

Report of On Earth Peace

Rooted in Christian faith, On Earth Peace cultivates people and communities who advance justice and build a peaceful world.

Theme: Jeremiah 29 (NKJV)

⁴Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. ⁶Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. ⁷And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. ¹⁰For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. ¹¹For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Jeremiah is speaking to people who do not want to be in the place and situation they find themselves, but instead of offering flight, God insists that the people work for peace where they are, “for in its [the city’s] peace you will have peace.” A full peace - peace within the city, within the exiled community, and within the hearts and minds of those who have been made captive - comes to those who seek it and pray for it.

For two years, On Earth Peace has focused its work on Jeremiah 29. In 2011, verses 7-9 have been central as we work with leaders to stop violence and build peace in the communities in which they live. Verses 7-9 read, *“And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”*

Many of the individuals, congregations, and communities with which we work feel captive as conflict and violence dominate relationships, schools, work places, and churches. Through programs like Agape-Satyagraha Training and the direct services of the Ministry of Reconciliation, On Earth Peace calls leaders to actively engage in conflict transformation and nonviolent social change. While not necessarily always in a city, On Earth Peace and its partners have sought and continue to work for peace.

In 2012 we are focusing on verses 12-14: *“Says the Lord, When you pray, I will listen. When your heart seeks Me, you will find Me. When I am found by you, I will gather you and bring you home again.”* Continuing in the spirit of God’s promise of peace, future, and hope, now we are reminded that God listens and responds to our faithfulness. This year, we celebrate with those who have found, for the first time, or have returned, to God and the church through the ministries of On Earth Peace. We eagerly pray and seek God in our work and relationships with each of you.

Activities throughout the Church at All Levels

2011 Annual Conference

In the exhibit hall at Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the On Earth Peace booth was a colorful and open gathering place for a wide variety of conference-goers. In addition to providing information about our organization, the On Earth Peace booth was a place where those interested in peacemaking and violence reduction gathered to exchange ideas, plans and dreams.

On Earth Peace also brought together constituents at 10 Insight Sessions led by staff and other selected leaders. Topics included “Worthy of the Calling: A Bible Study on Forbearance,” “Doing Conflict Well: Can a Healthy Fight Build the Body?” and “A Relevant Peace Tradition Has Some Teeth.” In addition, a series of three sessions was designed specifically for youth.

The On Earth Peace Annual Breakfast featured Samuel Sarpiya, a part-time Nonviolence Organizer for On Earth Peace, working in Rockford, Illinois. The grassroots community group he leads there has made great progress in reducing violence and changing the dysfunctional culture of one troubled middle school.

At the request of conference officers, Ministry of Reconciliation (MoR) provided observers during Annual Conference business sessions to assist persons needing a listening ear or a mediating presence during the proceedings. In addition, MoR facilitators were invited to be present at the evening gatherings of the young adults, and those of Voices for an Open Spirit. MoR was also available to consult with individuals or organizations dealing with conflict, and continued to be called upon for consultation during conference.

Youth Activities and Conferences

On Earth Peace also serves the Church of the Brethren through regional and national youth and young adult programs and conferences. In 2011, On Earth Peace was active at the National Junior High Conference, at regional youth conferences, and at Young Adult Conference.

District Conferences

From July through November, On Earth Peace staff and volunteers were present at nearly all of the 23 district conferences, bringing displays and a variety of resource materials for conference participants. At 13 district conferences, On Earth Peace reported to delegates, and/or led workshops, insight sessions, meal events and youth sessions, or assisted in other conference roles. Session topics included “Understanding Congregational Conflict,” “Meetings with More Light and Less Heat,” “Why it Matters to Teach Christ’s Peace,” and “Dealing with Difficult Conversations.” To arrange for a session at your district conference, contact Bob Gross, executive director, at bgross@onearthpeace.org.

Cross Cultural Celebration

"United by the Cross of Peace" (Ephesians 2:14-22) was the theme of the Mission and Ministry Board's Intercultural Consultation and Celebration, for which On Earth Peace provided keynote leadership. Approximately 100 Brethren from across the U.S. and Puerto Rico gathered April 28-30, 2011, in Mills River, N.C., hosted by His Way Church of the Brethren/Iglesia Jesucristo El Camino and Southeastern District.

