

PEACE COMMITTEE REPORT

REPRESENTATIVE MEETING, LEYM

CLEVELAND, OH 3/7/09

ATTENDING: Committee members Betty Ford, Kurt Liske, David Lore (chm), and Jim Satterwhite. Guest attenders Adele Looney and Serina Hanna.

Because events since last November's election are moving at such a fast pace, it was agreed to develop two committee minutes for timely distribution to monthly meetings and members of the Yearly Meeting executive board. These are:

- An alert to area Friends about a statement last month by the executive committee of the World Council of Churches on the need for religious groups to respond to the Gaza crisis. This alert will also note LEYM's 2008 open letters to Barack Obama and John McCain urging a reality-based assessment of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/bossey-february-2009/20-02-09-statement-on-the-gaza-war.html>

<http://leym.quaker.org/peacecommittee.html>

- An advisory to monthly meetings to support political action to achieve U.S. Senate ratification of the international ban on the use of cluster bombs. Peace Committee is concerned that if the Obama administration intends to keep U.S. forces in Iraq through 2011, priority must be placed on cleaning up such lethal abandoned munitions over the next two years.

<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/take-action/>

It was agreed to continue to monitor these issues as Obama administration policies develop, and revisit them as necessary at Yearly Meeting in June.

In addition, the committee agreed to prepare a document – in the form of an open letter, or possibly queries – urging monthly meetings and individual Friends to clearly define the “end game” when speaking out and/or writing about policy issues. When discussing the “problem” of nuclear weapons development in Iraq, Korea or Pakistan, for example, should Friends focus on who is allowed to have nukes or on the need for eventual abolition of nuclear weapons by all nations? We have gone straight to the core issue with “War is Not the Answer” and total opposition to torture. Similar “end game” perspectives are needed in other areas as well.

Without taking action, the committee used its time together to discuss possible Quaker responses to the current economic recession. Quakers, it was noted, have long focused on issues of economic justice and the size of the U.S. military budget.

We shared Bekah Sommer's report to us from the recent ecumenical conference, "Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace" in Pennsylvania. Sommer's positive experience encourages us to investigate participation in this initiative in the future.

In addition, Kurt Liske brought to our attention the wonderful work of the International Institute of Akron in resettling refugees from abroad. The Kent Meeting has been an active participant in the institute's program.