



... BRIEFLY

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

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Trusting the Nonviolence of Jesus Christ Today

General Assembly Calls for Boycott of Settlement Products

By Melinda Thompson, Silver Spring, MD

With a 71% favorable vote, the 220th General Assembly passed an overture calling for a boycott of all Israeli goods produced in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

Boycotts are the most immediate form of nonviolent action to express disapproval of activities going on in the world—in this case, the occupation of Palestinian lands by the Israeli government in violation of UN resolutions and other international agreements. Israeli settlements are illegal colonies peopled by Israelis within the territory set aside for the use of Palestinians for a land of their own.

Since the beginning of the occupation in 1967, Israel has used its military rule to the advantage of Israeli economic interests and to the detriment of the Palestinian economy under its control. Israeli companies have a relatively high concentration of capital, freedom of movement and favorable legal conditions. When operating in the OPT they enjoy special governmental support, access to cheap resources, tax incentives, and a very lax enforcement of labor laws and environmental protection laws. Production of Israeli goods in settlements is tantamount to stealing Palestinian land and resources. Purchasing such products is equivalent to buying stolen property.

Why boycott? Because our government is not willing to take any concrete action to back up its words.

The church and the US government have been railing against the Israeli settlement movement for decades. Although Secretary of State Hillary Clinton often calls the settlements “illegitimate,” in February 2011 the US vetoed the UN Security Council resolution that would have condemned continued Israeli settlement expansion as illegal.

The power to boycott is in the hands of everyone and can be implemented in everyday life. Boycott actions help raise awareness in the streets, in shops, and in our homes; they address everyone. A boycott not only states that a price must be paid for Israel’s apartheid crimes, but is also a clear sign to our political representatives of how we, their constituents, feel about it. Although boycotting may or may not produce an economic effect, it will shed greater light on injustices happening in the Holy Land, serve to educate the public, and show the Palestinians our solidarity with their plight.

Why now? Because the Palestinians have asked us to do so.

In 2005 Palestinian civil society called for a concerted international movement to engage in Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, or “BDS,” until the Israeli government ends its occupation of the OPT, dismantles the separation wall, recognizes the equal rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel; and respects the right of return of Palestinian refugees as stipulated in UN Resolution 194. In December 2009 the Christians of the Holy Land joined in the call with the Kairos Palestine document. International BDS was instrumental in bringing an end to apartheid in South Africa and the Palestinians hope that it will do the same in Israel/Palestine.

Boycott what?

For now, we’ve identified Ahava cosmetics, Hadiklaim dates (including King Solomon Dates and Jordan River Dates), Soda Stream carbonation devices, Interstar toys, Keter plastic products, and Carmel produce. Almost all Israeli wines are also produced in the settlements. For a list see www.theipmn.org.



Remembering Al Winn

By Christine Caton, Waterford, CT

The Rev. Dr. Albert Curry Winn died on July 17, 2012. He was 90 years old. Al Winn was well-known in the Presbyterian Church. He served as the Moderator of the 119th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1979 (commonly known as the “Southern” Church.) In addition, he served as President of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and was a pastor in local congregations.

Some may not know that Al was also the moderator of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship in the PCUS (before Reunion.) He received the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship’s prestigious Peacemaker Award in 1986 for his life-long commitment to peacemaking. Al was the author of ten books, including the 1993 book, *Ain’t Gonna Study War No More: Biblical Ambiguity and the Abolition of War*.

I was privileged to know Al Winn through my work with the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. What I will remember most about Al is not the giant and legendary church leader that he was, but that he was a kind, down-to-earth, gentle man who supported me in my ministry with the Peace Fellowship. Every once in a while I would receive a lovely, handwritten note of encouragement and affirmation from Al when I was employed by the Peace Fellowship.

I will miss Al Winn’s witness in our church. His was a voice much needed in our troubled church and world. But his legacy will continue to be carried out through the work and ministry of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.

Our prayers go out to Al’s family and all who loved him.

Ecuador Pulls Out of SOA Annual SOA Watch Vigil November 16-19

On Wednesday, June 27, Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa, after hearing from a delegation organized by SOA Watch, announced that Ecuador will cease sending soldiers for training at the School of the Americas, now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. Ecuador joins Venezuela, Uruguay, Argentina and Bolivia, who have pulled out of the SOA.

With this fresh evidence that the long campaign to close the SOA is bearing fruit, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship will continue its advocacy and action on this issue.