On Earth Peace provided leadership for a day and a half of study of scripture, skills, and philosophy of peacemaking. Matt Guynn, coordinator of Peace Witness, led the sessions with help from a team including Samuel Sarpiya, Nonviolence Organizer for On Earth Peace; David Jehnsen, Kingian nonviolence educator from the area of Columbus, Ohio; Carol Rose, co-director for operations for Christian Peacemaker Teams; Bob Hunter of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship in Richmond, Ind.; and Kay Guyer, Manchester College student and a member of the 2011 Youth Peace Travel Team.

These sessions focused on the holistic peace of Christ that ripples out to challenge situations in the world where there is injustice and violence. Participants shared in Bible study of passages from the Sermon on the Mount and Acts focusing on concepts of peace, and learned about nonviolence theory, including six principles of Kingian nonviolence and three levels of violence posited by Dom Helder Camara. The meeting also identified barriers to peace or "bricks in the wall of hostility," and talked about how Christ's peace might break in. In small groups, participants shared about situations of violence and oppression, practiced listening to each other, and prayed for healing.

Song & Story Fest

On Earth Peace co-sponsored the fifteenth annual Song & Story Fest in 2011. The event was held at Camp Brethren Heights, in the Michigan district, just prior to Annual Conference in Grand Rapids. The theme for the week was "Between the Waters," focusing on the many ways water is a central part of the biblical story. Planned by founder Ken Kline Smeltzer, Song & Story Fest is a truly intergenerational gathering -- a family camp where everyone is family. At this year's Fest, with its daily pattern of morning devotions, workshop groups, afternoon free time, evening campfire and concert, the 150+ participants enjoyed a wide variety of musical styles and storytelling from perennial favorites and new performers.

National Older Adult Conference

On Earth Peace was an active part of the 2011 National Older Adult Conference, held in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. David Waas and Bob Gross led a session which asked the question, "Are We Still that Church?," in which they reviewed the history of the Church of the Brethren in its peacemaking and service ministries, with a focus on the time during and after World War II. In another session, Bob Gross joined with Nevin Dulabaum, president of Brethren Benefit Trust; Ruthann Knechel Johansen, president of Bethany Theological Seminary; and Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren; to speak about current issues in the church and a vision for the future. Conference participants also visited the On Earth Peace display table, and found there a number of valuable resource materials for their own reconciliation and peacemaking work.

Other Denominational Meetings and Events

On Earth Peace is active in many denominational events in addition to those described above. The executive director sits on the Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren, and is joined by the board chair in the Interagency Forum. In addition, several other short- and long-term denominational initiatives include On Earth Peace as contributing partners.

Congregational Leadership and Interaction

Working directly with congregations is one of the primary avenues of ministry for On Earth Peace, through the International Day of Prayer for Peace, the Ministry of Reconciliation, and other programs. In 2011, On Earth Peace provided programs at the congregational level in many districts across the Church of the Brethren, including preaching and other worship leadership, church school teaching, workshops, retreats, and youth group programs. As On Earth Peace seeks to encourage and support congregations and individuals in their Christian peacemaking, these opportunities to meet and work with local churches are very important. To request worship, preaching, or church school leadership, contact us at 410-635-8704 or oepe@onearthpeace.org.

Print and Electronic Newsletters

On Earth Peace produces a print newsletter twice a year for constituents, in the spring and fall. The 2011 newsletters focused on new and expanding program areas, sharing stories about how individuals, congregations, and communities apply our programs in their individual situations. Three email newsletters reach constituents more frequently, in some cases with more specific audiences:

The Peacebuilder continues to be widely circulated among On Earth Peace constituents and peacemakers. This newsletter promotes upcoming activities, and carries reports of local ministries and inspiring stories of peacemaking. It is a place where constituents can read about one another's work and share their stories.

Reconciliation Notes focuses on conflict transformation ministries and is a venue for networking among those who are part of the Ministry of Reconciliation of On Earth Peace.

The **Step Up Newsletter** has been added as a mailing for youth and young adults who are ready to make a commitment to becoming leaders in nonviolent community change.

