In our day we wait for the time
when the love of learning
and longing of every soul to achieve
matters as much as the anger of the privileged,
a time when everyone can gain access
to education at any level.

We wait for the time when people in authority
won’t shoot first and tell lies later,
when black lives matter equally.
We wait for the time when violence toward any
is understood as violence against all.

We wait for the time when politicians
cannot build a following
through stoking the fires of fear and hatred
toward people whose skin or religion
is different from our own.

We wait for the time when a preacher
cannot get cheers and applause
for telling his congregation to get a gun
and be ready to kill the enemy of the moment.

We wait for a time when the refugee, the homeless,
the jobless, the orphan, the hungry, the weak—
when every one of God’s children has a place
of honor, love, and safety in this world.

—Mike Broadway, from “Staying Woke: An Advent Sermon”
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Thirteen Groups to Receive Grants from 2018 Gavel Fund

by LeDayne McLeese Polaski

Editor’s note: In this space, we normally print a word from the BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz staff or board of directors. In this issue, we decided to share an article from executive director LeDayne McLeese Polaski about the amazing groups around the world whose work the staff and board support.

Thirteen grassroots groups will be receiving Gavel Memorial World Peace Fund grants from BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz for 2018 projects that serve to gather, equip and mobilize peacemakers.

Nine of the projects will begin or deepen training in Conflict Transformation in contexts as varied as Mexican elementary schools and a refugee camp located in Ethiopia. Workshops, including the hugely successful Training of Conflict Transformation Trainers events, will take place in several locations throughout Mexico as well as in Burundi, Kenya and South Sudan. They will target such groups as children, youth, teachers, village leaders, church leaders and activists.

All of these events are being planned by local partners with deep roots in the areas they are serving, including Amextra, Jerusalem Baptist Church, Shalom Baptist Church, Iglesias por la Paz (“Churches for Peace”), the Baptist Seminary of Mexico, the Burundi Pan African Peace Network, Kingdom of Peace and Development, the Nuer Youth Council for Peace and Development and the South Sudan Association for Pastors Training Initiative.

A grant to Camino Hermoso (“Beautiful Road”) will support an arts project within detention centers in Mexico City, through which incarcerated men and women will participate in poetry, music, dance, painting and crafts. The aim is to deepen people’s appreciation of their own indigenous history and practices that will support them to reintegrate into society in peaceful and dignified ways.

The Mayan Intercultural Seminary will like-wise use art to promote peace through work with indigenous children and youth in four orphanages throughout the Mexican state of Chiapas. “MusicArte” will encourage self-knowledge and expression, an appreciation of cultural diversity and the use of practical tools for peacemaking with a group often vulnerable to drug trafficking and addiction.

A project led by the Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala will empower and accompany 12 communities in the municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez as they organize against a cement company that is polluting their aquifers and destroying their livelihoods, particularly in flower production.

The final grant will go to our long-term partners Trees of Peace as they work to create a peace center in a Zambian village. This project will train villagers in Conflict Transformation skills while at the same time creating economic self-sufficiency. Villagers will be trained to implement organic agro-forestry projects, to master basic computer literacy skills and to use clean energy sources, like off grid solar and biogas, instead of firewood and charcoal.

This project will economically empower villagers and at the same time will protect the environment. Project Organizer Lance Muteyo explains, “It will supplement household incomes

Please see “Gavel” on page 5.
Last spring, a group of peacemakers met in Shamshabad, India, to hold a 10-day Summer Institute of Theologies of Life (SITL). The meeting was hosted by the Center for Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolutions Studies (CPCRS) of the Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College (MBCBC) in Shamshabad.

The Collective of Dalit Ecumenical Christian Scholars (CODECS) coordinated with the CPCRS in organizing the event, which was partially funded by the Gavel Memorial World Peace Fund, a BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz program.

The program on (Re)-thinking Theologies of Life brought participants from different corners of India, including people from nine Indian states, and from the neighboring countries of Myanmar and Nepal. Participants were from Rajasthan, Punjab, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bangalore, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Kolkata. They represented the theological and secular communities as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

A total of 28 people from a variety of confessional backgrounds—Syrian Orthodox, Anglican, Baptists, Free Church, Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian and Reformed—were actively engaged in this year’s program.

The institute was organized to:

• create informal spaces of learning through conversations and mutual mentoring,
• foster theological commitment among younger theologians to make justice and peace as central themes of their scholarly and ministerial pursuits,
• provide opportunities of continued education to the practitioners of Christian ministry,
• nurture an Indian ecumenical theology of peace,
• encourage young people to be theologically informed, and
• foster sound theological literacy among lay people.

The faculty came from various confessional backgrounds, each one bringing a wealth of wisdom from their fields of expertise and faith backgrounds. The organizers developed broad clusters of courses: Social Analysis and Movements for Peace and Justice, (Re)-thinking Christianity, (Re)-thinking Theology, Feminist Theory and Practice, (Re)-thinking History: Dalit and Subaltern Historiographies (Re)-reading the Bible, (Re)-thinking Mission and Ministry, and Best Practices in the Pursuit of Justice and Peace.

While the faculty from within the country were physically present for teaching, those from outside the country lectured on Skype. Each presentation was followed by intense and enriching conversations, with students actively participating.

Each day began with a Bible Studies led by young biblical scholars. Participants were encouraged to be grounded in social theory so that our theological and ministerial practices are informed social engagements. We were invited to learn from various theological discourses that emerge from different contexts and be critical constructors of relevant theology. In the
Gavel, continued from page 3

and give villagers a political voice since Zambian politicians capitalize on hungry stomachs.”

Muteyo’s comment is a reminder of how seemingly simple grassroots projects can indeed have a long-term impact on the possibilities of peace. These 2018 grants represent the end of the current embodiment of the Gavel Memorial World Peace Fund as the funds on hand will be almost completely depleted by the end of 2018.

Recognizing the immense impact that the Gavel projects have had, the BPFA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Board of Directors recently voted to begin a new Peace Fund ~ Fondos por la Paz which will use a percentage of each year’s contributions to support grassroots peacemaking and begin making grants in 2019.

—LeDayne McLeese Polaski is the Executive Director of BPFA ~ Bautistas por la Paz. Staff note: If you are able, we hope you will consider a slight increase in your annual gifts to cover general funds as well as this new Peace Fund.

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process we were challenged to learn from history, literature, our theological legacies, social movements and social organizations.

As a course requirement, each student was to write his/her theological autobiography by making an inventory of resources, identifying the gaps in contemporary theological scholarship India and discerning what could be their contribution to the flourishing of justice and peace in India.

The SITL had a special commitment to mutual mentoring. We paid special attention to those young theologians who are keen on discerning their areas of interest for further research in theologies of justice and peace. Some of them have immense potential to pursue higher education in world-class institutions.

Here are a few highlights from the 10 days:

• We were rapt in wonder as Prof. Martha Moore-Keish of Columbia Theological Seminary shared her insights on “Sacraments for Justice and Peace,” derived from an in-depth exploration of biblical theology. In her words, “Sacraments are given to us not only as gifts to mediate grace, but also as a call to participate in God’s reign of love, justice and peace.”

• We feasted on the scriptures as Dr. Raj Nadella, also of Columbia Theological Seminary, shared his insights on feminist and postcolonial hermeneutics and used them while interpreting the parable of the tenants and Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman.

• Prof. Dalton Reimer of Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, CA, shared wisdom from biblical stories as paradigms for building peace in our communities.

• You can’t be but passionate in your speaking when your imagination is triggered by the speeches and writings of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Rev. Dr. Israel David shared with us his insights on justice and peace in Ambedkar’s thought.

• Rev. Kadivedu Joshua Samuel, a Ph.D. candidate at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, NY, shared his insights as he engaged Dalit Theology in conversation with Comparative Theology.

We learned together, engaged with each other, encouraged one another and made friendships that have the potential to last a lifetime. We look forward to another set of friends to join us next year in Summer 2018.

—Christina Asheervadam is the director of the Center for Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Studies (CPCRS) of the Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College (MBCBC) in Shamshabad.
Editor’s note: Former board president Cheryl Dudley was the speaker for the BPFNA~Bautistas Por La Paz Peace Breakfast at the American Baptist (ABC) Biennial Mission Summit in Portland, Oregon last July. The following is an excerpt from her presentation. The full manuscript can be found at www.bpfna.org.

As if sackcloth wasn’t modest enough, God directed Isaiah to loose the sackcloth from his body, and to remove his sandals. Not to be fitted with better clothing, but to be (un)clothed like a slave. Without sandals, Isaiah would have to put his bare feet upon the ground, and without sackcloth (the fabric of mourning) around his loins, he could hide nothing. In obedience, Isaiah stood alone, naked, and as a mouthpiece for God.

This was a revered role, but in so doing, he exposed himself to ridicule, compromised his health and risked his life. Some speculate that only a handful of people ever heard him speak, but a whole lot more saw him.

As we know, the book of Isaiah is prophetically poetic, pointed and poignant in its various descriptions. The vision of God that Isaiah describes is picturesque, yet it evokes all our other senses with its words like these, found in the third and fifth chapters:

“Many of us are bone tired. We live in a time in the USA where there is hypersensitivity, dread, loathing and a propensity for holding our breath…”

Even before answering God’s call, Isaiah knew that God had great expectations. Yet, Isaiah responded willingly to the grand question of God, who asked, “Whom shall I send?” by saying, “Here I am. Send me.”

Isaiah wondered, after volunteering to go, “How long must I do this?” God plaintively replied, “Until the cities lie ruined, and are uninhabited.” Oyyyy Veyy! Okayyyyy! It was going to be a hard gig.