November 16 marks the anniversary of the assassination of 14-year-old Celina Ramos, her mother and six Jesuit priests in El Salvador in 1989. Nineteen of the twenty-six Salvadoran army officers cited by a UN Truth Commission as responsible for this atrocity were trained at the School of the Americas (SOA). Since 1990, people have gathered at the gates of Fort Benning, home of the SOA, to memorialize these eight people and all those who have died at the hands of soldiers trained at this school. The day is also a call to take action in opposition to this military training as well as denounce the racism, repression and failed policy it represents.

This electoral year, it is more important than ever to mobilize for justice in the Americas. We have seen that no matter who wins the race to the White House, power cedes nothing without a demand. The November Vigil will occur two weeks after the Presidential election, and our presence at the gates of Fort Benning will serve as a reminder to the winner that we will not stop.

Join PPF and the SOA Watch movement at the gates of Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, this November 16-19, as we continue to speak truth to power and demand a real change in US foreign policy! All Presbyterians are invited to participate in our annual delegation to the SOA Watch vigil. Email Marilyn White at marwhite@igc.org for information about transportation, lodging, and special PPF activities throughout the weekend.



The Consequences of a Free Trade Agreement.

By Emily Brewer, Nashville, TN
Colombia Accompanier and PPF GA Intern

Before leaving for Colombia, we heard and read a lot about the Colombia Free Trade Agreement (CFTA). As you may know, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Church of Colombia both publicly and actively oppose the Colombia FTA in its current form. President Obama signed the CFTA into law this past October, and it went into effect on May 15, about half-way through my time as an accompanier in Colombia.

Not many people in the US talked about or even knew about the CFTA, so I was somewhat surprised at how many people knew and talked about it in Colombia. We went to eat lunch at the house of one *hermano* who works at a banana *finca* and also harvests rice on the side who was very excited about the CFTA because he said it would make kitchen appliances much more affordable. Others we talked to were excited about it because they said it will be easier to get a visa to go to the United States (which is somewhat true in that Colombian business investors and traders will be eligible for a special type of visa available to citizens of countries with trade agreements with the US, but most of the people we talked to would not be eligible for that type of visa).

The Presbyterian Churches of the USA and Colombia oppose it for several reasons, one being that small-scale farmers will no longer be able to earn a living from their crops because prices of crops, especially staple crops like rice and corn, will be driven down by the FTA. I saw this while I lived in Guatemala (part of the Central America Free Trade Agreement) – US corn sold in Guatemala was cheaper than local corn grown in Guatemala because subsidies in the US make corn grown in the US so cheap. Basically, as has happened in other countries, the Presbyterian Churches of the USA and Colombia predict and fear that the CFTA will serve to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Several individual pastors, church members, and community leaders we spoke with also expressed the same concerns.

We will have to wait and see exactly what the effects will be in Colombia, but I might predict that if we visited that same *hermano* in a year or two that, while he will probably still have his job at the banana *finca* (since it is a larger operation and already exporting almost all of its product to



Colombia Accompaniment Program display at PPF General Assembly booth. (Photo by Shannan Vance-Ocampo)

the US), it will no longer be profitable for him to harvest, dry, and sell the rice that helps supplement his income and support his family of six. For others who do not have jobs at the larger banana or pineapple *fincas* and depend almost entirely on their earnings from the crops they are able to harvest from a few acres of land, the situation will probably be even more difficult because even if some products are cheaper, they will not be able to afford them.

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General Assembly Calls for Wide Variety of Peacemaking Initiatives Around the World

By Marilyn White, Austin, TX

The 220th General Assembly, meeting in July in Pittsburgh, failed by the narrowest of margins to endorse the MRTI recommendations on divestment but took strong and bold positions on most of the other peacemaking issues on its agenda. With six different committees working on peace and justice concerns, PPF volunteers were very busy monitoring and tracking all of the debates and votes happening simultaneously in different rooms around the vast convention center.

Thanks go to a great team of volunteers who signed up to monitor committees full time, taking notes on important votes and providing assistance to commissioners on request: Kevin Moran, John and Andrea Morgan, Don Mead, Will and Marilyn White, and especially our interns Emily Brewer, Dylan Rooke, and Luke Rembold. We are also grateful that an additional dozen or so PPF supporters agreed to provide testimony in open hearings. We could see the difference that this witness made in the debates and the votes. And special thanks go to all of the donors who made it possible for us to bring three young adult interns to GA and to provide helpful briefing papers for the commissioners on six committees.