Website

On Earth Peace continues to develop its website in response to the changing needs of our programs and technological advancements. In 2011, the website was completely redesigned to improve function, visual design and ease of use. Janelle Flory Schrock oversees the site on a part-time, contract basis. We invite all interested persons to visit at www.onearthpeace.org.

Peace Education Program Report

On Earth Peace provides educational retreats, training events, and volunteer opportunities for all who seek to develop their faith-based beliefs and skills as peacemakers. The Peace Education program is concerned with offering these opportunities in order to develop leadership for peace in each new generation of the church. On Earth Peace recognizes the strength that is gained when people of faith gather to share ideas with one another, learn new concepts, and practice techniques that can be taken into the world. This recognition is one of the foundations of peace education programming. Congregations and districts can host peace retreats and training events by inviting On Earth Peace to provide leadership at local, district, and regional gatherings for youth and adults.

As an effort to renew its dedication to the work of peace education, On Earth Peace continually renews our commitment to invite every youth in the Church of the Brethren to participate in a peace education event. Many of today's denominational, regional, and local leaders can point to an experience at an On Earth Peace event as an important part of their faith formation. Recognizing the importance of providing this foundation for today's youth of the denomination, On Earth Peace is committed to expanding the number of retreats and workshops in order to reach this ambitious goal. How might the church – and our world – be different in fifty years because of a renewed effort to teach and live Jesus' message of peace?

Peace Retreats

The goal of peace retreats is to provide a spiritual setting in which youth can learn about Jesus' message of peace in an interactive and fun atmosphere. By training youth in the biblical, historical, and faith traditions of peacemaking, On Earth Peace empowers youth to become active and thinking participants in the world, on behalf of Christ.

Peace Retreats are designed to address the issues that youth groups are challenged by in their lives and to encourage putting faith into action as they apply Jesus' teachings to these challenges. On Earth Peace works closely with local youth leaders to prepare each retreat. This year, peace education topics included encouraging junior and high school youth to consider how they will work to eliminate violence in their communities, including the violence of bullying; inviting young adults to "Step Up!" to actively stop violence and build peace through local initiatives; and intergenerational sharing of experiences and witness.

In 2011, On Earth Peace provided retreats and retreat leadership in the Southern Ohio, Western Plains, Mid-Atlantic, Pacific Southwest, and Northern Indiana districts. Shorter workshops and sessions were provided for several churches in the form of Sunday school classes and meetings with youth groups. In addition, On Earth Peace was present at Bridgewater College's Roundtable, Young Adult Conference of the Church of the Brethren, and National Junior High Conference of the Church of the Brethren.

Youth Peace Travel Team (YPTT)

Mark Dowdy (Stone (Huntingdon, Pa.) Church of the Brethren, McPherson College), Tyler Goss (West Richmond, Va.) Church of the Brethren, Bridgewater College), Kay Guyer (Woodbury (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Manchester College) and Sarah Neher (McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, McPherson College) were this year's dynamic Youth Peace Travel Team, jointly sponsored by On Earth Peace and the Outdoor Ministries Association, along with the Church of the Brethren's Youth and Young Adult Ministry Office, Global Mission Partnerships, and Brethren Volunteer Service. The goal of the Youth Peace Travel Team is to teach peers about peace issues and develop leadership for the denomination. Participation in the Youth Peace Travel Team is open to young adults, ages 18-23, in the Church of the Brethren. The team continued the tradition of traveling to Church of the Brethren camps this year to teach and stimulate discussions about peace and discipleship issues.

2011 marked the eighth year that YPTT members participated in the Mission and Ministry Board's Ministry Summer Service (MSS) program, giving team members a support network with other young adults working for the church during the summer and providing a larger sense of many forms of ministry. The MSS program also connected each team member with a YPTT staff mentor for the summer and provided the team with tuition grants. MSS, along with YPTT orientation, prepares the team for their specific obligations during the summer.

This summer's schedule included work at the following camps: Woodland Altars (Southern Ohio), Shepherd's Spring (Mid-Atlantic), Bethel (Virginia), Emmaus (Illinois/Wisconsin), Galilee (West Marva), and Brethren Woods (Shenandoah). This year's team also attended National Junior High Conference in Elizabethtown, Pa.; Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, Mich., where the YPTT celebrated its 20th year of service; and a National Workcamp at Camp Mardela. The team used games, songs, skits, and simulations to talk with youth about topics from Brethren pacifism and alternatives to military service, to global justice issues and caring for our creation.