These are difficult times for advocates of prophetic peace. Our usual tricks and practices, which weren’t that easy in the first place, don’t seem to work as well as they once did. Many of us are bone tired. We live in a time in the USA where there is hypersensitivity, dread, loathing and a propensity for holding our breath—as if we are perpetually teetering on the brink of something potentially (more) devastating. We have adapted to a new normal that we pray is not permanent.

It is hard to talk about peace for those of us who happen to live in the United States. It has always been hard for Americans with a modicum of sensitivity to join in global conversations
of peace with people from around the world. We are used to critiques of US government and culture, because we know where we live, and we know how we tacitly benefit from the spoils of empire.

We are in even more awkward spaces now, both within and outside of our country, in the pursuit of peace. Our usual pithy pronouncements are not good enough. We find them flaccid or arid in the face of current national and global circumstances. What is there to do?

There are three things I believe one has to do, that we have to individually and communally reckon with in our practice of peace in these deeply divided times: We have to know who we are, we have to be prepared to strip away some things, and we have to be prepared to take some other things on.

1 We have to know who we are. We have to know who we are. We have to know our spiritual and social makeup, what motivates and calls us, what we know to be true about ourselves.

When Isaiah was moved to take on the call, he confessed to God, saying, “I am a man of unclean lips and I come from profane people.” This meant that he and his people were those who had seen and said just about everything. Yet, it didn’t diminish his capacity to recognize the holy when he saw it, so he responded that he was willing to not only go, but to go for the long haul.

I know who I am, at least in part. I am a tall, black, middle-aged woman raised in the desert city of Phoenix, AZ, and now a New Yorker…I’ve seen a lot…I have often sized people up based on my assumptions and experiences of certain types of folks…More than that, though, I am a disciple of Christ, and a minister of the Gospel of Peace, which motivates me and often transforms my assumptions and previous experiences.

I am an American Baptist by intention. I won’t apologize for my faith tradition, even when other Baptists or christians embarrass and shame me. I was given a heritage of wonder from my parents and church, who aren’t perfect but did the best they could with the messages they’d been given. I was taught to reach high and wide for my own place in the world, and to help push the world to live into its best self.

I do know what helps push me into my better self when I feel myself slipping into grief. I pray and cry and read the Bible and other sacred writings. I tell stories of the faith—from the Bible and from our historic and cultural traditions. I sing songs to lift my heart and spirit in order to remember what I know is true.

I notice when there is no song my heart and ask God to show me how to sing a song in a strange land. And then when I find the strength, I will pick up my lyre that I laid on the willows, pluck a few notes, clear my throat, and open a hymnal when needed, to remember the songs tucked away in the heart. Then I sing with my crackly voice until I remember who I am.

“When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, “It is well, it is well with my soul.”

If someone says “Why you are singing? It is NOT well,” I say I am singing until I believe it’s true. I am singing because, as Brother Roger of the Taize community said, when you sing you are praying twice. I say, “I’m practicing peace by singing until it comes.” You have to know yourself—when you are depleted, and how to get yourself refilled.

“Then I sing with my crackly voice until I remember who I am. If someone says ‘Why are you are singing? It is NOT well,’ I say I am singing until I believe it’s true.”

2 We have to be able to strip away some things. What are we being asked to strip away? Isaiah’s obedience to God’s command to strip off his clothes and remove his shoes speaks to his courage as well as to his faith. When Isaiah stood naked, he was not starting a prophetic tradition, but he was following in the footsteps of other prophets. Jeremiah did it. Ezekiel did it. Amos did it. Hosea did it.

Sometimes what we have done in the past isn’t enough in extraordinary times. When a plethora of words to the forces that be aren’t enough. When a thousand or thousands of tongues aren’t enough to proclaim and prophesy. When people and institutions turn a deaf ear. Then we have to be willing to reveal ourselves and strip away what is usually hidden to others.

During the Liberian civil war, Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist responsible for leading a women’s peace movement, led protesters by threatening to strip naked in an attempt to push warring factions to agree on a peace deal.

Please see “Practice of Peace” on page 8.
Practice of Peace, continued from page 7

Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, and the first Kenyan woman to earn a doctoral degree, used her nudity as a powerful tool in Kenya’s pro-democracy struggle. She was a consistent thorn in the side of an autocratic administration and was described by it as “not a good woman.” But a spokesperson added, “But Kenya needs more of them.”

Literally stripping ourselves naked, though, isn’t likely going to achieve the same effect here in the US. However, we need to be willing to strip away those things that that we think define us and give us status and social esteem, and to lay ourselves bare in the pursuit of peace and justice. We may need to strip away our need for the pronouncement of titles and pedigrees, our need to be the smartest or most wounded for a deeper or truer identity that demonstrates God’s vision for the people of the earth. A vision where the wolf will live with the lamb and the leopard will lie down with the goat; where the calf, the lion and the yearling lie together; where the infant plays near the cobra’s den; where the elephant and the donkey build each other up; where the evangelical and the transgender enjoy non-threatening friendship. A vision where “Black Lives Matter” is a given, and where the language of heaven is every tongue uttered on the earth.

“We may be tempted to say, ‘The hell with it; I can’t take it on. I can’t do it. I give up.’ Let me say, Don’t do it. DON’T DO IT. Take your rest and then take up the mantle again.”

For some clergy, we may need to strip away a tendency to hide behind collars or clerical uniforms of various forms. We have to strip away these things until the time that we know what garments we might later put back on.

Are we willing to strip away who we have been, or who we thought we were in the beginning of the movement? I am willing to strip away those things in my demeanor that defy or contradict my commitment to peace. To not “arm up” with unkind words and arrogant postures.

There are rewards in stripping down. You can’t hide the truth. Isaiah, in his nakedness and bare feet, was demonstrating the eventual state of humiliation that the communities’ oppressors would experience in their eventual departure. Enslaved to the accoutrements of power and dominance, they would depart in the apparel of slaves. Stripped of dignity and agency, they reveal they have nothing left.

When we strip away our put-on identities, we make room for a deeper or truer identity that demonstrates God’s vision for us, for the people of the earth. A vision where the wolf will live with the lamb and the leopard will lie down with the goat; where the calf, the lion and the yearling lie together; where the infant plays near the cobra’s den; where the elephant and the donkey build each other up; where the evangelical and the transgender enjoy non-threatening friendship. A vision where “Black Lives Matter” is a given, and where the language of heaven is every tongue uttered on the earth.

3 We have to be prepared to take some other things on. What are we are willing to take on—not fueled by ego, but out of obedience to God? What do we need to take on for the sake of our own souls, our communities and the call God has given us?

I am willing to take on deeper kindness. To remember the strength that God gives us for the journey is rooted in the earth—the humus. Humus shares the same root as the word humility. Our rootedness in the earth is the kind of humility that I believe God is calling forth: To behold the whole of creation as holy ground, to be willing to walk on filthy and soiled streets, as well as the still and unsullied places of creation, knowing that God is in all of it, and with us in it.

During the great post-inauguration women’s resistance march held in so many communities around the country on January 21, 2017, I looked around at those who were there. I thought, “What do all these people have in common besides being mad at the election outcome?”

So many differences, I thought, almost overwhelming in scope. Do they see me, too? Am I willing to take on all of this, some of which I don’t understand or agree with, yet is the burden of my brother and sister? Am I willing to be in solidarity with them? Pope John Paul II said, “Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion…it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good…of all and each individual, because we are really responsible for all.” Being in solidarity is linked to our co-relationship with one another on this earth.

Deciding what new areas in which to accompany one another is serious business, and not done lightly. Yet justice for some is a partial, false and imperfect peace. We have to be in solidarity with each other. We may be tempted to say, “The hell with it; I can’t take it on. I can’t do it. I give up.” Let me say, don’t do it. DON’T DO IT. Take your rest and then take up the mantle again. We haven’t been given this ministry of peace to keep it to ourselves. It is our work for our whole lives.

As our brother Lance Muteyo, a Zimbabwean peace activist who has gone many places we would not go, taught us: Amani Milele! Milele! Amani! Amani! Milele! Milele! Amani! (Peace Forever, Forever Peace). Let’s keep doing this thing.

—Cheryl Dudley, in addition to her years leading the BPFNA—Bautistas por la Paz board, is a Baptist minister, an activist “on good days,” a peacemaker and poet who grew up in Arizona and “is still growing up” in New York City, NY. She is a member of Madison Avenue Baptist Church, a BPFNA—Bautistas por la Paz Partner Congregation in Manhattan.
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Editor's note: The Rev. Judge Wendell Griffen, a longtime member and friend of BPFNA—Bautistas por la Paz, was the speaker at last summer's Peace Breakfast during the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly in Atlanta, GA. Below is an excerpt from his presentation. The full manuscript can be found at www.bpfna.org.

I thank LeDayne Polaski for inviting me to address you this morning. Thanks to each of you for your presence today, and your past and ongoing efforts as agents of God’s love, justice and peace. I also thank BPFNA—Bautistas por la Paz for your prayers, messages and other acts of encouragement on my behalf earlier this year, after Arkansas politicians and the Arkansas Supreme Court attacked me because I and other members of New Millennium Church held a peaceful prayer vigil in front of the Arkansas Governor’s Mansion on Good Friday, April 14, in solidarity with Jesus.

The Paradox of Prophetic Hope in a Distressing Time
by Rev. Judge Wendell Griffen

“So one important obligation of prophetic people is to do what Moses did for Joshua, what Peter did at Pentecost, and what Jesus did for Nicodemus. We must understand and then help others understand that the Spirit of God is not domesticated.”

Gwenyth Lewis of Albuquerque, New Mexico, came to Little Rock and delivered a statement of support on behalf of BPFNA—Bautistas por la Paz. New Millennium Church, my wife, our sons and I thank you. We are strengthened by your prayers and encouragement.