The world was watching as the Middle East Peacemaking Issues Committee took up a proposal from Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to divest from Caterpillar, Motorola, and Hewlett Packard. After hearing testimony from activists on both sides, the committee voted 36-11 to approve the recommendation. But then the plenary, acting without the powerful direct testimony from occupation victims, narrowly voted to substitute a weaker statement that did not include divestment. The committee and the plenary both agreed on disapproval of an overture labeling the occupation as a form of apartheid. However, the assembly did call for a boycott of all products made in the illegal settlements. Large majorities also supported statements opposing military intervention in Iran and Syria.

The Peacemaking and International Issues Committee unanimously approved a resolution on Movements for Democratic Change in the Arab World that included a comprehensive critique of U.S. military actions and recommendations for new restraints that would prioritize human rights, international accountability, and diplomacy in foreign policy. The committee endorsed the Peace

Discernment Process that will now go to congregations, seminaries and other groups for study during the next two years, and reaffirmed historical Presbyterian support for the United Nations. The plenary approved the committee report by consensus.

A new committee was assigned to consider immigration issues. Much of the committee's time was spent combining a large number of overtures and reports to shape a set of strong statements on immigration policy and enforcement, and to call for congregational engagement with immigrant communities. The committee reaffirmed the PC(USA) policy to refrain from holding national Presbyterian meetings in states with "show your papers" laws such as Arizona, called for passage of the DREAM act, and called for reforming detention policies that separate families and jail non-felons. The plenary approved these actions by voice vote.

The Social Justice Issues Committee worked late into the evening with lively debates on many agenda items, eventually approving a new comprehensive economic justice statement from ACSWP, an overture concerning abuses of free trade agreements, an overture to begin to consider divestment from for-profit prisons, and a wide range of other social justice positions. A commissioners' resolution condemned extended solitary confinement as a form of torture, and an overture opposed corporal punishment of children. The plenary passed all of these items, mostly by counted votes. The vote on corporal punishment was 334-396, indicating that the church is quite divided on the issue of hitting children.

Two other committees considered procedural items with potentially large effects on the church's peacemaking witness. A proposal to replace the Peacemaking Offering with a world mission offering and to combine peacemaking funding with the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering was rejected. A requirement to require concurrence from 10% of presbyteries for overtures was modified to require only one concurrence. PPF provided testimony and briefing papers on both of these items.

A General Assembly Reflection from Executive Director Rick Ufford-Chase: Top 10 Reasons You Should Support the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

10. Immigration Reform: An effort led by PPF supporters created 10 different overtures on immigration, leading to an entire committee dedicated to immigration issues that did great work on behalf of the whole church.

9. Solitary Confinement: Support by PPF and our partner the National Religious Campaign Against Torture led two commissioners to sponsor a resolution that called on the church to stand against solitary confinement, a widespread practice in U.S. prisons. The resolution passed overwhelmingly in both the committee and the plenary.

8. Briefing Papers: PPF's advice to Commissioners, printed on brightly colored paper, could be seen in the hands of numerous commissioners as they spoke from the microphones in the Plenary.



J. Herbert Nelson, director of the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness, speaks at the Peace Breakfast. (Photo by Michael Whitman)

7. Kairos USA: PPF support was critical in helping to get the US Christian Response to the call from Palestinian Christians off the ground, and Kairos USA was much in evidence at this assembly.

6. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette: OK – it's a little cheap for us to claim her, but she's a PPF member and her hymns are amazing – and everywhere! (buy her books for your church's music director).

5. Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions: PPF-generated overtures from a variety of Presbyteries had a huge impact on this assembly. Though a paper-thin, two vote margin decision not to divest was hugely dispiriting, the same assembly voted 71% in favor of a blanket boycott against all Israeli products produced in the Settlements of the Occupation.

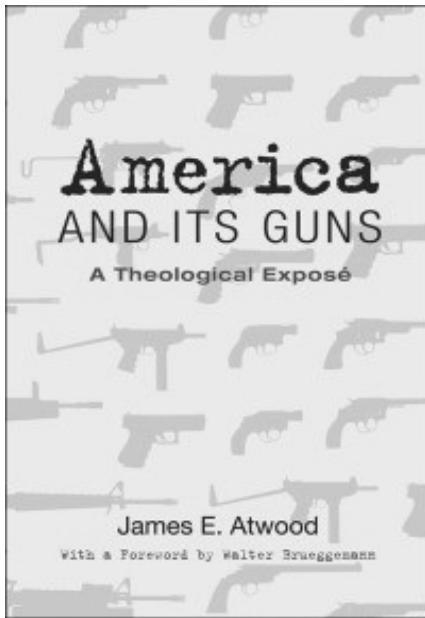
4. PPF Interns at GA: Our three young adult interns rocked the house – offering counsel and coordinating committee testimony.

