is important; creating permanent enemies is a mistake.

6. MENTORING:

We always need new leaders; despite their best efforts even the baby boomers are going to die someday. It is terribly important that youth are integrated into the work. We cannot just create a cast of characters that we call leaders and call it quits. We mentor and teach each other because we are willing to share our experiences of being involved in the public arena. We need new ideas, new energy, new leadership. If we don't involve our young people in helping to problem solve we will have wasted a vast resource.

7. POLITICAL IMAGINATION:

Being strategic means that we not only plug into the reality but the creative juices as well. We have got to find the non-traditional allies that might bring fruition to our dreams. How can we use the media? How do we bring both the rational and the passionate to the discussion? What is the best way to frame the issue for today's conversation?

8. PUBLIC DIALOGUE:

This is a dialogue that is open and holds people accountable for their positions and decisions. Bringing together the

broadest possible representation of the public sector, while difficult, will get us to places we can only imagine. The Minnesota Housing Campaign, for example, brought people from government, social service, faith, and other sectors in order to actually make a difference on the housing issue in this state. To date, almost everyone thinks we have a housing crisis, but the willingness to solve the problem is in short supply.

9. PUBLIC JUDGMENT:

This in no way resembles the CNN polling process that asks something like: "Do you think that Iraq is behind the anthrax threat? Vote now." Let's not substitute empty public opinion for sound public judgment, they are two very different things. Judgment requires us to gather the facts, to talk to the folks, to weigh the issues and possible actions against a set of values. It requires that we engage in public dialogue.

10. CELEBRATION—APPRECIATION:

This is what keeps us going and keeps us humble. We evaluate and celebrate our successes and appreciate the things we've learned. We celebrate our work as citizens but when you come right down to it, "private citizen" is an oxymoron and a mistaken notion.

We know that our communities and our nation are in desperate need of artful peacemakers. Practicing this art, cognizant of the ten suggestions above, will allow us to begin painting a new world order right here and right now. Let peace begin with all of us.

Kathleen Tomlin
Public Policy

Native African Prayer for Peace

Almighty God,
the Great Thumb
we cannot evade to
tie any knot;
the Roaring Thunder
that splits mighty trees:
the all-seeing Lord
up on high who sees
even the footprints of
an antelope on a
rock mass here on Earth.
You are the one who
does not hesitate
to respond to our call.
You are the
cornerstone of peace.

Making Your Voice Heard

"It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: 'A voice of one crying out in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'"

(From the gospel of Matthew for the Second Sunday of Advent.)

An authentic response to discipleship means we are active, not passive, in sharing our voice in the larger public arena. Like John the Baptist, our voice needs to be heard regarding the war on terrorism, the war in Afghanistan, the challenge of domestic security versus civil liberties, and the realities of those made vulnerable and voiceless by the burdens of poverty both here and abroad.

Failure to share our voice means that human dignity and the common good will lose an important moral defender. In a recent statement the bishops of the United States said, "How the common good is defended and peace is restored is a critical moral issue. While military action may be necessary, it is by no means sufficient to deal with this terrorist threat."

In this recent statement, the bishops have articulated the dual tradition of pacifism and the just war tradition. The apparent tension between these two aspects of Church teaching may reflect our own questioning and probing about the merits of the war in Afghanistan. It is important for us

as citizens and Catholics to grapple with the tension and the questions we have and come to our own, informed position about this important foreign policy issue.

Let's be clear that sharing our voice does not simply mean uttering an uninformed opinion. The bishops remind us that, "This is a time to share our principles and values, to invite discussion and continuing dialogue (and we should use our voices to protect human life, to seek greater justice, and to pursue peace as participants in a powerful way."

This month many of us will likely send Christmas cards to family and friends. In addition to these communications commit to sharing your position on the war and other related issues by sending a note to the President, your senators and congressional representative. Decision makers often regard silence as consent. But as disciples it is our moral obligation to study, pray and speak our truth.