I title my remarks today “The Paradox of Prophetic Hope in a Distressing Time.” The signs of our distressing time include racism, sexism (including heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia), materialism, militarism, imperialism, technocentrism, white religious nationalism, and xenophobia. These oppressive realities existed before Donald Trump and Mike Pence were elected President and Vice President of the United States on November 8, 2016. They are even more obvious now.


If you remember one thing I say today, I hope you remember that humans do not manage the Spirit of God. I repeat: humans do not manage the Spirit of God.

In Genesis we read that God has given humans custodial responsibility for the earth and its creatures. We are divine stewards, trustees if you will, over all that God created.

But before there was a world to manage, we read in Genesis that “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2) Think of that “wind from God” as the holy Spirit.

Then recall the night-time meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus that we read about in the third chapter of John’s Gospel. When Jesus explained to Nicodemus what he meant by being “born from above,” Jesus described the process in these words: “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

I will mention the point a third time: humans do not manage the Spirit of God.

In Numbers 11, we read about a crisis in the ministry of Moses as he led his formerly enslaved Hebrew people.

Malcontents among the people stirred up a complaint about the food service along the journey. (Numbers 11:4-9) The demands of leading hundreds of thousands of people overland were tough enough for Moses, but this seems to have been his breaking point. At Numbers 11:13-15 we read his frustrated words to God:

Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they come weeping to me and say, “Give us meat to eat!” I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once—if I have found favor in your sight—and do not let me see my misery.
Moses was dealing with a challenge that people in ministry understand to be common to our calling—the challenge that comes from knowing that we face challenges that are larger than our resources.

In Numbers 11:25 we read that “the LORD...took some of the spirit that was on him [Moses] and put it on the seventy elders, and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied...” But two men—named Eldad and Medad—were not with the other elders who joined Moses outside their encampment to meet God.

Nevertheless, Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp. When their activity was reported to Moses by an unnamed fellow, Joshua urged Moses to order Eldad and Medad to stop their prophetic speaking, which prompted Moses to speak the words we find at Numbers 11:29: “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!”

In the familiar lesson from Acts 2, we read how what Moses talked about happened to the first followers of Jesus. After the Galilean followers of Jesus began to inexplicably speak the native languages of people from other places, Peter explained that the Galileans were not drunk, but that God’s Spirit was on display:

No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: “In the last days it will be,” God declares, “that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:16-18)

Here’s the point! The Spirit of God is free to operate according to God’s agenda without our permission. What Joshua did not understand in Numbers and what the observers did not understand in Acts is that the Spirit of God is free.

The Spirit of God is free to work through people we have not designated. The Spirit of God is free to empower people we have not considered. God’s Spirit has been poured out in the world on men and women, young people and seniors, people who have no social standing as well as people with social standing.

God’s Spirit doesn’t need a license from the government. God’s Spirit doesn’t need us to vote a certain way. God’s Spirit works, in divine freedom, to do for God through people what must be done so that God’s purposes are achieved in God’s world.

However, some of us, like Joshua, are captives of our thinking about how things are supposed to work. Some of us are accustomed to God’s prophetic power being managed, rationed, and assigned according to our plans, our procedures, and our policies.

Our challenge, beloved, is to accept that God’s Spirit is free to work in ways we never considered and do not understand. God’s Spirit is free to move where we never imagined movement would be possible. God’s Spirit is free to call people we haven’t considered “religious” to speak and act with prophetic insight and courage.

Whenever traditional people like Joshua become set in their (our) ways, count on God’s Spirit to work through other people to do new things for love and justice. Yes, God sent young people, lesbians and gay men, bisexual, transgender and queer people—people who have been considered “outside the mainstream” of religious thought and practice—to do the love and justice work we see being done in the Black Lives Matter movement and to challenge congregations and larger religious bodies about the intersectionality of oppression in new ways.

Yes, God is inspiring more women and girls and men and boys to throw off longstanding notions of male privilege about who should be leaders—in religious efforts and otherwise. God is doing this love and justice in these new ways because the Holy Spirit is free!

Many people are like Joshua, who was so caught up in traditional notions of authority and power that he couldn’t understand how God always works. The Holy Spirit isn’t bound to follow our notions of rank and privilege. The Holy Spirit isn’t bound by our notions of budget, our forecasts or our sense of priorities.

We are God’s sails, and the Spirit is God’s wind. Our challenge is to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. We do not and cannot tell God’s wind when to blow. We do not and cannot control how God’s wind will blow. We have no idea where God’s
Wind will blow us, who God's wind will blow into fellowship with us, and how God's wind will blow obstacles from before us.

We have this assurance. God's wind will blow! God's wind is blowing! And, God's wind blows in ways the Holy Spirit chooses to make prophetic changes happen in our lives.

God's wind blows to make prophetic people shed light on unjust situations powerful people would rather keep under cover. God's wind blows to use prophetic people to uproot traditions, customs, and practices powerful people want to maintain. God's wind blows to send prophetic voices to disturb our complacency and complicity about poverty, cruelty, inequality and any other oppression.

God's wind blows us! And the paradox is that, like Joshua, we who should be most excited about the work of the Holy Spirit are often unhappy about how the Spirit operates.

God's wind is blowing women, gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and other queer people, people who have been previously incarcerated, and people who have been overlooked or deliberately shunned by religious people in the past to challenge the politics, commerce, and religion of empire.

God's wind is blowing! Our challenge is to be good sails! Our challenge is to be, like all other prophetic people before us, initially amazed. God's Spirit chooses to work through us. We do not recruit the Holy Spirit. We do not schedule the Holy Spirit. We cannot "organize" the Holy Spirit. We must admit that we are amazed about how the Spirit works and that we are agents of that work.

Then our challenge is to praise God for blowing on us, moving us, commissioning us, and getting God's work for love and justice done through us. We must resist the temptation to claim credit for what the Holy Spirit is doing. Sails do not deserve credit for moving sailboats. Sailboats move because the wind blows! Without the wind, sails are powerless to move sailboats! Without the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing.

We must also, as Peter did at Pentecost and as Moses did with Joshua, help others understand that prophetic work is always done according to the ways of the Holy Spirit. Joshua, the people who thought the Galileans were drunk and Nicodemus show that even religious people are not accustomed to how the Holy Spirit works.

So one important obligation of prophetic people is to do what Moses did for Joshua, what Peter did at Pentecost, and what Jesus did for Nicodemus. We must understand and then help others understand that the Spirit of God is not domesticated. God's Spirit is not house-trained. God's Spirit is always free.

Among other things, that will require us to admit that we are not in control! Like sailboats, we are on the water for God, but we do not control the wind. We do not define how strongly God's Spirit will blow us. We cannot dictate to God's Spirit when to act, where to act, or how long to work through us. We are not in control of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit controls us!

What a paradox! We are puny vessels. God’s Spirit transforms our puny and faint-hearted resources in amazing and powerful ways. Let us thank and praise God. Let us be obedient as the Spirit moves us to make God’s prophetic differences in our daily experiences. Let us live and rejoice in the powerful paradox of prophetic hope today, tomorrow, and always! Amen.

—Judge Wendell Griffen is a BPFNA~Bautistas por la Paz member and the pastor of New Millennium Church in Little Rock, AR. Copyright 2017 Wendell Griffen. Used with permission. Note: the comments and perspectives shared by Rev./Judge Griffen are his personal opinions. They do not represent, and should in no way be ascribed to, any other person, organization, or entity, including any member or entity of the Arkansas or American judiciary.

Endnote

1. To read more about this encounter, see “Let Us Reason Together” by Judge Griffen in Baptist Peacemaker, Vol 37 No 3, July-September 2107, pages 20-25. Read Gwenyth Lewis’ account of the rally on page 14.
Breathe Now, The Deep

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Baptist Peacemaker     JAN-MAR 2018

—Keith Sanford is a professor of psychology at Baylor University in Waco, TX, and is a member of Seventh & James Baptist Church, a BPF-NA ~ Bautistas por La Paz Partner Congregation. The tune for this song is Finlandia by Jean Sibelius.
Last spring, I’d been following the news about Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson’s push to execute eight men on death row there in an 11-day period—beginning the day after Easter. The reason cited for rushing these executions was the impending expiration, on April 30, of one of the drugs to be used in the lethal injections of these eight men. Many manufacturers of such drugs are now refusing to supply them for non-medical purposes, due in part to public outcry.

was about to be killed, coupled with the emotional turmoil of waiting for the inevitable.

Then, suddenly, a priest came to inform him that his sentence had been reduced, that he would not be killed. Juan’s story convinced me, beyond any doubt, that capital punishment is inherently cruel and unusual—a horrible example of what we humans can do to our human siblings. It is a fact that executions only happen to people with less power in the US—people without enough money or status to buy strong legal representation, people with limited mental or emotional capabilities, racialized people and others on the margins of acceptability and power. This just underscores for me the urgency of stopping these state-sanctioned murders.

As I struggled to help stop the executions in Arkansas, suddenly I remembered that the Rev. Hon. Wendell Griffen—one of the leaders who so deeply challenged and inspired me at the BPFNA ~ Bautistas Por La Paz Summer Conference (aka “Peace Camp”) in 2016—is a judge in Arkansas.

I soon learned that, on Good Friday afternoon, Judge Griffen had ruled in favor of the McKesson Medical-Surgical company, which was asking for a temporary injunction against the State of Arkansas to prevent the use of McKesson’s property (vecuronium bromide, a drug to be used in the lethal injections) on grounds that the state had misled McKesson about its plans to use the drug in its killing cocktail, thereby obtaining it under false pretenses.