Agape-Satyagraha Leadership Training for Youth in Conflict Resolution and Social Change

"I didn't get in a fight today. A guy got in front of me in the lunch line. I was ready to push him out of the way, when I remembered how we had talked about cooling off first. So I counted backwards for a while. Then I said to myself, 'This isn't worth getting into a fight about and then getting suspended. I'll just let it go this time.'" --Agape-Satyagraha Participant

Agape-Satyagraha Leadership Training in Conflict Resolution is offered in partnership with Brethren Community Ministries (Harrisburg, Pa.) and was developed by Gerald W. Rhoades (Executive Director of Brethren Community Ministries). The program helps junior and senior high youth learn to deal with conflict without using violence by presenting concepts and skills training through the completion of five levels. The program teaches youth the heart of Christian peacemaking (agape love) and Gandhian nonviolence (satyagraha) and empowers youth to use agape and satyagraha together for nonviolent interpersonal conflict resolution and nonviolent social change. In addition, the program trains adult mentors in the essentials of agape and satyagraha, and connects youth with mentors within their communities.

Agape-Satyagraha mentors youth (ages 11-18) through five levels of skills training: understanding conflict escalation, anger management, de-escalating conflict, dynamics of power in conflict, and

negotiation and mediation training. Adult volunteers coach youth individually or in small groups, using individualized techniques, allowing youth to pace themselves through each level.

In 2009, On Earth Peace launched a pilot program to share Agape-Satyagraha Training across the denomination. On Earth Peace provides support to local communities organizing to offer the program, and those sites provide feedback as the curriculum is developed to meet the needs of diverse settings. As of 2011, seven pilot sites were actively offering Agape-Satyagraha Training to youth. Pilot sites are located in Modesto, Calif., Canton, Ill., South Bend, Ind., Lima, Ohio, Union Bridge, Md., Harrisburg, Pa., and Wilmington, Del. Mentor trainings were also conducted for a potential site in Trotwood, Ohio. Site coordinators from each location meet monthly to share about the program's achievements and workshop together.

This year, On Earth Peace sponsored the first Agape-Satyagraha Peace Retreat. Held in Columbus, Ohio, the retreat provided an opportunity for participants, mentors, and site coordinators from the various sites to come together for a weekend of learning. Youth attending the retreat went deeper into the materials that are worked on from week to week. Thirty-seven youth advanced a level this year and three graduated from the program having completed all five levels.

Kids As Peacemakers Mural Project

Kids As Peacemakers, a program begun by Merle Forney in Newburyport, Mass., encourages schools, churches, and civic organizations to help their children learn to talk about and envision peace and peaceful living. As part of this process, the children use a consensus process to design a peace mural that is painted on plywood and displayed so the community can witness how their children envision peace. On Earth Peace has developed a faith-based curriculum to accompany the program.

In 2009, On Earth Peace began a partnership with Kids As Peacemakers, Inc., to offer the mural project to communities beyond New England. This year, Antioch (Rocky Mount, Va.) Church of the Brethren and First United Methodist Church of Centralia, Wash., participated in the program, creating murals as part of Sunday school, children's church, and Vacation Bible School.

Step Up!

LEARN – LEAD – BUILD are three commitments made by every youth and young adult who joins the Step Up! movement. Step Up! networks youth and young adults through e-newsletters, mentor phone calls, action teams, and retreats to learn the ways of active nonviolence, lead efforts to advance justice, build peace, and eliminate violence, and build the movement by encouraging other youth and young adults.

Thirty-six youth and young adults have "stepped up" as part of this program. They are working within their local communities to stop human trafficking and war, to build safe college campuses for LGBTQ persons, and to protect the environment. In addition, many participants are actively a part of other On Earth Peace programs including International Day of Prayer for Peace and Youth Peace Travel Team.

Brethren Volunteer Service Peace Retreat Coordinator

In 2009, On Earth Peace created a Brethren Volunteer Service position for a Peace Retreat Coordinator. In 2010-2011, Chelsea Goss joined the staff as a volunteer to organize, coordinate, and facilitate peace retreats. Chelsea served as a member of the 2009 Youth Peace Travel Team. She is a graduate of Bridgewater College.