The passive voice never makes a constructive contribution to issues in the public arena. Let's make sure our informed voice is an active one in these times.

Michael Griffin
Issue and Advocacy

The full text of the recent statement by the U.S. Catholic Bishops can be found at www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/sept11.htm.

// True peacemaking can be a matter of policy only if it is first a matter of the heart. Without both courage and charity, justice cannot be won. In the absence of repentance and forgiveness, no peace can endure. //

LIVING WITH FAITH AND
HOPE AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

People and Parishes at Work

Sowers members in Saint Paul are planning a forum for January focused on affordable housing. Sowers from **Nativity of Our Lord**, the **Church of Saint Mark**, the **Church of St. Peter Claver**, the **Cathedral**, and the **University of St. Thomas** attended an initial planning meeting.

At that meeting, those in attendance made a commitment to recruit 150 parishioners to the event, slated for January 31, 2002. The event will focus on educating parishioners by putting a face on the issue of affordable housing and securing commitments for future action.

Members of the planning group also agreed to do community research visits with people who could put a face on the issue of housing.

This just in! Sowers members in Washington County are taking action! By the time you read this, parishioners from **Guardian Angels**, **Transfiguration**, the **Church of St. Ambrose**, and **St. Thomas Aquinas** will have attended public hearings on a proposed development in the city of Woodbury. The proposal includes some affordable housing. Sowers members will encourage the city to build more affordable housing and to adopt an inclusionary zoning measure. Look for details in our February issue!

Culture of Poverty

There is poverty and there is poverty. That is to say there is situational poverty and there is generational poverty. Poverty can become

a way of life in such a way that it develops a culture with its particular worldview, its unique values, and its own language. Catholic Charities staff members, Allison Boisvert and Jodi Pfarr, introduced a group of twenty people from six different parishes to the realities of the Culture of Poverty. This duo draws from personal and professional experience to present the reality of the class system in our country. Through humor and examples they spoke of the eight resources that a person needs for growth and stability: financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support system, relationships/models, and knowledge of hidden rules. Focus was given to the fact that financial resources are only one of the necessary resources for human development and movement from one class to another.

In our work as Sowers members it is imperative that we are aware of the experience of those for whom we seek justice. That was the motive for this Issue Forum: to learn about people and their reality so that our work is accomplished with a sense of realism and hope.

War—Peace and Conflict

"If you want peace work for justice."

This often quoted statement of Pope Paul VI has become more meaningful since September 11.

The need for dialogue during this time produced two trainings for Sowers members to aid in preparing them for reflection. The traditions of Catholic social teaching regarding just war and non-violence were presented along with training

Cesar Chavez once said,

"We must understand that the highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline."

Parishes at work (continued)

On behalf of
the
Office for Social Justice
we wish you His peace
and many blessings
during this holy season
of
Advent and Christmas.



for local parish discussion. The Sowers members were encouraged to moderate a dialogue with parishioners during this stressful time. Twenty-six people attended the first training from fifteen parishes, and the second evening twenty-eight people participated from twelve parishes. In all, seventeen parishes and one school had Sowers who trained to meet with parish members. Members of the community of Transfiguration Parish met to do such a reflection. Jim Maurer, Social Justice Coordinator, invited the RCIA group and the numbers swelled to eighty participants. Ten group leaders, many from the OSJ trainings, were prepared to meet in small groups. People shared opinions and extreme views were moderated as the groups reflected together producing a positive experience for the participants.

A third presentation was available through the Sowers Issues Forum held on November 15. Dr. Bernard Brady presented the history of church tradition and participants discussed whether the war in Afghanistan met the criteria of a just war. More than fifty participants from nineteen parishes struggled to learn more and deepen their understanding of this complex issue so relevant to our lives today.