After ruling on this seemingly routine property/contract law case, Judge Griffen had ruled in favor of the McKesson Medical-Surgical company, which was asking for a temporary injunction against the State of Arkansas to prevent the use of McKesson’s property (vecuronium bromide, a drug to be used in the lethal injections) on grounds that the state had misled McKesson about its plans to use the drug in its killing cocktail, thereby obtaining it under false pretenses.

I had read Judge Griffen’s new book, The Fierce Urgency of Prophetic Hope, which includes reflections on the lead-up to the election of Donald Trump as US President. So I was not entirely surprised that Pastor Griffen had decided, as he headed to the vigil, to lie on a cot “as a dead man” for an hour and a half at the Governor’s mansion, as he said, “in solidarity with Jesus, the leader of our religion who was put to death by crucifixion by the Roman Empire.” He and other New Millennium
members there were also affirming their conviction that “in Jesus, God identifies with and loves those who are marginalized, including persons convicted of committing murder.”

People from other organizations carried anti-death-penalty signs outside the Governor’s mansion that afternoon. Soon some state legislators had decided that Judge Griffen’s actions as a private citizen, expressing his personal faith, were reason for him to be impeached.

I received an invitation to join a group of Judge Griffen’s allies to come to Little Rock and stand in support of him, because he was being targeted for his stand for religious liberty. I knew I needed to be there as a friend.

I also felt called to attend the rally because, as a Family Therapist for decades, I disagree heartily with Gov. Hutchinson’s contention that killing people accused of murder somehow will help the families of victims to heal. I believe that true emotional and spiritual healing happen only when we do the deep grief and anger work required. Causing an accused person to be murdered seems to me to serve only as retribution and revenge.

In addition, I agree with Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who are quoted as saying, “An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.”

Now that my present work entails offering affordable access to top-rated attorneys for all kinds of legal issues—including services to help stop racial and other types of profiling—I am even more aware than ever of the urgency of standing with people who are being oppressed, standing with them against legal and other types of violence.

As a person who attempts to follow Jesus, I wanted to support Wendell, who has contributed so much to BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz, and who continues to help those who have ears to hear, to make the connections between violence and Empire.

As a white person, raised with unearned privilege in the US, I believe that my job, when a racialized or other marginalized person asks for help in addressing injustice nonviolently, is to “show up and shut up.” In doing so, I am supporting the leadership of the person of color as much as possible—supporting from behind.

So I went to Little Rock and stood on the steps of the Arkansas State Capitol in Little Rock on June 9. What a privilege it was for me to be able to represent BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz in support of Rev. Hon. Wendell Griffen, who is such a friend of our organization! People of faith from across the US, including a missionary on leave from Bali, stood with our brother Wendell, to defend his right to express his religious beliefs as an elected official.

Rally speakers pointed out that there appears to be a different set of rules for Judge Griffen than for other (white) judges who express their personal religious beliefs. They noted that Judge Griffen is the only Black judge in this group. We educated listeners about the vital role religious liberty must have in our society, right in the city of Little Rock High School, where the fight for equal education was ignited nationally more than 60 years ago.

I loved telling people there about BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz (the only organization at the rally that overtly includes people whose first language is Spanish), inviting them to Peace Camp, and making new friends from progressive Baptist groups, and with other faith leaders and ethics leaders and anti-racism leaders. I am stronger because of these new bonds, and so grateful to the people of BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz, who continue to teach, inspire and empower me.

—Gwenyth Lewis, a certified Conflict Transformation trainer, is a long-time member and supporter of BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz. Among her many peacemaking efforts is her work with LegalShield to help people in the US and Canada deal with legal issues. After 27 years in Philadelphia, she has returned to her native Albuquerque, NM.

Endnotes
Columbus Day has a controversial history in the United States, despite being one of the newer federal holidays. After it was established at the federal level in the 1930s by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, many Italian-Americans have celebrated the day as one of cultural pride, particularly in times when Italian-Americans struggled against discrimination. However, when World War II rolled around, Columbus’ Italian origins allowed supporters of Mussolini to use the celebrations as a platform. In addition, Native American tribes across the country found the holiday offensive even before it received federal recognition.

A friend asked me to explain why I worked to enact Indigenous Peoples’ Day and what that might accomplish. I appreciated his wanting to know and thought maybe I should share my response with others who would like more details.

For starters, Christopher Columbus is widely recognized as having discovered America. He didn’t. He never even stepped foot onto the soil of the North American continent.

He and his men kept journals. In his own journals he spoke of his intention to either destroy or enslave the indigenous people he encountered. He also wrote about his own rape of a woman and how he sexually trafficked girls as young as nine years old.

One account says that one of Columbus’ men was shocked by his cruelty and documented what was happening. The description is graphic and more violent than I had ever imagined.

Columbus was forced to return to Europe eventually, after having been charged with Crimes Against Humanity. The King and Queen whom he made rich did set him free from prison. Columbus and his men are responsible for the genocide of the Arawak people—more than 6 million in Hispaniola.

Our committee, the Committee for Indigenous Peoples’ Day, seeks to tell the truth about our history. We want to stop celebrating Columbus as some kind of hero who should be revered. He did not discover our country. As I explained, he was a criminal.”

In 1992, Berkley, CA, became the first city in the US to reject Columbus Day in favor of Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Twenty-five years later, as of Oct. 9, Time reports a list of 55 cities which have done the same—as well as three universities, three states, two cities which celebrate both, and South Dakota, which replaced Columbus Day with Native American Day in 1990. More communities are considering the same, including Washington, DC itself. As of October 2017, Oberlin, OH, is on the list, and Cindi and Jeriel Byron-Dixon can tell you why. The following is from their speeches at an Oberlin rally of the Oberlin Committee for Indigenous Peoples’ Day.
dergarten to the 12th grade continues to be the worst of any demographic in the US. Natives have the highest drop out rates, the lowest graduation rates, and lower test scores. Violence in Native communities remains cyclical in nature.

The abuse experienced by thousands of Native youth at boarding schools was rarely, if ever, treated or addressed. Left unchecked, violence has cropped up in families generation after generation. Domestic violence and child neglect occur at higher rates in native communities.

Due to the lack of mental health resources on reservations, many abuse survivors have turned to alcohol or drugs to self-medicate—another cycle to be endured. Native youth begin experimenting with drugs and alcohol at much younger ages than their non-native counterparts. Alcohol experimentation in non-native communities begins around 10th grade; for native children it is the 6th grade, with a high rate of daily use by 8th grade.

Opioid use also begins at a younger age, for many native youth as young as 8th grade. Addiction runs rampant through our native communities, and crimes committed to feed addictions lead to an incarceration rate nearly 40 percent higher than the national average.

The most alarming statistic yet is that Native youth suicide is at more than three times the national average. (In reservation communities, they experience ten times the national rate.) Because of the dismantling of the family, children are seemingly less equipped to cope in positive ways.

When we take stands like advocating for Indigenous Peoples’ Day and acknowledging the lies and myths in our history, we take steps toward Restorative Justice.

—Cindi Byron-Dixon is a member of Community Peace Church, a longtime BPNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Partner Congregation in Oberlin, OH.

From Jeriel Byron-Dixon

It has been an honor to be a Youth Representative on the Indigenous Peoples’ Day Committee.

I understand that there has been opposition, mostly from out of town, to abolishing and replacing Columbus Day here in Oberlin [OH]. I am also aware that three states and dozens of cities have already done so.

What I think it is important for people to know is that Oberlin has a history of standing aside from the popular worldview. I am lucky to have grown up in a town that truly tries to embrace daily the idea of judging a person only on the content of their character. I consider myself lucky to grow up here.

That, Council Members, is something we have in common. This is our town. This is our community and our desire to stand for truth, even while others say we shouldn’t. We are the ones who live here, play here, go to school and work here, and make our homes here.

We are the ones who are asking you tonight to join with our voices to declare that it is time to acknowledge our nation’s true history. Let’s join in solidarity and take a step toward Restorative Justice here in Oberlin by enacting Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

—Jeriel Byron-Dixon is a freshman at Oberlin High School and a member of Peace Community Church, a BPNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Partner Congregation in Oberlin, OH.

Endnotes

1. Hispaniola is the island that contains Haiti and the Dominican Republic.
2. On June 19, 1865, the news that slavery had been abolished reached the US state of Texas. Juneteenth Independence Day, or Freedom Day, came to commemorate the announcement throughout the former Confederacy in the southern US. It is celebrated as an official holiday in 45 US states.
3. Epigenetics is the study of heritable changes in gene function that do not involve changes in the DNA sequence.

Editor’s note: The introduction above was written by Rachel Boyle, an editorial assistant for Seeds of Hope Publishers in Waco, TX. Here are just a few of the sources she checked: Time Magazine, Wake Magazine, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Washington Post and Daily Californian. For a list of links, email seedseditor1@gmail.com.
Many people today feel like the log in the photo above, sitting on the precipice of Niagara Falls, ready to go over the edge at any time. The social, political and economic powers around us are acting in ways that seem beyond our reach to affect—ways that are strong enough to destroy our very being, to take away familiar patterns of existence and send us to an unknown place. Yet, like this log, we can find a place in the midst of the turmoil surrounding us to stand our ground, to hang on and remain.

When we go inside to the essence of our being, we find relationship to a much larger picture, to the source of our being—whether we call that the God within, the power of the universe or simply the connection we have with each other and with everything we know.

The powerful force in this image is water, water tumbling over a cliff, water that produces a different power when channeled through turbines, electricity that is essential to the society we have created. Yet that water is no different than the water of a gentle mist on a foggy morning or the water in a hurricane or the water that comprises over two-thirds of our physical bodies.