The Peace Retreat Coordinator is a year-long placement through Brethren Volunteer Service. For more information on this position, contact Marie Benner-Rhoades or Brethren Volunteer Service.

Contact us today!

Peace Education programs are available to any persons, agencies, congregations, or organizations who want to develop their faith-based beliefs and skills as peacemakers. Please call the Program Coordinator for Peace Education, Marie Benner-Rhoades, at (607) 387-3509, email peace-ed@onearthpeace.org, or visit www.onearthpeace.org for more information.

Ministry of Reconciliation Program Report

Teaching and leading healthy, faithful responses to conflict

Christian peacemaking is rooted in the scriptures that exhort us to love one another (John 13:34-35, Romans 12:9-10), even our enemies (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27); and yet the reality is that our differences inevitably lead to conflict. The Ministry of Reconciliation is where On Earth Peace equips peacemakers to be peacemakers in all contexts (personal, family, church, community, world) by providing skills and processes that transform conflict. MoR is also where On Earth Peace models how differences can be settled by nonviolent and life-giving means, and where we accompany and support those who are committed to the hard work of reflecting Christ's peace in their ongoing relationships.

The main way MoR brings peacemaking skills to individuals, congregations, districts, and agencies is through workshops and training events. Rooted in Jesus' teachings, participants learn healthy responses to conflict, and pro-active practices for generating understanding in the midst of diverse perspectives. Sometimes, however, even the most well-equipped peacemakers need help, especially when a conflict is about an issue that evokes strong feelings or has been simmering for a long period of time. That is why MoR also offers facilitation, consultation, and mediation services.

God has been gracious to equip On Earth Peace to provide this ministry through the generosity of trained, skilled volunteers who comprise the MoR practitioner network. Because these gifted volunteers are willing to accept minimal remuneration for their services and because On Earth Peace and the congregations and individuals who support On Earth Peace subsidize the actual cost of services, MoR services are offered at significantly lower cost than agencies outside the Church of the Brethren engaged in similar work.

Ministry of Reconciliation Program Review

In part to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Ministry of Reconciliation as a part of On Earth Peace, a program review was conducted in 2010 and completed in early 2011. This included a general assessment of how well MoR has lived out the vision first articulated in 1991; an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT); and a thorough analysis of all areas of the program: education/workshops, direct services (facilitation, intervention and coaching), and the practitioner network. This included an examination of lessons learned, proficiencies, and areas for growth in each of these aspects of the program. The practitioner network stood out as an area for attention, and steps were taken in 2011 to re-envision and strengthen this vital aspect of how On Earth Peace equips peacemakers and serves local congregations and communities.

2011 Workshops and Training Events

In 2011, MoR provided 10 workshops, insight sessions and training events to congregations and districts in eight Church of the Brethren districts and at Annual Conference. Topics included "Difficult Conversations"; "Meetings with More Light and Less Heat"; "How to Help Children Respond to Conflict"; "Understanding Congregational Conflict"; "Faith, Family and Finances" (with Brethren Benefit Trust/Church of the Brethren Credit Union); opportunities to share what was learned by using the Special Response Process; a Bible study on Forbearance; and MoR's flagship nine-hour Matthew 18 workshop. Rooted in Christ's teachings on reconciliation, participants in

Matthew 18 workshops learn the biblical basis for reconciliation, how to deal with anger, a method of Christian conciliation and the impact of forgiveness.

None of these workshops, insight sessions and trainings would have been possible without MoR volunteer workshop leaders Marie Benner-Rhoades, Becki Bowman, Barbara Daté, Eddie Edmondson, Charletta Erb, Melisa Grandison, Bob Gross, Tim Harvey, Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey, Janet Mitchell, Rick Polhamus, Bev Weaver and Linda Williams.

Support for Congregations and Others in Conflict provided in 2011

Often it is helpful to engage an outside practitioner to facilitate a solid decision-making process, especially when issues are contentious. MoR provides skilled facilitators for meetings held by leadership teams or full congregations. While an organization is working through a period of change, a skilled facilitator can help clarify decision-making and work through a process to address problems that arise. Facilitators are also available to assist in visioning and planning for future change, or simply to facilitate lively discussion and dialogue among participants with diverse perspectives. In 2011, On Earth Peace staff provided facilitators for a Church of the Brethren agency board, a Church of the Brethren nonprofit, a seminary staff event and two community events.