Strategic Plan

Strategy, Strategize, Strategic. It all comes down to organizing an approach to deal with the large issues that Sowers members face today. We are organizing to tackle the persistent issues of affordable housing and welfare reform. The strategy looks at the goals we wish

to accomplish, who our allies and our opponents are, as well as who we need to target for decision making. But a strategy on paper is lifeless and without a future. We need Sowers members to bring it to life. Your expertise and enthusiasm, your willingness to work for change and your planning skills are essential. We need Sowers members to form county working groups that will plan and coordinate, putting flesh and bone on the strategic plan. Creating a groundswell of involvement is critical. Who wants to help? Call Matt, Michael, Kerry or Kathy. Just let us know who you are!

Immigration

The immigrant among us today has a new set of concerns as the national climate changes to intolerance for the stranger. A coalition has been formed involving many different groups to address federal immigration reform. This is an excellent place to learn more about the issue and how to shape policies that support immigrants. It is a wonderful opportunity to be involved directly and learn from the experience. If you are interested contact Matt Gladue or Kathy Tomlin at the OSJ office, 651-291-4477 to get information about the next meeting.

Congratulations...

The Planning Commission of Minneapolis unanimously passed the Lynnhurst project that includes affordable housing on 53rd and Lyndale. **Christ the King** Sowers were leaders in forming a coalition of supporters. Congratulations on success after your hard work.

Michael Griffin
Matthew Gladue
Sr. Kerry O'Reilly

OBSERVE—JUDGE—ACT

Our Seeds issues will put the spotlight on *Observe—Judge—Act*. Previous issues highlighted Observe and Judge. This issue we will take a closer look at what it means to *ACT*.

So you've done all the observing you care to do, and you've judged so much you ought to be nominated to the Supreme Court! Now, it's time to act.

Before we act, we need to plan our action. We have to make sure our action names solutions to a public problem, rather than simply restating the problem itself. The goal here is to get as specific as possible about the direction our action might take.

The solutions should meet a series of criteria:

- 4 First, solutions ought to address a problem that is immediate to a broad range of people.
- 4 Second, the solutions ought to ask specific decision makers to make concrete changes happen.
- 4 Third, the solutions need to be actionable. We need to be able to do something to make this proposed solution a specific public policy.
- 4 Fourth, the solutions need to be something that's winnable. We want to pose solutions that address the problem and that decision makers can reasonably adopt.

Once we've met this criteria, we have to develop a strategy. Action and strategy are not the same thing. Instead, action is one part of a strategy.

To create a strategy, we need to:

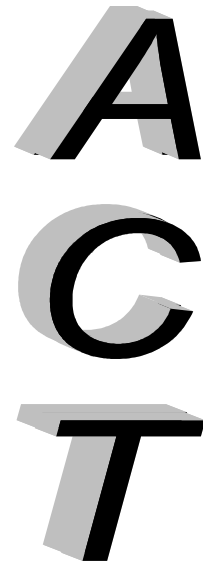
- 4 First, identify goals. In this case, our goals are the solutions we want to see decision makers adapt.

- 4 Second, we need to determine how our strategy will build our Sowers efforts. Will we recruit more members or deepen the experience of existing leaders? Do we want better relationships with decision makers or community members? Name these things now.
- 4 Third, we need to name our constituents, allies, and opponents. Don't make any assumptions here about who those allies and opponents might be!
- 4 Fourth, we name the decision maker or decision makers who can make our proposed solution a public policy.
- 4 Fifth, we decide on tactics—the actions we will take with our allies and opponents in order to get the decision makers to act as we wish.

In deciding these tactics, we need to take a number of things into account: How can our action challenge decision makers to do the right thing without alienating them? Will the action allow us to continue our relationship with the decision makers? Could it potentially end the relationship? Does this action demonstrate both our competency with regard to public problems and our confidence regarding the solutions? Is it an action that our Sowers members would be comfortable with? These are questions we need to ask.

Once we've answered them, we're ready to take action. After carefully assessing our options, it is most important that we act. Without this component, the observe-judge-act process goes unfinished, and our work for justice goes undone.