3. Peace Breakfast: PPF had what was, without a doubt, the best breakfast of the assembly. J Herbert Nelson of the Presbyterian Office of Public Witness preached the word and was absolutely amazing.

2. Peaceseekers: PPF honored Alice Winters and Victor Makari, both of whom have given their lives to the work of peacemaking in the world.

1. Peace Discernment Process: PPF helped to create a six year process of study and discernment of violence in our time and how to respond to it. This process has the potential to totally transform the church's peace witness in the world.

**Please give generously to support the powerful witness
of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship**



Recommended Reading:

America and Its Guns A Theological Exposé

By James E. Atwood
Wipf and Stock Publishers

America and Its Guns, by Presbyterian Peace Fellowship national committee member James Atwood is essential reading!

Atwood contends that the thirty thousand gun deaths America suffers every year cannot be understood apart from our national myth that God has appointed America as “the trustee of the civilization of the world” and even “Christ’s light to the nations.” Because these purposes are noble, and we are supposedly a good and trustworthy people, violence is sometimes “required” and gives license to individuals to carry open or concealed weapons, which “save lives” and can even be “redemptive.”

Atwood, an avid hunter, cautions that an absolute trust in guns and violence morphs easily into idolatry. Having spent thirty-six years as a Presbyterian pastor fighting against the easy access to firearms, one of which took the life of a friend, he uses his unique experience and his biblical and theological understanding to graphically portray the impact guns have on our society. He documents how Americans

have been deceived into believing that the tools of violence, whether they take the form of advanced military technology or a handgun in the bedside stand, will provide security. He closes with a wake-up call to the faith community, which he says is America’s best hope to unmask the extremism of the Gun Empire.

"Atwood knows that guns are not just weapons, but symbols, and not only symbols, but idols that demand enormous sacrifice in American lives. This book gets at both the depth and meaning of this on-going tragedy. As a gifted organizer and thinker, Atwood then unveils the inspiring theological bases of an awakening to gun violence [prevention] that has already begun in some cities and congregations."

—Christian Iosso, Coordinator of Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy

Order your copy in paperback from wipfandstock.com or in Kindle format from Amazon.

Volunteer Opportunity Colombia Accompaniment Program

Can you give a month to accompany our Colombian sisters and brothers in the The Presbyterian Church of Colombia as they work for human rights and to support the communities who have been displaced by the over forty years of violence in their beautiful country? They ask us to act as international accompaniers in order to provide a measure of safety—international eyes—for their work, and to bring back their stories to educate and advocate in the USA. If you believe you could help, then plan to come to one of our upcoming training sessions:

October 4-8, 2012 and March 14-18 2013, both at the Stony Point Center, New York.

For more information, visit our web-site at <http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/two/colombia/accompaniment> and then contact:

Accompaniment Coordinator Linda Eastwood
colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org

We, and our partners in Colombia, look forward to working with you!

Conspiring in the Spirit with Church Polity

By Dylan Rooke, Pittsburgh, PA
PPF GA Intern

Never did I think I would be learning "Roberts Rules" on Presbyterian Church polity and process, and on top of that, actually engaging in it with enthusiasm. I took up the opportunity to be an intern at this year's PC(USA) General Assembly with the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. Though I'm in my last year of a three year term as a "Ruling Elder" on my church Council, a union church of Presbyterians and Methodists, I've never considered myself much of a "Presbyterian." But the chance to engage the church in questioning the status quo and advocating for a more equal, just, and peaceable church, denominational or not, has been heavy on my heart for a few years now.

So, with this opportunity with the Peace Fellowship at the GA in Pittsburgh, I found myself working in another kind of church political sphere. I was working as a "committee liaison" on the committee for Social Justice Issues. In the Presbyterian political process, though I don't have a vote at GA, I can participate as an observer and organizer. We had a full docket of proposals and overtures with statements, recommendations, and actions to be taken on a slew of topics that I, and my co-conspirators, found very valuable and important. The items included statements on the housing crisis, economic injustice, racial ethnic concerns on incarceration, EPA, workers rights, and supporting the Occupy Movement.