MoR also offers short- or long-term consultation services for individuals, congregations and others needing assistance in dealing with conflict. A short-term MoR consultation might include facilitation of one or two meetings. For deeper and broader levels of conflict, or conflict that has been taking place over a number of months or years, MoR suggests a six- to nine-month “walk” with a consultation team. Typically, this involves three weekends on-site over the first three months, and then a six-month period of coaching and consultation by phone. During the consultation, the team may lead the parties through a variety of processes to address healing, reconciliation, and change.

One of the most courageous and faithful things Christians can do is to reach out for help to work through a difficult situation or a long-standing conflict. In 2011, MoR volunteers Celia Cook-Huffman, Marty Farahat, and Anna Lisa Gross, along with On Earth Peace staff Leslie Frye, Bob Gross and Samuel Sarpiya, participated in a restorative justice process; coached a district shalom team; consulted with a congregation member who wanted to faithfully approach a conflict with a pastor; and worked with two congregations engaged in long-term “walks” toward reconciliation. Two additional congregations pursued the possibility of an MoR long-term consultation.

On Earth Peace Internship

On Earth Peace was pleased to have Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey join the staff as a Ministry of Reconciliation part-time intern over the summer. A recent graduate of Bridgewater College with a Sociology major and Peace Studies minor, Audrey provided essential staff support primarily during Annual Conference where she coordinated the team of Young Adult Ministers of Reconciliation, served as an MoR Observer and performed other general duties. We wish her well as she begins her studies at Bethany Theological Seminary.

Contact Us!

Ministry of Reconciliation services are available to any persons, agencies, congregations or organizations needing assistance in dealing with conflict or desiring training in communication and conflict transformation skills. Please contact MoR program coordinator Leslie Frye at lfrye@onearthpeace.org, call 620-755-3940 for more information, or visit www.onearthpeace.org. Leslie works for On Earth Peace out of her home in McPherson, Kansas.

The Peace Witness program of On Earth Peace provides congregations with invitations and opportunities to address community issues through ministries of reducing violence and building peace. The main focus of the Peace Witness program in the last year has been providing a call to congregation and community groups to get involved in speaking out about violence in their communities and the world, and walking more deeply with several emerging partners as they address community issues.

As On Earth Peace transitions to a more holistic approach to peacemaking, and our efforts are integrating more powerfully to make a stronger impact, the Peace Witness program brings gifts which include the skills of active nonviolence and a view toward helping church and community groups make a difference in concrete terms.

Workshops and Retreats

In May 2011, On Earth Peace provided a workshop for Shalom House, a Christian peacemaking ministry of Circle of Hope, a Brethren in Christ congregation in Philadelphia, Pa. Members of Shalom House had participated in the October 2010 “You Can’t Stop the River: Nonviolent Community Change” training in Harrisburg, Pa., and used skills from that event to begin stimulating conversation within their 600-member congregation about the impact of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on the region of Philadelphia and South Jersey. This led to the desire to reach out to the broader regional community by building the congregation’s own understanding and analysis through collecting stories in a Listening Tour.

To prepare for this next step, Matt Guynn and Mimi Copp Johnson, led the training, “Strategic Listening for Social Change: To Hear, To Understand, To Act,” on May 1, 2011. The event had five goals: 1) an introduction into strategies of social change, 2) a closer look into the strategy of Kingian Nonviolence, 3) practical skill-building including listening, probing and information gathering, 4) building the Listening Tour team and planning next steps, and 5) spiritual components to ground the work of bringing about social change. By the end of the day, the Listening Team had been formed and had created a rough map for the next several months of listening efforts. The Team made plans to reach out and collect stories from people representing seven different leadership groups in society (religious, government, education, women and minority, social service, youth, and business). Mimi Copp Johnson wrote, “Shalom House has embarked on this Listening Tour as a way to discern a practical course of action for Circle of Hope to take as proactive peacemakers concerned with the ongoing wars of our country and their ramifications.”