All water, which is essential for life, is made of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. That hydrogen, the most plentiful element in the universe, was made at the beginning of the universe. The oxygen was made in the stars. To put that in context, we are part of the universe and cannot escape that. We are relatives of everything in the universe and carry within us the natural intelligence of that relationship. As we come to know ourselves fully, to look beneath the patterns of society that appear to determine our lives—often look frightening—we gain strength to look at a larger picture.

We are connected with all that is around us. As we recognize this fact, we can no longer see anyone or anything as an enemy to be defeated. Whether it is another person from a different culture or a force of nature like a destructive storm, we are related. Reconnection is the most effective antidote to the hyper-individualism of our culture.

Recognition of our inherent relationship is a powerful force, a sacred action. It may produce a sense of awe and wonder, loving care for another suffering human or a faith and hope that all is well and therefore will be well. Denial of this inherent relationship leads to fear, despair and continued
destruction. Like the log on the precipice, we are in our essence grounded and have the power to resist and alter the forces around us that seek to destroy by keeping us separate.

Getting grounded in our natural essence, we recognize our connection to everything in the universe. We can no longer separate ourselves into races, nations or even individuals. In our very being we are community. In and on our bodies, we have trillions of living cells that are not our own. They number more than our own cells. These include all the bacteria that digest our food and other organisms like fungi.

Our life is not possible without this larger community of life. To name any of these cells or any other human or animal or piece of the natural world our enemy is to deny our essential being, or as Thich Naht Hanh described it, our “interbeing.” We are integrally connected to everything in the universe.

“We are connected with all that is around us. As we recognize this fact, we can no longer see anyone or anything as an enemy to be defeated.”

Once we recognize that interbeing as ourselves, we can no longer wage war against anyone or anything, because that is waging war against ourselves. We can only recognize the peaceful community to which we belong. This connection is a spiritual connection to everything. As we affirm this understanding, we recognize that we are children of God or, if we prefer, children of the universe—and we are connected to all that is.

Our human society today has forgotten this basic understanding of life in almost all aspects. Rather than turning to the way nature heals itself as our model, we fight disease and pests and weeds, naming enemies that we have to exterminate. From our extreme anthropocentrism, coupled with our hyper-individualism, we have created the foundations for destruction of the natural world and our own society.

The universe runs itself without any need for money, yet in our human society money has become the primary value. We worship it by making it the reigning value rather than recognizing a creative power that brought everything into being. As we give a monetary value to everything and commodify it, we lose sight of its sacredness. Is it time to follow the example of Jesus and drive the moneychangers out of the temple of the Earth?

As people descended from ancestors who were immigrants in North, South and Central America, we have much to learn from the Indigenous communities our ancestors attempted to exterminate. These native peoples never lost their vital connection to the rest of the community of life, giving thanks when they felled a tree to build a house or canoe rather than clear cutting and destroying the ecological community of the forest.

When our ancestors—the European invaders—arrived, they called the Indigenous people “savages.” They did not recognize the inherent wisdom or the advanced cultures of these people.

Today, as we seek to rebuild a peaceful world that works well for everyone and everything, what can we learn from the natural world and from those Indigenous people who never lost their sacred connection to it? Is it not time to return to our essence, our interbeing, our connectedness?

• to return to our essence, our interbeing, our connectedness?
• to recognize that gratitude and generosity are values of the universe?
• to meditate with the trees which give us the oxygen necessary for life?
• to understand the forest as a community connected by a network of mycorrhizal fungi transferring nutrients, carbon and water among its inhabitants?
• to affirm that the sun burns four million tons of itself every minute to provide all the energy for the Earth?
• to see that we are part of community and not empire?
• to belong and not to conquer?

—Andy Smith is a professional photographer, a longtime member of the BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz and a former board member. He is also a member of Central Baptist Church in Wayne, PA, a BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Partner Congregation.

What Your Church Can Do About INDIGENOUS JUSTICE

BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz has created a new issue monograph on Indigenous Justice. Go to http://www.bpfna.org/mobilize/issue-monographs to download a free copy of this great new resource.

And, while you’re there, check out our other issue monographs on topics such as Moral Injury of War, Gun Violence, Climate Change, Migrant Justice and Human Trafficking.
Nota del editor: Orestes Roca predicó este sermón durante la Conferencia de Verano 2017 de BPFNA ~ Buatistas por la Paz en México. El tema de esa reunión fue “¿Cuándo te vimos desnudo? Vestirse unos a otros con esperanza.”

Gracia, misericordia y paz a todos ustedes, mis hermanas y hermanos.

Reciban un saludo en Cristo Jesús de sus hermanas y hermanos de la Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba. Es una alegría y un honor inmenso estar en este evento y poder compartir con ustedes esta reflexión. Créanme que lo hago con mucho gozo por todo lo que esto significa para mí y para las iglesias que represento, pero también con temor y temblor, por la responsabilidad que esto conlleva.

Quisiera compartir con ustedes la lectura de la Palabra de Dios en el libro de Éxodo, capítulo 33, versículos del 12 al 14. Dice así la Palabra de Dios:

Dijo Moisés al Señor: Mira, tú me dices: “Saca a este pueblo”, pero no me has indicado a quién enviarás conmigo. Sin embargo, tú dices: “Yo te he conocido por tu nombre y has hallado también gracia a mis ojos”. Pues bien, si he hallado gracia a tus ojos, te ruego que me muestres ahora tu camino, para que te conozca y halle gracia a tus ojos; y mira que esta gente es tu pueblo. El Señor le dijo: Mi presencia te acompañará y te daré descanso.

Oremos: Dios nuestro, envíe tu Santo Espíritu sobre nosotros, para que tu Palabra pueda echar raíces en los lugares secretos de nuestros corazones y produzca mucho fruto para tu gloria. Amén.

¿Sabían ustedes que Adán y Eva eran cubanos? ¿Por qué? No tenían ropa que ponerse, sólo tenían frutas para comer, no podían salir del jardín y llamaban a eso el paraíso.

Nosotros los cubanos hacemos estos tipos de chistes todo el tiempo. Un amigo norteamericano que visitó Cuba me preguntaba, un poco perplejo, cómo era posible que los cubanos podían reírse en medio de todos sus sufrimientos. Y esa es la cuestión. Los cubanos hacemos chiste de todas las cosas y en particular de los problemas y retos que enfrentamos diariamente. Eso nos ayuda a darnos fe para seguir viviendo, para vivir nuestra realidad y para enfrentar nuestras vulnerabilidades.

Es por eso que quiero compartir con ustedes en este día, si me lo permiten, una breve meditación con dos ejercicios espirituales.

Cuando supe cuál era el tema de este evento: “¿Cuándo te vimos desnudo?: Arropándonos con esperanza”, enseguida me vino a la mente una canción de cuna, una nana que cantan en Cuba, y seguro que en otros lugares también, a los niños y a las niñas para dormir. La nana dice:

_Arrorró mi niño, arrorró mi amor,
Arrorró pedazo de mi corazón._

Tal vez vino a mi mente ese canto porque es lo que le canto a mi pequeño Lucas para dormirlo, pero era lo que me cantaba mi mamá cuando yo era un bebé,

Izquierda: esta imagen, que representa a Cristo y al abad Mena, es un ícono copto del siglo VII.
This image, depicting Christ and the Abbot Mena, is a 7th century Coptic icon.
y nunca me sentí más protegido, más arropado, en toda mi vida que en los brazos de mi madre mientras me cantaba.

El lema de este encuentro, inevitablemente evoca al pasaje de Mateo 25 donde Jesús, entre otras cosas, dice: “Estuve desnudo, y no me vestisteis” (Mateo 25: 43), provocando la pregunta de las personas: “¿Cuándo te vimos desnudo…?” (Mateo 25: 44). Por supuesto que en todo este pasaje se está hablando de la vulnerabilidad. La desnudez es una vulnerabilidad, estar desnudo es ser vulnerable, estar expuesto a los elementos, a los peligros del mundo. Por su parte, el estar arropados es estar seguros y protegidos.

El pasaje que acabamos de leer nos narra una situación de vulnerabilidad. El pueblo de Israel había salido de Egipto, de tierra de esclavitud, y guiados por Moisés habían llegado al Sinaí, donde Moisés recibió las leyes de parte de Dios. En medio de toda esa situación, ocurre el incidente del becerro de oro, donde el pueblo construye un ídolo en quien depositar su confianza ya que no sabían qué había pasado con Dios y con Moisés. Ese acto provocó la ira de Dios, y ahora el pueblo se ve en una incertidumbre total. No saben qué va a pasar con ellos. Están en medio del desierto en una clara situación de vulnerabilidad, están desnudos, expuestos, cansados.

Cuando estamos en una situación de vulnerabilidad, cuando estamos expuestos, cuando estamos en la situación de desnudez, se vive con mucha ansiedad, con mucha preocupación, con mucho temor, con mucho miedo, como mucho terror… es una situación donde no hay descanso posible. Cuando estamos desnudos, expuestos, nuestra mente no puede descansar, tenemos que mantener una concentración de la mente para evitar los peligros. Esa era la situación de Moisés y el pueblo de Israel.

Es en medio de ese contexto que Moisés tiene este diálogo con Dios y le dice: “Señor, si he hallado gracia a tus ojos, te ruego que me muestres ahora tu camino, para que te conozca y que a este ícono también se le conoce como “el ícono de la bendición para los demás. el amor entre cristo y el creyente no es algo cerrado, es algo que se va abriendo y ampliando de ver en este ícono en el Museo del Louvre, en París. Está pintado en el estilo sencillo e ingenuo característico del estilo copto. Este es un ícono que para muchos es conocido porque es un ícono de los santos egipcios llamado Menas. Si nos fijamos bien, veremos unas letras raras al lado de cada personaje, eso son sus nombres escritos en caracteres coptos: al lado de Jesús dice: “Salvador”, al lado de Menas dice “Abad Mena, el más alto”. Menas se convirtió en soldado romano a los quince años, pero tres años después abandonó el ejército para entregarse a la vida contemplativa en el desierto. Tras vivir cinco años como ermitaño, regresó a la ciudad para declarar abiertamente su fe. Murió martirizado y pronto se convirtió en una referencia para las cristianas y cristianos que sufrieran persecución.

