

Intersections

Stories of Invitation to Walk in the Path of Jesus

from congregations in
Franconia Conference of
Mennonite Church USA

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Peace Quilts

by Mary Jane Hershey

It is six weeks before Christmas. **Salford Mennonite Church's** intergenerational class is discussing the Mennonite banner, "Pray for Peace, Act for Peace." The praying part is comprehensible. But how, we ask, do we act for peace?

On Monday morning class member Ken Pfhister, while folding laundry, remembers the Sunday conversation. As he folds a blanket, he wonders about Presidents George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein. When they go to bed and pull up their blankets, do they think about war? Do they think about peace?

Ken's reflection starts a flurry of peace activity at Salford. The blankets become quilts. The quilts become peace quilts. The quilt designer, Beverly Musselman, becomes the interpreter of Salford's wish for peace. The appliquers become prayer partners (every stitch is a prayer for peace.) Church members become quilters. The children become stitchers. And the whole congregation becomes more aware of their mission to pray for peace and act for peace.

The quilts are almost mirror images of each other: a spreading Tree of Life, divided in the middle by the edge of each quilt, shelters a globe on each side. Each displays part of the hemisphere; one highlighting Iraq and the other highlighting the United States. In both halves of the tree, a friendly dove looks at another amicable dove. The tree is firmly rooted in



peace quilts for George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein as seen when placed together.

thousands of one inch squares representing all of us at Salford as well as people throughout the world who long for world peace.

The quilts are put in quilting frames by Sunday morning, December 15, and the children as well as everyone in the congregation are invited to add a stitch, a prayer for peace. By Tuesday afternoon, December 17, the quilting is finished, ready for each quilt to be bound. Salford's 90 year old member, Verna Alderfer, completes the hand stitched edging.

Sunday morning, December 23, the quilts are dedicated. Immediately after the service the quilt for Saddam is flown to Chicago and given to a representative of the inter-Mennonite organization, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPTs). On December 26, Saddam's quilt is taken to Iraq by a group of CPT'ers. The quilt is now in Iraq, but at this writing (1/29/03) no word has been received about its present location.

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On Friday, January 3, 2003, the quilt for President Bush is taken to the White House by Daryl Byler, MCC Washington DC representative. Salford has not received an acknowledgment from the Bush family.

But the significance of what happened at Salford has opened throughout the community a dialogue about attitudes regarding the Iraq/USA situation. Extensive news articles with color photos appeared in three area newspapers, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Letters to the editor in the *Lansdale Reporter* affirmed and criticized the peace quilts. Columnists commented pro and con.



Quilters at prayer/work on Saddam's new bedding.

The message of the peace quilts spread across the country. Salford received a wonderful packet of drawings from fifth graders at the Blessed Sacrament Parish School in Midland, Michigan. Their teacher,

while visiting in the Philadelphia area, read about the peace quilts. Her students affirmed our project through delightful drawings as well as through their prayers and hopes for world peace.

Perhaps a message received over the Internet from a woman who lives in California, describes compellingly the impact of the quilts on Salford, and on a wider community:

"Naïve? Unworldly? Sure. But powerful. I don't think a peace quilt can fix the world, but symbols can gather power, can begin to help and heal. Then there's the change in the lives of the people who make the quilts. Focusing your attention and prayer changes you, yourself, and doing it in community can build strong bonds. We have to start somewhere."

Mary Jane Hershey is a member at Salford Mennonite Church.



Evangelism for the Rest of Us

by Craig Pelkey-Landes,
Editor

By the time you read this, *Off the Map: More Ready Than You Realize* will be only a few short weeks away. On April 4th and 5th, over 500 people (if you come and tell a friend to come) will get together and finally get concrete about what it means to be missional.

This won't be some dry lecture to sit through. This interactive event is more about an attitude than a strategy for evangelism. How do we cultivate an attitude that shows respect and love for non-Christians? How do we talk to others about spiritual matters without on one hand, shortchanging the experience of non-Christians, or on the other hand, our own love for Jesus?

Off the Map: More Ready Than You Realize will be a great opportunity to explore these issues with others from FMC congregations, as well as other Christians from southeastern PA and as far away as North Carolina, Kentucky, and Indiana.

FMC is underwriting the cost of this event for its members, so as many people as possible will feel free to attend. If \$49 (including two meals) is still a stretch for your budget, additional scholarships are available as well.

Off the Map isn't just for "leaders" or for those with a special gift for evangelism. It's "evangelism for the rest of us", based on the relationships and interactions that are part of our everyday lives.

You can register online at www.FMC-Online.org/leaders/otm.html. For more information, check with your pastor, or call 215-723-5513.