In October 2011, Matt Guynn provided skill-building and preparation for staff of the labor union Service Employees International Union (SEIU), as they created plans for education and advocacy activities in November. Highlighting hundreds of infrastructure projects which need to be addressed (public works, bridges, roads) and thousands of people seeking work, the union urged the government to create jobs programs which would put people to work doing the construction and repair that is needed.

Union staff from 15 cities came together in Chicago, Ill., for a training day with the following goals: consider how to maximize the effectiveness of a large day of action; explore the scenario overview; highlight key insights from nonviolent strategy; identify kinds of prep work before a big public action; and specific tasks and roles necessary on the day of a major nonviolent action. The day culminated in practice designing large/mass nonviolent actions using specific scenarios on bridges, overpasses, etc. This training supported major public events that took place on November 17, 2011, in at least 15 cities around the country.

Community Accompaniment

On Earth Peace is finding that the most powerful work for peace and justice takes place across time, and we are moving from simply providing program services to developing longer-term relationships in selected communities. Current communities or partner groups where the peace witness program of On Earth Peace has been working in some sustained way include Rockford, Illinois, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. In each of these communities, our partner groups are community coalitions or faith groups who are seeking to engage the community in new ways. For current information on these or other communities, check our website.

IDPP Campaign 2011

This year marked On Earth Peace's fifth annual campaign to invite communities around the world to participate in the International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP). Congregations and community groups in at least 21 U.S. states and 10 countries partnered with On Earth Peace to create community prayer events during the week surrounding IDPP 2011.

During the week of September 21, 2011, more than 128 grassroots groups around the world marked the seventh observance of the World Council of Churches' International Day of Prayer for Peace, which coincides with the United Nations' International Day of Peace. An initiative of the United Nations and the World Council of Churches, the International Day of Prayer for Peace is a time when the guns, armies and militias go silent as 24-hour ceasefires are observed around the world, and when people and grassroots groups join in celebration, prayer and speaking out about their hopes for a more peaceful world.

On Earth Peace program director Matt Guynn reported, "We have seen local IDPP events become a time for community and faith groups to generate energy and spiritual power to address the real problems people face. Martin Luther King, Jr., talked about the triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism. Around the world, people of conscience are stepping up to catalyze new responses to these and many other faces of violence. It's our prayer that IDPP events will help build new possibilities in each participating community."

On Earth Peace provided liturgical and organizing resources on its website, and actively organized grassroots partners both within its historical Church of the Brethren base and with ecumenical partners. At least 30 events were organized by youth and young adult leaders.

Local organizers who connected with On Earth Peace in 2011 were affiliated with at least 11 different denominations or religious traditions, including the Church of the Brethren in the USA and the Democratic Republic of Congo, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches UK, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of both America and Denmark. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA also marked the day as part of its assembly meetings in New York City.

Contact Us!

Peace Witness staffing in 2011 was supervised by Matt Guynn, coordinator of Peace Witness. Samuel Sarpiya, Gretchen Knaus, and Michael Colvin provided additional part-time staffing as organizers and support staff, with additional support from On Earth Peace's BVSer, Chelsea Goss. Contact the Peace Witness program through mguynn@onearthpeace.org, telephone 503-775-1636, or mail at 12727 SE Market St, Portland OR 97233.

Organizational Management and Development

Staff Listing

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Two staff members left the employ of On Earth Peace at the end of 2011: Gimbiya Kettering, who had served as Coordinator of Communications since 2007; and Jim Replogle who had served for one year in the interim position of Operations Director.

Board of Directors Report to Annual Conference 2012

The On Earth Peace Board of Directors is committed to supporting and furthering the vital mission and ministry of our organization within the Church of the Brethren and our world.

The Board of Directors convenes twice a year, usually at the On Earth Peace headquarters in New Windsor, Md. These Spirit-led meetings are conducted using consensus – a process of collaborative decision making that reflects and draws upon the creativity, concerns and ideas of all involved.

On Earth Peace constituents continue to call Board members who reflect the beauty of all humankind. The board includes individuals of African-American, European-American, and Amerasian backgrounds. Board and staff members' ages range from individuals in their 20s to those in their 70s. Board members come from all corners of the United States, and a variety of socio-economic, professional, and ideological backgrounds. At On Earth Peace, we believe that our differences are a gift from God, and we celebrate the peace of Christ, which binds us together.