Un ícono, palabra griega que significa literalmente “imagen”, es una obra de arte religioso característica del cristianismo oriental. Para las hermanas y hermanos de las iglesias ortodoxas y orientales, los íconos son la teología visual de la Iglesia. Ellos son “ventanas al cielo”, que muestran a la imagen representada cuando esté en gloria al final de los tiempos.

Quisiera que observemos por un momento este ícono. Este ícono hermoso, data del siglo VII y no pertenece a la tradición bizantina como los íconos griegos o rusos, a los cuales algunos estamos un poquito más acostumbrados, sino a la tradición de la Iglesia copta de Egipto. El original fue descubierto en 1902 después de haber permanecido oculto entre las ruinas del monasterio de Bawit, en Egipto, durante muchos siglos. Hoy se encuentra en el Museo del Louvre, en París. Está pintado en el estilo sencillo e ingenuo característico del estilo copto. Este es un ícono que para muchos es conocido porque es un ícono muy usado en la Comunidad Ecuménica de Taizé.

El ícono nos muestra a Cristo junto a uno de los primeros santos egipcios llamado Menas. Si nos fijamos bien, veremos unas letras raras al lado de cada personaje, eso son sus nombres escritos en caracteres coptos: al lado de Jesús dice: “Salvador”, al lado de Menas dice “Abad Mena, el más alto”. Menas se convirtió en soldado romano a los quince años, pero tres años después abandonó el ejército para entregarse a la vida contemplativa en el desierto. Tras vivir cinco años como ermitaño, regresó a la ciudad para declarar abiertamente su fe. Murió martirizado y pronto se convirtió en una referencia para las cristianas y cristianos que sufrieran persecución.

Quisiera compartir con ustedes una imagen que ha significado mucho para mí. Es un ícono. Los protestantes en general y los bautistas en particular, hemos sido reticentes al uso de imágenes, por lo que la figura de un ícono puede ser muy extraña para nosotros.

Un ícono, palabra griega que significa literalmente “imagen”, es una obra de arte religioso característica del cristianismo oriental. Para las hermanas y hermanos de las iglesias ortodoxas y orientales, los íconos son la teología visual de la Iglesia. Ellos son “ventanas al cielo”, que muestran a la imagen representada cuando esté en gloria al final de los tiempos.

Quisiera observaros por un momento este ícono en silencio. Fijémonos en las figuras, en las gestos. Tenemos nuestro espíritu, nuestra mente y nuestro corazón abiertos para ver que nos dice este ícono.

Si nos fijamos bien, Cristo está abrazando a Menas, como un signo de amistad, como un signo de su amor. Es por eso que a este ícono también se le conoce como “el ícono de la amistad”. Por su parte, Menas hace un gesto de bendición con su mano derecha. Al recibir este gesto de amistad y de amor de Cristo, su amigo está apto para bendecir a otros. Este es uno de los movimientos esenciales del Evangelio: dejarnos amar por Dios nos lleva, de manera natural y sencilla, a ser canales de bendición para los demás. El amor entre Cristo y el creyente no es algo cerrado, es algo que va abriéndose y ampliando cada vez más. Y esto se hace palpable en la posición de las dos figuras del ícono: no están sentadas una en frente de la otra, sino que están paseando en la misma dirección.

Cristo, como ya hemos visto, lleva el libro de la Palabra de Dios, mientras que el creyente lleva un pequeño rollo manuscrito. Podríamos, quizás, ver en esto una señal que da a entender que solo Cristo comprende toda la sabiduría de
Editor’s note: Orestes Roca preached this sermon during the 2017 BPENA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Summer Conference in Mexico. The theme for that meeting was “When Did We See You Naked? Clothing Each Other with Hope.”

G

race, mercy, and peace to all of you, my sisters and brothers. I bring a greeting in Christ Jesus from your sisters and brothers of the Brotherhood of Cuban Baptist Churches. It is a pleasure and an immense honor to be at this event and to be able to share this reflection with you. Believe me, I do it with much joy for everything this means for me and the churches I represent, but also with fear and trembling for the responsibility that this carries with it.

I wanted to share with you the reading from the Word of God in the book of Exodus chapter 33 verses 12-14. The Word of God says:

Moses said to the Lord, “I know that you have told me to lead these people to the land you promised them. But you have not told me who my assistant will be. You have said that you are my friend and that you are pleased with me. If this is true, let me know what your plans are, then I can obey and continue to please you. And don’t forget that you have chosen this nation to be your own.” The Lord said, “I will go with you and give you peace.”

Let us pray:

Our God, send your Holy Spirit upon us so that your word can take root in the secret places of our hearts and produce much fruit for your glory. Amen.

Did you know that Adam and Eve were Cuban? Why? They didn’t have clothes to wear, they only had fruit to eat, they couldn’t leave the garden, and they called that Paradise!

We Cubans make these kinds of jokes all the time. A North American friend who visited Cuba asked me, a little puzzled, how was it possible that Cubans could laugh in the middle of all their suffering. And that is the question. We Cubans make jokes about everything—especially about problems and challenges we face daily. That helps us have the faith to go on living, to live our reality and to confront our vulnerabilities.

It’s for that reason that I want to share with you today, if you let me, a brief meditation with two spiritual exercises.

When I found out the theme of this event: “When Did We See You Naked? Clothing Each Other with Hope,” right away a cradlesong came to mind, a lullaby that we sing in Cuba and surely in other places as well, to girls and boys to sing them to sleep. The lullaby says:

Lullaby, my child, lullaby, my love
Lullaby, piece of my heart.

Maybe that song came to mind because it is what I sing to my little Lucas to put him to sleep, but it was what my mom used to sing to me when I was a baby, and I never felt more protected, more wrapped up, in my whole life than in the arms of my mother while she sang to me.

The motto of this meeting, inevitably, evokes the passage “In light of Moses’ question, God answers with one of the most beautiful phrases in all the Scripture: ‘I will go with you and give you peace.’”

from Matthew 25 where Jesus, among other things says, “I was naked and you did not clothe me (Matthew 25:44), provoking the question of the people, “When did we see you naked…? (Matthew 25:44). Of course, all of this passage is talking about vulnerability. Nudity is a vulnerability, to be naked is to be vulnerable, to be exposed to the elements, to the dangers of the world. Being clothed is to be secure and protected.

The passage we just read tells us of a vulnerable situation. The people of Israel had left Egypt, from the land of slavery. Guided by Moses, they had arrived at Sinai, where Moses received the laws from God.

In the middle of all that, the incident of the golden calf occurs, where the people construct an idol in whom to place their trust since they didn’t know what had happened with God and Moses. That act provokes God’s anger and now the people find themselves in total uncertainty. They don’t know what is going to happen to them. They are in the middle of the desert, in a clear situation of vulnerability. They are naked, exposed, tired.
When we are in a situation of vulnerability, when we are exposed, when we are in a situation of nakedness, we live with a lot of anxiety, with a lot of worry, with a lot of fear, with a lot of dread, with a lot of terror. It’s a situation where there is no possible rest. When we are naked, exposed, our minds cannot rest, we have to keep mentally focused in order to avoid dangers. That was the situation of Moses and the people of Israel.

It is in the middle of that context that Moses has this dialogue with God and tells him, “Lord, if I have found grace in your eyes, let me know what your plans are, then I can obey and continue to please you. And don’t forget that you have chosen this nation to be your own.” (Exodus 33:13).

Similar to this is the situation of the people in Cuba—and, of course, with many other people groups. We live in a situation of anxiety, with a tremendous preoccupation about what our future will be like. In the middle of that situation of vulnerability, it is very difficult for us to have peace.

In light of Moses’ question, God answers with one of the most beautiful phrases in all the Scripture: “I will go with you and give you peace.” (Exodus 33:14)

In the middle of our desperation, in the midst of our anxieties and nakedness, the presence of God gives us peace, wrapping the people in hope. When we have the peace of God, it is like being wrapped up, protected, accompanied and clothed to live without anxiety and without fear. And in that context, yes, we can rest.

I want to share with you an image that has meant a lot to me. It is an icon [see page 20]. Protestants in general, and Baptists in particular, have been reticent about the use of images, so the figure of an icon can be very strange for us.

An icon, a Greek word that literally means “image,” is a work of religious art characteristic of eastern Christianity. For the sisters and brothers of Orthodox and Eastern churches, icons are the visual theology of the church. They are “windows to heaven” that show the image represented when it is in glory at the end of time.

I want us to observe this icon for a moment as a spiritual exercise. This beautiful icon dates from the 7th century. It does not belong to the Byzantine tradition like Greek or Russian icons, to which some of us are a little more accustomed, but rather, it belongs to the Coptic church of Egypt.

The original was discovered in 1902, after having been hidden among the ruins of the monastery of Bawit, Egypt, for many centuries. Today it is found in the Louvre Museum in Paris. It is painted in the simple and ingenious style characteristic of the Coptic style. This is an icon that is known to many because it is an icon used very much in the Taizé Ecumenical Community.

The icon shows us Christ at the side of one of the first Egyptian saints named Menas. If we look at it closely, we will see some strange letters to the side of the upper part of each personage. Those letters are their names written in Coptic characters; at the side of Jesus it says “Savior.” At the side of Menas it says “Abbot Mena, the tallest.”