Matthew Gladue
Parish Organizer



The following are a list of websites to check out for numerous resources, prayers, services, and education materials in response to the events of September 11.

: www.catholiccharitiesusa.org
Catholic Charities USA

: www.usccb.org/sdwp/index.htm
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Office of Social Development and World Peace
(Information on Bishop's response and the church's teaching on war & peace)

: www.usccb.org/sdwp/index.htm
Pax Christi USA

: www.ipj-ppj.org
The Institute for Peace and Justice

: www.nonviolence.org/links.htm
The Non Violence Web

: <http://alt.claretianpubs.org>
Salt of the Earth

: www.coc.org
Center of Concern

: www.catholicworker.org
The Catholic Worker

: www.paceebene.org/
Pace e Bene
Franciscan Nonviolence Center

: www.fema.gov/r-n-r/bereave.htm
FEMA
(Federal Emergency Management Adm.)
Berevment & Loss Resources

: www.redcross.org
American Red Cross

THE ADVENT OF PEACE

An Advent Evening of Reflection with Megan McKenna

Wednesday, December 12 — 7 to 9:00 p.m.

Church of St. John Neumann
40309 Pilot Knob Road, Eagan.

Megan McKenna, our presenter, is a renowned biblical scholar and an engaging storyteller well known for her workshops and retreats given around the world.

The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a half hour of meditative silence.

There is no charge—all are invited. FMI or to RSVP please call St. John Neumann at 651-454-2079.

Sowers Institute for Social Justice

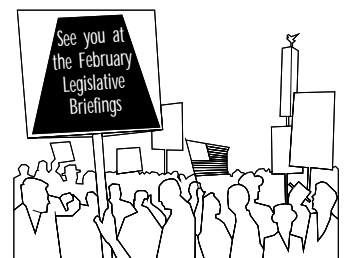
Back by popular demand, this institute is designed in particular for those new to the work of social action. Participants will engage in discussions about Catholic social teaching, faith and politics, leadership development, and the essential skills to be effective. Parish teams/groups are encouraged to attend together. The dates and locations are listed below:

(Mon) Jan. 28, 2002	6:30—9 p.m.	Basilica/Mpls.
(Mon) Feb. 11, 2002	6:30—9 p.m.	Basilica/Mpls.
(Mon) Mar. 4, 2002	6:30—9 p.m.	Basilica/Mpls.
(Mon) Mar. 18, 2002	6:30—9 p.m.	Basilica/Mpls.

Sowers Legislative Briefings

For many years these important briefings have served as the launching point for effective Sowers legislative action.

Overviews of the issue agenda and advocacy skills training, combined with the valuable experience of coming together with others passionate about the work of social justice, make these briefings essential for Sowers advocates. The dates are listed below—mark your calendars now.



(Mon) Feb. 4, 2002	7:00—9 p.m.	Location TBA
(Tues) Feb. 5, 2002	7:00—9 p.m.	Location TBA
(Thur) Feb. 19, 2002	7:00—9 p.m.	Location TBA



*Sow for yourselves justice,
reap the fruit of faithful love;*

*Break up for yourselves
a new field, for it is
time to seek the Lord,
until the Lord comes
and rains down justice
upon you.*

Hosea, 10:12

Sowers of Justice
Office for Social Justice
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SOWERS RENEWAL APPLICATION



Sometimes renewal doesn't
happen until members
"get around to it"...

It's time to renew your
Sowers of Justice membership!

Respond promptly to keep
connected to this important
opportunity to act on your faith.

Name _____

Address _____

City, St., Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Parish _____

City _____

Social issues or topics I'm especially interested in:

P I'd like to be on the mailing list for legislative advocacy.

____ Enclosed is my (our) household membership fee of \$25.

Mail to: Office for Social Justice, Attn. Sowers Renewal
328 West Kellogg Blvd. ■ St. Paul, MN 55102

Membership scholarships available. Please call
Sr. Kerry O'Reilly at 651-291-4482.