In 2011, the On Earth Peace Board of Directors welcomed our newest members: Patricia Ronk of Roanoke, Va., Lauree Hersch Meyer of Durham, N.C., and Ken Wenger of Lorton, Va. We also celebrated with thanks for the service of our outgoing board member, Phil Miller of Warrensburg, Mo.

As a peace and justice organization, On Earth Peace is committed to eliminating violence of all kinds. It is because of this purpose that, during our fall 2011 meeting, the On Earth Peace Board of Directors issued a statement of inclusion, which says,

“We are troubled by attitudes and actions in the church which exclude persons on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or any other aspect of human identity. We believe God calls the church to welcome all persons into full participation in the life of the faith community.”

Understandably, we have received some feedback from members in the denomination – both in support and in opposition to this action. We understand and respect all viewpoints on this controversial and sensitive topic in our denomination. Our statement of inclusion first expresses our deep concern about un-Christ-like actions and attitudes, and secondly expresses a belief in the church's call to follow the teachings and examples of Jesus as we see him in scripture. The On Earth Peace Board of Directors feels God's leading in our discernment, and hope that we have been faithful to that leading.

Another action taken by the Board of Directors was to launch a search for a new Executive Director. Bob Gross, who has served in this role since October 2000, will be moving to a new role within the organization. This transition has been in the works for two years, and is fully supported by both the staff (including Bob Gross) and the Board. We look forward to growing and strengthening our staff with the addition of a new organizational leader.

Other major items of business in 2011 included approving the organization's budget for the 2012 fiscal year and exploring new ways to enhance program services.

In addition to the time and commitment of our Board and staff members, the work of On Earth Peace would not be possible without our volunteers. We appreciate and thank all the individuals, groups, and congregations who share our vision and are engaged in conflict mediation, youth education, counter-recruitment, and justice advocacy. We are also grateful for our representation with other global organizations, including the United Nations and Christian Peacemaker Teams. Together, we are building peaceful communities both locally and globally, and spreading the love of Christ.

Board Members

Doris Abdullah
Joel Gibbel
Louise Knight
Benjamin Leiter (Secretary)
Carol Mason
Madalyn Metzger (Chair)
Lauree Hersch Meyer
David Miller
Robbie Miller (Vice-Chair)
Don Mitchell
Patricia Ronk
Donna Shumate
Gail Erisman Valeta
Ken Wenger

Financial Report

Overview of 2011

The past few years have been challenging ones financially for On Earth Peace, as for most church and nonprofit organizations. During this recession, contributions from some congregations and from some individual donors have been reduced. In 2011, through a focused initiative, over 300 new contributors joined with those already supporting the organization's ministries. This was a wonderful boost to our capacity to serve those who call upon us. In addition, some long-time donors have been able to increase their support, for which we are very thankful. More than 80% of all operating funds come from individual and congregational gifts.

This steadfast support, combined with careful budget management by staff while continuing to carry out all programs and projects, resulted in a balance of income and expenses for fiscal year 2011, which ended on September 30, 2011.

Financial Report for October 1, 2010, to September 30, 2011

Our audited financial report is available under separate cover.

Income sources:

Individual gifts (1028 donors)	\$340,768	63.8%
Congregational giving (249 churches)	97,094	18.2%
Income from program services	52,030	9.7%
Foundation grants	2,000	0.4%
Income from endowment and savings	42,456	7.9%

Total Income ***\$534,348***

Program expenses:

We are pleased to report on our stewardship of the funds entrusted to On Earth Peace:

Program Services	\$438,788	82.4%
Management and General Operating	35,146	6.6%
Fund Raising	58,567	11.0%

Total Expense ***\$532,510***

The staff and board join in thanking all who have supported the peacemaking ministries of the church through their contributions to On Earth Peace. As some sources of support are being decreased by the economic recession, we ask congregations and individuals who are able to increase their support to prayerfully consider how they can strengthen their investment in this work of the gospel.

Contact Us!

For information about making a current or future contribution to On Earth Peace, contact Executive Director, Bob Gross, at bgross@onearthpeace.org or 260-982-7751.