Menas became a Roman soldier at age 15, but three years later he left the army to give himself to the contemplative life in the desert. After living five years as a hermit, he returned to the city to declare his faith openly. He died as a martyr and soon became an inspiration for Christian women and men who suffered persecution.

I ask you now to observe the icon again. Let’s look at the details, the figures, the gestures. Let’s open our spirits, our minds and our hearts to see what this icon is saying to us.

If we look closely, Christ is hugging Menas, as a sign of friendship, as a sign of his love. It is for that reason that this icon is also known as “the icon of friendship.” On the other side, Menas is making a gesture of blessing with his right hand. Upon receiving this gesture of friendship and love from Christ, he is now enabled to bless others.

This is one of the essential movements of the Gospel: letting ourselves be loved by God allows us, in a simple and natural way, to be channels of blessing for others. The love between Christ and the believer is not something closed; it is something that is increasingly opening and extending. And this is made tangible in the position of the two figures of the icon. They are not seated one in front of the other, but rather they are traveling in the same direction.

Christ, as we can see, carries the word of God, while the believer is carrying a small manuscript scroll. We could, perhaps, see in this a signal implying that only Christ understands all of God’s wisdom, but the little that we understand is enough for us to move forward with him.

Menas can be considered as the representation of any believer. Each one of us could be Menas. The icon expresses the relation of friendship that Christ offers to everyone that receives him. With respect to this, Brother Roger of Taizé wrote:

[This icon] shows Christ putting his arm over the shoulders of an unknown friend. By this gesture, he takes upon himself the weight, the faults, all of the burdens that weigh on the other. He is not in front of his friend, but rather going forward at his side; he accompanies him. This unknown friend is each one of us. In the 7th century they already knew that Christ does not come to punish human beings. He descends even to the lowest of the human condition. He doesn’t let even the smallest part of what overpowers us rest on us.

This icon shows, for me, one of the principal gestures in clothing ourselves with hope: friendship.

I come from a country where we have felt naked, where we have felt vulnerable. “It is not easy.” This is one of the most common phrases in Cuba today. It is a phrase that we Cubans say all the time. We say it time and time again to remind ourselves that we have a difficult road to face each day. We use this phrase to encourage each other in the fight, as if we were saying to ourselves: “You are not the only one who is going through this.” And many times, saying that phrase, we try to explain why sometimes we can’t do what we promised: “It’s because it isn’t easy.”

I come from a country where one lives between hope and uncertainty. The changes in the world have also brought changes in us. Those changes bring us the hope that we will have a better future, without so much scarcity, without so many restrictions, but also it leaves us in the uncertainty of what will happen, of whether it will be worse than we expect.

Please see “Friendship” on page 25.
Amistad, continúa de la página 21

Dios, pero que lo poquito que nosotros comprendemos nos basta para avanzar con él.

Menas puede ser considerado como la representación de cualquier creyente. Cada uno de nosotros puede ser Menas. El ícono expresa la relación de amistad que Cristo ofrece a todo el que lo acoge. Con respecto a esto, el hermano Roger de Taizé escribió:

[Este ícono] “Muestra a Cristo poniendo su brazo sobre los hombros de un amigo desconocido. Por este gesto, toma sobre sí el peso, las faltas, toda la carga que pesa sobre el otro. No está frente a su amigo, sino que avanza a su lado, le acompaña. Este amigo desconocido es cada uno de nosotros. En el siglo VII sabían ya que Cristo no viene a castigar al ser humano. Desciende hasta lo más bajo de la condición humana. No deja que repose sobre nosotros ni la más mínima parte de lo que nos abruma”.

Este ícono muestra, para mí, uno de los principales gestos de arroparnos con esperanza: la amistad.

Yo vengo de un país donde nos hemos sentido desnudos, donde nos hemos sentido vulnerables. “No es fácil”. Esta es una de las frases más común en Cuba hoy. Es una frase que los cubanos decimos todo el tiempo. La decimos una y otra vez para recordarnos a nosotros mismos que tenemos un camino difícil que enfrentar cada día. Usamos esta frase para alentarnos los unos a otros en la lucha. Como si nos dijéramos a nosotros “Tú no eres el único que estás pasando por esto”, y muchas veces, diciendo esa frase, tratamos de explicar por qué a veces no podemos hacer lo que prometemos: “Es que no es fácil”.

Yo vengo de un país donde se vive entre la esperanza y la incertidumbre. Los cambios del mundo también han traído cambios en nosotros. Esos cambios nos traen la esperanza de que tendremos un futuro mejor, sin tanta escasez, sin tantas restricciones; pero también nos deja en la incertidumbre de qué pasará, de si será peor lo que nos espera. Es esperanza y esa incertidumbre se impone desde afuera y desde adentro. Desde afuera, haciéndonos creer que el capitalismo puede resolver todas las cosas y que Cuba tendrá un futuro mejor con ese sistema. Desde adentro, haciéndonos creer que en Cuba todo marcha bien, que vamos por un camino de prosperidad y que seguiremos siendo el mejor país del mundo. Estas dos promesas llenan de esperanza a muchos, pero también de incertidumbre, porque sabemos que ninguna de las dos cosas es cierta.

La amistad ha sido un gesto de esperanza para nosotros. La amistad que recibimos y la amistad que sabemos dar. La amistad nos arropa con esperanza. La amistad nos ha hecho saber que, a veces, las cosas demoran un poco en mejorar, que las respuestas no son inmediatas, que tú debes continuar. Esto nos ha hecho enfrentar los retos con mucho trabajo, pero con un rayito de esperanza. Es por eso que cantamos, que reímos, que podemos hacer chistes de nuestros problemas, aun cuando nuestras almas estén preocupadas por el qué le daremos de comer a nuestras familiasmañana.

Saber que Jesús camina a nuestro lado, con su mano en nuestro hombro, nos hace caminar con esperanza. Pero saber que tenemos amigas y amigos que caminan a nuestro lado, con su mano en nuestro hombro, nos hace caminar también con esperanza. La presencia amorosa de Dios a nuestro lado y la presencia amorosa de tantas amigas y tantos amigos nos da descanso de nuestras ansiedades y preocupaciones y nos da fuerza para mover corazones y mantenernos vivos y llenos de esperanza a pesar de las montañas de obstáculos. Nos arropan con esperanza.

Quisiera tener ahora el segundo ejercicio espiritual. Quisiera compartir con ustedes un canto muy sencillo pero muy hermoso. Mi amigo y hermano Samuel Aguilera, un excelente músico cubano que participó en la conferencia de Bautistas por la Paz de 2013, musicalizó las palabras de Dios a Moisés que escuchamos en el libro de Éxodo y hemos convertido ese canto en una oración y en una reafirmación de la esperanza.

Vamos a cantar este canto como una oración:

Primero vamos a cantarlo como si escucháramos la voz de Dios diciendo a cada uno de nosotros: “Mi presencia irá contigo y te daré descanso”. Cerremos nuestros ojos y cantemos:

Mi presencia irá contigo y te daré descanso.
Mi presencia irá contigo y te daré descanso.
Yo te daré descanso. Yo te daré descanso.
Mi presencia irá contigo y te daré descanso.

Por último, vamos a usar un gesto de amistad con nuestras hermanas y hermanos que tenemos a nuestro lado y a nuestro alrededor. Vamos a mirarlos, abrazarlos, saludarlos, y decirles que nuestra presencia y nuestra amistad estará con ellos y ellas:

Mi presencia irá contigo y te daré descanso.
Mi presencia irá contigo y te daré descanso.
Yo te daré descanso. Yo te daré descanso.
Mi presencia irá contigo y te daré descanso.

Amén.

—Desde 2002, Orestes Roca Santana ha sido pastor de la Primera Iglesia Bautista de Matanzas en Cuba y se desempeña como Decano y profesor del Seminario Evangélico Teológico de Matanzas. Su iglesia y seminario son socios desde hace mucho tiempo de la BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz. Predicó este sermón durante la Conferencia de Verano 2017 de BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz en México.

nota final

1. Hermano Roger de Taizé, en Pasión de una espera.
Friendship, continued from page 23

It is hope and that uncertainty that is imposed from inside and out. From the outside, it is making ourselves believe that capitalism can solve everything and that Cuba will have a better future with that system.

From within, it is making ourselves believe that in Cuba everything is going fine, that we are going down a road of prosperity and that we will continue being the best country in the world. These two promises are full of hope for many, but also full of uncertainty, because we know that neither of the two things is certain.

“Knowing that Jesus walks at our side, with his hand on our shoulder, makes us walk with hope. But knowing that we have friends that walk at our side, with their hand on our shoulder, also makes us walk with hope.”

Friendship has been a gesture of hope for us—the friendship that we receive and the friendship we give. Friendship wraps us in hope. Friendship makes us know that sometimes things delay a little in getting better, but that you should keep on. This has made us face challenges with a lot of work, but with a small ray of hope. It is for that reason that we sing, we laugh and we make jokes about our problems—even when our souls are worried about what we will give our families to eat tomorrow.

Knowing that Jesus walks at our side, with his hand on our shoulders, makes us walk with hope. But knowing that we have friends that walk at our side, with their hands on our shoulders, also makes us walk with hope.

The loving presence of God and the loving presence of so many friends gives us rest from our anxieties and gives us strength to move hearts and keep ourselves alive and full of hope in spite of mountains of obstacles. They clothe us in hope.

Now I would like for us to do a second spiritual exercise. I want to share with you a very simple but beautiful song. My friend and brother Samuel Aguilera is an excellent Cuban musician who participated in the 2013 Baptist Peace Fellowship Summer Conference. He put to music the words of God to Moses that we heard in the book of Exodus, and we have turned that song into a prayer and a reaffirmation of hope.

We are going to sing this song as a prayer.