We saw some small but loud oppositional arguments and tactics of misdirection and confusion. With few amendments in the spirit of consensus, the docket was passed by a large majority with overwhelming support. The only exception was an overture in the committee on not investing in for-profit prisons. It was not "approved," nor "referred" for more study, but was just barely "disapproved" by a 25 to 23 vote. After the confusion and eventual disapproval ended our meeting for the evening it was time to work overtime. We conspired in a discussion with supportive commissioners on how to overturn this disapproval. According to "Roberts Rules" we had two options, either submit a "minority report" to be discussed on the floor of the whole GA during "plenary," or find another commissioner who had spoken in favor of disapproval to "reconsider" the disapproval motion in committee. Due to the notes taken by us observers during the committee session, we were able to locate a commissioner who might be our ally.

The following morning right before the start of the last day of committee sessions, we met with such a commissioner. After some quick discussion with the commissioner, he started the new motion first thing. The committee needed a

2/3 vote in support of reconsideration, and there was an overwhelming consensus that it was desired. After the new motion to approve the overture, a TSAD (theological student advisory delegate) motioned to delay the new approval motion till after lunch so that supportive persons could spend time over lunch to compile their thoughts and make a better presentation; the motion was passed, and that's exactly what happened. A couple commissioners, a group of about 6 TSADs and YAADs (young adult advisory delegates), the "Overture Advocate," and a few of us co-conspirators sat through the hour and a half lunch break to do some serious overturning, as if justice in our denomination depended on it! With lots of prayer, a food run, laughing, and seriousness we all collaborated in such a beautiful way on the newly revised overture. After lunch it was time to make the move. A young man of color who hadn't spoke on the committee floor yet rose to speak, and eloquently articulated the new motion. With the explanation spoken well, it was then time to see if there was any opposition. The room fell silent as no word rose against it; it was time to vote. After tallying up the hands in support and opposition, the count came to 40 in favor, 9 against. The new motion passed! One of the commissioners who helped spearhead the reconsideration rose to speak after the motion passed. He started to address the committee and observers, and choked through overwhelming emotion and tears. He made note that this couldn't have passed without the amazing teamwork and enthusiasm from the passionate TSADs and YAADs. "This is the future of our church, and it gives me so much hope" spoke the commissioner, as a loud applause resounded in the room. I was sitting next to a fellow Peace Fellowship worker and the Overture Advocate. We all couldn't fight the tears of joy as we saw the beauty of the young people who will lead our churches in years to come, full of passion for justice and equality in our church and the world in which we must interact.

It doesn't always turn out with tears of joy, for it was the following day that I cried tears of sorrow as our church failed to make the strong stand against the apartheid occupation of Palestinian land by the State of Israel, by choosing not to divest from American companies, in which PC(USA) has invested stock in pensions which profit from the occupation. Despite the lack and delay of progress and action on some of the issues I care about, I still have hope. I got to see for the first time the gears of one of the expressions of the modern church in action. There was a time when I never thought I would engage in the inter-workings of the institutional church, but I've seen beauty despite its failures.

To my church, whom I love,

I am angry.

I am angry we prioritize politics
over our relationships with each other.

I am angry that members of our community
threaten to leave when their
demands aren't met
the temper tantrum of a petulant child.

I am frustrated.

I am frustrated that hours upon hours
years upon years of work
done by so many different people
is so quickly dismissed by those
newly educated on the subject
by those scared of change
or spending a little money.

I am disappointed.

I am disappointed that we
as a church
missed a chance to speak
the prophetic voice in our world
we could have no longer been a
thermometer reflecting society
but the thermostat dictating change

I am disappointed that in efforts
to appease the loudest
we have allowed the silent to stay ignored.

I am sad.

I am sad for our divisions.
I grieve for schisms rendered
and relationships broken.

I am sad we remain stuck in neutral
able to go neither forward nor back.

But I have hope.

I have hope for the conversations I have
seen
the dissimilar theologies and worldviews
committing to developing relationships
mending rifts.

I have hope for the young voices I heard
voices that demand our ears
and our respect
not simply because they are young
but because they hold the
passion
love
and commitment to reconciliation
that will guide this church forward.

And I have faith.

Even at my lowest points
when I doubted God's presence in our
midst
when I questioned the motives of voting
members
even as the dreams and visions I held for
this week
dissolved as chalk on sidewalk in the rain
I have faith.

For while I lament
timing

urgency
immediacy

I know it is not our will, but His be done
and while we may not know where that
takes us
my dear church
it's exactly where we need to be.

Even in

my anger

my frustration

my disappointment

and my sadness

my dear PCUSA, I love you.

...Luke Rembold(GA Intern), Newport, OR

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General Assembly Wrap-Up