First, we are going to sing it as if we were listening to the voice of God saying to each one of us: “My presence will go with you and I will give you peace.” Let’s close our eyes and sing:

My presence will go with you and I will give you peace.
My presence will go with you and I will give you peace.
I will give you peace. I will give you peace.
My presence will go with you and I will give you peace.

Finally, we are going to use a gesture of friendship with our sisters and brothers that we have at our side and around us. We are going to look at them, hug them, greet them and tell them that our friendship will be with them.

My presence will go with you and I will give you peace.
My presence will go with you and I will give you peace.
I will give you rest. I will give you peace.
My presence will go with you and I will give you peace.

Amen.

—Since 2002, Orestes Roca has been pastor of the First Baptist Church of Matanzas in Cuba and serves as Dean and Professor for the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Matanzas. His church and seminary are longtime partners with the BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz. This sermon was translated into English by Linda McManness.

Endnote
1. Brother Roger of Taizé, Waiting with Passion.

In a time when the daily news is filled with reports and threats of violence by dangerous people, Paul Dekar’s new book, Dangerous People, offers a refreshing review of the life of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and how its leaders’ vision of a new society—built through nonviolence and led by a different kind of dangerous people—can make real changes.

The book was written for the FOR centennial and includes many interesting photos and timelines for the organization.

Dangerous People follows Dekar’s earlier, more comprehensive history of FOR: Creating the Beloved Community: A Journey With the Fellowship of Reconciliation published in 2005. It is also a great companion to Albert J. Raboteau’s American Prophets: Seven Religious Radicals and Their Struggle for Social and Political Justice (2016). It’s no coincidence that all of Raboteau’s prophets had significant links to FOR.

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) was founded in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. Its United States chapter (FOR) was founded in 1915. FOR was largely Christian in its early years, becoming broadly interfaith in the present.

FOR, through one of its early leaders, John Nevin Sayre, promoted pacifism as a way of life. Its community has always lived with the tensions that this idealism encounters in the United States—perhaps best exemplified by the later withdrawal of a noted member, Reinhold Niebuhr.

FOR has always supported conscientious objection to military service, beginning in 1915 with the formation of the group which would later become the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Many of its “dangerous” members supported various refugees in the 1930s and 1940s and have continued to do so up through the Bosnian Student project in the 1990s.

For the older among us in the US, FOR is best known for its involvement in issues of racial justice. Its involvement stems from the days of the interracial Harlem Ashram in the 1940s, when it regarded the “problem of racial justice as America’s Number 1 problem in reconciliation.” It goes from there through the first integrated interstate bus rides (Journey of Reconciliation) in 1947 and through the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s.

Throughout these times, FOR provided training and support on the ground combined with successful attempts to...
garner support from northern white churches. All these efforts led to key legislative and social changes.

Later, the emphasis shifted to efforts to prevent nuclear war, as well as specific and timely other projects. FOR challenged nuclearism as a crucial issue. Dekar writes:

“As Dr. [Martin Luther] King once observed, the essential choice for humankind in the nuclear age is no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence.”

One of the specific and timely projects of the FOR was an effort to get Americans to sponsor young Bosnian refugees to attend college in the US. Dekar credits Douglas Hostetter as noting that this campaign was successful because it was simple, it had a personal face, it encouraged anyone, anywhere to participate, it offered a statement of interfaith cooperation and it made it clear that a cooperative effort was necessary.

Most recently, FOR’s efforts have been focused on the unfinished work of racial reconciliation, especially noting that true reconciliation requires consideration of reparations to address the harm that has been done.

Dekar’s list of dangerous people associated with FOR includes familiar names such as Norman Thomas, A. J. Muste, Bayard Rustin, Al Hassler, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many more. In 1966, as Al Hassler became more aware of the linkages between militarism, racism and ecological devastation, he suggested that it is “not enough to apply the tactics of nonviolence to individual circumstances in isolated places,” but what’s needed is a “nonviolently organized total world community in which the well being of all is the responsibility of all.”

To that end, FOR has continued to work toward nonviolent solutions to varied and nefarious world problems while keeping its eye on the prize of the Beloved Community.

Dangerous People is a badly needed reminder of what can be accomplished by a few dedicated individuals linked together in the common cause of building a better world for us all.

—Steve Jacobsen is a former Business Manager and board member of BPFNA. He is currently a member of the National Council of FOR.

Note: Paul Dekar is a longtime member and former National Council chair for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He is also a longtime member and former board member for BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz. In addition to Dangerous People and Creating the Beloved Community, he has written books about two FOR members: Thomas Merton and Martin Luther King, Jr. He also wrote Building a Culture of Peace: Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America—The First Seventy Years. Having lived in Memphis, TN, where he taught at the Memphis Theological Seminary for many years, Paul now lives in his native Ontario, where he writes and continues to work for justice.
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¡En total, recaudamos $ 5,540 USD!
Este es el segundo #GivingTuesday en una fila donde no solo hemos cumplido, sino que también hemos superado ligeramente nuestro objetivo previsto. De esta cantidad, $ 554 USD se destinarán a esfuerzos de ayuda en desastres en México y Puerto Rico, y $ 4,986 USD se destinarán a traer representación indígena a la Conferencia de Verano en 2018. ¡Esta cantidad es suficiente para cubrir los costos de la Conferencia de Verano para aproximadamente 10 personas!

In total, we raised $5,540 USD!
This is the second #GivingTuesday in a row where we’ve not only met but slightly exceeded our project-ed goal. From this amount, $554 USD will be designated to disaster relief efforts in Mexico and Puerto Rico, and $4,986 USD will go toward bringing Indigenous representation to Summer Conference in 2018. This amount is enough to cover the Summer Conference costs for approximately 10 people!

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www.bpfna.org/peace-sunday
No estás solo.

¿Alguna vez te has sentido como tu congregación es el único que trabaja por la paz?

El programa de Congregaciones Asociadas de BPFNA puede ayudar. Este programa alienta alianzas estratégicas para la misión entre iglesias locales y otros pacificadores. También ofrece recursos y redes para congregaciones que de otro modo estarían aisladas en un mundo violento y materialista.

Para más información, contacte con LeDayne McLeese Polaski en ledayne@bpfna.org o 704-521-6051; o visite nuestro sitio web en www.bpfna.org/entrenar/congregaciones-asociadas.

You are not alone.

Do you ever feel like your congregation is the only one working for peace?

The BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Partner Congregation program can help. This program encourages strategic alliances for mission between local churches and other peacemakers. It also offers resources and networking for congregations that would otherwise be isolated in a violent and materialistic world.

For more information, contact LeDayne McLeese Polaski at ledayne@bpfna.org or 704-521-6051; or visit our website at www.bpfna.org/join/partner-congregations.

Broadening our definition of membership:

BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz introduces a new membership structure

The board and staff of BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz have been thinking a lot about what it means to be a member of this organization, and as a result, we have developed a new membership structure to be more inclusive and welcoming to all in our network.

This new structure includes non-monetary contributions people can make to become members of BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz. While we do largely rely on individual and organizational donations to support our work of peace rooted in justice, we also welcome and celebrate the many ways people can participate in the shared work of peacemaking.

For those able to make a financial contribution, we have also increased our suggested membership dues for the first time in several years. This increase supports our expanding peacemaking programs. Our expenses are going up, yet we welcome and appreciate your giving at any level that makes sense for you.

Visit our new membership page at www.bpfna.org/join to learn more about these changes.

P.S. We have also created a new section on our website devoted to highlighting the peacework of our incredible members (www.bpfna.org/members). If you have stories or people to feature on this page, please contact BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Communications Manager Allison Paksoy at allison@bpfna.org.
Support BPFNA through iGive & Goodsearch!

You can support BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz while you shop online! More than 800 retail stores participate in the “iGive” program.

For every purchase that you make, the participating stores send a portion of the proceeds to BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz!

Go to http://www.igive.com/welcome to get started.

Similar to iGive, Goodsearch/Goodshop will give BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz a percentage of the proceeds when you search through this website: www.goodsearch.com.

Support BPFNA
through iGive & Goodsearch!

The women and men who enroll in the Master of Divinity program at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School come from diverse faith traditions and communities. However, they share the belief that Christ’s greatest calling is to faithfully and critically engage the world in order to transform it.

Call 1-888-937-3732 or visit us online at www.crcds.edu.

Pass the Peace.

If you are reading Baptist Peacemaker, chances are that you are a member of the BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz. If you are not, we invite you to add your story to ours. Just clip this coupon and send us your check, and you will become a member. If you are a BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz member, please invite others to our conversation.

Please print the following information:

Name: ______________________________________
Mailing Address: _______________________________
___________________________________________
City:________________________________________
State/Province: ____  Zip/Postal Code: _______________
Country: _____________________________________
E-mail: ______________________________________
Home Church: __________________________________
❑ My membership check is enclosed. $40-Household; $20-Student/Low Income; $50-Church/Institution
❑ Also enclosed is $ _________ as an additional contribution.

Send your check and this form to: BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz, 300 Hawthorne Lane, Suite 205, Charlotte, NC 28204 USA. Visit our website at www.bpfna.org/join to join online.
God has a better way for you and for me. We are waiting for it, and we can’t afford to sleep through its coming. We don’t know just when God will sweep away the structures of injustice, but God will do it. We don’t know what the means will be, but God will do it.

We want to be about the right work when it happens. When a new heaven and a new earth start to appear, we need to be in God’s vicinity. We need to be awake doing the work God has given us. While we wait, we need to stay woke.

Let’s do this together. Let’s stay woke beyond Advent and Christmastide into the new year. Let’s stay woke, because God will do it. Amen.

—Mike Broadway, from “Staying Woke: An Advent Sermon”